

Monday, January 5, 2009

TIME . . . today begins a new work year, and we must realize 2008 is complete, it's history. Nothing can change what transpired in '08. We live in its shadow now . . . so how was 2008 impacted by you? Your family, your church, your place of employment, your group of friends . . . what legacy have you left behind in each of those places by the choices, attitudes, decisions, even statements you made in 2008?

Today you are writing your 2009 history! Write carefully!

Isaiah 40 stands as a mountain of Scripture, rising out of a painful time in human history. It contains our theme verse for 2009. Remember I gave you a brief history of its setting. 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 26-32 are the accounts of that era in Israel's past. As you have time, I urge you to read carefully with the message notes from this past weekend alongside. Listen as you read!

A gap of time exists between chapter 39 and 40 of Isaiah, perhaps several years. 36-39 contain miraculous accounts of God's deliverance of Jerusalem and King Hezekiah's miracle healing. (It is inspiring!) In the gap, Manasseh is likely born, yet seems uninterested in the miracles, instead as an angry, ungrateful teenager he becomes king and quickly turns his back on God. Rapidly Jerusalem decays . . . violence, idolatry, crime, wickedness. Watch this friends, it doesn't take long for darkness to overtake and destroy the good. Like a fast spreading cancer, decades of God's blessing of His people were consumed as evil spread unchecked, and God's people floundered. Look carefully at your personal world . . . your family, your work place or school, your neighborhood, your social networks . . . is part of your purpose to be light and hope, helping to make sure darkness does not prevail?

In the despair, Isaiah receives this great message of "comfort" for God's people . . . Isaiah 40! It's a future vision reaching forward more than 600 years! Link Isaiah 40:1-5 with Luke 1:8-25; 57-80 and Malachi 4:5,6.

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Two weeks from today the U.S. will inaugurate a new president. May I urge you to pray for President Bush and those of his leadership team who are working feverishly to "finish well" as they transition leadership of our nation to our new president elect and his team? As you know, we'll be having a prayer/worship evening on Sunday as we invite God's direct involvement in our nation at this time.

Isaiah 40, our theme verse chapter for 2009, was proclaimed by God at a precarious time in Israel's history. King Manasseh's 55 year reign rapidly turned the nation away from God (2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33). His horrible, long tenure was 'bookended' by very significant national revivals during King Hezekiah's time (2 Chron. 29-31) and King Josiah's time (2 Chron. 34). When Isaiah received the messages of chapter 40-66 from God, he was already an old man, perhaps in his 80's. As you read through chapters 40-46 you'll note that over and over God challenges humanity to understand "I am God and there is no other." In some ways 40:5 is the first "salvo" of God's assault on the distortion of idolatry and pagan worship that was sweeping across Jerusalem among His people.

The phrase "the glory of the LORD" is powerful and Jews of Isaiah's day would quickly link it to such events as Exodus 14 and God's glory seen in the Red Sea miracle / Exodus 19 and God's glory on Mt. Sinai as He spoke the 10 Commandments to His people / Exodus 34 and Moses' radiant face after having spent 40 days with God on the mountain / Exodus 40 and the "glory of the LORD" filling the newly constructed Tabernacle / Numbers 14 and God's response to His doubting people as they believed 10 skeptical spies rather than Joshua and Caleb or Numbers 16 and the ground opening to swallow rebellious Korah and Dathan / 2 Chronicles 6 and God's glory overwhelming those present at the dedication of the Temple. So . . . what could "the Glory of the LORD" mean for you and me today?

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

It's College Football Bowl season and NFL playoff time . . . and American's love heroes, don't we? Sometimes it's good for us to get God's perspective on "hero worship". Consider our theme verse chapter, Isaiah 40, specifically 40:6-8. Do you see the contrast between "the glory of the LORD" in vs. 5 and "all men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field"? Dig carefully into these few verses . . . what is God telling us about "glory"?

Remember, Isaiah was writing this at a time when he and his peers had seen one of the most remarkable demonstrations of God's limitless power. (Is. 36, 37) Do you find we frequently need God's help in "re-adjusting" our perspective . . . on almost everything? King Hezekiah had become prideful after experiencing God's great deliverance from Sennacherib's army and even God's miraculous gift of 15 more years of life. King Manasseh was leading with total disregard for God. Then as now, some people were marginalizing God and passing God's majesty off as "out of touch". God calls us to remember that every human life is fragile and finite, "a vapor" James 4:14 calls it, and whatever any of us may accomplish in our lifetime that might be to our "glory" . . . in a short while it's forgotten! But, that which lasts is God, His truth, His power . . . He has the "last word" (vs. 8).

As you look back on 2008, what would be the top 3 most significant moments of the year in your estimation? How important will they be a few years from now? How does God view them from His eternal, Almighty perspective? Life looks different when we view it through God's lenses, doesn't it?

Is. 40:9-11 are great words of encouragement. Have you considered what makes God happy? Do you think He likes to smile, maybe even laugh? Does He delight in YOU? Read these few verses putting your name in them and link them with Psalm 139 and John 10 . . . what do you see?

Thursday, January 8, 2009

How big is your God? What do you point to as the evidences of God's power? I believe Isaiah had great delight in bringing the hope of Isaiah 40 to the people of his day who were living at a time of increasing despair. During most of Manasseh's reign, (697-642BC) life in Jerusalem deteriorated rapidly. The wonderful city which had experienced such great history with God, became a frighteningly dangerous, wicked place to live. On the hills surrounding Jerusalem, Manasseh built many places of worship and sacrifice for the despicable ceremonies honoring the 'gods' of other nations. Remember, God had repeatedly warned His beloved people against such "spiritual prostitution". (Deut. 7) It was the same leadership error Solomon had made, remember? (1 Kings 11) Manasseh even "sacrificed his son in the fire" (2 Kings 21:1-15).

God gave Isaiah a multi-media extravaganza message which called the people of his day (and us too) to serious consideration of the magnitude and majesty of Almighty Jehovah God. "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand . . ." (Is. 40:12) WOW!! Go ahead, think about it . . . the sun heats the oceans (salt water), moisture rises to form clouds, they are blown inland by wind, driven up by the mountains, encounter cooler air and fresh water rain or snow falls from those clouds! Trickles of fresh rain water or melted snow run down the mountain sides forming streams, which join into rivers, then much larger rivers and eventually run back into the ocean again! But along the way, water brings life to every imaginable animal, plant and nourishes our farms to feed humanity! Not only has God designed that remarkable miracle . . . but He holds every drop, gallon, river, lake, ocean, and cloud in His hand! Now . . . how big (and smart) is your God? Celebrate with Psalm 93 and 65. Watch out . . . when our view of God gets small, we begin making really dumb choices with our futile thinking! (Eph. 4:17-19) Be overwhelmed by God's majesty!!!

Friday, January 9, 2009

Where do you go, what do you consider when you need a "mind blowing" encounter with God and His Majesty? Since I was a boy, I love BIG . . . mountains, waves, coral reefs, waterfalls, huge trees, hurricanes, etc. In Haiti I saw much of that. In North Dakota, the winter blizzards or summer thunderstorms rumbling across the prairie; here in Wisconsin, the huge oak trees. What is it for you?

If yesterday Isaiah 40:12a was not enough to impress you, try the second half of that same verse, and go someplace where you can see the vastness of the sky, day or night. WOW! One light year is 5.88 TRILLION miles, and Hubble can see galaxies thousands, maybe millions of light years from here!!! ". . . or with the breadth of His hand marked off the heavens". How big is your God??

The first part of our theme verse for 2009 is Isaiah 40:28 "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth." Isaiah 40:12-14 are powerful statements which challenge the most intelligent, the most powerful, most influential, people among us . . . and all of us, to do the following:

- Look at yourself . . . are you impressed? How dependant upon God are you for this very moment . . . for tomorrow or next week? Or, are you quite self-sufficient? An accurate perspective?
- Look at the world around you . . . easy to see the decay, the evil, the wrong, the pain . . . but can you see the fingerprint of God? Where is His majesty most powerfully seen amidst the turmoil?
- Look at your heart . . . what do you value, treasure most? Why? How fragile or secure is it?
- Finally, when is the last time you had a very significant encounter with GOD . . . you were overwhelmed with His majesty, you heard Him speak to you, you found great delight in Him??

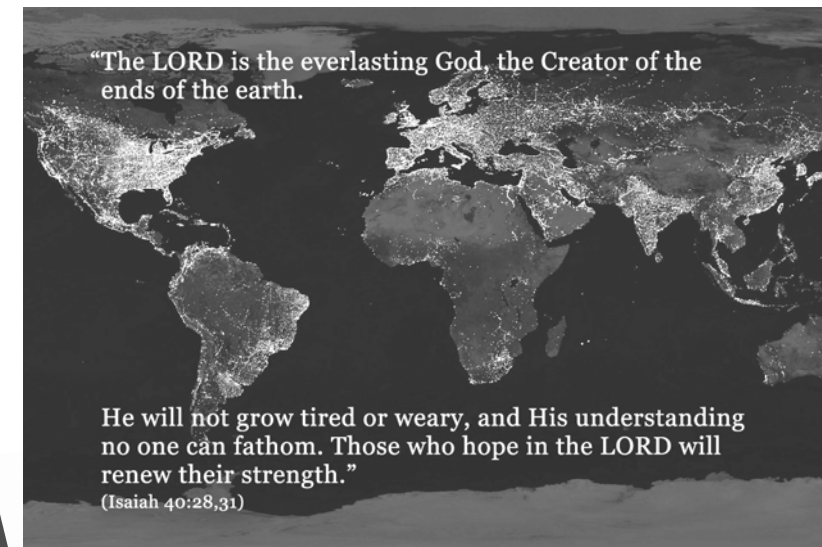
Invite the Holy Spirit to draw you to Himself in Isaiah 40!



Pastor Doug Anderson

January 5 - 9, 2009

Is Your God Big Enough?



2009 Calvary Theme Verses - Part 1



A Disciplemaking Tool
DIGGING
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