

GOD WITH US IN JOY

ISAIAH 35:1-10

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Context of Isaiah 35

- Isaiah 36-39: focuses on impending doom at by the Babylonian empire; punishment for how Israel has turned away from God
- Isaiah 34: another enemy: Edom
 - Ancient kingdom, close to Israel
 - Edom and Israel descended from brothers Esau and Isaac
 - Edom: literary trope to represent enemy
 - Symbolic of human nature: we turn from God

Context of Isaiah 35

- Isaiah 34: wilderness
 - Separation from God and his ways
 - Hebrew word for wilderness means the wild area where people don't live

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- Isaiah 34:9: "Edom's streams will flow sluggish, thick with pollution" (MSG) — Isaiah 35:6: "Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert"
- Isaiah 34:13: thorns, thistles and weeds that wreak havoc — Isaiah 35:7: "grass and reeds and papyrus will grow"

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- Isaiah 34:11, 13-15: Edom's wilderness is a habitat for wild animals, specifically jackals or wild dogs will roam, "vultures and skunks will police the streets" — Isaiah 35:7,9: pastures and places where green plants grow and "No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast"
- "the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God." (v.2)

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

Psalms 148:7-10,13:

- 7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,
- 8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,
- 9 you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,
- 10 wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,
- 13 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- Romans 1:20: the created world shows "God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature"

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- V. 5 & 6: "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf stopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy..."
- Isaiah 6: Isaiah's commission to speak to the people; some will hear and not understand, see but not perceive
- Metaphor of spiritual obtuseness or rejection

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- Jesus the Messiah - spiritually and physically restores people
- "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." (Matthew 11:4-6)

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- Handel's Messiah:
 - "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." (Isaiah 35, vv.5-6)

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- v.5: a highway through the wilderness that is safe from predators (v.9)
- v.8: "not even fools can get lost on it."
- "nothing and no one dangerous or threatening... Only the redeemed will walk on it." (v.9, MSG)

Isaiah 35: "The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom"

- V.10: Zion
 - Physical location
 - Jerusalem: 2 Samuel 5:7: David captures the city of Jerusalem, "the fortress of Zion"
 - Temple; Judah
 - Nation of Israel

Isaiah 35: “The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom”

- V.10: Zion
 - God’s spiritual kingdom
 - “the place where God’s divine presence lives amongst his people”
 - to go to Zion or to be in Zion is to “live in right relationship with God and others” - to love God and love people

Isaiah 35: “The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom”

- V.10: enter Zion (God’s presence) “with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”
- The reversal is complete
- The point of this vision: offer a message of hope, restoration, and joy amidst present suffering; the promise that God will transform desolate lands and heal the afflicted through the coming Messiah

And yet...

James 5:7-10:

“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.”

And yet...

- “patient” - Greek: *makrothymeō*: “to remain tranquil while waiting, have patience, bear provocation or testing without complaint.”
- impatience and waiting can often rob our joy as well

And yet...



- Isaiah 35: 3-4: “Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;
say to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
he will come to save you.”
- Courage, dear heart

And yet...



- Joy is possible in times of waiting, challenge, and suffering
- the persistent, ongoing presence of God with us
- 1 Thessalonians 1:6 describes “the joy given by the Holy Spirit” that is even possible in the midst of severe suffering
- Nehemiah 8:10: “the joy of the LORD is our strength”
- Galatians 5: fruit of the Spirit, Christ with us

As we wait...



- cling to the enduring presence of Christ who is God with us, the one who provides us with joy no matter our present circumstance
- we can remind each other the very words of the passage: “to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come...
he will come to save you.”” (Isaiah 35:4)