

No Comparison – Isaiah 40:12-26

Introduction – This passage is so opposite of the subject of our culture: autonomous self, self-esteem, self-love, self-expression, and self-worth. Are you really ready to believe in yourself? Maybe you actually haven't considered the transcendent glory and majesty of God. There is no comparison.

Isaiah 40 begins a new section following the promised judgment/exile to come (39:5-7). We already considered the promises of God's comfort and deliverance (40:1-11); God will deliver Israel after this future exile. The question remains, "can He deliver?" These verses will answer that question. But there is a greater context and a greater answer. The New Testament teaches us that this passage is about the advent of the Messiah and His kingdom, beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist. We do not live in the hope of these words. We live in the fulfillment of these words.

Incomparable Creator (vv12-14) – God is not just bigger than all of creation. He is transcendent over it. Can you pick up the Pacific Ocean in the palm of your hand? Did God need instruction or materials to create the universe? Did He need a "how to" manual or an imagination seminar to come up with all that is in creation and how it all functions. Implicit in the discussion of counselors (vv13-14) is the whole plan of God's redemption of His people. Who came up with that idea?

Incomparable Ruler (vv15-17) – What are the greatest nations of empires of world history to the Lord most high? Would you notice if one drop from a bucket went missing? Does that speck of dust change the weight on the scales? Take the grandest forests of the world; they couldn't provide enough wood for the sacrifices He deserves. All nations (and all their defiance of Him) are nothing to Him. They do not create an unforeseen difficulty in His plans. God has no problems.

Incomparable God (vv18-20) – Actually, the Bible does often describe God with comparisons from within creation. He is like a rock, a tower, a husband, a soldier, a shepherd, a warrior, and so forth. but never in a sense that any analogy can say it all. His transcendence beyond creation is why He has commanded that we cannot make an image of Him. Idols, on the other hand, only point to the trivial foolishness of man-made gods or attempts to make God in our image. God's sarcasm over this will only increase throughout these chapters (41:6-7, 44:9-20, 46:5-7). That is why we must never derive our sense of worth from any created thing. Isaiah's God is incomparable and that is our salvation.

Incomparable Ruler (vv21-24) – Have you not seen? Don't you remember? What happened to Sennacherib's army? What about Pharaoh? These are not accidents. The greatest princes and their kingdoms are like little seedlings just planted – easily blown over at the mere puff of God's breath. James teaches us to have this attitude towards our individual lives as well (James 4:13-16). But seen in the right context, this is a point of comfort. Nothing stops God's rule nor stalls His plans.

Incomparable Creator (vv25-26) – This is the God we worship. This is the God Who has told you He will save you. This is the Lord Who says He has made all things new. He wants you to go out on a cloudless night and count the stars. He wants you to do science and from your observations fall facedown and worship Him. He has macro-knowledge, naming all the stars, and micro-knowledge, knowing the number of hairs on your head (Matt 10:30).

Their God is Too Small (1 Cor 2:13-16) – Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13 as he speaks of the folly of man's wisdom. The "*natural man*" is a Greek idiom for "*man at his finest*." Without the gift of the mind of Christ, man develops a faulty doctrine of creation, he twists the doctrine of man, he is lost in his doctrine of the fall (or why bad things happen), and in his doctrine of redemption (or how we can make things better), let alone his doctrine of eternal things. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. If you do not start there, everything gets messed up downstream.

Our God is Too Small (Rom 11:28-36) – But if the god of unbelievers is too small, the modern church has taught them. In this passage, Paul again quotes Isaiah 40:13 (along with Job 41:11) to make the point that no one could have put this plan of the salvation of the world together but God alone. This is the example of God drawing straight with crooked lines. Through the unbelief of Israel, salvation has come to the Gentiles and through the mercy shown to the nations Israel will one day come to Jesus as Messiah. But what does the modern church teach? They worship a god who is not in control of hurricanes or terrorist nations. They worship a god whose chief end is to glorify man and to make man's life as comfortable and pleasurable as one could imagine. They deny the centrality of the worship of God on the Lord's Day, nothing transcendent, nothing extraordinary about Lord's Day worship. God has become weightless, unimportant, unnoticed throughout daily life. And so those who worship this god find banal entertainment more interesting. His truth is less appealing than the sweet lies of advertisers.

Incomparable – Instead, as in Narnia when Lucy found Aslan bigger as she grew older, so our God becomes more and more incomparably awesome in our eyes as we lift them up to Him, growing in our knowledge of Him. And where does this knowledge of God come from? It is something revealed to us from God by the work of His Holy Spirit, speaking to us through the prophets and apostles, written in Scripture, to be heard by the church. No more "believing in ourselves" and more and more believing in God Who can and does anything He pleases. We will never come to the end of the knowledge of the God Who loves us in Jesus Christ – and we will never tire of such knowledge; our delight will only grow.