

Jesus' Healing Ministry

Isaiah 35:5-6

Introduction:

- **Isaiah 35**, though not directly quoted in the New Testament, contains one of the Old Testament's most beautiful prophecies of Jesus' future ministry. The words of **Isaiah 35:5-6a** are particularly famous, because they prophecy of Jesus' healing ministry. These verses have been either cited or quoted in many hymns and sacred choral works down through the years—including Charles Wesley's hymn "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (1739), and George Frederick Handel's famous oratorio, *Messiah* (1741).
- However, though this famous prophecy certainly *applies* to Christ's ministry during His first Coming to earth, it will have its ultimate fulfilment when Christ returns to earth for the Second time! Like many messianic prophecies, this prophecy has both a "near" application and a "far" fulfilment. All the prophecies in **Isaiah 35** (including **verses 5 and 6**) foretell the Paradise-like conditions of the earth, and the ministry of Christ, during the future 1,000-year Kingdom of Jesus Christ!

Isaiah 35:1-10

I. The blessing upon the land in Christ's Kingdom (vv. 1-2, 6b-7, 9)

A. The event immediately preceding the blessing on the land: The Battle of Armageddon

- In **Isaiah 34**, we are given a description of the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation, and of the perpetually uninhabited condition of part of the land of Edom ("Idumea") after the battle, and throughout the 1,000-year Kingdom. Edom, located just to the southwest of Israel, was the land that was inhabited by the descendants of Esau, the elder son of Isaac. This nation was cursed by God in ancient times because of their perpetual hatred of Israel, which began with their father Esau.

Genesis 27:38-41

- Though the modern descendants of Esau who survive the Tribulation and enter into the Kingdom age will all be saved people, their ancient land (in the north-western tip of modern Saudi Arabia), will remain partially uninhabited during the Kingdom, as a reminder of God's curse upon those nations who have tried to destroy His covenant people, Israel. From other Scripture, we know that part of the ancient land of Edom will actually become part of the land of Israel during the Kingdom. As we saw in a past lesson, the saved Edomites themselves will be "incorporated" into the land of Israel.

Isaiah 34:1-10

Obadiah 1-3, 10-21

Amos 9:11-12

- The uninhabited portion of Edom during the Tribulation will be divided up for the animal kingdom.

Isaiah 34:11-17

B. The removal of the curse upon the land of Israel (and upon the earth in general) (vv. 1-2, 7)

- With this in mind, we now come to the opening of **Isaiah 35**. In **verse 1**, we are told that *“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them.”* The pronoun “them” refers back to the animals that will be given their habitations in the land of Edom.
- However, the LORD is now no longer speaking of the land of Edom, but of the land of Israel. (Carmel and Sharon, in **verse 2**, are a mountain and plain in northern Israel.) We are told that the Israeli desert will “blossom abundantly.” The extremely dry, parched ground that once covered Israel will become filled with pools of water.
- To understand how profound this prophecy is, it is important to realise the changes that the land has undergone since the Israelites first entered it 3,400 years ago. When Israel first entered Israel, God described it as a “land flowing with milk and honey,” and with succulent fruits. (Scripture mentions this phrase “land flowing with milk and honey” 23 times.) We also are told that there were thick forests in Israel, and abundant animal life.

Exodus 3:8, 17

Numbers 13:23-27 / 14:7-8

1 Samuel 22:5

2 Samuel 18:6-8

- However, these abundant blessings depended upon Israel’s obedience to God. God often withheld rain from Israel during times of great apostasy—or else, gave them just enough rain to survive—because of their disobedience.

Amos 4:6-8

- Even in the time of Christ, the Jewish-Roman historian Josephus gave this glowing description of the land:

“For the whole area is excellent for crops and pasturage, and rich in trees of every kind, so that by its fertility, it invites even those least inclined to work on the land. Every part of it has been cultivated by the inhabitants, and not a parcel of it goes to waste. It is thickly covered with towns, thanks to the natural abundance in the soil. Many villages are...densely populated.”¹

- However, after the Jews were scattered from the land by the Romans in A.D. 70 and A.D. 130, the rain mysteriously stopped. For nineteen centuries, the land was a hot, dry, barren wasteland that couldn't produce anything, no matter how hard anyone tried. The Romans, the Byzantines, the Muslim Saracens, the Crusaders, the Ottoman Turks, and the British all occupied the land, and tried to cultivate it, but to no avail. Only the hardest people attempted to live there. Here are some descriptions of the land by pilgrims who visited it as recently as the late 19th century:

1. Alfon Lamartine, *Recollections from the East*, 1845:

“Outside the walls of Jerusalem we saw no living being, heard no living voice, we encountered that desolation and deadly silence which we would have expected to find at the ruined gates of Pompey. A total, eternal, dread spell envelopes the city, the highways, and the villages.”²

2. Famous American author, Mark Twain, after his visit to Israel in the 1860's:

“The further we went, the hotter the sun got, and the more rocky and bare. Repulsive and dreary the landscape became.”

Twain called the area around the Sea of Galilee a “blistering, naked, treeless land.” The villages were “ugly, cramped, squalid, uncomfortable, and filthy.” He called it a “solitude to make one dreary, unpeopled deserts, rusty mounds of barrenness.”

When talking about the Judean hills, he said, “Close to us was a stream, and on its banks a great herd of curious looking Syrian sheep; and the sheep were gratefully eating gravel. I do not state this as a petrified fact—I only suppose they were eating gravel because there did not appear to be anything else for them to eat.”³

3. In 1905, right at the time when many Jews were beginning to return to the land of Israel, the prime minister of the Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper, said, “The Jews have come [returned to Israel] in vain. Only God can check the blight of the inrushing desert.”⁴
4. One author in the 1800's estimated the number of trees in Israel, and calculated that there were less than 1,000! It is now estimated that there are more than 1.2 billion

¹ Pastor Billy Crone, Countdown to Eternity, The Jewish People (Part 1). Sermon delivered in Sunrise Baptist Church, Las Vegas, NV, 2012

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

trees! Israel is now the bread basket of the Middle East. Just as in ancient times, Israel produces massive, succulent fruit, which they export all over the world. The desert also literally blooms with an abundance of flowers.⁵

- One can try to explain this away by saying that the land is producing because of the irrigation efforts, farming techniques, and technology that the Jews have employed. Though it is true that Israel has worked hard to make the land bloom, it does not account for the fact that no other nation was able to make it bloom for 19 centuries! God has supernaturally made the rain to return, and the land to bloom again, just for Israel!
- However, all this having been said, it must be understood that the prophecies about the healing of the land here in **Isaiah 35** have still not actually been fulfilled yet! These prophecies will not come to pass until after Christ returns to set up the 1,000-year Kingdom. The remarkable restoration of productivity in the land of Israel that we are now seeing does not compare to the supernatural productivity that God will give to the land during the Kingdom age!

C. The removal of the curse upon the animal kingdom (v. 9)

- In **verse 9**, we are told that no lions or ravenous beasts will walk upon the Highway of Holiness, which will be built to accommodate pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem to worship the Messiah. However, we know from other Scripture that not only will the ravenous animals not plague the land, but their ferocious nature will actually be removed!

Isaiah 11:6-8

Isaiah 65:25

II. The deliverance of Israel from her enemies when Christ sets up His Kingdom (vv. 3-4)

- **Verses 3 and 4** are directed to those Jewish believers who are of “fearful heart.” This certainly can apply to Jewish believers in any age, because Israel has constantly been threatened by enemies on every hand. (For example, the righteous Jews in Isaiah’s own day had good *human* reason to fear the empire of Assyria.) However, this statement seems to be directed to Jews who will be living during the Tribulation period, in particular. The Tribulation will be a time of tremendous fear for everyone (**Luke 21:25-26**); but Jewish believers, especially, will have reason to fear, since the Antichrist’s wrath will be especially directed against them. God is assuring them that He will preserve them until the end of the Tribulation, and will return to earth to defeat her enemies, and exact “vengeance” upon them.

Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17

Matthew 24:15-31

⁵ *Ibid.*

Zechariah 14:1-3, 12

Revelation 19:11-16

- Though **verse 3** is directed toward Jewish believers during the future Tribulation, it is, nonetheless, quoted by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, and is applied to Christians living in the New Testament age.

Hebrews 12:12

- To the Hebrew Christians who were fainting and weary in their Christian race on account of the persecution they were undergoing for Christ, Paul quoted **Isaiah 35:3** in order to encourage them. Though New Testament Christians are particularly anticipating the Rapture of all New Testament saints to heaven (**Philippians 3:20-21**), and not the Second Coming of Christ to earth (as the Jews during the Tribulation will be doing), the principle remains the same: we are waiting for Christ to deliver us! Basically, Paul is saying, “The end of the race is in sight. The LORD will return, and we will see our deliverance. So be strong! Don’t let your limbs droop and grow feeble because of fear. Don’t slow down. Draw your strength from the LORD, and keep running toward the prize!”
- Incidentally, the word “hands” speaks of doing service for the Lord; whereas the word “knees” speaks of holding oneself upright. Every believer should have hands that are continually serving God, and “knees” that are standing firm and upright for the Lord.

III. The new highway in Christ’s Kingdom (v. 8)

- As was mentioned in our lesson on **Isaiah 11**, there will be a superhighway that will traverse from Egypt to modern-day Iraq in order to accommodate pilgrims who will be travelling from all parts of the earth to worship Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. It will be called the “Way of Holiness.”

Isaiah 11:16

Zechariah 14:16

- The name “Way of Holiness” is not “just a name.” The name of the highway will actually reflect the spiritual condition of those who travel on it! People who are “unclean” (not just “unclean” in regard to outward, ritual purification, but in their hearts) will not be permitted to travel on this highway toward Jerusalem. Even “fools” will know better than to dare to set foot on that Highway of Holiness, when they know their hearts are not prepared to stand before the Messiah!

IV. The joy of the Jewish remnant in Christ’s Kingdom (v. 10)

- This same statement concerning the return of the Jewish believers to Zion is stated again in **Isaiah 51**.

Isaiah 51:10-11 [Notice that the LORD will dry the “sea” in order that people may have easy accommodation to travel to Zion to worship the Messiah. This matches what we read in **Isaiah 11:15-16** about how the LORD will “destroy” the “tongue of the Egyptian Sea” (the Red Sea, where the children of Israel once crossed by a miracle), in order that the Highway of Holiness may be built over it.]

- Thus far, the Jewish people have “returned to Zion” on at least two notable occasions in history: when they returned from Babylon in 535 B.C., and when they returned to the newly-formed state of Israel in 1948. These were times of great joy for them; but none will match the true, spiritual joy of those Jews who will return to Zion after Jesus the Messiah sits down on His throne in Jerusalem. Once again they will sing the songs of Zion; and the Levites will lead in the Temple singing and worship, as they did in Old Testament days.

Ezekiel 40:44

Psalms 68:24-29

V. Christ’s healing ministry during His future Kingdom (5-6a)

A. The setting for Jesus’ healing ministry: the Kingdom age

- Clearly, this entire chapter speaks of the blessings in the land of Israel during the 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ. Yet, right in the middle of this chapter, we find this prophecy of Jesus’ healing ministry. There are times when a prophecy of a future event is situated right in the middle of a Scripture passage that otherwise speaks of something else; but such is not the case with **Isaiah 35:5-6**. The word “then” at the beginning of **verses 5 and 6** indicates that Jesus’ healing ministry will take place after He returns to earth to set up His Kingdom.
- Obviously, Christ healed many people in His first Advent to earth. In fact, He did so many miracles, that John reckoned that the world itself could not contain all the books that would need to be written in order to record them all (**John 21:25**). However, that does not change the fact that this prophecy concerns the Kingdom age.
- So, there is only one conclusion: **Isaiah 35:5-6** *applies* to Christ’s first coming, but will be ultimately fulfilled in His Second Coming. Jesus did many great miracles of healing during His 3-year ministry 2,000 years ago; but as great as those miracles were, they are only a small “foretaste” or “preview” of what Christ will do in His Second Advent. In other words...we haven’t seen anything yet! Jesus will teach the entire world during the Kingdom age, just as He did 2,000 years ago; and likewise, He will *heal* the sick during the 1,000-year Kingdom, just as He did 2,000 years ago. Sickness and disease will still exist, because there will still be sin in the mortals who will be living on earth; but Jesus will, by His healing ministry, continually prove to new generations of people being born that He is God and Messiah!

B. The most direct New Testament reference to **Isaiah 35:5-6**

- The most direct reference to **Isaiah 35:5-6** in the New Testament is in **Matthew 11**, where Christ made mention of His miracles. The backdrop for Jesus' statement is that John the Baptist was in prison for preaching the truth, and was beginning to have doubts about whether Jesus were the Messiah. (Even John did not fully understand that there would be two distinct advents of the Messiah to earth—the first for the purpose of dying for our sins, and the second for the purpose of setting up the Kingdom.) In order to reassure John that He was, indeed, the Messiah, Jesus said this:

Matthew 11:1-6

In this verse, Jesus reminded John that by His power...

1. The blind received their sight.
 2. The lame walked.
 3. The lepers were cleansed.
 4. The deaf heard.
 5. The dead were raised up.
 6. The poor had the Gospel preached to them.
- Though these are not direct quotations of the Old Testament, Jesus is obviously reminding John of several Old Testament passages where His miracles (or works) were prophesied:

Isaiah 29:17-19 (Notice the setting in which the deaf will be made to hear: it is, once again, during the Kingdom age.)

Isaiah 33:20-24 (The “sick” would include those with diseases such as leprosy.)

Isaiah 35:5-6

Isaiah 61:1 (This prophecy emphasises Jesus' preaching of the “gospel” (“good tidings”) to the “meek”—i.e., to those who had humbled themselves and become “poor in spirit” so that they might receive Christ.)

C. Examples of Jesus' healing ministry in His first coming

1. The blind

Mark 8:22-25

John 9:1-11

2. The deaf

Mark 7:31-37

3. The lame

John 5:9

Luke 5:17-26

4. The dumb

Matthew 15:29-31

5. The sick
 - a. Those who were physically sick

Luke 5:12-16

- b. Those who were sick in mind and heart because of bondage to sin

Mark 5:1-20

D. The way that Jesus healed

- It is important to realise the *manner* in which Jesus healed, because our modern world is awash with fake “healers” who claim the name of Christ. Compare the way Jesus healed to the way that modern healers “heal.”
 1. Jesus healed by a touch, or by a mere word.

Jesus did not need a platform and a huge crowd, with plenty of loud, rocking, repetitive, altered-state-of-consciousness inducing music in order to get people into an emotional state in which they could believe that they were seeing miracles. He did not urge people to say hypnotising, mind-numbing mantras over and over again; nor did He play with people’s emotions. He healed people in any setting—whether walking down a street in a crowd, or in a private home, or in a synagogue. Sometimes, He healed people who were miles away, merely by saying the word. Modern “healers” cannot do this! They need plenty of “hype” and crowd manipulation to make people believe they are healing.

Mark 1:29-31

Mark 5:21-34

Matthew 8:5-13

2. Jesus healed instantly.

When Jesus healed the lame and paralytic, they stood (or even *jumped*) up immediately! Modern “healers” always make sure that people in wheelchairs who are permitted to come up on the platform *are* able to walk to begin with, and are not totally paralytic. And then, after the people are “healed,” they slowly stand up from their wheelchair and feebly walk across the stage, waving their hands and claiming to be “healed.” Not so with those whom Jesus healed. They were *instantaneously* healed (not progressively), and it was obvious to all. Unlike people who are “healed” by modern “faith healers,” they didn’t say, “I’ve been healed, but I’m still getting better. I just need to take it easy for a few days.”

Matthew 8:13

Mark 2:10-12

Mark 5:29

Luke 17:14

John 5:9

3. He healed completely.

Never were there crushed, devastated people who walked away from Jesus *not* healed, only to be told that they weren’t healed because they “just didn’t have enough faith to be healed.” For one thing, Jesus did not always require *complete, saving* faith before He healed. Though Scripture does often record that Jesus healed people in answer to their faith, some people came to full, saving faith after Jesus had healed them.

John 5:1-14

John 9:1-7, 24-38

Modern “healers” instruct the people whom they’ve “healed” to “claim their healing by faith.” But such was never the case with Jesus. Jesus did often say, “*As thou hast believed, so be it done unto you*”; but once they were healed, there was no need for them to cling to the belief that they were healed—as though there might be human reason to doubt. They had no more symptoms of sickness that *might cause* them to doubt the validity of their healing. *They were completely healed*; and both they and everyone else around them were 100% sure of it!

Luke 4:38-39 (Not only did Peter’s mother-in-law get up immediately: she immediately began to serve everyone!)

Acts 3:1-11

Jesus' apostles had the same instantaneous result in their healing, because they truly had the power of Jesus Christ upon them! The lame man didn't slowly get up; he jumped up, and kept jumping and leaping with the strength of a healthy child! The lame *never* do this when the modern "healers" heal them!

4. He healed every single person.

Luke 4:40

Modern "healers" cannot claim this. Anyone who has ever taken the trouble to investigate the faith healers' claims has discovered that the people whom the "healers" allegedly healed were not really healed; and those with terminal diseases were discovered to have died later. Furthermore, unlike the modern "healers," who end the service promptly so that they can catch their private jets to their next crusade, Jesus laboured long into the evening, and healed *every single one!* No one who came to Him for healing was turned away.

5. He healed people with organic diseases.

Jesus did not heal people with "invisible" problems such as back pain, headaches, or one leg slightly longer than the other. He healed people who were completely paralyzed; had withered hands; had grossly crippled legs; were blind or deaf; or had leprosy. Modern "healers" never do this!

6. He raised the dead!

Mark 5:38-43

Luke 7:11-18

John 11:38-44

Jesus didn't heal people who were on the brink of death (such as on an operating table, which can certainly be contested); He healed people who were *undeniably dead*. In Lazarus' case, he had been dead for 4 days, was buried in a tomb sealed with an enormous boulder, and was bound in a 100-pound "cocoon" of grave clothes and hardened myrrh! Modern "healers" sometimes claim to have raised the dead; but they never give any names, exact locations, dates, or anything that could confirm or deny their claim (such as a video). For example, in a very well-known interview with Benny Hinn on TBN, Hinn made this amazing claim:

"I was in Ghana just recently -- we had half a million people show up -- and a man was raised from the dead on the platform. That's a fact, people. A man was raised from the dead on the platform. We have it on video."

The trouble with this claim is that there was no video, as he claimed; and there were no reports whatsoever of anyone being raised from the dead in Ghana, despite their being thousands of people who supposedly saw this happen! In an interview with Dateline NBC, Hinn later revised his story (when forced to explain it) and claimed that he did not see this miracle happen—although he did “hear about it”!

Jesus raised the dead by His own authority; and in doing so, He proved Himself to be God. Only God has the power to raise the dead.

1 Samuel 2:6

E. The purpose of Jesus’ healing

1. To prove that Jesus is the Messiah

John 4:46-54

The most important reason Jesus healed was to show that He is indeed God and Messiah, so that people would believe on Him and be saved. He was constantly urging people who lacked true faith (such as this nobleman) to believe on Him before He healed. If Jesus had healed the man’s son, yet hadn’t challenged him about his salvation, the nobleman would have had a physically healed son, but still have gone to hell!

John 20:30-31

2. To show compassion

Despite the teaching of modern “faith healers,” the Lord certainly is not obligated to heal all believers of all sicknesses that they have. Even Christ’s Apostles and their co-workers, who healed others through Christ’s power, were often sick themselves, and were not permitted to be healed, in order that they might learn to trust in Christ’s sufficient grace (**2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 4:14-15; Philippians 2:25-30**). However, Jesus did heal those who humbly entreated Him. He did this not only to prove that He is Messiah, but also to show compassion and mercy on them.

Mark 1:40-42

3. To show that His plan for man is bodily resurrection

Jesus’ healing of the sick disproves the Hindu teaching of *samsara* (reincarnation). (Of course, reincarnation is taught in many different forms in many pagan religions throughout the world, and not just in Hinduism.) Reincarnation directly denies the Bible’s teaching that “*the wages of sin is death*,” because it denies that death is even real! According to the false teaching of reincarnation, you don’t really die, because your spirit, after death, simply goes to live in another body (and so on, and so on). But the Bible assures us that death *is* real. By biblical definition, death is separation not

only of the spirit from the body (temporarily), but, more importantly, separation of the soul from God, in a place of eternal punishment.

Genesis 3:1-5

Romans 5:12

Romans 6:23

Ephesians 2:1

Revelation 20:11-15

If reincarnation be true, then healing people's bodies should not have been Jesus' concern at all! In fact, the "gurus" who teach reincarnation teach that it is wrong to try to heal or soothe people's physical ailments, since that person with the ailment is "paying" for a wrong that he did in a "past life." According to the teaching of the "gurus," to try to heal someone's sickness would be to mess up that person's "karma" (debt of bad actions in "past lives")! Religions that teach reincarnation always teach, in some form or other, that material flesh is either an illusion, and unimportant; or, that it is actually *evil*, and needs to be shed, so that one can be in the spirit state, and become a "god."

The Bible's teaching could not be more radically different. Jesus' healing of people shows that the human body has dignity, because *God* created man to have a body and spirit. Man is a "living soul"—which is, by biblical definition, body and soul together.

Genesis 2:7

Even unsaved people will have a bodily resurrection (although their bodies will be fit for eternal destruction, pain, and punishment in the Lake of Fire, and will still have the sin nature). Saved people will have a glorious, sinless, resurrected body that is fit for heaven. But all men will have real, resurrected bodies of flesh and bone, because that is what God created men to have.

John 5:28-29

Philippians 3:20-21

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Revelation 20:5, 12 / 22:11

Ultimately, Jesus' healing ministry (especially His raising of the dead) points to God's plan of the "resurrection of life" for all believers! The resurrection of Lazarus and others was temporary: they all died again later. But one day, all believers will have a bodily resurrection that will be everlasting.

4. To bring glory to God

Ultimately, Jesus' healing of the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb was not merely for the sake of the people who were healed; it was for the purpose of bringing glory to God!

Matthew 15:31

Conclusion: Isaiah 35 is a prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. This passage prophesies of the removal of the curse from the ground during the Kingdom age, and of the removal of hostility in the animal kingdom. It prophesies of the deliverance of Israel from her enemies, and of the Highway of Holiness that will be built for the joyful travellers to Zion. But the centrepiece of all the prophecies in this chapter is the prophecy of the healing ministry that Christ will perform during the Kingdom age. The miracles that Jesus did during His *first* coming to earth were truly glorious; but they are merely a “preview” of even greater glories to come!