



Hope for the world

Venus Is Hell

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In the absence of any way to prove it, there are many who think that the Star of Bethlehem that lit up the night sky at the time of Jesus' birth may have been the planet Venus – the bright morning star that we've all seen at one time or another.

And that's a fine way to help burnish the Advent story. The reality is a little less poetic.

For up close, the planet Venus is hell – or so astronomers have concluded – with crushing atmospheric pressure, a surface temperature getting on for 1000F, runaway greenhouse gases and clouds made of sulphuric acid to boot.

And it's part of the creation – the same creation that holds our own planet, and us. Which makes you think. Why did God create our nearest planetary neighbour to be such an unwelcoming, frightening place?

By contrast, our world sits right in the centre of the 'Goldilocks zone' of our solar system – not too hot, not too cold – just right. For us humans, anyway.

Hmmm.

Seen from afar, Venus looks like the brightest, most glorious jewel in our sky. Seen up close, it's a hellish world, with few redeeming features if you're human.

Just a little bit like earth is becoming, in fact. Seen from the moon, the Apollo 8 astronauts referred to it as 'the good earth' as their craft came from behind the moon to see the earth 'rising' over the horizon. That photo became one of the most famous ever taken.

Seen up close though, Earth is in danger of very slowly morphing into being something different – going from being a beautiful 'pale blue dot' towards being a world where malign forces are gathering to turn it, Venus-like, into something else. And once those dominos start falling, it may be impossible for us to stop them.

In Venus, we perhaps have a warning vision of the distant future for our world if we fail to act.

But 'the good earth' is in our hands. And this Advent season that can give us hope, because by acting together we can make sure our world stays that way.



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