

v31 “But does the receiving depend on any particular condition? Only one, and it is specified here: *waiting on the Lord*. This expression implies two things: complete dependence on God and a willingness to allow him to decide the terms....Thus waiting in Hebrew is not merely killing time but a life of confident expectation. Those who give up their own frantic efforts to save themselves and turn expectantly to God will be able to *replace* or exchange their worn-out strength for new strength. How like God: he takes the useless and gives back the good” (Oswalt 1998: 74).

“Trust is never easy, but it is the key to unlocking God’s power. Trust enables people to walk the path (40:31) that God has chosen for their lives (whether it be pleasant or unpleasant) without growing weary or wanting to quit” (Smith 2009: 122).

“The fourfold Old Testament doctrine of God the Creator is represented here: he originates everything, maintains everything in existence, controls everything in operation, and directs everything to the end he appoints” (Motyer 1999: 278).

“That the God of Israel was the creator and Lord of the whole earth was not a novel idea....But such truth is not so easy to believe when our world is in ruins. In the midst of suffering we can become almost too numb to grasp it. Isaiah therefore clothes the age-old truth in vivid language so that it will penetrate the dullness of those who are almost past hope, take fresh hold of them, and lift them up” (Webb 1996: 165).

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How well do you know God? On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest possible for a person on earth, how would you rate yourself? Why should you desire to know God more? What can you do to know God better? Will you?

Is it the pattern of your life to eagerly wait upon God in full hope that he will supply all of your needs and answer all of your prayers?

Read Psalm 33 and compare and contrast it with Isaiah 40.

## ISAIAH 40:12-31: HOPE IN THE INCOMPARABLE GOD

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 40

- I. Be comforted because the Lord is coming (40:1-11)
- II. Be comforted because the Lord is incomparable (40:12-26)
  - A. The Lord is all-powerful (40:12)
  - B. The Lord is all-knowing (40:13-14)
  - C. The Lord is greater than the nations (40:15-17)
  - D. The Lord is incomparable (40:18-20)
  - E. The Lord is sovereign over the nations and their rulers (40:21-24)
  - F. The Lord is greater than the stars (40:25-26)
- III. Be comforted because the Lord cares for Israel (40:27-31)
  - A. God is fully in control of Israel’s situation (40:27-28)
  - B. God will strengthen those who hope in him (40:29-31)

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## NOTES

The message of this chapter would be very relevant to a people facing exile or in exile who wonder (1) if God has forgotten them; (2) if God is stronger than the gods of the nation that has conquered them; (3) if God still cares for his people.

Chapter 40 “makes two points: God is the sole ruler of the universe (vv. 12–26), and he can be trusted to deliver (vv. 1–11, 27–31)” (Oswalt 1998: 45–46).

“In the strongest terms he asserts that there is none like the Lord, either in the cosmos (vv. 12–14, 22, 25–26) or in history (vv. 15–17, 23–24). He is utterly without compare (vv. 18, 25), especially to the gods (vv. 19–20, 25–26). Thus it is plain that such a being is able to do whatever he wishes to do” (Oswalt 1998: 58).

v12 “God can measure the enormous breadth of the heavens by simply stretching out his fingers (Ps 33:6–7) to mark the distance between two stars” (Smith 2009: 110).

v15 “What are the nations—so impressive in their glory, and earthshaking in their power? They are the drop of water falling back into the cistern as the bucket is pulled up, the speck of dust on the pan of the balance scales that does not even cause the scales to flutter. Both are ephemeral and neither is cause for a moment’s notice” (Oswalt 1998: 61).

v16 “God is so great that even the vast cedar forests of Lebanon could not provide enough wood for the kinds of sacrifices he deserves. Nor could the abundant animals of those forests provide enough offerings” (Oswalt 1998: 61).

v17 “It is not that he thinks of them as nothing or considers them to be worthless. Many statements both in this book and elsewhere in the OT make clear that God does value the nations. It is simply that by comparison with the Lord (the sense of *in his presence*), Assyria and its gods, Babylonia and its gods, Persia and its gods, fade into nothingness” (Oswalt 1998: 62).

v17 “One of the implications of God’s transcendent incomparability is that the world does not actually revolve around the great nations of the earth and is not determined by personal wishes, human accomplishments, or national goals. What goes on in this world is actually centered on God and his plans. Therefore, in reality these nations have no power” (Smith 2009: 112–13).

vv18–20 “For apart from the God who reveals himself in Holy Scripture, people are confined to their own thoughts, imaginings and devisings, a truth most plainly seen in the making of an idol” (Motyer 1999: 280).

vv23–24 “If God has this kind of power and control over the universe, he is surely able to control the grasshopper kings that walk throughout the earth” (Smith 2009: 117).

v26 “If God can keep track of a million stars across the broad heavens, certainly he can keep track of every one of his chosen people” (Smith 2009: 119).

v26 “The stars are like so many pet dogs called by name to take their place in their master’s design, and innumerable though they are, their number is never less than complete” (Motyer 1999: 282).

v27 “The questions expose the frailty of faith and also the absurdity of faithlessness” (Motyer 1999: 282).

v28 “It may be confusing when God’s longsuffering patience delays the establishment of justice, but the nation’s present difficulties cannot be attributed to divine weakness, neglect, injustice, or misunderstanding” (Smith 2009: 121).

v29 “Far from becoming diminished himself, God has an excess of energy to give to those who lack it (see v. 26). This is one more concrete way of saying that God is noncontingent and self-existent. He never suffers lack; instead, he helps those who do” (Oswalt 1998: 73).