

to one and the same author. It is also claimed to be inconceivable that such a magnificent production as Isa. 40-56 could have been published by an author otherwise unknown, in the time of the exile, and have been incorporated with the works of so distinguished a prophet as Isaiah. Very much can be said on both sides of this question, but there is no need of committing these notes to either side of the discussion. The same great lessons appear, and the same Holy One of Israel speaks in these oracles, whether they were written in the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah, or of Cyrus, King of Persia. The notion that these chapters are robbed of their true prophetic character if we suppose them written after Cyrus had appeared as a mighty conqueror is thoroughly refuted by observing that the great prophecies of Isa. 7-11 were obviously written after the Assyrian had become a well-known power among the nations, threatening the overthrow of both Syria and Israel (2 Kings 16, 5-9; comp. Isa. 8, 4). And yet those prophecies are among the grandest on record. We must study to take such oracles for what they are in themselves, and we will find that, whatever their historical stand-point and personal authorship, they contain inestimable consolation and comfort for God's people in all time.

Verse 1. Comfort ye. The verb here is in the Hebrew intensive form, and its repetition in this form marks it as very emphatic, implying that the case is urgent and God's **people** are in a condition in which they need such comforting as is here given. **Saith your God.** Here the verb is in the imperfect tense, which in Hebrew implies unfinished action. So the thought is, "God continues saying;" he speaks with emphasis and intensity, and keeps on saying his words of consolation.

2. Speak ye comfortably. Literally, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem." A beautiful and touching idiom, suggesting especially the most tender appeal of a lover or a husband. Comp. Gen. 34, 3; Judg. 19, 3. **Her warfare.** Here evidently in the sense of the woes, privations, and various hardships of a military campaign. Most interpreters, whatever their views of the date and authorship of this prophecy, understand these sufferings, as Delitzsch, "of the exile, that homeless bivouac, so to speak, of a people transported to foreign soil, enslaved, unsettled, and unsafe." **Accomplished.** Hebrew, "filled up," completed. **Pardoned.** The word thus translated has in all its forms and derivatives the idea of "delight," a "satisfactory" act or experience. Jerusalem is here assured that her **iniquity** has been satisfactorily provided for, and the fact should be a joy at once to her and her God. The word **double** is here to be understood not of specific measure, but rather in the sense of superabundance.

3. Voice of him that crieth. The Hebrew has but two words, "voice crying," and is equivalent to "hark! one is calling!" **In the wilderness.** These words should be connected with **prepare**, not with **crieth**. The parallelisms are thus more clearly correspondent, and we have "prepare in the wilderness" enhanced in the next line by **make straight in the desert**. There is an allusion to God's marching before Israel in the Sinaitic deserts at the time of their redemption from the Egyptian bondage. The way from Babylon and Jerusalem was also through a desert land.

4. Crooked. Rather, "rugged," like steep passes through mountains. **Straight.** That is, "a level plain." The rugged and difficult pass is, like the hill and mountain, to be made like the rest of the flat desert pathway. **Rough places.** Like rocky heights and ridges. **Plain.** Or, "valley;" an open and easy grade cleft through the rocky ledge.

6. Voice said, Cry. Another voice; not identical with that of verse 3. Many are the voices which serve in the revelations of God.

7. Spirit of the Lord bloweth. Rather, "the wind of Jehovah." The destructive wind that blights and blasts the flower is thought of as Jehovah's breath.

9. Zion, that bringest good tidings. This translation is preferable to that of the margin, which the revisers have introduced into the text of the new version. It is Zion and Jerusalem that are here conceived as bearers of glad tidings, not some one else bearing tidings to Jerusalem. Hence Delitzsch, following the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (not the Septuagint), happily translates: "O Evangelist Zion!" The prophet in his rapture sees Jerusalem suddenly restored; her God has come to her, and she is called upon to announce the glad word to her daughters, **the cities of Judah**.

10. With strong hand. Revised Version, "as a mighty one." The phrase is somewhat obscure as to its meaning, but the Revised Version probably gives the real thought.

The Lesson Council.

Question 3. How was this prophecy fulfilled in the Old Testament history, and how in the New Testament?

By the rivers of Babylon these words of strong assurance were a blessed comfort to weary captives. In the gracious deliverance wrought by God's servant, Cyrus, and the return to Palestine under Zerubbabel, a glorious promise was fulfilled before the eyes of all nations. But the prophetic vision swept on to a grander event. The restoration of Judah was to be followed by the advent of Messiah. One night there was heard over Bethlehem a song rich with the melody of heaven.