

Today's Quick Word Isaiah 35:8-10

By Bruce Christian

ISAIAH 35:8-10 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

It is clear why this OT prophecy is often referred to as “The Gospel According to Isaiah”! The Prophet was given a vision 800 years into the future when the foundations of this new ‘highway’ in Zion would be laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ at his First Coming, and the vision extended even to beyond (perhaps?) our own day when the Project would be completed at his Second Coming! How we look forward to that day when ‘everlasting joy will crown [our] heads’, when ‘gladness and joy will overtake [us]’, and when ‘sorrow and sighing will flee away’. Even the small foretaste of this in this present Gospel Age is an overwhelming blessing!

But Isaiah’s description of the ‘highway’ is a challenge to us all. The name of it will be the ‘Way of Holiness’, and ‘the unclean will not journey on it’, nor will ‘wicked fools’ go about on it.

And the most important Gospel truth revealed to Isaiah is that the ‘cleanness’ and ‘righteous wisdom’ (as opposed to ‘wicked fools’) required to allow anyone to qualify for passage along this highway is something that is given graciously as a GIFT, rather than something that is EARNED!

This is implied by their being referred to as the ‘redeemed’ and the ‘ransomed’. These are terms referring to people who have been granted freedom, not by their own efforts/merit, but at the cost of the Redeemer.

Nevertheless, ‘free’ admission to the highway DOES NOT absolve me from the responsibility to walk consistently with the gracious privilege. Quite often I drive along Highways ‘1’, ‘31’ and ‘A26’ and, when I do, there are regular signs reminding me of what highway I am on. As I read the Bible each day I am reminded constantly of what it means to be on the ‘Way of Holiness’ - as Paul reminded Timothy: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ...” (2 Timothy 3:16); and as Peter reminded his readers: “... just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;” (1 Peter 1:15). Let us so read God’s Word each day, looking out for the indicators and warning signs reminding us that we are on “The Way of HOLINESS”!

Today's Quick Word Isaiah 42:5-8

By Bruce Christian

ISAIAH 42:5-8 This is what God the LORD says - he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."

When John the Baptist was born, his father, Zechariah, sang a song that was obviously inspired by Isaiah's prophecy, and, in particular, these verses (see Luke 1:67-79). No doubt, these Scriptures would have played a prominent part in Zechariah & Elizabeth's family devotions as John was growing up.

So, three decades later, when John told a group of people at Bethany that his Cousin, Jesus, was 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29), he was simply seeing the Scriptures with which he was very familiar, being fulfilled.

However, the big problem for John arose a short time later when he found himself imprisoned by Herod! How could this be, when Isaiah had prophesied that the Coming Messiah would, inter alia, "free captives from prison and ... release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness"? That is why he sent

messengers to Jesus asking, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:3)!

Jesus' response to this enquiry is interesting: "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." (Matthew 11:4-6). He mentions many clear 'pointers' to his Messiahship, but omits the one about the liberation of captives! He then implies that true faith is about trusting IN SPITE OF perplexing providence. "Blessed is the man who does not fall away (Greek: 'is not scandalised') on account of me."

The Author of Hebrews puts it like this: "Now faith is being SURE of what we hope for and CERTAIN of what we DO NOT SEE." (Hebrews 11:1). Admittedly, I sometimes feel 'scandalised' when I am unable to 'explain' God's strange providence to unbelieving scoffers and detractors; but I take heart from Jesus' reply to John! "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform; he plants his footstep in the sea, and rides upon the storm. ... Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain; God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain." (William Cowper - who, in his own experience with depression, could easily identify with the Baptist's struggle!)

Today's Quick Word Deuteronomy 17:17-19

By Bruce Christian

DEUTERONOMY 17:17-19 [The king] must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. ... he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees ...

Moses was preparing the people to enter the Promised Land and to organise themselves, not as a DEMOcracy, but as a 'THEOcracy', recognising the LORD as their King and sovereign authority to whom they were to be accountable in everything. If they were to appoint an earthly king over them, as they did less than 500 years later, he was only to rule UNDER GOD, and not in his own right. This is why Moses gave clear and comprehensive instruction about his personal life and his commitment to God's Law.

One of the greatest and wisest of these kings was Solomon, and we benefit from his wisdom in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. But, whereas we are told about Solomon's failure in the area of his almost countless wives and wealth, we know little of his obedience or otherwise in the matter of writing out and reading of God's Word; we can only surmise that he failed there too - certainly in comparison with his father, David, who testified: "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The

commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11).

But the Kingship was mostly downhill after David's reign - it wasn't until the coming of another descendant of David, King Jesus, that the TRUE Kingship was restored. This King not only ruled exactly in accordance with the Father's will (John 6:38) and obeyed his Law perfectly, but he also died in our place, to be our Saviour; and having conquered death he has the right to be Lord of every part of our lives.

Can we identify with the sentiments of Dorothy Greenwell's hymn: "I am not skilled to understand what God hath willed, what God hath planned; I only know that at his right hand stands One who is my Saviour! I take him at his word indeed: "Christ died for sinners" - this I read, and IN MY HEART I FIND A NEED of him to be my Saviour! That he should leave his place on high and come for sinful man to die, you count it strange? So once did I, before I knew my Saviour! And oh, that he fulfilled may see the travail of his soul in me, and with his work contented be, as I with my dear Saviour! Yea, living, dying, let me bring my strength, my solace, from this spring: that he who lives to be my King once died to be my Saviour!"?