



INVESTIGATE

The word of the Lord (v6-8)

You can imagine the people thinking, "Can this message really be trusted? Is God really going to return to us after all we've done? We've heard these promises before and nothing seems to have happened."

Read Isaiah's answer (v6-8). Try and summarise the point of his illustration.

How does this give us confidence and strength in our trials / this world?



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The love of the Lord (v9-11)

So, God is on his way and the people can trust what God's Word says about that. But what will it be like when he comes in all his glory? The last experience they had of God was his judgment on Jerusalem.

What's the encouragement in v9 (x2!)?

What insights are given into the character of the One coming in v10? Why is this encouraging?

What are we told about Him in v11? Take time to think about each description.

Why is each so relevant to them then? Why are they encouraging for you?

Note: This is the heart of Jesus Christ... each member of his flock treated individually, lovingly, caringly.

- These beautiful descriptions of Jesus are not just to be observed, but experienced.



PRAY IT THROUGH

Spend some time now responding to God's Word in prayer.

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

SMALL GROUPS SHEET

WEEK BEGINNING 23 SEPTEMBER 2012

1. The Caring Shepherd

Isaiah 40:1-11

Oakhall
CHURCH WELCOMES YOU



FOR STARTERS

All of us at some point face difficult and uncertain times in our families, finances, work etc. At those times it may feel like God is distant from us, that he's forgotten us and doesn't seem to understand or care. The sense of distance is often magnified when we have failed God.



BACKGROUND

God's people felt like this in the 6th century B.C. In 586 B.C their whole world was going to be shattered. Isaiah predicts the consequences of their sin and rebellion in Isaiah 39:6 (150 years before the events happened). The people who actually lived through this devastating time, whether in the rubble of Jerusalem or in exile in Babylon, must have wondered where God was, and whether he really cared anymore. Listen to their cry in Isaiah 40:27. It's into this painful context that Isaiah spoke his message of hope (chapters 40-55) into. It is one of the high points in the Old Testament and still speaks to those of us who feel God is distant and long for Him to comfort us.

Read: Isaiah 40:1-11



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The comfort of the Lord (v1-2)

What would be the impact of the repetition "Comfort, comfort..."?
Why would the words "my people" (v1) be such a comfort to them?
What else brings reassurance and hope to them (v2)?



THINK IT THROUGH

Do you think Isaiah is saying that *they* have paid for their sin by being in exile? Why or why not? Notice Isaiah's hint that the payment is from "the LORD'S" hand (v2). Read Isaiah 53:1-12 for a fuller explanation of a suffering servant paying for our sin.

[Note: "double for all her sins" is best understood as 'the payment which exactly matches her sins']

Verse 1 is written in the present tense, i.e. God is always whispering this comforting message into our ears, "You are mine, you are forgiven, though you have been away from me." Remind yourself again of Romans 8:1.



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The way for the Lord (v3-5)

The people in the mid-6th century felt deserted and abandoned by God. Yes, they deserved it but they longed to come back now. But how could they? And where was God anyway?

What's being built in v3-4?

Who is it being built for (v3a, v3b, v5)?

What is the encouragement for the people?



THINK IT THROUGH

The New Testament identifies this voice in the desert (v3) – see Mark 1:2-4. In the light of the glorious LORD's arrival what does Mark urge the people to do? What does that mean today?

Note how John summarises the arrival of Jesus into our world (John 1:14).