

Isaiah 55:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Analysis

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. This verse promises reversal of the curse. Thorns (na'atsuts, נֶאֱצֻט) and briars (sirpad, סִרְפָּד) recall Genesis 3:18's curse on the ground. Fir tree (berosh, בְּרוֹשׁ, possibly cypress) and myrtle (hadas, חֲדָס) represent beauty, usefulness, and blessing. The transformation from cursed vegetation to valuable trees symbolizes comprehensive restoration.

The purpose: "it shall be to the LORD for a name"—creation itself becomes testimony to God's character. "Everlasting sign" (le'ot 'olam, לְאוֹת עוֹלָם) provides permanent memorial. "That shall not be cut off" (lo yikkaret, לֹא יִכָּרֵת) guarantees perpetuity. The restoration serves pedagogical purpose—witnessing to future generations of God's redemptive power and covenant faithfulness.

From a Reformed perspective, this prophesies new creation through Christ. Romans 8:20-21 describes creation's liberation from corruption. Revelation 22:3 promises, "there shall be no more curse"—the thorn-brier curse reversed. The everlasting sign points to Christ's eternal covenant (Hebrews 13:20). This verse teaches that redemption restores created order, removing the curse and establishing permanent testimony to God's gracious character.

Historical Context

The Genesis curse brought thorns, thistles, and toil (Genesis 3:17-19). Israel's unfaithfulness resulted in land becoming wasteland (Isaiah 5:6, 7:23-25, 32:13). The exile physically devastated the land; Isaiah promises not merely restoration but transformation—better than original state. Post-exilic prophets addressed land restoration (Haggai, Zechariah).

Yet complete fulfillment awaits Christ's return. Revelation 21-22 describes new heavens and new earth with no curse, where the tree of life provides perpetual healing. Church history shows partial fulfillments—transformed lives becoming testimonies, communities renewed through gospel—all pointing toward ultimate restoration when Christ makes all things new (Revelation 21:5). The everlasting sign assures that God's redemptive work is permanent, irreversible, and self-authenticating.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What 'thorns and briers' in your life need God's transforming into 'fir and myrtle'?
2. How does your transformed life serve as 'a name' for the LORD and everlasting sign?
3. How should the promise of curse-reversal affect your hope for creation's future?

Interlinear Text

תַּחַת	הַנֶּעְצוּץ	יָעֹלָה	בֵּרֶךְ וְשֵׁם	תַּחַת
H8478	Instead of the thorn	shall come up	the fir tree	H8478
	H5285	H5927	H1265	
וְהָיָה	יָעֹלָה	הַדֹּס	הַסְּרִפָּה	
H1961	shall come up	the myrtle tree	and instead of the brier	
	H5927	H1918	H5636	
לֹא	עוֹלָם	לֹא	וְשֵׁם	לַיהוָה
H3808	for an everlasting	sign	for a name	and it shall be to the LORD
	H5769	H226	H8034	H3068
				יִכָּרֵת:
				that shall not be cut off
				H3772

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 41:19 (Parallel theme): I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:

Isaiah 61:3 (References Lord): To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Jeremiah 33:9 (Parallel theme): And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

Isaiah 60:13 (Parallel theme): The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (Parallel theme): Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Romans 6:19 (Parallel theme): I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Jeremiah 50:5 (References Lord): 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.

1 Peter 4:11 (Parallel theme): If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Isaiah 60:21 (Parallel theme): Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Isaiah 43:21 (Parallel theme): This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.