

ISAIAH 35:1-10
THE BETTER DAY TO COME !

Do you hope for and look forward to things being different? a better day? Less hectic, more predictable; less disappointments, more joy; less aches and pain, more peace; less failures, more successes? When you think you see a stretch of life lying ahead that's going to be better, does it somehow never materialize? This longing for a better day is in us all, but it will not be fulfilled until the end of time. When Jesus returns and we with resurrected glorified bodies which are re-united with the soul, enter life in heaven, then things will be better!

¹The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them; and the desert [the Arabah—the south region of Judah and beyond, including the Dead Sea and more] shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. ²It 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!

Old Testament Israel's godless neighbor Edom, which had rejoiced to see Judah fall, had just been addressed by Isaiah (Chapter 34), with words that Justice would come. Edom with its self-glory and idols would be brought down by the wrath of God, and ruined. Judah, on the other hand (Chapter 35—this text) had been taken captive into Babylon. During that time its land had become a waste. Judah would prosper again, more abundantly than ever. Its wilderness, its wasteland, its desert, would blossom and be green, splendid with joy! Certainly, you know the difference between walking through prairies, and pastures, and fields, that are brown and brittle vs. lush and green, blooming with flowers. Now imagine a desert, which has been blessed with rainy, breaking into bloom! I have heard it is beautiful! The lands sing for joy! Isaiah says Judah and its Arabah (desert of the south) will be lush with the greenery! The glory of the northern lands along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea—Lebanon (still a country today), Carmel, and the plain of Sharon—would be given to the Judah and its wilderness.

It's a glorious picture of God's blessings on His people—not just blessing them with a return from exile—which did happen. Five hundred years later Christ was born. Jesus' presence is the larger picture—His blessing and presence among sinners, bringing the blossom and greenery of forgiveness, bringing the peace that passes understanding! And through Jesus comes the ultimate day of deliverance and entrance into heaven at the End of Time—which we ponder today on the last Sunday of the Worship Year. In heaven God will give the greenery and beauty of Life forever. He gives it—His gift (birthday presents and Christmas presents as nothing)! YOURS BY GRAC! not by merit. The glorious presence of the Lord at your side—a better day!

³Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to those who are fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear!”

Certainly, the people in their captivity felt weak and feeble. Certainly, with age, hands don't have the power they once did; knees don't have the solid strength and stamina they once did. It makes one fearful of mastering life at hand. Sometimes the effect is the other way around. Because one is fearful, he lacks the boldness and the strength to move ahead.

God says to fearful hearts, ***“Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God, He will come and save you.”*** Do you want to give up, because you can't control life and are now afraid? God says do not fear! I am coming with vengeance to save you. He is in control. He will put down all the forces of sin, evil, and Satan that beset you. He comes to “save/rescue” you. Save! The name “Jesus” means “Savior”! Take heart! A better day—God's day in Christ—is coming! At the Last Day when He returns, the wicked will cry out to the mountains to cover them. The wicked will bow and cringe before their doom. But God's people, you and I, will gladly bow before Him in joy and delight. A better day has come—safe and saved!

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.

No longer will the effects of sin and evil, burden us. Remember how Jesus during His ministry on earth healed the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the mute! Likewise, and even more so, on the Last Day we will be raised up with glorified bodies! Glasses, hearing aids, crutches, braces—“*versenkt*”! (*German*)—sunk, gone for good! A better day! A day of great change! The body physically, mentally, and emotionally will function as God first intended it. And we will be spiritually in tune with Him 100%! Heaven!

For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. 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.

How valuable is water in the desert? How valuable is water here on the plains? Water is what keeps things going. Jesus is the water of life! He told the woman at Jacob's Well, "*Whoever drinks of this water [well-water] will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.*" (John 4:13-14). God made water gush out of the rock for the Children of Israel in the Desert of Sinai. In heaven, Jesus will be the abundant water of life forever! No jackals—desert dogs—lurking to destroy, rob, and distress! A better day!

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. 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.

Talk about a better day! Can you imagine traveling in the desert? Trails would be easily wiped out—there one day; but, with the wind and shifting sand, gone the next. Walking itself would be difficult with the drag of soft sand underfoot—like walking in snow. Dis-orienting surroundings—all looks the same. Meeting unfriendly habitants—be they beast or desert bandits. But not so in God's Kingdom.

There will be better conditions. A highway! Not just a trail, but a road "cast up / built up / elevated"—a "high"way for easy travel! Surely you know the difference in winter between traveling on an elevated road (whether it's paved or not) vs. a terrain-level road. On the road level with the terrain, the low spots are the first to fill in with snow, the spots behind cuts and ridges fill in quickly. However, on a "high"way, the snow blows across and clear of the road. Isaiah says that this highway back to Jerusalem on which the freed captives travel is the Highway of Holiness. It is for God's people, not robbers or bushwhackers. Nor will any wolves, dogs, wildcats, badgers, or rattlesnakes be there to attack. The Highway of Holiness. Even a simple thinking person won't take the wrong turn on this road, but be able to follow its route. This is the road for those whom the Lord has redeemed from captivity, those for whom He has paid the ransom price to set them free. No one can contradict that.

This highway is also the road to heaven in Christ. The failures and reversals of this life cannot interfere with the Lord's plans and direction for you. Your captivity to sin and to death is overturned in the Lord Jesus. You are on that Highway right now, although at time still overcome by sin's weakness and fear. The Lord has put you on that one road home. It's a good feeling to know you're on the road home. Home! The road, that highway, is Jesus. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except by Me!" (John 14:6).

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!

Is it because "you're worth it" that the Lord has done all this? No. It's because God is love. He paid the price to free you, the hostage, from the judgment-for-sin. He freed you with His "vicarious atonement." He made peace, "atoned," for you with God by serving as your substitute, your "vicar,"

With singing you are headed to Zion! "Zion" was originally the name for that part of Jerusalem where the early citadel—safety zone—and the Temple of the Lord were. That name itself meant "sunny" or "bright"—definitely a bright spot for peace and security. The name Zion was later applied to all of Jerusalem, then to the people of Judah, and to our home in heaven! You are headed to Zion too! On Judgment Day Jesus will say to those humbly clasping Him by faith, "Come inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." With joy you shall enter into everlasting joy and gladness! Things will be changed and different forever!

Sorrow and sighing shall flee away!

Sorrow and sighing will more than "back off" for a time, while lurking in the shadows. Sorrow and sighing will FLEE and be GONE! They cannot co-exist with joy and gladness in Christ! Are you waiting for things to be different? In Jesus they are, and will thoroughly be so, on the Last Day!