

Isaiah 51:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

Analysis

Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. The word "therefore" (ve-faduye, וְפָדוּיָהּ) connects this promise to preceding context—because God redeems, restoration follows with certainty. The "redeemed" (peduye YHWH, פְּדוּיָהּ יְהוָה) are those ransomed by divine payment, a term emphasizing God's costly deliverance, not human merit or effort.

The return journey transforms from mourning to singing (rinnah, רִנָּה, joyful shouting). "Everlasting joy" (simchat 'olam, שִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם) modifies their condition permanently—not temporary relief but eternal gladness. The phrase "upon their head" suggests joy like a crown or garland, publicly visible and honorific. The concluding antithesis—"sorrow and mourning shall flee"—depicts negative emotions as defeated enemies retreating before conquering joy.

From a Reformed perspective, this verse prophesies eschatological restoration when Christ returns. Revelation 21:4 echoes this: "God shall wipe away all tears...neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." The redeemed church—purchased by Christ's blood (1 Peter 1:18-19)—journeys toward Zion (the New Jerusalem) with joyful singing. Present suffering gives way to

eternal joy because redemption is complete and irreversible. This grounds Christian hope in divine promise, not circumstantial evidence.

Historical Context

This verse nearly duplicates Isaiah 35:10, creating a literary bracket around chapters 36-39 (historical interlude about Hezekiah). The repetition emphasizes the promise's certainty. For exiles in Babylon, the return journey would have involved months of difficult travel—Isaiah promises it becomes a joyful procession, not sorrowful trudging.

Initial fulfillment came through post-exilic returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Psalm 126:1-2 captures this joy: "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter." Yet the second temple period still involved hardship (Ezra 3:12-13, Nehemiah's opposition). Complete fulfillment awaits Christ's return when the redeemed enter eternal joy. Church history shows this pattern—persecuted saints sang hymns in prisons, expressing foretaste of eschatological gladness.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty of future joy affect your response to present sorrow?
2. What does it mean practically that you are among the 'redeemed of the LORD'?
3. How can the church embody joyful singing even while still journeying toward final redemption?

Interlinear Text

וּפְדוּי י	יְהוָה ה	יָשׁוּב וְ	וּבְ אֵו	צִיּוֹן	
Therefore the redeemed	of the LORD	shall return	and come	unto Zion	
H6299	H3068	H7725	H935	H6726	
בְּרִנָּה ה	וְשִׂמְחָה	עוֹלָם	עַל	רֹאשָׁם	שֶׁשׁ וְ
with singing	and joy	and everlasting	H5921	shall be upon their head	gladness
H7440	H8057	H5769		H7218	H8342
וְשִׂמְחָה	יִשְׂגּוּ וְ	נִסּוּ	יָג וְ	וְאֲנָחָה:	
and joy	they shall obtain	shall flee away	and sorrow	and mourning	
H8057	H5381	H5127	H3015	H585	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 25:8 (References Lord): He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

Revelation 21:4 (Parallel theme): 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.

Revelation 7:17 (Parallel theme): For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Isaiah 35:10 (Redemption): 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.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 (Eternal Life): Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Isaiah 61:7 (Eternal Life): For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

Jeremiah 33:11 (References Lord): The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

Revelation 22:3 (Parallel theme): And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

Jude 1:24 (Parallel theme): Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

Isaiah 65:19 (Parallel theme): And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.