

HOPE

Isaiah 35



Isaiah 35

(1) The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

(2) It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

(3) Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

(4) Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

(5) Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

(6) Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

(7) And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

(8) And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

(9) No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

(10) And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35 is one of the most hopeful chapters in the Bible. It is a beautiful chapter and even more beautiful when looked at a little more deeply.

But, first of all, it is helpful to know a little about Isaiah. To find out a little more about this prophet and the words he spoke, lets look at a commentary. There are several online programs that offer commentaries on the books of the Bible. Feel free to use whatever is your favourite, but the instructions will refer to the *Blue Letter Bible (BLB)*. If you are not familiar with it, it is a free online collection of Bible study resources, and is also available as an app (www.blueletterbible.org). The instructions here will refer to the app.

On the BLB app, select Isaiah 35, click on verse 1, and then click on **Text Commentaries**. Scroll down to the *Jamieson, Faussett & Brown* commentary, and then click on **Introduction** to Isaiah. Read through and take notes.

Isaiah chapters 34 and 35 are thought by some to be a poem - the first part is the judgment and destruction of the enemies of God and the other the blessing of the redeemed in a kingdom of peace and prosperity.

Read through both chapters and make a chart noting the contrasts.

Verses 16 and 17 seem to be a pausing point in the poem where one is reminded to look and see how God speaks and His spirit acts, bringing His words to pass. When we look at the history of the nation of Israel we can see this - judgment on the nations that act against Israel and on Israel when it is unfaithful, and despite all odds the continued preservation of the Jewish people.

Isaiah 34 starts out addressing the nations, and later on in the chapter specifically Idumea or Edom. Let's do a little detour and look at Edom in Isaiah 34:5.

The KJV gives “Idumea” but most modern translations have Edom. Go to the BLB, find Isaiah 34:5 and open the **Inter-linear**. Find the word for Idumea and click on it. What does this word mean? Notice the root word.

Scroll down through the verses where Edom occurs and note some of the history: why Esau was called Edom? what happened when Israel tried to pass by Edom on their journey to the promised land? what happened to Edom under David? how did Edom influence Solomon? what did the children of Edom do when Jerusalem was under attack? These were the descendents of two people who were brothers, but there is little brotherly love here.

In contrast, let’s look at Jacob. Jacob was the younger twin to Esau. Find out what the name “Jacob” means using the same method as yesterday (Genesis 25:26).

Look up Genesis 25:23. What did God say about Esau and Jacob before they were born?

Notice how the word “stronger” is used elsewhere in the Bible (look up the word stronger in the **Interlinear** and scroll down to the other passages where it is used).

Can you find examples of the elder (Esau) serving the younger (Jacob)?

Malachi 1:2-3 and Romans 9:15 tell us a little more about God’s perspective. This is not an easy thing for us to get our minds around - *“Why then doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?”*

In his book, Letter to the Romans, John Carter puts it this way: *“Paul puts an alternative to the statement that man cannot answer God. Either that must be admitted or God has not power over the clay. This would be absurd... It is in the power of God to make of part of the lump of humanity an honourable nation, and of another part a dishonourable one. And so with individuals. But as Israel were told by Jeremiah, God conditioned His act upon Israel’s response to Him.”*

Why was Jacob’s name changed? Genesis 32:28.

Prophecy in the Bible is the speaking forth of the mind of God. When this speaking forth is predictive, there is often a contemporary fulfillment, and then a more thorough fulfillment in the future.

With this thought in mind, read through Isaiah 36, 37 in which Sennacherib’s army is destroyed, and the beseiged city is returned to fruitfulness. What terms are used to describe it?

To get to know a little more about the Assyrian Empire, go to www.Jewishvirtuallibrary.org and do a search for “Sennacherib”. The entry includes a story from the Aggadah (legendary rabbinic literature). You could also do a search for “Assyrian Empire” to see a map of the territory they conquered. Take notes.

What did you notice about the Assyrian boasting and the reply from God?

Although Isaiah 34 is speaking to Edom, how do these events seem to be a contemporary fulfillment of Isaiah 34 and 35?

It can be helpful when looking at a section of the Bible in depth to print it out on paper so that you can interact directly with the text without worrying about marking up your Bible, although you may want to add notes to your Bible later. You can print the Bible text from your computer by going to www.blueletterbible.org, type Isaiah 35 into the search box and click on the magnifying glass, then choose the version of the Bible you would like by clicking on the button that says “KJV click to change”, and then click on the Print button on the far right. Another alternative is to write out the whole chapter in your notebook - writing things out by hand aids in retention

Once you have done this, get a red coloured pencil and as you read through the chapter circle all the pronouns you come across (words that stand in for a noun such as “it”, “he”, “they”, “you”, etc.) and draw a line under the part of the sentence that goes along with the pronoun.

We will look into this as we go along, but have a go at identifying who/what these pronouns are referring to.

It is helpful, when doing Bible study, to find out how words and phrases are used elsewhere - first of all by the same author, and secondarily by the whole of Scripture. Quite often this helps to make it quite clear what is meant. So let's try this out with the word “wilderness”. Open up the BLB and type “wilderness” into the search box. This will provide you with quite a long list of verses, but let's start by just looking at the verses from Isaiah. Not all of these verses will be helpful, but use the ones that you can to answer these questions - what has been made a wilderness and why? or what is no longer a wilderness and why? You may need to look at the context of the chapter or the verses surrounding it.

There are three terms used here: wilderness, solitary place, and desert. Let's just take a quick look at the meaning of these words and note how they are different.

Find Isaiah 35:1 on the BLB and open the Interlinear and then tap on each word and then have a look at the Strong's definitions.

Look up the following verses and note what is happening in each. What purpose might the wilderness have served in each situation?

Acts 7:23,30

Numbers 14:25-35, Deuteronomy 29:5

1 Kings 17:1-6

Matthew 3:1-6

Matthew 4:1-2

Before we go any further, let's have a little geography lesson :) Have a look at a topographical map or satellite image of Israel. You can find a map here: <http://mapsof.net/israel/israel-topographic-map>. Notice that there is a lot of desert or wilderness in Israel. Here you can read about the Judean Wilderness: www.bibleplaces.com/judeanwilderness/, and here you can read about the Negev www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-negev-desert. Take notes.

Read through Isaiah 35. What is it that makes the wilderness blossom?

This article has a short video of the desert blooming. www.timesofisrael.com/video-depicts-lush-judean-desert-in-bloom

Since it is clear from Scripture and from experience that water is what makes a desert bloom, let's take a quick look at water in the Bible.

Find Isaiah 35:6 in the BLB, and tap on **Cross-References**.

Have a look through the verses relating to “for in the wilderness shall waters break out”. What else does water do? What might it be a symbol of?

Let’s look a little bit at why these desolate places would be glad and rejoice.

Find Isaiah 35:1 in the BLB, tap on the verse and choose Interlinear. Have a look at the definition for “glad” and “rejoice”.

Look through the other occurrences of the words. What do you find that is usually being rejoiced over?

Let’s look at what is the glory of Lebanon, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.

First let’s have a look at the words “glory” and “excellency”. Find Isaiah 35:2, tap on the verse and choose Interlinear. Scan through the verses where these words are used elsewhere in the Bible.

What did you find?

Go back to verse 2, and this time choose **Dictionaries**. Read the entries on “Lebanon”, “Carmel” and “Sharon”. Take notes. Can you picture in your mind how the wilderness will be changed?

Before we leave this verse, let’s explore a little bit what the glory and excellency of the LORD is.

Find Isaiah 35:2 and open **Cross-References**. Have a look through the cross-references for “*they shall see...*” What do these verses tell you is the glory and excellency of the LORD?

With a yellow pencil, go through the nouns and pronouns you coloured earlier and mark the ones that refer to God (names and pronouns). What is God doing in this chapter?

Let's look next at why the hands are weak, the knees the heart melting.

Find Isaiah 35:3 and open the **Interlinear**. What do the words “weak”, “feeble”, and “fearful” mean?

Take a look through the verses that use the word for “feeble” in Isaiah. Take note of why they were feeble or why they were not feeble.

Instead, they were to “be strong and courageous”. Do a search for these words by clicking on the magnifying glass and typing in the words including the quotation marks. Where else do you find these words?

Find “confirm” and scroll through the verses where this word is used elsewhere. What is it that makes people strong and

courageous?

Verse 4 tells us that God is coming in vengeance, and to save you.

Look up the word vengeance and find out what it means.

Look through the places where this word is used elsewhere. Who is God taking vengeance on?

Look up the word “save” and find out what it means.

Scroll through the verses in the Psalms where this word is also used. Who is being saved?

Find Isaiah 35:5 in the BLB, and open the cross-references for this verse. Go through them all making notes in the appropriate section. Do the same for verse 6.

blind _____

deaf _____

lame _____

dumb _____

Now let's look at the reason for healing. Find the word "for" in verse 6 (it is there in most translations). Go through the cross-references under the word "for".

In western culture, where water is not scarce or hard to come by, we may not fully appreciate how necessary it is. How would your life be different if you were limited to a bucketful

each day? To help you appreciate it, this is a story about a man who brings water to animals in the wild where there is little water: <https://www.thedodo.com/water-man-kenya-animals-2263728686.html>

Do you see the spirit of God as given to us in His word essential for your life?

Note the contrasts made in verse 7:

Looking up the words in the Interlinear to get any additional meaning, and scroll through the verses where the word is used elsewhere. Sometimes it is also helpful to look at root words or words that are closely connected.

What connections do you notice between death and life?

In this land brought back to life, there is a highway - a public or great road. Lets find out what we can about this highway. Read through verses 8 and 9 and write out what these verses tell us about this highway.

Next let's take a look at the cross references for the word "highway". What else can you glean from these verses?

We will take a little detour today and have a closer look at “the way of holiness”. To do this, let’s start by going to Psalm 119:1. This is an amazing Psalm that emphasizes the importance of the law of God and putting it in our hearts. This verse tells us that there is a blessing on those who are undefiled in the way, and walk in the law of the LORD. Look up the cross references for this verse. What do these verses tell you about the “way of holiness”?

There would be no lion or ravenous beast there. Do a search for “lion” in the Bible and take note of whether the lion is a positive metaphor or negative one.

What else does that tell you about the “way of holiness”?

Who are the redeemed? Use the Interlinear to find out what this word means.

How is this concept the same or different as in the next verse: “the ransomed of the LORD”?

Where else does the Bible speak of redemption and ransom? Check out the cross references for these words and if you want to dig in deeper, find out where these words are used elsewhere.

This way leads to Zion. To find out a little more about Zion, click on verse 10 in the BLB, and then **Dictionaries**. Scroll down to *Naves Topical Bible*. Read through the entry on “Zion” and take notes. Where is Zion? How does it relate to New Jerusalem mentioned in Revelation 3:12, 21:2.

This chapter ends on a very positive note: these people “obtain everlasting joy” and “sorrow and sighing flee away”. Look up the cross-references to this section. What other details can you glean from these passages about this time?

Go back through your notes and imagine this transformation that is promised. It provides a little vision of what God has planned for the future. *“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”* (Isaiah 64:4)

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