

Session 1

March 1, 2020

HOLY VOCABULARY: THE WORD *HOLY*

Isaiah 40:25-31

Isaiah 40 brings a word of comfort to God's people. It's a promise of present deliverance from the penalty of their sin (vv. 1-2), and future deliverance through the promised Messiah. Besides that, it has several key Scriptures that are well known and often quoted, like "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord...'" (40:3); and, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (40:8).

By the end of the chapter, the Lord suggests that God's people should be comforted and confident because they belong to Him...and there is *none* like Him. The idea that God is separate, different, unique, and perfect is all part of His *holiness*. God's encouragement of Israel in this chapter is based on those things that only Holy God can do.

Incomparable in creation (vv. 25-26). In its most basic sense, "holy" means *set apart*, or *sacred*. Isaiah uses the phrase *Holy One* as a title for God twenty-five times in his book. In their narrowest context, these verses refer back to the man-made idols mentioned in vv.18-20, but their applications are much broader. The questions are more rhetorical than actual: how could anyone possibly choose to worship a created idol above the one true Creator God? (see Rom. 1:22-25). After all, the heavens themselves "declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). First, the Lord points out the great care with which the stars were made (v. 26). He spangles the night skies with infinite multitudes of them but knows each so intimately that He *calls them by name*. Second, He highlights the great power He exercises over them (v. 26). As 18th century English Baptist John Gill wrote, "the hosts of heaven cannot be stopped in their course, or hindered in their work appointed to do, or be deprived of their being," all because of "the power of His might." *There is none like Him in creation.*

Incomparable in understanding (vv. 27-28). The focus now shifts from God's creation, to His understanding. The Bible teaches that God is omniscient ("all-knowing"). While His knowledge and wisdom and understanding are over all things, He still knows about the little things...and cares deeply about them. Foremost in His mind are His people (see Matt. 6:25 ff). Israel's complaint was two-fold. First, they felt neglected by God. They felt as though God paid no attention to their *way*; that is, the situation and circumstances they faced. Second, they felt as though God was ignoring their *pleas*; most likely their complaints of mistreatment! Again, rhetorical questions are used as a gentle rebuke to set up God's answer (v. 28). His three-fold explanation emphasizes the faithfulness of God. His works of the past (creation), His works in the present (never growing weak), and His works in the future (continuous, limitless understanding), all point to God's greatness. Is anything really hidden from His sight? Is any thought really beyond His comprehension? Of course not...*there is none like Him in understanding.*

Incomparable in empowerment (vv. 29-31). Finally, the focus shifts to God's continuous empowerment. Here, the emphasis is on strengthening the weak. Notice the contrasts between human weakness and divine strength. The word *weary* is used in every verse. Apart from God, people are *powerless* (v. 29) and they *stumble and fall* (v. 30). But those who trust in the Lord

will find strength in Him (v. 29). Notice His empowerment regardless of the activity. When required to *soar*...they will do so like eagles. When asked to *run*...they will not grow weary. When they are allowed to *walk*... they will not get tired. Who else could do such a thing for fallen man? The answer is obvious...*there is none like Him in His sustaining power.*