

Sunday, November 30, 2014

1ST SUNDAY OF *Advent*

The first candle lit in the Advent Wreath represents the presence and hope of Christ.

Luke 2:8-14

Advent is a remarkable time of year for Christians. It is the season of expectation, recalling the hopes of Israel as they longed for the coming of their King, their release from captivity, and the return of God's presence in their midst in the Temple. The assertion of the Gospel is that all of these expectations were met in the coming of Jesus. The coming, dying and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus have begun the Age to Come for believers. He is the long expected deliverer who redeems God's people from bondage to sin and death. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords who demands our supreme allegiance and loyalty.

God's glory, His radiance and splendor were resident in the Temple behind the veil, for to see it in a sinful state would result in death. After Israel's remnant physically returned to the Promised Land and rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, they were dismayed because God did not honor the Second Temple with the presence of the Glory as He had in Solomon's Temple. Yet God had promised that the glory of the Second Temple would be greater than the first. So the people of Israel lived in expectation that one day God Himself would visit the Temple and display His glory in Israel's midst again. The glory of God was not seen in Israel in any form for 600 years! Still they waited and the faithful watched for the day that Israel's redeemer would come in the glory of God.

The Gospel of Luke tells us of the wonderful night when Israel's long wait was over. "And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid; I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.'" That night the glory of God, so long expected, returned to Israel; Israel's redeemer and deliverer was born of a virgin, and He was none other than the sinless Son of God... He was and is Christ the Lord! Let us join our voices with those of the shepherds and the angels as together we praise Jesus, the glory of God come to earth. Truly He is our Immanuel, which means God with us!

Merry Christmas... Joy to the World, The Lord is Come!!

Reverend Lucky Arnold