

**Isaiah 35:1-10**  
Christmas in the Desert  
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Immanuel: <http://www.immanuelchurch.com/>

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\*See next page for preaching outline.

## Introduction:

1. One of the best Christmas movies is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Pet, Susan, Lucy, Edm).
2. The land of Narnia is in never-ending winter with no Christmas, waiting for Aslan to come.
3. The nation of Israel is facing winter exile because of their rebellion and sin.
4. The prophet Isaiah prophesied from 739-701 B.C. to Israel who wasn't trusting God.
5. During this time Assyria captured northern Israel and threatened southern Judah.
6. Isaiah prophesied the winter (exile) would be bad (chap 34) but deliverance would come (chap 35).
7. Our God delivers the desperate, heals the hurting, and leads the lost home. (Read Isaiah 35:1-10)

## I. Our God delivers the desperate. (35:1-4)

### A. Our God changes desert sin into garden grace. (35:1-2)

1. Desert is arabah, which means "dry or infertile region" (Galilee, Jordan, Dead Sea - 2' an. rain).
2. The desert is Israel's spiritual and metaphorical state (exile/rebellion).
3. God will change their desert into a garden (asphodel/crocus ~ lily)
4. Lebanon is a "mountain range between the Mediterranean and the desert." (glory)
5. Sharon is a lush coastal plain and Carmel is forested hills.
6. God can change your desert sin into garden grace.

### B. Our God promises to come and deliver his people. (35:3-4)

1. Weak hands, feeble knees, and anxious heart are the whole person (head, heart, hands).
2. Israel is going to experience a deep feeling of abandonment during exile.
3. You don't have to be afraid because God is coming with vengeance and salvation.
4. Nineveh, capital of Assyria, destroyed in 612BC by Babylon diverting river into city.
5. Babylon had two 11 feet x 30 feet walls but destroyed in 539BC by Persians diverting Euphrates.
6. God promises to come and deliver his people.

### C. Sean Lawrence gave me to share the story of his near-death experience in Mosul Iraq.

1. In October 2004 he and 300 mechanics were surrounded by 3000 insurgents (not "spartans").
2. They were told that the tanks couldn't make it to morning, so they had to last the night.
3. At 2200 hours (10pm) they attacked the gate and the 50 caliber guns fired for hours.
4. At 0200 hours (2am) he heard the propellers of a C130 gunship (vulcan cannons 6k rounds min).
5. One day our God will come from above and deliver his people.

(This passage points to God's final judgment, but also to God's coming salvation.)

(How is God going to come and save his people?)

## II. Our God delivers the desperate and heals the hurting through Jesus. (35:5-7)

### A. Our God heals the hurting through Jesus. (35:5-6)

1. Verses 5-6 are signs that God will come and heal his people.
2. God comes in Christ Jesus and heals the blind, mute, and paralytics.
3. Matthew 11:2-5 says, "2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" 4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind

receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”

- B. I want to show you a brief (0:49) video of a child heard for the first time.
1. I like the Doctor saying, “We call that a late Christmas present.”
  2. This is a tangible picture of what Jesus really did for people.
  3. This is also a picture of what Jesus does for us spiritually—he opens our eyes and ears.
  4. Our God heals the hurting through Jesus.

(Not everyone wants to be healed by God.)

- C. The message of Jesus can soften the hardest soil. (35:7)
1. I love the picture of “burning sand” becoming like a “pool.”
  2. Israel was hard soil for the word of God—tradition says Isaiah was sawed in half.
  3. New England soil is a little like “burning sand.” (Immanuel, plant, relatives)
  4. A “haunt of jackals” becoming “reeds and rushes” is a picture of abundance.

- D. The movie the Lion King is about a young lion cub named Simba.
1. His uncle Scar kills his father and tricks Simba into thinking it’s his fault.
  2. He runs away and ends up with Timon and Pumbaa (no worries) but returns to fight Scar.
  3. While he was away their once lush kingdom has become a wasteland and home to hyenas.
  4. At the end Simba defeats Scar and the rain begins to fall again.
  5. New England was once a place of rich Christian faith.
  6. The king has come—do you believe the rain can fall again?
  7. The message of Jesus can soften the hardest soil.

(The coming of Christ changes deserts into gardens.)

(What does Jesus bring with him that does this?)

### III. Jesus delivers the desperate, heals the hurting, and leads the lost home. (35:8-10)

- A. Jesus leads the lost home. (35:8)
1. Through Christ Jesus we are provided a “roadway” (2x) of holiness (share gospel).
  2. Remember that “the way” here is the earliest name of Christianity (Acts 9:2)
  3. Jesus wants to deliver you, heal you, and bring you home, but this begins by walking with him.
  4. At first I was very encouraged by the ESV, “...even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.”
  5. But a better translation is “No fools will stumble [upon it]”—which is a warning too.

- B. Jesus delivers the desperate, heals the hurting, and leads the lost home. (35:9-10)
1. The redeemed and ransomed are those who have been bought by God.
  2. Israel will soon go into exile but God promises them they will return.
  3. But “everlasting joy” tells us that we’re still awaiting our final home.
  4. Jesus delivers the desperate, heals the hurting, and leads the lost home.

- C. Maybe for some of you this Christmas season is bringing more heartache than joy.

1. If you're a believer, let baby Jesus remind you of the hope you have in God.
2. If you don't yet know Jesus, remember the difference between the desert and a garden.

Conclusion:

1. A friend of mine lives in Australia where they celebrate Christmas very differently than us.
2. Western Australia like a desert, BBQ lunch, afternoon at pool or beach, seafood, beach cricket.
3. Maybe you feel like you're in a desert this Christmas—you can still celebrate, just differently.
4. We can all celebrate Christmas when we focus not on our circumstances, but on our savior.
5. Jesus delivers the desperate, heals the hurting, and leads the lost home.

Benediction: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Peter 1:2 ESV)