

SERMON: INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Isaiah 40:3-4

(3) The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough place plain:

Introduction

This well-known Scripture is a prophecy about the Messiah and His forerunner, John the Baptist. In order to exegete the full meaning of this Scripture several grammatical facts must be considered. First, the person in verse three is the grammatical second person. Prophetically, John, will tell the people of his era to prepare their hearts to accept Christ. Verse four shifts to the grammatical third person, and tells what Christ will do when He arrives in the flesh on earth. Both verses use the metaphor of repairing and improving a highway system for ease of travel. So verse three tells what we should do to accept Christ. Verse four tells what Christ will do for us when we accept Him as Lord and Savior. These two verses have implication about the return of the exiles and the final consolation at the End Times. In this sermon we will only concentrate on how these prophecies apply to us today in our personal lives. (I found out the hard way, you can easily put too much in a single sermon and make a mess.)

In preparation for this sermon, I re-read the original Hebrew to get a deeper understanding of the text. This is how I would translate these two verses: A future voice will scream in the wilderness. This voice will say, "Prepare a highway for the coming of the Savior. Choose a highway in the desert; make it straight. It should not have any curves or hills. If you make a highway for the Savior, He will reciprocate by improving your existing highways. He will fill every valley, carve down every mountain and hill, remove all of the curves, and get rid of all of the pot holes." I took a few liberties and made some paraphrases. But if Isaiah were speaking today, in English, I think my translation would be real close to what he would say.

Only in the New Testament do we find out the identity of this voice; he is John the Baptist. All four gospels verify this. The Bible is self-explanatory. This is one of the many reasons I love the Bible.

This expression used here of a highway, of course, is a figurative one. It alluded to a custom well known in ancient times. When an Eastern king desired to pay a visit to a distant part of his empire, he sent ambassadors before him to announce his coming and to see that the roadways over which he was to pass were put in order. All obstacles had to be removed and rough places made smooth. The roads had to be level; a bumpy ride would be unacceptable, especially if the king was prone to motion sickness.

What is unique about this passage is that if the roadway for the king was adequately prepared, the king would, in return, improve the quality of life of the community by improving all of the roads and highways in the local area. This was unheard of. Most kings were known for their selfishness and because they had absolute power would seize anything they wanted and call it their own. This is what sets our King, YAHWEH, apart. He cares about all of us. His is righteous, not ruthless.

So figuratively, God will reciprocate by improving our spiritual infrastructure. This principle has been expressed for years in our oral tradition by the expression, "If you make one step toward God, He will make two steps toward you." Whenever a deep obstructing valley is encountered, it will be raised so that it will become even ground and will no longer be an obstacle. Whenever the way should encounter a mountain or even a hill, these will be brought low in that they will be leveled off and become even, so that they too will no longer constitute obstacles to travel. The uneven, jagged, rocky places will be smoothed out so that travel over them will be possible. Tortuous roads, with dangerous curves and gorges, will be straightened so that they will advance in straight lines and connecting right angles. To go even further, He reciprocates our faith in Him with the saving power of His precious blood.

How do we prepare the way for Jesus to enter into our lives? John the Baptist made it crystal clear in Matthew 3:8. "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." As we continue to celebrate the birth of our Savior, let's see how this partially fulfilled prophecy of His arrival and His ministry applies to us today.

Exposition

1. Every Valley Shall Be Filled (Exalted.)

(Christ Meets The Lowly First.)
 (He Lifts Them Up.)
 (We All Have Had Our Valleys.)
 (The Woman At The Well Was In A Valley.)
 (Blind Bartimaeus Was In A Valley.)

2. Every Mountain and Hill Shall Be Brought Low.

(The Proud Must Be Humbled To Be Helped.)
 (The Problem With Pride Began With Satan-Isaiah 14:12-15.)
 (We All Have Our Mountains and Hills Of Pride And Arrogance.)
 (Ask Christ To Bring Them Low.)
 (God Has Some Blessed Bulldozers.)

3. The Crooked Places Shall Be Made Straight.

(Every Curve Shall Be Made Straight.)
 (Curves Are Dangerous.)
 (How Devious Are The Sinful Minds Of Humans.)

(Christ Can Reform Our Crooked, Mean Ways.)

4. Every Rough Place Shall Be Made Smooth (Plain.)

(Cursing Peter Became The Spokesman For The Church.)

(The Church Fighter, Paul, Wrote 14 Books Of The New Testament.)

(Those Who Trust Christ Are Made New-2nd Corinthians 5:17.)

Closing Thoughts

The highway Christ has prepared for us is much better than the one we have prepared for Him. Think about it. This is a prepared highway, to get prepared people, to a prepared place. We call this prepared place Heaven. If this thought doesn't make you shout, I don't know what will. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Matthew 3:1-3

Mark 1:1-3

Luke 3:3—5

John 1:22-23

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