

The Nativity of Our Lord

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

Isaiah 52:7-10

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Analysis by Peter Keyel

*7 How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'*

*8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.*

*9 Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.*

*10 The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.*

DIAGNOSIS: Ruined Jerusalem

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *No Singing*

We sing Christmas carols every year. But aside from going through the motions here in church, what is there to sing about?

Where is God's Kingdom? We hear about salvation and comfort and all of these good things, but where are they? There's nothing new here worth singing about.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Ruins*

There's nothing worth singing about because our lives are in ruins. Yeah, we make the best of our lives and we go on. And we tell ourselves that's the best that we can do. We pick through the ruins and deal with the world as it really is. We don't dare hope that there's something better, because those hopes will just be dashed. Be realistic.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *No Sign of God*

For all the times that we go to church, and go through the motions, we have lost sight of God. We do not see God's presence in our world, or if we claim to, we ascribe tiny little things to God. You have to look for God in the little things because God will not be present in the big things. Jerusalem, or our lives are still ruined. And God has forgotten us or is content to leave our lives in ruins. God gives us exactly what we want: our "realistic" world and the ruins our lives through which we pick for fleeting bits of happiness.

PROGNOSIS: Redeemed Jerusalem

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Seeing the Salvation of God*

God has done something else on this very day. God has bared his holy arm and come into the world, here in a manger, as a helpless, crying baby. That helpless crying baby will grow up to be a helpless, crying man nailed to a cross. God will live and die in our realistic world the same way that we do. In Jerusalem, God's own life will be ruined. The eyes of all the nations are on this so-called King of the Jews dying like a common criminal. But God is doing something different here. Our realistic world, or the very real death Jesus dies here, is not

the end. God raises Jesus from the dead! Our world has been shattered!

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Redeemed*

Perhaps a better way of saying shattered is redeemed. Our lives are not the best we can do. The best we can earn, perhaps, but in this resurrection God is giving us so much more than the best we can do. God gives us redemption in the death and resurrection of Christ. We now see what the “real world” is: God’s redemption for us, the nations. We now live in this real world, no longer a world limited by the ruins of our lives.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Break Forth into Singing*

And that is reason to break forth into singing! There is something to sing about this Christmas Day: the coming of God into this world on the mission to save us. We can sing about it, how our lives are no longer defined by our failures or our hardships. The Kingdom of God is at hand! The LORD has comforted his people, and we can sing about it, all the way to the ends of the earth!