



The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ
to the Gentiles.

[January 6.]

The Collect.

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave

1 Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. 2 What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. 3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. 4 But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. 5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom. 6 Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. 7 Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? 8 Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? 9 Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? 10 He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons. 11 Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? 12 Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay. 13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. 14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? 15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. 16 He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. 17 Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. 18 Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified. 19 Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. 20 Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee. 21 Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. 22 Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me. 23 How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin. 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? 25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? 26 For thou writest bitter things

against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. 27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. 28 And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten. (Job 13:1-28)

Following Zophar's lame appeal to the sovereignty of God to judge the unrighteous, Job responds with salvos of truth that God is sovereign to judge, not only the unrighteous, but the righteous as well. His power and sovereignty know no limits. Though Zophar has offered a partial truth, the words and thoughts of man can never achieve complete knowledge of truth – are you listening, you so-called Higher Critics and charismatic wonders? God Himself will later reveal the fullness of truth regarding man's counsel compared to that of God: *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* (Job 38:2)

Job appeals for a direct dialogue with God to settle the matter. Is this fair? Certainly, what other purpose would prayer afford? The troubles and turmoils of life mount up to unscalable heights. No man can overcome such barriers without the wisdom and knowledge of God. He must seek remedies in the Library of Heaven if he will be sure of his plan. Once the keystone is set in place, it is a late moment to reconsider the foundation. If we seek God's guidance early in our troubles, our labors shall be built on a firm foundation. *"Come, let us reason together."* God counsels in Isaiah 1:18. Is Job unreasonable in seeking that counsel. Even a wise God may have reasons for not issuing an answer promptly, but it is good to get the question in queue early, and so Job does! *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* (James 1:5)

A great benefit of Christ's coming was to make God even more accessible to man than even in old times. We have that remarkable privilege to approach the Throne of Grace without a single intermediary, and at any hour of the day or night.

But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom. If the physician renders no help, it is a burden to pay his bill. Job tells his friends that they are full of lies in their counsel. He tells them that the wiser thing for them to do would be to remain silent if they know not the answers. The saying of Abraham Lincoln comes to mind: *"It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt."* How many ignorant hotheads would cherish the opportunity to call back their hasty words spoken in moments of rage!

Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? Job desires that his friends hear Godly counsel, full and complete. Their arguments have been half-truths, and a half-truth is also a half-lie. To ascribe to God legitimate powers which seem limited in scope is worse than making any claim against Him. God needs not even the defense of whole truth on His behalf from men – how much less half-truths. When we see the cheap little slogans of bumper stickers that proclaim *"God is my Co-Pilot"* we are immediately aware that they are headed for a crash unless they allow God to be the PILOT of their life's boat. God takes second seat to no mortal soul. Another slogan borne out of ignorance (but perhaps good intentions) is the one which says: *"Christ died for you Salvation; the American soldier for your freedom."* Although many courageous American soldiers have died defending our freedoms, Christ is the First Cause of Liberty and Freedom from bondage of sin. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* (Gal

5:1) Such half-truths do not honor God, but offend Him.

8 Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? 9 Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? 10 He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons. Job's friends have been playing the part of Satan, to Satan's pleasure, in accusing Job before God. Isn't that precisely what Satan does? Is he not our Accuser? *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.* (Rev 12:10) It is a comforting thought to realize that the Ancient Deceiver shall be cast into the bottomless pit ever before the White Throne Judgment. (see Revelations 20:10-11) We will face the Judge of our souls alone with no Devil to accuse us.

11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? Would we wear blue jeans and flip-flops before the secular magistrate when our fate hangs in the balance. Why then, would we lack reverence before God, so much so, that we wear street clothes to worship? A distinguishing mark of true Anglican and Lutheran worship is that God is revered in worship. There is no casual or trifling appeal to the vanities of man. We await the worship hour in solemn and serious silence and meditation, we kneel in prayer, we stand for the Gospel reading, and we stand for the hymns (which are also fittingly dignified and powerful for the occasion).

12 Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay. 13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. All of the works of man that lack the meritorious seal of God will be burned to ashes. The memory of Job's friends is lacking in substance and truth. Their bodies already reek of the dust of the earth to which they shall return when dead, for they are walking dead now without the wisdom of God. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* (2 Peter 3:10) But Job has a history with God. He has been a faithful man of God – thus God has entrusted his temporary torture to Satan to prove him as faithful. He does this with all of His beloveds.

14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? 15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. When the last move on the Chess Board is made and "checkmate" called, the game is over! The words of Job spoken here are as "Checkmate" to the wiles and plans of Satan! Satan has run his course in afflicting Job, hoping that, instead of blaming the guilty party (Satan), Job will blame God. But Job issue one of the strongest statements of faith in all Scripture here in verse 15. It is not as great a faith required for healing as for a continued suffering, but Job says that he will trust God even if the object of that trust "KILLS" him. Perhaps Job would be better advised to have omitted the "but" for it amends his strong faith to a lower rung. *"I will maintain mine own ways before him."* I will give Job the benefit of the doubt here and believe that he intends his "own ways" to be charted by God.

16 He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. Have you not known that it is often the hypocrite who gains the prominence in business and in churches? It shall not be so with God for He judges the heart and not the outward appearance. Judas was a hypocrite who carried the money bag (a privilege perhaps esteemed highly by the world); but Judas purchased his estate in the Potter's

Field for his hypocrisy.

17 Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. 18 Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified. 19 Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost Job is sure that he knows the Lord to be just and merciful; and he knows that he has lived his life trusting in God to lead in all things. If so, such a man will be justified through Christ. The truth cannot be stored in confined places – it must burst forth. Just as a pressure cooker must have a relief valve, so the truth must have a means of escape. Remember the leper who came to Christ for healing? *And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.* (Mark 1:40-45)

A serious question: Do you believe that Christ intended that the leper keep silence regarding his healing? Can a man who has lived in forced separation from his loved ones (as a leper must do) remain silent when they see him whole? He was filthy in his rags and stinking from his disease, yet, Christ did two things that no one else would, or could, do – He 'touched' the filthy leper, and he healed him. Pray tell, how can one remain silent in the face of such a glorious occasion? Jesus is teaching us that when we are touched by Him; healed by Him; and saved by Him, we cannot remain silent. Even our friends will know of it from our changed persons. Even if our silence is commanded by a great angel, we could not hold our peace.

20 Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee. 21 Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. "Release me from my torment," Job cajoles, "and grant me courage. I will run to thee if these are granted." But isn't this bargaining with God? Have you ever bargained with God? It is an ancient Hebrew principle – the only evidence that Job is descended from Seth. Abraham bargained with God to no avail for the cities of the plain were destroyed in spite of his intercession. The Lord already knew that there were not "ten righteous" in all of the city of Lot. When I was in elementary school, I used to bargain with God to help me on exams. If God would help, I would promise to be a very God boy thereafter. God did always help, but my end of the bargain often fell flat.

22 Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me. 23 How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin. Job seems to be telling God: "Look, LORD, grant those petitions I have made and I will then never falter in answering thee. Job should know his sins without being reminded by God. He believes they are few, but are they? Do you, too, believe that you are a fairly righteous person, and do you believe that such limited righteousness will gain the gate of Heaven for you? No, it will not. Better travel on the righteousness of Christ and depend not an iota on your own.

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? 25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? Job resorts to the

"self-pity" mode here. How long would Job last if God considered him His enemy – a millisecond would be quite a record breaker. Job wonders why God would bruise and shake a leaf by buffeting it with his winds, and then chase after the dry stubble that results? Job is speaking out of the duress of torment and not of reason. He is questioning, himself, God's justice.

26 For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. 27 Thou putttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. Job accuses God of bringing up to memory the sins of his childhood. Are the sins of his adulthood not sufficient to send him to Hell? He accuses God of taking away his freedom. It must be heart-breaking to God to claim our strong faith before Satan and then suffer our feeble words of faithlessness.

28 And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten. God has taken away Job's freedom to go on with his former life of comfort. His discomfort is more keenly felt because he has been spoiled by God with kindness. Job considers himself already dead and rotting – without hope except in his own power to reason with God.