
ISAIAH 35: 1 The wilderness and the dry land will be glad. The desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose.

Flourishing state of the Church of God consequent to the awful judgments predicted in the preceding chapter. The images employed in the description are so very consolatory and sublime as to oblige us to extend their fulfillment to that period of the Gospel dispensation when Messiah shall take unto himself his great power and reign. The fifth and sixth verses were literally accomplished by our Savior and his apostles: but that the miracles wrought in the first century were not the only import of the language used by the prophet, is sufficiently plain from the context. They, therefore, have a farther application; and are contemporary with, or rather a consequence of, the judgments of God upon the enemies of the Church in the latter days; and so relate to the greater influence and extension of the Christian faith, the conversion of the Jews, their restoration to their own land, and the second advent of Christ. Much of the imagery of this chapter seems to have been borrowed from the exodus from Egypt: but it is greatly enlivened by the life, sentiments, and passions ascribed to inanimate objects; all nature being represented as rejoicing with the people of God in consequence of their deliverance; and administering in such an unusual manner to their relief and comfort, as to induce some commentators to extend the meaning of the prophecy to the blessedness of the saints in heaven, Isa 35:1-10.

The various miracles our Lord wrought are the best comment on this chapter, which predicts those wondrous works and the glorious state of the Christian Church. See the parallel texts in the margin.

On this chapter Bishop Lowth has offered some important emendations. I shall introduce his translation, as the best yet given of this singular prophecy: -

1. The desert and the waste shall be glad; And the wilderness shall rejoice, and flourish:
2. Like the rose shall it beautifully flourish; And the well-watered plain of Jordan shall also rejoice: The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, The beauty of Carmel and of Sharon; These shall behold the glory of Jehovah, The majesty of our God.
3. Strengthen ye the feeble hands, And confirm ye the tottering knees.
4. Say ye to the faint-hearted, Be ye strong; Fear ye not; behold your God! Vengeance will come; the retribution of God: He himself will come, and will deliver you.
5. Then shall be unclosed the eyes of the blind; And the ears of the deaf shall be opened:
6. Then shall the lame bound like the hart, And the tongue of the dumb shall sing; For in the wilderness shall burst forth waters, And torrents in the desert:
7. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, And the thirsty soil bubbling springs: And in the haunt of dragons shall spring forth The grass with the reed and the bulrush.
8. And a highway shall be there; And it shall be called The way of holiness: No unclean person shall pass through it: But he himself shall be with them, walking in the way, And the foolish shall not err therein:
9. No lion shall be there; Nor shall the tyrant of the beasts come up thither: Neither shall he be found there: But the redeemed shall walk in it.

10. Yea, the ransomed of Jehovah shall return; They shall come to Sion with triumph; And perpetual gladness shall crown their heads. Joy and gladness shall they obtain; And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Verse 1

Shall be glad - יששום yesusum; in one MS. the ן mem seems to have been added; and שום sum is upon a rasure in another. None of the ancient versions acknowledge it; it seems to have been a mistake, arising from the next word beginning with the same letter. Seventeen MSS. have ישושום yesusum, both vaus expressed; and five MSS. יששום yesusum, without the vaus. Probably the true reading is, "The wilderness and the dry place shall be glad. "Not for them.

ISAIAH 35: 2 It will blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. Lebanon's glory will be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the LORD's glory, the excellence of our God.

Verse 2

Rejoice even with joy and singing "The well-watered plain of Jordan shall also rejoice" - For ורנן veranen, the Septuagint read ירדן yarden, τα ερηνα του Ιορδανου, "the deserts of Jordan." Four MSS. read גלת gulath; see Jos 15:19 : "Irrigua Jordani;" Houbigant. גידת gidoth, Ripae Jordani, "the banks of Jordan;" Kennicott. See De S. Poesi Hebr. Praelect. 20 note.

Unto it - For לה lah, to it, nine MSS. of Kennicott's and four of De Rossi's read לך lecha, to thee. See ibid.

ISAIAH 35: 3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

ISAIAH 35: 4 Tell those who have a fearful heart, "Be strong. Don't be afraid. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, God's retribution. He will come and save you.

ISAIAH 35: 5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

ISAIAH 35: 6 Then the lame man will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing; for waters will break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

ISAIAH 35: 7 The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water. Grass with reeds and rushes will be in the habitation of jackals, where they lay.

Verse 7

The parched ground "The glowing sand" - שרב sharab; this word is Arabic, as well as Hebrew, expressing in both languages the same thing, the glowing sandy plain, which in the hot countries at a distance has the appearance of water. It occurs in the Koran, chap. 24: "But as to the unbelievers, their works are like a vapor in a plain, which the thirsty traveler thinketh to be water, until, when he cometh thereto, he findeth it to be nothing. "Mr. Sale's note on this place is, "The Arabic word serab signifies that false appearance which in the eastern countries is often seen on sandy plains about

noon, resembling a large lake of water in motion, and is occasioned by the reverberation of the sun beams: 'by the quivering undulating motion of that quick succession of vapours and exhalations which are extracted by the powerful influence of the sun.' - Shaw, Trav. p. 378. It sometimes tempts thirsty travelers out of their way; but deceives them when they come near, either going forward, (for it always appears at the Same distance), or quite vanishing." Q. Curtius has mentioned it: "Arenas vapor aestivi solis accendit; camporumque non alia, quam vasti et profundi aequoris species est." - Lib. vii., c. 5. Dr. Hyde gives us the precise meaning and derivation of the word. "Dictum nomen Barca הברקה habberakah, splendorem, seu splendentem regionem notat; cum ea regio radiis solaribus tam copiose collustretur, ut reflexum ab arenis lumen adeo intense fulgens, a longinquo spectantibus, ad instar corporis solaris, aquarum speciem referat; et hinc arenarum splendor et radiatio, (et lingua Persica petito nomine), dicitur serab, i.e., aquae superficies seu superficialis aquarum species." Annot. in Peritsol., cap. ii. "Shall spring forth" - The ה he in רבצה rebitseh seems to have been at first מ mem in MS. Bodl., whence Dr. Kennicott concludes it should be רבצים rebitsim. But instead of this word the Syriac, Vulgate, and Chaldee read some word signifying to grow, spring up, or abound. Perhaps פרצה paretsah, or פרצו paretsu, or פרץ החציר parats hachatsir, as Houbigant reads. - L.

ISAIAH 35: 8 A highway will be there, a road, and it will be called The Holy Way.

The unclean shall not pass over it, but it will be for those who walk in the Way. Wicked fools will not go there.

Verse 8

And a highway - The word ודרך vederech is by mistake added to the first member of the sentence from the beginning of the following member. Sixteen MSS. of Dr. Kennicott's, seven ancient, and two of De Rossi's have it but once; so likewise the Syriac, Septuagint, and Arabic.

Err therein - A MS. of Dr. Kennicott's adds בו bo, in it, which seems necessary to the sense, and so the Vulgate, per eam, "by it." One of De Rossi's has שם sham, there.

But it shall be for those "But he himself shall be with them, walking in the way" - That is, God; see Isa 35:4. "Who shall dwell among them, and set them an example that they should follow his steps." Our old English Version translated the place to this purpose, our last translators were misled by the authority of the Jews, who have absurdly made a division of the verses in the midst of the sentence, thereby destroying the construction and the sense.

ISAIAH 35: 9 No lion will be there, nor will any ravenous animal go up on it. They will not be found there; but the redeemed will walk there.

Verse 9

It shall not be found there "Neither shall he be found there" - Three MSS. read ולא velo, adding the conjunction; and so likewise the Septuagint and Vulgate. And four MSS., one ancient, read ימצא yimmatsa, the verb, as it certainly ought to be, in the masculine form.

The redeemed shall walk there - גאולים geulim. Those whose forfeited inheritances are brought back by the kinsman, גואל goel, the nearest of kin to the family. This has been considered by all orthodox divines as referring to the incarnation of our Lord, and his sacrificial offering. After גאולים geulim, one of De Rossi's MSS. adds עד עולם ad olam, for ever, "The redeemed shall walk there for ever."

ISAIAH 35: 10 The the LORD's ransomed ones will return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

Verse 10

The ransomed - פדוּיִי peduyey, from פדה padah, "to redeem by paying a price." Those for whom a price was paid down to redeem them from bondage and death.

Sighing shall flee away - אַנְחָה anachah. Never was a sorrowful accent better expressed than in this strong guttural word, an-ach-ah; nearly the same with the Irish in their funeral wailings, och-och-on. The whole nation express all their mournful accents by these three monosyllables.

This chapter contains the following parts: -

1. We have here blessed promises of the latter-day glory.
2. The prophet may be considered as addressing the teachers of the Gospel, to show them that it was their business to encourage and direct the people in their expectation of redemption.
3. A promise of the manifestation of God among men is given.
4. The miracles which Christ should work are explicitly mentioned.
5. The privileges of Christianity are specified; there shall be,
 1. Thorough teaching;
 2. Holy walking.
6. Perfect safety.
7. Complete happiness. And -
8. Final glory.

The chapter shows also that no impurity should be tolerated in the Church of God; for as that is the mystical body of Christ, it should be like himself, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.