

Sermon #109 — Isaiah Series

Title: **WHEN CHRIST COMES**

Text: Isaiah 35:1-10

Subject: *The Calling of God's Elect*

Date: Sunday Morning — November 17, 2019

Reading: *Ezekiel 34:1-31*

Introduction:

A while back I received an invitation to attend a conference for “Reformed Pastors and Church Workers.” The theme of the conference was to be “**Growing the Church God’s Way.**” Like most religious groups and denominations, the emphasis of all the planned lectures and activities was “growth” and “success.” Even those who call themselves “Reformed” and “Calvinistic” are, for the most part, completely obsessed with numbers, numeric growth, and success in the eyes of men. **In the Word of God that is never the case; and it is never the case with faithful men.** In fact, anytime a preacher, a church, or a group of preachers and churches become obsessed with growth and success compromise is the result. They mold their message to obtain their desired result.

Illustration: *Modern Fullerites*

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When I read that invitation, I immediately thought to myself, “The only thing we do in this matter of growing the Church is to get out of the way and watch God work.” Needless to say, I didn’t attend the conference. — You and I do not grow the Church of God. We just preach the Gospel and watch God gather His elect.

There is a people in this world called “*the elect*” and “*the ransomed of the LORD.*” These people are such a vast multitude that no man can number them; but they are a specific number.

- They are called “*the elect*” because they were chosen of God unto eternal life in Christ before the world began.
- These elect ones are called “*the ransomed of the LORD*” because they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and ransomed from the curse of the law by the sacrifice of God’s dear Son.

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The Lord God assures us repeatedly in his Word that these chosen ones, “the ransomed of the LORD” shall, at God’s own appointed time of love, return to Him (Jeremiah 24:6-7; 30:10; 31:8; 46:27; Hosea 14:7). — Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 31. Let’s read about the return of God’s elect to Him.

- They were chosen, blessed, and accepted in Christ before the world began.
- They were scattered over all the earth by the hand of God through the sin and fall of our father, Adam.
- They were scattered among the nations that they might be gathered again to God’s everlasting praise.
- These scattered sheep were gathered out of the world by the sin-atoning blood of the Great Shepherd when He laid down His life for them at Calvary, and carried with Him into Glory in His resurrection from the dead.
- Now, the Lord God is gathering His elect out of the world by the power of His grace in the blessed experience of that grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

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(Jeremiah 31:1-10) “At the same time, saith the LORD, will **I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.** 2 Thus saith the LORD, The people [which were] left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; [even] Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. 3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, [saying], Yea, **I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.** 4 Again **I will build thee, and thou shalt be built,** O virgin of Israel: **thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets,** and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat [them] as common things. 6 For **there shall be a day, [that] the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.** 7 For thus saith the LORD; **Sing with gladness for Jacob,** and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, **O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.** 8 Behold, **I will bring them** from the north country, and gather

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them from the coasts of the earth, [and] with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. 9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim [is] my firstborn. 10 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare [it] in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd [doth] his flock.”

ISAIAH 35

Now, let's turn to another, perhaps more familiar prophecy, back in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 35, and see what happens when Christ comes to save. — WHEN CHRIST COMES, that is the title of my message. My text is the 35th chapter of Isaiah. — Here, we are told not only that all God's elect shall return to Him, but how they are caused to return to Him by His almighty mercy and omnipotent grace.

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- If you would be saved, **you must turn** to the Lord; but you will never turn until you have been turned.

(Jeremiah 31:19) “Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.”

- **You must call** upon the name of the Lord; but you will never call for His grace until He has called you by His grace.
- **We must return** to the Lord; but none will ever return to the Lord until they have been returned to the Lord by the mighty operations of the Lord’s own grace toward them, upon them, and in them.

Some say that Isaiah 35 is a prophecy of **the restoration of Judah** and the revival that took place in the latter part of Hezekiah’s reign, after the Assyrian invasion. — Others tell us that these ten

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verses are **a prophecy of the coming of Christ and the dawn of this Gospel Age**, after the long, long night of spiritual darkness. There is no question that it does refer to the coming of the Messiah, attended with signs, wonders, and miracles at the beginning of this Gospel Age. — Still others say that Isaiah is here giving **a prophecy of Christ's second coming**, and the everlasting joy of His glorious kingdom. Again that cannot be disputed. This prophecy does look to eternity and to the blessedness of God's elect in eternity. — But I say, why not all three? Why should we have to choose one interpretation? It seems obvious to me that this chapter is clearly a prophecy of Christ's coming...

- In Providence to Deliver and Bless Judah!
- In Grace to Save His Elect!
- In the End of Time to Gather His Ransomed Ones!

I will not spend much time talking about the historical event to which the prophet here refers, because Judah and Hezekiah are no longer with us. And I will not talk much about the future, because I am not a prophet and I do not have any great

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perception of prophetic things. I think I understand prophecy far better than those I have read and heard who claim to be “prophetic theologians” and “scholars of prophetic literature.” But I realize that my understanding of prophecy is vague at best. Therefore, **I intend to spend my time talking about what I know. I am going to talk to you about the saving power and grace of God experienced in a sinner’s heart and soul when Christ comes in the saving power and grace of His Spirit.**

Proposition: When Christ comes to save He comes in power, making all things new. — *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Divisions: Let me show you three things in this chapter:

1. The Promise of Grace (1-2).
2. The Preaching of Grace (3-4).
3. The Performances of Grace (5-10).

THE PROMISE OF GRACE

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1st — In verses 1-2, the Lord God speaks and gives the promise of His grace. In chapter 34 we read of the threat of judgment. Edom, the populous, fruitful land, because of its sin was made a desolate, barren wilderness. Here God promises grace. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrians, that land that had been laid waste was made fruitful again.

(Isaiah 35:1-2) “The wilderness and the solitary place 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 unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, [and] the excellency of our God.”

Certainly, these verses also have reference to the Gentile world, which was a desolate, barren wilderness, bringing forth no fruit unto God. But when God sent the Gospel of His grace to the Gentiles, Jerusalem was left desolate and the Gentiles

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were given the joy of faith and brought forth fruit unto God (Psalm 96:10-13; Isaiah 54:1).

(Psalms 96:10-13) “Say among the heathen [that] the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that [is] therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice 13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”

(Isaiah 54:1) “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.”

Blessed is that city, that nation, that people to whom God is pleased to send His Word, the Gospel of His grace!

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Before Christ comes to a sinner, he is like a solitary, desolate wilderness, or an empty, barren desert. Man by nature has nothing, can do nothing, and can offer nothing to God.

- He cannot see God.
- He cannot walk with God.
- He cannot serve God.
- He cannot praise God.
- He cannot speak to God.
- He cannot know God.

Like the desolate earth, he is “without form and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep.”

Illustration: Genesis 1:1-2

(Genesis 1:1-2) “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (2) And the earth was (became) without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

But when Christ comes He makes the wilderness to blossom and bring forth fruit and causes the

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desert to rejoice. Grace is effectual, causing sinners to bring forth fruit unto God. — He gives life to the dead! — Grace brings joy to the heart.

- The Joy of Forgiveness!
- The Joy of Faith!
- The Joy of Life!
- The Strength of Lebanon!
- The Fruitfulness of Carmel!
- The Beauty of Sharon!

When Christ comes to a sinner in saving power and grace, He reveals Himself and makes Himself known. He causes us to see...

- *“The Glory of the LORD”* (Exodus 33:18-34:7).
- *“The Excellency of our God”* — His Purpose — His Character — His Salvation — IChrist His Son.

This is what God promises to do for sinners when Christ comes in saving power. —

- He will give you life!
- He will give you joy!
- He will make Himself known!

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No man can do these things. But God can and will. And the means by which He has chosen to do so is the preaching of the Gospel. Nothing else will get the job done!

- Romans 1:16
- Romans 10:17
- 1 Corinthians 1:23

THE PREACHING OF GRACE

2nd — So let me show you something about the preaching of grace from verses 3 and 4. **These are God's words to His prophets and preachers.** This is what preachers are supposed to do for God's elect.

- “**Strengthen ye the weak hands.**” — Hands that cannot work or even be lifted up in prayer.
- “**Confirm the feeble knees.**” — Knees that cannot stand, walk, or run.
- “**Say to them that are of a fearful heart...**” That cannot find peace. — “**Be strong.**” — “**Fear Not.**” — “**Behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense**”

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upon your enemies! — “He will come and save you!”

While we seek the salvation of God’s elect, those who are already His children must not be neglected. It is the shepherd’s job to feed the Lord’s sheep.

THE PERFORMANCE OF GRACE

3rd — The performance of grace follows the preaching of the Gospel. So, in verses 5-10, the prophet returns to the business at hand, assuring sinners of the performances of grace that must and shall attend the coming of Christ in saving power.

(Isaiah 35:5-10) “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame [man] leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, [shall be] grass with reeds and rushes. 8

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And **an highway shall be there**, and **a way**, and it shall be called **The way of holiness**; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it [shall be] for those: **the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err [therein]**. 9 **No lion** shall be there, nor [any] **ravenous beast** shall go up thereon, 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 songs and everlasting joy upon their heads**: they shall **obtain joy and gladness**, and **sorrow and sighing shall flee away**.”

Without question, the wondrous miracles described here were **prophetic of Christ's coming** to establish His Kingdom in this world. These things were proofs of his Messiahship.

- The blind were made to see.
- The deaf were made to hear.
- The dumb were made to speak.
- The lame were made to walk.
- The dead were made to live.

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Wonders were wrought on men's bodies. But **those wonders were only a foretaste of the greater wonders** wrought on men's souls through the preaching of the Gospel. — *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father”* (John 14:12).

When Christ comes, He gives life where there was only death before (vv. 5-7).

- Eyes to See Him.
- Ears to Hear Him.
- Tongues to Praise Him
- Feet to Walk with Him
- And Hands to Serve Him.

“5 ¶ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame [man] leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each

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lay, [shall be] grass with reeds and rushes.”
(Isaiah 35:5-7)

When Christ comes, He causes those who were lost, straying, on the road to hell, to walk in the way of Holiness. The way of holiness is the way of **holy worship** and the way of **holy obedience**. Holiness is the conformity of my life, my will, my heart, myself to Christ, His will, His heart, and His life. But it is much more than that. **Holiness is Christ!** He is the Way!

(Isaiah 35:8-10) “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it [shall be] for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err [therein]. 9 No lion shall be there, nor [any] ravenous beast shall go up thereon, 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 songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

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When God saves a man or a woman, He puts the saved sinner in the Way. He makes them to be the people of the Way. The Way of Holiness is the way of:

- Grace.
- Faith.
- Submission.
- Consecration.

This Highway, the King's Highway, is called by many names in the Scripture.

- “*The Way of Righteousness*” (Matthew 21:32).
- “*The Way of God*” (Matthew 22:16).
- “*The Way of Peace*” (Luke 1:79).
- “*The Way of Salvation*” (Acts 16:17).
- “*The Way of Truth*” (2 Peter 2:2).
- “*The Narrow Way*”
- “**The Way which is called Heresy**” by the religious world (Acts 24:14) is “*The Good, Old Way*” (Jeremiah 6:16).

Christ Himself is the Way (John 14:6).

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- A Straight Way.
- A Simple Way.
- A Safe Way (v. 9). — “*He shall be with them.*”
- “**“The ransomed of the LORD shall walk there!”** — All who have been redeemed by Christ shall be made to walk in the way of life with Christ (Jeremiah 50:4-6).

(Jeremiah 50:4-6) “In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. (5) They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten. (6) My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.”

WATCH THEM RETURNS

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Now, take a minute or two with me to watch the return of God's elect to him.

- Abram in Ur
- Moses at the Bush
- Israel Out of Egypt
- The Gadarene
- The Woman with an Issue of Blood
- The Prodigal
- Zacchaeus
- The Adulterous Woman
- My Own Experience of Grace

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true,
No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,—
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole

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Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul,
Always Thou lovedst me.

We do not make things happen in the Kingdom of God. We just watch. We preach the Gospel and watch as the Lord adds to His Church daily such as should be saved. We watch the Good Shepherd gather His sheep and return them to the fold. — Then...

When we have reached the end of the King's Highway, the ransomed of the Lord shall be brought into heaven in a triumphant blaze of glory (v. 10).

(Isaiah 35:10) “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

All who were ransomed with the blood of Christ shall inherit the Kingdom and glory of Christ!

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- We shall come to Zion at last!
- We shall enter into heaven with songs of praise!
- We shall be crowned with everlasting joy upon our heads!
- We shall obtain joy and gladness at last!
- Sorrow and sighing shall flee away! (Revelation 21:3-7).

“1 ¶ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

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And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, **It is done.** I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 **He that overcometh shall inherit all things;** and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” (Revelation 21:1-7)

APPLICATION

When Christ comes to a sinner, He comes not to offer grace, but to perform grace. He does not come to show you the way, but to put you in the way. He does not come to tell you what to do for Him, but to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. I pray that He may be pleased now to come to you. — If He does, you will come to Him.

All hail, Thou great Redeemer, hail!
We know Thy promise cannot fail;
Thy ransomed family shall come,
To their prepared eternal home.

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Shall come! — This truth demands a song,
From all the blest returning throng;
Satan must yield his long held prey,
When Jesus bids them come away.

Nor sins, nor doubts, nor foes can keep
The least of Jesus' ransomed sheep —
They shall come to His sacred fold
Whom He engaged to save of old.

His name, His honor, and His blood,
Are pledged to bring them home to God;
And all His church shall come, and prove
Jehovah's free unchanging love.

(Isaiah 35:10) “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

This is the experience and the confession of every saved sinner. This is what happens when Christ comes to save (Jeremiah 31:19; John 6:37-40).

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(Jeremiah 31:19) “Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.”

(John 6:37-40) All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. (39) And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

What a sweet description this chapter is of the blessings of Christ and his salvation! My brother, my sister, think of it. — The mind of the Triune Jehovah has been occupied from everlasting and

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through all the ages time, with your salvation and mine! Think of the infinite love of God, in not only providing redemption and redeeming us, but also in preparing the minds of his redeemed for the full enjoyment of it, when the Son of God would come.

Bring these things home to yourself. Think of them personally. Has the wilderness of your own fallen state by nature been made by grace to blossom as a rose? In the dry parched soil of your own corrupt heart, has the Holy Ghost been poured out by His regenerating influences? Has the Lord Jesus put in ou the river of living water? Have your blind eyes been opened and your deaf ears unstopped? Healed by the Son of God is your lameness done away, so that in his name and righteousness you can and do now leap as a hart. Your tongue, that was once dumb, now of speaks his salvation plainly.

Oh, you who are blind and ignorant of the way of righteousness, behold Christ is the Way and the Highway, in which none that are found walking shall ever err! Oh, you who have spent your strength for nought, and your labour for that which satisfies not,

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hearken diligently to the prophet's call. He says to you that are of a fearful heart, “Be strong. Behold your God shall come and save you!

Precious Lord Jesus! Come and save, come and bless, come and guide Your redeemed home to Your Zion which is above! Help all Your redeemed to sing now the song of redemption, in this house of our pilgrimage here, and soon to sing it forever before Your throne in Glory, in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. — O Spirit of God, cause the ransomed of the Lord to return and come to Zion!

Amen.