

The Dayspring From On High Hath Visited Us

Luke 1:67-79, Advent Sunday I

November 22, 2007

Beloved of the Lord...Once again we enter the joyous season of Advent, when we wait for and anticipate the glorious birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! And once again, without fail, the world that we live in seeks to draw and entice our attention away from the birth of our Savior, and replace it with all that robs Christ of His glory. This point was driven home to me this week, when I visited a hospital. Driving up to the parking ramp I glanced over into the hospital lobby and there I saw two large banners hanging down from the ceiling. The first banner represented the Muslim religion. It had a crescent moon, and a tall tower called a minaret, where the herald announces the time of prayer. The second banner was no better than the first. It was a picture of Hanukkah, with the Jewish candles and symbols of Judaism. It wasn't until I walked into the hospital lobby that I saw the third banner representing Christmas. There was a star and wise men, but no baby Jesus, no manger, no cross.

That's how it is in this world of sin. It is getting harder and harder to find Christ in Christmas. The hospital and its three banners represents the world which desires to give equal footing, equal ground to all religions, as if it doesn't matter what one believes, only that one believes something. Everywhere you look, the devil and this world seek to hide Christ from the eyes of men. They want to pull the wool over your eyes so that you forget the words of the angels who said, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." May God grant that each and every one of us not lose sight of the true and genuine meaning of Christmas, namely: Christ the Savior is born: God hath visited His people!

I. Joyful Zacharias, and the prophets who waited for the Lord. In our lesson today, the priest Zacharius was joyful in the knowledge that God Himself would soon visit His people! For the angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias in the temple, telling him he would have a child in his old age, and the name of his child would be John. When John was born, Zacharias joyfully proclaimed "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways!" John the Baptist would preach the Gospel, "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." This reminds us of the body and blood of the Lord we receive in Communion. "Given and shed for you, for the remission of sins." "O taste and see that the LORD

is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Ps. 34:8

But returning now to Zacharias, we remember that he at first doubted God's Word. He wanted a sign, additional proof in order to believe he would have a son in his old age. Gabriel said, "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words." This is a reminder of how sinful it is to doubt God's Word. Even if we accept all the Scriptures except one passage (because it is too hard to believe), we sin against God in the same manner of Zacharias. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." In the book of Revelation God tells us that if we add our own words to the Bible, God will add to us His plagues. Likewise if we take away from God's Word, He will take us out of the book of life. God's Word is sacred, and we are not to doubt any part of it, but firmly believe.

Of course, Zacharias repented of his doubts, and we know the Lord forgave. But for nine months, while his wife was pregnant, Zacharias was dumb! He could not praise God for his mercy! For nine months his faith was bottled up inside him, just waiting to explode in joyful words! Then suddenly his trial is over, his tongue being loosed, and He sang joyful praises to God with all His heart! "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed his people!" While Zacharias was joyful to be a new father, His greater joy was knowing another Child would soon be born, the Christchild! The Messiah of old! The Seed of the Woman! This is what all the prophets before him had been waiting for! The prophets of old knew that a special Child, would one day be born, who would redeem Israel from their sins. God "spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Adam was the first prophet. He taught his children, his family, that God would provide a Savior for sin, by the Seed of the woman. Though Adam's transgression was worse than any other man, in that Adam brought sin into the world, Adam trusted that the Seed of the woman would save him. Then down through the ages, and through the flood, Noah carried this Gospel promise into the new world, after the old world had been destroyed. There were also the prophets Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Micah, and so forth. They all knew the same promise of a Savior, whom they called the Messiah. They knew He would come "to perform the mercy promised to our fathers...the oath which he swore to our father Abraham." Down through the ages this Gospel promise of salvation was passed on from generation to generation, faithful fathers and mothers to their children. They were all waiting for the

same thing, the birth of their Savior! And now here stood Zacharias, at the end of a long list of prophets and priests. He stood on the brink of the New Testament, and God told him his son John would prepare the way for the Messiah, "to make ready a people, prepared for the Lord" JESUS!

Still overflowing with joy, Zacharias exclaims, "God hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David!" Jesus was David's Son and David's Lord. Jesus was the root of David, coming before David, yet also the offspring of David, coming after David. Jesus was David's "horn of salvation", the horn being a symbol of strength and rule, something firm, fast, and solid, which no enemy can overcome. This point is important to remember because the spiritual enemies of Christendom are very powerful. The devil is not content to have and hold the majority of men in unbelief, but he seeks, goes after, and pursues God's children of faith. If your weakness is pride, the devil knows it. If your weakness is the love of worldly friend, the devil knows it. If your weakness is seeking the praise and honor of men, the devil knows it. And he will attack your weakness and continually tempt and vex you.

But there is a way to overcome the devil. In Psalm 18 David says, "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the **horn of my salvation**, and my high tower." The Lord being our strength, we return to Bethlehem, and kneel in repentance and faith before the manger of our Savior. Here there is abundant grace, tender mercy. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The Dayspring from on high hath visited us!

II. The Daystar which shines into the heart of men.

This Dayspring from on high is none other than Jesus. Yet Jesus was not born during the day, but during the night, when all the world lay in darkness. A special star in the sky announced that God now dwelt with men. In a manger, in a feeding trough, our Savior lay. Our God, the Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, now had flesh and blood. He was one of us, so that He could deliver us from sin. When Mary, Joseph and the shepherds looked upon the baby Jesus, they saw with their own eyes, God, who came to visit them.

For this reason, Zacharias calls Jesus the Dayspring, the Daystar, or Morning-star. To this day, if you get up early in the morning, and get away from all the lights of their city, just as the new day is dawning, you might catch a glimpse of this Daystar. It is the strongest and brightest star, the last star in the sky to be

seen before the brilliant light of the sun overwhelms it. And this physical picture represents the birth of our Lord Jesus! "Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in to the way of peace." Do you see what the birth of Christ really is? Truly when Jesus was born, this was a sure and solid sign of God's grace and mercy upon mankind! For the baby Jesus is a Morning star, whose birth announced the glorious light of God's grace! Gone is the darkness of the night, whereby Satan held in bondage and captivity all the sons of Adam. Gone is the dark shadow of death, for Jesus Himself would conquer death and rise up victorious over the grave! In short, in the birth of Christ, gone was all the hopes of the devil and the powers of hell, for the King and Creator of all men, being moved by His tender mercies and grace, had come to earth, to take on the devil, and crush him under His feet! God had come to save, and no man, no devil would be able to stop him! That Babe born in Bethlehem came for one reason, and one reason only, to deliver you from your sins of darkness, setting you free in the light of God's grace, the Light of His dear Son. Jesus said, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

Dear sinner, do you fear the powers of darkness? Are you afraid of the shadow of death? Jesus came from heaven above to earth below and conquered each of these enemies for you. From the manger to the cross, all He did He did for you. He guides your feet into His way of peace, by teaching your heart that in Him there is remission, forgiveness of sins. Do not keep the light of His grace from you, but receive the Lord Jesus by faith. Listen closely to the words of Jesus, He means you no harm. He did not come to condemn you, but to save you. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned." God does not require one good work from you for your salvation. Jesus died for the ungodly, He paid for the sins of all men, including your own, on the cross. Before your lips even had the ability to say, "Please forgive me", Christ had already forgiven you. Therefore believe and trust in Him. "Serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people." Amen.