

[Christmas 2007](#)
Isaiah Chapter 29
“Going Through The Motions”

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One year, during their church Christmas Program, a young mother was busily making an Authentic costume for her son so that he would look just like Joseph in the Bible.

The Costume was complete with a lifelike beard, and clothing that made the small boy look just as Joseph must have looked.

As the Christmas program began, the children were all aglow as they sang their well rehearsed Christmas songs to all of the proud parents watching.

After the program was over, all of the children that were in the reenactment of the Christmas story, removed their costumes and gave them to children of their city who were poor and without much during this Christmas Season.

The mother of the small boy who played Joseph asked his mother if he could keep the beard on for awhile..

When she asked him why he wanted to keep the beard on, and this is what he said:

“Mom you know all of those songs that we sang tonight?” “Yes his mother said...

“Well I never learned them, but with this beard on I could just move my mouth and nobody ever knew that I didn’t know the song...could I just keep it on for awhile?”

Ever feel like that during the Christmas Season? Like you are just **“Going through the Motions”** of Christmas, without really knowing the Christmas song?

[Mark 7:6](#)

Jesus answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: *“This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*

Jesus was quoting Isaiah chapter 29

[Isaiah 29:13](#)

Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

Everyone of here today have the tendency to stray away from the Lord little by little.

- ☞ **We may still say that we love the Lord**, but in our hearts, we have move far away from Him.
- ☞ **For this reason** there are many times in our life that we need to renew our love for the Lord and come back to Him, **over and over**.

Lamentations 5:21

Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old

Perhaps today, many of us need to have our love for the Lord re-kindled and have Him restore us.

- ☞ **Maybe we have been** just “*Going through the motions*” of being a believer is Jesus Christ, but we know that our heart has been far from Him.
- ☞ **If we draw near** to Him today, then He will again move near to us.

Joel 2:13

So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm

Isaiah Chapter 29, the Lord speaks of an amazing fact; that He is going to come against Jerusalem.

- ☞ **The reason** He is going to come against them, is because the people who claimed to know the Lord, have turned away from Him.

Hezekiah was the King of Judah, and under Hezekiah, there had been a sort of spiritual revival.

- ☞ **Unfortunately**, their returning to the Lord didn't go far enough, it was all on the outside, instead of deep in their hearts.

After king Hezekiah died, the nation of Judah fell into a terrible time of moral collapse from where they never recovered.

The people had forsaken the Lord, so now the Lord had forsaken them

Isaiah 29

1 “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city *where* David dwelt!

Add year to year;

Let feasts come around.

2 Yet I will distress Ariel;

There shall be heaviness and sorrow,

And it shall be to Me as Ariel.

“Ariel” means “The Lion of God”, it is a name for Jerusalem.

Isaiah 29

- 3 **I will encamp against you** all around,
I will lay siege against you with a mound,
And **I will raise siege works against you.**
- 4 You shall be brought down,
You shall speak out of the ground;
Your speech shall be low, out of the dust;
Your voice shall be like a medium's, out of the ground;
And your speech shall whisper out of the dust.

Jeremiah also writing about this period in Judah's history, said this.

Jeremiah 2:13

“For My people have committed two evils: They have **forsaken Me**, the fountain of living waters, **And hewn themselves cisterns**—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

1. They have **forsaken** or forgotten the Lord in their lives.
2. They have **made for themselves**, “Cisterns” or substitutes for the Lord in their lives.

These are the two mistakes that human being make:

- ☞ **We forget the Lord** in our lives, we ignore Him or fail to make Him a priority.
- ☞ **We instead make these “Cisterns”**, or holding places in our hearts where we place everything else that is in the world, **except the Lord.**

Jeremiah said that when we make Cisterns for ourselves, when we try to fill ourselves up with the things of the world, that no matter how many Cisterns we make, **“They cannot hold Living Water.”**

John 7:38

Jesus said: who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Jesus said this same thing to the Samaritan woman at the well who was seeking physical water, but failed to realize that what she really needed was Jesus as the **“Living Water”**.

John 4:10-15

10 Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and **He would have given you living water.**”

11 The woman said to Him, “Sir, **You have nothing to draw with**, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?”

12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered and said to her, **“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,**

14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

15 The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw

Did you get that?

“Whoever drinks of this water, the water from the world, whoever fills up the cisterns of their lives with the water from the world, WILL THIRST AGAIN”

“But whoever fills up their lives with Jesus as the Living water, will never thirst again...”

Are you thirsty this morning? Perhaps we have been filling up our own cisterns with too much of the world, and forgotten Jesus, the fountain of Living Water!

The people of Judah, who claimed to know the Lord had tried to substitute faith in the living God with human philosophies, and with other interests in life that had become their gods.

As the result, the Lord was now forsaking them.

The Lord told King Asa:

2 Chronicles 15:2

... “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. **The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.**

The Lord is the same yesterday, Today and Forever, He doesn't change

Malachi 3:6

“For I am the LORD, I do not change

It was true in Asa's day, and it is true in our day:

- ☞ **If we forsake the Lord**, forget Him, substitute a relationship with Him for all things we are occupied with in the world, **He will forsake us...**
- ☞ **But if we draw near to Him**, no matter how far we might be from Him, He will Draw near to us.

James 4:8

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

We are either in the place of trusting in the Lord, and waiting upon Him, or the Lord is in the position of waiting upon us to hit bottom and cry out to Him for His help.

Luke 20:18

Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.

Which position are we in today: Falling on Jesus and allowing Him to break us and mold us and shape us, or have we placed ourselves in the position where the Rock will fall on us and grind us to power.

The Lord told Judah that HE was going to lay siege to them and that HE was going to Encamp against them...

- ☞ **But that is not** what the Lord Wanted to do.
- ☞ **He wanted** to bless their lives, He wants to prosper their land.

But they have forgotten the Lord...so He has no other choice.

Is it possible that we can have a head knowledge of the Lord, believe that we know Jesus but our hearts can be far from Him?

The reality is that we grow in our knowledge of Jesus through our heart, and not through our heads.

- ☞ **We do not really** know who Jesus is, until we **have fallen in love** with Him.
- ☞ **We cannot fall in love** with Him until we have spent time getting to know who He is.

Christmas has become a nearly completely secular holiday now.

- ☞ **They have taken Jesus out of Christmas** and left us with an empty, hollow holiday.
- ☞ **Without Jesus**, Christmas means absolutely nothing.

The entire purpose of Christmas is that God Loved the world so much, that HE GAVE His only Son.

I am afraid for us as the people of the United States of America, because it seems as though we have become just like Judah whom the Lord said these words to:

Isaiah 29

13 Therefore the Lord said:

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths
And honor Me with their lips,
But have removed their hearts far from Me,
And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

14 Therefore, **behold, I will again do a marvelous work**
Among this people,
A marvelous work and a wonder...

Here is where we can gain great hope.

- ⊕ **Even though** the people of Judah had moved far from the Lord, He was going to do a marvelous work again of drawing them back to Himself.
- ⊕ **There are sometimes** when we are so far from the Lord that the only way we can be brought back to Him, is if He draws us to Himself.

The Lord tells them that they are going to just stand there in Awe, staggering at the promises that the Lord is making to them...

In Romans chapter 4, Abraham is given to us as an example of where we should want to be.

- ⊕ **The Lord** promised Abraham and Sarah that He would make of them a great nation.
- ⊕ **The problem was** that when the Lord made that promise to them, They were both almost 100 years old!

It was completely beyond the realm of human possibility that they could have a child at that age, and yet that is when the Lord told them that He was going to give them a child, at nearly 100 years old.

- ⊕ **Now Abraham** could have “Staggered at the promise of the Lord”, that is, found it impossible to believe.
- ⊕ **Instead Abraham decided** that whether or not it would happen was not his problem, **it was the Lords problem.**
- ⊕ **The Lord said it**, now it was up to Him to do it.
- ⊕ **Abraham believed** that the Lord was able to do it, that was what made him Righteous to the Lord.

Abraham believed what the Lord said to him.

Romans 4:19-22

19 And not being weak in faith, Abraham did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.

20 **He did not waver at the promise of God** through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

21 and **being fully convinced** that **what He had promised He was also able to perform.**

22 And **therefore** **“it was accounted to him for righteousness.”**

Maybe we have been far from the Lord and we have lost much of the feeling that we used to have for the Lord...

The Lord is able to not only draws us back to Himself if we will take the first step today and move towards Him.

He is able also to begin to bless your life in ways that you could never imagine possible...

Do You believe that ?

Abraham could have staggered at the promises of the Lord, but instead he chose to believe what the Lord promised Him.

Today All nations of the world are blessed because Abraham believed the Lord.

The Bible says that we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises by the Lord...

2 Peter 1:4

by which have been given to **us exceedingly great and precious promises**, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature,

There was a time in Israel's history when things were so bad, they were in such a great famine that the people had began to eat their children.

- ☞ **The reason** that this had happened was that the people had **forgotten the Lord** and He had allowed the Syrian Army to come and besiege the city of Jerusalem.
- ☞ **As often happens** when things go wrong, **we sometimes blame the Lord.**
- ☞ **The King came to Elisha** and blamed him for their situation.

2 Kings 6

25 As a result there was a great famine in the city. After a while even **a donkey's head sold for two pounds of silver**, and a **cup of dove's dung cost about two ounces of silver**.

26 One day as the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city, a woman called to him, **"Please help me, my lord the king!"**

27 "If the LORD doesn't help you, what can I do?" he retorted. "I have neither food nor wine to give you."

28 But then the king asked, "What is the matter?" She replied, **"This woman proposed that we eat my son one day and her son the next.**

29 **So we cooked my son and ate him. Then the next day I said, 'Kill your son so we can eat him,' but she had hidden him."**

30 **When the king heard this, he tore his clothes in despair.** And as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing sackcloth underneath next to his skin.

31 **"May God kill me if I don't execute Elisha son of Shaphat this very day," the king vowed.**

32 Elisha was sitting in his house at a meeting with the leaders of Israel when the king sent a messenger to summon him. But before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the leaders, "A murderer has sent a man to kill me. When he arrives, shut the door and keep him out. His master will soon follow him."

33 While Elisha was still saying this, the messenger arrived. **And the king said, "It is the LORD who has brought this trouble on us!"** Why should I wait any longer for the LORD?"

2 Kings 7:1-2

1 Elisha replied, “Hear this message from the LORD! This is what the LORD says: **By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost only half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost only half an ounce of silver.**”

2 The officer assisting the king said to the man of God, **“That couldn’t happen even if the LORD opened the windows of heaven**

Israel was suffering because they had forgotten the Lord.

- ☞ **The King of Israel blamed** The Lord for their famine, and also Elisha.
- ☞ **Food was so scarce** that a donkeys head sold for **2 pounds of silver.**
- ☞ **Just a cup of Dove Manure** cost **2 ounces of silver.**
- ☞ **As if anyone would eat those things,** but they were starving!

Things were so bad that no one believed in the promises of God anymore.

Then the Word of the Lord comes from Elisha:

“By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost only half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost only half an ounce of silver.”

“The officer assisting the king said to the man of God, “That couldn’t happen even if the LORD opened the windows of heaven”

Because the situations of their lives had become so bad, they no longer trusted in the Lord, they didn’t call upon Him...

- ☞ **They “Staggered** at the promises of God...”
- ☞ **And even so,** The Lord said:

“By tomorrow there will be such an abundance of food that you can buy 5 quarts of fine flour for just ½ ounce of silver. And 10 quarts of Barley can be purchased for ½ an ounce of silver...”

The officer of the king couldn’t figure out how the Lord could do something like that.

- ☞ **Many times** we find ourselves in places where we have made many mistakes and we cannot imagine how the Lord could rescue us out of them...**but he can!**
- ☞ **Often our life** is so full of trouble and difficulties that we begin to believe the Lord must not care or be able to help us...**But He Can!**
- ☞ **Even if today** as we are going through this study, we realize that **we have just been going through the motions** with the Lord lately...**our hearts are far from Him.**

It might seem like we could never come back to that place of joy and fulfillment again...But the Lord can do it, if you will draw near to Him this morning and believe that He will restore us, if we ask Him.

The reality is that the Lord is going to work, even if you don’t believe it!

Israel didn't think that it was possible that the Lord could deliver them from the hands of the Assyrians, to them it was hopeless...

- ☞ **Then the Lord promises** that He will wipe out their enemies, and they were Staggered, they couldn't believe it.
- ☞ **The next day** they had more food to eat than they knew what to do with.

In 9 days, it will be Christmas Day.

- ☞ **Because Jesus did come** to the earth as a Baby.
- ☞ **Live through** all the things that you and I live through in our own lives...
- ☞ **He knows** what you feel like right now, and He understands.
- ☞ **He knows what needs to be done** to rescue from your trials.
- ☞ **He knows how to provide** for you from resources that you know nothing about.
- ☞ **He can draw your heart back** to Him again this morning and light the fire ablaze again.

The question is: Will you draw near to Him this morning and ask Him to help you, then believe that He WILL help you?

Let us not Stagger at the promises of God the way Israel did, but let us draw near and believe Him for everything He is wanting to do in our lives...