

Isaiah 35:1-10 – “A Highway to the Kingdom”

(Pew Bible Pages: 595-596)

Intro: The Atacama Desert in Peru is the driest place on earth. Average rainfall there is 0.6 inches per year. The landscape is 49,000 square miles of “moonscape” like terrain, salt lakes, sand, and lava flows. “Desolation” is the best word to describe the view. Imagine a highway through that desert. What a depressing journey it would be! Now, imagine a beautiful highway through a fabulous, garden like section of earth. Imagine fields of blooming flowers; rushing streams of water; lush pastureland; snowcapped peaks in the distance. Which road would you rather travel? Tonight’s text takes us from the moral desert of planet earth to the Eden like garden of the Kingdom of God. Come along as we discover that...

Proposition: Christ’s return will make the moral desert of earth burst into riotous bloom for the redeemed.

Interpretive Perspective: Chapter 35 cannot be understood properly without considering the meaning of chapter 34. These two chapters are seen as complementary “bookends” by nearly all commentators. Chapter 34 describes the desert like condition produced on planet earth through sin’s damage and God’s righteous judgment of humanity. Chapter 35 looks forward to a time after God’s judgment, when restoration will occur. Chapter 35 must be understood in the light of chapter 34, then, if we are to receive the full meaning intended. The picture these two chapters give us is of the final days of the story of man on earth. How will the story end? Chapter 34 tells us that the desert sin has created on earth will one day be supplanted by a new Eden described in Chapter 35. It is to the implications of that new Eden we turn tonight. The Kingdom of Man will one day be replaced by the Kingdom of God.

Billboard:	(vv.1-2)	In the Kingdom God Comes to Us
	(vv.3-7)	In the Kingdom God Comes to Set Things Right
	(vv.8-10)	Because God Comes to Us, we can Come to Him

(1-2) In the Kingdom God Comes to Us¹ – The dryness, barrenness, and emptiness resulting from God’s judgment during the Tribulation Period pictured in chapter 34 turns into the majestic garden of chapter 35 when, “the glory of the Lord, and the majesty of our God,” comes to earth at Christ’s return. What a beautiful picture of life returning to the wilderness after a refreshing rain. Lebanon was a picture of fruitfulness to the Jews of Isaiah’s day, while Carmel and Sharon were considered two of the loveliest places in their world.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The Return of the King will bring the restoration of nature’s glory after the tribulation of sin’s dominance and judgment. (cf. Isaiah 11:6; 65:25 for other pictures of this principle).

[ILLUSTRATION] Immediately following the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945, “The Big Three,” Churchill, Stalin, and Harry Truman, conferred together at Potsdam, Germany, a suburb of Berlin. They met to plan the Allied course in post-war Europe. During a day’s pause in the conference, President Truman was asked to drive into Berlin to review and encourage the

¹ Outline suggested by Oswalt in the NIV Application Commentary

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victorious American soldiers occupying the former Nazi capital. As the President’s car drove into the city, conversations between the occupants hushed. Looking out their windows, they witnessed a scene of devastation so terrible, that the President and his aids were literally left speechless. No one had ever witnessed such destruction as that which the Allies had poured down on their enemy, and these powerful men could say nothing in the face of what they were witnessing. In just that same way, sin has made a desert of God’s good Eden on earth and God’s judgment at Christ’s second advent will totally destroy the city of man.

[APPLICATION] But, praise His holy name, God comes to us to heal the desert our sins have made of His creation. We could never get to Him unless He first came to us, “*with healing in His wings*” (cf. John 1:1-5; 14). God has come to us in His Son Jesus to heal our desert spiritually, and one day Jesus will come again to heal our desert physically. Our hearts should begin to sing as we reflect on the goodness of God. Why should He care to heal our self-inflicted wounds? What goodness in Him calls forth the sending of His Son to bear our sins on Calvary? Are we amazed at His grace? Shouldn’t we be?

(3-7) In the Kingdom God Comes to Set Things Right – We are commanded in verses 3 and 4 to encourage one another with the fact that God Himself will come and make the moral desert of earth right when Christ establishes His kingdom. Notice how verses 5 and 6a describe the work of Christ during His first coming to earth. 6b through 7 echo verses 1 and 2 in their description of nature’s restoration at His second coming. This is all designed to inspire hope in God’s people. God will come to save us. What is broken will be restored when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom and that restoration has already begun in Jesus.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] We are to await the coming of the Kingdom in hope, knowing with certainty that when Christ returns our weakness will be made strong by His power; our brokenness healed by His strength.

[ILLUSTRATION] A few moments ago I described the destruction President Truman and his aids witnessed in Berlin in 1945. But if you and I could drive that same route today, we would witness a seeming miracle by comparison. Healing has come. The city has been rebuilt and today is one of the most impressive examples of man’s accomplishments on planet earth. Only a few years ago, Berlin was a desert, but today by comparison, it has become a new Eden. Think of a Berliner who lived through both eras! What must the journey have been like, from the hopelessness of 1945 till the healing of today? If only the people of Germany living in 1945 could have gotten a glimpse of the Berlin of 2022 – What difference would it have made to them as they sat among the ashes? In many ways, you and I are sitting among the ashes today. Sin has devastated our world and is not done with its terrible work yet. But remember, we have hope, because we know that our Savior is coming again to set things right.

[APPLICATION] The hope of His return is help for those sunk in despair and discouragement. Think for a moment! What trial are you facing today that will discourage you one minute after Christ’s return? When Christ returns to judge the world, your weakness will be healed; your fears will be erased; your eyes will be opened; your ears will be unstopped; your lameness

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healed; your tongue loosened; your desert will burst into blossom. We need to live in this hope! We need to remind ourselves that in the coming Kingdom, God will set things right again. We can live in hope as we await that day.

(8-10) Because God Comes to Us, we can Come to Him – Christ’s first coming has prepared a highway for us to come to Him at His second coming (cf. Isaiah 40:3). A highway has been prepared for God’s people to come into His kingdom. Far from being like the highways of planet earth, this highway will safely bring God’s people home since no impediment or danger will be found there. No unclean person can walk on it. Fools are not permitted set foot there. Wild beasts cannot come there. Only the redeemed of God shall walk there. This highway leads us with singing to Zion, the final dwelling place of God and His redeemed.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Because God has come to us in Christ, we can come to Him in His kingdom.

[ILLUSTRATION] The transformation of Berlin from a desert to an Eden did not happen overnight. It took blood, sweat, toil, and tears to restore what was broken. Imagine the hours of hard labor that it took just to clear the ground of debris. Think of the vast financial resources required to raise a city to life again from the ashes left by “total war.” It is so much easier to tear things down than to rebuild them! Aren’t you glad that the restoration project begun on Calvary through the blood, sweat, toil, and tears of God’s Son, was at God’s expense and not yours?

[APPLICATION] God has a way prepared for us to come to Him. God has come to us in Jesus. One day we will come to Him in His kingdom. Nothing will ever be able to keep those who walk in the “Way of Holiness” today from reaching their destination then. As the pilgrim going up to the feasts in Jerusalem sang their songs, so you and I will enter the Kingdom singing the Song of the Redeemed. Sorrow and sighing will flee away forever. We will obtain gladness and everlasting joy. It makes one’s mouth water to think of it! God has prepared for you everlasting joy and Jesus is the Way of Holiness through which we arrive safely home at last. Praise Him!

Conclusion: Remember the road trips you took with your parents before the Interstate system was built? Miserable travel, wasn’t it? In the old days a road trip could test the soul of the traveler! Multiple stop lights in each little town. Crooked roads slowed to a crawl by slow moving, overloaded trucks. Dangerous hairpin curves coming at you without warning. Monotonous wasteland out the window, hour after hour. Aren’t you glad there is a superhighway to heaven? Aren’t you thrilled that the scenery out the window is Eden rather than Earth? Aren’t you amazed at the grace of God? Be encouraged! Perhaps the Kingdom is just around the next corner.