

# **Imminent Arrival: Be Joyful!**

Introduction: What brings you joy when family or guests arrive for the holidays?

## **First Lesson: Isaiah 35:1-10**

- <sup>1</sup> The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, <sup>2</sup> it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.
- <sup>3</sup> Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; <sup>4</sup> say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."
- <sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
- <sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.
- <sup>7</sup> The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.
- <sup>8</sup> 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.
- <sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> 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.

1.) The poetry of verses 1-2 contrast the bleak and desolate with verdant and majestic. These themes are woven together throughout. What would bring about this transformation? (v. 2, 3) How do verses 1-7 illustrate our natural spiritual condition and the change God's Spirit brings?

2.) What is the safe way that leads us to "Zion" (where God is)?

## **Second Lesson: James 5:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. <sup>8</sup> You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. <sup>9</sup> Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! <sup>10</sup> Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

1.) Why are a coming harvest and the coming of seasonal precipitation good illustrations of our waiting for Christ's return? (v. 7-8)

2.) What are the spiritual downsides and dangers of waiting?

3.) List some Bible characters who endured their share of waiting.

**Sermon: Matthew 11:2-11**

<sup>2</sup> When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples <sup>3</sup> to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” <sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

<sup>7</sup> As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? <sup>8</sup> If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. <sup>9</sup> Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ <sup>11</sup> I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

1.) Perhaps for the sake of defending John’s reputation, some interpreters have suggested that John sent his disciples to Jesus to “hand them off” to Christ. What seems more likely and fitting in the context?

2.) Why might God show us these inexplicable faults, flaws, and falls in his “all-star” followers?

3.) What does (and doesn’t) make for a good messenger? (v. 7-11)