

Title: DIALOGUE ABOUT GOD, ISAIAH 40:12 – 31  
(Chatham, NJ; 02/08/15, AM) [Pc – Dialogue]

Theme: Isaiah's questions to his audience make for a dialogue about the nature of God and about our need for confidence in Him.

Purpose: To remind us that there is no greater power than God's and that we must be patient before we can experience His salvation and renewal.

Introduction:

1. Isaiah 40 begins with a proclamation of comfort, 1-5.
2. He continues by exalting God over all human life, 6-8. (Cf. 1 John 2:17)
3. Then Isaiah extols the greatness of God (9-11) and alludes to God's redemptive plan.
4. Then he asks a series of questions.
5. A dialogue is implied with his listeners. Isn't this what we do in the church? We listen to the voice of God; we talk to one another and to God; we learn his ways.
6. I'll intersperse a supposed dialogue with some contemporary issues also.

First Dialogue – Challenging the Doubters and Skeptics

D&S: You claim that God's word will outlast the world and that his redemption will be forthcoming, but hasn't He had enough time to do that? We are tired of waiting.

IS: Don't you think we all get tired of waiting from time to time? You have to see things from God's perspective.

D&S: How about our perspective? We aren't even sure that God is around anymore or even if he exists at all. We just don't see his activity.

IS: Then, let me ask you a question. Can any of you doubters, materialists, and atheists control the weather? (This is the gist of **verse 12**) We've got some pretty sophisticated equipment that can measure and somewhat predict the weather, but no human being has the ability to control it.

D&S: How come the weather can be so cruel and destructive? That convinces me even more that he doesn't exist.

IS: True, it asks you to think about your own powerlessness.

D&S: I think we have to do all we can to save planet earth, besides I've had too many disappointments in the way the world goes on.

IS: Actually that gets to the heart of the matter. You think the world doesn't operate the way you think it should. But if God really is supreme and really did create all things, should he have consulted the people he created to know how to run His universe? (This is implied in **verses 13-14**).

D&S: You haven't proved his existence. You've just accused us of not having enough knowledge to know how the world should operate. Science will eventually reveal all that.

IS: Alright, so when you get this weather thing figured out, let me know. In the meantime we have to move on to other things, like how to manage the affairs of men.

D&S: Perfect. Don't we have governments and agencies and institutions to teach us and govern our ways?

IS: We do. How is that working out for you?

D&S: Well, I'd say we have some very smart people working on our problems.

IS: From God's perspective, those very smart—and presumably important—people aren't necessarily all they are cracked up to be (**verses 15-17**). Peace hasn't exactly broken out all over the world just yet.

D&S: You tell me on the one hand that God has offered his comfort, but at the same time you say that all the nations aren't really worth anything.

IS: I didn't say they weren't worth anything, but from God's perspective the nations can't thwart his plans, figure out justice, or do anything good apart from his wisdom. He resists all challenges to his authority. (**Psalm 2:1-6 and verses 23-24**)

D&S: You make God sound like some petty tyrant. Don't we have a free will?

IS: God does allow people to live in a state of rebellion, but think about this: if living in a state apart from God's will causes death and destruction, should he let His creation be deformed like that? Would you want to live in a country with complete anarchy?

D&S: Well, I'm still not entirely convinced God is there, much less that he cares.

#### Dialogue II – If Not God, then What

IS: Perhaps we should think about what the human race has done with the concept of God.

D&S: Great. Now you're on my home turf. Prove to me that God exists.

IS: I'll gladly be the visiting team for the time being, but as far as proving that God exists, let's go at it from the other side. What are some of the many human conceptions of God?

D&S: I think god is just a projection of what humans want, some spirit being who loves us and controls everything.

IS: But not all conceptions of God suggest love, much less any power over themselves. Consider the idols. Ancient man made items of wood and metal: **verses 18-20**. Those idols couldn't even move without a human carrying them.

D&S: You are making my point. Man makes gods out of his own imagination.

IS: And they often were pretty feeble conceptions (also **44:19-20**) of God. But what about the conception of God that He is a being who transcends creation, **verses 21-22**?

D&S: I'd say that was pretty imaginative.

IS: Imaginative? True, but also very different from the imaginations of almost all the nations around Israel. How did Israel come up with something so different?

D&S: What about many other peoples beyond the borders of Israel?

IS: Glad you asked. Let's look at some of them, **verses 25-26**.

- Hindus came up with thousands of deities
- Buddhists don't believe in God
- Islam's God is distant, demanding, and impersonal

- The gods of the Romans and Greeks were capricious and didn't care at all about the fate of humanity; they had to be appeased but didn't concern themselves with human affairs otherwise.

D&S: So what? The God you claim to be the true God still sounds cruel because he punishes people for their rebellion.

IS: I'm glad you brought that up. You also have to consider that He is a God of redemption.

D&S: I'm not feeling much of that.

IS: Ahhhh! Perhaps that is your real issue with God.

### Dialogue III – God's Regard and Our Patience (27-31)

IS: Haven't we already made the point that God is the creator, the Supreme Being that made and rules over everything?

D&S: You said that, but I didn't say I believed it.

IS: Fine, but at least follow what it might mean for you. Even God's people sometimes lost sight of his concern for them, **27**.

D&S: How can that happen? Weren't they the people who believed in him?

IS: Of course, but that doesn't mean they didn't have doubts.

D&S: I thought all those so-called "saints" were perfect people.

IS: Hardly. Even the great Apostle Paul felt despair, **2 Corinthians 1:8**. Even this man of God had to trust God in the face of his own psychological struggle.

D&S: I'm not sure how he did that.

IS: He did it the same way we all have to do it. He realized that he didn't have strength to face his trials and had to lean on God's strength, **verses 28-30**. If God truly is the creator, the single greatest power in the universe, then Paul realized he needed His strength for something beyond his power, **2 Corinthians 2:9-11**.

D&S: I find it more challenging and satisfying to face difficult things on my own.

IS: Suite yourself. Just realize that the God we serve is willing to step in to help when we really need it. Israel came to know him as a God who comforts, supports, and redeems. No other people saw their gods in such compassionate terms.

D&S: Well, I'm still waiting.

IS: Are you waiting in faith and anticipation or still with skepticism? . . . Don't answer that; I already know your answer. Remember, those who wait in faith renew their strength, **31**.

### Conclusions: (a postscript to the dialogue)

1. God came with comfort and salvation, Mark 1:15.
2. Some got to see it, Luke 2:25-32, Mark 9:1.
3. The rest of us are living it, but many times we still have to renew our strength.
4. And so we remember Isaiah and wait in anticipation of God's power.