**Advent Vespers II,**

**The Second Sunday in Advent,**

5 December 2021.

*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“The Messenger of the Covenant is the Son of God Incarnate to Save Men from Sin through the Cross.”**

**Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.**

**Malachi 3:1**.

**Introduction**.

OK. How can the Lord come suddenly to His temple as the Prophet Malachi prophesies in this Messianic prophecy when He is already there? The Lord comes suddenly to His Temple because He is now Incarnate.

The Lord come to His Temple, i.e., His People, the Church, in order to shoulder their burdens under the law and to fulfill all their obligations to deliver them from their failure to keep the law, namely, to save them from their sins.

The Incarnate Lord is able to do so because He is the Almighty Lord in the flesh. He is the Angel of the Covenant (the Law of Moses), the Angel of the Lord. Just as He delivered Israel from his Egyptian oppressors, so He is all-powerful to deliver all men from their sins.

The Messenger of the Covenant continues to come to His people, His Temple, the Church, where He forgives sins through the Gospel and gives life everlasting.

**I. Jesus is the Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord, who Saves Men from their Sin by the Cross.**

**A. Jesus is the Messenger of the Covenant, the Incarnate Lord.**

Who is this Messenger of the Covenant? The Covenant is the Law of Moses. The Messenger of the Covenant is the One who gave to Moses the Law or Covenant of Moses and presided over it. Moses writes:

And the [Angel {Messenger}] of the LORD appeared unto him [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush *was* not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses, And he said, Here *am* I. And he said, Draw not night hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the placed whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.[[1]](#footnote-1)1

The Angel or Messenger of the Lord is the Lord God Himself, the Son of God. He is the Messenger of the Covenant because He gave to them the Law of Moses and presided over it. Moses writes:

And he [Moses] took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.[[2]](#footnote-2)2

Again, Moses writes that the Messenger of the Covenant (the Angel of the Lord) is God Himself:

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, *from* before the people*.* ... And the [A]ngel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went before them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them ... .[[3]](#footnote-3)3

The Apostle St. Paul writes that the Messenger or Angel of the Covenant is Jesus:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud[[4]](#footnote-4)4, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

This coming to pass of the Incarnation is why the Lord could come suddenly to His Temple. After all, mightn’t someone say He is already there because He is the Lord and its His Temple? What then does it mean “He comes suddenly to His Temple”? Yes, the Lord is already there according to:

* His **Omnipresence** because He is God, and
* His **Promise**[[6]](#footnote-6)6, namely, that He Promises to be with Israel and to dwell graciously with them through the Promise of the Gospel. Moses writes: “in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. (**Exodus 20:24**[[7]](#footnote-7)7)

Now, however, the Prophet Malachi records that the Lord comes suddenly to His Temple because the Lord is Incarnate. The Lord comes suddenly to His Temple as a Man to dwell with men as a Man.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

Jesus is the Messenger of the Covenant and comes suddenly to His Temple, His People, the Church, because He is the Son of God Incarnate.

**B. Because Jesus is the Messenger of the Covenant, i.e., the Law of Moses, He is Fully Able to Save by Fulfilling the Law for all Men through the Cross.**

Plainly, Jesus is Powerful to save from sin because He is the Messenger of the Covenant, i.e., Almighty God, in the flesh. To bear the burden of man’s disobedience to the law and to full its obligations for all men who have ever lived, live now, and will ever live, is a task of infinite and eternal proportions. Yet Christ is able to do so because He is the Almighty and Eternal God in the Flesh. The Apostle St. John writes that Jesus is God Incarnate:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, glory as the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

The Apostle St. Matthew writes that Jesus is God Incarnate:

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

Because Jesus is God Almighty Incarnate, He is fully able to bear the infinite and eternal burden for each man in order to Atone for sin and save. The Prophet Isaiah writes:

And he [the LORD] said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.1[[11]](#footnote-11)1

Is the Lord making light of Christ’s Work when He says it’s a “light thing”? Certainly not. How can bearing the infinite and eternal burdens of each man to Atone for them be a “light thing”, i.e., something not substantial. It cannot be. Consequently, here the Lord speaks not of the ease of the burden but rather that this impossible burden is dwarfed to a “light thing” when juxtaposed to the Almighty Power of the Son of God to save. Indeed, the Son of God has power to spare and so the Lord makes Him the Savior of the Gentiles as well.

Because Jesus is the Messenger of the Covenant, namely, the Almighty God, Incarnate, He is Powerful to save from sin and death.

**II**. **Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, Saves His People through the Gospel**.

**A. Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, saves by Gospel**.

The Messenger of the Covenant is also the Messenger of the Gospel, evinced again by Moses sprinkling the Covenant with Blood. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first *testament*1[[12]](#footnote-12)2 was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined you.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3

Why did Moses sprinkle the Covenant with Blood? Moses sprinkled the Covenant with Blood because Messenger of the Covenant, Jesus of Nazareth, Shed His Blood on the Cross to forgive sins and to bring to pass and sustain this Covenant. In other words, the Messenger of the Covenant also brought with Him the Saving Gospel. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Also circumcision and the Passover were, ever since their institution, means of grace for the period of the Old Testament. ... On this account Luther says: “It is not true that the Sacraments of the New Testament differ from the Sacraments of the Old Testament as to their signification” [namely, as God-appointed signs of the *grace* of God] .... “Both our and the fathers’ signs or Sacraments have a word of promise attached which calls for faith and can be fulfilled by no other work. Therefore they are signs or Sacraments of justification.’ ... Both through the Word about the coming Messiah and through circumcision and the Passover, the Sacraments of the Old Testament, the remission of sins was given and, by the believers, appropriated.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

The Messenger of the Covenant continues to bring to men the Saving Gospel. The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

Luther writes:

Christ came into the flesh to be with us in Baptism and at the Holy Supper. Every Spirit who is at pains to teach that Christ does everything through the sacraments of God, is glad to hear about Christ, and gives thanks. For he understand that Christ is his and that He came in the flesh. Therefore this has been stated emphatically. Behold, this is the test of a spirit, whether he is of God or of the devil.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

**B. Jesus. the Messenger of the Covenant, gives life everlasting through the Gospel.**

Through the Gospel Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, saves and gives life everlasting. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

So we learned in catechism:

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking [in the Sacrament]? That is shown us by these words, “Given and shed for you for the remission of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

**Conclusion**.

The Messenger of the Covenant is the omnipresent and Gracious Lord. The omnipresent and Gracious Lord comes to His Temple, i.e., His People, the Church, suddenly because He is now Incarnate. The Lord is Incarnate in order to shoulder the burdens of all men under the law to keep the law for them and save.

The Messenger of the Covenant continues to dwell with His People Graciously through His Word and Sacraments, i.e., the Gospel, wherein He forgives sins, saves, and gives life everlasting.

***Amen.***

1. 1**Exodus 3:2-6**. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2**Exodus 24:7-8**. St. Paul uses the word “testament” (**Hebrews 9:16-20**). St. Paul uses the word “testament” when Moses writes, “blood of the covenant”. Why does St. Paul write “testament” when Moses writes “blood of the covenant”? St. Paul writes “testament” because “blood of the covenant” means testament.

   For what does a covenant, i.e., an agreement, sprinkled with blood mean? The shedding of blood over an agreement is remarkable. That ought to grab anyone’s attention; this agreement or relationship or covenant is serious because the shedding of blood is involved. Blood is involved in this agreement or relationship God makes with the people of Israel. What does that mean? It’s obvious. It means this agreement or covenant is held together by the shedding of someone’s blood. That’s serious business. The shedding of blood means someone must die. Hence, someone must die for the agreement to be in force. Christ’s Testament, the Shedding of His Blood for the sins of Israel, then, underpinned and empowered the relationship between God and the people of Israel.

   For this reason, one of the expressions for making a covenant in the Old Testament is “carath [to cut] berith [a covenant]”because in the cutting of flesh blood was shed. For example, when God promised Abraham promised Abraham the land for his people to him, Moses writes, “In the same day the LORD [cut] Abraham [a covenant] “. Once again, this covenant or relationship, was forced, underpinned, and empowered by the Blood of Jesus Christ, by His Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Exodus 13:21-22**, **19**, capitalization in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4The Cloud is Christ. “Jesus appears as God on the pages of the Old Testament. He reveals Himself under such titles as ‘the Angel of the Lord,’ ‘Jehovah,’ ‘Lord,’ etc. Whenever in the Old Testament the name ‘Lord’ occurs, it is pre-eminently not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son of God. Ex. 13:21 Moses writes of the Israelites in the wilderness: ‘And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.’ Who is this ‘Lord’? Ch. 14:19 He is called ‘the Angel of God,’ which is a well-known appellation of Jesus in the Old Testament. Here the Angel of God is directly termed ‘Lord.’ All doubt is removed by Paul (I Cor. 10:3-4): ‘Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; *and that Rock was Christ*.’ ... Which person of the Godhead summoned Moses to the summit of Mount Sinai and gave him the two tables of the Law? Again it was the Son of God. The evidence is presented in the Ascension Psalm 68; vv. 7-8, and 17-18. And all doubt is excluded by Heb. 12:18-26, especially v. 24. ... Luther writes: ‘The God who led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea; who went before them in a pillar of a cloud and of fire; who nourished them with bread from heaven and did all the miracles which Moses relates in his books; again, who brought them into the land of Canaan and gave them kings and the priesthood and everything, is this God and none other than Jesus of Nazareth, Mary’s, the Virgin’s, Son, whom we Christians call our God and Lord ... . Again, He it is who on Mountain Sinai gives Moses the Ten Commandments ... Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, who died for us on the cross is the God who says in the First Commandment: “I, the Lord, am thy God.” ... .’ So then, the same God on Sinai and Calvary. What comfort for the believers! Now the flames of Sinai can no longer fill us with terror. Indeed, we daily transgress the holy Law of Sinai, but we break through its condemnation and flee to the Redeemer on Calvary, who Himself fulfilled the Law for us and paid its penalty.” The Rev. Louis E. Roehm, *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 1, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946, pp. 20, 21, underscore added [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**I Corinthians 10:1-4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6“When God makes a promise, there He Himself is dealing with us and is giving and offering us something.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 3, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7“I think everyone knows that ‘God’s house’ means where He dwells, and that He dwells where His Word is, be it in the field, in church, or on the sea. On the other hand, where His Word is absent, He is absent, nor is His house there; but there the devil dwells, though it be a church of gold blessed by all the bishops. But where God’s house is, there is pure blessing, grace, and life, as the psalmist says: ‘We bless you from the house of the Lord.’ You are blessed, because you are in the Lord’s house. God says (Ex. 20:24): ‘In every place where I cause My name (that is, My Word) to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.’ In this passage this verse in the psalm had its origin. [“*26. Blessed be He who enters in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.* {**Psalm 118:26}**” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 14, p. 103]. “Wherever God sends out His Word, by which His name and work and not our name and work are praised, there He also comes with pure grace and every blessing, as Moses declares. [“... in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” **Exodus 20:24**.] But wherever the devil sends out his word and it is accepted, he follows with his curse and eternal destruction. The world, however, does not believe this and considers and praises the devil as God, his curse as a blessing, and his lies as truth.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 14, p. 103, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8“Pleased as Man with man to dwell; Jesus, our Immanuel!” Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, #94. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**St. John 1:1**, **14**. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10**St. Matthew 1:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11**Isaiah 49:6**, amplification in brackets added. “[Isaiah] Chapter 49. Christ forgets His Church nevermore”, editor’s notes in the caption. *The Bible or the entire Holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, according to the German Translation of Dr. Martin Luther*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1897, p. 711, translation from the German is mine and amplification in brackets is added. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12St. Paul uses the word “testament”. St. Paul uses the word “testament” when Moses writes, “blood of the covenant”. Why does St. Paul write “testament” when Moses writes “blood of the covenant”? St. Paul writes “testament” because “blood of the covenant” means testament.

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13. 13**Hebrews 9:16-20**. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, pp. 214, 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**St. Matthew 28:18-20**. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 285, 286, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**Romans 6:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18*The Small Catechism*, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)