

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The Birth of our Lord is one of, if not the most celebrated event in the world today. The simple reason is that there are more Christians living today than during any other period in history, also they make a big chunk of the earth population at the present time. According to the latest statistics published by the United Nations, Christians are close to two billions, which is more than one third of the earth's population. Not only that but the life of Jesus Christ affected the lives of more people on this planet than any other human being who ever lived.

The amazing thing about this is that Jesus did not possess any of the usual qualifications that we normally associate with those who have such an impact on our lives. Judged by the criteria by which the world usually measures greatness He does not qualify to be considered a great man. He was born to a poor Jewish girl engaged to a poor carpenter, who decided to let her go when he discovered that she was pregnant. As the time of his birth became close, His parents had to travel from Nazareth where they lived, to an obscure village called Bethlehem to be taxed according to an order issued by Caesar Augustus. As they entered the village, they went to the only inn to spend the night. The inn keeper could not accommodate them in a regular room, there was no place for them in the inn. Looking at St. Mary, and feeling some compassion, he allowed them to stay in the stable. When it was time for her to be delivered, she delivered Him there. So He was born in a filthy and smelly stable where the inn keeper kept his animals. When He was born, His mother did not put Him in a clean bed or a crib, there was no other place but the manger from which the animals fed. As He grew up, He was an average child, who obeyed and respected His "parents". At an early age He learned His father's trade and led a normal life as a Jewish man under the rule of Rome. Until the age of thirty no body noticed Him, just another poor carpenter living with His widowed mother supporting her, working long hours in His shop trying to make ends meet. Then suddenly after that, He left His shop and began calling few men to accompany Him, twelve in all, mostly poor, uneducated,

rough fishermen. Then He began to call people to repent, and come back to God. Most of His preaching fell on deaf ears. Most of them did not heed His call, as the overwhelming majority did not understand Him, including His own disciples. He was never discouraged. So He continued to preach the word of God, and doing good to all who needed it. It was reported that He never turned back anybody who needed help. He was poor, so He could not give them money or possessions, but He gave them what He could, healing from their diseases, and freedom from the evil spirits that controlled them. After three years, the stubborn nation whom He has served and whom He tried to convert, condemned Him to die, preferring to release a thief called Barabas and not him. The soldiers who crucified Him gambled on the only thing He owned, His robe. When He died they buried Him in a borrowed grave.

This man was described by the prophet Isaiah more than seven hundred years before His birth, when he wrote, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed He shall not break, and a smoking wick He shall not quench (Is 42:3)

This man wielded no visible power, had no army, or navy, or air force, or a cavalry, not even one horse. This man did not answer evil with evil, and forgave everybody who hurt Him, even those who crucified Him. This man had no generals, or admirals or anybody of authority in His circle of friends. This man did not have any extensive formal education. This man was rejected by His own people who described Him as an imposter, a breaker of the Sabbath, a blasphemer, and in collusion with the prince of demons. It is really amazing that despite all that He had such an impact on the lives of mankind as no other man in the history of the world.

Someone wrote this about Him, "All the kings who ever reigned, all the emperors who ever ruled, all the conquerors who ever conquered, all the philosophers who ever lived, all the armies, the navies, the air forces, all the cavalries ever assembled by man, all put together did not affect the destiny of mankind as Jesus of Nazareth" (author unknown).

So, that unassuming figure, that young Jewish rabbi, whom we just described affected the lives of so many people. No wonder more than two billion people celebrate His birthday every year.

The reason for His birth:

If Jesus was only a man, whether He was an average man or an extraordinary man, we would not have asked the question why was he born? But because He is God in the flesh, the only begotten Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, we have to wonder about the reason behind His birth as a human being.

The story began a long time ago, before the Lord God created Adam and Eve. How many years before that we do not know, thousands, may be millions of years. In this remote past at one point, God decided to create the angels, millions of them, to serve Him, and worship Him. The Bible tells us that there were few archangels. Three of these were mentioned by name; Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer. It seems that Lucifer was the most powerful and the wisest of the three. Then for some reason He thought that he is entitled to more authority than what was given to him by God. So he decided to take things in his own hands, and one day he tried to raise his throne above that of God, aided by one third of the angels of God, whom he had recruited and consequently shared his belief that they too deserve more authority than what was given to them by God. This was an act of insubordination, which was not tolerated by God, who punished the rebellious archangel, and his followers by banishing them from heaven. Two prophets; Isaiah and Ezekiel referred to the story of Lucifer and the fallen angels. Ezekiel wrote this about Lucifer before he fell,

"You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty, You were in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, carnelian, topaz, and jasper, chrysolite, beryl, and onyx, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald; and wrought in gold were your

settings, and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared, with an anointed guardian cherub I placed you, you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you." (Ezek 28:12-15)

Isaiah wrote about his fall,

"How you are fallen from heaven, O day star, son of dawn! How you are cut down to the ground...you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High. But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depth of the pit."

(Is 14:12-15)

After some time the length of which we also do not know, the Lord God decided to create another creation, to enjoy His love and to worship and glorify Him, in place of the fallen angels. This time God selected to create His new creation from an inferior material than the one He used to create the angels. Angels were created from light, so He decided to create man from the dust of the earth. Why did He decide to do that, we do not know, but He may have done that to demonstrate to Lucifer and the fallen angels His glory by showing them that His new creation who will take their place are made of an inferior material to that which was used to create them.

The earth was created many years before, and was void and without form when God decided to create man. It was probably the place that Lucifer and his fellow rebels were banished. But the earth was not ready to receive the new creation. It was a rough and difficult environment that could not sustain life. So the Lord God had to make several changes to make it a more hospitable environment worthy of His new creation. The changes are detailed for us in the first Chapter of Genesis. It took God six days to complete His work, but at the end, He looked

and behold everything that He has made was good. The earth was now ready to receive man. Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, and finally He created Adam in His image and His likeness. God loved Adam and felt that he needed a companion because most of the animals that He created were males and females. So God decided to create Eve, to keep Adam's company and to help him in what God asked him to do.

Satan watching all that, envied man on his position in heaven, and the favor that he had found with God, a favor that he, Satan had lost a long time ago. And since he could not attack God, he decided to upset His plan, by attacking his new creation. We know what happened, he lied to Eve and sowed doubt in her mind about God, and enticed her to eat from the forbidden fruit, using the same lie that he perpetrated on himself, telling her that if they ate they won't die, but will be like God knowing good from evil. So Satan was successful in making Adam and Eve disobey their creator and rebel against Him. He must have felt good about himself and what he did. May be he had a big party with his fellow demons, celebrating and congratulating each other on their huge success against their enemy. After all they have just defeated God and upset His plan. Satan never thought that God knew what happened before it did, and that He was ready with a solution. The reason for their celebration was that they knew that God will fulfill His threat, when He told them " that they will die if they ate the fruit of that tree". They were certain that they will. They knew about God's justice, because they observed it strictly applied in their case. They probably did not know anything about His mercy, and his forgiveness. Based on that they were sure that they had defeated God.

But God's mercy was immediately evident. Satan must have watched with dismay the first display of God's mercy when He promised that the "seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" This was a promise designed to inform Adam and Eve that God will not abandon them and that He will save them from the destiny that they deserved when they disobeyed Him. It was also designed to put Satan on notice that God was not defeated, and that what happened was a temporary setback,

which will be corrected. His second act of mercy toward man was killing the two animals which provided the aprons that God made for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness.

God's main purpose was to save man from the punishment that he deserved; death. And since the death that God threatened was two kinds ; a physical death and a spiritual death. So to save man God let the physical death proceed as planned. But He suspended the spiritual death, until He puts in effect his plan of salvation, and then He made it contingent upon every man's response to God's salvation. The plan that God planned for that was simple but unbelievable.

If man is to be forgiven and saved from death, somebody had to die in his place, to satisfy God's justice. But since all men are sinners, none among them can perform this function. The man whose death would be accepted as a sacrifice, had to be sinless, because if he was sinful, he will need somebody to atone for him. The only solution to this dilemma is for the son of God, the second person of the Trinity, to take flesh and become a man, a sinless man who can offer himself a sacrifice on behalf of the whole human race, to satisfy God's justice. This is the reason for His incarnation which was prophesied in many prophecies sprinkled throughout the Old Testament, two of the most explicit ones are these which were written by the prophet Isaiah five centuries before the arrival of the Lord on our planet. He wrote, "The Lord himself will give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel" (Is 7:14). He also wrote, "For to us a child is born, a son is given ; and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called , Wonderful, the Mighty God , the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." (Is.9:6)

In simple language, we can summarize this by saying that God became man to save his beloved creation who disobeyed and rebelled against Him, from eternal death.

The question still persists, why did He do it? He didn't do that for the

fallen angels, why did He do it for man? He could have destroyed the human race, by letting His justice run its course, and created another species better able to obey Him. The reason is that He loved mankind. Several times God expressed that love. David said that, " The Lord takes pleasure in His people"(Ps 149:4). St. John described that love when he said,"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, so whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life"(Jn3;16). God's love for man is unexplainable, man is not lovable,but this is His will. God's love is a fact that we delight in, and is considered one of the basic Christian beliefs that gives us hope, and makes the story of salvation believable.

This is the simple truth on which Christianity is founded. A truth that is readily accepted by those who know and believe God , but a truth which constitutes the biggest stumbling block for those who do not know Him, that stands in the way of their belief in His incarnation. As a result of their inability to comprehend the reason behind God becoming a man, they have come to the conclusion that Christians worship three gods. This stubborn denial of non Christians was beautifully portrayed in many stories. The following two were among the best which I have read.

This is the story of a twelve year old girl who asked her father to go with her and her mother to church on Christmas eve. The father told her that he does not go to churches. The girl answered him that tonight is a special night. How is that asked the father. The girl answered that it is Christmas, and we are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. What is so special about that, the father asked. The girl told him that He is God in the flesh that is why it is so special. The father who so far was trying to control his temper suddenly exploded saying " you do not believe that stuff, do you? God became a man and was born in a stable, ridiculous " The girl did not give up, she was used to her father's refusal of her God. So she said that even the Old Testament said that, and she recited for him the two prophesies quoted above. As she proceeded to explain to

him that nobody can be called "Mighty God, or Everlasting Father" except God. But her father cut her off, telling her that the whole story was silly, and that he is not going to church with them. The girl begged him, but he was adamant in his refusal. With tears in her eyes she left to church with her mother.

As she entered the church she saw the crucifix high above the alter. She looked up and whispered a brief prayer asking God to help her father understand the fact of His incarnation, and ended it by asking Him to please bring him to church. The father disgusted because of his conversation with his daughter, got himself a can of beer and lied down on the couch watching television. After few minutes he was asleep. He dreamed that he was standing on the porch looking on his backyard. Suddenly he saw a flock of birds flying around. "These birds should have migrated to a warmer climate, but here they are flying looking for food and warmth." He found himself murmuring. It was cold outside and there was no food. Around and around they went, and he felt that they are getting weaker and weaker. He thought that if he could orient them toward the barn, they may survive. So he went out and opened the barn, but they did not notice it, and continued to fly away from it. He then tried to direct them, but the more he tried the more confused they became. In his despair, he cried, "If I can become a bird only for few minutes, I can save them". Suddenly he changed into a bird. He immediately flew and led them to the barn where they found food and warmth. He was so happy, and at the top of his voice he expressed his joy saying, "They are safe, they are safe". At this moment he woke up, and immediately realized why God became man. He quietly put his coat on, and headed for the church. His daughter only felt a hand clutching hers. She looked up and saw that it was her father. She raised her eyes full of tears to the crucifix, and whispered, "Thank you Lord, thank you very much." The man in the story certainly underwent a big change, and for the first time in his life he felt the true joy of celebrating Christmas. He rejoiced with the rest of the world in remembering the most memorable moment in the history of the world; the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He sang with a lot of emotion, when the congregation and the Heavenly Host sang, "Glory to God in the highest,

peace on earth, and good will toward men". He felt happy with the shepherds when they were told the good news by the angel of the Lord. He understood for the first time what the angel told them, "I bring you good news of great joy, for to you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord" (Lk2:10). He followed with a great deal of interest the story of the three wise men who traveled from their far country in the east to Bethlehem guided by a star. He was happy for them when they found Lord Jesus, and presented Him with their unusual gifts. He listened with enthusiasm when the priest explained the symbolism of those gifts.

The second story about our Lord's incarnation was that of the atheist king and his Christian friend. These two men grew up together, the Christian was the son of the top general in the king's army, and a good friend of the king. So the young prince and the general's young son became close friends. As they were growing up they were both exposed to Christianity. The prince refused it, while his friend accepted it. This was the first time they differ about something important. In the beginning they dismissed that difference as unimportant, but as the years went by, more differences began to appear between them, and they began to have more arguments, than they used to. One of the topics that they argued about often was the incarnation of our Lord. One day while they were arguing, the Christian was trying to explain to his friend that God became man to save mankind from death. The prince who became king, after his father's death, asked his friend, "Why did he come himself, why didn't he send one of his generals". His friend did not want to tell him what the liturgy says in that respect. The liturgy says that " He (God) did not entrust our salvation to an angel, or an archangel, or a prophet, but He Himself was incarnated and took the form of a slave to save us". But he began thinking of a plan which would convince his friend that Jesus of Nazareth is God in the flesh. After some time during which he avoided arguing with the king about Jesus, he perfected a scheme, which he felt could convince him. The scheme involved one of the king's maids, who was selected to take care of his newly born son. The scheme called for the maid to accidentally lose

control of the stroller that carries the young prince, which as a result will plunge in the swimming pool, carrying the prince with it. This had to happen when the king is there to observe the whole thing. The maid was instructed in her role and was told that the young prince will be substituted with a doll, made in his likeness. So on the designated day and hour, while the king and his friend were sitting next to the pool discussing a problem, the maid came out pushing the young prince in his stroller. Suddenly she lost control of the vehicle and it plunged in the pool carrying the fake prince with it. As the king saw that, he did not lose one second, and immediately dove in the pool with his clothes on, only to find that it was not his son, but a doll. While still in the pool, he, with a faint smile on his face looked at his friend, as if he wanted to tell him, that he is now convinced that God had to come himself, and that he could not have given this job to any of his generals, and that he had to do it himself. As he came out of the pool, he hugged his friend saying, " Thank you my friend, for your patience and ingenuity, because without you, I would have never believed that God became a man to save us from our sins"

The incarnation of the son of God was not accepted by many even the chosen people to whom He was incarnated. They just could not believe that Jesus Christ was God incarnate, God in the flesh. This seems strange since the Old Testament gives few examples of God appearing in a human form. The first was Melchizadec who met Abraham after he defeated the five kings who raided Sodom and Gomorrah and took his nephew Lot captive. The Bible tells us that Abraham gave him one tenth of everything. Why did he do that, we do not know. We also know that he blessed Abraham. The only description that was given to him in Genesis was that he was king of Salem, and that he was a priest of the Most High. Then as we read what St. Paul wrote about him in his epistle to the Hebrews (chapter 7) , we find that he is called king of righteousness, king of peace. He is also described as without a father or a mother, and neither has beginning of days , nor end of life. and St. Paul concludes that resembling the son of God, he remains a priest forever. It does not take much imagination to see that he was God in a

human form. Another example was recorded also in Genesis 18, when the bible tells us the story of the three men who visited Abraham before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. One of them was God in a human form, the other two were angels.

The third episode was that of the three young men who refused to worship the golden image that king Nebuchadnezzar made, and were thrown in the fiery furnace (Dan 3). When the king checked on them the next day, he was surprised to see them walking in the furnace alive, and to find with them a fourth man, whom he described saying , "the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods"(Dan3:25)

Again it is not difficult to realize that the person whom the king has seen in the furnace was God in a human form.

It is rather obvious that God did appear many times as a man before his incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, so why did the Jewish nation have that much difficulty believing it, and why are they still denying that important fact. The amazing thing is that they say that God is capable of anything, but somehow when the topic of the incarnation of the son of God is brought up they seem to rob Him of that quality by saying that it didn't happen.

The conditions of His birth:

As we examine the birth of this extraordinary human being who was both man and God, we find many fascinating facts, that have elicited reactions of unbelief and confusion from many people who heard about it. Even the angles, at the time of its happening must have wondered why is this all taking place.

The first of these conditions is the timing of His birth. The Lord God promised His coming as Adam and Eve were ushered out of the garden of Eden, when He said, addressing the serpent, " and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heal (Gen3:15). He did

not tell them when He intends to do that, probably because He knew that Satan will use that information to try to upset His plan, as he did before when he tricked Eve to disobey Him. So He wanted His coming to be a surprise to Satan, and also man, because He knew that man in his new status;that of a sinner, will be easily controlled by Satan. So He could not entrust man with the time of His coming either. The other fact about His coming is that it came after thousands of years. why did the son of God delay His coming until practically every Jew more or less gave up hope that He will ever come. Eve must have expected that the seed of the woman will come soon. This is why when she gave birth to Cain, she said,"I have gotten a man from the Lord"(Gen4:1). She may have discovered her mistake when Cain did what was evil in the eyes of God.

The birth of the Lord was delayed because man had to suffer the consequences of his disobedience to God. He has to experience his utter helplessness against Satan and his demons, so he will appreciate more the salvation when it comes.

Another condition associated with His birth was that His birth was announced by Archangel Gabriel. Not too many people were treated the same way. The birth of only five other people was announced before their birth; Ishmael, Isaac, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. Also He was named by God. Again not too many people were named that way. Only two shared this honor with the Lord;Ishmael, and John the Baptist.

His birth was miraculous. Again very few people share with Him this honor; Isaac, Samson, Samuel, and the virgin Mary, all were born to barren women,who conceived after God opened their womb. But our Lord was the only one who was born of a virgin. This had to happen to fulfill God's promise to Adam and Eve, when He said that "the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head". Only one person in history can be called the "seed of the woman" and that is Jesus because He had a human mother but no human father. His father was God.

Also He was born in a stable, a filthy and smelly place, which He shared with animals, as if humans did not deserve to be associated with Him during His historic birth. That is not why He chose to do that, simply because He came to save man, and He did associate with him countless times during His stay on earth. He did not only associate with righteous men and women, He often associated with sinners. And when He was criticized for doing that He replied that, " Healthy people do not need a physician, it is the sick people who do. I did not come to call righteous people, but sinners to repentance".(Mt9:13) One of the reasons for this humble birth, is His humility. He wanted to show man His humility because the first sin that man committed against God was the sin of arrogance. Adam and Eve wanted to be like God, knowing good from evil. So our Lord who was incarnated for the purpose of saving man from his sins chose humility as the hallmark of His life considering it as an antidote for Adam's arrogance. So it can be said that man's sinfulness began with his own arrogance and his salvation began with God's humility.

Another aspect of His birth is the lack of the appropriate publicity. We may feel that the birth of the King of kings and the Lord of Lords was supposed to be announced to the world on a much larger scale than what actually happened. It did not. All the publicity that accompanied it, was the angels singing their familiar song, " Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will toward men" (Lk2:14), and telling a group of shepherds that, " to you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord"(Lk2:11). This is in line with what we said about His humility. He did not want to enter the world with a big bang, But He preferred to enter it unnoticed. This may have been done also to hide His identity from Satan, who was watching and waiting for Him. This was all the publicity that happened in Judea, where His people lived. Another announcement happened in the east where an unusual star appeared to the Magi, and those wise men somehow knew that this is a sign that a king has been born. The Bible does not tell us how did they know that the newly born king was the king of the jews, nor does it

tell us exactly where these wise men lived. But it tells us that they were three men, and that their faith in their interpretation of the star was so strong that they decided to make the long trip to see the king. Not only that but they also took gifts with them to present to Him. The story of these three visitors was only reported in the gospel according to St. Matthew,

who called them wise. The reason may have been that they were learned people more so than the average person. The other reason is that they sought God, and since it is written that, "The fool said in his heart, there is no God"(Ps 14:1), then those who recognize and seek God are called by contrast "wise". As we think about the reason for their confidence in their interpretation, it may be because they came from Persia, and they may have heard and studied Daniel's prophesy, which he made while in exile in Persia, that pinpointed the time the Messiah was to be crucified. Daniel wrote that,

"Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there will be war; desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for a week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abomination shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."(Dan9:24-28)

The explanation is that from the time of the prophecy, it will be four hundred and ninety years (seventy weeks of years) before the messiah,

who (will put an end to sin) finishes his job . This period was divided in the prophesy into two periods; the first is forty nine years(seven weeks $7 \times 7 = 49$) which is the time it will take to restore the temple and rebuild the wall. The second is four hundred thirty and half years, since the prophecy says that He will make sacrifices to stop in the middle of the week, therefore He will be crucified in the middle of the 62 nd week. ($61.5 \times 7 = 430.5$) which is the period of spiritual decline at the end of which the messiah was crucified (cut off). Taking into account that the year in which that prophesy was made was 446 B.C. one can calculate the year in which the savior will be crucified, by adding $49 + 430.5 = 479.5$, and subtracting 446, which will give us the year 33.5 A.D. The Magi knew all this, and concluded that the messiah will be cut off after about thirty three years, so when they saw the unusual star they were almost sure that it is the birth of the anointed one.

As we reflect on their visit we find interesting symbolism. The Magi were gentiles, but they were the first people who worshipped the infant Jesus, and to show Him their loyalty, while He was just a baby, and before He did or said anything that indicates that He is indeed the Messiah who is to come. This points to the fact that His kingdom will embrace all humans not only the Jewish nation. The fact that they were learned men points to the fact that even the learned people who usually deny the existence of God, will in time come around and worship Him. Then there is the known symbolism behind their gifts; gold for Jesus the King, frankincense for Jesus the priest, and myrrh for Jesus the man who suffered.

This episode was written not only because of its historical importance, but also for us to learn from it few precious lessons

The first is that these people sought God. Not only they sought God, but they sought Him diligently. They left their comfortable homes, their families which may included wives and/or children, and undertook a long and tiring journey, that some say took them two years. All this had one purpose , to find God. Are you seeking God with the same diligence? Or do you abandon your pursuit of Him when you run into a

difficulty, a problem, or a test?

The three wise men persevered in their journey because they had strong faith, that they were going to find the Messiah. How strong is your faith? Have you found God as they did? or have you found one of the false gods that people often find while they are looking for the real one. Another point worthy of our attention is that God helped them. As their faith continued strong, He responded by giving them the help they needed, creating the special star that guided them all the way. And finally when they found Him, they worshiped Him. Are you worshiping God in truth and spirit, as He told the Samaritan woman? or are you worshiping this world or any of the many attractive things of the world?

When we compare the behavior of the gentile Magi and Herod the Jewish king, we find amazing contrasts. We find that the Magi sought God to worship Him, while Herod sought God to destroy Him. The Magi were happy to realize that the will of God to save man was finally happening, while Herod tried to abort it. The Magi rejoiced when they saw the star, while Herod and all Jerusalem with him were troubled when they heard that. How about you, do you rejoice when you hear the good news about God and how he was born because of His love for you, or are you indifferent, and may be unhappy because his light will expose the darkness in you? I hope and pray that every one who is reading this will learn from the Magi to seek God diligently, until he finds Him.

Every Christian celebrates the Lord's birthday every year. Most people celebrate by decorating their homes, eating, drinking, and exchanging gifts. We spend a lot of money on Christmas trees, ornaments, lights, and we even celebrate substituting the Lord by a fictitious character whom we call Santa Clause. These things have no relationship to the birth of our Lord. When one examines all this hoopla, and asks where is Jesus, we will not find Him even though He is the one whose birthday we are supposed to celebrate. When Jesus was about to be born 2000 years ago there was no place for Him in the inn. We seem to be

repeating the history because we too are saying with our celebration that there is no place for Him in our celebration.

If you are celebrating Christmas that way, chances are that you are also telling Him that there is no place for Him in your life. If this is the case you need to put Him back in your life. You have to enlist His help to be able to do that. You need to repent of your sins , asking Him to forgive them, and to become the center of your life, so when the next Christmas comes you will find yourself celebrating the occasion with a renewal of your spiritual commitment, pledging to love Him and to follow Him all the days of your life .