

Exegetical Notes, Isaiah 40:28-31
“Have You Not Heard?”

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Isaiah 40:28-31

(The history of the prophet Isaiah is as follows. In chapters 1-35, Isaiah writes to warn the people of Judah about the impending threat from the nation of Assyria. Assyria did invade Judah. However, the King of Judah appealed to the king of Syria, Babylon, for help. In chapters 36-39 Isaiah warns of the failure of Assyria and the greater threat from Syria. Eventually, Syria took control of Judah and exiled the Jews from their homeland. In chapters 40-66 Isaiah writes as if the 70 years of captivity in Syria are over and the time has come for the Jews to return home to Jerusalem. Contained within the book of Isaiah are many passages which, though originally applied to Isaiah's time, speak prophetically to us about the birth of the Messiah and His return to earth to rule. In chapter 40 Isaiah writes to the people of Judah in captivity to tell them that the time of their captivity is over. God is now ready to bring them home. He begins by comforting them and telling them about the goodness, faithfulness, and power of God. But, in verse 27, Judah states her position. The people believe that God has thrown them away and is no longer concerned about them. To these disillusioned people Isaiah writes.)

Verse 28

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

- The passage begins with the re-asking of two important, but rhetorical, questions. These questions were first asked in verse 21. After the first asking, Isaiah reminds the people that God made the world and all that is in it. He tells them that the nations rise and fall at God's command. He tells them that God has no equal (verse 25) and that everything is held in the palm of His hands (verse 25-26). Isaiah

uses the questions to tell Israel what they should already know about the nature of God but may have forgotten.

***The Lord is the everlasting God,
The creator of the ends of the earth.***

- “Everlasting God” means that God is enduring. He exists throughout the ages. He does not come and go. He always is.
- God’s role as Creator of the universe is declared in detail in verses 21-22.
- “Of the ends of the earth” refers to its limits. It means that God is the creator of the parts of the earth and the secrets of the earth that we know as well as the creator of those parts and secrets we do not know. Isaiah wants his readers to remember that God made it all!

***He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.***

- Sometimes we tend to remake God in our image. Here, Isaiah wants his readers to understand that God is not faced by the same limits as are we.
- First, he wants them to know that God is not limited by physical fatigue as are humans. God never gets tired.
- Second, he wants them to know that God’s comprehension and knowledge is unlimited and cannot be appreciated by human intelligence.

Verse 29

***He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.***

- Third, he wants his readers to know that God strengthens those who are weary. Israel is weary of their captivity. This is a promise to them, specifically. However, it is also a promise to anyone, anywhere, at any time who is weary, tired, and/or oppressed by the circumstances they face.
- Fourth, God gives increasing power to those who are weak.
- These promises are echoed by the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12).

Verse 30

Even youths grow tired and weary,

and young men stumble and fall,

- Youths and young men are the symbol of strength. They are the ones to whom a people looks for its future. However, even young people have limits to their endurance. They grow tired and, as a result, stumble and fall.
- There is a possible implication of moral failure here. When youths become tired and weary, they often stumble and fall into sin. While that is so, it is not the clear implication of this verse. We are talking about physical fatigue; Israel grew tired and weary of following the ways of the Lord and fell morally.

Verse 31

but those who hope in the Lord,

- The word “hope” is better translated “trust.” It means to look expectantly to the Lord. In older translations the word is “wait.” It is so translated because trusting the Lord implies that, recognizing His attributes as established above, faithful people do not move until He instructs them to do so. Part of trusting God is waiting upon His instruction in each situation we face.

will renew their strength.

- This is the promise of God to the weak and weary, to the tired, and even to those who have stumbled and fallen. If they trust God, He will renew them.
- The word translated “renew” means to change clothes. It means that they will take off their weariness, etc. and put on the strength of the Lord. God will clothe them in His strength. This is the reward of faith.

***They will soar on wings like eagles,
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.”***

- When the exchange described above occurs, there will be a visible change in the people who trust God. They will find a source that supplies them with supernatural ability to do what the Lord asks.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Have You Not Heard?* They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)