

Devotion for Christmas II

Psalm 111

Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

Glorious and majestic are His deeds, and His righteousness endures forever.

He has caused His wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

He provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever.

He has shown His people the power of His works, giving them the lands of other nations.

The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy.

They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.

He provided redemption for His people; He ordained His covenant forever—holy and awesome is His name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

Questions for Reflection

Isaiah 62:1-12

What does Jerusalem represent?

How does God's salvation come to the Church?

How does God redeem and make us holy?

Luke 2:22-52

Why was every firstborn male 'holy to the Lord'?

How did Jesus cause the fall and rising of many in Israel?

Why is it important that Anna was from the tribe of Asher?

When the Time Had Fully Come

We celebrate the birth of Christ as a pivotal point in the plan of salvation that God had determined from eternity. For centuries the faithful in Israel had waited patiently for the coming of God's Messiah. Isaiah sang of Him, "*For to us a child is born and to us a Son is given...and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Everlasting Father, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.*" The prophet Micah identified His birthplace seven centuries before His birth singing: "*But, you Bethlehem Ephrathah, although you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings out are from of old, from days of eternity.*"

Five Centuries before Jesus' birth, the prophet Malachi foretold the work of John the Baptist, who would prepare Israel for the coming of the Lord saying, "*Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.*" In Luke's gospel two people, Simeon and Anna were blessed to see the words of Malachi fulfilled, when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him to the Lord, in obedience to the law God had given Israel through Moses.

We celebrate Christmas as the fulfilment of ancient promises, and in anticipation of the fulfilment of salvation, when Christ returns in power and glory. When Christ returns, He will make the work of salvation complete in the recreation of heaven and earth as the home of righteousness. He will give believers the greatest gift, a place in His Father's house in His resurrection to life everlasting.

We celebrate Christmas to remember the promises fulfilled in Christ and those whose time is yet to come. We celebrate Christmas to remember that even as Christ first came into the world when the time was just right, so again at the right time Christ will return. We celebrate Christmas, so that like Simeon and Anna who waited patiently, we too will remain watchful for our Lord's second advent and fulfil the promise of Christmas, by making us and all things new.

“O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM” (Public Domain)

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep And dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, The everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight!

For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, The angels keep, Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together, Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king, And peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently, The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts, The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming; But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, And enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell;
Oh, come to us, Abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!

Prayer

“To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Direct us, O Lord, in all our actions by your gracious favour, and further us with your continual help that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in your name, we may glorify your holy name and finally, by your mercy, receive eternal life. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Son you gave for our salvation. Jesus our Immanuel. In His Name. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Benediction Isaiah 60:1

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.”

Bible Knowledge Quiz

- 1) What tribe was Paul from?
- 2) What famous Old Testament person was from the same tribe as Paul?
- 3) What tribe was responsible for maintaining public worship?

Answers to last week’s Quiz

- 1) Augustus Luke 2:1
- 2) Tiberius Luke 3:1
- 3) Jehoiachin 2 Kings 25:27