

Comfort Ye My People, and Prepare the Way of the Lord

The marked change in Isaiah's writing style beginning with chapter 40 has caused scholars over the ages to question whether it, and succeeding chapters, were written by a different author. The *Old Testament Student Manual* states that "Isaiah merely shifted from a mix of prose and poetry to a more completely poetic style. These later chapters use his typical words and expressions. Further, his authorship is attested by modern revelation" (Vol. II, 179). The manual further states that "Hebrew poetry differs from poetry written in English, primarily because it emphasizes parallelism in thought, rather than rhyme and meter. Its beauty and sense are wonderful and pleasing to both the mind and the ear" (Ibid).

Chapter 40 can be divided into three parts:

- Instructions given to "prepare the way of the Lord," who will come with power and glory at His second coming.
- The Lord's challenge: "To whom will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isaiah 40:18) Man-made idols pale when compared to the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth.
- The reassurance that the Shepherd of Israel is aware of each of His lambs. He shall gather them, sustain them, and restore them.

Historical Context:

722 BC	Assyria Conquered Samaria/Israel/Ten Tribes
715 BC	Hezekiah – a Righteous King for Judah/Jerusalem
701 BC	Assyrian Sennacherib Conquered Philistia and Most of Judah, Threatens Jerusalem – The Lord Fights for Judah
609 BC	Babylon Conquered Assyria
587 BC	Babylon Conquered Jerusalem
539 BC	Medes/Persians Conquered Babylon
538/7 BC	Cyrus Allows Jews to Return to Jerusalem/Build Temple

King Hezekiah and his people averted Assyrian domination of Jerusalem by calling upon the Lord in the Temple, and following the prophet Isaiah's counsel. Hezekiah made a fatal error, however, in later showing his treasures to the Babylonian delegation who came to congratulate him on his recovery from a life-threatening illness. Isaiah prophesied that while Judah had escaped the fierce Assyrians, Babylon would eventually succeed in conquering Jerusalem and in carrying away all of its treasures. He further prophesied that Hezekiah's posterity would be taken to serve in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 39:5-7). Hezekiah didn't seem to worry about that prophecy, as long as he would know peace "in [his own]days" (Isaiah 39:8). His son, Manasseh, was an unrighteous king who turned the country once again to idolatry. Under

Manasseh, Judah became a tributary to Assyria in 679 BC, 22 years after they had been saved from Sennacherib. “Tradition records that Isaiah died as a martyr by being sawed in two at the hands of Manasseh” (*Old Testament CES Institute Manual, Vol. II, p. 176*).

The *Old Testament Student Manual* explains further:

King Manasseh had ascended the throne in Jerusalem at the age of twelve. He reigned for about fifty years and became the most loathed and cursed king in the history of Judah.

Assyria was then at the height of her power. All the world of Mesopotamia and the west lay subdued before her ... In Judah, Assyria ruled not only politically but also culturally. Her cults, gods, and fashions were introduced into the land by Manasseh. This was the golden age of astrology and divination in Assyria, and ... priests and astrologers filled the court with their omens and predictions ... The Aramean-Assyrian gods were clearly superior to the gods of all other lands, for all kingdoms were vassals of the god Ashur. The astral gods of Assyria – Ishtar, Shamash, Adad – were worshipped on rooftops everywhere.

... Whole elements from the core and periphery of the Assyrian world washed across the hills of Judah, leaving behind gods and goddesses beneath leafy trees, on tall hills, in groves, on rooftops. The southern historian tells us, ‘He built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal ... and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord ... And he made his son pass through the fire, and practiced soothsaying, and used enchantments ...’

...[In] the valley of Hinnom, outside the walls of the old city of Jerusalem ... There, to the din of drums, with smoke and flames rising through the air, children were offered to the god Molech, another name for the king of heaven. The Greeklike word Gehenna, hell, comes from that place: *ge* (pronounced *gay*) – valley, in Hebrew – of Hinnom ...

Within the temple of Solomon the fertility cult ... flourished as integral elements of the state cult practiced by the people of YHWH. (YHWH is the sacred word that many Jews still do not pronounce. It is translated *Jehovah* by most Christian writers.) In the countryside the populace too worshipped YHWH along with pagan deities. It is probable that this would in time have made YHWH the head of a pantheon, like El in the tablets of Ugarit. The sins of Manasseh were never forgotten (*Chaim Potok, Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews, PP. 134-36, as quoted in Old Testament CES Institute Manual, Vol. II, p. 214*).

Although Babylon did not conquer Judah until Manasseh’s grandson, Jehoiakim, was on the throne in Jerusalem, the Lord made it clear that the Babylonian scourge had come upon Judah because of the sins of Manasseh: “And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and the bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his

servants the prophets. ***Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did***” (2 Kings 24:2-3; emphasis added).

“Comfort Ye My People”

The first five verses of Isaiah Chapter 40 are the opening lines to George Handel’s ***Messiah***, a fitting application to the style and message of Isaiah’s writings:

KJV	COMPLETE JEWISH BIBLE
1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.	Comfort and keep comforting my people, says your God.
2 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 of her sins.	Tell Yerushalayim to take heart; proclaim to her that she has completed her time of service, that her guilt has been paid off, that she has received at the hand of Adonai double for all her sins.
3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.	A voice cries out: Clear a road through the desert for Adonai!
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 places plain.	Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill lower, the bumpy places made level and the crags become a plain.
5 And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.	Then the glory of Adonai will be revealed; all humankind together will see it, for the mouth of Adonai has spoken.

How was it, with the current conditions of idol worship, wicked and righteous kings succeeding one another without any consistency, Babylonian and Roman conquests yet to come, and the horror of the Holocaust still in the distant future that the Lord could issue the instruction to “comfort” His people, and to “speak comfortably to Jerusalem?”

These promises of comfort and salvation reaffirm that the Lord does indeed, know the “end from the beginning,” and in sharing that knowledge with His people, they could carry those prophecies with them as seeds of hope. Nephi and Jacob clung to Isaiah’s prophecies and cited them frequently to their people, who wondered how the covenant promises might still pertain to them despite their separation from their brethren in Jerusalem. Nephi explained:

And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer

I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.

Wherefore I spake unto them, saying: Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet written (1 Ne. 19:23-24).

When would the promise of comfort to Jerusalem be fulfilled? *How* would it be fulfilled? In our previous chapters, the Lord comforted Jerusalem against the invading armies of Sennacherib, but that day of salvation was isolated in a long-propheesied of future of scourging, scattering and desolation. Through Isaiah, the Lord assured His people that despite what was coming, there would be an end to the scourging, and a promise to cling to. Like the garment that the Lord provided for Adam and Eve before expelling them into the “Lone and Dreary World,” the children of Israel, could “wrap themselves” against the dark days ahead in the knowledge that the Lord knew them, and loved them.

The *Old Testament Student Manual* explains that even during Christ’s ministry, “Instead of speaking comforting words to Jerusalem, Christ exclaimed: ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets . . . Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.’ . . . Only with the second coming of the Lord will Jerusalem find forgiveness and peace” (p. 179).

If it is only with the second coming of the Savior that Jerusalem will find peace, it is important to understand that preparations have begun in this dispensation, with the servants of the Lord “speaking comfortably” (at last!) to Jerusalem and her people, declaring that the promised peace and advent is near.

“Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”

Isaiah stresses the fact that there must be a “preparing of the way” first. These verses are often used to identify John the Baptist’s role preparing for the earthly ministry of Jesus, and in fact, Luke quoted them so that his readers would recognize fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (see JST Luke 3:4-11). But, John came a second time, in preparation for the second coming when he appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the banks of the Susquehanna River in May 1829, and conferred upon them the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood (see Joseph Smith History 1:68-72). In addition to John, there are other messengers preparing the way.

Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

The Lord declared, through one of his prophets, that before his second coming a messenger should be sent to prepare the way and make it straight. You may apply this to John if you will, and it is true. John, the messenger who came to prepare the way before the Lord in the former dispensation, also came in this dispensation as a

messenger to Joseph Smith; so it applies, if you wish to apply it so, to John who came as a messenger to prepare the way before the Lord.

But I go farther and maintain that Joseph Smith was the messenger whom the Lord sent to prepare the way before him. He came, and under direction of holy messengers laid the foundation for the kingdom of God and of this marvelous work and a wonder that the world might be prepared for the coming of the Lord (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:193-95).

The fact that the Prophet Joseph Smith had the fate and destiny of the Jews and Jerusalem pressing deeply upon his mind and heart is evidenced in his plea regarding them as recorded in the dedicatory prayer on the Kirtland Temple, 27 March, 1836:

But thou knowest that thou hast a great love for the children of Jacob, who have been scattered upon the mountains for a long time, in a cloudy and dark day.

We therefore ask thee to have mercy upon the children of Jacob, that Jerusalem from this hour, may begin to be redeemed;

And the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David;

And the children of Judah may begin to return to the lands which thou didst give to Abraham, their father.

And cause that the remnants of Jacob, who have been cursed, and smitten because of their transgression, be converted from their wild and savage condition to the fulness of the everlasting gospel;

That they may lay down their weapons of bloodshed, and cease their rebellions.

And may all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth, come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed from oppression, and rejoice before thee (D&C 109:61-67).

The apostle Orson Hyde was impressed by the Prophet's teachings regarding the Jews, and received his own witness and call to assist in the work of bringing comfort to Jerusalem. He had a vision in March 1840, wherein he was instructed to go to Jerusalem and dedicate the land for the return of the Jews. He was instructed to declare:

Assemble yourselves . . . Set up the standard towards Zion - retire, stay not, for I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way - he has gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate, and thy cities shall be laid waste without inhabitant. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished - that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received at the Lord's hands double for all her sins" (Hyde, *A Voice*, iii). <https://byustudies.byu.edu/hc/4/22.html>

Orson Hyde left 13 February 1841 on his journey to the Holy Land, and entered Jerusalem 21 October 1841. On Sunday, 24 October, Elder Hyde climbed the Mount of Olives, and offered the following prayer:

Now, O Lord! Thy servant has been obedient to the heavenly vision which Thou gavest him in his native land; and under the shadow of Thine outstretched arm, he has safely arrived in this place to dedicate and consecrate this land unto Thee, for the gathering together of Judah's scattered remnants, according to the predictions of the holy Prophets -- for the building up of Jerusalem again after it has been trodden down by the Gentiles so long, and for rearing a Temple in honor of Thy name . . .

. . . O Thou, Who didst covenant with Abraham, Thy friend, and who didst renew that covenant with Isaac, and confirm the same with Jacob with an oath, that Thou wouldst not only give them this land for an everlasting inheritance, but that Thou wouldst also remember their seed forever. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have long since closed their eyes in death, and made the grave their mansion. Their children are scattered and dispersed abroad among the nations of the Gentiles like sheep that have no shepherd, and are still looking forward for the fulfillment of those promises which Thou didst make concerning them . . .

Grant, therefore, O Lord, in the name of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to remove the barrenness and sterility of this land, and let springs of living water break forth to water its thirsty soil. Let the vine and olive produce in their strength, and the fig-tree bloom and flourish. Let the land become abundantly fruitful when possessed by its rightful heirs; let it again flow with plenty to feed the returning prodigals who come home with a spirit of grace and supplication; upon it let the clouds distil virtue and richness, and let the fields smile with plenty. Let the flocks and the herds greatly increase and multiply upon the mountains and the hills; and let Thy great kindness conquer and subdue the unbelief of Thy people. Do Thou take from them their stony heart, and give them a heart of flesh; and may the Sun of Thy favor dispel the cold mists of darkness which have beclouded their atmosphere. Incline them to gather in upon this land according to Thy word. Let them come like clouds and like doves to their windows. Let the large ships of the nations bring them from the distant isles; and let kings become their nursing fathers, and queens with motherly fondness wipe the tear of sorrow from their eye.

Thou, O Lord, did once move upon the heart of Cyrus to show favor unto Jerusalem and her children. Do Thou now also be pleased to inspire the hearts of kings and the powers of the earth to look with a friendly eye towards this place, and with a desire to see Thy righteous purposes executed in relation thereto. Let them know that it is Thy good pleasure to restore the kingdom unto Israel -- raise up Jerusalem as its capital, and constitute her people a distinct nation and government, with David Thy servant, even a descendant from the loins of ancient David to be their king.

Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. Let not their enemies prevail against them, neither let pestilence or famine overcome them, but let the glory of Israel overshadow them, and the power of the Highest protect them; while that nation or kingdom that will not serve Thee in this glorious work must perish, according to Thy word --- Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted . . .

. . . Do Thou arise in the majesty of Thy strength, and make bare Thine arm in behalf of Thy people. Redress their wrongs, and turn their sorrow into joy. Pour the spirit of light and knowledge, grace and wisdom, into the hearts of her Prophets, and clothe her Priests with salvation. Let light and knowledge march forth through the empire of darkness, and may the honest in heart flow to their standard, and join in the march to go forth to meet the Bridegroom (*History of the Church*, Vol. 4, Chapter 26).

After their long dispersion, the Jews formed the state of Israel in 1948, almost exactly 100 years following Elder Hyde's dedication. The last time they had been an independent entity was during Isaiah's lifetime - before the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests. It is worth repeating here that faithless Judean kings had actually invited Assyria and Babylon into their kingdoms, seeking alliances that Isaiah had specifically warned them against making.

In reference to the phrase "She has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:2, emphasis added), explanation can be found in understanding that the "birthright" Inheritance is to receive a "double portion." Israel would have claimed birthright privileges and responsibilities as well as inheritance, if she had honored her covenants. Jeremiah explained:

I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable things (Jer. 16:10-18).

The Parry brothers add:

The word *double* recalls the law of Moses, which required double payment as restitution for theft (Ex. 22:4,7) or breach of trust (Ex. 22:9). It indicates that the full measure of debt has been paid for the nation's sins (*Understanding Isaiah*, 341).

In addition to John the Baptist, Joseph Smith and Orson Hyde, there have been others who have been sent to "prepare the way" for the second coming of the Lord. Malachi prophesied:

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me:
and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple,
even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in:
behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts (Mal. 3:1).

The Malachi prophecy is fulfilled on various levels: Moses, Elias and Elijah all came to the Kirtland temple to restore their individual keys preparatory to the appearance of the Lord at the same temple (D&C 110). There have been several additional messengers, as attested to in D&C

128:19-24, including Moroni, Michael, Peter, James and John, Gabriel, Raphael, and “other divers angels.” The eternal ramifications of these appearances continue to reverberate, as the heavens conspire together for the preparations necessary to usher in the second coming of the Savior.

Isaiah prophesies that in this work of preparation, “every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low,” as the “highway,” or “the way of holiness,” as Isaiah referred to it in Chapter 35:8, is prepared for the children of God to return to their lands of redemption (both literally and figuratively). In the literal sense, President Joseph Fielding Smith declared that:

. . . before the Second Coming of the Lord, there will be an earthquake that will be so destructive that mountains will be made low, valleys will be elevated, and rough places made as a plain. It will be so violent that the sun will be darkened and the moon will be turned to blood. The waters will be driven back into the north countries and the lands joined as they were before the days of Peleg (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:85; 2:317; as quoted *Old Testament Student Manual*, Vol. II, 179-89).

In the figurative sense, The Parry brothers explain that:

This phrase means . . . prepare for the Second Coming by making the Saints’ path back to God’s presence level or smooth (that is, remove all obstacles out of the way so that others can be obedient to the laws and ordinances of the gospel . . . The desert symbolizes the world of sin. The highway here is the ‘way of holiness’ (*Understanding Isaiah*, p. 341).

Modern revelation adds further clarification:

Remember all thy church, O Lord . . .

That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness,
and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun,
and terrible as an army with banners;

And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens,
and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence,
and the valleys to be exalted,
the rough places made smooth;
that thy glory may fill the earth (D&C 109:72-74).

As previously stated, the Isaiah verses 1-5 form together as necessary preparations for the coming of the Lord, who will be revealed in His glory: “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isa. 40:5). Nephi reminds us that those who live in the latter-day will come to understand Isaiah, because it will be in those days that the scriptures will be fulfilled (2 Ne. 25:8).

Isaiah prophesied that all the earth would be able to see the glory of the Lord revealed; modern-day revelation adds to our understanding as to how that might take place:

And there shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour;
and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded,
as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up,
and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled (D&C 88:95).

Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name,
and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel,
should gather together, and stand in holy places;

And prepare for the revelation which is to come,
when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle,
which hideth the earth, shall be taken off,
and all flesh shall see me together (D&C 101:22-23).

“Lift Up Thy Voice With Strength: Say, Behold Your God!”

The sacred commission, then, to prepare the way before the second coming of the Lord, is given to appointed servants, but also to all members of the Church, who have entered into a covenant with God (see D&C 65; 33:10). What keeps us from raising our voice? Is it not the fear of man? Isaiah, and the Lord, anticipate this stumbling block in the next verses of chapter 40, as man is compared to God. Why fear man, who is as impermanent as grass, when God’s strength and work stand forever? Go out, go up to the mountains, and shout from the greatest heights so that all can hear, that God lives, watches over His children, and is on His way!

[Table follows]

KJV	COMPLETE JEWISH BIBLE
<p>6 And the voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field;</p>	<p>A voice says, "Proclaim!" And I answer, "What should I proclaim?" "All humanity is merely grass, all its kindness like wildflowers:</p>
<p>7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.</p>	<p>the grass dries up, the flower fades, when a wind from Adonai blows on it. Surely the people are grass!</p>
<p>8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.</p>	<p>the grass dries up, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever."</p>
<p>9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!</p>	<p>You who bring good news to Tziyon, get yourself up on a high mountain; you who bring good news to Yerushalayim, cry out at the top of your voice! Don't be afraid to shout out loud! Say to the cities of Y'hudah, "Here is your God!</p>
<p>10 Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.</p>	<p>Here comes Adonai Elohim with power, and his arm will rule for him. Look! His reward is with him, and his recompense is before him.</p>
<p>11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.</p>	<p>He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering his lambs with his arm, carrying them against his chest, gently leading the mother sheep.</p>

The Doctrine and Covenants echoes the same sentiments and instructions:

Call ye, therefore, upon them with loud proclamation, and with your testimony, fearing them not, for they are as grass, and all their glory as the flower thereof which soon falleth, that they may be left also without excuse -

And that I may visit them in the day of visitation, when I shall unveil the face of my covering, to appoint the portion of the oppressor among hypocrites, where there is gnashing of teeth, if they reject my servants and my testimony which I have revealed unto them.

And again, I will visit and soften their hearts, many of them for your good, that ye may find grace in their eyes, that they may come to the light of truth, and the Gentiles to the exaltation or lifting up of Zion.

For the day of my visitation cometh speedily, in an hour when ye think not of; and where shall be the safety of my people, and refuge for those who shall be left of them? (D&C 124:7-10)

The Parry brothers emphasize the preparation needed before lifting up our voices, and what Isaiah means by “getting up into the high mountain”:

Before Zion’s people take the gospel to the world, they are commanded to go up to the high mountain, or God’s temple. Isaiah’s words apply to us: We are ‘sent forth ... to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit: and ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power’ (D&C 43:15-16; 110:9).” (Parry, *Understanding Isaiah*, p. 343)

According to verse 9, the message we are to deliver is “Behold your God!” Elsewhere, Isaiah repeats this truth:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (Isa. 52:7)

This is the good news for Judah, Jerusalem, and all peoples. God lives and reigns. His plan is still going forward. He is very much aware of the individual needs of His children, in fact, He is as a shepherd who gently cares for His sheep, and numbers each one. Although, as Joseph Smith so tenderly stated, the “children of Jacob . . . have been scattered upon the mountains for a long time, in a cloudy and dark day” (D&C 109:61), now is the time of promised salvation. God is coming “with a strong hand and arm”: it is His right to rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the next verses of chapter 40, God will ask that His people consider the differences between Himself and the useless idols that they have made with their hands. Those “dumb idols” cannot hear the cries of the people, nor can they bring about salvation and eternal life. Only Jehovah can accomplish that. “His reward is with him, and his work before him” (Isa. 40:10). His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

The scriptures often compare the Savior to a shepherd. During His mortal ministry, Jesus referred to Himself as the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:11). This particular title evokes a tender image of loving care. The “Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep,” Jesus taught, and this is, indeed what He did. The children of the Lord are often compared to a flock of sheep who wander, follow false leaders, become lost, and put themselves at terrible risk. Isaiah promises that “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa. 40:11). Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord adds:

And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them,
and will bring them again to their folds;
and they shall be fruitful and increase.

And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no
more, nor be dismayed,
neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord (Jer. 23:3-4).

David, the shepherd-king, wrote this beautiful psalm in praise of the Good Shepherd:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (Psalm 23).

May we contemplate the beautiful promises of being safely gathered under the watchful eye of
our Shepherd, as we also seek to raise our voices, and to speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and
to all of the lost sheep of Israel: Behold [our] God!

Once The Lamb of God

By Steven Kapp Perry

See the sheep upon the meadow, Quiet and serene.
Peaceful as if painted On a field of emerald green.

And the winds they blow, But they bring no fear
For the sheep well know That the shepherd is near.

And they follow this good shepherd Though he lead to distant lands
For they know they are the reason For the scars upon his hands.
And they honor their good shepherd For the battles he has fought
For they know that this good shepherd Was once the lamb of God.

Some among his flock have wandered, some were lost for years.
Still the shepherd found them for he tracked them by their tears.

And the wolves, they howled, and the sheep, they cried,
But the shepherd fought and the shepherd died.

And they mourned for their good shepherd, but their sorrow soon would pass
For at dawn they saw the shepherd walking through the dewy grass.
And they gathered 'round their shepherd and every head did nod
For they knew that this good shepherd was once the lamb of God.

Beyond their comprehension is the love within his gaze –
This Shepherd of the stars who made the grass on which they graze.
His willing condescension to live the life they knew
And save them by his blood, is what no other lamb could do.

See the shepherd on the meadow watching o'er his flock,
Trusting in the shepherd who was once the lamb of God.