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Adam Clarke Commentary Isaiah 35

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Flourishing state of the Church of God consequent to the awful judgments predicted in the preceding chapter. The images employed in the description are so very consolatory and sublime as to oblige us to extend their fulfillment to that period of the Gospel dispensation when Messiah shall take unto himself his great power and reign. The fifth and sixth verses were literally accomplished by our Savior and his apostles: but that the miracles wrought in the first century were not the only import of the language used by the prophet, is sufficiently plain from the context. They, therefore, have a farther application; and are contemporary with, or rather a consequence of, the judgments of God upon the enemies of the Church in the latter days; and so relate to the greater influence and extension of the Christian faith, the conversion of the Jews, their restoration to their own land, and the second advent of Christ. Much of the imagery of this chapter seems to have been borrowed from the exodus from Egypt: but it is greatly enlivened by the life, sentiments, and passions ascribed to inanimate objects; all nature being represented as rejoicing with the people of God in consequence of their deliverance; and administering in such an unusual manner to their relief and comfort, as to induce some commentators to extend the meaning of the prophecy to the blessedness of the saints in heaven, Isaiah 35:1-10.

The various miracles our Lord wrought are the best comment on this chapter, which predicts those wondrous works and the glorious state of the Christian Church. See the parallel texts in the margin.

On this chapter Bishop Lowth has offered some important emendations. I shall introduce his translation, as the best yet given of this singular prophecy: -

1.The desert and the waste shall be glad; And the wilderness shall rejoice, and flourish:

2.Like the rose shall it beautifully flourish; And the well-watered plain of Jordan shall also rejoice: The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, The beauty of Carmel and of Sharon; These shall behold the glory of Jehovah, The majesty of our God. 3.Strengthen ye the feeble hands, And confirm ye the tottering knees. 4. Say ye to the faint-hearted, Be ye strong; Fear ye not; behold your God! Vengeance will come; the retribution of God: He himself will come, and will deliver you. 5. Then shall be unclosed the eyes of the blind; And the ears of the deaf shall be opened: 6.Then shall the lame bound like the hart. And the tongue of the dumb shall sing; For in the wilderness shall burst forth waters, And torrents in the desert: 7. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, And the thirsty soil bubbling springs: And in the haunt of dragons shall spring forth The grass with the reed and the bulrush. 8.And a highway shall be there; And it shall be called The way of holiness: No unclean person shall pass through it: But he himself shall be with them, walking in the way, And the foolish shall not err therein: 9.No lion shall be there: Nor shall the tyrant of the beasts come up thither: Neither shall he be found there

10.Yea, the ransomed of Jehovah shall return; They shall come to Sion with triumph; And perpetual gladness shall crown their heads.

But the redeemed shall walk in it.

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Joy and gladness shall they obtain; And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Verse 1

Shall be glad - x™x©x©x•x• (yesusum); in one MS. the xž (mem) seems to have been added; and x©x•x• (sum) is upon a rasure in another. None of the ancient versions acknowledge it; it seems to have been a mistake, arising from the next word beginning with the same letter. Seventeen MSS. have x™x©x•x©x•x• (yesusum), both (vaus) expressed; and five MSS. x™x©x©x• (yesusum), without the (vaus). Probably the true reading is, "The wilderness and the dry place shall be glad. "Not for them.

Verse 2

Rejoice even with joy and singing "The well-watered plain of Jordan shall also rejoiceâ€● - For x•x¨x xŸ (veranen), the Septuagint read x™x¨x"xŸ (yarden), Ï"α εϕηνα Ï"οÏ... ΙοϕΠανοÏ... , "the deserts of Jordan.â€● Four MSS. read x'xœx² (gulath); see Joshua 15:19: "Irrigua Jordani;â€● Houbigant. x'x™x"x² (gidoth), Ripae Jordani, "the banks of Jordan;â€● Kennicott. See De S. Poesi Hebr. Praelect. 20 note.

Unto it - For xœx" (lah), to it, nine MSS. of Kennicottâ€̃s and four of De Rossiâ€̃s read xœxš (lecha), to thee. See ibid.

Verse 7

The parched ground "The glowing sand― - x©x"x' (sharab); this word is Arabic, as well as Hebrew, expressing in both languages the same thing, the glowing sandy plain, which in the hot countries at a distance has the appearance of water. It occurs in the Koran, chap. 24: "But as to the unbelievers, their works are like a vapor in a plain, which the thirsty traveler thinketh to be water, until, when he cometh thereto, he findeth it to be nothing. "Mr. Saleâ€~s note on this place is, "The Arabic word (serab) signifies that false appearance which in the eastern countries is often seen on sandy plains about noon, resembling a large lake of water in motion, and is occasioned by the reverberation of the sun beams: ‹by the quivering undulating motion of that quick succession of vapours and exhalations which are extracted by the powerful influence of the sun.†-Shaw, Trav. p. 378. It sometimes tempts thirsty travelers out of their way; but deceives them when they come near, either going forward, (for it always appears at the Same distance), or quite vanishing.― Q. Curtius has mentioned it: "Arenas vapor aestivi solis accendit; camporumque non alia, quam vasti et profundi aequoris species est.― - Lib. vii., c. 5. Dr. Hyde gives us the precise meaning and derivation of the word. "Dictum nomen Barca x"x'x"x§x" (habberakah), splendorem, seu splendentem regionem notat; cum ea regio radiis solaribus tam copiose collustretur, ut reflexum ab arenis lumen adeo intense fulgens, a longinquo spectantibus, ad instar corporis solaris, aquarum speciem referat; et hinc arenarum splendor et radiatio, (et lingua Persica petito nomine), dicitur serab, i.e., aquae superficies seu superficialis aquarum species.â€∙ Annot. in Peritsol., cap. ii.

"Shall spring forth― - The x" (he) in x"x'x¦x" (rebitseh) seems to have been at first xž (mem) in MS. Bodl., whence Dr. Kennicott concludes it should be x"x'x¦x™x• (rebitsim). But instead of this word the Syriac, Vulgate, and Chaldee read some word signifying to grow, spring up, or abound. Perhaps x¤x"x¦x" (paretsah), or x¤x"x¦x• (paretsu), or x¤x"x² x"x—x¦x™x" (parats hachatsir), as Houbigant reads. - L.

Verse 8

And a highway - The word x•x"x"xš (vederech) is by mistake added to the first member of the sentence from the beginning of the following member. Sixteen MSS. of Dr. Kennicottâ€̃s, seven ancient, and two of De Rossiâ€̃s have it but once; so likewise the Syriac, Septuagint, and Arabic.

Err therein - A MS. of Dr. Kennicottâ€s adds x'x• (bo), in it, which seems necessary to the sense, and so the Vulgate, per eam, "by it. "One of De Rossiâ€s has x©x• (sham), there.

But it shall be for those "But he himself shall be with them, walking in the way― - That is, God; see Isaiah 35:4. "Who shall dwell among them, and set them an example that they should follow his steps.― Our old English Version translated the place to this purpose, our last translators were misled by the authority of the Jews, who have absurdly made a division of the verses in the midst of the sentence, thereby destroying the construction and the sense.

Verse 9

It shall not be found there "Neither shall he be found there― - Three MSS. read x•xœx• (velo), adding the conjunction; and so likewise the Septuagint and Vulgate. And four MSS., one ancient, read x™xžx¦x• (yimmatsa), the verb, as it certainly ought to be, in the masculine form.

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The redeemed shall walk there - x'x•x•xœx™x• (geulim). Those whose forfeited inheritances are brought back by the kinsman, x'x•x•xœ (goel), the nearest of kin to the family. This has been considered by all orthodox divines as referring to the incarnation of our Lord, and his sacrificial offering. After x'x•x•xœx™x• (geulim), one of De Rossiâ€~s MSS. adds x¢x" x¢x•xœx• (ad olam), for ever, "The redeemed shall walk there for ever.―

Verse 10

The ransomed - x¤x"x•x™x™ (peduyey), from x¤x"x" (padah), "to redeem by paying a price.― Those for whom a price was paid down to redeem them from bondage and death.

Sighing shall flee away - x•x x—x" (anachah). Never was a sorrowful accent better expressed than in this strong guttural word, an-ach-ah; nearly the same with the Irish in their funeral wailings, och-och-on. The whole nation express all their mournful accents by these three monosyllables.

This chapter contains the following parts: -

- 1.We have here blessed promises of the latter-day glory.
- 2. The prophet may be considered as addressing the teachers of the Gospel, to show them that it was their business to encourage and direct the people in their expectation of redemption.
- 3.A promise of the manifestation of God among men is given.
- 4. The miracles which Christ should work are explicitly mentioned.
- 5. The privileges of Christianity are specified; there shall be,
- 1. Thorough teaching;
- 2. Holy walking.
- 6.Perfect safety.
- 7. Complete happiness. And -
- 8. Final glory.

The chapter shows also that no impurity should be tolerated in the Church of God; for as that is the mystical body of Christ, it should be like himself, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.