

Bible Study

Christian Beliefs

Isaiah 40 v. 9 – 31



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Introduction

In our Bible Studies we will be using a booklet from 'A Life Builder Bible Study' series. Our overall theme for these studies is: CHRISTIAN BELIEFS. The studies were originally written by Stephen Eyre, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for both home study and Church study.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us.

If you are unable to be with us in church and have decided that you will be doing the studies from home, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.

We do hope that you enjoy the studies that have been produced!

Context

Knowing what we believe is foundational to a healthy relationship with God and others. These studies on Christian Beliefs explore what Christians need to understand about some vital topics:

God, Christ, The Holy Spirit, God's Word, human nature, salvation, the church and the 'last things'.

Having a good grasp of these beliefs will equip us to make sense of the world we live in, strengthen our assurance of our own identity in Christ and direct us to a life of integrity.

Some Thoughts To Help You While You Study

The purpose of the study is:

To find strength and comfort in the knowledge of God's sovereign power.

No definition is adequate to describe God. Scripture and experience show that God is glorious, beautiful, exciting and inspires awe in people. The ringing proclamation is that God is **here** and God **reigns**. We must believe these things in our hearts if we are to trust him. It is also important to note that God is proclaimed both as **Judge** and **Saviour**. He brings judgment to the enemies of his people and gather his people like a shepherd.

In this passage the verses continue the reflection on the immensity of God. Isaiah also proclaims the **transcendence** of God (**v. 17**). God is not only bigger than all things, but he is also above all things. In addition, these verses also show the **omnipotence** of God (**v. 23**). He is more powerful than anything or anyone else.

There is no way that we can adequately conceive of God. There is a false notion that comes with idolatry. People believe that if they make an image and worship it, they will gain personal power and favour. One of humanity's fundamental drives is for power. We want to be in control. We believe that we can control what we can understand. If we can reduce God to an idol, then we can control him.

The belief that God is an uninvolved creator is called Deism. It became a popular form of religion during the Enlightenment. Although the term Deism has fallen into disuse, its teachings have become part of the way many people think about God.

Here are a few heresies or extremes to avoid when seeking to

understand the attributes of God:

PANTHEISM – God is in everything and synonymous with all created things.

UNHOLINESS – since God is all – powerful and sovereign, he is the cause of sin.

IMPERSONALITY – God is only energy and power, not a person.

DUALISM – God and Satan are two equal but opposing forces.

Thoughts about God:

God is holy (Exodus 3 v. 5 – 6; 19 v. 23); God is good (Luke 18 v. 19; Romans 8 v. 28); God is omnipresent (Psalm 139 v. 7 – 10); God is omniscient (1 John 3 v. 20; Matthew 6 v. 8); God is omnipotent (Matthew 19 v. 26; Psalm 115 v. 3); God is immutable – unchanging in his character (Malachi 3 v. 6; James 1 v. 17); God is perfect (Matthew 5 v. 48); God is love (John 3 v. 16; Romans 5 v. 8; 1 John 4 v. 10 – 11); God is forgiving and compassionate (Psalm 103 v. 3 – 6; Exodus 3 v. 7 – 8)

Study 2 – Knowing God

The writer of the studies says: ‘During my years as staff member with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, I had the privilege of encountering many students who were not yet Christians. When talking to them about God, I frequently heard a common refrain: ‘My God is not like that’.

Different religions are all around us – secularism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam – and every religion has its own set of beliefs about God. As Christians we believe in the God of Abraham, The God and Father of Jesus Christ. But who is he, and what is he like?

PERSONAL REFLECTION: What are some common opinions that you run into about what God is like?

In this chapter, Isaiah writes as though Judah’s captivity in Babylon judgment is almost over. His comforting words present a dramatic portrait of God.

Read Isaiah 40 v. 9 – 31

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

Some people have the idea that thinking about the character of God is abstract and not very practical. What might Isaiah say to that? (Draw from his proclamation of the good tidings of God in **verses 9 – 11**).

What do Isaiah’s questions encourage us to ponder about God? (**Isaiah 40 v. 12 – 14**).

Focus for a moment on **Isaiah 40 v. 15 – 24**. What encouraging insights about God does Isaiah's contrasting of God with the nations surrounding Israel lead to?

Isaiah prophesied in order to bring comfort to Israel as they were facing threats from other countries. What comfort do you receive from knowing God has power over the nations?

Isaiah exposes the foolishness of idolatry (**Isaiah 40 v. 18 – 24**) in his day by comparing it to the power of the Creator God. What idols in our culture need to be exposed as foolish by the power of the Creator God?

Why is it that worshipping idols in any age and culture seems preferable to worshipping the living God?

Some people today view God as an uninvolved Creator who stands at a distance to watch his world. What does **Isaiah 40 v. 26** reveal about God's involvement?

Classical theology describes characteristics of God as eternal – God's existence which transcends time, infinite – unlimited by time or by space, omnipresent – present everywhere at all times and omniscient – knowing everything that is happening everywhere. How many of these characteristics can you discover in **Isaiah 40 v. 27, 28**?

What does it personally and practically mean to you that God's knowledge is not limited by anything?

Those who know God look to him for help. Describe a time when the Lord renewed your strength or enabled you to soar on wings like an eagle.

Something to Do Now

Ask God to enable you to find strength for the challenges you face in his wonderful character and his personal commitment to you.

Something to Do Later

One famous description of God contained in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is this:

'God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, justice and love'.

Choose a characteristic of God mentioned in this definition for each day of the upcoming week. Reflectively ponder that characteristic throughout the day; consider why it's good that God is like that. Consider as well, what you (and the world) would be missing if he weren't.

Now use the opportunity to Pray