

The Coming Tribulation Period and Messianic Kingdom of Blessing

Isaiah 34-35

Isaiah 34 - *“Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. ² 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. ³ Also their slain shall be thrown out; their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. ⁴ All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll. All their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree.*

⁵ “For My sword shall be bathed in heaven. Indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment. ⁶ The sword of the Lord is filled with blood. It is made overflowing with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. ⁷ The wild oxen shall come down with them, and the young bulls with the mighty bulls. Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust saturated with fatness.” ⁸ For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance; the year of recompense for the cause of Zion. ⁹ Its streams shall be turned into pitch, and its dust into brimstone; its land shall become burning pitch. ¹⁰ It shall not be quenched night or day; its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; no one shall pass through it forever and ever. ¹¹ 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. ¹² They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all its princes shall be nothing. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals, and the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; also the night creature shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ “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. ¹⁷ 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.”

Background Notes

Isaiah 34 and 35 conclude the section of six “woes” that began in chapter 28. This section concluded with the worldwide scope of God’s future judgment on this earth (chapter 34), and God’s future blessings on this earth (chapter 35).

Doctrinal Points

1. All nations, including unfaithful Israel, will be judged during the Tribulation period.

In Jeremiah 30:7 the future Tribulation period was described as “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” The Tribulation period will be a final time of purging for the Jewish people - but out of that time of trouble will come a restored Israel, as we will see in Isaiah 35.

Chapter 34 predicted that the coming judgments of the Tribulation period will not only be upon the secular state of Israel, but on all the nations of the world: *“For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies”(v1-2).*

The horrors of verse 3 bring to mind the conditions at the end of the Tribulation period, as described in Revelation 19:17-18. The cosmic disturbances in verse 4 are described under the sixth seal of judgment in the Tribulation period.

The biggest question about Isaiah 34:5 (and the following verses) is - Why was Edom singled out from all the other nations? Verse 5: *“For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment.*

There are several possibilities reasons:

a. Edom, as descendants of Esau, should have been more friendly with their Jewish brothers. Instead, Edom made Israel its long time enemy, so Edom will be singled out from the other nations.

b. Edom here represents all the other nations. Thus what will be true of God’s judgment upon Edom specifically, will also be true of God’s judgment in general on all the other nations.

c. The End Time campaign against Jerusalem will extend from Edom. I favor this possible reason. When all the nations of the world will be gathered against Jerusalem in the End Time (Zechariah 12:3), they will start their campaign from the Jezreel Valley in the north. But many of the armies will extend down the Jordan River Valley all the way to the ancient land of Edom, so that Jerusalem will be completely surrounded. Then, when the Lord returns in judgment to end this Armageddon campaign, His victory will start in the north and sweep all the way down to ancient Edom, eliminating the anti-Semitic armies of the world.

This may be why Revelation 14:20 says that the ground will be soaked with blood for almost 200 miles. If you start at the Mediterranean coast of the Jezreel Valley, move east to the Jordan Valley, and then south to the city of Bozrah in the ancient land of Edom, you will cover about 200 miles.

Furthermore, Isaiah 63 seems to indicate that when the Lord returns, He will come in victory **from Edom**, before He establishes His earthly kingdom with His capital city of Jerusalem. Isaiah 63:1: *“Who is this who comes from Edom, from Bozrah, with His garments dyed crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of His strength?”*

If I were to describe a brief scenario of events at the Lord’s second coming, it would go as follows: The Lord will touch down at the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14). He will then go north with His heavenly army (and that includes us!), and He will begin His sweeping victory from the Jezreel Valley (where Har Megiddo is located). He will then move down the Jordan Valley and finish up in the ancient land of Edom, where the godly remnant of Jewish people may have taken refuge in Petra. He will then come from Edom to Jerusalem, in strength and splendor, to set up His glorious kingdom.

Time will tell if this brief speculated sketch of events is close to actual reality. And we may actually know in the not too distant future, because we may be on the threshold of End Time events! We may be alive for the Rapture of the Church!

The most difficult problem in interpreting Isaiah 34:9-17 is determining the time period in which the devastated and isolated conditions of Edom fit. Remember, this is after the Lord’s judgment as described in verses 5-8. The Hebrew word that is translated “forever” in verses 10 and 17 can be translated “into the distant future.”

It is possible that this whole area will be left in these devastated conditions throughout the Millennium – perhaps as a reminder of God’s former judgments on those who attack His people, and as a warning to those who will rebel at the end of the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20).

The mention of “the Book of the Lord” (v16), and the fact that “His mouth has commanded these judgments,” and the fact that His Spirit will execute them, all emphasize the absolute certainty of these coming judgments. All nations, including unfaithful Israel, will be judged during the Tribulation period.

2. All nations, including restored Israel, will be blessed during the Millennial kingdom.

Isaiah 35 - *“The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; ² It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it; the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellence of our God.*

³ Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

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

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, 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.”*

These verses were not a description of blessings on Israel when they returned from their Babylonian captivity, and they do not describe the spiritual blessings that we enjoy in the Church today (as some incorrectly teach). These are the blessings of the literal earthly millennial kingdom of Christ that will be established here on this earth when the Lord returns. This kingdom will last for 1000 years, and then it will merge with eternity (Revelation 20).

The Land, including the wilderness, will become productive: *“And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice”* (v1-2). And, *“For waters 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”* (v6-7).

Fear and anxiety will be removed (v4). There will be physical healing (v5-6). A “Highway of Holiness” will lead up to Jerusalem, and the redeemed will travel it in confidence and safety. They will be filled with joy as they come to worship the Lord (v8-10). All nations, including restored Israel, will be blessed during the Millennial kingdom.

Practical Application

Travel the “Highway of Holiness” today!

We believe that the “Highway of Holiness” described in Isaiah 35:8 will be a real, literal roadway, and redeemed pilgrims will travel on it as they go up to worship the Lord in Jerusalem during the Millennium. *“A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness.”*

God’s people will walk a literal highway in the future - but what about our worship of the Lord and walk with the Lord now? True worship is a way of life! Are we walking the Highway of Holiness with Him, in life of obedience and worship today?

Do we strive to honor the Lord daily by leading a holy life? Are we obeying the Lord’s command in 1 Peter 1:15-16: *“Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, ‘Be ye holy, because I am holy,’ says the Lord?”*

Although we can’t be sinless in this life, we should **sin less**.

Travel the “Highway of Holiness” today!