

The Rescue Mission of Jesus **Isaiah 9:2-7**

Intro: If you were to ever study history, even for a brief period of time, you would quickly notice that history is full of a series of oppressive empires. It seems like there was always a nation that had world domination in its vision, and oftentimes, they would resort to ruthless efforts to accomplish their goals. One such superpower was the Assyrian Empire which reigned around 750 B.C. They were particularly ruthless in the way they treated defeated nations. After they conquered a city, they would take the inhabitants and deport them to the far ends of their empire. Then, they would take people from other conquered nations, and move them into the city they just defeated. Their hope in mixing populations together like this was that the conquered peoples wouldn't find a unified culture and history which they could rebuild, and ultimately rebel from. **In the year 722 B.C. this is the fate that befell the Northern Kingdom of Israel.** And even as the embers were still cooling, the Assyrian army began to march south towards the Kingdom of Judah, the last tribe remaining of the people of Israel. It is during this period of time, in the face of impending exile and oppression, that God sends Isaiah a vision of future deliverance!

Transition: But this isn't a vision of the Assyrians, or of any superpower for that matter. The deliverance comes from an oppression that runs deeper than any empire, the deliverance comes from an oppression that has plagued humanity from the very beginning of time in fact. This deliverance is a promise of freedom from the bondage of sin. This oppression that sin holds over the human soul is what destroys our relationship with God and with others. It is because of sin that we see and experience so much pain and suffering in this world... it is because of sin that death entered into the world. But the darkness that looms over this world will not have the final say, because the light of God's saving grace is coming to overcome this darkness. Isaiah saw this vision, but 700 years later, it would become a reality as Jesus Christ came into this world.

Main Point: We are a people in desperate need of rescue from oppression

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

I. The rescue is from darkness into light (v. 2)

-As the vision begins, we see a distinction being made between darkness and light. **(read v.2)**

Darkness-- evil, chaos, calamity (that which is absent of God's goodness)

Light-- awesome, powerful, and personal presence of God (the way God displays his grace)

Darkness in the creation (Genesis 1:2 "**darkness over the face of the deep**")-- absence of God's personal interaction with the creation

Light in the creation ("**and God said**")-- after light is formed, God interacts personally as he lovingly watches over the creation process

And when we come to this passage, we see a people who are dwelling and walking in a land of deep darkness. In other words, they are living in a land that is separated from the good, and loving presence of God-- and are instead dwelling in a land of chaotic evil.

But in the middle of this despairing picture-- we are told that a light shines. When it shines into these peoples lives, listen to the effect it has on them. **(Read v.3)**

As these "darkness dwellers" are coming into God's light, they are rejoicing magnificently. The language here shows that the people are now demonstrating Unreserved Joy-- There is a tone of exuberation by these people. It is God's triumphant presence shining into the light doing this for them. **(ALCS Game 2 Analogy)**

(Trans.) As we move further into this vision, we begin to see why these people were dwelling in darkness, and why they rejoice greatly when the light arrives. **(Read vv. 4-5)**

II. The rescue is from oppression (vv. 4-5)

In vv. 4-5 we see that the people were dwelling and living in the land of darkness because they were being held there by an oppressor. **Notice the yoke and staff language.** The reason there is so much joy and celebration is because this oppressor has been absolutely vanquished, and the bonds that were used to oppress the people will never be seen again.

As mentioned-- the oppressor isn't a human enemy-- this oppressor is sin, and it is every human soul that is oppressed.

Romans 3:23 tells us that **"All men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"**. Sin occurs when we do not rightly worship God. As the creator of the universe, and the author of each one of our lives, he deserves our undying praise and obedience.

In the garden, Adam and Eve sought to be like God knowing good and evil, and we continue down the same path to this very day. We act independently of God's direction, and we defy his holy law, as we try to determine for ourselves what is right and wrong. We attempt to take our destiny and fate under our own control.

We do not honor God as the creator and sustainer of the universe, or the author and controller of our lives. If we really did, then we would be singing his praise in the morning when we wake up, continue all day, and not stop until we went to sleep-- where we would all sleep talk and continue singing his praises!

But how is it that sin oppresses us? How is it that doing it our own way, trying to be independent from God places us under oppression? I think the answer is laid out so beautifully for us in Jeremiah 2:13 **"For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaking me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water"**

Sin oppresses us by 1) Causing us to forsake God-- God has made us as creatures that desire. We desire joy, pleasure, laughter, contentment, peace, etc. **And what he is telling us here is that it is in his very presence that we are made to find the fulfillment of these desires.** How do we fulfill our desires in the presence of God?-- Relationship

We often find that our joy is at its best when we are around certain people in our lives-- whether it's a group of good friends, or beloved family members. It doesn't matter what you are doing with them (watching a movie, bowling, whatever), it is the fact that you are in their company that you are so joyful.

This is how we are to be with God. God has a personal presence, we can communicate with him, fellowship with him, and enjoy recreation with him. **But it is our sin that causes us to not see God as a person whom we can share life with--** so we forsake him. We don't see him as being present in our lives at all times and in all places.

Therefore, since we are made to find the fulfillment of our desires by living in and drawing on the presence of God-- **when we forsake him, we are left with a gaping and empty hole in our souls.**

Sin oppresses us by 2) Causing us to drink from broken cisterns-- Now that there is a vast emptiness in us, we will seek to satisfy the longings of our hearts apart from God. We will turn to self gratifying actions to satisfy the deep desires of our hearts. The problem is that **these are temporary solutions to an eternal longing.**

We will try to attain as much wealth, power, intellect, athletic ability, looks, sex, and on and on. But **we will NEVER be satisfied with what we have**, we will always want more! We will constantly be telling ourselves, "if I could just have a little more (insert what will make you happy)."

We live in the most prosperous, safe, comfortable, and leisurely nation in the history of the world, and yet **we still see rampant depression, suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, etc.** because we all know deep down that there is something more to this life than an attainment of toys. And so we lapse into cycles of addiction, where we are looking for our next

gratifying sense of fulfillment- and it won't come.

God has made us to find our satisfaction in him, and he will not allow us to become fully satisfied with anything else.

Sin oppresses us by 3) Causing broken relationships with others-- God did not create us in a vacuum, but as humans who interact with other humans. And so I ask this simple question-- **what would you expect a world to look like where every human, being under the oppression of sin, is looking to satisfy their own desires?**

if we were living in a right relationship with God, we would be drawing from an eternal supply of joy that is shared abundantly with everyone, but since we are not-- we are left fighting each other over the limited supply of broken cisterns.

Paul tells us that **"the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these."** (Galatians 5:19-21). While we don't have time to go over all of these, notice how most have to do with our behavior towards others. If someone has a desire for more power, and another person is in their way, then they will do what they must to fulfill that desire, or they will begin to have internalized anger, envy, or sorrow.

Is there any wonder why we live in a world where war, murder, rape, looting, corporate greed, government suppression, sex trafficking, and on and on the list goes-- is it any wonder that this evil in the world exists?

But sin is not only the evil that is expressed in the world, it is found in the innermost desires of our hearts. Jesus says **"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** (Matthew 5:27-28).

So we must ask ourselves, **if the innermost desires of our heart were on display for the world to see... how might we react?** I know that I have held enough lust, anger, hatred, jealousy, etc. in my lifetime that I would flee from the presence of mankind because of shame.

So sin oppresses us by distorting our relationship with God and others because it forces us to seek satisfaction for our desires outside of the personal presence of God. The question is-- how can this be fixed, how can we be cured?

If sin causes us to be blind to God's presence because we dwell in a land of deep darkness-- then the answer is light! Notice the beginning of the vision-- the people are walking and dwelling in deep darkness, meaning they can do nothing about it. **They don't even seem to realize that they are being oppressed.** This is the nature of sin in our hearts-- **it has such a grip on us that we don't even recognize it is there--** until the light of God shines into the darkness.

III. The rescue comes from a child (v.6)

On Wednesday, we celebrated the birth of a child who was born over 2000 years ago. Not only that, but this is a child who was born into a poor family in a backwater community of a Roman province. The reason why we still rejoice over and celebrate the birth of this child is because **he is no ordinary man.** He is the child prophesied of in this vision (**Read v.6**).

He is the eternal Son of God who came into this world **to be that light** that would shine into the darkness, and would **rescue us** from the oppression and bondage that sin held over our hearts. The Gospel of John begins with this profound statement of who Jesus is **"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."** (John 1:1-5).

The truth that we must understand from this passage is that Christ being born into this world was the eternally begotten Son of God coming into this world! This is why in the vision Isaiah receives, the child is called the by names that demonstrate his infinite worth and holiness (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace). This is why angels sang praises at his birth. (Luke 2:14)

During Jesus' ministry, he calls himself **"The light of the world. (and that) whoever follows (him) will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** (John 8:12) We can see that **Christ is claiming** to be this promised child who came to expel the darkness, and free the captives.

He is the light that will shine into the darkness-- opening our eyes to the oppression of sin-- making it so that we can see the reality of our condition-- knowing that we are desperately in need of God's presence to satisfy the longing of our hearts. He lived his life as the light in the way he healed those who were on the brink of death, the way he claimed authority in his teaching of God's Word, the way he lived in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit.

And then the light of the world marched up the hill of calvary, and there he took the weight of our sin upon his shoulders, and suffered the deep oppression of darkness in our place. He had always enjoyed the perfect presence of God's love, but in that moment, he took on the fullness of God's justice in our place-- **and because every sin laid heavily on him-- he died**

But that darkness could not contain him forever, sin could not bind him as it bound us-- **NO--** as he burst forth from the tomb on the 3rd day-- **He was breaking the yoke of sin's burden**, the rod of the oppressor once and for all! **"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21)** Christ suffered this on the cross, **so that he could enter into darkness, defeat it, and become the light** that would break us from and lead us out of oppression!

He has redeemed us from this so that we can come to drink from the deep wellsprings of the eternal God as our source of Joy. **We won't pursue the broken cisterns any longer, they won't be appealing to us, we have God himself**, and nothing can keep us from him! The rescue mission is completed on the cross, the darkness is vanquished, and the glory of God's light shines brilliantly for all of mankind to see!

(trans) But the vision doesn't end here. God's grace doesn't just last for the few years we have on this earth, he doesn't want to limit the sharing of his bountiful presence for just a season- no, he assures us that if we follow the light, and leave the darkness of sin, then we will draw from **The Living Water** of his presence forevermore!

IV. The rescue brings eternal peace and joy (v.7)

We always seem to be attempting to build a perfect paradise on earth-- a utopia. But we know that we fail time and time again. Once again-- the desire for perfect peace and harmony is a good and right desire, but because of sin's oppression we cannot build this existence. Now we see into the vision of a perfect future, one where Christ will reign as King for an everlasting period of perfect justice and righteousness. **(Read v.7).**

The book of Revelation also describes this perfect kingdom. I want to put us into this wonderful promise, so we can hopefully feel the joy of being in Christ **"(God) will dwell with (us), and (we) will be his people, and God himself will be with (us) as (our) God. He will wipe away every tear from (our) eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."** (Revelation 21:3-4).

For those who see the dark oppression of sin in their lives, who recognize the chains that cause us to seek after joy in temporary pleasures. **Who cry out to God, seeking forgiveness for their transgressions against his holiness.** For those who see the light of the world, For those who put their faith in the atoning death of Christ, and follow his light out of the darkness-- this is the hope, this is the reality of your future!

Much has been covered today, but I wanted us to taste the whole Gospel message as we end 2013. The vibrant reality of these eternal truths won't become real unless we turn ourselves to God's Word. For the Gospel is **"The power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16)**

So as we go into 2014, my encouragement for you is to come to God's word knowing that you aren't just reading a historical document. You are hearing the very words of life from God himself. And as you read, practice a life of communication with God through prayer in a contrite and broken spirit, knowing that God's grace is a remarkable gift-- and you will see that the vibrant person of God is truly real and active. And he truly is the deep pool of living water that we must draw from if we are to be satisfied in our souls. **"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4)**

