

that He is going to deliver them, but here He is not referring exclusively to one specific deliverance. In fact, three aspects of deliverance are involved. God is assuring the people who are in misery in the exile that they are to be delivered from their suffering. He is assuring those who are suffering from the result of the sin which has sent them into exile that He is going to deal with the sin question and to send His great deliverance from it in the person of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross, won deliverance from the guilt and result of sin. This has been won in principle by what He has done, but it is to be worked out completely at His return; hence joy over the return of Christ is also involved, along with joy over deliverance from exile and joy over the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since these three situations are in the mind of the writer it is no wonder that Isaiah 40 is one of the grandest chapters in the entire Bible. Let us run through it and see how the various emotional themes are touched upon.

It begins in verses 1 and 2 with a declaration of comfort. God declares that comfort will come to Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been in suffering; she has received from the Lord's hand the equivalent for all her sins; her warfare is accomplished. Therefore, God commands that His people be comforted.

This, of course, is an exhortation which is appropriate to the time of deliverance from Babylon and which is equally appropriate to the other two deliverances mentioned.

In verse 3 the note of deliverance is further stressed. God's deliverance is right at hand; a way is to be made straight for Him. This can be expressed in relation to the return from exile: the people in Babylon see hills and valleys separating them from the homeland for which they long. God declares that all these difficulties will be straightened out. In Matthew 3:3 this verse is applied to John the Baptist as he prepares the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the rough places are to be made plain in order that God may bring His mighty redemption.

When the children of Israel have gone into exile and the gods of the heathen have had their standards planted on the very site of the temple at Jerusalem, it appears to most of the world as if the God of Israel is no longer of any importance, possibly even that He has ceased to exist. Now,