

- Isaiah 35 brings the “Book of Woes” (Isaiah 28–35) to a glorious conclusion. After warning Judah against trusting in human wisdom, political alliances, and military strength, Isaiah lifts our eyes beyond judgment to God’s glorious promise. The message is clear: Put your trust in the LORD and His promised Messiah. Christ has come as our Saviour, and He will come again as our King. Until that day, we are called to walk faithfully in *“the way of holiness.”*

Notes

The Glory of the Messianic Kingdom (35:1–10)

- Isaiah 35 looks beyond the judgment of Isaiah 34 to the glorious Messianic Kingdom. Judgment is not God’s final word for His people. Beyond desolation lies restoration & beyond sorrow lies joy. Christ will come; He will save & He will transform this broken world under His righteous reign.

1. The Land Blossoms with Joy (35:1–2)

- Isaiah 35 opens with a remarkable picture of transformation: *“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose”* (v1). The wilderness & desert, normally associated with dryness & barrenness, will become places of beauty, fruitfulness & joy. In Isaiah 34, Edom becomes a desolate wasteland under God’s judgment. Here, the wilderness flourishes under God’s blessing.
- When Adam sinned, the ground was cursed (Gen 3:17–19). Since then, creation has been marked by decay and suffering, waiting to be delivered from *“the bondage of corruption”* (Rom 8:21–23). Isaiah looks forward to the day when creation will experience remarkable renewal. The wilderness will become like Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon in their beauty and abundance (v2; cf 33:9). The LORD who judges sin is also able to restore what has been devastated by sin.
- The greatest wonder is when the restored creation displays *“the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God”* (v2). The beauty of the renewed earth will testify to His power, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness. The God who will one day renew creation is the same God who is renewing His people today. The God who can make the desert blossom can also bring spiritual fruitfulness out of the dry and difficult seasons of our lives.

2. The LORD Strengthens His People (35:3–4)

- Isaiah exhorts God’s people: *“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees”* (v3). The people have endured hardship and uncertainty but he calls them to strengthen one another (cf Heb 12:12). When God gives us strength, we should use that strength to strengthen others.
- Isaiah then addresses those who have *“a fearful heart”*: *“Be strong, fear not”* (v4). Judah faced powerful enemies and coming judgment. Yet Isaiah commands them not to allow fear to control them. Their courage is not based upon self-confidence but upon the character and promises of God: *“Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence;*

he will come and save you" (v4). Their confidence does not come from favourable circumstances but from their relationship with the LORD.

- The repeated emphasis "*God will come....He will come*" points forward to His intervention to judge His enemies and save His people. At His first coming, Christ came to save through the cross. At His second coming, He will return in power and glory to judge His enemies and establish His Kingdom. God's vengeance is His holy and righteous judgment against sin. His "recompence" speaks of His just response to evil. When wickedness appears to prosper and injustice seems to prevail, remember that Christ will return, evil will be judged, and His people will be saved.

3. The LORD Brings Healing & Restoration (35:5-7)

- Isaiah describes another great blessing of the coming Messianic Kingdom: "*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped....*" (vv5-6a). The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, and the mute will sing. Isaiah is describing the physical restoration that will accompany the Messiah's reign. During His first coming, Christ's miracles were acts of compassion, but they were also Messianic signs demonstrating that He was the promised Messiah (Matt 11:4-6). What Christ demonstrated in part at His first coming will be manifested in far greater fullness when He returns to reign.
- The physical restoration promised also reminds us that Christ's saving work will ultimately include the redemption of our bodies. Paul says, "*this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (1 Cor 15:53). For the believer, sickness and physical weakness are temporary. The day is coming when Christ will make all things whole. The imagery also reminds us of the spiritual transformation that takes place through salvation. Those who were spiritually blind can have their eyes opened to the truth of the Gospel. Those who were spiritually deaf can hear and respond to God's Word.
- Isaiah returns to the renewal of creation: "*For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert..... the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water*" (vv6b-7). The dry wilderness will become a place of abundant water and life. Jesus used similar imagery in John 7:38 when He said, "*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*" (John 7:38). The picture reminds us that spiritual life & refreshment come from God.

4. The Redeemed Walk the Way of Holiness (35:8-10)

- Isaiah concludes his vision with a beautiful picture of a great highway through the restored land: "*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness....*" (v8). The primary reference is to the future restoration of Israel under the reign of the Messiah. God's redeemed people will return to Zion, and the highway will provide a safe and holy way into the blessings of His Kingdom. It is called "*The way of holiness*" because the coming Kingdom will be characterised by holiness, reflecting the character of its holy King.
- Isaiah says, "*The unclean shall not pass over it.*" This reminds us that those who belong to the LORD are called to live holy lives (1 Pet 1:15). Holiness does not earn salvation; rather, it is the fruit of a life transformed by God's grace (Eph 4:1). Isaiah also says, "*The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*" The LORD has prepared the way, and His people will not lose their way. Jesus declared, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6; cf Acts 9:2).
- The highway is also completely secure: "*No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon....*" (v9). This fits the wider picture of the Messianic Kingdom in Isaiah 11:6-9, where there will be remarkable peace and security. Our present experience is different. Temptation, persecution, and spiritual danger remain real (1 Pet 5:8). We need to remain watchful and walk closely with the LORD.
- The chapter reaches its climax in verse 10: "*And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.*" The destination is Zion, associated throughout Isaiah with the LORD's presence and the centre of His future earthly reign (2:2-4). The return from Babylonian exile provided a historical foretaste of restoration, but Isaiah looks forward to a far greater restoration under the Messiah. The word "ransomed" reminds us that these people have been delivered by "*the precious blood of Christ*" (1 Pet 1:18-19).
- The redeemed return with "*songs and everlasting joy*" because the LORD has brought them safely into the blessings He promised. Isaiah closes with the beautiful promise: "*They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*" The sorrow, fear, and suffering associated with the fallen world will give way to joy and gladness under the Messiah's righteous reign. Our hope rests on having a certain destination and a faithful God who will bring us safely there.