

# The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

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Text

Isaiah 35:1-10

Topic

The Lord will construct the Highway of Holiness to accommodate pilgrims visiting Jerusalem during the one-thousand year Kingdom on Earth.

Title

***"Holy Rollin' Down The Highway"***

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**I call him Peter Parkinson.**

Peter is a drawing that you see on Parkinson's Disease websites. It's an illustration to help you quickly understand the physical symptoms and manifestations of the disease.

Peter is usually an old, balding man. He's stooped over, with a cane. Going clockwise around him are written the description of his symptoms: Masked face, speech changes, loss of the sense of smell, forward tilt of the trunk, reduced arm swing, hand tremor, slightly flexed hip & knees, tremors of the legs, flexed elbows & wrists, back rigidity, balance & coordination problems, and slowness of movement.

**Isaiah similarly illustrated the spiritual condition of Israel.**

- They had "weak hands," and "feeble knees" (v3).
- They were "fearful-hearted" (v4).
- They were "blind," "deaf," "lame," and "dumb" (v5-6).
- They were "parched" and "thirsty" (v7).

The LORD ministered to them by directing their gaze to the far future. He let them know that their descendants would inherit the promised Kingdom of God on Earth.

### **God uses future prophecy to encourage, to edify, and to equip us.**

- Is anyone suffering, physically or spiritually, with weak hands, feeble knees, or a fearful heart?
- Are there any here who remain blind, deaf, lame, and dumb to the call of Jesus?
- Who among us is *not* parched and thirsty from walking out in the desert that is this fallen, and thereby evil, world?

I'll organize my comments around two questions: **#1 Wherein Lies Your Hope?**, and **#2 Whereto Leads Your Highway?**

#### **#1 - Wherein Lies Your Hope? (v1-7)**

These ten verses are uncomplicated. They announce Israel's future enjoyment of their Messiah in the earthly Kingdom God promised them. Their Kingdom is an unconditional, physical promise God made to King David to establish his throne forever.

You can get lost in the language of Bible prophecy. The terms can be strange sounding, and more often than not, a person or place or event has many names. Today we are talking about the Kingdom of God on Earth that follows the 7yrs of Tribulation on Earth. According to the Revelation it lasts one-thousand years, so we call it the Millennial Kingdom, or the Millennium.

It isn't Heaven; it is on Earth. At the Return of the King (AKA The Second Coming), Jesus will identify the believing citizens of the Gentile nations who survive the Tribulation. They will enter the Kingdom in their mortal bodies as its first inhabitants.

When God's people were struggling or suffering, He often met their need by revealing their future. The Church in general has gotten away from that method of encouragement. Prophecy is seen as a niche hobby among certain conspiracy-oriented individuals or groups. Very few think it valuable to promote a healthy and holy spiritual heart.

I ran across a quote in my reading that struck me positively:

*“Eschatology, as religious doctrine about ‘last things,’ is faith in final resolutions. It is the hope of believing people that the incompleteness of their present experience of God will be resolved, their present thirst for God fulfilled, their present need for release and salvation realized. It is faith in the resolution of the unresolved, in the tying-up of all the loose ends that mar the life of the believer in the world. It is the expectation, despite uncertainties, that our choices and patterns of action in this present human life will find lasting relevance in the retribution - for good or ill - administered by a God who is good and wise and powerful, the expectation that God’s provident action in history will be shown, in the end, to have a consistency and purposefulness that reflect His goodness.”*

Bible prophecy is not impractical. We focus on what is coming in order to get through what is here.

The southern Jewish kingdom of Judah was besieged by the arrogant, aggressive Assyrian army. Isaiah comforts them by jumping ahead to what would occur centuries later, beyond our time.

Isa 35:1 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;

A better reading of verse one is, “Thirsty deserts will be glad; barren lands will celebrate and blossom with flowers.”

Although God in His goodness allowed a great deal of beauty to survive, the transformation of the Earth to a cursed desert is part of His just penalty for human sin. God’s creation is groaning under this curse every single moment (Romans 8:19-23).

If Hwy 58 survives the Great Tribulation, when you come down from Tehachapi to Mojave, you’ll see signs that say, *Glad Desert Ahead*. Everywhere along the road will be a vista point from which you are surrounded by the beauty of the Lord’s restorative work.

Isa 35:2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God.

These were what we call vacation destinations. In the future earthly Kingdom, everywhere you go will be a breathtakingly beautiful vacation spot. Except Riverdale.

There are some incredible places on Earth. I want to say, "Imagine what they will look like in the future Kingdom," but that would suggest that we *can* imagine it. Our descriptions fall short. The Lord's restoration will have two things unique to His workmanship which we cannot fathom until we see them:

1. "The glory of the Lord." While it is true that "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), we *ain't* seen *nothin' yet!*
2. "The excellency of our God." The Earth and everything in it are suffering from the curse. Still, we can see from the single cell to the galaxies the meticulousness of His work. It will pale compared to the attention to detail Jesus pays to His Kingdom work.

Isa 35:3 Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees.

Isa 35:4 Say to those *who are* fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *With* the recompense of God; He will come and save you."

We could draw an illustration of Joe or Jane Christian, noting on it the symptoms Isaiah listed:

- "Weak hands." If you are a believer you are compared to a builder, a farmer, a steward, a soldier. All involve hard work with your hands. Over time, your hands can weaken, or suffer permanent damage.
- We automatically associate "knees" with kneeling to pray - even though I'd guess most of us do not kneel to pray very often? The easiest way to make a Christian feel awful is to point out that they do not pray enough. That wasn't Isaiah's point.
- There is certainly a lot in our surroundings to cause us to fear. It has gotten so bad that we are legalizing crime. Police in Oakland, California, now suggest residents carry air horns to deter criminals, an alarming indication of the escalating crime rates plaguing the city.

The Lord's exhortation is to "strengthen," and "make firm," and "be strong, do not fear." There is no instruction as to how you do this. There is no plan, no steps. That can only mean one thing: *We don't need instruction, and there is a single step.*

There is a scene in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* that might help us gain perspective. When the attack on the city of Gondor begins, Denethor shouts, "Abandon your posts! Flee! Flee for your lives!" Gandalf hits him on the head with his staff and counter-commands, "Prepare for battle! Return to your posts!" It is presented

to the soldiers as an option, and they have a decision to make. You see their faces as they struggle to decide. They obey Gandalf, even though it will likely cost them their lives.

There was nothing to do but obey or disobey. Later Gandalf will encourage them again, saying, "*You are soldiers of Gondor!*" **You** are soldiers of Jesus Christ. Or you could say builders, farmers, stewards, etc. Be who you are.

I must add that this is a process. Truth be told, half the time I follow Denethor's advice. The more I realize I *can* obey Jesus, because God the Holy Spirit is indwelling me, the more "strengthened" I am.

**"Strengthen," "make firm, "be strong and do not fear" - that's a solid biblical counseling session.**

During the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian's we can see Isaiah going around the walls of Jerusalem, into the towers, and saying, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *With* the recompense of God; He will come and save you."

Isa 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isa 35:6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing...

If you didn't know these words were about the future, and I asked you what they describe, you'd likely think of Jesus in His first coming. He did all these things as proof He was Israel's Messiah. Despite all that and so much more, the nation rejected Him.

**Their rejection cannot affect God's unconditional promises to Israel.**

I cannot emphasize enough that national, ethnic Israel is the apple of God's eye. He *did not* and *cannot* abandon them in favor of the Church.

The future Kingdom is another unique age. It will feature the healing of all handicaps and conditions.

Isa 35:6 ...For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

Isa 35:7 The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, *There shall be* grass with reeds and rushes.

These things will happen - literally, physically, historically. Though you may draw analogies and illustrations for living from this, *it isn't allegorical or metaphorical.*

### **Jesus will come; Jesus will deliver you.**

When? Maybe He'll wait another hour or day; or month or year; maybe a lifetime. In any case we need a strong ethic of suffering.

Disease is as good an illustration as any. A little background first. We mentioned that, when Jesus was on Earth, He healed pretty much everyone from everything - even occasionally bringing a person back to life. It was to prove that He was the King of the long-promised Kingdom.

His approximately 3½yrs of ministry were a unique time. Before Jesus came, there were miracles of healing and folks raised from the dead, but not very often. In the current Church Age, Jesus heals, but not as often. We pray for healing, but the honest truth is that very few are healed. It isn't their fault; it isn't your fault. It isn't anyone's fault because it is the way God has designed this dispensation. He desires to be glorified in our weaknesses, being strengthened by Him.

I'll let Martin Luther say it: *"In our sad condition [sometimes] our **only** consolation is the expectancy of another life."* As much as I have wanted to tell folks that they are going to recover or be healed outright, I've often led with, "You're going to die if God doesn't intervene." Then we talk about what to expect beyond their disease when an "entrance will be supplied to [them] abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (Second Peter 1:11).

I think that blind, deaf, lame, and mute is more descriptive of the spiritual state of unbelievers. While it would seem that a person in this condition, can do nothing, several times in the Scriptures such an unbelieving person is encouraged by Jesus to see, hear, speak, and walk:

- In the Revelation Jesus tells the Laodiceans, "you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (3:17). He immediately tells them to do what seems impossible, to "buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (3:18).

- Later in Isaiah we will read, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price" (55:1).

**Y**our only hope in this life is Jesus in the next. Thomas Fuller said, "*If it were not for [future] hope, the heart would break.*" Then Spurgeon reminds us, "*Do not look to your hope, but to Christ, the source of your hope.*"

## **#2 - Whereto Leads Your Highway? (v8-10)**

In high school I got into lots of trouble with Steve Kasler. Mostly because his '64 Chevy Malibu in original meadow green with a 327 and four on the floor was the fastest car in the Tri-Cities area. We'd cruise E Street looking for cars to drag race, then head to Marshall Blvd.

In a sad irony, in 1993 Steve was killed in a car accident while driving at an excessive speed.

He was the son of Richard Kasler. In the 1970s and 1980s everywhere you drove in Southern California there was massive freeway construction. On the side of those ginormous water tankers was stenciled, KASLER CORP. They built freeways.

### **Jesus is going to build a spectacular highway.**

Isa 35:8 A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it *shall be* for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray.

Some commentators say that the Highway of Holiness does not need to be a literal highway; they say the point of the prophecy is that God will remove all obstacles and 'smooth the way' for His people, enabling them to access the blessings of the Kingdom.

We know that people from every corner of the globe will make physical pilgrimage to the Lord in Jerusalem in the future Kingdom.

### **There must be roads to Jerusalem that link-up with the Highway of Holiness.**

The expression, "All roads lead to Rome," was kinda true. They built 50,000 miles of hard surfaced highways that extended from Britain to the Tigris-Euphrates river

system, and from the Danube River to Spain and Northern Africa. That's about the amount of paved road you'll find in Maine.

What do you think: High Speed Rail? Monorail system? People Mover? Self-driving Tesla? Uber? We don't know that there will be vehicles.

In this context "holiness" simply describes a believer. There isn't a standard of holiness they must prove. There is no holiness toll.

Unbelievers won't have the same access. Seems we will know who *is* and *is not* a believer.

Who are the "fools?" A paraphrase version renders it, "those who go on it will not be turned out of the way by the foolish." Those who have no business being on the road will not cause traffic jams & accidents. No road rage!

Isa 35:9 No lion shall be there, Nor shall *any* ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk *there*,

Travel was mostly by foot, and extraordinarily dangerous. Wild beasts, especially "lions," were no joke. Elsewhere in Isaiah we learn that in the Millennium animals will have no animosity towards humans. They will not be carnivores. No predators will stalk the Highway of Holiness.

Isa 35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah's immediate audience was exclusively Jewish. The "ransomed of the LORD" are Jews who believe God and receive Jesus. Only Jews can be described as those who "return" to Jerusalem. They were dispersed by God all over the globe, but gathered together again and return to their homeland.

### **That happened not too long ago and continues as Jews return to Israel.**

Isaiah was describing Jews, but Gentiles will also pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

"They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away," is a promise to all the citizens of the Millennial Kingdom.



**A**re you sighing & sorrowing? The "God of all comfort" *comforts* by directing your heart to consider the future.

The believers in the church in Thessalonica were expecting Jesus to come for them at any moment. As they waited, some among them died. The living were grieving. How did the apostle Paul comfort them? He gave them additional prophetic insights regarding the pretribulation resurrection & rapture of the Church.

Can you think too much upon the future promises of God? Not really. In fact, the more you look to the future, the better. C.S. Lewis said, "I have discovered that the people who believe most strongly in the next life do the most good in the present one."

### **The Lord is coming with "vengeance" & "recompense."**

- His final "vengeance" is the Second Death for all who refuse His gracious offers of salvation.
- His "recompense" are rewards the Lord wants to distribute to believers.

*J.C. Ryle said, "Let us remember, there is One who daily records all we do for Him, and sees more beauty in His servants' work than His servants do themselves. And then shall His faithful witnesses discover, to their wonder and surprise, that there never was a word spoken on their Master's behalf, which does not receive a reward."*