

Thurs., Dec. 22, 2011

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Scripture

Galatians 3:1-14

¹You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! ²The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? ⁴Did you experience so much for nothing? — if it really was for nothing. ⁵Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

⁶Just as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," ⁷so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. ⁸And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." ⁹For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.

¹⁰For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law." ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for "The one who is righteous will live by faith." ¹²But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, "Whoever does the works of the law will live by them." ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" — ¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Devotional

The Lectionary makes the interesting choice of leading us through some parts of Paul's Letter to the Galatians these last days before Christmas. In Galatians, Paul battles some "teachers" who have come from Jerusalem and preach in Galatia "a different gospel" (1:6) than what Paul had been preaching. At stake is, in one sentence, "What time do you believe it is on God's watch?" Both Paul and the teachers believe that at some point God is going to radically interrupt the life of this world and re-create it. For the teachers, this is still in the future. For Paul, this is now (6:15). In this passage he gives one of his arguments. When God were to re-create the world, both Paul and the teachers believed, God would send God's Spirit—the mighty Spirit, which once hovered over the waters of the chaos and called creation out of nothing, would once again call new life out of chaos. Well, says Paul, when I preached the gospel, did you receive the Spirit or not?

What do you believe that Christmas is? Another chapter in the life of the world, or the radical invasion of God, the beginning of the new creation?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, bless your name for not wanting to be relevant to my life but making my life relevant to yours. Amen.