

“Only those who return to God, only the holy, and only the ransomed will experience the joy of that day” (Smith 2007: 582).

“This is the apex of the eschatological vision: a day when the people of God can be set free from their own sins and the sins of others, when they can come home to their God and be fully restored to his image, when a lifelong struggle to avoid grief and pain will be ended in their being overwhelmed by gladness and joy. This is the hope of biblical faith” (Oswalt 1986: 626).

“We, of course, would like to have only one of these realities: blessing without curse, salvation without judgment, heaven without hell. And we are always in danger of rewriting the rules, so to speak, to suit our own inclinations. But the biblical revelation has a stubborn shape to it that resists all manipulation of this kind. It forces us to decision: we must have it as it is or not at all; accept it or make up our own religion. No quarter is given, either by the biblical writers or by Jesus himself. On the last day, some will go away to eternal punishment, and some to eternal life” (Webb 1996: 145).

Is Isaiah 35 describing an other-worldly heaven or a redeemed earth? Amillennial theology doesn't have a place for a fulfillment of this on earth; they teach that Jesus comes, the earth is destroyed, and we all go to heaven. But all of the language here points to a redemption of *this* earth. The mere fact that the people *return* indicates that they are coming back to the place they left before, not going to a new place.

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## ISAIAH 35: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EARTH

“One of the most beautiful poems ever written” – J. Alec Motyer.

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 1-35

- I. Judah's sin requires exile, but a remnant will return (1:1-12:6)
- II. The nations will be judged, and therefore they should not be trusted (13:1-23:18)
- III. The Lord will rule over the earth and redeem his people (24:1-27:13)
- IV. **The Holy One of Israel will replace faithless rulers with a righteous king (28:1-35:10)**
  - A. The Lord condemns the leaders of Israel and Judah (28:1-29:24)
  - B. The Lord condemns those who trust in Egypt (30:1-31:9)
  - C. The Lord will rule in righteousness (32:1-33:24)
  - D. **The Lord will destroy the nations and restore Zion (34:1-35:10)**

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 35

- I. Transformation of the Land (35:1-2)
- II. Exhortation To Trust God (35:3-4)
- III. Transformation of the People (35:5-7)
- IV. Restoration of the Exiles (35:8-10)

The Lord comes to:

1. Judge the wicked
2. Return the exiled
3. Heal the afflicted
4. Revive the land
5. Display his glory

## CONNECTIONS WITHIN ISAIAH

| Isaiah 6  | Isaiah 35   |
|---|---|
| Those who see will have their eyes blinded  | The eyes of the blind will be opened  |
| Those who hear will have their ears dulled  | The ears of the deaf will be unstopped  |
| Isaiah alone saw the glory of the Lord  | The people will see the glory of the Lord   |
| The land will be ruined and deserted  | The desert will blossom abundantly  |
| The people will be exiled   | The people will return on a highway   |
| The people were of unclean lips (but Isaiah's sin was atoned for)                       | The people are redeemed and ransomed  |
| Tiny glimmer of hope that points to the "way out": the remaining stump is the holy seed | Question remains: how does God atone for sin of wicked people? How does he change their hearts? The "holy seed" is the righteous king; what else? |

Isaiah 1:19-20 (ESV) "19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.""

Verse 19 is fulfilled in Isa 35; Verse 20 is fulfilled in Isa 34.

Summary of chapters 32-35: In the future, when the righteous king rules, blinded eyes and deaf ears will be opened (32:1-8; 35:5-6). The Spirit will be poured out upon the people, the land will be transformed, and the people will live in righteousness and peace (32:15-20). The Lord will be exalted and he will fill Jerusalem with justice (32:5-6). He will judge the wicked, but the righteous will not be consumed (33:11-14; 34:1-17). The people will see the king in his beauty and the glory of God (33:17; 35:2). The Lord will meet all needs (33:17-24). The redeemed remnant will return to Zion on a highway called the "Way of Holiness" and no ferocious beasts or fools will be on it (35:8). The people will be happy forever (35:10).

## NOTES

"As Edom in ch. 34 represented the nations in general, so here the desert represents the total world: physical, social, and spiritual, which, human arrogance having destroyed, God in his grace can make to bloom. Whereas trusting the nations results in a desert, trusting God results in a garden" (Oswalt 1986: 620).

v1 Why the great transformation from chapter 34? "The answer is God. He is the author of all joy. We human beings keep thinking we can produce joy on our own. But we never can. Joy is always a by-product of the presence of God in his world. When we, through our lack of trust, hold him at arm's length, the end result is desolation. It is only when we turn to him, recognizing the uselessness of all other help, that we can perceive his coming to us (v. 4) and find joy in becoming complete with him" (Oswalt 1986: 622).

vv3-4 "The implication of the stanza is that the people of God are still in the period of waiting and need encouraging in the realm of action (*hands*), stability (*knees*) and conviction (*hearts*). The proffered encouragement is the hope that is set before them: *your God will come*. It is a call to the fortitude of faith, not grim determination but believing determination" (Motyer 1993: 274).

vv3-4 "Hope is the cordial the people of God need to keep them going" (Motyer 1993: 273).

vv8-10 "The Lord never reduces his standards to match the weaknesses of his people; he raises his people to the height of his standards. How this will happen Isaiah does not say; he simply leaves us to assume that such meeting of the requirements of the law is achieved for the Lord's people by his work of salvation (4f.) and redemption (9d, 10a)" (Motyer 1999: 245-46).

"Both terms emphasize that the people's status as the *redeemed* or *ransomed* is based on an act of divine grace to free them from the bondage of an earlier obligation" (Smith 2007: 581).