

February 4, 2024

“Faith in the Power of God”

Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-31

Lesson 1

Intro

Today’s lesson comes from Isaiah, one of the Major Prophets in the Old Testament. Even though the days of the prophets is over, and we live under grace and not the law, the OT prophets are still to be highly valued. They are quoted often by Jesus and the authors of the New Testament. Isaiah is by far the most frequently quoted of the Major Prophets, over 60 times! His prophecies about the Messiah in chapter 53 were fulfilled by Jesus, adding power and authority to all his writings.

The text for today follows a prophecy warning King Hezekiah of a time when Babylon would carry away the people and the wealth of Judah. This came true over 100 years after Isaiah said it. This action was God’s punishment on His people for their sins, which they refused to alter. The chapter begins by declaring that the punishment would eventually end. What follows is a prediction of John the Baptist’s role, and concludes with God asking His people to consider His very nature.

Read Isaiah 40:12-13

1. vs. 12: This verse uses the Hebrew poetical style, which uses parallelism

This means saying the same thoughts in consecutive lines, using different words

This is shown by the words “measured” and “marked off” and by the phrases “hollow of his hand” and “the breadth of his hand”

Isaiah mentions the waters of the earth and the heavens

Both are brought up to show things God can do which humans cannot

The verse is phrased in the form of a question

This is called a rhetorical question, because an answer is not expected

The answer is obvious from the way the question is asked

“Who has measured...?” The obvious answer is, “No one but God”

This use of rhetorical questions focuses readers on God’s greatness

God can measure things with His hands than man needs machinery for

This question reminds Israel in Isaiah’s day of God’s greatness

He is far beyond all the gods of the nations around them

2. vs. 13: This verse, though much shorter, carries across the same idea of God’s greatness

Again, another rhetorical question is used here

“Who can fathom...(who) can instruct the Lord...?”

No person created by God can be as smart as God

Therefore, no person can understand Him completely, or give Him advice

He doesn’t need that from us

Verses 14-24, not part of our study today, continue the rhetorical questioning

God reminds His people that He is superior to other nations, idols, and earthly rulers

Read Isaiah 40:25:31

3. vs. 25: God asks the people, “To whom will you compare Me? Or who is my equal?”
This is a reminder that no one and no thing is comparable to God
In Scripture, God is compared to a shepherd, a rock, a shield, and a fortress
These comparisons help us to see God’s actions toward us, for us
But they are not an attempt to say God is similar to or equal to any of these

4. vs. 26: God next calls attention to the stars and all the things in the sky
“Who created these?” He asks
Many throughout time have worshipped the stars, such as astrologers
To do so is forbidden by the Law in Deut. 4:19
Man is not to worship the thing created, but the Creator (see Rom. 1:18-25)

God tells us that he knows each star and celestial object *by name*
He says “None of them are missing” due to His power
God knows all of His creation, and takes care of it with His power

5. vs. 27: This verse’s idea is directly connected to the previous thought in vs. 26
If God knows all of His created things by name, why are men worried?
“My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God”
It’s easy for people to think that God has forgotten or is ignoring them
We want things to happen in our timing, and God has His own timing
We don’t see or understand His thoughts, so we can get discouraged
God does not forget or ignore His creation
We are wise to remember that

6. vs. 28: Isaiah reminds the people in strong terms about who God is
He uses three different terms: The LORD, the everlasting God, the Creator
This is the only place in the OT where these three terms are used together
He reminds them that God doesn’t grow weary—He is not like humans
He created everything in 6 days and then rested on the 7th
This isn’t because He was tired—he had simply finished the creative process!
Isaiah reminds them that no one can understand God’s mind
All of these descriptions are present to show that God is unlike any other

7. vs. 29: This verse begins a 3-verse section about the promise of God’s strength to His followers
Here it says “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak”
There is no one alive who hasn’t felt weak or weary at times
This is especially true of Christians fighting the spiritual battles that we do
The strength and power God promises here is two-fold
It is physical strength to meet the demands of the world’s challenges
It is spiritual strength to handle and overcome the spiritual battles we face

8. vs. 30: Youths and young men are at the heart of this verse

These two groups are usually associated with having tons of energy

Yet even they can encounter situations that exhaust their energy

No one is immune from being taxed beyond their ability to handle a situation

If it can happen to the young and strong, it can happen to any and all people

9. vs. 31: This verse begins with the great contrast word—“but”

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength”

Having strength when needed doesn’t depend upon one’s age

If youths can grow weary, then even older people/tired people can regain strength

The key is how that strength is regained

They “hope in the LORD”—they depend upon His Holy Spirit for power

Hope implies trusting in God, waiting for Him to do what He promised He would

Waiting is not something we do well in today’s society—everything is fast-paced

Our tendency can be to act in our own timing instead of waiting for God’s

Three great images conclude this verse—the result of waiting on God’s renewal

Soar on wings like eagles

Run and not grow weary

Walk and not be faint

Soaring puts you above the ground, sailing effortless above the challenged

Running and walking far or fast can be very tiring

Being renewed by God gives one the power to do what needs to be done

Receiving God’s strength is so superior to human strength

Application: God is not like man. His resources never run out, grow weak, or become scarce. His promises to aid His followers likewise never expire. God’s power and strength are available to us all day, every day, at the same level of power and fulfillment as they always were, and as they always will be. But there is a caution to be remembered. In 2 Chronicles 15:2, we are reminded, “The Lord is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.” This is the only restriction to our access to God’s resources.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for preserving the Old Testament book for us today. Thank You for the insight they give us into Your character and nature. We ask that our strength be renewed by You, as only You can do, so that we are able to carry out the missions that You bring into our lives. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

