

THE DAY OF HIS COMING

Mal 3:1-3

Jelšava, 25 December 2014

Malachi 3:1-3 "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; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.

הַנְּנִי שְׁלַח מַלְאָכִי וּפְנֹה־דַרְךְ לְפָנַי וּפְתַח־אֶת־בָּיְתִי וְיָבֹא אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְכָל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מִבְּקָשִׁים וּמִלֶּאךְ הַבְּרִית
 אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֹפְצִים הַנְּהַבֵּא אִמְרֵי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
² וְגַם מִכְלֹכַל אֶת־יוֹם בּוֹאֹ וְגַם הָעַמֵּד בְּהִרְאוֹתָיו כִּי־הוּא כָּאֵשׁ מִצְרָף וְכַבְרִית מְכַבֵּסִים
³ וְיֹשֵׁב מִצְרָף וּמִטְהַר כֶּסֶף וְטָהַר אֶת־בְּנֵי־לֵוִי וְזָקַק אֶתֶם כְּזָהָב וְכַפְסָף וְהָיוּ לִיהוָה מְגִישֵׁי
 מִנְחָה בַצְדָקָה

חֶפֶץ (hēpeš) delight

The basic meaning is to feel great favor towards something. Its meaning differs from the parallel roots, ḥāmad, ḥāshaq, and rāšâ, in that they connote less emotional involvement.

כּוּל (kûl) **contain, hold, abide, bear, nourish, provide.** The primary meaning of this root is "to contain as does a vessel. ... As a logical extension of the above meanings are those which express the possibility or impossibility of enduring (or containing) something (Prov 18:14; Joel 2:11; Amos 7:10; Mal 3:2)

OUTLINE

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- 3.3 CAN I SEE "HOLINESS IN SEXUALITY"?

4. TO REMEMBER

0. INTRODUCTION: THE JOY AND TRUTH AT CHRISTMAS

- the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight
- But who can endure the day of his coming ?!

0.1 CHRISTMAS: THE GREAT JOY

- **Lk 2:10** "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people...
- the angels
- the shepherds

0.2 CHRISTMAS: THE DIFFICULT TRUTH

- **Lk 2:34-35** "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."
- sinful humanity → a new beginning

1. GLORY AND THE CHRISTMAS STABLE

1.1 GLORY AND GLAMOUR

1.1.1 THE WORLD

- "glory" → fame, even notoriousness, (celebrity is famous for his/her well-knownness)
- "glorious" → beautiful, rich, expensive, colorful, glamorous, shiny, spectacular, fragrant...
- "The word "celebrity" (from the Latin *celebritas* for "multitude" or "fame" and *celeber* meaning "frequented," "populous," or "famous") originally meant not a person but a condition... The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness."¹

1.1.2 THE CHURCH

- "glorious" → ornate vestments, cathedrals, music, incense

1.2 GLORY AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD → WORSHIP

- glory in the Old Testament → "weight", ability, reality
- the beauty of the Temple → gold, colors, incense...

From its root meaning of 'mass' or 'weight' derive connotations of importance and worth, the splendor manifested by things of such nature, and the honour due them. 'The glory of the Lord' is a technical expression used of God's sovereign and self-revelatory actions in CREATION (Isa. 6:3), history (Exod. 24:16-17), and LITURGY (Lev. 9:6-24; 1 Kgs 8:11), all of which are to be perfected in God's eschatological dominion (Dan. 7:13; Ezek. 43:5). Since actions manifest the presence of the one who acts, 'the glory of the Lord' implies God's presence and the divine ATTRIBUTES revealed thereby (e.g., mercy in Bar. 4:21-4; cf. Eph. 4:19)²

1.3 WHERE CAN I SEE "GLORY IN THE STABLE"?

- "repeated Christmas" in the history of the Church
- "repeated Christmas" in the life of a Christian

2. POWER AND THE CHRISTMAS CHILD

2.1 POWER AND "BIGNESS"

2.1.1 THE WORLD

- the display of military might (Moscow communist military parades; Hollywood war films)
- political rallies (Nuremberg Nazi rallies)
- wealth

¹ BOORSTIN, D. *The Image*, New York : Vintage Books, 1992, p. 57.

² PITSTICK, A. L. *Glory*. In: MCFARLAND, I. A. – FERGUSSON, D. A. S. – KILBY, K. – TORRANCE, I. R. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Cambridge : CUP, 2011, p. 197

- learning; big libraries

2.1.2 THE CHURCH

- the church imitated Roman administration – political, organizational
- persecution (AUGUSTINE: “cogite intrare”³ – compel them to come in)

2.2 POWER AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD → TRUST

- **Zec 4:6** 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,'
- The angel said to Mary (**Lk 1:35**): "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.
- ⇒ the power of God is in the unseen → the work of the Holy Spirit
- Simeon: **Lk 2:30** “For my eyes have seen your salvation,…”

2.3 WHERE CAN I SEE “POWER IN WEAKNESS” TODAY?

- in the Church?
- in my life?

3. HOLINESS AND SEXUALITY

3.1 HOLINESS AND THE UNNATURAL SEPARATION

3.1.1 THE WORLD

- The idea of holiness is the farthest religious idea from the worldly mindset. → the idea of unnatural character – against what is “normal”

3.1.2 THE CHURCH

[DIX] That the Mother of our Lord remained Ever-virgin, is not less evidently the instinctive belief of the heart, than it is the common and assured conviction of the Church. Yet not less clear is it, that there can be no profitable disputation on the sacred theme. Indeed it were useless to argue with one by whom the contrary thought could be deliberately dwelt upon. The very haste with which we repel that thought, as repugnant and shocking, not to say revolting and monstrous, implies a total want of sympathy, in that behalf, with any one to whom it should not present itself in the same light. There are subjects on which a man may feel so deeply that he shrinks from hearing them opened as topics of discussion; and the tenet of the Perfect and Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mother of our Lord, is one of those. Little is said of her in the Scriptures; many excellent things, however, are spoken of her in the heart of "all but adoring love," ...⁴

[SCHAFF] "...her name is even wrought into the Apostles' Creed, in the simple and chaste words: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The Catholic church, however, both Latin and Greek, did not stop with this. After the middle of the fourth century it overstepped the wholesome Biblical limit, and transformed the "mother of the Lord" (Lk 1:43) into a mother of God, the humble 'handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:38) into a queen of heaven, the "highly favored" (Lk 1:28) into a dispenser of favors, the blessed among women (Lk 1:28) into an intercessor above all women, nay, we may almost say, the redeemed daughter of fallen Adam, who is nowhere in Holy Scripture excepted from the universal sinfulness, into a sinlessly holy co-redeemer.⁵

3.2 HOLINESS AND RELATIONSHIPS → LOVE

- God created man and woman in marriage. And He saw that “it was good”.

³ *Letter 93 to Vincentius*, You are of opinion that no one should be compelled to follow righteousness ; and yet you read that the householder said to his servants, "Whomsoever ye shall find, compel them to come in." You also read how he who was at first Saul, and afterwards Paul, was compelled, by the great violence with which Christ coerced him, to know and to embrace the truth; for you cannot but think that the light which our eyes enjoy is more precious to men than money or any other possession. This light, lost suddenly by him when he was cast to the ground by the heavenly voice, he did not recover until he became a member of the Holy Church.

⁴ DIX, M. *Exposition... Galatians and Colossians*, New York : Published for the author, 1864, p. 21-22.

⁵ SCHAFF, P. *History of the Christian Church III*, p. 413.

- “Mary is a unique woman because she is the mother of the Son of God and also the first Christian disciple. The Catholic Church of East and West has developed its teachings concerning her not only by speaking of her as *theotokos* [mother of God] but also by speaking of her virginity before birth (virginal conception), at birth (miraculous delivery), and after birth (perpetual virginity). Liberal theology tends to deny all three. Classical Protestantism (Luther, Calvin) accepted all three, but modern biblically based Protestants tend to only accept the first.”⁶

[SCHAFF] The Virgin Mary marks the turning point in the history of the female sex. As the mother of Christ, the second Adam, she corresponds to Eve (The earliest theological references to Mary as the New Eve are found in the second-century writings of Justin Martyr (d. ca 165), and is, in a spiritual sense, the mother of all living.... Henceforth we find woman no longer a slave of man and tool of lust, but the pride and joy of her husband, the fond mother training her children to virtue and godliness, the ornament and treasure of the family, the faithful sister, the zealous servant of the congregation in every work of Christian charity, the sister of mercy, the martyr with superhuman courage, the guardian angel of peace, the example of purity, humility, gentleness, patience, love, and fidelity unto death. Such women were unknown before. The heathen Libanius, the enthusiastic eulogist of old Grecian culture, pronounced an involuntary eulogy on Christianity when he exclaimed, as he looked at the mother of Chrysostom: "What women the Christians have!"⁷

- [NEWMAN] Thus the Son of God became the Son of Man; mortal, but not a sinner; heir of our infirmities, not of our guiltiness; the offspring of the old race, yet "the beginning of the "new creation of God." Mary, His mother, was a sinner as others, and born of sinners; but she was set apart, "as a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed," to yield a created nature to Him who was her Creator.⁸
- The holiness of Jesus is preserved in the midst of *normal* human relationships of marriage (without him being conceived by the *normal* sexual intercourse).

3.3 CAN I SEE “HOLINESS IN SEXUALITY”?

- prejudice?
- unclean thoughts?

4. TO REMEMBER

- The truth of the first Christmas purifies our VIEW OF GLORY → do not depend on the outward glamour.
- The truth of the first Christmas purifies our WORSHIP OF GOD → do not depend on the outward displays of power.
- The truth of the first Christmas purifies our PREJUDICE OF SANCTITY → do not depend on the carnal ideas of holiness.

⁶ ELLWELL W. A., (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Books : Grand Rapids, 1996. p. 514

⁷ SCHAFF, P. *History of the Christian Church I*, New York : Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889. p. 443

⁸ NEWMAN, J. *Parochial Sermons II*, London : J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1840, p. 35. (Newman was received into the Roman Catholic Church on 9 October 1845 [Wiki])