

3. Historical Situation of Isaiah 40-56.

Isaiah 40 does not begin with the statement as to when the material was written or as to the time with which it deals, or its general purpose. All these matters must be gained from an examination of its contents. When it is examined however, these matters become very clear.

Since the New Testament refers to the entire book of Isaiah as having come from him as author, and since there are many very close literary similarities between this section and other sections of the book, we do not question that the section was actually written by Isaiah. However, we find in it a very *different* purpose from that in chapters 1-35. In most of the material in those chapters he was speaking to the nation as a whole, pointing out that exile was sure to come, and rebuking --if they continue in their wicked ways,--and rebuking them for their sin. Occasionally he looked forward far beyond the exile to wonderful blessings that God would eventually give.

In this section we find that there is assumed throughout that the end of a long period of misery has come. This is quite clear in the very beginning of chapter 40. Verse 2 reads "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 is a very different from that which has been struck in most of the book up to this point. It is quite evident that Isaiah is jumping forward in imagination to a time near the end of the exile, and is encouraging the godly among the people who know that exile is absolutely certain by assuring them that it is to have an end. He imagines the situation at the end of the exile and speaks directly to the heart of the godly people of Judah who tend to give way to discouragement. This serves two purposes. It serves first the great purpose of encouraging these godly people in the land of Judah to maintain their faith in God and their study of the Word and