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

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 12-29-2013



This week after the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas, we will look at the events that occurred immediately after the birth of Jesus. We will also investigate teaching by Saint Paul about Christian character.

The first reading is from the Apocrypha, which you will need to look up on your own. The second reading is from Paul's Letter to the Colossians. The purpose of his message was to contradict false teaching that was happening among some in the church at Colossae regarding strict rules about the observance of religious festivals, eating and drinking, and the idolatrous practice of worshipping angels.

The context of the whole of Chapter 3 has the idea of "taking off" the things that are contrary to God's ways and "putting on" the ways of God. Paul opened this section by saying, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). Next, he provided a list of behaviors to "take off," because such things were not in keeping with the character of the Lord Jesus and His call to holiness in the church. Paul said, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" (v.5). He continued, "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, [and] abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its [evil] practices" (vv.8-9). Paul admonished the Colossians to put aside these ungodly behaviors because as believers we "have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (v.10).

As you study the reading, which picks up at verse 12 create a list of the things that you are to "put on."

> *12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. 18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. 20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart. (Colossians 3:12-21)*

How many godly characteristics did you count? Paul said to "put on" the following behaviors:

1. A heart of compassion (v.12b).
2. Kindness (v.12b).
3. Humility (v.12b).
4. Gentleness and patience (v.12b).
5. Forgiveness (v.13b).
6. Love (v.14).
7. The peace of God (v.15).
8. The Word of Christ (v.16a)
9. Admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (v.16b)
10. A heart of thankfulness to God (v.16)
11. Wives' submissiveness to husbands (v.18a).
12. Husband's love of their wives and not being bitter against them (v.19)
13. Children's obedience to their parents (v.20).
14. Fathers not exasperating their children (v.21)

Paul also called the people to thankfulness in addition to the admonition to "take off and put on." Paul said to be thankful in verses 15b, 17c, and further down in 4:2. The call to put on a thankful heart runs throughout the Letter. Paul said in the opening of the Letter, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (1:3). He closed with a call to "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with [an attitude of] thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:1).

However, how can Paul be thankful while he is in prison? How can we be thankful while we go through the troubles of life? The key to the secret of thankfulness is in verse 12: "And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved . . ." It is only when we recognize that God has

chosen us (He wants us), we are holy (the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin), and we are beloved (we have entered into the most deeply bonded relationship with God through His great love) that we can put off the old ways of doing life on our own and put on the new way of life. Without the truth of our new identity in Christ, our self-empowered efforts to "be good" are not enough.

An illustration from my life may help to provide some insight into how we as believers in Jesus Christ can be thankful in spite of difficult circumstances. This past week I was blessed to do some snowboarding in Northern Michigan. The snow was fantastic as they had received daily dumps of snow, and our last day was no exception. On what was to be the last run of the day, I slipped while getting off the ski lift, which resulted in badly twisting my hip. I kept asking myself what I could have done differently to avoid this catastrophe. I began recounting the promise of God: "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5c, Deut 31:6). Since I was barely able to walk, I found that the only way I could get around was by leaning on my wife. I was very thankful to have a wife who cared for me and who I could lean upon to help me to get back home. In a similar way, Saint Paul was able to be thankful during his time in prison by leaning upon the promises of God and on other believers. In his final greetings, Paul mentioned many of the people who he was working with in ministry including Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nympha, and the brothers at Laodicea. Paul leaned upon the people of God. Paul put off the ungodly practices of the world and put on the things of God. Through this he was able to "rejoice in the sufferings of your sake" because he was "filling up what (was) lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the body, that is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

As we move onto the Gospel lesson for today, we remind you that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of a large number of Old Testament prophesies. We looked at some of those last week. This week we will address the fulfillment of three prophesies regarding the early life of Jesus. As you read, take note of these three prophetic fulfillments.

> *13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." 14 And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "OUT OF EGYPT DID I CALL MY SON." 16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi. 17 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, 18 "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE." 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 20 "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." 21 And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he*

> *was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee, 23 and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matthew 2:13-23)*

Three specific prophecies were fulfilled from this Gospel reading during Jesus' early life. First, like Moses, Jesus was to be called out of Egypt (v.15). Joseph carried Jesus to Egypt because an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him to flee from the persecution of King Herod. In the Jewish mind, Egypt represented all that was bad about society including idolatry and a whole host of ungodly practices. However, Jesus was to be "called out of Egypt" in both the moral *and* physical sense, just like Moses. The prophecy that was addressed was from Hosea 11:1. "When Israel [was] a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son."

Second, King Herod fulfilled the prophecy of a slaughter of children spoken of in Jeremiah 31:15. Jeremiah's prophecy appeared with a set of verses that promised future blessings for Israel and all nations (Jeremiah 31:10). Jeremiah said, "And they shall come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, And they shall be radiant over the bounty of the LORD–Over the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, And over the young of the flock and the herd; And their life shall be like a watered garden, And they shall never languish again" (31:12). The prophecy regarding the slaughter of the innocent children was placed after these verses of blessing. Saint Matthew's quote regarding this event was taken directly from the Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint. Since Jeremiah's prophecy of this future event was not thematically intuitive, we can see how God supernaturally fulfilled his prediction through Herod's execution of the infants throughout the region of Bethlehem.

Third, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that He was to be called a "Nazarene," but in a different way than the Jews would have expected. A Nazarite in the Old Testament was someone that took a certain vow for religious purposes (Numbers 6:1-27). This included refraining from drinking wine or other alcoholic beverages, from cutting their hair, and a list of other behaviors. The purpose of the Nazarite vow was to focus upon the things of God during a particular period. Many people, including Paul (Acts 18:18) took the vow of the Nazarite for certain periods in their life. Some, like John the Baptist, took the vow for their entire life (Luke 1:15, Luke 7:33). Jesus evidently didn't take the vow of a Nazarite, at least during the period of His public ministry, because he drank wine (Luke 7:34). Instead, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of being called a Nazarite by living in the City of Nazareth. Joseph, along with Mary and Jesus, "came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'" (Matthew 2:23). Jesus fulfilled the prophecy but in a different way than could have been imagined.

We can trust in God because we can see how exactly He carried out the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus down to the exact detail. These predictions weren't fulfilled in a manner in which anyone could predict. Who would have thought that Jesus would have been called a Nazarite because of the fact that he lived in Nazareth instead of being called that for taking the vow of the Nazarite, something with which the Jews were very familiar? Who could imagine the ghastly circumstances surrounding Herod's slaughter of the innocent children in Bethlehem? In addition, what could ever cause Jesus to be known as One that was called out of Egypt? We can trust in God

because we see that He does what He says He will do, and does so through miraculous means that we would never be able to predict. This should stand as a caution to us that although we think we understand many of the details of Jesus' return, this will most likely not play out exactly as we think. We can rest in the fact that after we see the fulfillment of Christ's return we will be able to look back and understand the prophecies, just as we did in the Gospel study today.

Knowing that God protected Jesus during His early years is a testimony to God's love for us. While we may not be protected from every painful circumstance, God has provided for our ultimate deliverance by preserving the life of His anointed One, the Messiah. He came to do more than save us from temporary bad circumstances, He came so that we might be saved from the eternal consequences of our sin. This is the good news of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus for us today.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Looking at the reading from Colossians, which characteristics of putting on the new self that is in Christ most resonated with you? Spend some time talking to the Lord about how you would like Him to change you.

2. As you think about God's fulfillment of prophecy after the birth of Jesus, how does His attention to detail encourage you in your day to day life?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/122913.cfm

First Reading SIR 3:2-6, 12-14

See http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/122913.cfm

Second Reading COL 3:12-21

Colossians 3:12-21 NASB 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. 18 Wives, be subject to your husbands,

as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. 20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.

Gospel Reading MT 2:13-15, 19-23 (plus skipped verses)

Matthew 2:13-23 NASB 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." 14 And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "OUT OF EGYPT DID I CALL MY SON." 16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi. 17 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, 18 "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE." 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 20 "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." 21 And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee, 23 and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB