

2013

Advent 3 • Isaiah 35:1–10 • December 15, 2013

Jeffrey Gibbs

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, gibbsj@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj>

 Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gibbs, Jeffrey (2013) "Advent 3 • Isaiah 35:1–10 • December 15, 2013," *Concordia Journal*: Vol. 39: No. 4, Article 11.

Available at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol39/iss4/11>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Journal by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Editor's Note: The following homiletical help is adapted from Concordia Journal, October 1998.

Advent 3 • Isaiah 35:1–10 • December 15, 2013

Textual observations: The historical situation at the time of Isaiah's prophecy is impossible to determine. Oppression by Assyria is one possible setting. These verses are matched with Isaiah 34 as oracles regarding Edom's doom and Israel's salvation; the present text is "as eschatological as anything in the book" of Isaiah.¹ The following is a possible structure for this oracle of hope and salvation:

A. Verses 1–2: The promise of future reversal of conditions; the creation itself will experience the change from conditions of death and dying ("desert, dry ground") to a situation of joy and life, brought about by the manifestation of God's glory. The future hope is emphatic ("the desert will be glad; the Arabah will exult and sprout") and certain ("it shall surely sprout and exult with exultation and a ringing cry").

B. Verses 3–4: On the basis of this certain hope, the prophet offers strength for the hearers who are still in a time of trouble. Since this promise is sure, therefore, make the weak hands and the staggering knees to be strong—fry means of the proclamation of the future deliverance: "Say to the anxious of heart, 'Do not fear ... your God will come!'" In the present time of trouble, God's word offers strength.

C. Verses 5–10: This is a full description of the future reversals and salvation. Healing of human infirmity will follow from ("because," v. 7) the abundance of life that will break forth in the desert. A return from exile is envisioned, with a highway in the desert built up by God himself. Those who walk on the road are not responsible for its construction—they are the redeemed and ransomed of Yahweh. The road is a road of holiness (v. 8), of true wisdom (verse 8; "the foolish ones will not wander"), of safety (v. 9), and of joy (v. 10).

In sum, the larger moves of the text are: (1) These reversals will happen; therefore, (2) speak a present word of encouragement, and (3) describe what God will one day do.

Isaiah's prophecy looks forward to a time of literal and complete fulfillment on the final Day of Yahweh when all the promised reversals will take place in their consummated form. Yet Jesus's answer to John the Baptizer's query about his identity (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22) applies this text to the miracles and preaching of his own earthly ministry. As New Testament Christians, we may receive this word as already fulfilled and as yet to be fulfilled.

From the Lord's application one can take direction for the sermon. Isaiah 35 was fulfilled in the earthly ministry of Christ. Yet even as Jesus spoke those words to the Baptizer's disciples, their teacher was in prison, about to be beheaded, and Christ himself was on the way to the glorious climax of his ministry—the cross. Isaiah 35 is fulfilled in Christ yet the power of evil, the desert's hold of death, continues to exert its influence as Christians await the final and full manifestation of Yahweh's glory, promised in the text. Already... and not yet.

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

Endnote

¹ Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 213.