

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

As Israel entered the Promised Land, it was to the proclamation of blessings and curses. As Moses had commanded, Joshua led Israel between mounts Ebal and Gerizim. According to the command of God, blessings were proclaimed from Gerizim, curses from Ebal, as Israel passed between. If they kept the Law, there were blessings. If they transgressed, there were curses.

On balance, Israel did not keep the Law. Truth be told, no man born of human father has. So according to the Prophecy, the curses were realized. Israel learned exile and slavery. They served pagan kings, their land was taken away, their Temple destroyed. And those were the temporal consequences of their sin. The eternal consequences would be much worse.

For 400 years the Presence of God was removed from Israel. No Prophet brought them the Word of God. And yet while the new Elijah was yet an infant, already the House of Bread had been filled with the Bread of Life. The Christ was born in Bethlehem. And six weeks into His Infant life, the Eternal Word entered the Temple. He did not come in glory and power, He was carried in by a Virgin chosen by God and her poor husband.

The Lord bestowed upon Israel great Goodness, according to His mercies, according to His Loving-kindness. The Christ was born. God Himself became the Savior. Then just as Joshua read the Words of the Law over Israel, as the blessings and curses were pronounced upon them, so now the new and better Joshua, the True Israel, hears blessings and curses proclaimed over Himself.

There, in that Holy Infant, was the One who put His Holy Spirit within Israel, the One who led them by the right hand of Moses, the glorious Arm of the Lord, who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting Name. And over Him the Prophet Simeon, sent by God, led by the Spirit, spoke blessings and curses.

“This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel”, the Prophet said. Those who would receive Him, those who believed in His Name, would be lifted up, counted among the faithful, and rise again on the last day. Those who would not receive Him, those who lifted Him up on the cross, those who would not believe, would fall to the very depths of sin and hell.

“For a sign which will be spoken against”, the Prophet added. The sign was clear. The long-awaited Savior was born. The angels testified. The Prophets’ Words were fulfilled in His birth. The shepherds spread their heavenly report. Those who heard marveled. The ox and the donkey knew their Master. But even in the face of all these proofs, there were those that spoke against Him. The blood of the Holy Innocents, and Rachel’s weeping, testify to the hatred of sinful men towards Love Incarnate. And that hatred would only grow worse.

As Joseph and Mary marveled at the Divine Titles Simeon spoke of the Child, the ancient man, just and devout, spoke a blessing upon them, and then spoke a most unsettling prophecy. For faithful Mary, for she who pondered the Mysteries of God in Christ and stored them in her heart, there would be a sword, a sword to pierce even her own soul. For like Rachel, she would know the horror of the death of a child. Mary would look upon this Son as He was pierced.

For in this Child, the Prophet promised, the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed. No man can read another's heart. But what is in the heart is revealed by word and deed. A few would follow this Holy Child. Some would leave all to serve Him. So it is today as well. But most would revile and blaspheme, most would reject and curse and even hate the One who came to save them. This Child is destined for fall and rising of many in Israel.

That hatred would not stop with His crucifixion. Even when He proved Himself True by taking up His life again, men would hate Him all the more. So it has been ever since His resurrection, and so it is today. The Prophet is proven true by the hatred of fallen men for the Christ and for His Church, the only Way to Salvation. He is still a Sign which is spoken against, and those who follow Him learn to taste of His cross.

With each sin fallen men commit, they speak against Him. For to sin is to deny God. It is to place yourself and your desires ahead of the One that made you. It is to reject the Child of Bethlehem, it is to forsake the Savior sent into the world. And so it has been with your sins as well. Sin, as the Apostle teaches, is slavery to an evil master. Sin is unbelief. And the curses of Ebal pale in comparison to the eternal suffering of those who refuse to believe in the Christ Child.

But Simeon, sent by God, blessed Joseph and the Mother of Jesus, and he spoke that Prophecy to Mary. Anna too, that aged Prophetess, gave thanks to God, and spoke of the Christ Child to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. For in Israel's affliction, it is the Christ, the True Israel, who would be afflicted. So Simeon called the six week-old Child the Salvation of God. He called Him the Light of Revelation. He called Him the Glory of Israel.

In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law – that we might have adoption as sons. Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

For you, you who believe in His Name, you who believe that God the Son was laid in the manger, you who believe that Simeon held God, you who believe the Prophets and Evangelists, for you that Babe is forgiveness and life. For as Isaiah promised, "Our Redeemer from Everlasting is your Name."

So, seeing seven centuries into the future, the Prophet proclaimed "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed upon us..., which He has bestowed according to His mercies."

And the risen and ascended Christ still leads His people by the Spirit of the Lord, who brings you comfort and peace. The Lowly Child of the manger is now exalted, enthroned in heaven, His celestial Habitation, holy and glorious. And His zeal and His strength and the yearning of His heart and His mercies are toward you, you who He has redeemed, you for whom He shed His Precious Blood.

In the Mystery of the Holy Incarnation of God, in His willing humiliation, the Eternal Word Incarnate, Wisdom Enfleshed, the Christ Child returned to Galilee, to Nazareth, and grew. God grew. He became strong in Spirit, the very Spirit that proceeds from Him and from the Father.

And Wisdom Himself was filled with Wisdom. That Wisdom, Mary's Son, God's Son, places His Body and Blood with earthly elements that you receive the Christ that Simeon held.

And when the thoughts of your heart are revealed, by the indwelling of the Spirit, your heart will be found full of Christ, and the rising of many for you will be the resurrection of the just unto life everlasting. For as the grace of God was upon the Christ Child, so also is His boundless grace upon you.

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