

# Jesus is Our Hope

## *December 11, 2022*

### Lesson Summary

#### ***Main Passages***

Isaiah 35:1-10

#### ***Session Outline***

1. Restoration Will Come (Isaiah 35:1-2)
2. The People Will Flourish (Isaiah 35:3-7)
3. Highway of Hope (Isaiah 35:8-10)

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#### ***Theological Theme***

After the judgment, God promises restoration. Believers can look with anticipation to the future and what will happen when Jesus returns. Regardless of the difficult things you may be walking through, Advent reminds us that hope is found in Jesus.



## Leader Guide

# Jesus is Our Hope

### Introduction

There are numerous popular television shows that focus on restoration projects. Old, dilapidated, broken down pieces of furniture, houses, or cars are treated with all the things necessary to restore them to their original condition or even make them better. This is a big business, and those who are trained in this area can accomplish miraculous results. There is something satisfying about watching a transformation take place, whether for a small item or an entire house.

Think about why these shows draw in so many viewers and are entertaining. Things don't always go perfectly, but we can trust that the process will work out in the end. Maybe we can relate. How often do you feel like a failure? Have you ever felt broken down, like your life has lost its luster? There is something to be said for the hope we feel when we watch a transformation take place. This process reminds us that we also are not beyond restoration when we find our hope in Jesus.

- ❓ What is one of your favorite restoration shows? Why do you think they are so popular in our culture?
- ❓ Why do you think all people are drawn to the idea of restoration?

### Session Summary

After Isaiah described a terrible, black season of judgment in the previous chapters, today's text takes a turn and reminds us that all will be restored in God's time. Blessing will follow judgment for both the people and the land. Believers are encouraged to place their hope in Christ and look forward to His return and the glory that will be revealed.

### 1. Restoration Will Come (Isaiah 35:1-2)

In chapter 35, Isaiah painted a picture of what would come after the devastating punishment he described in earlier chapters. In chapter 34, God made it clear that the people would suffer the consequences of their ungodliness and be turned into a wilderness. Now Isaiah turned his writing to the restoration God had already planned to bring to the land and the people themselves.

This was dry, barren, and desolate land was going to be glad. Though it may seem odd to think about nature being sad or glad, the imagery applies to both the land and the people of God. The Lord promises that His people will be transformed from a wilderness into a glad and bountiful garden. Isaiah stated that blessing would come after the judgment. God's people did enjoy restoration when Judah returned to Jerusalem after the invasion, and Israel has continued to see different examples of a blossoming desert. So, some aspects of this promise have taken place already, but other aspects point to the time when Jesus will return to earth. This is the hope Isaiah wanted to give the people.

 Can you think of an example where nature seemed to be glad or sad? How would you describe this?

There are times in our lives when we feel as if we are struggling through a wilderness. It may be the result of some bad decisions on our part, or things beyond our control. The same hope Isaiah wrote about for the people is true for us today. Whatever difficult or devastating situations you may be facing, you are not alone. God will, in His timing, restore what was destroyed. Our responsibility is to persevere and trust that He is working on our behalf. Our faith should be in the Lord alone and not in the nations, our own works, or our own power.

 When has your life felt like a dry and desolate wilderness? How did you relate to God in this time?

The specific places listed as examples of God's restoration were known for lavish and abundant vegetation. So, God didn't just promise to make things slightly better—He promised to take the wilderness and transform it completely. He promised to do the miraculous. Our God is a God of abundance. He desires for His people to trust Him and believe Him. When you face a wilderness of some kind, you can trust that the Lord knows what He is doing, and He alone has the power to restore completely.

The last part of verse 2 reminds us why we can trust the promises of God and why He made the promises He did. The ultimate purpose of all that happens is to bring glory to the Lord. The lost world is watching to see how we as believers respond in the wilderness seasons. When we trust God and wait for His timing, He receives glory, and the world recognizes the majesty of our God. This should give us motivation to keep moving toward Jesus. To stay faithful and trust His plans. To resist attempting to manipulate circumstances in order to make the wilderness a little easier. God will restore the land and the people; we just need to trust Him.

 Application: How do you need to trust God more in this season of life? How will you do that?

## 2. The People Will Flourish (Isaiah 35:3-7)

There is no doubt that times of judgment or wilderness can make a person feel weak and cause knees to tremble. Isaiah made the point that when you trust God in all things, He will strengthen and empower you. As His people, we have no need to fear what others can do or what we may face. God wants us to seek strength in Him and continue in what He has called us to do. The description of weak hands and knees represents the way we live before God. Hands represent what you do, and knees represent where you go. If your hands and knees are weak, then the implication is that you are not making progress in your walk with Jesus. Though salvation is a free gift that comes through faith in Christ, a result of that faith is living a righteous life that is an example to the world around us. We are to be set apart from those who don't know Jesus. Now is the time to be strong in your faith and keep progressing as a believer. We are all works in progress—the key is to be progressing in the right direction.

 How do you relate to the weak hands and feeble knees imagery? What might threaten to immobilize you in your walk with Jesus?

No one makes it through life without experiencing fear on some level. Hearing about the coming judgment would be daunting and fear-inducing. Isaiah wrote words of encouragement to the people: when facing trials, it is vital to find hope in the Lord. The world wants to tell us that many other things will remove fear from our hearts and lives, but only God can do that. Our hearts need much more than vague optimism on something that might make a difference in our circumstances. Bold confidence that God will come and save us is the key to standing strong, whatever our circumstances.

 How has confidence in Jesus's power helped you stand strong and push back fear?

The Advent season is the time we celebrate and focus on Jesus coming to earth. His birth marked a significant milestone in the unfolding of God's plan. The manifest presence of God with the people changed everything for the better. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, Isaiah called the people to be strong and courageous because the God of Israel is present with His people. This is still true for us today. Even when you feel like no one else cares about you or knows what you are dealing with, you can trust God more than your feelings. We can be strong and not fear because God is with us, and He never leaves us alone.

God's restoration is complete and beyond anything the world can offer. When God comes to save, He does it with miraculous power. God intended the world to be a place without suffering, but sin entered, and with it the enemy brought suffering to people. When God's plan for restoration is fulfilled and Jesus comes again, there will be miraculous healing in the land and in God's people. The world will be a place with no more suffering and no more pain. That is something to look forward to with anticipation and hope.

When God's salvation comes, the dry, withered, and useless landscape will become a lush and fruitful land of plenty. The description of streams in the wilderness and parched ground becoming pools won't only apply to the natural creation. This will also be true of the spiritual lives of God's people. Jesus brings this kind of provision to the lives of believers. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, Christ followers can access the power of God. There is no need for a Christian to be stuck in a dry place when the miraculous power of God is available. The living water was sent to restore and replenish dry places. You can be filled with that living water so that the dry places are no more. It is available for you as a believer, but you must be intentional about what you are filled with. When you choose to fill up with the things of the world, you neglect the things of the Spirit. The reality is, our circumstances may lead us to feel dry and weary, but hope can always be found in Jesus.



Application: Where do you need the miraculous power of God to work in your life? How are you being intentional about filling up with the living water that Jesus offers?

### 3. Highway of Hope (Isaiah 35:8-10)

Consider the importance of a good road or highway. People notice the roads they travel, especially through a difficult terrain. Today we take roads for granted and feel upset when they are not up to our standards. In the days of Isaiah, good roads were not a given. A highway or good road was a blessing to be enjoyed as it promoted travel, commerce, and progress. The Hebrew word used here for "road" (v. 8) indicates a highway or road raised above the ground. Isaiah described a high and glorious road to travel on. This type of road was not constructed with asphalt and work crews. This road was paved with the blood of Jesus and connects unworthy people with a holy God. It is the road from sin to holiness, from death to life, and from temporary to eternal.

Isaiah announced this road based on the ministry of the Messiah and made clear those who would be allowed to travel on it. Because it provides access to the Lord in all His holiness, the unclean cannot travel this road. There is no way to pay for entrance onto the road, and you can't earn the

right to use it. Access is only granted to those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and allowed Him to wash away their sins. Isaiah also made it clear that the redemptive work of Jesus is ongoing in believers, and none have arrived at complete perfection. So even those who have access to this special highway may still make poor choices at times. The difference is that even in imperfection, those on the road are safe because God is still growing and maturing His people along the way. He will keep us safely on the right road using the guardrails found in His Word.

 What guardrails can you think of in Scripture that help keep you on the right “road”?

## God’s Highway

God’s weakened, discouraged people would be rejuvenated by His mighty deeds on their behalf. This renewal is compared to the miraculous healing of various physical disabilities and to the blossoming of a hot, dry desert. Where once there was only sand and desert creatures, there would now be flowers, green pastures, abundant water, and thick vegetation. Through this garden land would run a highway, upon which no wicked men or dangerous wild beasts would be allowed to go. The Lord’s redeemed people would follow this “Way of Holiness” to Jerusalem, entering its gates with joy. The delightful imagery depicts in a striking way the divine blessings and renewed access to God’s presence that would follow the future purification and restoration of His people.

Travel along this highway is also protected from attacks. We have a real enemy who is often compared to a lion. Isaiah tells us that the lion or other ravenous beasts will not be able to devour those along the road. Attacks will come, but you can rest assured and be free from fear that you will be overcome by the enemy because you have the promise and power of God on your life when you choose Jesus. As the redeemed, you have the freedom to live victoriously over the most fearsome of enemies. Isaiah named some of the fiercest animals known to viciously attack. Our enemy also attacks in very personal and fierce ways. The battle is real, and anyone who is a Christ-follower knows what it is like to be under attack at times. The difference is that you never need to fight your battles alone, and you can trust God so that you can walk the highway of holiness, continuing your progress in the right direction.

 What forms of attack have you faced from the enemy that can cause fear or hesitation in following Christ?

The destination of this highway of holiness is Zion, the place where God makes His presence known to His people. It is the place where God lives and reigns. We are not to take that lightly, and we are to go there singing. Praise is always a good response to the work of God in our lives. He is always worthy of our praise, and we can have a song in our hearts as we travel this life because we recognize all that Jesus has done for us along the way. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin and gifted us His Word and Spirit. We have everything we need to live set apart until He returns and finishes our restoration. Advent focuses on Jesus and the sacrifice He made to come to earth as a man, but our Savior didn’t stop there. He lived a perfect, sinless life and paid the debt for our sins on a cruel cross. We can have everlasting joy regardless of our circumstances because of what Jesus has done for us.

The same truths Isaiah wrote to the people are true for us today. If you are on the highway to holiness, you are on the right path even though you haven’t arrived yet. Transformation is a process that we undergo

until we reach heaven, but we must be on the right road and do the right things along the way. Even when you feel dry, withered, devastated, or barren, with Jesus you are on the path to provision, wholeness, life, and miraculous healing. Our responsibility is to stay the course with joy, gladness, peace, and singing. This is possible because we do it in the strength of God, not our own. God also promised that He will take away the sorrow and sighing that come our way when we face hard times. That is a huge blessing. Isaiah painted the picture of an unequaled highway, where we can find the hope we need to face the challenges of this life and continue our progress toward becoming like Jesus. Isaiah gave the people hope by sharing what God would do in the face of their devastation. He wanted them to choose the right road and keep going with God no matter what came their way.

- ❓ Application: Where are you in relation to the God's highway today? On the road? Watching from the grass? Far from the path? How is God calling you to respond to Him?

## Conclusion

- ❓ How do you need to experience the loving, healing presence of Jesus this Advent season?
- ❓ Who in your life needs to experience the hope, love, and forgiveness that God offers through Jesus? How will you encourage them in Jesus this season?
- ❓ Who can you have a gospel conversation with and invite them onto God's highway of salvation?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank God for His beautiful plan of redemption. Ask Jesus to show you where you need to change so that you are living out His calling on your life. Commit to sharing with others this Advent season about the hope they can find in Christ.*

## Additional Resources

- *Hidden Christmas* by Timothy Keller
- *Isaiah* by Raymond Ortlund Jr.
- *Isaiah* by Trent Butler

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples



## DxD This Week

### ***Call to Action***

How do you need to experience the loving, healing presence of Jesus this Advent season? Who in your life needs to experience the love and forgiveness that God offers through Jesus?

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- Jesus is Our Life

### Main Passages

- Isaiah 7:10-17

### Session Outline

1. The Offer (Isaiah 7:10-12)
2. The Sign (Isaiah 7:13-16)
3. The Answer (Isaiah 7:17)

### Memorize

*The wilderness and the dry land will be glad;  
the desert will rejoice and blossom like a wildflower.*

- Isaiah 35:1

# Historical Context of Isaiah

## Purpose

Isaiah's message is relatively simple. First, Isaiah accused God's people of sin: rebelling against the one who made them and redeemed them. Second, Isaiah instructed these sinners to reform their ways and act obediently. Third, Isaiah announced God's judgment on the people because of their sin. Finally, God revealed his future restoration of the people, or at least of the faithful remnant that survived the judgment. As part of the restoration of God's people, Isaiah foresaw both judgment on the nations (chaps. 13–23) and a future turning of the nations to God (2:1–4). The first part of the book (chaps. 1–39) emphasizes sin, the call to repentance, and judgment; the second part (chaps. 40–66) emphasizes the hope of restoration.

## Author

The book presents itself as the writing of one man, Isaiah son of Amoz. The superscription to the book dates his prophetic activity as spanning the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (783–742 BC, Isaiah's call is dated to this king's last year, 6:1); Jotham (742–735 BC); Ahaz (735–716 BC); and Hezekiah (716–686 BC). On Uzziah (Azariah) see 2Kg 15:1–7; 2Ch 26:1–23. On Jotham see Kg 15:32–38; 2Ch 27:1–9. On Ahaz see 2Kg 16:1–20; 2Ch 28:1–27. On Hezekiah see 2Kg 18:1–20:21; 2Ch 29:1–32:33. Not much is known about Isaiah apart from his prophecy.

Isaiah's authorship of the whole book has been vehemently contested in the modern period. Many scholars have argued that the historical Isaiah could not have written chaps. 40–66. For those who believe that God knows the future and can reveal it to his servants, it is not problematic that God through Isaiah predicted the rise of Babylon, its victory against Judah, the exile, and the return.

## Setting

Uzziah's reign was a particularly prosperous time in the history of Judah, but storm clouds were on the horizon. Assyria was on the rise again in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC). The Assyrian king threatened to engulf Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. After the death of Tiglath-pileser, his successors, Shalmaneser and Sargon, defeated the northern kingdom in 722 BC and deported its citizens. This event brought Judah even more under the shadow of that great empire. Isaiah 37:38 suggests that the prophet lived until the death of Sennacherib in 681 BC.

## Special Features

Isaiah was an eighth-century BC prophet. His book is the first of the Prophets in the English canon and the first of the Latter Prophets in the Hebrew canon. Isaiah is powerful in its poetic imagination, intriguing in its prophetic vision, and complex in its structure. One can never read or study the book without gaining new insights into the nature of God and our relationship with him. The authors of the New Testament read the book of Isaiah in light of the coming of Christ and realized that this prophet anticipated Messiah's coming with remarkable clarity. For this reason they quoted or alluded to Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book.

## Extended Commentary

### Isaiah 35:1-10

35:1–10 This chapter is a mirror image of chap. 34 where God announced that he would turn the nations into a wilderness. In chap. 35, he proclaimed that he would transform the people of God from a wilderness into a garden. The principle of both chapters is that God's people should trust him, not the nations.

35:2 Lebanon ... Carmel, and Sharon were regions especially lush in vegetation (33:9).

35:3–4 God will save his people from the godless nations that oppress them. God's retribution refers to the punishment due the wicked and the reward due the righteous. For this reason, the latter can be strong and not fearful.

35:5–7 God's work transforms those who are blind ... deaf ... lame, and mute. Elsewhere in Isaiah these physical disabilities are metaphors for spiritual shortcomings (29:18; 42:18–19; 43:8). They have been physically dead to godliness, but in the future they will come alive. Not only will the lame walk, but they will leap like a deer. Not only will the mute speak, but they will sing for joy. A similar transformation is described with the language of nature. The parched ground will flow with water. Land that was only suitable for wilderness animals like jackals will be verdant.

35:8 Israel, with its deep wadis and mountainous terrain, was a hard land to cross, but Isaiah foresaw a road. This road will be the Holy Way, a name indicating that it would provide access to God. While the unclean would not travel on it since it led to the presence of a holy God, even the fools would not get lost if they sought to walk this path.

35:9–10 The road described in v. 8 will be a safe road, and it will lead to Zion, where God makes his presence known to his people.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

## Author Bio

### Timothy Keller (Hidden Christmas)

Timothy Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, which he started in 1989 with his wife, Kathy, and three young sons. Dr. Keller's books, including the New York Times bestselling *The Reason for God* and *The Prodigal God*, have sold over 2 million copies and been translated into 25 languages.

### Raymond Ortlund Jr. (Isaiah)

Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. is the pastor to pastors at Immanuel Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He is the author of several books, including the *Preaching the Word* commentary on Isaiah and Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel, as well as a contributor to the ESV Study Bible. He and his wife, Jani, have four children.

### Trent Butler (Isaiah)

Trent C. Butler is a freelance author and editor. He served ten years on the faculty of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and for twenty-two years as editor and editorial director for Holman Bible Publishers and LifeWay. He wrote the *Word Biblical Commentary* volume on Joshua, the *Layman's Bible Book Commentary* on Isaiah, the *Holman Old Testament Commentaries* on Isaiah and Hosea through Micah, and the *Holman New Testament Commentary* on Luke. He served on the editorial Board of the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, and edited the *Holman Bible Dictionary*. Dr. Butler has a Ph.D. in biblical studies and linguistics from Vanderbilt University, has done further study at Heidelberg and Zurich, and has participated in the excavation of Beersheba.