

## ISAIAH 35

## THE RANSOMED ONES SHALL RETURN!

This beautiful chapter is evidently a continuation of the previous one. As we have often remarked in our study of the Book of Isaiah, God's threats of judgment are always coupled with promises of His mercy! The darker the threats, the brighter the promises. But this chapter seems as if it contained a kind of summary of all the blessings brought by Christ and His salvation! And it points on to future blessings also – to a time (verse 10) when sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Everyone knows, by sad experience, that this is a time which has not come yet. And so here we are shown the bright and joyous aspect of our Savior's second coming at the end of the world, just as the previous chapter had drawn a picture of its darker and more awful features. However, this chapter alludes to Christ's first coming also! Indeed, it is impossible to read verses 5 and 6 without thinking of all the miracles which Jesus did during His ministry on earth.

The rejoicing and the blossoming of the desert refer, no doubt, to the preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles (non-Jews). Until the coming of Christ, they were left like a barren land; for they were without distinct revelation from God, such as the Jews enjoyed. But before our risen Savior ascended, He commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations (Luke 24:47). And then a stream burst forth in the desert, just as it did from the smitten rock in Moses' day (Ex. 17:5-6); and it has continued to flow ever since, bringing joy and fruitfulness in its course!

The world without Christianity is like the parched ground, or the dreary wilderness. Look at the degraded condition of heathen nations! Many of them are blessed by God with every natural advantage; yet they live in gross ignorance and perpetual warfare, and they are the slaves of foolish and often cruel superstitions. They either tyrannize over others, or else they suffer as the victims of oppression. But wherever Christianity appears, it springs up like a stream in the midst of this desert! In recent times, it has converted many heathen barbarians into communities of peaceful human beings; and even today, in many places, it is shaking ancient superstitions to their very foundations. To what do we owe all of the freedoms and blessings we enjoy, except to the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ? That stream, through God's mercy, sprang up a few hundred years ago in our land; and since that time (although our nation does indeed have much to humbly repent of), His mercy has never permitted that stream to completely dry up. And the blessings of this Gospel-stream are bestowed in great abundance and purity – unlike some lands, where its waters have been sadly corrupted. The people are not allowed to go and drink at the Fountainhead, by reading and hearing the pure Word of God for themselves. And what is the re-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ A description of the flourishing state of Christ's Kingdom – verses 1-4
- ❖ A sketch of the privileges of that Christ's people enjoy – verses 5-10





sult? Let anyone visit those lands, and see how they are overgrown with superstition and blasted by tyranny! Let him see the folly and frivolity of their upper classes, as well as the ignorance and degradation of their lower classes; and then he will know how great a curse it is for a people to have their access to the Fountain of Life hindered, and to have the puri-

ty of its waters corrupted. But although this stream of living water flows through our land, this is not enough; it must also spring up in *our hearts!* It is a blessed thing when the Holy Spirit of Christ springs up like a fountain in the heart of an unconverted person, and wondrous indeed is the change that it works there – softening his dry, rugged, and arid nature; and causing him to rejoice with joyful singing! The irritable tempers, which used to grow like thorns and briars, all disappear; and the blessed fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance – now spring up in their place.

But this chapter also points us even farther to a far more glorious accomplishment of the Lord's promises, which is yet in the future; and to that future, let us now turn our thoughts. Verse 10 says, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads!" When the heavenly Kingdom of our Lord Jesus is finally set up, and when our heavenly mansion is finally made ready for Him to bring His Bride home – then shall all of His redeemed people, from all nations, enter therein with great joy! Their wars, tumults, and oppression on earth shall cease; "and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth even for ever!" (Micah 4:7) There is everlasting joy in store for the ransomed children of the Lord! "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (verse 10). How precious a promise! It is precious in itself, and it is also precious because it shows how tenderly our God thinks of all our sorrows and sighing. He knows it all, just as He kindly sent word to the poor Israelites: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows" (Ex. 3:7). If we could thoroughly realize this, even in moments when the troubles of life press heavily upon us and overwhelm us; and if we would only believe that God knows all of our sorrows – then half of their bitterness would be gone! May the thought that our Father knows all (Matt. 6:32) bear us up in the midst of our sorrows, sighing, and tears! Silencing our own discontented murmurs, let us try to catch some faint echoes of those songs which the ransomed of the Lord are singing even now in the heavenly Zion – and in which we shall soon join, if we hasten along the way of holiness!

*All praises be to You, Lord Jesus; for from Your cross and empty grave, the river of the water of life is pouring out for the quenching of the thirst of our souls! Amen.*