

Christ's Advent, Part II- The Coming of the Christ

Call to Worship: Micah 5:2-5a

1st Scripture: Genesis 3

2nd Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Hymn #151- *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Hymn #157- *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

Hymn #149- *Joy to the World!*

Introduction

Last time, we began a four part series on the “Advent of Christ,” and we looked at the “Foretelling of the Christ,” considering the promise of His coming, right from the outset, in Genesis, Chapter 3.

This morning, we move on to consider the actual “Coming of the Christ,” as recorded here in Luke’s Gospel. And to this end, we will especially hone in on the glorious proclamation of the angels (given in verse 14), in the presence of a group of many shepherds, concerning two significant outcomes, which Christ’s coming has brought about.

I. The Historical Context

We begin then, by first considering a general overview of the historical context, within which, our Lord had entered into this world, through the virgin’s womb.

First, consider that over four thousand years have passed, since the time God had declared the first promise (the foretelling) of the coming of the Christ, back in Genesis 3, when pronouncing the curse against the serpent, who had just provoked the fall of man. We looked at that text last time, and read through it again, in our first Scripture reading.

But, I simply mention this, because a lot has transpired; a lot of history and God’s dealings with men (and especially the nation of Israel) has come and gone, when God finally sends the Christ, in the fullness of the times. There has been a worldwide flood, back during the time of Noah, which nearly brought about the extinction of mankind, barring Noah and his family. Following this, so as to prevent another severe and universal judgment, God had separated the nations at the Tower of Babel, when the whole world was on the verge of rebelling against God, yet again. And then, He set apart Abraham and his seed, to be His own special people, with whom He would form a unique covenant, where God would be their God, and they

would be His people. And they were to faithfully represent the true and living God, to a lost and fallen world. However, Israel, God's chosen people of old; those with the greatest amount of light, containing the oracles of God, and His temple, had so failed to faithfully represent God to the rest of the world, that God had brought judgment upon them on many occasions, and in various ways, always sparing a remnant, ultimately, in keeping with His promise, back in Genesis Chapter 3, to bring a victorious Seed out of the woman, to defeat the serpent. This promise was reaffirmed and made clearer all throughout the Old Covenant, reassuring the people, that in spite of their sins and failures, their idolatry and rebellion, God would keep His promise.

The sins of Israel had become so grievous, that God had brought about the worst of His curses upon them, exiling the people from their land, sending the Babylonians in to destroy and burn down the temple and the City of Jerusalem with its wall. But, yet again, God spared a remnant, and He brought a people back into the land, from out of captivity, so that they could rebuild the temple, the city and the wall. There, God renewed His covenant with the people. However, when you come to the end of the Book of Nehemiah, sadly, the hope that the people had, in maintaining their covenant with God, having now rebuilt the temple and the wall of Jerusalem, fades into the inevitable reality that this hope of prospering as a nation in covenant with their God, will be short lived. They had already begun to break the covenant, and the pattern which led to their judgment and exile, was set in place, once again.

In all of this, and when reading through the entire Old Testament Scriptures, one cannot help but say, "When will the Christ come; when will the promised One come to make things right? When will God bring forth the Anointed One, who will conquer the serpent, and who will rectify things, dealing a death blow to man's sin, so that, man can be reconciled to God in truth, and be given a new heart which would obey God from the inside out, so that, such a pattern of rebellion (witnessed over and over again in Israel), would be broken forever? When will mankind's natural drive toward the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah be stopped?

Well, here in our text, brethren, with great appreciation, we ought to gaze upon that which took place, when Israel was in subjection to Rome, run by corrupt leadership, in a context of very dark times, when the truth of God's promise had all but been swallowed up, in a gospel of self-

righteousness and arrogance. The Promise had finally arrived, but not as one would naturally expect.

II. The Coming of the Christ

An angel appears to a betrothed (an engaged), lower-class couple in Nazareth, to tell them, individually, that the custody of the Christ (the One Promised, and longed for, for over four thousand years) would be in their care. The Holy Spirit would overshadow Mary, a virgin, and she would conceive and be with child. Her firstborn Son, would have no natural father, barring Him from the effects of sin, and He would be called Jesus, because He would be the One, who would save His people from their sins. He would answer the promise given in Genesis three, which was reiterated and further developed throughout all of the Old Covenant.

And as a census is taken by the Romans, and the Jews are ordered to go back to their place of birth, Joseph and the pregnant Mary head down from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And it is there, in accordance with the prophesy given by Micah, in Micah 5:2 (which we read for our Scriptural call to worship), that Mary gives birth to the Christ. Not in Jerusalem or in some well respected, wealthy city, but in the lowly, discreet city of Bethlehem... is where the Savior and King of all living things was to be born. So poor was His birth, that there were no inns even available to house the couple and their infant child. They had to reside in a manger, and the Christ Himself, after being wrapped in loose cloths, was placed in a trough where animals would feed. At a time of predominant arrogance, self-righteousness and pride amongst the religious elite, the Christ would come in humility, lowliness and poverty.

And the report of His birth first goes out, not to Kings, not to princes or high officials or religious leaders or anyone in any high position whatsoever. Angels declare His birth, first, to a group of mangy, unclean, dejected shepherds. Societies outcasts get an angelic visitation from a host of angels that declare the glory of what just happened in Bethlehem. And the shepherds immediately go to see this great thing! Let us then consider the angelic declaration of praise; the chant of angels, which loudly declared the certain outcome of the birth of the Christ, in the presence of the shepherds.

III. Glory to God in the Highest

As they praise God, in verse 14, we are given two declarations. The first is this: “Glory to God in the highest!” What then are we to make of this declaration? What do the angelic host mean by this statement? Well, in the simplest sense, we can state it this way. They were declaring that the birth and incarnation of the Christ would bring unmatched glory to God, whose throne is in the highest heavens. In other words, God’s glory would here, finally be recognized at its fullest magnitude and strength (the sun would be at high noon, as it were), and the glory He would receive (and the glory which was long due His majesty) would be the highest glory given to the greatest King who has ever and will ever exist! Yes, the earth has had her glorious kings, in all of their pomp and show; she has had her Caesars and her Pharaohs, and all manner of other rulers, decked in majesty and splendor, but the highest glory; a glory that is untouched and unreached (in even any remote sense) by men or even angels, is that glory which belongs to the One who sits in the highest seat; on the highest throne, in the highest heaven, which is at the center of every created and living thing. The greatest weight of glory and majesty belongs to, and would be given to, our infinite and eternal God, the Creator, sustainer and ordainer of all things!

And here’s the real power behind this statement, brethren. The apex of God’s glory is reached; that infinitely highest level of glory is reached, here in this temporal, finite, material world, when the Christ has come, to fulfill what God had promised back in Genesis 3, when man had fallen away from God. Both, the death knell for every enemy and opposer of God (spiritual and physical), and the redemption of every true child of God, were proclaimed, as it were, the moment the infant Christ was born, and laid lowly in a manger, in Bethlehem.

And so, first and foremost, above all else, God would be vindicated, God’s Word would be affirmed, His Name would be known, His righteousness would be boldly displayed, and He would be glorified in the highest! And I don’t think it would be splitting hairs to recognize the order here, with respect to the salvation of men. Yes, salvation is an incomprehensible blessing and glory for the people of God. And the Christ, indeed, came to save His people. But, even the ultimate end of this entire mission is not the salvation of men. It is that God would be glorified in the highest! What is revealed about God; what is declared about His being, His character, His

Person, His righteous attributes; what God displays about Himself to every living thing, in the redemption of His fallen people, is, and ought to be, the central focus of our praise and our worship. And sadly, I think that is what is lost in many Christian contexts. Many a gospel is a man-centered Gospel, rather than a God-centered gospel. May that never be the case for us, brethren. The Gospel is, and always will be, first and foremost, about declaring and proclaiming the glory of God, and not men. Again, the King, sitting on the highest throne, in the highest heaven would be glorified in His entire creation; He would be known in the world that has constantly rejected Him, and every living thing would ultimately give Him His due praise and honor!

IV. And On Earth Peace, Goodwill Toward Men

“And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” Here, we now address the second portion of the Angelic chant of praise. God is glorified, in accordance with the ultimate purpose of His divine will, and the benefit of this great reality, meets fallen mankind in a most profound and glorious way. A bridge of peace is opened up, bringing man back into relation with the God whom he has alienated by his sin, and an avenue for God to legally and legitimately express good-will toward fallen men has opened. God can bless the ungodly, without compromising His holy and righteous nature. God can be just, and yet, justify sinners!

What more incomprehensibly greater news could these angels have proclaimed? The world was cursed and damned; separated from God and heading straight for utter destruction. The wedge between an infinitely holy and righteous God, and fallen, rebellious men, was large and immovable from the standpoint of man. And who would ever think? Who would ever think that God, Himself, would condescend and step down into this world, in the Person of His Son, to bring about restoration and peace.

Life is such a wonderful reality! It is great to exist! But, our existence is pained and plagued with every form of evil and hurt, and then, in but a short time, we die! We die and face impending judgment, where we are held to the standard of God’s holy law! It is a state most to be pitied and feared and dreaded! It gives the word “hopeless” its highest meaning! To be an enemy of anyone is a terrible thing. But, to be an enemy of the living God, who is able to

righteously cast our never-dying souls into hell, forever...what could be worse? No, we want to live. We want joy and life and peace. But, our curse has brought us misery and death and toil and labor. But, God has sent us a Christ! He has sent us an Anointed One, with every capacity to deliver us from the curse of sin and death! God is glorified, and on earth, “peace!” Peace on earth! How can it be? And goodwill toward men. God, graciously blessing, loving, caring for, and rewarding fallen sinners with good! How can this be?

It is all wrapped up in swaddling cloths, nestled in a feeding trough, in the lowly city of Bethlehem! The coming of the Christ; the One who would crush the head of the serpent, bearing the curse of man for man, so that, man no more may perish! Oh, there will be tribulation in the world, but in Him, there is true peace; peace with God forever! What profound words, spoken later by John the Baptist, regarding this Christ: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” What did the “lamb” mean to the Jews, who constantly sacrificed animals, unto the covering of their sins? How meaningful was the Paschal Lamb (the “Passover Lamb”), to the Jews, who, every year, reflected on the way, in which, God had delivered them out of their bondage to the Egyptians? As they ate that Lamb, they were reminded of the innocent blood of the lamb that was shed, and poured out upon the outside border of the door of their homes. For, it was this blood that kept the Angel from entering in and destroying their firstborn children. And now, the Angel Himself; the Righteous Judge and Destroyer Himself, has come, to be that very sacrifice which would actually remove the sins of men. For, animal blood could not truly atone for the sins of mankind.

And so, peace on earth and goodwill toward men, came with this Christ child, who, born to die, through His death, would redeem lost, fallen, cursed sinners.

V. Concluding Thoughts

Friends, over six thousand years ago, God made a promise to send a Savior to restore what was broken because of the sin of our first parents. Mankind had fallen into sin, and God was determined to do something about it. And almost two thousand years ago, God fulfilled that promise. He sent His Son into this world, to become the substitute and sacrifice, who would stand in the place of sinners, and receive the punishment and condemnation due them.

That child, born in Bethlehem, went on to live a sinless life, ultimately dying, after He was horrifically nailed to a cross. However, God raised Him from the dead three days later, and He has since ascended to the right hand of God. What God has gloriously accomplished, means one of two things for everyone in this room.

1) If you have come to put your hope and trust, completely in this Christ, and in Him alone, then you possess what is most to be treasured in all the world. You can't take silver and gold or precious metals, stones and gems, or fancy cars and homes, or anything else of significant value in this world, with you beyond the grave. These things are temporal, and your life is temporal, and nothing in this world can ever fulfill the deepest longings of your soul.

But, you have come to find the glorious treasure of Christ, who has reconciled you to God, through His death, so that, you walk with God now, and eagerly look forward to eternal life in heaven. And although you suffer in this life; although this life is not easy, your eternal inheritance provides you with all that you need to live for the glory of God now, and to declare the glory of Christ to a lost and dying world. You look forward to the glory to come, where you will have a resurrected body that will never break down, and where there will be no more tears or sorrow or pain or death. All of that is in the bank, presently, because you are in Christ.

Brethren, we have to continually remind ourselves of who we are, and of all that we have in Christ. We have to keep putting things in their proper perspective, as the busyness of life and difficult trials can easily eclipse these wonderful truths. Brethren, let us remember what this is all about! God has already won. The outcome is certain. He will be glorified to the full, you already have peace with God, His goodwill is already directed toward you, and He will soon bring you home, safely into His eternal glory! Revel in that! Rejoice in that! Live in that light, and strive to walk worthy of that, now, making the building of His church, your ultimate priority, including the seeking of lost souls.

2) There are those of you who are still not joined to Christ by faith. Oh friends, if you are not in Christ; if you are not a true Christian, resting in Christ for salvation, and striving to live for Him, see that the curse of Adam still rests upon you. You are in that naturally condemned and hopeless state, but you don't have to stay there. You still have breath, and therefore, you can call upon the Lord today; you can seek Him, and trust in Him, and find eternal salvation. Why would

you remain in a lost and condemned state? Why would you remain in a state of unrest and separation from God, heading straight for hell? There is a Savior! And this Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ready, willing and able to save you to the uttermost. He can remove the penalty that you have incurred by all of your sins. But, you must go to Him! You must call upon Him, and trust in His atoning work, so that, you can be reconciled to God, forever! Don't die in your sins, friends! Our Savior has come! Seek Him, and you will find eternal rest for your never-dying soul!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25