

Isaiah 40

Isaiah 40:2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem... that her warfare is accomplished

The Millennium will bring peace to a city that has known no peace. Ever since Israel was established as a state, there has been war and rumors of war for Jerusalem. A quick review of Israeli conflict underscores what a remarkable change it will be for the Jews to hear the words of Isaiah, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

"This page shows conflicts between the Arab nations (as a group), and Israel. As a rule, a legal state of war has existed between Israel and her Arab enemies since the beginning of the first war in 1948. Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, and Jordan made peace in 1994. The Palestine Authority, headed by Yassir Arafat and his Al-Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization negotiated a semi-peace, which, from mid-2000 on, has been destroyed through the "Al-Aqsa" Intifada violence. Other Palestinian groups, most notably Hamas, have been at war with Israel continuously. Although Israel and most Arab nations are technically in a continuous state of war, unless otherwise noted, specific outbreaks of fighting are considered to be separate wars...

Israeli War of Independence/ "al-Nakba" (The Disaster) (1948-1949)--Upon independence, Israel was invaded by the armies of six Arab nations: Egypt, Syria, Transjordan (later Jordan), Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In addition, local Arab Palestinian forces also fought the Jewish Israelis.

Qibya Raid (October, 1951)--*Israeli troops, led by Major Ariel Sharon (Israeli Prime Minister 2001-2006) destroyed dozens of buildings in the West Bank (Jordan) town of Qibya. Civilian deaths reached 69.*

Egyptian Seizure of the Israeli ship Bat Galim (Summer, 1954)--*Egypt seized the Israeli ship Bat Galim as it attempted to enter the Suez Canal. According to various international agreements, the Suez Canal is supposed to be accessible to ships of all nations. This provoked worsening tensions between Israel and Egypt.*

Gaza Raid (Feb. 28, 1955)--*Israeli forces conducted a raid, a response to repeated guerrilla attacks and the seizure of an Israeli ship by Egypt, resulted in the deaths of 51 Egyptian soldiers and 8 Israeli troops. This raid was the largest of its kind against Arab forces since the end of the First Arab-Israeli War in 1949.*

The Sinai War (1956) [Also known as the Suez War]--The invasion and temporary conquest of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula by Israel, while France and Great Britain seized the Suez Canal.

Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (1960-Present)...

First al-Fatah (PLO) Raid (Dec. 31, 1964)--Yassir Arafat's al-Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization conducted its first raid into Israel from Lebanon.

Israeli-Syrian Border and Air Battle (Nov. 13, 1964)...

West Bank Raids (May 1965)-After Palestinian guerrilla raids resulting in the deaths of 6 Israelis, the Israeli military conducted raids on the West Bank towns of Qalqilya, Shuna and Jenin.

1966-Israel reported 93 incidents along its borders.

West Bank Raid (April 30 1966)-Israeli forces destroyed over two dozen houses in the West Bank town of Rafat, killing 11 civilians. This attack was in response to Palestinian raids on Israel. Most of these attacks on Israel

West Bank Raids (1966)-Israeli forces raided the Hebron area of the West Bank. These raids resulted in 8 civilian deaths and firefights with the Jordanian Army.

Israeli-Syrian Border Battles (Summer, 1966)-Continued artillery and tank duels along the Golan Heights front led to :

Israeli-Syrian Air Battle (July 7, 1966)-Responding to the continued fighting along the border, Israeli planes attacked Syrian forces, resulting in the loss of one Syrian MiG fighter plane.

Israeli-Syrian Air/Sea Battle (Aug. 15, 1966)-After an Israeli patrol boat ran aground on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (according to the 1949 cease-fire agreement, Israeli forces were not supposed to approach within 250 meters of the eastern shore, which was a Demilitarized Zone), Syrian planes attacked it. Israel responded, shooting down two MiG planes.

Samu Raid (West Bank) (November 13, 1966)...

The Six-Day War (1967)--In a rapid pre-emptive attack, Israel crushed the military forces of Egypt, Jordan and Syria and seized large amounts of land from each. Iraq also participated in the fighting on the Arab side.

The War of Attrition (1968-1970)--The War of Attrition was a limited border war fought between Egypt and Israel in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. It was initiated by Egypt as a way to recapture the Sinai Peninsula after losing it to Israel in 1967. A cease-fire in 1970 ended the fighting, but left the borders unchanged.

The Yom Kippur (Ramadan) War (1973)--In a surprise attack launched on the Jewish Yom Kippur holiday (the dates also fell on the Muslim Ramadan holiday), Egypt and Syria attacked Israel. Despite aid from Iraq, the Arab forces failed to defeat Israel.

Israeli Invasion of Lebanon (1978)--Operation Litani was the official name of Israel's 1978 invasion of Lebanon up to the Litani river. The invasion was a military success, as the Israeli military expelled the PLO from Southern Lebanon, where they had created a de facto state within a state. An international outcry over the invasion forced a partial Israeli retreat and the creation of a United Nations patrolled buffer zone between the Arab guerrillas and the Israeli military...

The Osirak Raid (1981)--An Israeli air attack on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor.

The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon (1982-1984)--In response to repeated guerrilla attacks by the PLO, which were launched from South Lebanon, Israel invaded with the intent of destroying Arafat's forces. Syria, which maintained a large army in Lebanon, fought Israel and suffered an embarrassing defeat...

The Israeli Occupation of South Lebanon (1984-2000)--As they withdrew from most of Lebanon seized in the 1982 invasion, Israel held onto a large part of Southern Lebanon with the aid of the "South Lebanon Army (SLA)," a militia set up and supported

by Israel. This occupation was opposed by the PLO and other Palestinian groups as an extension of their long-running conflict with Israel. Also, other militia armies (mostly Lebanese Muslim groups), such as Hezbollah (supported by Iran and Syria), stepped up attacks on the Israeli-occupied region as well as on settlements and military targets in northern Israel. In 2000, Israel withdrew from Lebanon and the SLA disbanded...

The First Intifada (1987-1993)--Urban uprising against Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza. The Oslo Peace Accords end the Intifada and lead to the formation of the Palestinian Authority with PLO Chief Yasser Arafat as the official leader of the Palestinians.

The Second Persian Gulf War (1991)--While Israel took no offensive action in this war, Iraq did launch Scud missiles which struck Israel and almost caused Israel's intervention in the Gulf War.

The "Al-Aqsa" Intifada--Urban guerrilla/commando war waged between Israel and various Palestinian groups, including Hamas. Between September, 2000 and, September, 2007: 4,453 Palestinians and 1,114 Israelis have been killed due to the escalating violence. (Source on

casualties: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/text/2003911771_intifada29.html)

Israeli Air Strike on Syria (October, 2003)-- Israeli warplanes hit the Syrian village of Ain al-Saheb, near Damascus.

The Israeli-Hezbollah War (also known in Israel as "The Second Lebanon War) (2006)--In response to repeated guerrilla attacks by the the Shiite Lebanese militia Hezbollah, Israel invaded southern Lebanon, set up a naval blockade, and launched a powerful bombing campaign in order to win the release of two captured Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli-Lebanon Conflict (1978-Present).

Israeli Air Strike on Syria (Sept. 6, 2007)--Israeli warplanes overflew northern Syria, dropping ordnance on a (publicly) unknown target. According to both the New York Times and ABC News, the target was a nuclear facility being built with North Korean aid and assistance. See War and Conflict Journal's article on this attack.

The Gaza War (2008)--War between the Palestinian Hamas rulers of the Gaza Strip and Israel. Began in December, 2008.

Threat of an Israeli-Iran War--Scenarios for a possible Israeli attack on Iran, or an Iranian attack on Israel. Emphasis on the nuclear threat from Iran.

(http://www.historyguy.com/arab_israeli_wars.html)

Isaiah 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord

Matthew begins his 3rd chapter:

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,
And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Then when out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the regions round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matt. 3:1-6)

"John the Baptist is one of the great figures in sacred literature. Though his mortal ministry was brief and was limited to a small portion of the Holy Land, he is widely acclaimed in scripture and is spoken of in all four standard works. He was, in effect, the last prophet of the Old Testament, the first prophet of the New Testament, and a central participant in the dispensation of the fulness of times...

"John's mission was important enough that it was made known to prophets and seers hundreds of years beforehand. (See Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1; 1 Ne. 10:7-10; 1 Ne. 11:27; 2 Ne. 31:4, 8.) Although these prophecies do not mention him by name, there can be no mistaking that John's mission is the topic. His forthcoming birth was announced by the angel Gabriel and was attended by miraculous circumstances. (See Luke 1.) The Savior himself emphatically and singularly praised John as a "burning and a shining light" (John 5:35); a prophet without peer (see Matt. 11:7-15); and an example of righteousness whose testimony would condemn in the Day of Judgment all who refused to obey what he taught (see JST Matt. 21:32-34; JST John 5:34-36).

"The Prophet Joseph Smith said that John the Baptist 'had his authority from God, and the oracles of God were with him, and the kingdom of God for a season seemed to rest with John alone. ... [He] was a priest after his father, and held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, and ... was a legal administrator ... ; for no man could have better authority to administer than John; and our Savior submitted to that authority Himself, by being baptized by John.' (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, pp. 272-73)

"At the baptism of Jesus, John saw the 'Spirit descending from heaven like a dove' as a sign that Jesus was the Messiah. (John 1:32.) He also heard the voice of the Father proclaim Jesus as his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. (See JST Matt. 3:45-46; D&C 93:15-16.) This personal experience with the three members of the Godhead made John one of the most able of witnesses." (Robert J. Matthews, " 'There Is Not a Greater Prophet': The Ministry of John the Baptist," *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, 14)

Isaiah 40:5,9 the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together... say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

We need to really examine the scriptures and our preconceived notions of how things will transpire. The scriptures say that "all flesh shall see it together" meaning that the Second Coming will be a global event, witnessed by all. Although only a few witnessed the Lord's ascension, the entire world will witness his descent! (Acts 1:9-11)

There shall appear a great sign in heaven, and all people shall see it together...

the curtain of heaven [shall] be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled. (D&C 88:93-95)

Then the Jews will be able to behold their God. How different is this doctrine from the false Christs who come in secret?

Jesus taught, "if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not...if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not" (Matt 24:23, 25). "And again, verily I say unto you, that the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on the earth. Wherefore, be not deceived" (DC 49:22-23). The question remains, "how will he come?" The answer is found in Acts 1:11. He will return from the heavens in the same manner he ascended, attended by angels, power, and glory. He will be plainly visible, for "all flesh shall see me together" (DC 101:23). "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt 24:27).

Isaiah 40:8 the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever

"In the psalms and the writings of the prophet Isaiah, we see grass used as a symbol—a symbol that persists through the end of both Testaments: (quotes Ps. 103:15-16 and Isa. 40:6-8)

"Grass represented the transitoriness of man. With the heavy rains of wintertime, grass flourishes and spreads its velvety green carpet even over the barren wilderness, but with a blast of the transitional *khamsin* (the desert wind), it is gone. The blades are vivacious and vigorous one week—gone the next. So is the life of man. "(D. Kelly Ogden, "A Sampler of Biblical Plants," *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 36)

Gordon B. Hinckley

It has been most interesting on occasion to contemplate the learning of my school days. So much learned then has been so very good, has helped me over the years. Habits and disciplines and much else that has blessed my life have come from those experiences.

Yet at times I have been compelled to reevaluate the learning of those days. Some matters, somewhat dogmatically set forth, have become almost fiction. In medicine, physics, and chemistry, some of the criteria have changed. In political science and law, attitudes have changed. In literature and art there has been a shift in standards. Across that educational landscape there have been change and modification—everywhere except in the eternal truths of God.

Many centuries ago, one of the great prophets of what we call the Old Testament, the volume of scripture we will study this year, gave counsel that is inspiringly applicable to

the scene I have described: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isa. 40:8.) ("Pillars of Truth," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 2)

Isaiah 40:10-11 his arm shall rule for him... he shall gather the lambs with his arm

The Savior's positioning on the cross of Golgotha was powerfully symbolic. His arms were outstretched. Why? Because outstretched arms are an invitation, "my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me... for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works." (3 Ne. 27:14-15) Do we recognize the invitation the Lord has given us?

At the Second Coming, it will be time for judgment to be administered. The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord will be great for the righteous and terrible for the wicked. For the wicked, his arm of justice is "stretched out still;" for the righteous, his arm of mercy is "stretched out still" (Isa. 5:25). This dualism is seen in Isaiah's prophecies as well.

First we see his arm of justice, a "strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him" (v. 10) as the wicked suffer their terrible punishments. At the same time, we see his arm of mercy gathering his faithful as a hen gathereth her chickens or as a shepherd feeds his flocks, "he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them (with his arm of mercy) in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (v. 11). Would we rather the Great and Terrible Day be great or terrible? It is our choice. The symbolism continues in the Savior's red apparel. To the righteous, the red symbolizes the blood spilt in Gethsemane and Golgotha; to the wicked it symbolizes the blood of the wicked destroyed at the end of the world, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me; And I have trampled them in my fury, and I did tread upon them in mine anger, and their blood have I sprinkled upon my garments, and stained all my raiment; for this was the day of vengeance which was in my heart." (D&C 133:50-51)

Isaiah 40:15-17 the nations are as a drop of a bucket... All nations before him are as nothing

John Taylor

God has a certain object to accomplish, and he will do it in his own way and in his own time. He holds the nations as dust in the balances; he will manipulate them and their affairs as he pleases, and they cannot help themselves; he will also manipulate the affairs of the Latter-day Saints, having his watchcare over them, as he ever has had over all his people. If we are found to be willing and obedient, and on the Lord's side for right, for truth, and integrity, for virtue and purity and holiness, adhering to the principles of truth and the laws of life, then God will be with us, and he will sustain all those who adhere to these principles; for be it remembered that these are the principles we profess to believe in, and those who are not governed by them he will move out of the way; they will drop down on the right hand and on the left as many have done before, and the

pure and virtuous, the honorable and upright, will go forth from conquering to conquer until they shall accomplish all that God designs them to do on this earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, 18:281-282)

Isaiah 40:28 Hast thou not known? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator... there is no searching of his understanding

Joseph Fielding Smith

Much of the world today does not have this knowledge of God, and even in latter-day Israel there are those who have not perfected their understanding of that glorious being who is our Eternal Father. To those without this knowledge we might well say: "Why dost thou limit the glory of God? Or why should ye suppose that he is less than he is? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is infinite and eternal; that he has all power, all might, and all dominion; that he knows all things, and that all things are present before his face?"

In section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which directed the Prophet Joseph Smith to organize the Church again in this dispensation, we have a revealed summary of some of the basic doctrines of salvation. As to Deity the revelation says: "... there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them." (D&C 20:17.)

And in section 93 we are taught that Christ received not of the fullness of the Father while in mortality, but went from grace to grace until, after the resurrection, he received all power both in heaven and on earth. Then this revelation says that Christ, like his Father before him, "... received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth." (D&C 93:26.) The revelation also announced the doctrine that all men who keep the commandments shall receive truth and light until they are glorified in truth and know all things.

God is our Father; he is the being in whose image man is created. He has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's (D&C 130:22), and he is the literal and personal father of the spirits of all men. He is omnipotent and omniscient; he has all power and all wisdom; and his perfections consist in the possession of all knowledge, all faith or power, all justice, all judgment, all mercy, all truth, and the fullness of all godly attributes. This the Prophet Joseph Smith taught in the Lectures on Faith. The Prophet also taught that if we are to have that perfect faith by which we can lay hold upon eternal life, we must believe in God as the possessor of the fullness of all these characteristics and attributes. I say also that he is an infinite and eternal being, and as an unchangeable being, he possesses these perfected powers and attributes from everlasting to everlasting, which means from eternity to eternity.

I am grateful that the knowledge of God and his laws has been restored in our day and that we who are members of the Church know he is a personal being and not, as some sectarians have said, "a congeries of laws floating like a fog in the universe." I am

grateful that we know he is our Father in heaven, the Father of our spirits, and that he ordained the laws whereby we can advance and progress until we become like him. And I am grateful that we know he is an infinite and eternal being who knows all things and has all power and whose progression consists not in gaining more knowledge or power, not in further perfecting his godly attributes, but in the increase and multiplying of his kingdoms. ("The Most Important Knowledge," *Ensign*, May 1971, 3)

Isaiah 40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and... he increaseth strength

Ezra Taft Benson

In Moroni's great sermon on faith, the principle is even more clearly taught. He was told by the Lord, "If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men." It matters not what is our lack or our weakness or our insufficiency. His gifts and powers are sufficient to overcome them all.

Moroni continues with the words of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, *then will I make weak things become strong unto them.*" (Ether 12:27; italics added.)

What a promise from the Lord! The very source of our troubles can be changed, molded, and formed into a strength and a source of power. This promise is repeated in one form or another in many other scriptures. Isaiah said, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." (Isa. 40:29.) Paul was told by the Lord, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9.) In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "He that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom." (D&C 52:17; see also 1 Ne. 17:3; 2 Ne. 3:13; D&C 1:28; 133:58-59.)

Brothers and sisters, we must take our sins to the Lord in humble and sorrowful repentance. We must plead with Him for power to overcome them. The promises are sure. He will come to our aid. We will find the power to change our lives. ("A Mighty Change of Heart," *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 4-5)

Isaiah 40:31 they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength

James E. Faust

In the message of the Redeemer, there is an offer of hope to all, including those who feel poor in spirit and downtrodden, unloved, and unlovely. It is a transcending hope of a new spiritual birth. There is a great freedom for those who are born anew of the Spirit. They can be like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, and no man knoweth "whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" (John 3:8). Thus being twice born, they can be free from the restricting shackles of self-pity, doubt, discouragement, and loneliness, and be lifted up in lofty, noble pursuits. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall

walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). ("Married or Single: Look beyond Yourself," *Ensign*, Mar. 1980, 36)

Sheri L. Dew

The Lord has promised to heal our broken hearts and "to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18); to give power to the faint, to heal the wounded soul, and to turn our weakness into strength (see Isa. 40:29; Jacob 2:8; Ether 12:27); to take upon Him our pains and sicknesses, to blot out our transgressions if we repent, and loose the bands of death (see Alma 7:11-13). He promised that if we will build our lives upon His rock, the devil will have no power over us (see Hel. 5:12). And He has vowed that He will never leave us or forsake us (see Heb. 13:5). There is simply no mortal equivalent. Not in terms of commitment, power, or love. He is our only chance. ("Our Only Chance," *Ensign*, May 1999, 67)