

Isaiah 40:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Analysis

This prophecy foretells the ministry of John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for the Messiah. The imagery of preparing a highway in the desert for a coming king draws from ancient Near Eastern practice where roads were prepared for royal visits. Spiritually, this speaks to the need for repentance and spiritual preparation before encountering the Holy One. All four Gospels cite this verse in reference to John's ministry (Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, John 1:23).

Historical Context

While immediately addressing Israel's return from Babylonian exile, this prophecy reached its fullest expression in John the Baptist's preparatory ministry. John called people to repent and be baptized, making their hearts ready for Messiah. His message of repentance 'made straight' the path by removing obstacles of sin and unbelief. This pattern continues as the gospel must be preceded by conviction of sin and the need for salvation.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What 'crooked places' in your own heart need to be made straight to better receive Christ's work?
2. How does John's example of humble preparation challenge our approach to ministry and pointing others to Jesus?

Interlinear Text

קול	קוֹלֵ א	בְּמִדְבָּר	פָּנּוּ	דַּרְכֵי	יְהוָה
The voice	of him that crieth	in the wilderness	Prepare	ye the way	of the LORD
H6963	H7121	H4057	H6437	H1870	H3068
יִשְׁרֹוּ	בְּעֵצְבָה	מַסְלֵה	לְאַלְהֵינוּ:		
make straight	in the desert	a highway	for our God		
H3474	H6160	H4546	H430		

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:1 (References Lord): Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

John 1:23 (References Lord): He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Isaiah 57:14 (Parallel theme): And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

Isaiah 43:19 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 35:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

Isaiah 49:11 (Parallel theme): And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

Psalms 68:4 (References God): Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

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