

LESSONS

1st Lesson: Psalm 14

1. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. 2. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. 3. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one. 4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call on the Lord? 5. There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous. 6. You shame the counsel of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge. 7. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

2nd Lesson: Luke 2: 25-35

25. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28. he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29. "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; 30. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, 31. which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32. a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." 33. And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "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."

3rd Lesson: Apocalypse Explained 460

Salvation is from Him [the Lord] since He is salvation; for everything of salvation and of eternal life is from the Lord and is with man and angel; for all the good of love and all the truth of faith with man are the Lord's with him, and not the man's; for it is the Divine proceeding, which is the Lord in heaven with the angels and in the church with men, and from the good of love and the truth of faith come salvation and eternal life; so when it is said that salvation is the Lord's, and that the Lord Himself is salvation, it is clear how this is to be understood.

S E R M O N

Salvation Is The Lord's

A sermon by
Rev Michael E. Ferrell

Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation. Luke 2: 29-30

Introductory Ideas:

For the past few weeks and yesterday we have celebrated the Lord's birth into the world. His birth is the most profound of all miracles. A person's journey begins in this natural realm as part of the Lord's beautiful plan for an angelic heaven from the human race. The Lord, who is God of the universe, descended through the heavens and eventually came to this natural realm where mankind begins its journey to heaven. Then, in the twinkling of a moment, He was conceived in the Virgin Mary as the Lord continued His descent to dwell on this earth as Immanuel, God With Us.

Simeon, a just man, waited for Israel's redemption. When Joseph and Mary brought the infant Lord into the temple, Simeon took Him into his arms, blessed God, and said, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." Filled with the hope that a new life brings into the world Simeon turned to the Lord acknowledging Him as the God of our salvation, and this because "Jesus means salvation" (AE 460:2).

Humanity's Decline:

Many ages ago, people lived in peace. They loved the Lord and cared for one another. Love of the Lord and other people guided humanity during these wonderful times. And as people passed into the spiritual world, the Lord created a heaven for them where they continued living as angels.

But people in the world began to turn away from God. They became sick with diseases. These were disease that sickened their souls. The hearts of people became filled with hatred and contempt. Hardly anyone cared about other people. Their minds became darkened by their own false ideas that caused people to excuse and justify themselves. People did not care about truth because they were uninterested in living a good life that truth teaches.

We're told in the Psalms of David: They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one (Psalms 14: 1, 3).

When they passed into the spiritual world people continued living without any reverence to God or love to their fellow human beings. Consequently, the spiritual world gradually became filled with more and more people who did not love God. Many people on earth and in the spiritual world hated one another and treated each other with cruelty. Evil people in the spiritual world gradually began to rise and harm even the angels in the heavens above.

Prophecy:

Although humanity became malicious and wickedly sinful, both here on earth and in the spiritual world, there were still a few who remained committed to the Lord. They knew the Lord would come and heal humanity. They looked forward to the day that the Lord would come, bringing comfort to those who loved God and committed themselves to a life of heavenly uses.

Through the prophet Isaiah, a promise was made: Indeed the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming'" (Isaiah 62: 11). And again from the Psalms of David: Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad (Psalm 14:7).

The Lord is Born:

And so while people on earth languished in sickness the Lord was born amidst the diseases that threatened to kill the spiritual life of humanity. While people in the spiritual world struggled with chaos and disorder the Lord was born to bring order and to restore peace in the heavens.

The Lord is salvation because of the wondrous works He would accomplish here on earth and at the same time in the spiritual world. When Joseph and Mary brought the Lord to the temple in Jerusalem, Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms, and blessed God saying, "my eyes have seen Your salvation." To bless God seems to imply that there is something God demands us to do for Him as if He is somehow inspired by our submission to Him.

We learn in the Heavenly Doctrine that the Lord "is not moved by any desire for glory. Indeed what glory does [the Lord] have which comes from man? He desires humility and submission not for His own sake but for man's. For when humility is present in a person he turns away from the evil and falsity present in him" (AC 4347:2). Our submission to the Lord is for our benefit. In states of humbleness we become repentant and therefore willing to turn away from our transgressions. This is to our benefit and contributes to our salvation.

When we are repentant we are willing to bless God. To bless God has a specific implication. "To bless God" means to glorify and give thanks because the Lord was to

come into the world, to save all who receive Him (AE 340: 3). Simeon knew that the Lord is salvation, the One to come and redeem humanity.

Surely we have celebrated the Lord's birth in the world. But the celebration can go on for the Lord's continuing work of salvation. The Lord is coming now and salvation is available today as long as we are willing to receive of Him. We can bless God for His coming into the world again even now as He is continually present with us leading and guiding us day by day.

Rejoicing on Earth:

When the Lord came into the world there was rejoicing at His birth. Mary said "my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47). After seeing the Lord the "shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2: 20). When they saw the star the wise men "rejoiced with exceedingly great joy" (Matthew 2: 10).

But celebration of the Lord in the world did not end at His birth. At certain times during the Lord's ministry people rejoiced. After the Lord healed a paralyzed man, saying "Arise take up your bed and go to your house" the multitude "marveled and glorified God" (Matthew 9: 8). After a crowd had gathered on the Sabbath and the Lord healed a woman "all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (Luke 13:17). When the Lord raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain the large crowd with her glorified God saying, "a great prophet has risen up among us" and "God has visited His people" (Luke 7: 16). After His resurrection when He had showed the disciples His hands and His side "the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20).

While in the world the Lord performed wonderful miracles: raising the dead and healing people who were leprous, blind, deaf, dumb, crippled, paralyzed, crooked and broken down. All these miracles represent the Lord restoring health, and moreover restoring spiritual life by cleansing humanity of evils and falsities and all manner of spiritual diseases (AC 8364:6, AE 455:21).

Rejoicing in the Spiritual World:

At the same time these miracles represent the Divine work of the Lord with people in the spiritual world as He restored order and ushered in an era of peace in the heavens. Surely indeed Simeon said, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation."

As the Lord performed great miracles here on earth He was, at the same time, cleansing the heavens and the world of spirits of unclean influences that had infested people. Just imagine, if you will, the celebrations taking place in the spiritual world. When the Lord came into the world to save and redeem, faithful believers in the spiritual world celebrate saying, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is

the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25: 9).

Concluding Ideas:

We have celebrated the Lord’s birth in the world. Yet our celebration should not end here. We can carry it forward into the new year ahead. The Lord’s coming is not only His birth in the world but includes also His coming to us each and every day. From the Lord, like a sun, proceeds the good of love that warms the desires of our hearts. From the Lord, like a sun, proceeds the truths of faith that enlightens our understanding and forms our belief.

As taught in the Apocalypse Explained “from the good of love and the truth of faith come salvation and eternal life” (AE 460). Yet it is from our acceptance of the Lord’s love and truths within us and a life according to them that we have salvation. Salvation is of the Lord yesterday, today, and the days to come. The Lord’s daily work of providing for our salvation is one of the reasons we celebrate His birth into the world.

As the Lord said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1: 8).

Amen.