

WHERE'S THE BACKDROP?!? BY LAURA SHAW

Imagine spending twenty dollars on a ticket to see a play. You get there, excited to see what entertainment is in store for you. The curtain opens, the opening lines begin, but you soon realize that there's no backdrop, no set, and the actors and actresses have no costumes...it's just a story, a script. If the acting is phenomenal, you MIGHT get what you paid for, but it's really difficult to enjoy and understand without the proper setting. Oftentimes the backdrop and costumes help explain the story, the characters, etc. It would lengthen a play significantly if the actors had to explain everything to the audience without these tools.

In some ways, the same can be true of God's Word, though it will NEVER return to us empty or void as believers. This great treasure is given to us (at least we don't have to pay twenty bucks every time we open it, it's a gift!). We open it up and read a wonderful verse, maybe a common one that gives you reassurance or peace. Or maybe someone encourages you to look up a particular verse. You read it, and you are blessed or given insight, but often we miss the full blessing and effect of it because we don't understand the setting or the characters. Let us take a common passage and explore this idea together:

**“Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
They will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not be faint.”**
Isaiah 40:28-31

Wow! Every time I read this verse, I am humbled, comforted and blessed. However, when I read it this morning, I read some of the notes in my study Bible and went back to the beginning of the chapter. By the time I got to this verse, I was truly enlightened and invigorated. The cool thing is that I don't have to worry about not having a theology degree! If I were to listen to a Bible teacher instruct on this verse, I'm sure I would learn a TON; however, I'm talking about reading the Bible every day, and I'm an every day person with limited education on the background of His Word. All I can do is look at the words, look at the notes and possibly go and research and dig for more if I have time. With a few extra minutes this morning, this is what God taught me about this very special passage in Isaiah.

In the notes of my Study Bible it explains the historical context of the chapters that precede this one. I'm not going to go into that, because one fact would lead to another, but the gist of it is that God has allowed "His people" to go through much hardship...war, battles, death, illness...in chapter 40, he allows Isaiah to provide comfort to them by reminding them of these three things: 1. Who we are, 2. Who God is, & 3. What God gives to those He loves.

Verse 6 of chapter 20 says that ***“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.”*** What a beautiful setting to this story! It goes on, (vs 7 & 8) ***“The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of***

our God stands forever.” Now we know who we are in light of who God is---the ornamental kind, but grass nonetheless! I can picture Him reaching down His hand gently, picking me up in all my “grassiness,” and blowing me where He wants me to go next. Then it goes on to give us a picture of who God is: *(vs.13 & 14) Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed Him as counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten Him, and who taught Him the right way? (vs.18) To whom, then, will you compare God? (vs. 25 & 26) To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? (It is) He who brings out the starry host, one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”* Isn’t this an amazing backdrop for us to see?!?! Throughout all of Scripture, since it is said to be “God-breathed,” he is that backdrop indeed!

This picture of who we are in light of who God is sets us up for the popular passage in verses 28 through 31. Just as we begin to get a grasp on the story, the grand finale of this marvelous play full of beautiful scenery, imagery and interesting characters is revealed to us. We get to see what God, this incredible, One and Only Deity, gives to those He loves, even though we are likened to the grass that withers and fades. Only God would love and comfort us in our smallness, you know?

Doesn’t all that background give a fresh and fuller meaning to this popular group of Scriptures?:

HE IS THE EVERLASTING GOD!

HE IS THE CREATOR OF THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!

HE NEVER TIRES OR RUNS OUT OF ENERGY!

NO ONE CAN FATHOM WHAT HE UNDERSTANDS!

ONLY HE CAN GIVE STRENGTH TO THE WEARY AND POWER TO THE WEAK!

WHEN WE HOPE IN HIM, THE ONE WHO NEVER TIRES OR STUMBLES OR FALLS, WE WILL HAVE RENEWED STRENGTH!

**HE WILL MAKE US PART OF THE SCENERY AS WE SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES.
HE WILL MAKE US PART OF THE DRAMA AS WE DRAW ON HIS ENERGY, RUNNING
AND WALKING WITHOUT BECOMING FAINT!**

Now that’s a play I’d like to pay my twenty dollars to see acted out on stage ! I challenge you when you hear a beautiful verse or feel conviction about a passage of Scripture to dive in and research the background, the context, the history, the setting. Let God help you grasp the fullness of His Word through the power of His Spirit which searches even the mind the God. Lastly, ask Him to open your eyes, sharpen your mind & help you to hear all that He would have for you to know. He will reveal to you what you can handle at the time, because He knows what you need more than you even know yourself! AT the end of your personal time with Him each day, I pray you can visualize Him as the magnificent Backdrop of every story & teaching, the Breath behind the characters, and the One worthy of all the applause and glory. Open the curtains now, Lord. We’re ready to get a glimpse of You!