

VOC-December 2015: Advent - Christ's birth is true (Lk. 1: 1-4)

Dear Listeners,

This is the time which is commonly called "*the days of Advent.*" It's the weeks prior to *Christmas* that we call the time of *Advent*. Originally it means that we focus on the *coming* of the Christ. During that time we could consider the *prophecies* in the OT announcing Christ's coming. We could meditate on the *meaning* and *importance* of His coming. Whatever focus we have during these weeks of the *Advent*, however, its purpose should be our *preparation* for the celebration of Christ's birth! Now that *purpose* may well be reiterated and re-emphasized at this time! As you are well aware, when we speak of *preparations* for Christmas we think of the hype, the shopping, the baking, and the presents, to mention a few of the features that characterize this time. I urge you, however, *not* to be caught up in this Christmas mood and merriment; rather let's focus on the *true meaning* of Christmas! Let's prepare ourselves for Christmas in the true spirit of Christ's *Advent*, i.e. *Christ's coming* into this world!

An important question you might have regarding this *meaning* of Christ's coming dear listener could be: How can I be *sure* that the Christian faith is really *true*? That everything I have heard about Jesus Christ has *truly happened*? That's a good question, an honest question, which requires a good and honest answer. It's very important, then, to listen to someone who spoke to the *eye- and ear-witnesses*, to the people who did see, hear, and meet Him! Well, dear listener, with the gospel according to *Luke* we have such an account of someone who went all out in doing *research* regarding the things that happened before, during, and after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ! He spoke to the people involved, *interviewed* Jesus' relatives, apostles, disciples, hearers, and witnesses personally! He ensured that we do not need to be ashamed of the gospel, knowing that the accounts can stand close scrutiny and criticism. He wrote an account that can be used very profitably for the purpose of answering questions of people who still doubt, who need more convincing, persuading, etc. During these weeks of *Advent*, therefore, I wish to look closely to the *first chapters of his account*, so as to confirm you in the *truth* of the gospel as Luke had it *verified* by his research!

At this time I wish to invite you, yes even *urge you*, to find yourself a *Bible* and read along with me in the gospel according to Luke. When you read through it you will be struck by the *vivid descriptions* of the events recorded in it. Luke was a master *story-teller*! Then you will find the *first four verses* of his account an *exception* to that overall impression of Luke's account. It's important though, that we *don't* skip these verses and right away get into the story part. What we find in these *opening sentences* we might find to-

day in the *preface*, or *prologue*, or on the back of the cover of a book; namely, to express the *author's intention* with the book, and his *method* and *approach* to the project. Luke wants to present it as a challenge to the reader, the way publishers do today: this is a *must-read*! This book tells you *exactly* how it is; you'll find in it, black on white, *what* happened and *how* it happened and *with whom* it happened! This is true history! Then Luke mentions that he is aware of others having reported on the events, yet he wants to affirm to us that he has also taken the approach of the *historiographers* of his days. Luke writes the *history of salvation*! That's very important for people who want to know *who* He was, the Lord Jesus Christ, *what* He said, and did, and *why*!

So what I am speaking to you about dear listeners is gospel truth indeed! *Thus* Jesus was born, this is *how* He died, and it is true that He *rose* from the dead! We know that for sure, for a fact! How? How does Luke know it so assuredly? He wrote it accurately so that you would believe; that you *can* do so because it is *true*! Luke tells us that he did so initially with a view to a very *personal* call to faith and repentance, to the most excellent *Theophilus*. He was a very honorable man of the intelligent middle-class at Rome, who was able to *verify* all that Luke has recorded. The Holy Spirit, then, used Luke's account to convince this *Theophilus* (a friend of God, his name denotes!) to become a God-lover in Jesus Christ. The holy gospel can be and must be *believed*, because it's *true* in all its *facts* and it has happened as revealed, as it was also researched by Luke! It was of eminent importance to him that what he recorded was indeed *true* and the gospel truth!

Well, dear listener, Luke doesn't just suffice by saying that he had *heard* the stories, but he writes "an account of the things that have been *fulfilled* among us." It's not a half story, but it's the complete and *full truth* about the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! It's *God's* work that Luke describes, *God's* plan that was fulfilled in the facts he records! The entire series of events and experiences, including Christ's resurrection, His ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the spreading of the Christian Church, were *fulfilment* of God's prophecies! Those who told these stories and shared their accounts thus far, Luke calls 'servants of the word,' people who had been *ear- and eye-witnesses* from the beginning! Luke went to the *people* themselves, who knew the Lord Jesus, were involved with Him in one way or another. He went to the actual *places* where He lived and worked. He investigated everything from the beginning! He involved interviews most likely of people like Zechariah and Elisabeth, Mary, the shepherds, to hear the stories about John in the womb, about the angels, etc. Indeed, in *Luke's account* we find information we can't read anywhere else! That was important for *Theophilus*, for future generations, and for us today! You can't have a stronger *witness* than that! Their *testimony* is proof!

After Luke had so done his research and completed his investigation, dear listeners, he sat down to write an *orderly account*. Thus he presents to us, to you and me, the gospel as a *reliable* account of what *truly* happened and what has been investigated meticulously! Yes, Luke may present it as such, including in this account the stories about the miracles Jesus performed, even raising people from the dead, also reporting in detail that Jesus Himself has died and rose from the dead, which was seen and confirmed, verified and reported by many! Thus God incited and *inspired* Luke to go to work in this way, in order that we may *believe*! Yes, this makes the gospel according to Luke such a wonderful book for us today, since Luke wrote to convince, “so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” Of course, then we realize that just the historical *facts* are not enough for us to come to *faith*. We don’t believe in the *stories* but we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ *revealed* in the stories! Then these stories certainly are the *basis* for this faith! It is my prayer, therefore, dear listeners, that the Holy Spirit may use this account to *touch your hearts* today! Yes, I pray that you will *come to church*, which is the workshop of the *Holy Spirit*, that you may *hear* the explanation of the scriptures and the *proclamation* of the gospel with your own ears!