

NT-LK03
12/16/18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by Origen ¹

The baptism that Jesus gives is a baptism in the Holy Spirit and in fire. Baptism is one and the same no matter who receives it, but its effect depends on the recipient's disposition. He who is portrayed as baptizing in the Holy Spirit and in fire *holds a winnowing fan in his hand, which he will use to clear the threshing floor. The wheat he will gather into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with fire that can never be quenched.*

I should like to discover our Lord's reason for holding a winnowing fan and to inquire into the nature of the wind that scatters the light chaff here and there, leaving the heavier grain lying in a heap – for you must have a wind if you want to separate wheat and chaff.

I suggest that the faithful are like a heap of unsifted grain, and that the wind represents the temptations which assail them and show up the wheat and chaff among them. When your soul is overcome by some temptation, it is not the temptation that changes you into chaff. No, you were chaff already, that is to say, fickle and faithless; the temptation simply discloses the stuff you were made of. On the other hand, when you endure temptations bravely it is not the temptation that made you faithful and patient; temptation merely brings to light the hidden virtues of patience and fortitude that have been present in you all along. *Do you think that I had any other purpose in speaking to you, said the Lord to Job, than to reveal your virtue?* In another text he declares: *I humbled you and made you feel the pangs of hunger in order to find out what was in your heart.*

In the same way, a storm will not allow a house to stand firm if it is built on sand. If you wish to build a house, you must build it upon rock. Then any storms that arise will not demolish your handiwork, whereas the house built upon sand will totter, proving thereby that it is not well founded.

So while all is yet quiet, before the storm gathers, before the squalls begin to bluster or the waves to swell, let us concentrate all our efforts on the foundations of our building and construct our house with the many strong, interlocking bricks of God's commandments. Then when cruel persecutions is unleashed like some fearful tornado against Christians, we shall be able to show that our house is built upon Christ Jesus our rock.

Far be it from us to deny Christ when the time comes. But if anyone should do so, let that person realize that it is not at the moment of his public denial that apostasy took place. Its seeds and roots had been hidden within him for a long time; persecution only brought into the open and made public what was already there. Let us pray to the Lord then that we may be firm and solid buildings that no storm can overthrow, founded on the rock of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 1994 – pg 15

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**The wisdom that planned our salvation:
a reading from the *Letter to Diognetus*.**

“O Wisdom”

No one has ever seen God or known him, but God has revealed himself to us through faith, by which alone it is possible to see him. God, the Lord and maker of all things, who created the world and set it in order, not only loved us but was also patient with us. So he has always been, and is, and will be: kind, good, free from anger, truthful; indeed, he and he alone is good.

He devised a plan, a great and wonderful plan, and shared it only with his Son. As long as he preserved his secrecy and kept his own wise counsel he seemed to be neglecting us, to have no concern for us. But when C through his beloved Son C he revealed and made public what he had prepared from the beginning, he gave us all at once gifts such as we could never have dreamt of, even sight and knowledge of himself.

After making all his plans in consultation with his Son, God still allowed us for a time to go our own way, to be swept along by unruly passion, enslaved by sensuality. This does not mean that he took pleasure in our sins, but only that he tolerated them. When we had shown ourselves to be unworthy of life, his goodness would make us worthy of it. When we had shown our inability to enter the kingdom of God by our own power, we would be enabled to do so by God's power.

How immeasurable is God's generosity and love! He did not show hatred for us or reject us or take vengeance. He gave his own Son as the price of our redemption, the holy One to redeem the wicked, the sinless One to redeem sinners, the just One to redeem the unjust, the incorruptible One to redeem the corruptible, the immortal One to redeem mortals. For what else could have covered our sins but his Sinlessness? In whom could we have been sanctified but in the Son of God alone?

How wonderful a transformation, how mysterious a design, how inconceivable a blessing! The wickedness of the many is hidden in the One who is holy, and the holiness of One sanctifies the many.

**AO Adonai@: the Lord who loved us first; a reading from William of St. Thierry=
*On the Contemplation of God.*¹**

You alone are the Lord. By ruling us you save us and we are saved by serving you. Lord, you save your people and bless them, but what does it mean to be saved by you if not to receive the grace of loving you and of being loved by you? And so, Lord, you willed the Son at your right hand, the man you made strong for your service, to be called Jesus, which means Savior, for *he will save his people from their sins*, and indeed *salvation is to be found in him alone*. He taught us to love him by first loving us, *even to the extent of dying on the cross*. By loving us and holding us so dear he aroused our love for *him who first loved us to the very end*.

This is what really happened. You loved us first to make us love you, not because you needed our love, but because only by loving you could we be what you created us to be.

In many ways and on various occasions you spoke to our ancestors through the prophets. Now in these last days you have spoken to us through the Son, your Word, by whom the heavens were made, by whose breath the whole heavenly host came to be.

By speaking through your Son you made the extent of your love for us as plain as day. You did not spare your own Son but gave him up for all of us. And he himself loved us and gave himself up for us. This Lord, is your Word to us, your omnipotent Word. While all things were in profound silence (that is, in the depths of error) he came from his royal throne, the stern conqueror of error and gentle apostle of love. You wanted us to love you because otherwise our salvation would not have been just, and we could not do so unless you made it possible. Therefore, Lord, you loved us first. For our part, we love you with the love you yourself have given us. Your love is your goodness. It is the Holy Spirit. By his inspiration, by keeping us from harm and by providing for our needs, he unites God to us and us to God.

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O Root of Jesse
from a treatise by St. John Chrysostom ¹

Listen to [the prophet Isaiah] and how he said not only that Christ would become man but also that he would be born of a virgin. *"Behold the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel."* The name *Immanuel* is interpreted as meaning "with us is God." Then to show that this child, on his appearing, would not be a mere phantom of a man but truly a human being, the prophet went on to say: *"[He shall eat butter and honey,"* because it was usual for children to be fed these foods shortly after their birth. To make it clear the child was no mere human, the prophet then said:] *"For before the child learns good or evil, he will not heed the evil so that he may choose the good."*

We learn, too, that Christ is not only a man and born of a virgin, but also that he is of the house of David. Again listen to how Isaiah predicted this long beforehand, even though his prediction was couched in figurative and metaphorical terms: *"But a rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse and from his root a flower shall arise. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and piety, a spirit of fear of the Lord shall fill him."* For this man Jesse was the father of David. And it is clear from this that David came from Jesse's tribe.

So Isaiah predicted that he who was to come will come not only from the tribe but even from the house of Jesse when he said: *"A rod will come forth from Jesse's root."* For the prophet was not simply speaking of the rod but of Christ and his kingdom. The words which follow make it clear that Isaiah did not say this about the rod, for when Isaiah had said: *"A rod shall come forth,"* he went on to add: *"And there shall rest upon him a spirit of wisdom and understanding."*

No man, even if he is extremely senseless, will say that the grace of the Spirit came down on a rod of wood. It is quite obvious that the grace of the Spirit came down on that spotless temple of the Spirit. This is why Isaiah did not say: *"It will come,"* but: *"It will come to rest,"* because after the Spirit came, he did not depart but remained. This is what John the evangelist made clear when he quoted the words of the Baptist: *"I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from the sky and it came to rest on him."* - over

And the Gospels did not remain silent about the sentiments which the Jews showed after the child had been born. Matthew said: *"When Herod heard this, he was troubled, and so was all Jerusalem with him."* Listen to how Isaiah predicted this long beforehand when he said: *"They shall be willing to do so if they were burnt in fire. For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us: and his name shall be called Messenger of Great Counsel, Wonderful Counselor, God the Strong, the Mighty One, the Prince of Peace, Father of the world to come."*

¹ *Demonstration Against the Pagans That Christ is God.* Trans. Paul W. Harkins, Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 73. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985. pp. 191ff.

No one could say this of a mere man, as is obvious even to those who are very eager to show how stubborn they can be. No man from the beginning of time has been called God the Mighty nor Father of the world to come nor the Prince of Peace. For Isaiah said: *"There is no end of his peace."* And what did happen makes it clear that this peace has spread over the whole earth and sea, over the world where men dwell and where no man lives, over mountains, woodlands, and hills, starting from that day on which he was going to leave his disciples and said to them: "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."

Why did Christ speak in this way? Because the peace which comes from man is easily destroyed and subject to many changes. But Christ's peace is strong, unshaken, firm, fixed, steadfast, immune to death, and unending. No matter how many wars assail it, no matter how many plots rise against it every passing day, his peace is always the same. And it was his word, which accomplishes all things, that accomplished this along with his other blessings.

The Anew thing@ brought forth by God from among his people; a reading from treatise by St. John Chrysostom. 1

"O Key of David"

Christ had the power to set the human race free from all evils C not only the Romans, but the Persians, and simply every race of barbarians. And he succeeded in doing this with no force of arms, nor expenditure of money, nor by starting wars of conquest, nor by inflaming men to battle. He had only eleven men to start with, men who were undistinguished, without learning, ill-informed, destitute, poorly clad, without weapons or sandals, men who had but a single tunic to wear. ...He was able to persuade so many nations of men to pursue the true doctrine, not only in what concerns the present life but also the life hereafter. He succeeded in winning over these men to drag down their ancestral laws, to tear out their ancient customs, long and deeply rooted as they were, and to plant in their place other ways, which led them from the easy-going life to his own program of austerity. And he succeeded in doing this when the whole world was waging war against him, when they jeered at him, and forced him to endure the most shameful death of the cross.

These successes are not confined to the cities. They have spread to the desert, the villages, the fields, the islands, the ship basins, and harbors. Not only simple citizens and petty rulers but even those who wear the imperial crown have shown great faith and served as subjects to him who was crucified. I shall now try to prove that all this did not simply happen but that it had been predicted long beforehand. - over -

I do not wish you to suspect that what I say had not been foretold. Therefore, I must bring forward as evidence the books of the Jews, Y the Scriptures, over which the Jews have kept such careful guard, and set before the eyes of those who are still unbelieving the predictions and testimonies about Christ would become man and still stay God. *A This is our God; no other will be compared to him. He has discovered the whole way of understanding, and has given it to Jacob, his servant, and to Israel, his well-beloved. Since then he has appeared on earth and moved among men.*@

Do you see how, in a few words, the prophet made it altogether clear that Christ, still remaining God, became man, that he moved among men, and that he is, himself, the Lawgiver of the Old Testament? For the prophet said: *A He has discovered the whole way of understanding and has given it to Jacob, his servant, and to Israel, his well-beloved.*@ For here the prophet shows that, before his coming in the flesh, he arranged and disposed all things, that he did all things by giving the Law, by exercising his providence, and by granting to men the blessings of his care.

Demonstration Against the Pagans That Christ is God. Trans. Paul W. Harkins, Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 73. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985. pp. 191ff.

12.21.2018

**The prophets foretold that God would be seen among humankind;
a reading from St. Irenaeus.**¹

O Radiant Dawn.

There is one God who, through the Word and Wisdom, made everything and brought everything into harmony. It is he who is the Creator and who gave this world over to the human race. Because of his greatness he is unknown to all the beings whom he has made; for no one, either in ancient times or today, has looked upon the great eminence in which he dwells. Yet because of his love he is known at all times, thanks to him through whom he created all things. He is none other than the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in these latter times became a human being among humans in order to join the end to the beginning again, humanity to God. That is why the prophets, when they had received the gift of prophecy, foretold in their preaching that he would come according to the flesh and that the uniting and communion of God and humanity would be realized according to the Father's good pleasure. From the very beginning the Word proclaimed that God would be seen by humans, that he would live and talk with them on earth and that he would take part in the work which he himself had planned. He proclaimed that he would do this to save his work, and proclaimed that he would let himself be seized by it, "to save us from the hands of all who hate us", from all spirit of transgression. He also proclaimed that he would act in such a way that "we shall serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life" (Lk 1.71, 74), so that, caught up by the Spirit of God, humanity might attain to the glory of the Father... The prophets, then, foretold that God would be seen among humankind, according again to what the Lord said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5.8).

It is true that because of his greatness and inexpressible glory, "no one shall see God and live" (Ex 33.20), for the Father is unattainable. But because of his love and goodness towards humanity and of his power to do all things, he goes so far as to grant to those who love him the privilege of seeing God — just as the prophets foretold — "for what is impossible with humans is possible with God" (Lk 18.27). By their own power humans will never be able to see God; but God, if he wills it, will be seen by humans, by those whom he intends to see him, when – and how – he intends it. For God can do all things: seen of old through the intervention of the Spirit in the manner of the prophets; then seen again through the mediation of the Son in accordance with the adoption, he will be seen again in the Kingdom in accordance with the Fatherhood, the Holy Spirit preparing humanity in advance for the Son of God, the Son leading them to the Father, and the

¹ *Contra Heresies*, Book 4, 20, 4-5.

Father bestowing on them that incorruptibility and eternal life which comes to everyone from the fact of their seeing God. Just as those who see the light are themselves in the light and share in its splendor, so those who see God are in God and share in his splendor. Now, the splendor of God gives life. Those who see God will thus share in life.

Contra Heresies, Book 4, 20, 4-5.

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A reading about our need of the Incarnation of Christ, from an Oration by St. Gregory of Nazianzen . 1

O King of All Nations

The very Son of God, older than the ages, the invisible, the incomprehensible, the incorporeal, the beginning of beginning, the light of light, the fountain of life and immortality, the image of the archetype, the immovable seal, the perfect likeness, the definition and word of the Father: he it is who comes to his own image and takes our nature for the good of our nature, and unites himself to an intelligent soul for the good of my soul, to purify like by like. He takes to himself all that is human, except for sin. He comes forth as God, in the human nature he has taken, one being, made of two contrary elements, flesh and spirit. Spirit gave divinity, flesh received it.

He who makes rich is made poor; he takes on the poverty of my flesh, that I may gain the riches of his divinity. He who is full is made empty; he is emptied for a brief space of his glory, that I may share in his fullness.

What is this mystery that surrounds me? I received the likeness of God when I was created, but I failed to keep it. He takes on my flesh, to bring salvation to the image, immortality to the flesh. He enters into a second union with us, a union far more wonderful than the first.

Holiness had to be brought to us by the humanity assumed by one who was God, so that God might lead us back to himself through the mediation of his Son. The Son arranged this for the honor of the Father, to whom the Son is clearly obedient in all things.

The Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep, came in search of the straying sheep to the mountains and hills on which you used to offer sacrifice. When he found it, he took it on the shoulders that bore the wood of the cross, and led it back to the life of heaven.

We need God to take our flesh and die, that we might live. We have died with him, that we may be purified. We have risen again with him, because we have died with him. We have been glorified with him, because we have risen again with him.