



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 Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, 2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? 4 Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. 5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty. 6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee. 7 Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills? 8 Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? 9 What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us? 10 With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father. 11 Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee? 12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thy eyes wink at, 13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth? 14 What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

17 I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare; 18 Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it: 19 Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. 20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. 21 A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. 22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. 23 He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. 24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. 25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. 26 He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers: 27 Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and

maketh collops of fat on his flanks. 28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. 29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth. 30 He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. 31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence. 32 It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green. 33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive. 34 For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. 35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit. (Job 15:1-35)

In the previous lesson on Chapter 14, the first cycle of speeches was concluded. The grand debate is between Job and his three friends. More often than not, Job's friends take the devil's part, while Job argues from the premise – not of present circumstance – but future hope in the Lord. Now begins the second cycle of arguments after the same pattern as the first. Job's friends persevere in accusing Job of unrepented sins. As is usual in the eyes of the world, material success is a mark of favor from God. Penury, to the world, is a sign of unrighteousness. How many in society today are highly respected simply because they have ill-gotten wealth or power while the gleaners in the field (whose hearts are full of tender love) count for naught before the world.

How often are we condemned by the words from our own mouths? Eliphaz has labeled himself perfectly in his accusation against Job! **2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?** The lack of knowledge and wisdom is on the part of Eliphaz and not Job. Have the accusations of the three friends done good for Job? No, they have only hurt and dismayed Job. It is a terrible experience to argue the truth with men who cannot accept truth. Our Lord must have suffered much discomfort at all those who would hear the truth and not accept it.

THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES! Please examine closely the words of Eliphaz. Do they not redound to his own head and soul? **4 Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. 5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty. 6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee.** Though Job has expressed some feelings of unfair treatment from the hands of God (unjustifiably), he has remained faithful to God in his future hope. He has even declared that he would remain faithful to God even if He kills him. Neither of the three friends have uttered words of such faith. Eliphaz has no way of knowing what kind of prayer life Job leads. If Eliphaz does not condemn Job, he certainly puts up a good front! Job's lips testify of faith and not of sin.

A reason begins to emerge now for the hostility of the three friends against Job. They recognize that Job is very faithful in his words, his spirit, and his faith. Failing to have an argument against the many pearls of wisdom Job has articulated, they resort to personal attack. **7 Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills? 8 Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? 9 What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us? 10 With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father. 11 Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee? 12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thy eyes wink at, 13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth?** Ridicule is the resort of fools. An ugly illusion begins to emerge in the argument of Eliphaz – age

always trumps wisdom. Not so! Eliphaz wants to know "*what makes Job feel so special?*" It is true that ancient wisdom bears a greater legal tender than modern thought, because all true wisdom is older than the hills, the seas, or the earth itself. True wisdom comes from an unchangeable God who declare it before the Foundation of the World! So even those tender in age may declare perfect wisdom if they are quoting the Ancient of Days. It is true in today's churches that those of greatest seniority consider themselves to be Holy Grail of wisdom in church matters. If a younger attempts to serve, he is stepped on by the elders. Eliphaz is more concerned about winning an argument than in winning comfort for an unfortunate friend.

14 What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? It is true that our righteousness is as filthy rags. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* (Isaiah 64:6) It is not the truth that is so weighty in Eliphaz view as it is the absolute worthlessness of man – almost beyond redemption. The words of Elphaz contrasts sharply with those of the man after God's own heart (David): *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!* (Psalms 8:4-9) The amazing thing with God is not how sinful man is, but that God still loves us so magnificently that He would send His only Begotten Son to redeem us IN our sins!

17 I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare; 18 Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it: 19 Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. It is true that a wise man does not fail to pass along his wisdom to his sons and daughters. Really? Did no stranger pass among the wise men? Or perhaps, did the wise men pass among strangers as did Lot in pitching his tent toward Sodom and finally became a judge at the gate there?

20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. Eliphaz does well, if he means to do so, in contrasting the wicked man from the wise, for a truly wise man will not enter into wickedness. But Eliphaz has the purpose here to indict Job, the most wealthy in all the east, as coming to his ruin as a result of hidden sins and wickedness. Here, Eliphaz is not like the wise man who never opens his mouth over matters of which he is not schooled. My French teacher used to quote a fine old saying: "*A wise old owl sat high in the oak; The more he saw the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he heard. Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?*"

21 A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. Does the `wise' Eliphaz realize what dreadful sound is presently in the ears of Job? It is the senseless voice of ELIPHAZ! Eliphaz is pointing directly to Job in saying "...*in prosperity the destroyer will come upon him.*" How absolutely true these words are, but Eliphaz does not know why they are so. The destroyer, Satan, has, indeed, come upon Job in his prosperity, but God is protecting Job from destruction. How does this escape the notice of the supposedly wise Eliphaz?

22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. 23 He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. 24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. 25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. 26 He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers: 27 Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks. Eliphaz gives his unflattering assessment of Job in these sentences. Eliphaz misses the mark on so many points that his entire soliloquy is far more error than truth. When has Job stretched his hand out against God? What has Eliphaz been smoking?

If any want proof that Eliphaz is not a prophet, he need look only so far as the next lines: 28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. 29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth. 30 He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. 31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence. It is true that the world looks only upon present circumstances, and presently, Job is living in a shanty,; but from this point forth, Eliphaz misses the mark so completely that the mark is embarrassed for him. Job shall, for certain, be rich – in fact, exactly twice as rich as before. We have read the end of Job's story to which Eliphaz has no access. God is the same. He ALWAYS knows the end of the story and bases his judgment on the end and not the in-between. How can Job be vane in his present predicament. I believe that Eliphaz speaks out of a pent-up jealousy from earlier years of Job's opulence.

32 It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green. 33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive. 34 For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. The most evil part of deception is that it tends to mix truth with lies. Before Job's appointed days are finished, he shall dwindle and die according to Eliphaz. Don't we all long for such a friend as Eliphaz? Who needs an enemy when such friends are so abundantly available? Verse 34 is absolute truth, however, truth, when misapplied, is a lie!

35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit. Job is not in such fair fettle to "conceive mischief" or to bring forth vanity". We shall leave such nonsense to the salons of Paris! Job needs the comfort of friendly counsel. He does not seek to deceive. He is the only one whose voice the Lord will favor in the end. (I read ahead).

You are my friend. If I am overcome with hardship and misfortune and call upon you, will you come to me blaming every misfortune on my hidden sins?