Isaiah 35:4 “Say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come…he will come to save you.”

 I have to tell you when I read this full text, that the part that kind of caught my attention was the line that said, **“Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom.”** Needless to say, I had to do some reading on crocuses because I wondered what about this flower was so intriguing that it is found in prophecy.

 What I can tell you is that learned a lot about crocuses. None of it is really worth telling you about, with maybe the exception that I learned that saffron, the spice, is actually derived from one of the autumn blooming crocus plants. Other than that, as I read the information on the various varieties and such I didn’t see anything at all that I thought made the crocus worthy of prophetic utterance. And then I realized that the Scripture itself gives you the reason for citing this flower. “The crocus…bursts into bloom.” A variety of the crocus is one of the first of the spring blooming plants and often that crocus will bud and bloom under circumstances where it is the only one in bloom! That’s what the prophet was highlighting. That the crocus burst into bloom. Just like the coming of the Lord will burst upon the world!

 With that mystery over, let’s you and I then turn our attention to the whole of this text. Our simple theme will be: **THE ADVENT OF OUR LORD. 1st. A prophecy of his coming! 2nd. How it is fulfilled. 3rd. It is about Jesus!**

 There is no doubt that this text is a prophecy concerning the Messiah, the hope that the Messiah will bring not only to the Jewish people but also to the world. But this prophecy, like so many others, is rather difficult to comprehend, (but that comprehension is made so much easier in our day and age because of the revelation of Jesus Christ our Savior). That’s because our prophecy has both a complete fulfillment understanding and a partial fulfillment understanding all at the same time still pointing to the Messiah and the wonder He will bring.

 What do I mean that there is a both a full understanding and a partial understanding? Take the verses found before us today. Did you note something particular about them? Can anyone here say that they know of a desert area that has burst into bloom or that now has the splendor of
Carmel or of Sharon, both places of the Old Testament renowned as agricultural oases. Does anyone know of a desert where the water is now flowing and where steams are in abundance? How about this. Can anyone here tell me where this place is, this highway, where only the holy walk and where there are no ferocious beasts or anything that will hurt or harm? Yet, such is exactly what our text tells us will be.

 It is as we study this text that it begins to dawn on us that these words will only be fully fulfilled on the Great Day of Judgment. As we compare what this text says against other verses of the Bible that speak of what will be after the Day of Judgment we see how these words come true fully. After the Day of Judgment God’s Kingdom of heaven will be revealed. After the day of Judgment, the world will be restored to its perfection and holiness, a place where sin, sickness, strife, evil and wickedness of every nature will no longer be found. Yes, the picture given here is a prophecy of what will be when the Messiah comes, but when the Messiah comes the second time, when the Messiah, the Christ returns to establish His perfect, everlasting Kingdom of Glory. So, there is no doubt. This is a prophecy about the coming of the Christ.

 Of course, as I said, this prophecy also has a partial fulfillment. When we speak of a partial fulfillment we mean an event of this world that clearly fits what is said here but not completely. Again we turn to the Scripture for our understanding and grasp of this. In truth we are going to turn to our Gospel reading and hear what Jesus himself had to say.

 In our Gospel reading please note that John the Baptist is in prison and that John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask if he was the Christ who was to come. Please note, I do not think that John himself was having any doubts that Jesus was the Christ, but rather John wanted his disciples to become followers of Jesus and understand Jesus was the Christ. And how does Jesus answer? He tells them, **“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.”** In other words, Jesus points these disciples to Isaiah and his words. Jesus says that He is the one who is fulfilling these words of prophecy.

 Just a bit of a side note for you. Be aware of the fact that John has been in prison for perhaps a year when this history occurs. It is clear that Jesus is doing some very spectacular things. Jesus is doing all sorts of miracles including the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead. Remember, we have only a fraction of the miracles Jesus did recorded for us, but what is still very clear is that Jesus is doing miracles, miracles of such nature and number that there is no doubt that He is a fulfiller of these words. That’s the partial fulfillment I spoke of in connection with these words. Even Jesus points out his partial fulfillment and it is a real eye opener.

 Of course, that does not surprise us. The other day, as we were going through our study of the book of Colossians we heard these words: **“I have become a servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.”** As we spoke of those words we talked about how many of the Old Testament prophecies where difficult to grasp and how many people didn’t and couldn’t grasp how they were to come true. Can you imagine the puzzlement of the Jewish people (and perhaps this accounts for their not readily believing in Jesus) as they see and hear what Jesus is doing and saying but they don’t see the desert blooming or they don’t see springs and pools of water gushing forth as this text indicates.

 Can you grasp their dilemma? Jesus is causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk but there is no path of holiness leading to Zion where the wicked are not found. If your teachers have been telling you these words are about the Messiah and yet you don’t see these words completely fulfilled, don’t you see how that might be a problem with the faith? So what do you do?

 The key here is again in what Jesus says to John’s disciples. **“Go back and report to John what you hear and see.”** Jesus knew that John was full of the Holy Spirit of God and as such, John would be able to point his disciples to the Word of God and tell them, yes, Jesus is the fulfillment of the words and that the fullness, the complete understanding of these words is revealed in what Jesus is teaching and preaching. It is because of Jesus that what was hidden is now made known!

 At this point then, what I want you to grasp is how this prophecy of Isaiah is clearly about Jesus, both partially and fully. Let me highlight a few more things.

 Our text says, **“They will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God….be strong, do not fear; your God will come.”** Scripture says of Jesus, **“He is the image of the invisible God…He is before all things…God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him.”** Yes, Jesus is the glory of the Lord, the splendor of God. Yes, in Jesus God has come to be among his people! Partial fulfillment.

 Or look at the words of our text that say, **“A highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness…only the redeemed walk there…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.”** Do we not grasp that Jesus is the highway? Jesus tells us, **“I am the Way, the truth and the life.”** Jesus is our direct path to heaven, called Zion in this text. And note that heaven is filled with singing, everlasting joy and crowns of glory? Heaven is a place where gladness and joy cause sorrow and sighing to flee. Isn’t that, on a spiritual level, what we are promised and given in Jesus? So again, it is clear that Jesus partially fulfills these words. These words are about Jesus.

 Then I want you to realize how these words are also completely fulfilled in Jesus. Listen to these sections from the Book of Revelation. These sections speak of what we will have and what will be when Jesus returns and the Kingdom of Glory or Heaven is made our permanent dwelling place.

 Rev. 7:15-17. **“Therefore, ‘they are before the throne of god and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”**

Rev. 21:3-4 **“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

Rev. 21:22-27 **“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone do what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”**

 All of these words are there that we might grasp the wonder and joy of God’s eternal kingdom of heaven. All of this is true and will be true. True because God’s Son Jesus has come. He has become the way. He is our salvation and our hope. He died for us and rose again and just because this is true, then know that we too will live because He lives.

Dear people that is the whole point of Jesus! He has come to be our way to heaven, to forgive our sins and grant us eternal life with him. Our God has come the first time to win our salvation and He will come again the second time to judge the nations and the wicked and to bring to reality his eternal Heaven. These hopes and promises are ours in Jesus. In Jesus, our fear is gone and our salvation has come.

Perhaps the best way to end today is to with the words of our Epistle reading found in James. He says to us, **“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. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”** Yes, be patient. Hope in the Lord. Cast aside your fear! Trust in Jesus, and know that He is the fulfiller of the Words of Scripture. He is coming again. Stand firm. Amen.