

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

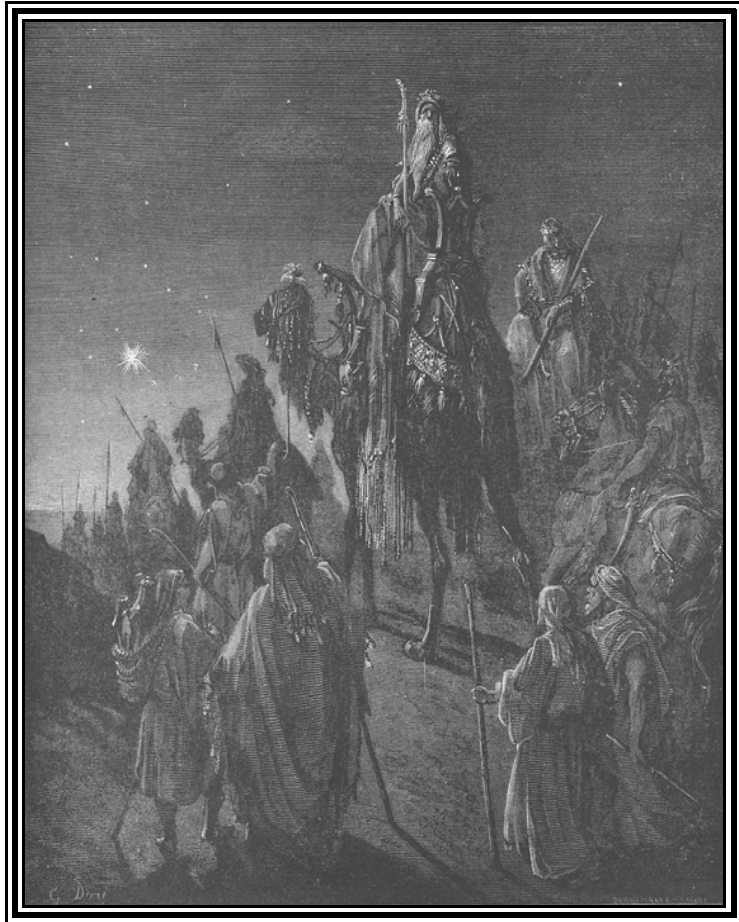


Illustration: The Star in the East

A Devotional for the Week of Sunday After Christmas.

SUNDAY.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb. – Luke 2:21.

Circumcision in the Old Testament signified that all mankind is conceived and born in sin, and consequently under the wrath of God and lost forever, unless saved and cleansed by the blood of Christ. And through this same circumcision God imparted the saving and cleansing power of the blood of Christ which was to be shed in the fullness of time. Herewith the believers in the Old Covenant were to comfort themselves always, and thus to become and remain partakers of such grace. Thus circumcision in the Old Testament was what Holy Baptism is today. – When the Christ-child was eight days old, He was circumcised, although He was without sin. But upon Him lay the sin of the whole world, and He was made to be under the Law for us. Circumcision for the Christ-child was a pledge that He would surely save the whole world from all its sins through His blood. For that reason He received the name *JESUS* when He was circumcised in accordance with the instruction given by the angel; for Jesus means Redeemer, Savior. To the name, to this Child, to this Redeemer and Savior, we must look in life and death. Then we shall be His own and partakers of His salvation.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, You have borne the sins of the whole world, and mine also; with Your blood You have blotted out the sins of the whole world, and mine too. You are my Redeemer, my Savior, my Jesus. Write, I beg You, this name JESUS on the tablet of my heart, that it may forever glow and glisten there – in life and in death. Amen.

Hymn 178.

JESUS! Name of wondrous love! | Name all other names above!
Unto which must every knee | Bow in deep humility.

Jesus! Name decreed of old: | To the maiden-mother told,
Kneeling in her lowly cell, | By the angel Gabriel.

Jesus! Name of priceless worth | To the fallen sons of earth,
For the promise that it gave – | "Jesus shall His people save."

Jesus! Name of mercy mild, | Given to the holy Child,
When the cup of human woe | First He tasted here below.

Jesus! only Name that's given | Under all the mighty heaven,
Whereby man, to sin enslaved, | Bursts his fetters, and is saved.

Jesus! Name of wondrous love! | Human name of God above;
Pleading only this we flee, | Helpless, O our God, to Thee.

MONDAY.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, . . . for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. – Luke 2:29-30.

When Christ was born, there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, the promised Savior; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before – O what blessing! – before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Now, six weeks after the birth of Jesus, when Joseph and Mary brought the Child to the temple at Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of purification, as prescribed in the Law of Moses (Exodus 13:2; Leviticus 12), this aged Simeon, moved by the Spirit, also came to the temple. As soon as he saw the Child, he took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Joseph and Mary saw and heard this, and were filled with holy and increasing wonderment. (Luke 2:22-23).

God is just as gracious to us as He was to Simeon. We can likewise see the Savior while we live; namely, in His Word and holy Sacraments. Our hearts, too, shall rejoice in Him in blissful joy; namely, through the Holy Ghost who is given to us. And so we, too, shall one day depart in peace; for he that sees and embraces his Savior in true faith, and rejoices in Him, has eternal life.

PRAYER. – I thank You, Lord Jesus, my only Savior, my Life and my Salvation, that I may see You, and embrace You, and rejoice in You. Now I know that when my last hour shall come, I shall depart in peace. Grant me Your Holy Spirit, that at all times, I may look to You, and, embracing You, may always find my greatest joy in You. And when my last hour comes, give, O give, to me that eternal peace which You have earned for me, O Jesus! Amen.

Hymn 190, 2. 4.

Yes, Lord, Thy servants meet Thee, | E'en now, in every place
Where Thy true Word hath promised | That they should see Thy face.
Thou yet wilt gladly grant us, | Who gather round Thee here,
In faith's strong arms to bear Thee, | As did that aged seer.

Let us, O Lord, be faithful | Like Simeon to the end,
So that his dying song may | From all our hearts ascend:
"O Lord, now let Thy servant | Depart in peace, I pray,
Since I have seen my Savior, | Have here beheld His day."

TUESDAY.

This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. – Luke 2:34.

Aged Simeon, of whom we read yesterday, finally blessed Joseph and Mary. And then he prophesied concerning the Christ-child, saying to Mary, His mother: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and

rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." – Jesus is the corner-stone of that temple of God which shall grow until the last day, His redeemed and believing Church. Those who, in unbelief, stumble and are offended at Him shall fall into eternal destruction. But those poor and prostrate sinners who in faith lay hold on Him, and strengthen themselves in Him, shall rise to new and eternal life. Jesus is the great sign demonstrating the grace of God toward us poor sinners. But how did they oppose Him? Think of His cross! There the sword, as prophesied, pierced deepest through the soul of Mary. When men so oppose Him, now as ever, then the thoughts, the wicked, godless thoughts of hearts, are revealed in their nakedness. Judgment Day will show this. O you who read this, let the Spirit of Jesus Christ govern you to believe in the Savior, and to strengthen yourself in Him, and to stand in the grace of God, and to enter eternal life!

PRAYER. – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, who – through holy Simeon – did foretell that Christ, Your Son, is set for a fall and rising again of many in Israel, enlighten my heart, I beg You, through Your Holy Spirit, to know Your Son Christ to be my Savior, always to stay with Him, and to rise in Him, but not, like the blind and careless world, to stumble at Him and fall. Grant, O Lord, that I may ever be a living stone of Your temple which is built on Christ, the only corner-stone, and which is Your habitation, O gracious Triune God. Amen.

Hymn 190, 5.

My Savior, I behold Thee
Now with the eye of faith;
No foe of Thee can rob me,
Though bitter words he saith.
Within Thy heart abiding,
As Thou dost dwell in me,
No pain, no death has terrors
To part my soul from Thee.

WEDNESDAY.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. – 2 Peter 1:19.

In the East, for centuries, there had been a cast of learned men devoted to the sciences. In times past the Prophet Daniel had been master of them, and to him and his book they owed the knowledge of Christ, the expected "King of the Jews," which was common among them. When the time of Jesus' birth was at hand, God caused these men to see a peculiar star, and gave them to know that this star indicated the birth of Christ, which had now come to pass. – Hence, when Jesus was born, the Wise Men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him."

When Herod the King heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said to him: "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.'" Then Herod privately called the Wise Men, and enquired of them diligently at what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said: "Go and search diligently for the Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again that I may come and worship Him also."

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and

worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. (Matthew 2:1-12).

We have something better and more sure than the star which the Wise Men saw. We have the Word of God, which points to Christ and leads us to Christ. Let us look there. Let that be our guiding star.

PRAYER. – Lord God, Heavenly Father, who guides us through Your Word, which is the true star, pointing to the Child Jesus, we pray You, endue our hearts with Your Holy Spirit, that we who are called Christians may receive that light, make blessed us of it, and thereby be led to Jesus, our Savior, and thus into eternal light. Amen.

Hymn 179, 6.

And bid Thy word within me
Shine as the fairest star;
Keep sin and all false doctrine
Forever from me far;
Help me confess Thee truly,
And with Thy Christendom
Here own Thee King and Savior
And in the world to come.

THURSDAY.

They are dead who sought the young Child's life.
– *Matthew 2:20.*

When the Wise Men had departed from Bethlehem, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying: "Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young Child to

destroy Him." And Joseph arose and took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt. – When Herod saw that he was mocked, as he called it, by the Wise Men, he was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the Wise Men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying: "Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought the young Child's life." And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he hear that Archelaus reigned in Judea after the death of his father Herod, he was afraid to go to Bethlehem. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned into parts of Galilee, and dwelt again in Nazareth. Thus two prophecies were fulfilled: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," and: "He shall be called Nazarene." (Matt. 2:13-23).

Carnel-minded Herod meant to kill the Christ-child, but God rescued Him. The carnal-minded world means to destroy the Church, Christendom: but God will keep it, and when it comes to the utmost, will take it to Himself in heaven, as He did with the infants of Bethlehem. To the world, however, that saying applies: "They are dead who sought the young Child's life." And what then? Ah, fear not the impotent rage of Christ's enemies!

PRAYER. – Christ Jesus, true God and man, bring to naught the counsels of all who persecute Your holy name, that their wicked machinations may be put to shame with them. But let us, whom You have taken into Your gracious favor, enjoy the protection of the holy angels, that we, being protected in body and soul, may lastly, with joy, enter eternal life, which You have merited for us by Your willing death on the cross. Amen.

Hymn 279, 1. 3.

CHRIST, Thou the Champion of the band who own
Thy cross, O make Thy succor quickly known!
The schemes of those who long our blood have sought
Bring Thou to naught.

And give us Thy peace: peace in Church and school,
Peace to the powers who o'er our country rule,
Peace to the conscience, peace within the heart
Do Thou impart.

FRIDAY.

*I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken
to thee of. – Genesis 28:15.*

Today you enter a new year, O Christian, and you know not what it has in store for you. In Christ God has given you the most solemn assurances of His grace, of protection, of guidance on your pilgrimage to the eternal home. Enemies will waylay you, oppose you -- enemies cruelly armed with deep guile and great might. But God will stand between you and them. And if your eyes were opened as were Jacob's (Genesis 32:1-2), you would see the angels of God meet you, and you would shout: "Manahanim, this is God's host!" Open your eyes, see, and shout! He has given His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. And yet, it may come to pass that you will fear – fear greatly, because of some threatening danger or other. For your flesh faints and is despondent. Then shall you pray and cry anxiously, and remind God of the promises which He gave to you.

That is the proper thing to do. And yet, it may be that God will meet you as an enemy, as He did Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30), in order to try you. Oh, then hold fast to God, as Jacob did, and say: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." And He will bless you, and you shall

shout again: "Peniel, the face of God! My life is preserved! And God will help you and lead you in the paths of righteousness, and lastly, this year or another, bring you home -- home! All this He promises to you. And He says: "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Now, with joy and confidence, say: "Amen."

PRAYER. – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for the sure and comforting promises which You have given me in Christ Jesus, and that You have faithfully fulfilled them even to this day. I pray You to continue to do so, and not to leave me, until You have done that which You have spoken to me of. O Lord, You are faithful. Give me Your Holy Spirit, that, trusting in Your Word, and led by Your hand – with all joy and confidence – I may enter upon the new year, indeed, face the whole future before me, hastening to my eternal home. Amen.

Hymn 169.

THE new-born Child this early morn,
The dear Christ-child of virgin born,
Again brings from His heavenly home
A new year to all Christendom.

This causes joy to angels fair,
Who love to keep us in their care;
They sing that in this wondrous Child
God now with man is reconciled.

Since God is reconciled with men,
What harm can Satan do us then?
O'er Satan and the gates of hell
This Christ-child shall for us prevail.

He brings the year of jubilee!
Why doubt we yet despondently?
Cheer up! This is a joyous day,
The Christ-child drives all care away.

SATURDAY.

The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple.
– *Malachi 3:1.*

The parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to be in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed. And His mother said unto Him: "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." And He said unto them: "How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that *I must be about my Father's business?*" And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

(Luke 2:41-52.)

This is the only story we have of Jesus' youth. We here see a ray of His divine glory shining forth from His voluntary lowliness. "Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" said He, being the Only-Begotten Son of the Father. So in Him there had come to His temple the Lord for whom they had waited, whom they had sought so long. In this light you must know the Child Jesus.

PRAYER. – Jesus, Jesus, You poor infant in the manger, You obedient Son of Your lowly parents, who did take upon You the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in

fashion as a man, You did humble Yourself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: You are, nevertheless, the Lord, the true God, begotten of the Father from eternity. I thank You that You, great Lord, did become man – a lowly man – and did save us miserable sinners. Grant, O Lord, that I may know You aright, and in true faith, may call You my Lord and Savior, until I shall behold You in Your great glory. Amen.

Hymn 147, 5-7.

The Father's Son, God ever blest,
In the world became a guest;
He leads us from this vale of tears,
And makes us in His kingdom heirs. Hallelujah.

He came to earth despised and poor,
Man to pity and restore,
And make us rich in heaven above,
Equal with angels through His love. Hallelujah.

All this He did, that He might prove
To us sinners His great love;
For this let Christendom adore
And praise His name for evermore. Hallelujah.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914)..

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