Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for 12-25-202



These readings are for "The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas): Mass at Dawn."

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes and Merry Christmas to you. Today, as we celebrate Christmas, we look at some readings from Isaiah and Luke which reveal the blessings granted to us both today and in the future as believers in the Lord Jesus. Then we see Luke's telling of the story of the shepherds seeing Jesus for the first time.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The reading from Isaiah deals with what Bible commentators and theologians call the "Millennial Reign of Christ." This is the period of time during which Jesus returns to the earth to restore His rightful rulership taken from him as a result of Satan's usurpation (refer to Genesis 3) and the subsequent crucifixion. Jesus willingly handed over His life as a Victor of sin, He is nowhere portrayed as a victim. Isaiah's prophecy deals with Jesus' future literal reign after the Great

Tribulation period. During this time God reveals His special plan for the Nation of Israel with the capital city of Jerusalem along with the Gentiles ("nations") who believed in the name of the Lord Jesus. "*The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the LORD will designate*" (Isa 62:2).

First Reading:

Isaiah 62:11-12 NAS95 11 Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes; Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him." 12 And they will call them, "The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD"; And you will be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken."

God's message to Israel through Isaiah revealed that the salvation of the LORD comes from Him (v. 11) and not through human's good works or obedience to the Mosaic Law. At a future time, God's Holy people, Israel or the Jews, will be called "The redeemed of the LORD" (v. 12c). The capital city of God's chose people Israel will be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken" (v. 12e).

When Isaiah wrote God's message the City of Jerusalem was under siege from the ungodly forces of the northern Jewish tribes and the Syrian Empire (Rezin the king of Aram, Isaiah 7:1). Although Jerusalem, the capital city of the southern tribes, was threatened, Isaiah saw both near term and far term prophecies for the beneficial treatment of God's ordained city. Isaiah saw in Chapter 7 (starting at verse 7) how God would deliver Jerusalem from her enemies. Isaiah's visions often had both near term and long-term fulfillments such as seen in Isaiah 7:14 with the birth of Isaiah's own son but also in the prophecy of Jesus' birth. "Isa 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." Today's reading reveals God's long-term plans for the Nation of Israel and the capital city of Jerusalem. The forsaken city of Jerusalem, which was sacked by the Babylonians in 586 BC (but saved from the Assyrian's in the early 700BC timeframe) would once again be exulted (v. 12). Jerusalem will be a city "Sought out, a city not forsaken" (v. 12e), a name which bears the reminder of the previous perils faced by the people (the Jews) in that city.

We too share in the exaltation of God's city as ingrafted believers into God's plan of salvation through the Jewish Messiah. Although we have gained an early share of this inheritance, God's people the Jews will ultimately be granted full acceptance by Him through their reception of their

Messiah Jesus.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

This reading from Paul's Letter to Titus was penned including instructions on godly living for leaders of the church, bondservants, and believers in general. Paul wrote to Titus who was located in Crete at the time (Titus 1:5) where he had departed from him with instructions to appoint elders in the cities (Titus 1:5). Chapter 3 continues the instructions regarding godly living, including being obedient to civil authorities (verse 1) and to show kind consideration to everyone (v. 2) as all of us were capable of as nonbelievers (v. 3).

Second Reading:

Titus 3:4-7 NAS95 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The opening word "But" connects the subsequent verses to the ideas presented in verse 3 which were to be kind to everyone because, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our lives in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (v. 3). This "Oh But God" introduction shows God renewed the hearts of believers by making them born from above (John 3:3) not upon the basis of their good works but according to God's mercy (v. 5) which is his free gift (see Ephesians 2:8-9). This salvation came only through faith in Jesus Christ which resulted in our regeneration (again, being "born from above as per John 3:3) and the renewal of our formerly evil hearts through the renewal by the Holy Spirit of God (v. 5). It is only through this unmerited favor (grace, v. 7) by which we as believers will be granted heirs of eternal life.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

Today's Gospel reading from Saint Luke was after The Angel of the Lord had revealed that the Messiah had already been born in the City of David (Luke 2:11) and the appearance of a multitude of angels (v. 13).

Gospel Reading:

Luke 2:15-20 NAS95 15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Observant Jews would either have known about the prophecy of the Messiah's birth to be in the City of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) or perhaps the Angel of the Lord told them this during his visit. When the shepherds went to Bethlehem Judah they found the baby Jesus just as Luke had told them. "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:2). The shepherds then relayed all that the Angel had said to them. This provided validation to Mary and Joseph that Jesus was indeed to Messiah.

The birth of Jesus proceeded exactly as outlined by the Prophets right down to the details of timing and the exact location in which He would be born. Jesus' birth was an announcement of the outpouring of God's love upon the world, first through the Jews and later through the Gentile believers including you and me. This outpouring of God's love foreshadows a host of future blessings promised by God for His believers as we saw in the first reading from Isaiah. We saw in the second reading how God granted us a new heart, one made not of stone, but a renewed one through the power of God's Holy Spirit. As we celebrate Christmas this day, we can look back at how God has so richly blessed us through the sending of His one and only Son who died to take away our sins (Hebrews 9:26 – 28). May God richly bless you this Christmas Day.

Reflection Questions

1. The Gospel reading detailed how the shepherds left their flocks in order to visit the obscure village of Bethlehem in order to locate the long-awaited Messiah. Open your Bible to the Old Testament Book of Micah, chapter 5, verses 1 – 2.

Considering both the first two verses of Micah 5 and the reading from Isaiah, what were some of the curses pronounced upon the Jews?

2. Considering these same verses but also including the second reading from Titus, what were some the blessings that God either promised or brought to fulfillment through His believers?