

# A Path Through the Wilderness

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*A voice of one  
calling: "In the  
wilderness prepare  
the way for the Lord;  
make straight in the  
desert a highway  
for our God."*

ISAIAH 40:3

**I**n Isaiah 40, we find the Israelites deported to a strange land—exiled and captive in ancient Babylon. The city was located about an hour south of modern-day Baghdad, Iraq, and was considered the center of Mesopotamian civilization, a cosmopolitan desert city of hanging gardens that was famous for Hammurabi and his code. But God’s people didn’t want to remain stranded here. They wanted to go *home*, back to Jerusalem. Yet they were far, far away from home with no hope of return.

In this no-hope-possible context, they experienced an inbreaking of God’s grace. “Comfort,” the prophet cried—a Hebrew word with connotations of *courage* and *strength*. His message was something akin to “Be comforted, have hope! This is not the

end. You are going to see and experience something you could never have imagined in your wilderness life.” Like their ancient ancestors who had experienced miraculous provision and deliverance in the Egyptian wilderness, they too would see God make a path through the wilderness for them.

Pairing Isaiah 40:1–5 with Malachi 3:1–4 and 4:5–6, we see God’s promise to send a messenger to prepare the hearts of his people for deliverance. They would be cleansed as through fire so that they might see God, themselves, and the world more clearly. In this deliverance, that which had been torn apart through exile, like familial relationships, would one day be stitched back together (Mal. 4:5–6).

God kept his word; eventually the Israelites returned to Jerusalem. Yet this return was not the end of the prophecy. Centuries later, another prophet, John the Baptist, would clear the path for the Mighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to save his people from their exilic existence—exiled from God and one another due to sin. John would soften people’s hearts for Christ’s arrival.

And there is another layer of fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy (3:1–4): It points toward Jesus’ second coming when we will be refined—made pure—as all things are made new (see Rev. 21:5).

Fantastic deliverances in hopeless situations are not relegated to ancient history. Almighty God pulls off spectacular feats of deliverance daily. Indeed, God appears when all hope seems lost. We can trust in the mightiness of God. And, during Advent, we’re reminded to trust the Promised One who came to us as a newborn babe yet held all the power and might of the universe and beyond in his tiny hands!

Are you in the wilderness in need of deliverance—in need of God in his might to intervene? We may not know how or when deliverance may come, but *it will come*. God always comes. Ask God to prepare your heart for his arrival and the deliverance that always comes with it.

*Contemplate* Isaiah 40:1–5  
and Malachi 3:1–4; 4:5–6.

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How do you see God’s might in these promises? In their layers of fulfillment? How do these passages resonate with your own longings and desires?