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Fall of Jerusalem (Part 2)



Isaiah: A Topical Look At Isaiah - Steve Gregg

In this piece by Steve Gregg, the fall of Jerusalem and the ensuing judgment is discussed in relation to various biblical passages. Gregg explores different interpretations of the prophecies in Isaiah and Ezekiel, noting that these texts describe a desolate and barren land in the aftermath of judgment. However, he also highlights that these prophecies offered hope for redemption and a return to a righteous way of life through the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, Gregg reminds readers that following God's will leads to protection and wholeness even amidst trials and hardship.

Transcript

In our last session we were talking about the prophecies that were references to the fall of Jerusalem and then followed up with descriptions of the New Jerusalem or of the New Kingdom Age. Another passage, we went through chapters 24 through 27 in the last session, and I'd like to look at a few other places like that. Chapters 34 and 35.

This is, chapter 34 presents some difficulties, and I mentioned them earlier in our series. It has the appearance of being a judgment on Edom, and as I said at the time that we first pointed this out, Edom or Moab or a lot of these other ancient nations that are extinct are frequently mentioned as the ones that are going to come under some kind of a judgment. And yet those nations don't exist anymore, so we either have to figure that whatever is predicted here happened when they did exist, or that the mention of them is symbolic for something else.

And I suggested to you that Edom, in this case, could represent Gentile nations in general, or even, it seems to me not impossible, that Edom could represent Jerusalem. Now, I will remind you why that latter suggestion might hold some weight, though I don't know that it's the case or not. There is another passage where Edom is mentioned, in chapter 63, and there, the trampling of Edom seems to be in view, although many factors in it make it look like it's the trampling of Jerusalem.

Now, we know that Jerusalem is sometimes known symbolically by the names of pagan nations, because in Revelation, Jerusalem is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. We do

not read of it being called spiritually Edom anywhere, but on the other hand, had we not the book of Revelation, and for many centuries, the Christians didn't even have that in the canon, they might not have known that sometimes Jerusalem is called Sodom or Egypt either. We see, of course, in chapter 1 of Isaiah that he calls Jerusalem Sodom, and it may be that he calls them Edom in this place, but I'm not going to be emphatic about that.

If it does represent Jerusalem, then it is trying to make the point that Jerusalem is, as far as God is concerned, now as good as Edom, now as good as a pagan nation. Whereas God had favored Jacob over Esau, and therefore Israel over Edom, the two nations that came from those two men, now it is no longer the case. God does not favor Jacob any longer over Esau, they're just about the same.

It would not be impossible, nor would it be out of character for the prophet to speak that way, but I just don't know for sure if he is doing so here. It is also a historic fact that Edom, as a nation, was pretty much wiped out prior to the birth of Christ, and that the only Edomite family that is known to have been around in that particular generation was the Herod family. And there are a number of commentators who would say that the Herods and their descendants were pretty much wiped out, or at least the bloodline was diluted enough to stop calling them Edomites, by 70 A.D. There are many sources that would say that 70 A.D. would mark the extinguishing of the last known Edomite people, although the nation of Edom had fallen long before, to the Nabataeans and some marauding Arab groups had wiped out Edom before the time of Christ.

But it is possible that here it is, the judgment of Edom that is talked about. But it would not be possible, I think, for it to refer only to the nation of Edom destroyed before the time of Christ, because the timing of the sequel seems to reflect 70 A.D. to me. Maybe not.

We'll see. We'll just look at the data and decide. A view that is commonly held about chapter 34, like the view that is held in chapter 24, is that this is the end of the world.

Reasons for that would be that verse 1 seems to indict all nations and indicates that God has, in verse 2, an indignation against all nations. His fury is against all their armies. It says in verse 4 that all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll.

All their hosts shall fall down as a leaf falls from a vine and as fruit falling from a fig tree. If that were true, of course, then we would have to say that this is the end of the world, and not only that, but the end of the universe. Because of the heavens being rolled up like a scroll and all the hosts of the stars of heaven falling or dissolving.

Both. Dissolving or falling down. Both are mentioned in verse 4. Now, as far as stars falling down, it's hard to know where they would fall to out in space.

There isn't up and down. We do have a phenomenon we call falling stars, which are really shooting stars. In the scripture, from time to time, the imagery is used of stars falling to the earth.

In the 8th chapter of Daniel, it describes Antiochus Epiphanes and describes him as an animal who draws some of the hosts of heaven and casts them to the ground. Certainly the fulfillment of that in Antiochus must be a reference to him killing righteous people. But symbolically described as casting certain stars from the heavens to the ground.

In Revelation 12, 3 or 4, it mentions the dragon sweeping a third of the stars from the heavens and casting them to the earth also. Now, we all know that's symbolic. Some people believe that refers to the angels.

That he drew a third of the angels with him in his fall. In any case, if that is the meaning or isn't, it's clear that stars falling to the ground does not refer to actual stars out in the sky falling to the planet earth, which they could not physically do. The earth is too small.

One star would be thousands of times larger than the earth, and therefore you can't have stars falling to the earth. Therefore, we have to conclude that there's something about this symbolic. Now, we saw that language sort of like that in verse 4. That seems to speak of the de-creation of the universe.

It was used about the fall of Babylon and very probably in Matthew 24, the fall of Jerusalem. There are other places in scripture that use the same kind of language about things like that. And in particular, Isaiah 34, 4 mentions, their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine and as fruit falling from a fig tree.

That imagery of stars falling like fruit from a vine or like figs from a fig tree is taken up in Revelation chapter 6. When the sixth seal is broken, in Revelation 6 verses 12 and following it says, I looked when he opened the sixth seal and behold there was a great earthquake. And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, that would be a goat's hair, black. And the moon became like blood and the stars of heaven fell to earth as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

Obviously that image is taken from Isaiah 34, 4. Stars falling like figs from a fig tree. Furthermore, in Revelation 6, 14 says, then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. Now, the sky receding like a scroll also comes from Isaiah 34, 4. The heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll.

The question is, what is it talking about? Now, in Revelation we've been, I guess, conditioned to think of that as a prophecy about the end of the world. And since the idea of the sun being extinguished, the moon turning to blood and the end of the universe happening could be conceived as happening at the end of the world, many people have thought that that is what this is talking about. However, there is quite a bit in Revelation,

especially in this section of Revelation, to suggest that what is described in this chapter, Revelation 6, is the fall of Jerusalem.

I say there's very much, and that's putting it mildly. There's a very, very large amount of the material in Revelation 6 that harks back to other passages in the Scripture that do talk about the fall of Jerusalem. For example, just following the verses we read, in Revelation 6, verse 15, it says, In the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks and the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of his wrath has come and who shall be able to stand? Now, these people are calling on the mountains and rocks to hide them because of this wrath. It goes back to Luke 23, where Jesus was being led to Calvary, bearing his cross, and women followed weeping and mourning for him. And in Luke 23, verse 28, it says, But Jesus turning to them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed. Then they will begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood or green tree, what will be done in the dry? Now, that last statement is very enigmatic, but there seems no better way to interpret it than this.

Jesus is the green tree, the living tree. Israel is the dried up tree. A green tree is worth more than a dried up tree.

A green tree has reason to be kept around. A dried up tree might as well just be destroyed. Now, if they are doing this to the green tree, what will they do to the dried tree? Now, who are they? The Romans.

Jesus was at that moment being led by four centurions, Romans, out to be crucified in the Roman manor. The Romans were about to crucify him. He said, Now, if they're doing that to me, what do you think they'll do to the dried up old fruitless tree of Israel? Now, in that connection, he said, Weep for yourselves and your children, because the day will come when you'll wish you hadn't had children.

The day will come when you'll see things happen to them that will make you wish you'd never nursed a baby. And people will say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us. Now, that's what we read the people saying in Revelation 6. And they will say to the rocks and the mountains in verse 16, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

This is a prediction Jesus is making that would affect those women and their offspring in that generation when the Romans did to that dried tree something far worse than what they did to the green tree, as he implied. And this, the fact is, Josephus says the people did seek to hide in caves. The Jews did go down into the caves and the caverns under the city trying to hide out and escape the Romans when they broke through the wall.

But they were found there, Josephus said, and they didn't escape. What's interesting also is that Revelation 6.17 has them saying, For the great day of his wrath has come, and who is able to stand? Now, the great day of God's wrath or Christ's wrath has come, and who is able to stand? This harks back to Malachi chapters 3 and 4. If you'd like to look there, you'll see very close parallels here. Malachi chapter 3, verse 1, says, Behold, I send my messenger.

This was John the Baptist. This verse is quoted in the New Testament and says it's John the Baptist. Mark chapter 1. Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.

And the Lord, that'd be Jesus, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. Even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? Now, his suddenly coming to his temple is a judgment to the temple.

It is a severe judgment. It's worse than when he brought the scourge of small cords and drove animals out of the temple. It's something so severe that they say, who can stand when this happens? Who will survive this horrendous event when the Lord suddenly comes to his temple? I personally believe, as you must know, that this is talking about his coming in judgment on the temple in 70 A.D. But if you'll notice, it says, who can stand when he appears to do that? Now, if you'll notice in Revelation, they say, for the day of his wrath has come, and who is able to stand? The same question related to the same event in Revelation 6, 17.

What's interesting is that Revelation 6 ends with that question, and Revelation 7 answers the question. We have there immediately a vision of the 144,000 Jewish people sealed with the seal of God. They are the Jewish Christians who escaped from Jerusalem before the Holocaust.

They are the ones who were able to stand when that great day came. Now, how do I know that? How do I know the 144,000 were the Jewish Christians who escaped the Holocaust of 70 A.D.? Well, they're mentioned in two places in Revelation. Here, where there's very little said about them, except that they were sealed, their number was 144,000, and that there were 12,000 from each of the tribes.

But there's more information about them in Revelation 14. In Revelation 14, verse 1, it says, Then I looked, and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion, with him 144,000,

having his father's name written on their foreheads. So that's the same group.

They were sealed on their foreheads in chapter 7. Now we see them, the seal is there still. And I heard a voice, etc., etc. Then it says, Of them, verse 4, These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.

That's spiritual. There's nothing wrong with having a wife. Nothing defiling about having a wife.

Hebrews says, Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is undefiled. So marriage bed isn't defiling. But these have not defiled themselves with women.

They are virgins simply means they have not participated in the harlot system, of which the book of Revelation says so much. The perverted apostate harlot system. They have not participated.

They've kept themselves pure. It says, These are the ones who follow the lamb wherever he goes, symbolic of being a disciple of Jesus. Following Jesus.

Furthermore, it says, These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits to God and to the lamb. The 144,000 are said to be the first fruits to God. The day of Pentecost was the feast of the first fruits.

The first fruits of the church harvested there were Jewish believers. In fact, for a very long time, the only converts to Christianity were Jewish people. They were the first fruits of the church.

Later came Gentiles. And James wrote his book to Jewish Christians. It says in James chapter 1, verse 1, he's writing to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad.

James chapter 1 says he's, in verse 1, he's addressing the 12 tribes, the Jewish believers. We know they're believers because he talks about them naming the name of Christ in chapter 2, verse 1. Brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. So they're Jewish, James 1, 1 says, and they're Christians, James 2, 1 says.

They also were his contemporaries, the Jewish Christians of the first century. But look what he says to them in verse, let me think here, verse 18, yeah. Thank you, verse 18.

Of his own will, I was scanning the whole chapter, of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Writing to his fellow Jewish Christians in the first century, he said that God has brought us forth to be the first fruits. Of course, the Gentiles started coming in later on, but as far as the harvest of the church age, the first ones harvested were Jewish.

A great number of them, we don't know their exact number, and 144,000 may be

symbolic, but we are told that the 144,000 are the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. Now, they are introduced in Revelation 7 just after the question is asked, who is able to stand? That is, who will survive this great horrendous day of the Lord? The answer is, those Jewish Christians who escaped, those Jewish Christians who accepted Christ, they did survive that holocaust. Now, we'll talk more about this later on, but what I'm saying is, it is in that passage it talks about the stars falling like figs from the tree and the heavens being rolled up like a scroll.

The very imagery taken from Isaiah 34, 4, which is where we start out, if you remember. If, in fact, the passage in Revelation is talking about the fall of Jerusalem, then very possibly the passage in the Old Testament from which its images are taken may also be about the fall of Jerusalem. Possibly so.

Come on in, Clint. Okay. Now, I'd like to read the chapter, and I'll give you as we go through reasons for suggesting the possibility that this is the fall of Jerusalem in chapter 34.

I must be open to other possibilities, because it is, as I say, a chapter with some difficulties. But, because of several things internal in the chapter, and because of chapter 35 following as it does, and being of the subject matter it is, I am inclined to the view that we probably have here, 70 A.D., and it's possible that even the judgment that came on Edom, in addition to Jerusalem at that time, may be in view. But I think, possibly not.

Let's read chapter 34. Come near you nations, to hear and heed you people. Let the earth hear in all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it.

For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and his fury against all their armies. He has utterly destroyed them. He has given them over to the slaughter.

Now, this statement about God being angry at all the armies, and then later mentioning Edom, which he does in verse 5. My sword shall be bathed in heaven, and it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of my curse for judgment. Then it says in verse 6, The sword of the Lord is filled with blood. It is made overflowing with fatness, and the blood of lambs and goats, and the fat and kidneys of rams.

For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, which is in Edomite city, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Now, there's reference to Edom, the land of Edom, Bozrah, specified in verses 5 and 6. All that language about the fat of rams and so forth, is simply saying that his slaughter of these people is to him like the routine sacrifice of animals that need to be sacrificed. Now, the thing here is that Edom is mentioned by name in verses 5 and 6, but verses 1 and 2 seem more generic, more universal.

It talks about, Let the earth hear and all that is in it, the world and all things that come

forth from it, in verse 1. You've got the indignation of the Lord against all nations and all their armies, in verse 2. Now, this may indicate that Edom represents all the Gentiles, but I'm not convinced that it does. We have to remember that God used pagan nations to judge Israel, even in the Old Testament, and then said he's going to judge the pagan nations because they were wicked too. God used Rome to judge Jerusalem, but he later judged Rome.

In fact, Rome was in the process of almost collapsing at the time, although it recovered and lasted several more centuries. But in 68, I think it is, A.D., just two years before the fall of Jerusalem, or 69, it might have been 69, Nero committed suicide, and there was a power struggle in Rome to replace him. Three emperors in one year succeeded him, killing each other in order to take each other's place.

I don't remember the exact order. It was Otho, Vichellus, and Galba. That might not have been the right order, but those are the three guys.

There were three Roman emperors who put themselves up in Nero's place in sequence by killing and beating the other one. And then Vespasian became the emperor after that. There were five emperors in the course of 12 months in Rome.

There was so much civil war that many historians say it's an amazing thing that Rome survived it at all. It was a tremendous blow upon Rome. And in the book of Revelation, where there is some reason to argue that the beast may be a representation of Nero, we see, or at least one of the heads of the beast is Nero, that one of the heads is slain and the beast recovers from the head wound.

There are some interpreters who believe that that refers to Nero's death and the Roman Empire seemingly almost died, but managed to recover, and all the world marveled that it recovered from that. In any case, I don't know, but that Rome, as the one who comes against Jerusalem, may not be what is here referred to as all nations, because all the nations of the Roman world were represented in the armies there. The armies of all the pagan nations that were in the civilized world were part of Rome.

And were there. So I don't know, but it may be talking about God's going to judge Rome, but first He's going to use them to judge Edom, whoever Edom may be. So there's more than one way to look at this.

I would suggest that Isaiah 34 is one of the more difficult chapters to understand in Isaiah for me. And that is because of the several possibilities for the identification of what Edom refers to here. It says, verse 3, Also their slain shall be thrown out, their stents shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

The host of heaven shall be dissolved, and so forth. This is all graphic imagery. The mountains melted with blood and the hosts of heaven come down.

It's an earth-shaking event. Now, the fall of Edom might have been that significant, the natural Edom, but I think the fall of Jerusalem more so. For the sword will be bathed in heaven, etc.

He says in verse 5, This will come down on the people of my curse. Now, this could be the Edomites, or it could be somebody else. But it sounds like it's some particular group that are particularly slated for cursing.

And as I pointed out before, Moses himself told the Jews they could choose blessing or cursing. If they followed God loyally, they'd have blessing. But if they rejected him, they'd experience his curse.

And there may be a certain appropriateness about seeing Israel as the people of his curse at that time, after they crucified Jesus and God brought his judgment upon them. We read verse 6, let's look at verse 7, The wild oxen shall come down with them, and the young bulls with their mighty bulls, and the land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust saturated with fatness. This is all imagery of a sacrifice being offered.

It's just trying to make the connection that God is slaying these wicked, just like animals are sacrificed, brought for slaughter. Now, verse 8, It is the day of the Lord's vengeance. Now, we have looked earlier at a number of places which speak of the day of God's vengeance.

This is actually the first of them in Isaiah. There are two others. In Isaiah 61, 2, which says, He's come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of the vengeance of our God, which Jesus himself proclaimed.

And then in Isaiah 63, I think it's verse 4 or 5, where it says, The day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed. So, here we have the day of vengeance. Now, that was associated, in those passages, I think, with the coming of Christ, the first coming.

And Jesus himself said, These are the days of vengeance, so that all things that are written may be fulfilled. That, of course, in Luke 21, in verse 23 or 22. So, it's hard to know if this is not about Jerusalem.

It is the year of recompense for the cause of Zion. Now, the day of vengeance and the year of recompense. And every time we read of the day of vengeance, it's in contrast with the year.

Here, it's the day of vengeance, the year of recompense. In 61, 2, it's the acceptable year and the day of vengeance. In 63, chapter 63, verse 4, it's the day of vengeance and the year of the redeemed.

Therefore, we have to assume that the year of recompense for Zion, Zion is the

redeemed here. Those who are acceptable. The year of the redeemed is the year of the recompense for Zion, is the year of the acceptable year of the Lord.

Always in contrast to the day of vengeance in all the three occurrences. Now, that means this Zion is the spiritual Zion. God is coming to the rescue and to recompense the persecutors of the church.

Now, when we think of the church being persecuted, we think of modern day Russia and China persecuting the church. We think of maybe during the Dark Ages, the Inquisition, true Christians were persecuted by the Roman Catholics. If we go back far enough, we think of the Roman emperors persecuting the church.

But the very first persecutors of the church were the Sanhedrin. First of all, they had Christ crucified. Second, they stoned Stephen.

Third, they dispatched Saul of Tarsus to go out and hunt down Christians in other countries and bring them back for imprisonment. After that, they followed Paul around, trying to destroy his ministry, stirring up the Gentile authorities against Paul, getting him stoned in Lystra, and having other problems arise for him, trying to get him thrown in jail in other places because they didn't like him. Later on, when Paul came to Jerusalem the final time, they tried to kill him in the streets.

And even when he was protected by the Romans, 40 of them made a plot to eat and drink nothing until they'd killed Paul. And they even pursued him to Rome. Now, long before any Roman emperor persecuted Christians, Jerusalem and its inhabitants had made a practice of it.

The first persecutors of the church were the Jews. And to say that the fall of Jerusalem would be the year of recompense for God's people, Israel, the Christians, the spiritual Zion, would not be in any sense out of place. Now, speaking of this, it says, verse 9, Its streams shall be turned into pitch.

Presumably this would have meant Edom's streams, which was mentioned earlier. Now, streams turned into pitch. Well, pitch is, you know, flammable.

Basically, it's like they've got streams of fire rather than streams of water. Elsewhere in Isaiah, streams in the desert, that is water streams, are a mark of God's blessing. But for water streams to be turned into streams of fire would be a mark of God's judgment.

Its streams shall be turned into pitch, and its dust into brimstone, its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day. Its smoke shall ascend forever and ever.

Now, this verse is picked up, the language of it is picked up in Revelation 14.11, where it talks about those cast into the lake of fire. It says, the smoke of their torment ascends

day and night, and they have no rest day or night, or ascends forever. So, this language is picked up later on by Revelation.

It says, from generation to generation it shall lie waste. No one shall pass through it forever and ever, but the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it. Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it, and he shall stretch out over it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.

Now, here, this language, to my mind, connects very much with language elsewhere in Isaiah, where Jerusalem's judgment is said to result in it becoming a desert wasteland. Isaiah 5 being a very good example where this meaning is unmistakable, because Isaiah 5 is about the vineyard, and because God has watered it and produced every advantage for it, so that it should give him good fruit, and has not, he is going to take away all those advantages. And he says in Isaiah 5, in verse 5, Now please let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard.

That's Judah, he says, in verse 7. I will take away its hedge, it shall be burned, and break down its wall, it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste, it will not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I also will command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.

Now, this basically says that God's judgment on Judah would result in it becoming a desert wasteland, and gives these images of it. Now, that's what we have here in Isaiah 34. A picture of that which has come under judgment because of God's vengeance is now a wasteland.

What's more, in Isaiah 35, in verse 11, it says, He shall stretch out over it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. Now, the actual imagery is difficult to understand, but the word confusion and emptiness, both were used in chapter 24, in describing the judgment of Jerusalem there. In Isaiah 24.10, Jerusalem is called the city of confusion, is broken down.

And as far as emptiness, in chapter 24, verse 3, it says the land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered. Now, I don't know what it means, He shall stretch out over it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness, but it obviously means that emptiness and confusion will be features of this judged territory. And both those terms have earlier been mentioned in connection with the judgment of Jerusalem.

It says in verse 12, They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all its princes shall be nothing. So they won't come to the kingdom. And thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and brambles in its fortresses.

It shall be a habitation of jackals, a courtyard for ostriches. The wild beasts in the desert shall also meet with the jackals, and the wild goats shall bleat to its companion. Also the

night creature shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

There the arrow snake shall make her nest, and lay eggs and hatch, and gather them under her shadow. There also shall the hawks be gathered, every one with her mate. Now, this of course is just an elaborate, maybe unnecessarily elaborate description of all the ways in which it resembles the desert.

These desert animals are there. Now, it does say in verse 14, the wild goat will bleat to its companion. And in verse 15, the hawks will be gathered, every one with her mate.

And then, it goes on to talk about them not lacking a mate. If we'll just go on. Search from the book of the Lord and read, not one of these shall fail, not one shall lack her mate.

For my mouth has commanded it, and his spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them, and his hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever.

From generation to generation they shall dwell in it. Now, I'm not sure why it is mentioned that not one of them shall fail, not one shall lack its mate. It may just be emphatic that these desert creatures will surely be there.

And it says that he has divided it, in verse 17, his hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. That reminds of Joshua dividing the land up to the children of Israel with a measuring line. They would divide up the land by measure.

And he's saying now the land that was given to the tribes of Israel is now given to the desert creatures. And they will inhabit it from generation to generation. And that's how I understand the meaning of it.

And then it says in chapter 35, the wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and bloom as a rose. Now, this is a very difficult verse. The desert rejoice and bloom as a rose is not too difficult because we've already looked at passages that use the imagery of a desert wasteland blossoming.

And it was always a reference or becoming fruitful or a forest. All of that is an image of spiritual fruitfulness. We even saw that in some of the passages spoke about the rain.

God will pour out rivers in the desert. He'll pour out His Spirit upon the dry places. The dry places are spiritual places and the Spirit is what is who waters them.

So this is a spiritual transformation. I just don't understand the first line quite plainly. The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them.

It may just mean that the region will welcome the desert creatures. You know, God told the Jews in Leviticus that the land of Canaan was vomiting out its inhabitants because of

the abominations that the Canaanites did there. And He said, Do not repeat those things or else the land will vomit you out also.

I don't know if you recall that when we went through those books, but Deuteronomy, I think, also says that that the Canaanites who were expelled from the land were graphically described as being vomited out by the land. The land found them repulsive. It was nauseated by them and vomited them out.

And God specifically warned the Israelites that if they break covenant with Him, the land would vomit them out also. This may be personifying the land. The wilderness and the wasteland should be glad for them.

It may be saying that the land is glad to have the desert creatures but was far from glad to keep the Jews around defiling the land under them. And the land has vomited them out. And now it's happy to be inhabited by desert creatures instead.

Maybe. In any case, with the introduction of the desert rejoicing and blossoming as a rose, we begin a kingdom golden age passage that continues to the end of this chapter. It's a short one, only ten verses, although the verses are long verses.

But we have talked about chapter 35 before in pieces but not in its entirety. But I would say it can be demonstrated beyond, I think, the shadow of reasonable doubt that chapter 35 is in fact about the church age. Let me go on through and show you why.

It, meaning the desert, verse 2, shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it. That is, it will be a lush forest like the cedars of Lebanon.

Again, this is all imagery of the spiritual wasteland becoming spiritually fruitful and wonderful. The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. Carmel and Sharon were lush grazing lands, a lot of grass and greenery there.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God, strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 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. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. For water shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

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. Chapter 34 described it as a habitation of jackals when it was a desert, but now it's going to be reeds and rushes and grass, a well-watered place.

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. It doesn't take a genius to walk the highway of holiness.

Anyone can do it, if they will. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go up on it. It shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there, 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 sighs shall flee away. I pointed out before that this verse 10 is repeated verbatim practically in Isaiah 51, 11, a passage we considered in an earlier lecture. And I pointed out that this has to do with the Kingdom Ages.

Actually, there are so many ways to prove that this is talking about the church. Let me just cross-reference with a bunch of different things. First of all, it says in verse 2, they shall see the glory of the Lord.

And, in verse 8, a highway shall be there in a road. This will be a highway in the desert. And they shall see the glory of the Lord.

Isaiah speaks of this only a few chapters later, in chapter 40, verses 3 through 5. In Isaiah 40, verses 3 through 5, it says, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, Every mountain and hill shall be made low, The crooked places shall be made straight, And the rough places smooth. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together, For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Now, notice the features. A highway in the desert is constructed, and the glory of the Lord is revealed, and all flesh see it. Both of those are features of Isaiah 35.

Isaiah 35, 2, they shall see the glory of the Lord. Isaiah 35, 8, a highway shall be there, and a road. Clearly talking about the same thing in both passages.

Now, what makes this so easy, is that the second passage, Isaiah 40, verses 3 through 5, is quoted in its entirety in the New Testament. In Luke, I think it's in Luke, chapter 3. Could be Matthew's version, but I think it's Luke's. I can get to it.

Okay, in Luke chapter 3, verse 3 and following, And John the Baptist went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for remission of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill brought low.

The crooked places shall be made straight, the rough places made smooth, and all flesh

shall see the salvation of God. Now, that's the Septuagint version that's quoted there, but we recognize that as the same passage in Isaiah 40, verses 3 through 5. And there, although the language is changed in the Septuagint, the passage which clearly talks about John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord, building the highway, and the glory of the Lord about to be revealed, the salvation of God, it says in the Septuagint, this is all associated with the first coming of Jesus and John the Baptist, what was inaugurated there. Now, the reason I emphasize that is because chapter 35 of Isaiah, our present chapter under consideration, is often thought to be about the millennium.

It's often thought to be about what happens when Jesus returns. But the features are described as those that pertain to the first coming of Jesus, not the second. Now, there's another passage that gives us a clue.

Look at Isaiah 35, verses 3 and 4. Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful hearted, Be strong, do not fear. Behold, your God will come with vengeance.

With recompense of God, He will come and save you. Now, God did come with recompense and vengeance, and He did save His remnant people. But look at this statement, Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.

If you'll turn to Hebrews, chapter 12, Feet, that is reminiscent of the highway, or a road of holiness, a straight road. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God, John the Baptist's prophecy says in Isaiah 40. And so here, the highway in the desert, the straight path, is alluded to.

Then, in Hebrews 12, verse 14, Pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Pursue holiness. The highway in the desert is the highway of holiness.

It's the highway that leads to holiness, or it's the way of holiness itself. There are many echoes. One unmistakable echo in this passage in Hebrews, and that's the strength in the hands that hang down and the feeble knees.

There's no mistaking that. But in the following verses, there's even hints, allusions to this passage. So it seems clear that the writer of Hebrews understood Isaiah 35 as pertaining to his own generation, as being an encouragement to his own contemporaries, the Christian Jews of his day.

Now, looking back at Isaiah 35, there's more. Verses 5 through 6. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

Now, the reference to the lame leaping like a deer also is echoed in Hebrews, by the way, Hebrews 12, because it says in Hebrews 12, 13, Make straight paths for your feet,

so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. So there's an allusion to the healing of the lame there, also from here. So there's at least four allusions to Isaiah 35 in that one passage in Hebrews.

Beyond that, we have something Jesus said in Matthew 11. When John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus, John was in prison, and it seems like either his faith was wavering or his disciples' faith was wavering, and so he sent his disciples to ask Jesus a question, either to strengthen his faith or his disciples' faith, we don't know. But in Matthew 11, John sent messengers to Jesus.

And in verse 2, when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to him, Are you the coming one, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them, Go and tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Now, in this one verse, Jesus alludes to several passages in Isaiah. The last line, the poor have the gospel preached to them, is from Isaiah 61. The Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

The reference to the dead being raised could possibly be a reference to that passage in Isaiah 26. It says, Together with my dead body shall your dead live. But the majority of the features come from Isaiah 35.

The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the deaf hear. Those three things, in particular, come from Isaiah 35, verses 5 and 6. The eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame shall leap like a deer. And, by the way, I would imagine, let me take a look here.

Yeah, if you'll note in the margin of your Bible, if you have marginal references in your Bible, at Matthew 11, 5, you'll see the cross references. Isaiah 29, 18, Isaiah 35, 4 through 6, Isaiah 61, 1. Scholars all recognize that Jesus was alluding to these passages. Now, what is the importance of that? Well, John was saying, Are you the one who is to come or not? Implying that maybe you're not doing all the things we think the Messiah is supposed to do, and, you know, are you going to get with the program or not? And Jesus said, Go tell John what you see.

And he lists these things. And he gives them no further answer. He says, Blessed is he who is not offended by me.

Now, how is this observation supposed to help John out? What Jesus is saying is, Look, I am in fact doing the things that the Messiah was predicted to do. Why do you wonder if I'm the one or not? Look what is happening. The very things Isaiah said would happen at the coming of the Messiah, is what he implies.

That's the drift of his answer to John. Well, the things are happening that the Messiah is supposed to do, are they not? In other words, Jesus himself interpreted Isaiah 61, Isaiah 35, as references to his earthly ministry and things he would do when he came. And he did.

And in addition to that, of course, spiritual eyes are, I mean, the writer of Hebrews even spiritualized it. He said, Make straight paths for your feet, so that which is lame may not be dislocated, but may be healed. Clearly, lame there doesn't refer to physically lame.

The straight paths for the feet are spiritual paths he's talking about, and therefore spiritual walking is what's in view. And certainly to say that people are spiritually deaf, spiritually blind, or spiritually lame, is an image that is in Scripture. And Jesus cured those conditions too, the spiritual conditions.

But the point here is, that the Isaiah 35 passage describes a time and a series of events that Jesus himself quoted or alluded to in order to say this is happening now. He, like the writer of Hebrews, applied this passage to his own day, not some future millennial day. Now, continuing, Isaiah 35, the middle of verse 6, through verse 7, For waters shall burst forth burst forth, burst forth, burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert, the parched ground shall become a pool, the thirsty land springs of water, in the habitation of jackals where each lay, there shall be grass and reeds and rushes.

Now, this, as we saw I think yesterday, is an extremely common image in Isaiah, and it always refers to spiritual, something spiritual. For one thing, in verse 7 it talks about the thirsty land. If you will turn with me to the Psalms, we'll find that this image of a thirsty land as a state of spiritual state of a person is frequently used in the Psalms and would commonly to the Jews be understood that way.

In Psalm 143, that is Psalm 143, in verse 6, the Psalmist says, I spread out my hands to you, my soul longs for you like a thirsty land. My soul is like a thirsty land. The very term that is used in Isaiah, the thirsty land will become springs of water.

My soul is like a thirsty land. In Psalm 63, 1, Isaiah 63, 1, I mean Psalm 63, 1, excuse me, it says, O God, you are my God, early will I seek you, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. He is talking about a spiritual condition, not a physical condition.

My soul thirsts for you in a dry and thirsty place where there is no water. Also, in Psalm 84, in verse 2, it says, My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

I am longing, I am fainting. I am dying of thirst, in other words, for God. Now, when this prophecy says that waters shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert, the parched ground shall become a pool, the thirsty land shall become springs of water,

this is talking about spiritual refreshing, spiritual water, and there is no doubt about this if we compare the various other places that say things like this, like Isaiah 32, 15.

In fact, a very good parallel to what we are looking at in Isaiah 34 and 35. Isaiah 32, look at, let's, verses 13 through 15. On the land of my people will come up thorns and briars.

That's Israel. Yes, and on all the happy homes in the joyous city, because the palaces will be forsaken. That was described in Isaiah 34.

The bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever. That is, lairs of animals.

It will become a wilderness. A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks, until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field and the fruitful field is counted as a forest. This is clearly a spiritual thing.

The Spirit will be poured out. In Isaiah 35, 7, its waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, but it is the Spirit that is referred to, according to Isaiah 32, 15. In Isaiah 41, verses 18 and 19, it says, I will open rivers in desolate heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys.

I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. And I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle, and so forth. The wilderness, again, being watered and fruitful, a common theme.

Chapter 44 of Isaiah, 44 verses 3 and 4. This is obviously another place where the water that is poured out is identified with the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 44, 3 and 4. I will pour water on him who is thirsty. Now, notice the thirsty land is now him that is thirsty, a thirsty person, spiritually thirsty.

And floods on the dry ground, which is... Now, see, there you have, in the Hebrew parallelism of poetry, it's made clear. The dry ground is him that is thirsty, a person. Spiritual thirst.

Pouring out water on him who is thirsty is the same as pouring out floods on the dry ground. And further, it is identified, I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants and my blessing on your offspring. They will spring up among the grass like willows by the water courses.

How anyone could fail to see that this is the same thing that Isaiah 35 is talking about would be beyond me. But look at Isaiah 55 now. Isaiah 55, verse 1 says, Ho, everyone that 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. Now, there's thirsty people addressed here.

Look at verse 10 in the same chapter. For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and do not return there, but water the earth and make it bring forth in bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth. It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please and it shall prosper in the thing which I sent it.

Now, what the Word of God accomplishes in the heart of man is likened to the rain coming down and causing the earth to bud and bloom. Furthermore, verse 12, for you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree. Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree. And it shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign that it shall not be cut off.

I realize we've read these verses previously, but I bring them up again to remind you how clear it is in some of these passages that the thorny, briar, jackal-infested desert is symbolic of the person who is spiritually dry, spiritually thirsty, spiritually dying. And the water poured out, the pools of water that result in cypress and cedars growing up and blossoming and blooming and fruit fulfilled and so forth as a result, all of that is pools of water and rivers bursting forth in the desert. This image that transforms the wasteland into a gardenland is the Spirit of God or in this case, the Word of God.

It's like the rain that comes down and causes the earth to bud. So is my Word, God's Word, God's Spirit. It is spiritual.

Therefore, as we look at Isaiah 35 and see the very same things there, we can say this is a spiritual thing everywhere associated with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and with the Word of God accomplishing it in the present age. Now, back to Isaiah 35. Only a few verses left.

Should take only an hour or so to get through. No, actually we will be done on time. I plan.

Verse 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.

Now, this way of holiness is spiritual. God's not going to build a real paved highway out in the desert. There would be no need to.

He's not predicting that. He's talking about a new way of life which is called holiness. The way of holiness.

It's like a highway. Now, why is it a highway? There was always... The Jews were always

expected to walk the way of holiness. But there was no highway of holiness.

Now, the difference between a way and a highway was that a highway was where the obstacles had been removed. The hindrances. People were expected to be holy in the Old Testament, but it was so difficult.

But what God was going to do in the New Covenant was make the way smooth. Every valley should be lifted up. The mountains should be brought low.

The rough places should be made smooth. It's said in Isaiah 40, talking about the same highway that John the Baptist announced was about to be made. Jesus came to make holiness accessible.

To make the way of holiness a smooth way. To make it not go against our grain. To make it not a rocky road for us.

To make it something that because of His Spirit poured out in the desert of our hearts, enabling us, holiness becomes the natural result of the Holy Spirit living out His character in us. Walking in the Spirit, we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8, verse 4 says. And so, as the Spirit is poured out in the desert, one of the results is that the way of holiness becomes a smooth road for those who wish to walk it. Now, who are they? Not the unclean.

The unclean can't walk on that road. Fools can, if fools be taken not in the moral sense of wicked fools, like Proverbs should use it, but people who are just plain not endowed intellectually. It doesn't take intellectual endowment, but it does take cleanness.

The unclean cannot walk there. Fools, even though fools are not very intelligent and tend to go straight, they won't go straight there. It doesn't take a genius, doesn't take a space scientist, a rocket scientist to live a holy life.

Jesus said, Father, I thank you that you've hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. In Matthew chapter 11, in the closing verses there. So, this is talking about holiness as a way of life.

Where the desert was will be a well-watered scene with a highway of holiness, which doesn't take great intelligence, but it does take cleanness to walk on it. It says in verse 9, No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go upon it. It shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

Now, the lion can represent dangers in general, spiritual dangers, or it could represent the wicked. Remember I said earlier, in Isaiah 11, we have the lion and the bear and the

wolf representing the Gentiles who are hostile to the Jews. To the righteous, the lion could just be those people who are hostile to them, or maybe the spiritual powers that are hostile to them.

But in any case, we know that Satan walks about like a roaring lion. I don't know exactly how far we're supposed to press the symbol into an exact meaning, or if it's just the general impression we're supposed to get is that this is a secure place. This is a place that God protects you when you're in the center of His will, walking in the midst of the highway of holiness.

There is safety there. There's security there. And it says, And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing.

Now, in Isaiah 51, 11, where this verse is found, it seems to be in the context of people returning from Babylon. The exiles returning to Zion from Babylon. But in that context, as we saw, it also speaks of the antitype of that, and the salvation in Jesus.

And here, the ransomed of the Lord. Jesus said, The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. And it says in Timothy, Paul said to Timothy, that Jesus gave His life a ransom for all.

Jesus has ransomed us, which in the word actually means the payment of a fee to release a slave from captivity or a prisoner from captivity. And so, Jesus' blood is the ransom. And those who have been ransomed shall return on this highway of holiness and shall come to Zion.

This has to be the spiritual Zion, with singing and everlasting joy on their heads. The reason the joy is everlasting is because they're involved in an everlasting covenant that will never be annulled. And they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sign shall flee away.

Now, sorrow and sign shall flee away may give the impression that there's no sadness anymore once you're a Christian. There are trials. But I think it's talking about the particular sign and sadness over the broken relationship with God.

The desert dry, the sign and groaning over their desert land condition. That'll be over because they won't be a desert land anymore. When Jesus said, Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

He probably was referring to people who were mourning over their spiritual condition. And the comfort that we receive is the comfort of justification and forgiveness. So, I personally believe that this chapter, almost every verse has some cross-reference that points us in the direction of identification with the church age.

Now, the reason that I labor over this as much as I do in this case is because it is a

typical kingdom passage. It has those things about it. The highway, it's got the, you know, the rivers and the desert.

It's got so many of the things that are in the various passages about the kingdom. There can be little reason to doubt that all of them are talking about the same thing. And if this is talking about the church age, then there's good reason to believe they all are.

Now, we would still perhaps want to check each one and test that theory on its own merits in each case. I believe when that is done, we will find it works, that all the passages work. And the New Testament is quoted frequently from them as applying to the church age.

The New Testament is quoted So I think that we'll find that to be true all the way through. But this is a good one to illustrate that, I think, because of the number of ways in which the New Testament brings out its meaning and by allusions and quotes from it. You know, rather than begin something else, I think we'll just consider chapters 34 and 35 a day's work here, a session's work, even though it will get out a little early.

I don't suppose anyone minds. Anyone here object to getting out early? I didn't think so. This is the third class today.

Why don't we just quit there and we'll take something else next time.