

*The
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"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path." Psalm 119:105.

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“For the grace
of God that
bringeth salvation
hath appeared
to all men.”

Titus 2:11



"My Scripture cannot be broken." Luke 16:32
"My Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are *"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."*

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



The President's Column

"Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel" (TLH 62)

The above hymn title is for one of the most beautiful of our Advent hymns. It expresses the very theme of the Advent Season — Come!

Indeed, during the Season of Advent, the appointed Scripture lessons (Old Testament, Epistle, Gospel) set forth how our Savior was promised to come into the flesh at His birth in Bethlehem and did so, how He continues to come into our hearts through His Word, and how He will return visibly and in glory on the Last Day to judge all mankind.

[Let it be inserted here that we actually teach and confess these comings the year round by virtue of our proclaiming "*all the counsel of God*," Acts 20:27. In other words, the Church Year is not some God-given mandate which compels us to compartmentalize what we teach and confess from the Scriptures. Rather, the observance of a Church Year with its various seasons is something adopted by the Christian Church years ago by way of custom to serve as a guideline for making sure we cover each year the chief events of the life of Christ (conception, birth, life, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection, ascension), and also the basic teachings which pertain to our Justification and our Sanctification. This serves to prevent pastors from being disproportionate in their preaching, that is, it serves to keep them from preaching every Sunday on one doctrine or one practice, or on some certain sin and vice, and thus from depriving the people of hearing the whole counsel of God.]

With the space afforded in this column, we shall briefly treat the three comings of our Savior mentioned above.

First, since Advent, the first season of the Church Year, comprises the four Sundays prior to Christmas, it quite obviously deals with the

first coming of Christ, how, as promised by the prophets, He came into the flesh. Indeed, this was what all the believers in the Old Testament times yearned for. Jeremiah wrote, "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah*" (Jeremiah 33:14). This promise was first set forth to Adam and Eve when God promised to send the Seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15). That this woman was to be a virgin was foretold by Isaiah in 7:14, "*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*" Even the place of His birth was foretold by the prophet Micah, "*But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*" (Micah 5:2). That this Child was none other than the Mighty God Himself was expressed in Isaiah 9:6, "*Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*" That the promised Seed of the woman was to be our Suffering Servant to bear the penalty for the sins of all mankind and make full atonement for all men's sins was set forth in Isaiah 53, with some of the key words being, "*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*" (verse 5). The Old Testament Scriptures also foretold Christ's burial and resurrection (Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:9). In addition, His ascension was foretold in Psalm 47, and His session at God's right hand in Psalm 110:1. Thus, as our Risen Savior opened up the Scriptures to the two Emmaus disciples, He said, "*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*" (Luke 24:25-26).

Yet, in Advent, we are also reminded of how our Savior continues to come into our hearts through His Word and the Sacrament. For example, the Epistle Lesson for the second Sunday in Advent declares, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*" (Romans 15:4). Indeed, through the Word, our Savior comes to us and conveys to us and instills in us

His blessed peace and hope. In Revelation 3:20 our Savior stands at the door of our hearts and says, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*" Then the same text concludes: "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" Thus, in His parable of the sower, Christ urges us to hear His Word and let it fall, not by the wayside, nor on rocky soil, nor among thorns, but on good ground. (Matthew 13:3-23; Mark 4:2-20; Luke 8:4-15). It is by means of our continuing to hear Christ's Word that we are kept in the faith and are ready for Christ to return on the Last Day. James 1:21 says, "*And receive with meekness the engrafted [implanted] Word, which is able to save your souls.*" Or, as God says, "*But to this man will I look, even to him that poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*" (Isaiah 66:2). What is more, even as we receive the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood under the elements of bread and wine, we also by faith receive Him and His forgiveness anew—"*Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.*" This, too, is the Lord coming to us to preserve and to keep us in the one truth faith.

Thirdly, during Advent there is also a definite focus upon Christ's second coming, that is, His return on the Last Day to raise up all the dead, to separate the believers from the unbelievers just as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and then to condemn the goats to everlasting torment in hell and to take the sheep unto Himself into the bliss of heaven. (Matthew 25:31-33ff.; also John 5:28-29). In this regard, we find that the Epistle Lesson for the First Sunday in Advent says, "*And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*" (Romans 13:11). Similarly, in Mark 13:35-37, our Savior says, "*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.*" In addition, there are described for us the conditions and the events which usher in the last days. The Gospel Lesson for the Second Sunday in Advent says, "*And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are*

coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:25-28).

In view of all this, we surely appreciate why John says in Revelation 22:20, “*He which testifieth these things saith, ‘Surely I come quickly. Amen.’ Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*”

—E. R. S.



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“**The Scripture cannot be broken.**” John 10:35

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Isaiah's Christmas Prophecy Fulfilled

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” —Isaiah 7:14

The Holy Scriptures are the revelation of God written down in human language. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine”* (II Timothy 3:16). *“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (II Peter 1:21b). Sometimes that divine revelation in human words is profound, astonishing, amazing, and beyond normal experience in this earthly life. Such is most certainly the case with the above prophecy of God in Isaiah 7 and its perfect fulfillment recorded in Matthew 1: *“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* (Vv. 22-23).

The ultimate and overriding purpose of the Holy Scriptures is to show all sinners in the world what God through Christ Jesus has done for their salvation from the hatred of God toward all sin and all sinners (Psalm 5:4-5; John 3:16-17; I Timothy 1:15), from the curse and condemnation of God's Law toward every human being (Galatians 3:13; Romans 8:1), and from the everlasting, deserved punishment and torment of hell (Luke 16:19-31; John 3:36; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 4:10-12). God's three prophecies, written down by the Prophet Isaiah in verse 14 of Isaiah 7, were a vital, important, and necessary part of God's marvelous plan of salvation for all lost (Matthew 18:11) and completely guilty sinners (James 2:10; Romans 3:19). Since no human beings (not even you or me — Romans 3:10) are righteous, acceptable, and holy before God on their own (Romans 3:9, 12), therefore we all need Someone else to take away, remove, and forgive our inherited and actual sins. That Someone else is *“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). He is (and will ever remain) the *“one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”* (I Timothy 2:5-6). On account of Jesus' perfect, finished, and complete payment and satisfaction for

all sins and for all sinners (John 19:30; II Corinthians 5:15a), as well as His perfect, finished, and complete compliance with all the demands of God's Law in the place of all people (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:4-5), God has "*justified freely by His grace*" (Romans 3:24) "*all*" (Romans 3:23a) sinners, "*not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (II Corinthians 5:19b). Now, whosoever "*believeth on Him* [God's Son, Christ Jesus] *is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God*" (John 3:18). There is no other preparation, righteousness, holiness, and justification before God (in this temporary life, at death, or at the end of this world) **EXCEPT IN** "*the Lord, our righteousness*" (Jeremiah 23:6). This is spelled out so clearly in John 14:6, I Peter 2:9-10, Mark 16:16, Revelation 14:13, and Matthew 25:31-46. Therefore, we must, for Jesus' sake (II Corinthians 5:14), "*abhor*" (Romans 12:9) religions (Judaism, Buddhism, Unitarianism, etc.) which leave out Christ Jesus and His work for all sinners, and organizations (the Masonic Lodge, Scouting – Boys and Girls, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.) which promote the "god of your choice," your own efforts and works as deserving of awards and rewards, etc., therefore leaving out the only Savior for sinners (Acts 4:12; John 3:36), the only, real, living, and lasting hope and comfort for lost sinners (Matthew 18:11; I Thessalonians 5:8-11; II Thessalonians 2:16-17; Titus 2:13-14; etc.). Furthermore, for Jesus' sake (I John 4:19), we must "*hate every false way*" (Psalm 119:104), especially those false, deceiving funeral sermons which promote "work-righteousness" (as if the "good" works of the deceased will surely bring him/her to heaven) rather than the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus (Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 3:21-28), which alone gives sinners "*the victory*" (I Corinthians 15:57) over sin, death, and the grave (I Corinthians 15:54-56), that victory received and enjoyed only by faith in Christ Jesus (Matthew 25:1-13; Mark 16:15-16; John 3:36).

Now, let's look closely at God's stupendous, awesome, Messianic prophecy (prophecies), intimately connected with His work of saving sinners, written down by the Prophet Isaiah in chapter 7, verse 14:

- "*Behold*" - This word draws attention to something important. It would be like introducing a statement with "*Lo*" (Matthew

28:20) or “*Verily*” (Luke 23:43) in the New Testament. Or we might react to something important which we see, hear, or get in the mail by saying: “Wow!” Here in Isaiah 7:14, the “*Lord Himself*” promised to give “*a sign*,” a miracle, a supernatural event, an extraordinary happening. What was that “*sign*”?

- “*A virgin shall conceive*” – Here we see not only the reason for the “*Behold*,” but we also have set before us the “*sign*,” the miracle, the supernatural event, the extraordinary happening! Literally, in the original Hebrew, “*the virgin*,” a specially chosen, designated, selected, and favored virgin; not just any virgin. This was already made clear in the first Messianic prophecy, when the Lord God said to the devil: “*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed*” (Genesis 3:15). God, who “*cannot lie*” (Titus 1:2), kept His promise in Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14 when He chose, designated, selected, and favored the virgin Mary to be the “*mother*” (Matthew 1:18) of Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel delivered this message to Mary: “*Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus*” (Luke 1:31).

Mary was puzzled because she was a virgin. She, therefore, inquired of Gabriel: “*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man*” (Luke 1:34)? What was Gabriel’s answer? “*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible*” (Luke 1:35-37). The words of God, conveyed by the Angel Gabriel, moved Mary to believe the announcement of her conception by the Holy Ghost. How did she express her faith in the angel’s message from God? “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*” (Luke 1:38).

Now, how did Joseph, Mary’s engaged “*husband*” (Matthew 1:19), react to the news that his engaged, virgin “*wife*” (Matthew 1:20) was pregnant and expecting a child?

Initially, he concluded that she was guilty of adultery. Therefore, he was going to quietly divorce her (Matthew 1:19; 19:9). However, while he was thinking about this apparent unfaithfulness by his engaged wife, "...the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21). How did Joseph express his faith in the angel's message from God? Let us take careful note of the content of the closing two verses of Matthew 1: "*Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn Son, and he called His name Jesus.*"

For both Mary and Joseph, the Word of God was their light and lamp (Psalm 119:105), even though that Word of God, conveyed by the angel, spoke of unprecedented things, things which were completely strange and foreign to both of them. This was evidence and proof of their faith and trust in the words of God, especially in His words concerning the promised Messiah and Savior! "*He that is of God heareth God's words*" (John 8:47). The Savior Himself declared: "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*" (John 10:27). Should we now worship and glorify Mary and Joseph because they willingly submitted to and followed the astounding and astonishing words of God brought to them by the angel? Of course not (Philippians 2:13)! Scripture plainly teaches us: "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve*" (Matthew 4:10). Therefore, all prayers to the saints, including those connected with the wicked, ungodly rosary, must be condemned, abhorred, and rejected as an abomination to God and a horrible abuse of His Word of truth (Isaiah 63:16; Exodus 20:3; Psalm 97:10).

- "*And [shall] bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel*" – God, through Isaiah, not only promised the birth of a Son by the Virgin Mary, but also promised (prophesied) that the Son's name would be "*Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*" (Matthew 1:23). These divine prophecies were most certainly and perfectly fulfilled, for God is always "*faithful*" to His

Word; “*He cannot deny Himself*” (II Timothy 2:13), even though, in time, it took over 700 years for these prophecies in Isaiah 7:14 to be actually carried out by the Holy Ghost in the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-40). This Son was born (making Him an actual human being, just like us, except that He was without sin – Hebrews 2:14-17; 4:15; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5), while, at the same time, He was the eternal God (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; I John 1:1-2, 7). Therefore, He was, in one Person, the Son of Man and the Son of God (Matthew 9:6; 16:13-17; John 3:16; Matthew 17:5).

WHY was the actual coming of this God-Man so absolutely and vitally necessary? To fulfill God’s prophecies for the redemption, reconciliation, and justification of the whole world of sinners through this God-Man (Isaiah 7:14; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 9:6; Romans 3:23-24; II Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:2), that “*whosoever believeth in Him [Jesus, the God-Man] should not perish [in hell, as every sinner deserves], but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16b).

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime [such as the words of Isaiah 7:14] were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4), hope built on verses such as those in Matthew 1: “*Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou [Joseph] shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* (Vv. 20-23).

The standard Epistle Lesson for Christmas Day is Titus 2:11-14. These verses fit in so perfectly with the priceless prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, not only wonderfully summarizing that prophecy, but also showing the God-produced good fruits which are evident in the lives of all believers in Immanuel: “*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men [with no one left out],*

teaching us [the believers in Jesus] that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works."

To whom do we owe our unending thanks, praise, and worship during this Christmas season for planning, preparing, and perfectly carrying out our (and the whole world's) redemption, reconciliation, and justification? *"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren [in the Lord Jesus Christ], be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor [in the past, present, and future] is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:57-58.

—R. J. L.



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A Christmas Meditation



“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

—Galatians 4:4-5

Already back in the Garden of Eden after our first parents had fallen into sin, God promised them a “Seed,” a Child, which would bruise Satan’s head (Genesis 3:15). Isaiah predicts that a virgin will bear a Son (Isaiah 7:14). In inspired prophetic vision he beholds this fact as accomplished and writes, “*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given*” (Isaiah.9:6). These passages foretold the supernatural birth of the promised Messiah—the “Seed of the woman,” of a “virgin.” Jesus Christ is the Messiah. The virgin birth fits only Him of whom the Apostle writes, “*When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.*”

This Jesus is not only true man but also the Son of God. He is not the Son of God in the sense in which we and all true believers are called the sons of God, for we are the children of God by adoption, while Christ is of the same essence with the Father, having been begotten of Him from eternity. The Scriptures clearly ascribe to Christ divine names, divine attributes, divine works, divine honor and glory (See the Exposition of Luther’s *Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, pp. 103-104).

It had been foretold that this Messiah would bruise Satan’s head, (Genesis 3:15) and that He would swallow up death in victory (Isaiah 25:8). Only God could do this and He alone — no mere man! This Messiah is true God and true man in one undivided

person. We confess with Luther, *"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."* When God's appointed time had come, the heavenly Father, in love for the world, sent forth His only begotten Son, who assumed a true human nature within the womb of the Virgin Mary and was born a true man that He might take our place under the Law. and that He might be able to suffer and die in our stead. Being *God manifest in the flesh*" (I Timothy 3:16), He not only fulfilled the Law perfectly as our Substitute, but His suffering and death was also a sufficient ransom for our redemption; and He was able to overcome death and the devil for us.

Now we can joyfully exclaim with Luther that Christ *"has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death"* (Luther's *Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, p. 10). We were unable to satisfy the righteous anger which God had because of man's disobedience. Every single one of us was conceived and born in sin and iniquity, and we were already by nature the children of wrath who sin daily in thought, desire, word and deed (Ephesians.2:1ff.). *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23), not merely temporal death, as some would have us believe, but everlasting destruction in hell! But behold the love of our dear heavenly Father in sending forth His only begotten Son! *"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"* (II Corinthians 5:19). Because of Christ's sacrifice, the heavenly Father has absolved the world and no longer charges their sins against them. [*"Christ has redeemed*] *them that were under the Law,*" which means "all," since all men were under the Law. The Apostle tells us that God sent His Son to redeem us, *"that we might receive the adoption of sons."* It is God's good will that we should be His children through faith in His Son. The Savior declares, *"Repent ye and believe the Gospel"* (Mark 1:15). Be sincerely sorry that you have grieved and offended God with your sins, and receive into your heart the joyous message that *"the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin"* (I John 1:7). The very moment that the Holy Spirit has changed our heart into a heart

new-born, we have as our very own possession the forgiveness of all sins and the promise of everlasting life with Him in the joys of heaven. *"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins"* (Colossians 1:12-14).

The purpose of Christ's redemption is stated by the Apostle when he writes, *"that we might receive the adoption of sons."* Luther correctly writes, *"that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."* Just think! Every true believer in Christ can confess: *"I am now the dear child of my heavenly Father through faith in His Son!"* We can sing with the hymn writer, *"Now my conscience is at peace, from the Law I stand acquitted"* (TLH 324). Why? *"Christ hath purchased my release and my every sin remitted. Naught remains my soul to grieve — Jesus sinners doth receive"* (TLH 324). O, what comfort to our sin-laden souls! *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). Come what may in this life, we now have the blessed assurance that God is our dear heavenly Father and that we are His dear children through faith in Christ, who means all things well with us. *"For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"* (Romans 8:28). There is no need to be afraid when the troubles of this life seem to be so overwhelming. *"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, thy shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee"* (Isaiah 43:1-2). Though many foes assail us and severe trials and tribulations beset us, we are safe in the arms of Jesus, who assures us, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). And finally, when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, *"I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me"* (Psalm 23).

—M. L. N.

The Angels' Christmas Song of Praise

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men."* —Luke 2:14

The Lord Jesus Christ, true God from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Ghost, was born into this world as a true Man in the little town of Bethlehem, and was laid in a manger (a feeding trough for livestock) because there was no room in the inn. That night an angel appeared to some shepherds who were watching over their flocks in a nearby place. Being *"sore afraid"* at the sight of this heavenly messenger and of the glory of God which *"shone round about them,"* the shepherds were told by the angel: *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:10–11).



It was after this glorious message had been delivered that *"a multitude of the heavenly host"*—or army (*sabaoth*)—of angels broke forth in the praise of the Lord God of heaven and earth in what we call the *Gloria in Excelsis*: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"* (Luke 2:14). Without doubt, this was an awesome sight for the shepherds to behold. But what caused those angels suddenly to appear and praise the Lord in such a manner? It was the glorious event which had just been announced—the birth of *"a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!"* This was the long-awaited Messiah, whose coming had been foretold in Gospel prophecy throughout the Old Testament. The fact that He had now come to carry out His work of saving mankind from the wages of their sins was certainly good reason for the angels to sing God's praises for His great goodness and faithfulness.

For the salvation of us poor wretched sinners, the only-begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, *was made man*—being conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary through the

miraculous working of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35). How the divine nature of the one true God could be joined together with a true human nature in the person of Jesus Christ without disrupting the oneness of the divine essence with the Father and the Holy Ghost is beyond our ability to comprehend. In view of this wonderful, astounding, miraculous, and gracious work whereby God became man (was incarnate) in order to redeem mankind from their sins, the Lord is most certainly worthy to receive honor, praise, and glory from all His angel hosts in the heights of heaven, as well as from all people who dwell upon this earth.

Peace on earth is proclaimed by the angels in their glorious song of praise. This is very commonly misunderstood and misinterpreted by those who preach a social gospel as being a promise of *earthly* peace—the end of strife between those of different faiths and the end of wars between the nations of the world. However, to the contrary, concerning this kind of temporal peace Jesus told His disciples: “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household*” (Matthew 10:34–36). This is the case because the enemies of Christ will continue to oppose the true believers—often violently—until the end of the world; and the Christians, by God’s grace, will not compromise their faith for the sake of temporal peace. Rather, the “*peace*” proclaimed by the angels in connection with the birth of Christ is a *spiritual peace* between God and man.

We know from the Bible that man by nature is the *enemy* of God (Romans 8:7) and is incapable of pleasing Him (Romans 8:8; Hebrews 11:6). And because of his sins, natural man is under the righteous wrath of God. The Scriptures plainly state: “*Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness... Thou hatest all workers of iniquity*” (Psalm 5:4–5; see also Ephesians 2:1–3).

It is only by the redemptive work of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, that we can be saved from the just punishment of our sins. The Scriptures say: “*If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous: and He is the propitiation [the*

atonement, appeasing sacrifice] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:1-2). This universal atonement brought about a universal reconciliation—peace between God and all mankind through the forgiveness of their sins (objective justification). This is why the angels sang of peace "on earth"—the whole world is included in God's declaration of peace. But it is only by faith in the holy Babe in Bethlehem's manger that we actually receive personally this peace with God through the forgiveness of all our sins (subjective justification). The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: "Being justified [forgiven] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1).

Sadly, the vast majority of people refuse this peace and remain the enemies of God by their unbelief. But this does not change the fact that, for the sake of the Christ-Child, God has "good will" toward all men. The Bible so clearly tells us that the Lord desires all people to come to faith in Jesus and to be saved from their sins and the punishment of hell. We read: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11); and again: "The Lord...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9); and again: "[God] will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). We see this universal will of grace manifested in the incarnation of the Son of God. This is why the angel could proclaim to the shepherds these "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10).

As we consider the wonders of God's great love for us in sending His only-begotten Son into the world as a true man to be our Substitute under His Law and under His wrath, and thus to earn for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven, our hearts should be so filled with gratitude and appreciation that our mouths will show forth His praise in joyous song. Let us then follow the example of the angel host and glorify God for His infinite power, mercy, and grace as this is revealed in the Christ-Child born in Bethlehem.

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men."*

—P. E. B.

“Forget Not All His Benefits”

Psalm 103:1-5

Thanksgiving is a festival celebrated in the United States on the fourth Thursday in November by proclamation of the President and the governors of the states. It was first celebrated in 1621 by the Pilgrims out of thankfulness to God for deliverance from a famine of food. After the year 1630, it was celebrated by the Pilgrims after each harvest. The custom of setting the day aside for the purpose of worship became fixed when Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation in 1864, calling on the nation to thank God, and made the fourth Thursday in November the date for a national Day of Thanksgiving.

David, the writer of the Psalm from which our devotion is taken, was not only singing thanks to the Lord for all of His gracious blessings, but he was recounting them in detail to exhort himself (and also us) not to be forgetful or unmindful of the Lord's choicest gifts, of which believers in particular are the recipients. David writes by the inspiration of God: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”* David is not specific when thanking his Lord in these first two verses. The expression *“all his benefits”* is used, and this covers everything that God had done for him; but no special benefit is mentioned yet.

When exactly David wrote this Psalm is not known; but throughout his life he had experienced many blessings from the Lord, his God, blessings both temporal and spiritual. He had been chosen by God to be Israel's king when he was still a young boy. He had often been delivered by God from the hand of his enemy, wicked King Saul. He had been forgiven for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and for the murder of her husband, Uriah. And, with God's blessing upon him, he had conquered the enemies that continually plagued his people. Whatever the occasion may have been for his writing of this Psalm, it is apparent that David was extremely joyful and thankful to the Lord for *“all his benefits.”*

But he was also exhorting his own soul not only to be thankful but

to “*bless*,” that is, to *praise*, the Lord as he contemplated his life and the Lord’s gracious blessings upon him. And so, as he began to compose this Psalm, he called upon his own soul and all that was within him to “*bless the Lord*” and “*His holy name.*” As he looked about him at the unbelieving world, David could easily see that the gods of the heathen nations were idols and that the wicked nations surrounding Israel, with the name of their gods on their lips, committed the most profane crimes to *their* glory and worked all manner of iniquity in ignorance and unbelief of the only true God. On the other hand, David was thankful that the name of *his* God was “*holy*” in and of itself, and that it was holy among God’s people as His precious Word was proclaimed to them and as His people gratefully followed it in their lives. To David this was a cause for much joy, and for this he gave thanks.

Each time we assemble in God’s house to worship, we pray in the Lord’s Prayer that His name might be hallowed *among us* also. Are we able to say with David that this is a cause of *our* thanksgiving? Do we, like David, search our souls to find out whether God’s name is being hallowed among *us*? According to Luther’s explanation of the second petition, the name of God is hallowed, made and kept holy, “when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead a holy life according to it.” Is this being done among us? By the grace of God, our people have been blessed with faithful pastors who preach, teach, and apply His pure Word without any compromise of His precious truth and watch for the souls of their people as diligent undershepherds of the Lord Jesus. This is so rare today that we should be thankful for it as a gracious gift of God. Moreover, as we, who have been cleansed from all our sins by the blood of Jesus and cling to Him as our dear Savior, live according to the New Man in daily repentance, God’s name is hallowed as we continually amend our sinful lives according to God’s Word, enabled by God’s gracious Spirit, through the Means of Grace, the Gospel and the two sacraments, to live unto Him which died for us and rose again. And thus, in gratitude both for God’s Word of Grace and for our sanctified lives to His glory, each of us can thankfully say, “*Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*”

The Psalmist mentioned that we should be thankful and bless the

Lord for all His benefits. He proceeds to list some of them.

The first one he speaks of is our justification before God, "*who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" Properly, this blessing of the Lord stands at the head of the list. Forgiveness of our sins is the most important blessing that we have. There is no blessing that is greater in scope for poor sinners, nor any that reveals the extent of God's grace to undeserving mortals. Who among us would dare to say that he deserves to have all his sins forgiven? Yet, though we deserve nothing but punishment, God has forgiven the sins of all for the sake of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. And by God's gracious "*power unto salvation*" (Romans 1:16), His precious Gospel, He created in us saving faith in what God has done for us through Christ, so that, "*being justified by faith*" (Romans 5:1), we receive the forgiveness personally and benefit individually from the "*peace with God*" which gladdens our hearts with the assurance of salvation. And what joy that produces, not only on a special day of thanksgiving, but also each Sunday as we confess with our brethren in the Lord's Prayer, "*And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" Forgiveness of sins is something we have each and every day of the year by faith in our Savior; and thankfulness for that blessing is also something that we should have every day of our life, for we have thus received God's greatest blessing.

The writer of the Psalm then adds a synonymous expression – "*Who healeth all thy diseases*" – which confirms to us the blessings won for us sin-sick human beings by Christ: The forgiveness which God, for Jesus' sake, declared for all men, and the righteousness of Christ which God has imputed to poor wretched sinners. Our sick souls have been healed from the leprosy of sin; our frustrated, fruitless labor to gain God's favor by our works has been replaced by the gift of His grace apart from works; and our heavy-laden souls have been relieved of their burden (Matthew 11:28). "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,*" Jesus assures His believing disciples (John 14:27). Moreover, in our lives as Christians, as we suffer chastisements and crosses at the hand of our loving Father, we have His assurance that they are meant not for our hurt but for our healing, to work "*the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby*" (Hebrews 12:11).

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed” (v’s. 12-13). God does NOT promise to “heal” all our physical “diseases.” Even Christians die as the result of illness that God had chosen not to heal; but in such cases the Lord grants His believing children perfect relief from their trials, “*a way to escape*” from them (I Corinthians 10:13), by taking them to heaven. In this way even ill health can be counted as a blessing for which the Christian should thank God and “*bless His holy name.*” To the question, “Why me??” the answers they receive from unbelievers, who blame God for their woes, will not suffice. God has said, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent*” (Revelation 3:19). And God often uses the humble patience of a suffering Christian as an example to others to direct them to the Lord, the only Way to heaven and the only true Helper in time of need.

Another blessing mentioned by the Psalmist is “*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*” This again is the result of God’s forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake. We confess with Luther that Jesus “redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.” This blessing is NOT the assurance that a believer will never lose his life as the result of an accident, or from a natural disaster or other misfortune, or in a vicious attack by a wicked criminal, or because of persecution for the sake of his faith. Any of those might happen by God’s permission; but none of those things “*shall separate us from the love of Christ*” (Romans 8:35). God in Christ has redeemed our life from everlasting destruction in hell, from the destruction of eternal death. That’s the only destruction we need to be concerned about. In all other things “*we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*” (v. 37). On the basis of His promise in Psalm 91:10, we pray in the Lord’s Prayer: “*Deliver us from evil.*”

God “*crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies,*” with countless gracious blessings, both temporal and spiritual. “*What shall [we] render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward [us]?*” (Psalm 116:12), for “all that [we] need to support this body and life; that He defends [us] against all danger and guards and protects [us] from all evil” (Luther), as well as for the wonderful

spiritual blessings He gives us in His Word. It is the Lord, David says, "*who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" When this expression speaks of the mouth and good things, we immediately think of food. This blessing does include food, but it also includes every other blessing "that belongs to the support and wants of the body," as Luther describes "daily bread" in the 4th Petition, even the conveniences of our modern world and its technology that make our life easier and more enjoyable. We have noted that celebrating *Thanksgiving Day* is only an American custom and tradition. And when we speak of an abundant harvest, and food for all and food to spare, then we are also talking about a blessing that God has showered primarily on America. In no other country of the world is food served to all classes of people in the rich manner that it is served up to us in America, and not only on a special holiday but every day of the year. No other country has piles of grain for which they often cannot find enough railroad cars to haul it away. America is the envy of the world in what it produces and consumes.

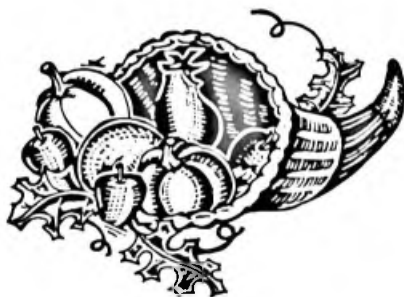
But the food that counts is the *manna* for our souls, the Bread of Life, for which we should hunger above all things. Like newborn babies, who cry day and night for milk, who demand it and are not satisfied until they get it, we should "*desire the sincere [pure] milk of the Word, that [we] may grow thereby*" (I Peter 2:2). It is through the Word of Christ, dwelling in us richly (Colossians 3:16), that we "*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*" (II Peter 3:18). Then "*[our] strength is renewed like the eagle's*" so that we do not fall from our own steadfastness, from our confidence in the Lord, our Redeemer, Savior, and neverfailing Benefactor. Those are blessed who "*hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*" (Matthew 5:6). "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*" (Isaiah 40:31).

We know from the Word of God how much we believers have received from the Lord. The important thing is that we learn to appreciate what we have. Are we grateful for all His gracious blessings? ---for the fact that God's name is kept holy among us; for His most important blessing, the forgiveness of sins; for its healing of

our sin-sick souls; for deliverance from spiritual destruction; for the nourishment of His precious Word; and for the plenteous supply of food and all the other temporal blessings that we enjoy?

We have been richly blessed; but, because of our sinful flesh, we cannot thank God sufficiently for "*all His benefits.*" Like the ungodly, we sometimes imagine that we have earned particularly our temporal blessings ourselves by our hard work and initiative (Deuteronomy 8:17). Only with God's help can we resist the sins of pride and ingratitude that so easily beset us and give all thanks to Him. Only by His grace will we then be like the person described in Psalm 1, the Godly believer, of whom it is written, "*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*" God ever so bless all of us!

—D. G. R.



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False Teachers Endeavor to STEAL from Us the Blessings of Christmas!

“Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given!” —Isaiah 9:6

This wonderful prophecy of the Savior’s birth is emblazoned on Christmas cards, sung in performances of Händel’s *Messiah*, and preached from pulpits across our land and around the world—the Gospel message of God’s unspeakably great Christmas Gift of love to fallen mankind—and yet, in many of those same venues, as well as in still others, these “*good tidings of great joy*” (Luke 2:10) are perverted, twisted, “spun,” and even outright denied by false prophets in sheep’s clothing who make Dr. Seuss’s “*Grinch that stole Christmas*” look like a choir boy! In this present article we can only begin to unmask, identify and reprove the host of those—many of whom dare to proclaim their false doctrine “in the Name of Jesus”—who “*serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18). From the modernists to the millennialists, from the higher critics of the Holy Scriptures to the prophets of anti-Christian cults, false teachers endeavor either to “*add*” to the prophecy of Isaiah (and to its reference by the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:31-35) their own “*private interpretation*” (II Peter 1:20) of what the Holy Spirit of God moved him to write concerning the coming Savior, His person, and His work; or they “*diminish from it*” (Deuteronomy 12:32) by denying its rectilinear (or direct) reference to Jesus altogether and by reducing Isaiah’s words to allegorical clap-trap and mere sentimentality.

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord is, properly speaking, the **Feast of God the Father**, who in love for fallen mankind “*sent His only-begotten Son into the world*” (I John 4:9), to be “*made flesh*” (John 1:14), to be “*made man*” (Nicene Creed), to take the human nature into the person of the Son of God, to be “*made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law*” (Galatians 4:4-5). The promised Redeemer was to be “*the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2), the only sacrifice and payment of

sufficient value to change the way that our just and holy God regards disobedient, rebellious and perverse sinners, the children of wrath by nature (Ephesians 2:3), deserving of everlasting death and damnation as the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). As true God and true man in one undivided and indivisible person, Christ, by His *active obedience*, perfectly kept the Law in the stead of all mankind and thus perfectly satisfied God's just demands (Leviticus 19:2, *et al.*) upon the ungodly; and, in His *passive obedience*, He offered Himself without spot to God as the perfect Paschal Lamb and bore God's righteous wrath toward sinful men, paying the penalty of their guilt (I Peter 3:18 *et al.*). It was "*Christ the Lord*" who satisfied God's justice on behalf of sinful mankind (Isaiah 53:11), earned righteousness for the unrighteous and forgiveness for the unforgivable (Romans 3:25; 4:5-8), and thus made possible God's reconciliation of the whole world of wretched sinners unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19a). This result of Christ's *vicarious atonement*, the forensic *objective justification* of all mankind by God for Christ's sake, is the essence of the Christmas Gospel, "*the word of reconciliation*" (II Corinthians 5:19b) proclaimed by the Christmas angels: "*For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord! ...Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!*" (Luke 2:11 and 14), or, in Wesley's poetic paraphrase, "peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" (TLH 94).

All of these precious truths were revealed and declared to God's people of old in types and pictures, as well as in direct statements and promises, among which Isaiah 9:6-7 ranks as one of the most detailed and comprehensive of the Messianic prophecies. As we examine this wonderful Christmas text for its instruction, comfort, and assurance, we will also observe how false prophets manipulate and pervert its words, either to strip them of their true meaning for us and for our salvation or to add to them figments of human, rationalistic "creativity" to divert our focus away from the *treasures of heaven* where Christ lives and reigns to all eternity to an imagined reign of Christ *here on earth*, as if that would be the ultimate vindication of His life, of His work, of His Word, and of His threefold office as our Prophet, as our Priest, and as our glorious King.

“Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.” “Unto US,” writes Isaiah regarding the intended recipients of God’s unspeakable Christmas Gift. Self-evidently, he is writing to God’s people of old, to whom he had been sent by the Lord as His prophet, to Judah in particular and to Jerusalem before the Babylonian captivity, as introductory remarks in the various chapters indicate. To be sure, the Savior had been prophesied long before to come from Judah’s tribe, as a descendant of King David; and He was, in particular, to be Zion’s Helper, the Comfort of Jerusalem, the Redeemer of Israel, the Shepherd of His flock, *“God with us,”* and the vicarious Sin-bearer of His people. But He was also to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles; and, as the New Testament Church arose and flourished in the shadow of the Old, God made abundantly clear in the Scriptures of fulfillment that His only-begotten Son was the Savior of **all** men, that He was no respecter of persons, and that, in Christ, He had reconciled *“the world”* unto Himself. Moreover, the Old Testament Scriptures were written *“for our learning”* that *“we...might have hope”* in the comfort offered by them (Romans 15:4), that is, the sure expectation of all the benefits wrought by the Redeemer on **our own** behalf. Therefore, we rightfully own this prophecy for **ourselves** and rejoice that God’s Son was *“born”* a helpless Child in His *state of humiliation* and was *“given”* as the Gift of His grace *“unto us,”* as well as to all the world, *“to all people”* (Luke 2:10), to be the Savior of **ALL**.

God’s gift of **universal grace** in Christ Jesus is, of course, **DENIED** especially by the Calvinists, who “triple-space” and edit Holy Scripture with impunity and insert, at their own will and pleasure, all sorts of limitations upon the good and gracious will of God, upon the vicarious atonement of the Savior, yea, upon the number of those for whom the unspeakable Gift has been intended! They teach, in effect, *“Unto **the elect** a Child is born; unto **the elect** a Son is given.”* But the very same result is achieved, as to its effect, also by those who **DENY** God’s **forensic justification** of *“all”* who have sinned (Romans 3:23-24), and limit justification to **believers**, as if to say: *“Unto **us believers** a Child is born; unto **us believers** a Son is given.”*

Moreover, “modernists” from even nominally Christian

denominations, who DENY just about every fundamental doctrine of Holy Scripture including the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the doctrine of sin, and the vicarious atonement—as well as the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, rectilinear prophecy, and the Isaiah-authorship of his own words—“gut” this Christmas text of its entire message: They only *coincidentally* identify “a child” with the Jesus of Bethlehem’s manger. They regard Him as “a son” of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, and his fiancée, Mary, whose virginity they reject, and as “a son” of God in the same generic sense as all people are “children of God.” And, as to the “name(s)” by which He would become known, names that define both Christ’s person and His work, they recognize these as mere sentimental descriptions of that great religious teacher whose concern for His fellowmen and His example of sympathy, kindness, and acceptance of all people without judging them makes him the “natural namesake” of Christianity in his love of “men of good will.” And they call that “the Christmas spirit”!

But the words of prophecy speak for themselves; and the arrogance of modernists who presume to know “*the mind of the Lord,*” claiming to state what He *meant* to say, and to be “*His counselor*” by explaining His words as He *should have* explained them (Romans 11:34), must fall in the face of the words as they *read* and as they were *penned* by inspiration of God (II Timothy 3:16). The Lord’s prophet goes on “*for our learning,*” for our comfort and Christmas joy, to declare with the authority of God, “*that cannot lie*” (Titus 1:2), who this “*Child,*” this “*Son,*” was to be. On the basis of the text itself, in consideration of its nearer context (Isaiah’s *other* prophecies of God’s promised Messiah), and in the light of other clear and certain passages of Holy Writ which both confirm and explain the prophecy, we observe the prophet’s word-brush painting an unmistakable and vibrant portrait of the Savior’s person and work, to which the false prophets willingly blind themselves.

“*And the government shall be upon His shoulder.*” Already in Genesis 49:10, in the prophecy of Jacob, the old patriarch had said that “*Shiloh,*” God’s anointed Prince of Peace, would appear on the scene at the time when “*the scepter,*” the right of self-government, had departed from the tribe of Judah, and it no longer

had the power to enact and enforce its own laws. Then “*unto [Shiloh] shall the gathering of the people be,*” said Jacob. The people would turn to the Messiah, not merely for *temporal* security but for *spiritual* security, for comfort, for peace, for remission of sins, to see the glory of the Lord in their salvation (Isaiah 40:1ff.). Balaam in Numbers 24:17 echoed the same concerning the “*Star out of Jacob*” and of the “*Scepter*” rising out of Israel — it is certainly possible that this was the prophecy that incited the Wise Men to follow His star to Bethlehem. Jeremiah, too, speaks of the reign of the Messiah prospering as He executes justice and judgment in the earth, saving Judah and ensuring the safety of Israel. “*And this is His Name whereby He shall be called: The Lord, our Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:5-6). Concerning the Messiah’s government Isaiah writes (v. 7): “*Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.*”

“*His government*” is “*not of this world,*” said the Savior to Pilate (John 18:36), but exists “*upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom,*” upon the mercies of God in the Kingdom of Grace (Cf. Isaiah 55:1-3). This Kingdom of Grace was ordered and established in Christ, who Himself bore God’s judgment against sin and sinners so that the ungodly could be justified (Romans 4:5), their sins having been imputed to the Son of David (1 Peter 2:24a), and their unrighteousness having been covered by the perfect obedience of “*the Lord, our Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:6; cf. Romans 5:19). The Bible rejects the imaginary and completely unscriptural scenario of the Millennialists, which pictures the Messiah’s *earthly* reign upon a *temporal* throne of David in a *geographical* Israel where His government and peace will be only *temporary* (lasting only 1,000 years). The Scriptures teach in plain and simple speech the permanent, everlasting rule of God’s Anointed, as He fills all things (Ephesians 4:10), governing and protecting His Church (Ephesians 1:20-23), finally leading it to eternal glory in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21; Revelation 22; *et al.*); “*...and He shall reign over the House of Jacob [the spiritual Israel, Romans 9:1-8, the true believers] forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end,*” echoed Gabriel in his announcement to Mary, Luke 1:33.

*"And His name shall be called **WONDERFUL...**" or **Miracle**. As the Seed of the **woman** (Genesis 3:15), "...**made of a woman**" (Galatians 4:4), conceived by the Holy Ghost in the **Virgin** Mary, who had never had carnal relations with a man (Luke 1:34-35), the Lord's Messiah was indeed a "**Miracle**" Child, whose *miraculous* conception and birth were also foretold in the rectilinear (direct) prophecy of Isaiah (7:14): "*The Lord Himself shall give you a **sign**,*" a clear, identifying mark by which to distinguish the Messiah from millions of other male children born to Jewish mothers, "*Behold, a **virgin** shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*" Moreover, as if to beat unbelieving Bible critics to the punch when they argue against "**virgin**" as the only legitimate translation of the Hebrew word "*almah*" in Isaiah's prophecy, the Holy Ghost quotes the Holy Ghost in Matthew 1:23, equating the Greek word "*parthenos*" ["**virgin**" and ONLY "**virgin**"] with the Hebrew word "*almah*" and thus effectively putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

*"...**COUNSELOR...**"* The Lord's Messiah, true God and true man in one undivided and indivisible person, whose divine attribute of *omniscience* was communicated to His human nature when this "*Child [was] born,*" when "*unto us [this] Son [of God and of man was] given,*" is the "*only wise God*" (1 Timothy 1:17), to whom Peter confessed, "*Lord, Thou knowest all things*" (John 21:17). Who better to be our "*Counselor*" than the "*Dayspring from on high,*" the long-promised Savior, who came in the fulness of time "*to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*" (Luke 1:79)?

*"...**THE MIGHTY GOD...**"* Let the "modernists" in the various denominations, the Mormons, the so-called Witnesses of Jehovah, the Unitarians, and many others deny with impunity the Trinity in unity, reject the deity of Jesus Christ, and scoff at the idea that the "*Child*" born unto us in Bethlehem's stable was "*begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, ...who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made **man***" (Nicene Creed). The Scriptures are literally FULL of clear and indisputable texts which state unequivocally that Jesus

Christ is **God** — not the first creature of God, not God-like, not merely God-sent, not just a prophet of God, not only *a son* of God, but “**GOD...manifest in the flesh**” (I Timothy 3:16). “*In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*” (Colossians 2:9). “*Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever*” (Romans 9:5). Why, even the scribes and Pharisees recognized that Jesus plainly laid claim to His deity, for that was the very basis of their bogus charge of blasphemy against Him (John 19:7)!

“...**THE EVERLASTING FATHER...**” This prophetic name of the Savior does not confound the persons of the Trinity; for the author of this name is God Himself! But this name bears out the truth expressed by the Lord Jesus concerning the **UNITY** in the Trinity, and particularly His unity with His heavenly Father, when He said to Phillip: “*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. ...Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?*” And in John 10:30, “*I and My Father are one.*”

“...**THE PRINCE OF PEACE...**” Contrary to the world’s opinion, that of worldly wolves in sheep’s clothing, and even of many who call themselves by His Name, Christ did not come down to this world on the first Christmas night to bring temporal peace on earth, peace among the nations, peace among men —either then, or now, or during an imaginary millennial reign. “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword!*” (Matthew 10:34). He came to establish **peace between God and men** through the forgiveness of their sins: “Peace on earth and mercy mild; God and sinners reconciled!” This divine name, “*the Prince of Peace,*” was prophesied of God’s Messiah by Jacob in Genesis 49:10, when he said: “*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until SHILOH come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.*” This was He, who by His vicarious satisfaction of divine justice would make possible **TRUE peace** between God and men. “*For God was IN CHRIST reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19). “...*the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace BY JESUS CHRIST; (He is Lord of all)*” (Acts 10:36). “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I*

unto you. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27).

Those who would rob us of the true peace of Christmas by perverting the Word of Reconciliation, either by adding thereto or diminishing from it, are duly warned in Revelation 22:18-19 of their eternal peril in doing so. But they can harm us none, for "*the Word of the Lord endureth forever; and this is the Word which [as] Gospel is preached unto you*" (1 Peter 1:25) — "*Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord!. ...Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!*" (Luke 2:11 and 14). That peace is ours personally when we cling in childlike confidence to the FACT of our reconciliation with God; for "*being justified by faith, WE HAVE peace with God THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*" (Romans 5:1). May that peace with God, purchased and won by our precious Savior and published to all men in the Gospel of Reconciliation, continue to gladden our hearts this Christmas, in the year ahead, and throughout our lives as we hold fast to the pure Word of His grace even unto the end!

—D. T. M.

*If Thy beloved Son, O God,
Had not to earth descended
And in our mortal flesh and blood
Had not sin's power ended,
Then this poor, wretched soul of mine
In hell eternally would pine
Because of its transgression!*

*My guilt, O Father, Thou hast laid
On Christ, Thy Son, my Savior.
Lord Jesus, Thou my debt hast paid
And gained for me God's favor.
O Holy Ghost, Thou Fount of Grace,
The good in me to Thee I trace;
In faith do Thou preserve me!*

TLH 375, 1 & 5

Announcement



On October 27 and 28, 2003, Pastor Nimi Fyneface, President of the Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations of Nigeria (FLCN), at our recent Fall Pastoral Conference held at Holy Scripture Ev. Lutheran Church, San Antonio, TX, underwent an intensive and thorough colloquy. We are pleased to announce, with all praise and thanks to God, that Pastor Fyneface was found to be in full agreement with us in both doctrine and practice and is therefore a true confessional Brother in the faith. Currently Pastor Fyneface shepherds a very large congregation of some 1,900 souls, St. Paul's Nyemoni Lutheran Church, in Abonnema, Rivers State, Nigeria. May the Lord continue to bless Pastor Fyneface in his many responsibilities as a shepherd of a very large congregation and as the President of the FLCN, which is made up of six congregations. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalm 133:1.)

—Pastor E. R. Stallings, President

Send a Christmas greeting to distant brethren:

*Pastor and Mrs. Roman G. Schurganoff
P. O. Box 27
620039 Yekaterinburg, RUSSIA*

*Pastor and Mrs. Nimi B. Fyneface
Box 123
Abonnema, Akulga
Rivers State, NIGERIA*



Be sure to send letters and packages by AIR MAIL!

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Church Directory

FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2620 Francis Street

Jackson, MI 49203

Telephone: (517) 787-1411

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service..... 10:30 a.m.

The REV. ROSS A. MAHAN, Pastor

2175 Pioneer Drive

Jackson, MI 49201

(517) 750-3946

E-mail: rmahan@voyager.net

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

4050 South Melpomene Way

Tucson, AZ 85730

Telephone: (520) 721-7618

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 a.m.

The REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor

4050 South Melpomene Way

Tucson, AZ 85730

(520) 721-7618

E-mail: david.redlin@worldnet.att.net

HOLY SCRIPTURE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

5605 Windsong Drive

Windcrest, TX 78239

Telephone: (210) 650-9053

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 11:00 a.m.

The REV. E. R. STALLINGS, Pastor

110 Grasmere Court

San Antonio, TX 78218

(210) 656-2125

E-mail: erstallings@juno.com

NOTE: Services are also held each Sunday in **Anaheim, California.**

Please call the Pastor for further information.

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place

Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

Telephone: (708) 532-4288

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

17151 South Central Avenue

Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 (708) 532-9035

E-mail: peace@orbitel.com

NOTE: Services are also held each Sunday in our **Midland, Michigan** chapel at the **Ramada Inn**, 1815 South Saginaw Road:

Sunday School & Bible Class 6:30 p.m.

Worship Service 7:30 p.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets

Lebanon, OR 97355 Telephone: (541)258-2941

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor

483 Tangent Street

Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-2941

E-mail: m.l.natterer@comcast.net

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street

Seattle, WA 98178 Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The REV. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 – 54th Avenue South

Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia** on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service 7:00 p.m.

Adult Bible Class 4:30 p.m.

Adult Catechism Class 8:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

420 Park Avenue

Wilmot, SD 57279

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 11:15 a.m.

The Rev. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor

420 Park Avenue

Wilmot, SD 57279 (605) 938-4710

E-mail: dierking@tnics.com

Churches in Fellowship with the Concordia Lutheran Conference

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Yekaterinburg

Yekaterinburg, RUSSIA

For the time and location of services, contact:

THE REV. ROMAN G. SCHURGANOFF, Pastor

P. O. Box 27

620039 Yekaterinburg, RUSSIA

E-mail: romansh@mail.ur.ru

Faith Lutheran Church (F. L. C.)

Highway N

Stover, MO 65078

For the time of worship services, please

contact **Stephen Richter** at (314) 376-3221.

THE REV. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Vacancy Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: donnalietz@worldnet.att.net

St. Mark's Ev. Lutheran Church (F. L. C.)

22012 S. Torrence Avenue

Sauk Village, IL 60411

Telephone: (708) 758-6222

Sunday School & Bible Class ... 8:45 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

THE REV. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

22012 S. Torrence Avenue

Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859

E-mail: p.bloedel@comcast.net

Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church (F. L. C.)

300 North Ridgeland Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Sunday School & Bible Class ... 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

THE REV. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: donnalietz@worldnet.att.net