

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

# aim

December 2023 ❖ PAGES 52 ❖ ₹ 20/-

A Journey of Faith

*“For unto you is born this day  
in the city of David a Savior,  
which is Christ the Lord.”  
Luke 2:11*



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# A Journey of Faith

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Vol. 52 / No. 12  
 AIM Annual Subscription for  
 India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-  
 (Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

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## ADVERTISEMENT RATE

Centre Spread (Color) :	Rs. 7000/-
Back Cover (Color) :	Rs. 5000/-
Front Inside (Color) :	Rs. 4000/-
Back Inside Page (Color):	Rs. 4000/-
Ordinary Page (B&W) :	Rs. 2000/-
Half Page (B&W) :	Rs. 1200/-
One third Page (B&W) :	Rs. 900/-
Quarter Page (B&W) :	Rs. 500/-

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## Online payment details

Name : EFI Publication Trust | Bank : State Bank of India | Account No. **54015789597** | IFSC CODE: **SBIN0040415**  
 Branch : Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019

For subscription query call us: 011-26431133; Tele/Fax: 011-26285350, E-mail: [aimatefi@gmail.com](mailto:aimatefi@gmail.com), website: [www.efionline.org](http://www.efionline.org)

THE TREASURER, EFI PUBLICATION TRUST, 805/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019.  
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*Editorial*



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

## **A World in Turmoil: Seeking Hope Amidst Conflict**

In the tumult of our global reality, shadows of conflict stretch across the globe including the war in the Holy Land, the ethnic religious violence in Manipur, and the targeting and persecution of Christians in India particularly in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Yet, amidst these narratives, Christmas signifies hope during chaos.

In the Holy Land, where history echoes with age-old conflicts, the current struggles between Israel and Hamas have turned the sacred region into a modern-day battleground. Innocent civilians are trapped in the crossfire since

the October 7 incursion this year, where heavily armed Hamas terrorists breached Israel's border, leading to retaliatory strikes and a siege on Gaza. Despite international efforts for a ceasefire, ongoing airstrikes, casualties, and displaced populations persist, with the death toll in Gaza surpassing 15,000. The quest for peace, elusive in a land marked by strife, should cause us to pause and reflect.

This Christmas in Bethlehem and the Holy Land will be a time of solemnity, prayer, and fasting, as church leaders have issued calls

for a subdued celebration amidst the ongoing conflict. The focus will be on the spiritual meaning of Christmas, with an emphasis on solidarity, prayers for lasting peace, and support for war victims and the needy. As Christians, let us join in prayers for peace in the Holy Land.

Back home in Manipur, as the ethnic and religious violence continues, the state stands divided on ethnic lines and communities are grappling with the consequence of longstanding discord. The violence that began in May 2023, has claimed over 200 lives, and displaced over 70000 people for no fault of theirs other than their identity. The call for peace in the state resonates not only as a necessity for immediate stability but also as a fundamental right for communities to coexist without fear. The echoes of ethnic and religious tensions demand a nuanced approach and a political and social will—one that acknowledges the grievances of the past while forging a path towards a shared future.

The remembrance of the arrival of the Prince of Peace challenges us to address the root causes of conflict, engage in empathetic conversations, and actively contribute to conflict resolution. Christ, who humbled Himself and took on the frail human flesh and nature, did so only because He wanted us reconciled with the Father and with each other. Can Kuki and Meitei Christians take the first step towards reconciliation following the example of their saviour despite the hurt and pain they have gone through? The hope embedded in Christmas should inspire communities to transcend the barriers of ethnicity and religion.

Turning our eyes to the issue of persecution of Christians in India, we see a distressing reality unfold. Just in the state of Uttar Pradesh, nearly 400 Christians have faced arrest in the past three years under the legislation that is commonly known as the anti-conversion law. Enacted in 2021, this legislation, prohibits changing religion "through force, allurement, fraud, or marriage." The Christian community, a mere

fraction of the state's population, has become the target, with the law wielded as a tool by hardliner majoritarian groups.

Christmas is the time when the attacks against Christians go up exponentially especially in states in North and Central India. How does a community, facing threats, harassment, violence and legal hurdles, find hope in the midst of persecution, and what role does the Christmas narrative play in fostering resilience?

Amidst the narratives of conflicts and pain mentioned above, the Christmas story reminds us of hope in the midst of chaos.

The surprises and challenges of the first Christmas parallel the

struggles of today. Amidst the historical backdrop of Jesus' birth, the Roman-Jewish Wars and ethnic and religious tensions marked the region, especially in Judea and Galilee. The Roman occupation intensified clashes, and internal divisions within Jewish society added complexity. Persecution of the Jewish population under Roman rule accentuated the intricate socio-political landscape.

And yet, Christ came. Despite sin, scandal, racism, sexism, and hopelessness. In the midst of pandemonium, Christ came—a surprise pregnancy, a sudden census, and a long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem resulted in the world's greatest miracle.

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**





# Christmas amid Chaos?

Mr. Hansraj Jain

We are on the cusp of December 2023. Winter has well and truly arrived. The evening and morning temperatures dipped to 14.3 Celsius. Burr...it's cold. That is, subjectively speaking.

While Tokyo and Washington DC would have celebrated the blossoming of cherry blossoms in all their hues over Thanksgiving, our winter blooms in potted plants now display their beauty and riot of colours. We are told that climate change is the reason for the delay in the 'Season'. We should have had these floras fill our hearts with joy in November. There is a paradigm shift.

## ***What paradigm shift is that?***

The answer is, perhaps, staring us in the face. Why are we unable

to see it? I am not a YouTuber. Nor am I fond of those individual news reporters who have moved away from the 'godi-media'\* to use YouTube as their platform to disseminate their views, assessments and perspectives about events shaping India. Nevertheless, we must grow the discipline to hear these Youtuber folks and the 'godi-media'. Listening to them talk about the 'invaders and colonizers' who have brought war to people isn't amusing. A god-free society displays its unbridled humanity. Or is it inhumanity that has dehumanized and demonized us?

*"He who is informed is also warned!"*

However, I am an avid listener to the Word – the Bible - that speaks in that small, still voice. Sadly, though, we are quick to speak and lazy to listen. Worse, we are not very discerning in what we hear, decipher, interpret, apply, and respond. In fact, it is often noticed that our responses are emotionally influenced and supported by our warped mindset. We want to do (and justify) what we want to do. Admittedly, these wield that power that makes us insensitive, biased, cold, indifferent, subjective, and negative. Yes, one wishes that these could make us objective and critically analytical. Alas..!

That said, unfortunately, such behaviour and mindset exist across every single international border, too. As a direct consequence of this mentality and attitude, we are forced to live in a world that is relationally in chaos and irrationally arrogant. All attempts to bring about mutual respect, acceptance, harmony instead of cacophony, forgiveness, and reconciliation instead of hate and violence appear to be a very distant dream. In a metaphor, it is like a mirage in a desert of

hopelessness. As such, it seems to reinforce the notion that we choose to stew in our current state of brokenness and rejection instead of honestly seeking help to be pulled out of the cauldron in which we are being stewed.

Not all is lost. Thank God!

There is good news. A remedy is made available. It is a remedy that fixes the broken and shattered people, communities, nations and even our destroyed environment. It heals and restores. It provides assurance and belonging, all built on the strength of that prayer that prays, "Forgive us as we have been forgiven..."[Luke 11:4]. Its core value and ethos drive it into action. That action has purpose, acceptance, and worth building as its goal. All because it is God-centric. And God loves a repentant people! (Jonah 3:10; 4:10,11).

### **Where and Who provides such a therapeutic treatment?**

Here is the News – the Good News, if you please.

It is back to the Bible. The Bible reintroduces us to meet the eternal Specialist – The one and



only - our Creator, revealed as an infant birthed to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. His name is Immanuel, viz., God with us!

### "GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY" – 2023 AD:

Christmas 2023 returns once more with the message, "**Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people**" [Luke 2:10]

Dr Luke, Physician and author of 'The Gospel According to St Luke', narrates to Governor Theophilus the event that took place at night – at an hour when the night is at its darkest and sleep at its deepest.

The shepherds, as they did each night, having grazed their sheep through the day, had gathered their flock into their pen. The Pen itself offered some protection for the flock from the ravenous wolves. Yet, the experienced shepherds knew that the Pen had to be watched through the night, especially between 1 AM and 4 AM when the wild beasts, by instinct, knew the most venerable hour to prey on their prey – the hour just before dawn. Surprisingly, more than the visits of the wolves, the sudden visit of

"an angel of the Lord" would have shocked the shepherds guarding the Pen. Such an unexpected visit would have certainly sent shock waves down one's spine. Even the bravest among the brave would have trembled.

Alternately, as some suggest, it was all a hallucination at the height of night when we humans are most vulnerable and find it very difficult to be awake. In those moments, we see what we think we see. Hallucinations are intangible. The reality is tangible. Dreams and fantasies are just that, dream, and fantasy - intangible. However, the physician in Luke rejects by negating both views - the notion of hallucinations and dreams.

### How can we make such a claim on behalf of Dr Luke?

Please allow me to quote what Dr Luke wrote to Governor Theophilus. "**When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they**

**made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child." [Luke 2: 15-17]**

A vital element of Luke's narrative is his construct of information. It is a researched and verified narrative for a well-informed, highly intelligent friend who is also a powerful ruler. That throws out all impressions pertaining to arguments for the story being mythological or hallucination. Truth sweeps away all arguments built on presumptuous propositions.

Dr Luke says that after their extraordinary experience, Shepherd's conversation, and physical verification of that which was announced to them, repudiate all arguments to support the theory built for hallucinations and dreams.

Another element in Luke's narrative is that as the day broke and people poured into the streets, the Shepherds told everyone in the village of their amazing, extraordinary discovery and perhaps reminded the people who, for centuries, had been waiting for the long-awaited prophecy to be fulfilled. [Luke 2:17,18].

As for the actual content of the message, it amazes us that the Shepherds should receive communication that said, **"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."** [Luke 2: 10,11].

As the angel leaves after delivering the message, an angelic choir joins him, singing, **"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"** two facts/truths emerge.

#### **Two truths/facts:**

- Were Shepherds' fear solely driven by the sudden appearance of one angel and then being joined by many more?

Such an experience and response would be both - legitimate and logical. There was nothing extraordinary, then, to hear the angel assure them that he and his companions were not sent to hurt them. Rather, they were the privileged few to receive very direct information - the good news. And the good news of the birth of the 'Prince of Peace' and Saviour wasn't to be exclusively

for them (Jews in general) alone but was Global [universal] in scope – "for all people".

- Could it also be that shepherds' fear was more than a situational fear?

We ordinary folks live with a variety of fears. Who doesn't fear tyrannical leaders and rulers? The ruthlessness of the Romans and their government was an established fact and well-known.

The economy was in bad shape, too. Besides high taxes and corrupt officials [Luke 19: 1-10], manipulative religious vendors and the cost of living, took more from them and the people than their due.

The social reality at the time was the existence of bandits and marauding raiders who raided and happily marched away with what wasn't theirs in the first place. [Luke 10:30-36].

So, yes, this was good news in more ways than one – for the shepherds, the city of Bethlehem, Israel as a people and 'all the people', making it global in scope.

2023 Christmas announces this GOODNEWS again!

## **GOODNEWS ACCORDING TO THE MEN OF EAST:**

The 'King of the Jews', to quote the Wise Men, whose star they had seen their own countries, was born to liberate people from sin and its consequences – the eternal consequence of separation from God our Father. [The gifts presented to Baby Jesus speak to us with profound meaning]. Emmanuel was born among us - a reality. For the Jews, the much-expected and awaited-for Messiah was among them. God had heard their social, political, and religious abuse and acted, again, just as He had done when their ancestors were slaves in Egypt. The difference this time was that God Himself had come down among them, birthed as a baby in the lineage of King David. He had not sent another team of Moses and Aaron.

And in that personal coming, John the disciple said, "as many as received Him, He gave the power to become children (sons and daughters) of God". (John 1:12-14).

## **TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS:**

Christmas celebrates Jesus Christ's birthday. Without Christ, there is no Christmas.

**Secondly:** This Christ of Christmas came as Saviour from our sin and its consequences.

**Thirdly:** This Christ of Christmas came announcing peace, reconciliations, and joys-eternal.

Christmas is all about – Immanuel [to quote Isaiah's prophesy – Isaiah 7:14] – God with us.

Christmas has returned, announcing its message once more, saying Jesus Christ is the only hope and healer of shattered dreams. He specializes in mending broken lives and relationships. He offers acceptance for the rejects of the world, living in hopelessness and doubting their worth. In fact, His standing offer is, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavily

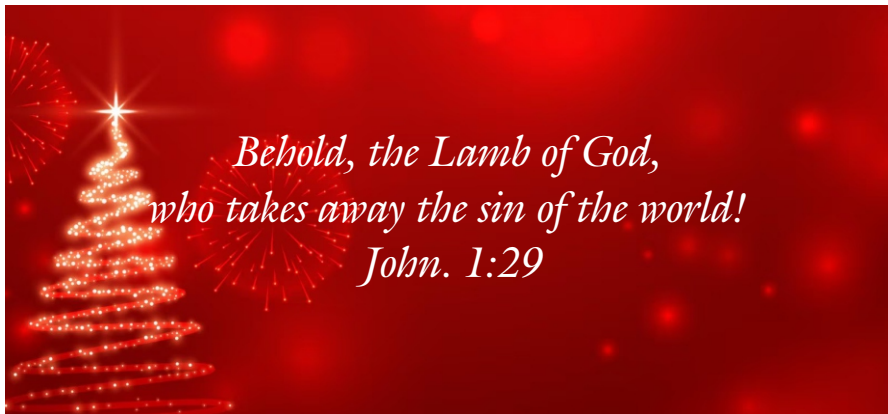
laden, and I will give you rest" [Matthew 11: 28]. He came, He says that we may have life, a life that is abundant for today, tomorrow and eternity ahead. [John 10:10b]

**Guaranteed.**

**May the Blessings of Christ of Christmas be yours this Christmas and the New Year 2024!**



**Mr. Hansraj Jain,**  
*Managing Director, Family, Marriage & Human Relationships, INHERITORS.*





# An Advent Reflection

Dr Shantanu Dutta

Amidst the vibrant festivities and jubilant celebrations of Christmas, there exists a parallel undercurrent of sorrow and lament. While this season is often associated with themes of hope, joy, and togetherness, it also illuminates the stark realities of hardship, loss, and solitude. For many, the cheerful carols and sparkling lights serve as poignant reminders of their losses or unmet needs.

The festive atmosphere can magnify feelings of isolation and despair, particularly for those grappling with the loss of loved ones, enduring financial difficulties, or facing personal struggles. The stark contrast between the idealized Christmas imagery and their lived reality can

become overwhelming, fostering emotions of bitterness, resentment, and sadness.

Recently during one of my daily readings, I stumbled upon a passage that speaks of sorrow and lament, a portion not commonly included in traditional Advent readings. It recounts a time when God lamented—a time when God's people yearned for a king and dethroned Him from His kingship. In the Old Testament, the concept of God as King was central to the Israelite faith. God reigned as the sovereign ruler of Israel, liberating them from slavery in Egypt, guiding them through the wilderness, and establishing them as a nation in the Promised Land. Through prophets and psalmists, God's

reign was proclaimed, emphasizing His power, justice, and love for His people.

However, in 1 Samuel 8, the ageing Samuel is approached by the people, imploring him for a king. Despite Samuel's warnings of the perils foretold by God, the people disregarded his counsel (as mentioned in verse 19). Eventually, God acceded to their demands, yet foreseeing the repercussions. Among the lineage of rulers, starting from Saul, only a few upheld justice. The majority mirrored ravenous wolves, just as the Lord had cautioned.

During Advent, these less-explored verses serve as a poignant reminder that the kings of ancient times and our era share similarities. Jesus, the infant born in Bethlehem, stands as the sole true King, although His full reign is yet to be realized. In history, while we find references to kings and rulers like Vlad the Impaler or Ivan the Terrible, there are also leaders in our contemporary world who have been accused of perpetrating atrocities and acting with cruelty and disregard for human life.

These leaders often ascend to power through undemocratic means, such as coups or military takeovers. Once in power, they might suppress dissent, persecute minority groups, or initiate wars causing widespread suffering. Though few bear the title "Kings," we encounter numerous masked kings under the guise of governments, organizations, or collective entities. Their cruelty manifests through armed conflicts, wars, genocide, and other human rights violations, leading to widespread suffering, displacement, and loss of lives.

While significant strides have been made toward a more just world and human rights advancements, cruelty remains a pervasive issue, affecting individuals, communities, and entire nations. At an individual level, cruelty manifests as physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and discrimination, inflicting immense suffering and lasting scars on the victims. In extreme cases, individual cruelty can result in murder, torture, and other appalling crimes.

Cruelty isn't alien to the Christmas narrative or the

concept of Kingship. When Herod learned of Jesus' birth, proclaimed by the Magi as the Messiah or King of the Jews, he felt threatened by the potential challenge to his power. Driven by jealousy and insecurity, he ordered the massacre of all male infants under two years old in Bethlehem and its vicinity. This horrific event, recounted in the Gospel of Matthew, stands as a stark reminder of Herod's cruelty. Herod felt threatened, much like all unjust kings do, by the kingship of Jesus, whose rule contrasts so markedly.

When Jesus arrived on Earth in Bethlehem, He didn't come as a conquering king with earthly armies and imperial ambitions. Instead, He arrived as a humble servant, born in a manger and raised in obscurity. He lived a life of love, compassion, and teaching, demonstrating God's love for humanity through His words and actions. Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently proclaimed the kingdom of God, a kingdom not of earthly power and dominion, but of spiritual transformation and eternal life. He called people to turn away from the darkness of sin and embrace the light of God's truth,

repenting of their wrongdoings.

The kingship of Jesus isn't about coercion or control; it's about love, mercy, and grace. In the person of Jesus Christ, God's kingship assumes a new dimension. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, embodies divine attributes of power, wisdom, and love, exercising His kingship over all creation. The Advent season urges us to acknowledge Jesus as our King, surrendering ourselves to His rule and aligning our lives with His teachings. As citizens of His kingdom, we're called to love God and love our neighbour, seek justice, promote peace, and care for the marginalized and oppressed."



**Dr Shantanu Dutta**

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# THE HOLY FAMILY

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy



In recent years, in big city stores and shopping malls in India, it is common to see a Santa Claus during the days before Christmas. Mothers and their children crowd the stores, buy gifts, and then line up to have the kids climb into Santa's lap to be photographed with him. For most of them that is all Christmas is about. It is the festival of the jovial, fat man in a red suit who loves children.

Most Christians would be quite upset that that is the general perception of Christmas. They would want to correct that impression by saying it is about the birth of the Son of God as a human being, and when the Son of God grew up, He went about

doing good and teaching some great stuff (like loving enemies) and in the end praying for His tormentors and killers to be forgiven, and in this way offering salvation to all humankind. They would feel that if they could get this message across, they would have got the complete message of Christmas across.

But Christmas is more. It celebrates the birth of God into a human family. No, more than that, it is the celebration of the birth of God into the human family.

## **Incarnation of God**

God took birth as a human and lived as a human for a period of time. That period is called "the Incarnation". Hinduism talks of



avatars, and Greek mythology has stories of incarnations. All those are not the same as the Incarnation. First of all, the avatar type of incarnation happened several times according to mythologies, but biblical history knows of only one Incarnation. God does not have to keep on doing something. Once is enough for His plan to be made effective and His purpose to be achieved.

The second difference is that the avatars were only gods in disguise, but when God became incarnate in the person of Jesus, He did not don a disguise. He did in fact become human. He hungered, thirsted, and was wearied. He hurt, bled, and wept. He cared, comforted, and rejoiced. He had human experiences and felt human emotions. He died. Jesus was not just pretending to be human. He was human. God became human.

The third difference is that all avatars and mythological incarnations are said to have come to destroy evil. When the level of wickedness went beyond a certain point, though no one was given any indication when

that point would be passed, then the gods would be furious and descend in the guise of a human to give one last chance (or was it to prove their guilt and assert that they deserved punishment?) and in the end, destroy the bad ones with one mighty act of annihilation. Jesus, on the other hand, came to save. "God did not send His son to condemn the world, but to save the world" (Jn.3: 17). He was called "Jesus...for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt.1: 21).

### **Family Member**

Being part of a family is an aspect of being human. The young of humans need families, more than other creatures. When our son was an infant, we kept a goat for the milk. After some time, the goat was mated and had two kids. Minutes after their birth, the kids struggled to their wobbly legs to get milk from the mother goat. Human babies, on the other hand, lie on their backs totally helpless for so long. They need to be nurtured and cared for. They need not only food, but also a family or someone who will care for them if they are to survive.

Many however, find family life a trial. It seems it is easier to be a saint in a cave in the mountains or out in the desert. Families are too limiting and too demanding. Some people are in the habit of saying, "I could be a very good Christian, if I didn't have to deal with people...if I didn't have to live with them...if I could just be left alone..."

Jesus, the Son of God, lived the divine life in the midst of life, family, and society. He lived in the thick of things. He did not escape hard situations, nor was He protected from difficulties and trials. He never felt that He did not need His family. He did not cut Himself off from them. Even when He moved on in His ministry and later on, when He was giving up His life on earth, He continued to show that He cared about them.

Historically, the Holy Family consisted of Mary, the mother of Jesus, Joseph, the foster father, and Jesus, the Son. What are the pictures of their family life that we have in the Bible?

### **Mary**

Mary was a picture of gentility and quiet strength. Without that

strength she could not have accepted being pregnant before her marriage (Lk.1:38), nor the role of being mother to God's Son (v.31), nor knowing beforehand that He would be rejected and that she herself would have a sword driven through her heart (2:34-35).

She was a godly woman, and humbly submitted to God (1:38), though it was a costly submission.

She was a very caring woman. This comes through in the story of her going to see Elizabeth as soon as she heard that Elizabeth was expecting a child (vv.39-45). When Jesus was "lost" at the age of 12, we get a glimpse of her caring for Him (2:48). Then as He hung on the cross, we see the caring mother standing at the foot of the cross (Jn.20:25).

Like all mothers, we also see her having great expectations of her son, when she approached Him with the problem of the wine running out at the wedding in Cana (2:3).

### **Joseph**

Joseph, the foster father, is the

forgotten character of Christmas pageants. He stands almost like a prop behind Mary with nothing to say. Men are so unnecessary at the time of birth. This must have been more so in their case because that was a virgin birth.

The Bible does not tell us a lot about Joseph. It tells us that he was not a cruel man, because he tried to save Mary from being stoned as an adulteress when he found out that she was pregnant before marriage (Matt.1:19). It also explicitly tells us that he was a man who was in touch with God, because he received God's revelations concerning his situation (v.20; 2:13, 19-20), and he was always obediently responsive to those communications of God (1:24; 2:14,21).

But there are other aspects of the man's character that are implicit in the story, and they are even more significant. First of all, Joseph adopted Jesus as his own son, and he loved him so much that no one suspected that Jesus was not Joseph's son (Lk.3:23; 4:22). The Christmas story is the greatest adoption story of all time. Jesus would

have been an unwanted child, but for Joseph's love. Joseph sets an example in foster love and care.

The story of how they were friendless in Bethlehem with no place to stay (2:7) gives us another glimpse of the man. He was the only one there to attend Mary as she gave birth to Jesus. He stayed by her and cared for her. He was Mary's midwife. When the shepherds came to see the baby, they found Him wrapped in clean strips of cloth (v.12). Joseph was obviously a man who was not ashamed to do a woman's work. He also treated his wife with care and dignity.

Jesus was known to be a carpenter (Mk.6:3). Quite obviously, Joseph was the one to teach Jesus his trade. Knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, and had a special mission on earth, Joseph still took the trouble to teach carpentry to Jesus! Why did Joseph waste his time and effort doing that? He did that because children need parental training until they can discover themselves and make choices. So, Joseph taught carpentry until Jesus discovered what God wanted Him to do.

## Jesus

The third member of the Holy Family was the eldest son of the family. From a young age He did have an awareness of who He was. He knew He was God's Son (Lk.2:49). Though He knew that to be the fact, Jesus was obedient to His parents (v.51). He was "subject" to them, to use the word the King James Version uses. That suggests subordination and humility.

Subordination does not come easily to humans. How difficult it must have been for God's own Son to be subordinate to mere humans. Jesus was subject. He learned. This had to be an aspect of His life in the Incarnation because He became truly human. Yet, Jesus did it and left us an example. The only time the word "example" is found on the lips of Jesus (Jn.13:15) was when He subordinated Himself in the role of servant to His own disciples (vv.4-5). Jesus was clearly and definitely our example in living in subordination.

The sacred historian tells us the secret of Christ's strength in subordination. He loved His disciples very much and was

willing to go to any length in His love for them (v.1). He was self-assured. He knew who He was and no matter how much humiliation He experienced, He knew that nothing could change that (vv.3-4). It is only when one is insecure about oneself that there is a need to arrogate the privileges of office or be abusive toward others.

## Being a Holy Family

Today, we call the earthly family of Jesus "the Holy Family." But Jesus Himself never regarded physical relationship to Him made anyone holy.

When a woman said, "The woman who gave birth to you and breastfed you is blessed", Christ's response was, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it" (Lk.11:27-28).

Another time, when Jesus was speaking to a crowd, someone told Him that His mother and brothers wanted to speak to Him. Those around Him must have thought it strange when He asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Those who heard Him did not venture a reply.

Then, Jesus pointed toward His disciples and said, "See my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does my Father's will is my brother, my sister, my mother" (Matt.12:46-50).

When He taught His disciples to pray, Jesus taught them to say, "Our Father..." (Lk.11:2). The fatherhood of God was a precious lesson that Jesus taught His disciples. He also explicitly taught the Twelve that they could all be only brothers (Matt.23:8). There would be none great or small. Only Jesus is Lord. To describe God as Father and all of us as brothers and sisters is to define us His family.

The historical Holy Family was more an ordinary family, than a holy family. They had no halo around their heads as depicted in Christmas cards and calendar art. The Bible indicates that after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had a normal sex life (Matt.1: 25) and had other children (13:55). They did things ordinary families do. They were an ordinary working-class family. The birth of Jesus in their family did not turn them into a holy family.

On the other hand, according to Jesus Himself, if anyone does God's will, they are His holy family. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus do not make up the Holy Family. If you let Jesus be a part of your family, yours could be the Holy Family of your own situation or neighbourhood.

In today's world, where families are battered out of shape by divorce dividing husband from wife, where old parents are left alone to lead lonely lives, and brothers and sisters, who grew up together, forget to be brothers and sisters over pieces of property, how Christian families need to be the Holy Family that shows that Jesus can make a difference in life today.



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# "FROM HEAVEN HE CAME ... He ENTERED OUR WORLD"

"From Heaven, You came helpless babe  
Entered our world, your glory veiled  
Not to be served but to serve  
And give Your life that we might live" Graham Kendrick

Mr. Chacko Thomas

## WHERE DID JESUS COME FROM?

Dr P. D. Bramsen in his book "One God one message" points out how Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would take on a body of flesh and blood without originating from Adam's sin-infected bloodline. He would be untainted by sin.

'... from a purely biological standpoint, today we know that the gender of a child is determined by its father's "seed" (sperm), and not by its mother's "seed" (egg). We also know that from conception, a baby in the womb has a circulatory system distinct from its mother's. Medical science tells us: "the placenta forms a unique barrier that keeps the mother's blood separate while allowing food and oxygen

pass through to the embryo." Even before God created the first human, He had planned every detail of the Messiah's coming to earth.'

Thus, Jesus possesses a sinless nature., perfect in character, as the Gospels describe him. There is none like him. Hebrews 7:26 says about Jesus that, He is "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heaven".

The Apostle Paul compared Adam with Jesus, "It is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ... The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven.'" (1 Corinthians 15:45-47).

Yes, He is Lord from heaven. He is the Son of the Most High, the Son of God. See Luke 1:26-37. "... Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. ... For with God nothing will be impossible.'"

Adam led the entire human population into Satan's dark kingdom of defilement and death, so the second man, Jesus would lead many out of Satan's Kingdom and into God's glorious Kingdom of righteousness and light. This process was set in motion the same day when Satan contaminated the human race. (Genesis 3:15.)

#### WHY DID JESUS COME?

The Apostle John would have us know why Jesus came. Here are two of several reasons John gives us. "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. ... The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the

devil's work." 1 John 3:5-8.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the hope for all humanity, enslaved in sin and in bondage to the Devil, the Evil one. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. How thankful I am for this great provision of God; His provision to make us sinless. First judicially and then in full reality.

When Peter Maiden, Former international Director of OM, came near the end of his earthly sojourn, he wrote in his last letter to OMers about the hope of "no more sinning". Those of us who have to run hourly to the cleansing fountain, can appreciate the privilege of a life in heaven free from the presence of sin.

What a blessed relief it would have been to the thief on that cross to hear the words from the Lord's mouth, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." He is another "blessed man whose transgressions had been forgiven and his sins covered". (Luke 23:43, Psalm 32:1-2). Zacchaeus was a man lost in sin with no way out. Jesus made a special visit to him, and there in his house, Jesus declared "Today, salvation has come into this house, ..." By the way, the

name "Jesus" means "Salvation". Wherever Jesus enters, there enters, Salvation. Yes, Salvation has come to one man on a cross, one house of a sinful tax collector, one nation of Israel, God's lost sheep and now to the entire the world, of rebellious sinners.

Bishop Alfy Franks, wrote in an unpublished article about a Christian man he knew. The man's wife was from a well-off home but was an angry woman. One day, she got very angry with a servant girl and picked up a grinding stone and threw it at her servant, which killed her. When the police came to arrest her, the husband came to the door and gave himself in, confessing he had done it.

When the police said that it was reported that the wife had done it, he lied and said "Sir, look at her, she would not even hurt an ant". So, the man went on to suffer the consequences of his wife's crime.

Well, Jesus did not lie. Matthew tells us that He revealed that we are evil, "If you, then, though you are evil, ..." Matthew 7:11. But, he was prepared to die in our place even before the foundation of the world, even before Adam was created. Revelation 13:8.

The Bible says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45.

#### HE CAME TO CRUSH THE HEAD OF THE DEVIL.

We are familiar with the Gospel story of the evil spirits crying out to Jesus saying, "Have you come to torment us before time". He cast out many demons by "the finger of God", thus signalling that the Kingdom of God has come among us, in that its King was standing right there.

The Author of the Book of Hebrews says, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death-that is, the devil". Hebrews 2:14

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." Colossians 2:15

"Greater is He who is in us than he that is in the world." 1 John 4:4.

The Scripture gives us much to rejoice over the birth of the Lord Jesus who came from heaven, the Son of God, the Son of Man,



the God-Man, to pull us up from under of the power of sin and Satan, to seat us with Himself in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1). Allow me to close with one of my favourite Christmas Carols. Please take time to absorb its theology.

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new born King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!

Christ, by highest heaven  
adored;  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail the incarnate Deity,  
pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that man no more may die,  
born to raise the sons of earth,  
born to give us second birth.  
Come, Desire of nations, come,  
fix in us thy humble home;

rise, the woman's conquering  
Seed,  
bruise in us the serpent's head.  
Adam's likeness, Lord, efface;  
stamp thine image in its place.  
Second Adam from above,  
Reinstate us in thy love.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new born King!"

Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,  
Stamp Thine image in its place:  
Second Adam from above,  
Reinstate us in Thy love.  
Let us Thee, though lost, regain,  
Thee, the Life, the inner man:  
O, to all Thyself impart,  
Formed in each believing heart.

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!"



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## Christmas Goodnews Starting With The Magic Moments and Heart Breaks of the 2023 ODI World Cup

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

In this Christmas Season, we can copy Jesus and Paul who wrapped key Gospel elements around contemporary events and quotes from non-Biblical authors (see Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:28). I want to show how this can be done with some magic moments/heart-breaking moments still in our memories from the 2023 ODI World Cup which India lost in the Final.

### **THAT PLANNING MEETING**

There was an undated planning meeting which Captain Rohit Sharma and Head Coach Rahul Dravid called. All the members of the India teams were present in that meeting. In that meeting, a volunteer was sought to

accelerate the team score by taking risks at the start of the innings. Usually, juniors are given this role. But, the Captain Rohit Sharma himself raised his hand as others looked a little stunned. "I will take care of this," he said. And take care of it, he certainly did. On an average he ensured India raced to 80 runs in the first 10 overs in the 2023 World Cup. He played aggressively as an opener hitting 31 sixes during the Cup – a record.

A planning meeting took place in eternity past. In that meeting, Jesus raised his hand when volunteers were sought to take a body to go into the earth to become the perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:5). When the first

Christmas happened, Jesus voluntarily entered virgin Mary's womb without the help of a man, thanks to the 'impossible made possible' work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34-37). He took on a sinless body which grew first inside Mary's womb and later outside it (Luke 2:52). He offered himself as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the World on the Cross (I Peter 2:24). "He himself bore our sins in His body," Peter writes (I Peter 2:24). Jesus did not delegate this difficult job to someone else just as Rohit Sharma did not delegate the tough job of accelerating the score at the top of the Indian innings in the ODI World Cup 2023 to someone else junior to him in the team.

## **THAT MATCH-TURNING CATCH**

Australia's Travis Head ran backwards in desperation and brilliantly caught Rohit Sharma's miscued rocket in the Cup Final 2023. The 90,000 plus strong partisan crowd who watched this inside the stadium in Ahmedabad were stunned into silence. If only, Rohit continued to bat for a few more overs, or till the end, India

probably would have gotten to a score very similar to their match-winning semifinal score of 397 versus New Zealand. Rohit was looking that ominous when he got out have scored 10 runs in his previous two balls. Travis Head's catch was a match-turning catch. It changed the history of the India-Australia ODI Final 2023.

This match-turning catch leads me to talk about the ultimate history-changing and life-changing event of our planet – the Cross of Jesus. Couple of events which happened to Jesus during the first Christmas pointed ahead to this history-changing event. One of the gifts the wisemen gave Jesus was Myrrh (Matthew 2:11). Myrrh those days was used to preserve dead-bodies. A dead-body preservative as a gift to a new-born? How inappropriate! Perhaps the wisemen knew from their study of Old Testament Scriptures that baby Jesus was born to die (Isaiah 53 passage?)! Born to die for the sins of the planet! When Simeon blessed Mary after she delivered Jesus, he said, "a sword will pierce your very soul" (Luke 2:35). This is an obvious reference to the history-turning event of the Cross of

Christ which Mary would watch live and have a proverbial sword pierce through her being.

## **THAT SLOW MID-OVERS MARCH**

After India lost the marauding Rohit Sharma and in-form Shreyas Iyer who had just arrived at the crease, they went into the damage-control mode in the 2023 Cup Final. The batsmen in the middle, Virat Kohli and K.L. Rahul played without taking any risks. The result was this: the boundaries dried up. K. L. Rahul was the worst culprit here scoring a mere 60 plus off more than a 100 balls. India hoped Surya Kumar Yadav would accelerate them to a total of 300 at least as he was still around towards the end of the innings even as wickets fell regularly. But, that was not to be. This slow march from overs 11 to 50 cost India dear. This robbed them of the opportunity to post a championship-winning score.

But, the Shepherds of the original Christmas story were unlike the flopped slow-coach Indian middle order of the ODI Cup Final. "And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger" – the Bible records in Luke 2:16. They challenge us

today to run to Jesus in repentance and faith to receive our free gift of salvation. If we drag our feet in order to do this, it can become perilous, more perilous than the loss of a ODI World Cup! The Holy Spirit who speaks to us now asking us to repent and come to Christ, will not keep speaking to us forever (Gen. 6:3). After we die – and death can come to any of us at any second – we cannot come to Jesus in repentance (Hebrews 9:27). After Jesus returns – he can return to the planet like a thief in the night at any second – it would be too late to come to him as He is Saviour today and Judge tomorrow (2 Peter 3:10; Hebrews 9:28). So, let us surrender our lives to Jesus, the Christmas Baby turned Perfect Sacrifice without any further delay!

## **THAT UNRAISED FINGER**

India dismissed three of the Australian batsmen including centurion in the ODI Cup Final 2015, Steve Smith, Australia's score was not even 50. India's hopes of an unlikely win in the Cup Final 2023 soared. However, Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne had other ideas. They put on a partnership. That's when Captain Rohit Sharma threw the ball to the "boot-lace

**bomber" Jasprit Bumrah. In the 28th over with Australia still needing about 80+ runs to win, Bumrah's yorker struck Labuschagne on the legs and screamed for leg-before. The umpire did not raise his finger. Rohit Sharma sought to review the umpire's decision through video replay. The ball was going to hit the stumps, the review showed. If only the Umpire had raised his finger Labuschagne would have been out. India could have come back into the Final – thanks to that breakthrough! Harsha Bhogle who was on the air said this in-effect about this moment: India's fate in the Final were sealed by millimeters, thanks to this "Umpire's Call not out" decision!**

The Ultimate Umpire of the planet is God. He is called "the Judge of all the earth" (Genesis 18:25). It is his "call" that all should be saved, including everyone reading this piece (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). That is why Jesus came to this earth to open the door of Salvation that anyone who repents and trusts him would walk into that door. That umpire's call of the 28th over in the India-Australia final sealed India's fate in the Cup Final. But the Divine

Umpire's call open an invitation for us so that we can be saved and seal our fate for eternity! How are we responding?

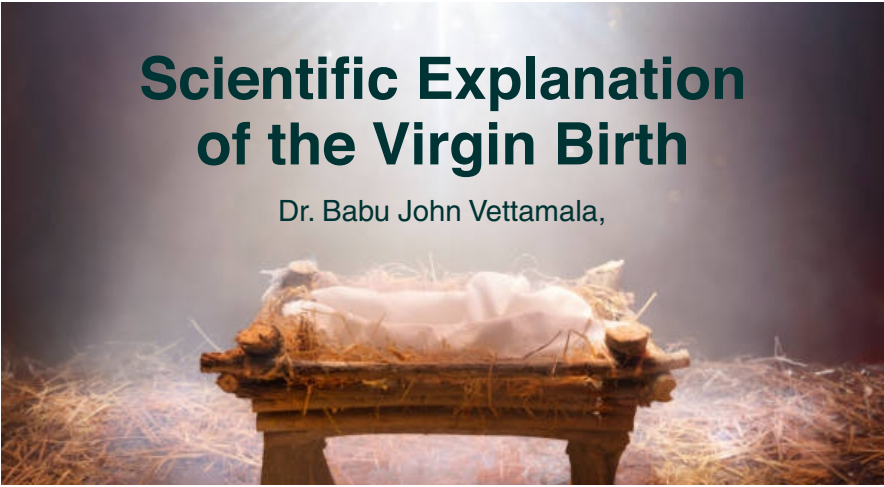
(Dr. Duke Jeyaraj is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission. As an itinerant he has covered 20 Indian States and 7 countries preaching the Word. He is the author of three books, one of which is Straight Talk, a book on sex, love, marriage, porn, phone addiction and more. WhatsApp him on 918886040605 to know more).



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# Scientific Explanation of the Virgin Birth

Dr. Babu John Vettamala,



One of the ridiculous accusations that the pseudo-scientific sceptical world raises against the legitimacy of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is the concept of virgin birth.

A truth far from being comprehensible to an ignoble mind, the virgin birth of Jesus has been acclaimed by the majority world, though their motives differ.

To the Christian world the virgin birth is one of the hallmarks of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as Christianity. However, it goes without say that if Christians are incapable of giving a scientific explanation to virgin birth, the Jesus history will remain as an effigy exposed to all types of mockeries.

As the world is now lost to itself in

the spree of celebrating Christmas it would be worthwhile if we look at the truth of the virgin birth.

According to the Christian concept of the Virgin Birth, Mary the mother of Jesus had never had a physical relation with a man so as to get pregnant. How then is it humanly or scientifically possible that she could become pregnant. Had she ever had a clandestine relation?

Let us see what science itself says about it?

There is a biological terminology called Parthenogenesis (PG), which says that it is possible for a virgin to become pregnant. Look what it says:

*"Parthenogenesis (PG) is an*

*asexual reproduction in which a female can produce an embryo without fertilizing an egg with sperm. In Greek, it means the virgin creation.*

*It occurs naturally in some jawed vertebrates such as the whiptail lizard, but in mammals, it is an unnatural event.*

*However, PG may not be a rare event in humans as we thought, but it may occur spontaneously resulting in the formation of teratoma in the ovary.*

*The secondary oocyte (SO), which is ovulated at each ovarian cycle, usually stops in metaphase II until it is fertilized by the sperm.*

*Once the sperm enters the oocyte, the egg completes meiosis II to form the ovum, whose nucleus fuses with the sperm nucleus to form the zygote.*

*This process is called sexual reproduction. However, under idiopathic abnormal circumstances, a spontaneous exit of the oocyte from metaphase-II could occur without apparent stimulation. This is known as oocyte spontaneous activation.*

*Such spontaneous parthenogenetic activation may occur in human oocytes but mostly leads to tumour formation, including ovarian teratoma.*

*Some authors postulate that PG occurs in humans through the formation of OTs.*

*However, they did not explain how this could happen. Although reproduction in most mammals occurs through mating between male and female, it has been hypothesized that presence of rare cases of PG in humans that result in normal and viable individuals go unnoticed due to the absence of congenital anomalies.*

*Parthenogenetic activation by artificial manipulation has been conducted in mice with the creation of an early stage of foetal development.*

*However, other authors stated that the creation and birth of the animal through oocyte parthenogenic activation using genetic modification technologies is possible."*

*Well then, what is the miracle in the virgin birth of Jesus if it is just the result of a scientific process?*

*Yes, there is one. Every baby*

born of the process of parthenogenesis is a female baby as there is no male element in the foetus. But Jesus was a male baby. Is there any evidence for that, one might ask.

There is record from the local synagogue of which Jesus was a member that He was circumcised on the 8th day, and then subsequently dedicated in the temple of Jerusalem when He was forty days old, and finally He had His bar mitzva at twelve.

Bar Mitzva was a very auspicious ceremony every Jewish boy of 12 had to attend in the Temple of Jerusalem during the Passover, in which he would be promoted from his childhood to the status of an adult. Jesus attended it, and that was when He was missed in the Temple.

All these are documental evidence seen in the Scriptures. And they are rather pertaining to all other Jewish boys of the time. What then is unique in Jesus is a question that remains yet to be addressed in every Christmas. For it, we had better go back to the Prophet Isaiah some six hundred years before the birth of Jesus.

In ch 9. V.6, the prophet gives us a different caricature of the person

the Lord Jesus Christ:

Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. The government shall be upon His shoulders: His specialities are as follows:

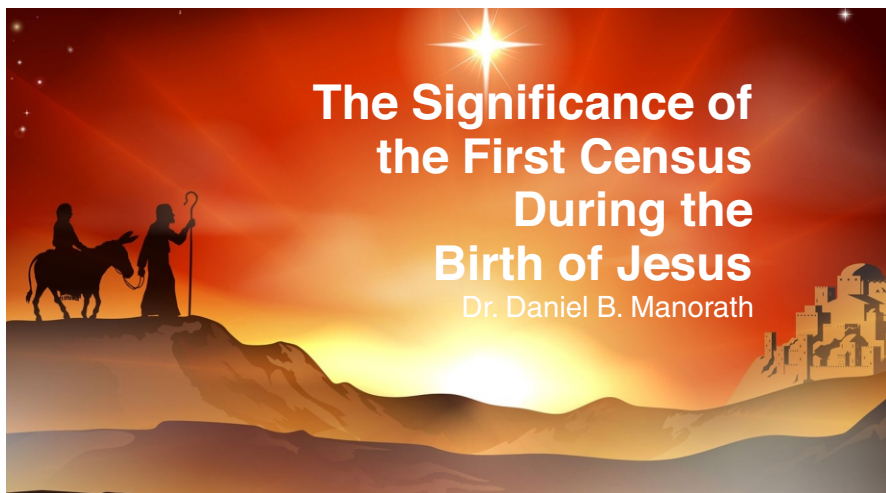
He shall be called- Pele- Yo-wes (wonderful Counsellor), El- Gibbor (Mighty God), Abi-Ad (Everlasting Father) and Sa ar Sha-lo.wm (Prince of peace).

This is the Jesus that God gave us- this is the Jesus we have to give the world.



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# The Significance of the First Census During the Birth of Jesus

Dr. Daniel B. Manorath

## Introduction

The story of the birth of Jesus Christ is one of the most well-known and revered narratives in the history of Christianity. It is a story that has been celebrated and retold for over two millennia. While the central theme of this story is the miraculous birth of the Savior, a seemingly mundane event also played a pivotal role in the narrative – the first census ordered by Caesar Augustus. This census, recorded in the Bible, has immense historical and symbolic significance, shedding light on the cultural, political, and religious context of the time. In this article, we will explore the importance of the first census during Christ's birth and

how it shapes our understanding of the Nativity story.

## Historical Background

To comprehend the importance of the first census during the birth of Christ, it is essential to consider the historical backdrop. The Roman Empire, at the time of Christ's birth, was a vast and powerful entity that stretched across three continents. Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavian, was the first Roman Emperor. He ruled from 27 BC until his death in AD 14 and was instrumental in shaping the Roman Empire into a stable and prosperous state.

In 27 BC, after years of civil war

and political turmoil, Augustus established the Pax Romana, a period of relative peace and stability that lasted for about two centuries. One of Augustus's major accomplishments was the reorganization of the Roman Republic into an autocracy, effectively making him the first emperor. His rule was marked by administrative reforms, a standing army, and various public works projects, which brought about significant changes in the Roman world.

### **The Census Decree**

It was within this historical context that Augustus issued the famous decree for a census, as described in the Gospel of Luke. The decree called for a registration of all the Roman subjects for taxation purposes:

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world." (Luke 2:1, NIV)

This census had a profound impact on the life of Joseph, the husband of Mary, as they were both required to return to their

ancestral hometown for registration. According to the same gospel, Joseph, a descendant of King David, had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem due to this decree:

"And everyone went to their own town to register. So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David because he belonged to the house and line of David." (Luke 2:3-4, NIV)

This forced journey to Bethlehem is a pivotal element of the Nativity story, as it ultimately led to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would come from the House of David.

### **Theological Significance**

Theologically, the first census during the birth of Christ is immensely significant for several reasons. First and foremost, it demonstrates the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the birthplace of the Messiah. In the Old Testament, the prophet Micah foretold the

birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2, NIV)

By ordering this census, God used the Roman Emperor's decree to ensure that Jesus, as the prophesied Messiah, was born in Bethlehem, connecting the Old and New Testaments in a profound and miraculous way.

Furthermore, the first census underscores the humble and modest circumstances of Jesus' birth. It reminds us that the Savior of the world was born not in a palace, but in a stable, surrounded by animals. This contrasts sharply with the majesty and power of the Roman Empire, emphasizing the Christian message of humility and the accessibility of salvation to all, regardless of social or economic status.

The census also serves as a symbol of obedience and divine

providence. Joseph and Mary obediently followed the decree, despite the inconvenience and hardship it presented. Their obedience to the earthly authorities reflects their trust in God's divine plan and their willingness to fulfill their roles in the unfolding of the redemptive story.

### **Political Implications**

The first census during the birth of Christ carries significant political implications. Augustus's decree for a census, designed for tax collection and administrative purposes, was not merely a bureaucratic exercise. It was a demonstration of the power and reach of the Roman Empire. It established the Roman state's authority to count and tax all of its subjects, reinforcing the idea of Roman citizenship and governance.

The census was a practical means of maintaining control over the vast empire. It allowed the Romans to identify their subjects, monitor population trends, and allocate resources accordingly. In this way, it was

both a tool of administration and an instrument of power projection.

The requirement for Joseph and Mary to return to Bethlehem, their ancestral home, reflects an essential aspect of Roman rule: the enumeration and control of the population based on familial or ancestral ties. People were registered not by their current place of residence but by their family's origin. This aspect of the census underscores the connection between the individual and the community, with the family as a fundamental unit of Roman society.

In the broader historical context, the census also exemplified the Roman policy of 'Pax Romana.' It aimed at maintaining peace and stability throughout the empire, ensuring that resources and wealth flowed efficiently to the center of power, Rome. The idea was that a well-organized and documented citizenry would be less likely to rebel, and it would facilitate the collection of taxes, which were crucial for financing the empire's military and public works.

The census's role in the Nativity story illustrates the interplay between human political decisions and divine providence. Augustus's decree, from a human perspective, was a tool of state power. However, it was also a means by which God's plan was fulfilled, ensuring that the Messiah's birthplace aligned with the prophecies.

### **Social Implications**

The first census during the birth of Christ also has social implications, highlighting the impact of government policies on individual lives. For Joseph and Mary, the census meant a long and arduous journey, away from their familiar surroundings. It was a test of their endurance and faith, as they faced uncertainty and hardship on the road.

The requirement for people to return to their ancestral hometowns for the census had a particular impact on those who had moved away from their ancestral lands, as Joseph and Mary had done when they moved to Nazareth. The journey would have been especially challenging

for Mary, who was heavily pregnant at the time.

This aspect of the census narrative draws attention to the human dimension of such governmental decisions. It underscores the way in which political and administrative policies can have significant and sometimes challenging effects on the lives of ordinary people.

### **Religious Practices and Rituals**

The first census during the birth of Christ also provides insights into the religious practices and rituals of the time. The requirement for individuals to return to their ancestral towns for registration suggests that there was a strong connection between one's family lineage and religious identity. This was particularly relevant in Jewish society, where lineage and ancestry were deeply significant.

Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem aligns with Jewish religious practices, which often involved returning to ancestral towns or centers of worship for

significant events. This connection between lineage and faith is a recurring theme in the Bible, and the census narrative highlights this aspect within the context of the Nativity story.

Additionally, the census may have disrupted traditional religious routines for those like Joseph and Mary, who were required to travel during this time. The journey to Bethlehem would have taken them away from their local synagogue and community, potentially affecting their ability to engage in regular religious activities.

### **Conclusion**

The first census during the birth of Christ is a crucial element of the Nativity story, offering historical, theological, political, and social insights. It serves as a powerful reminder of the intricate interplay between human actions and divine providence, illustrating how even seemingly mundane events, such as a government census, can play a fundamental role in fulfilling prophecies and shaping religious narratives. The importance of this

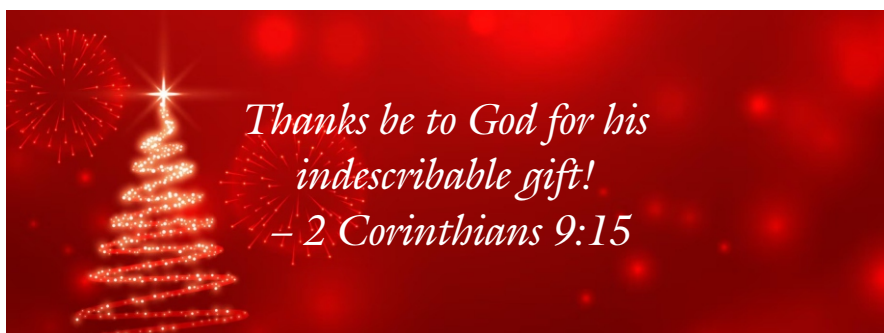
census extends beyond the administrative and political realms, impacting the core beliefs and practices of Christianity, providing a deeper understanding of the Nativity story, and highlighting the ways in which divine purpose unfolds through human events. The first census during Christ's birth is spiritual tapestry woven with divine intentionality. It symbolizes the significance of humility and the universal message of salvation. This event reaffirms the theological understanding of God's sovereignty and perfect timing. As Christians reflect on the census and the subsequent birth of Jesus, they are reminded of the profound spiritual truths embedded within this seemingly ordinary event, strengthening their faith and guiding their journey of spiritual growth and devotion.

### **Introduction of Writer:**

Dr. Daniel B. Manorath is the editor of widely circulated Hindi magazine 'Christian Witness'. He is also head of Publications at Central India Christian Mission, Damoh. He holds PhD's in Education and religious studies and Masters in Journalism. He has written several articles on Spiritual growth, Christian parenting, marriage and youth.



**Dr. Daniel B. Manorath**





# The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ

Rev. Dr. David Mende

## Introduction

There is something absolutely vital in relationships, advertising, and politics. What is it? It's communication. Communication is important for any relationship to thrive or to even survive. Advertisers are effective communicators and they spend lakhs and even crores of rupees to advertise their products. Good politicians and leaders (like Obama, Modi, etc.) are also good communicators and they strike a chord with the masses. A communication gap can lead to strained relationships, ineffective advertising, and incompetent political leadership. Communication is extremely important. In Hebrews 1:1-3, the writer says that through Christ, the communication gap between a holy God and sinful humans is closed. I've entitled this article

"The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ."

In Hebrews 1:1-3, we see that in these last days, God spoke to us through his Son who is supreme over all things. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is unknown. It could probably be Apollos, Silas, or Barnabas. The author wrote to the Jewish Christians who were in the Diaspora in about 68 AD. These Jewish Christians were tempted to go back to Judaism as they faced severe persecution. Some of them doubted Christ's deity and his equality with the Father. They thought that it was not worth suffering so much for Christ. So, the author writes to them and explains to them that Jesus is better than the Old Covenant and encourages them to hold on to Jesus and not to turn back to

Judaism under pressure. Let me take you through this passage and show the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ.

### **1. In the Past, God Spoke to the Jews by the Prophets (Heb. 1:1).**

Let me briefly talk about how God spoke in the past (v. 1) before I dwell on how God has spoken to us in these last days (vv. 2-3).

#### **a. He spoke at many times.**

God spoke to the Jews many times, during different periods of human history. He revealed himself progressively, little by little, because everything could not be understood by us at once.

#### **b. He spoke in many ways.**

God spoke to the prophets in many ways. He spoke through parables, dreams, visions, miracles, historical narratives, prophecies, dramatic presentations, psalms, proverbs, etc. God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai as there were thunder and lightning and God's voice was like the voice of thunder. He spoke to Elijah in a small, still voice. He spoke to Ezekiel through visions. He spoke to Daniel through dreams. So, God revealed himself to the Jews at many times in many ways.

### **2. In These Last Days, God Has Spoken to Us by His Son (Heb. 1:2-3).**

The end times that were prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1) were initiated by Christ's coming. The author portrays Christ as the ultimate and final Word of God. Since Christ is the ultimate revelation of God's Word, he is superior to the prophets and the partial revelation found in the Old Testament. Jesus alone can perfectly reveal the Father as he is his Son, who shares the divine nature. Jesus didn't just bring a message from the Father; rather, he is the message from the Father. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament types and shadows. Without Christ, the Old Testament is partial and incomplete. However, we cannot discard the Old Testament. The Old Testament is very precious to us because it is God's Word. In Christ, God spoke finally and perfectly. There is no more revelation needed as God has decisively spoken to us through his Son, Jesus.

After telling his readers that God has spoken decisively through his Son, the author describes the supremacy of Christ by giving



seven *descriptions* of Christ:

**a. The Son is appointed the heir of all things (His Possession; v. 2).**

The Father appointed Jesus as "the heir of all things." Probably this is an allusion to Psalm 2:8. Jesus will inherit the whole universe. Apostle Paul says that Christ is the firstborn over all creation (Col. 1:15). The glorious thing is that we the disciples of Christ are joint-heirs with him! This is what Apostle Paul writes, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and *fellow heirs* with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:16-17). Again, citing from Isaiah 64:4, Paul writes: But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). You and I are spiritually rich! Hallelujah! What we give up for Christ is nothing compared to what we gain in Christ! That's why John Trapp, a 17th-century commentator wrote, "Be married to this heir and have all."

**b. The world is created through the Son (His Creatorship; v. 2).**

The Greek word for "world" is *aiōnas* (meaning, ages). Christ created the universe of space and time. After talking about Christ's future destiny, the writer to the Hebrews reminds Christ's role at the beginning of creation. God created everything through the Son (Jn 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16). Since everything is created through Christ, he is the rightful heir of all things.

The human body has approximately 37 trillion (37 lakh crore) cells! The diameter of the earth is 12,756 km. But the diameter of the Sun is 1.392 million (about 14 lakh) km. The Sun is so huge compared to this earth that you could fit 1.3 million (13 lakh) piles of earth to fill up the Sun. Jesus created this entire universe! But the Maker was laid in the manger!

**c. The Son is the radiance of the glory of God (His Radiance; v. 3).**

The Greek word for "radiance" is *apaugasma*. This word is used in Wisdom of Solomon 7:26, where wisdom reflects God's light. Further, this wisdom is like a mirror that reveals God's image. Ezekiel (1:28; 3:23) portrayed the glory of God, but Christ reflected it. In fact, Christ doesn't simply

reflect God's glory, but he is God's glory. Just as the brilliance of the sun cannot be separated from the sun itself, the Son's radiance cannot be separated from the deity, for he himself is God. The glory of God refers to the visible and outward manifestation of his presence. For instance, the Lord's glory was seen on Mount Sinai when he gave the Law to the Israelites. This same glory is now seen in Jesus Christ! That's why Jesus says, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9).

**d. The Son is the exact imprint of God's nature (His Being; v. 3).**

The Jews saw divine wisdom as the exact imprint of God. The author says here that Jesus is the exact imprint or stamp of God. As a coin reflects the exact imprint or image of the seal, Christ reflects the exact character of the Father. The Son has been divine from eternity past.

Isaiah (1:4, 18; 11:4) reveals God's nature and says that he is holy, righteous, and merciful, and Christ manifested that nature. If we want to see God, we must look at Christ. No wonder Jesus says, "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30). Hebrews 1:3 shows

that Jesus is just like the Father, but he is distinct from the Father.

**e. The Son upholds the universe by the word of his power (His Administration; v. 3).**

The Jews believed that God held the entire universe in his hand (Isa. 40:12-26). Here, the author says that Christ sustains the universe. Christ upholds the universe and sustains it according to God's purpose (Isa. 46:3-4, 9-10; Col. 1:17). Jeremiah (1:18-19; 10:12-13) describes God's power, but Christ demonstrates that power. The author is reminding them that since Christ sustains the entire universe, he can sustain the Hebrews in their faith in the midst of persecution. Saints, we are secure in Christ's hand. The One who handles the entire universe can handle your problems!

**f. The Son made purification for sins (His Sacrifice; v. 3).**

Not only does Christ demonstrate his power in upholding the universe, but he also demonstrates his love by offering himself as a sacrifice for our sins. In the Old Testament, the priests made purification for sins. Here, the author says that Christ made purification for sins. Hebrews

chapters 7-10 further develop this theme. The author of Hebrews portrays Jesus as the high priest (Ps. 110:4; cited 10 times in Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 15, 17, 21, 24, 28). Here, we need to note something important. Jesus is ceaselessly "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature."

Also, he continuously "upholds the universe by the word of his power." However, when Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins, he did that "once for all." Christ's finished the work of salvation on the cross. Nothing can be done to improve that work of salvation. We were saved through Christ's sacrifice.

**g. He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high (His Exaltation; v. 3).**

Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father. The priests constantly stood because the sacrifices had to be offered constantly. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God to indicate that he had finished his sacrificial work. That's why Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30)! A person sitting at the right hand of the king meant that

he had ultimate honor. This verse alludes to Psalm 110:1 and it is quoted in Hebrews 1:13. Psalm 110:1 was an important text for early Christians. The New Testament quotes or alludes to it over fifteen times, including five times in the book of Hebrews (vv. 3, 13; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2). The word "Majesty" refers to God, the Father. The Son humbled himself on the earth, but is now exalted at the right hand of God! Now he has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt.28:18).

**Conclusion**

The big idea that we can draw from this article is: Cling to Christ because he is supreme and sufficient.

There are three implications for the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ.

1. We must read the Bible and do theology Christologically. For instance, when we read the Old Testament, we don't just read it from the Jewish perspective, but from the perspective of the finished work of Christ on the cross.
2. Our life must be Christo-centric.

Christ must be the center of our lives. We must love him, adore him, obey him, share about him, serve him, and live for him!

**3.** Christ is enough and Christ is sufficient.

The Hebrews were tempted to turn back to Judaism because of severe persecution. How about us? Do you look back at your old life and crave those sins that kept you under Satan's bondage? Are you looking for happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction elsewhere rather than experiencing them in Christ? Don't leave Jesus at any cost because there's no hope apart from him! No matter what sickness, pain, or tragedy you face, make sure you cling to Christ and his love (cf. Rom. 8:35-39)!

**P.S.** This article is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, *Good News of Great Joy!* You may contact him on 9848004094 for copies of this book.



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*A merry heart does good like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22*



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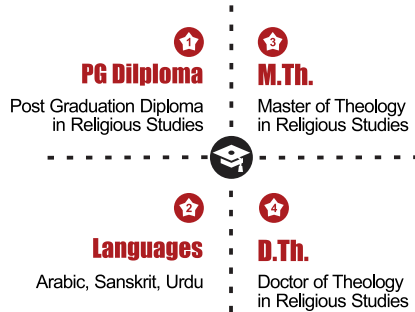


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# Intercessory Prayer Points



December 2023

**1 FRIDAY** Thank God for taking you through 2023 and enabling you to see the last month of the year. Pray that it will be a blessed month with many opportunities.

**2 SATURDAY** Pray for the Joint Advance Christmas program organized by North-East Pastors' Prayer Fellowship Delhi on December 2 at Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi. Pray that Jesus may get all the glory, honor, and praise.

**3 SUNDAY** Pray that you may worship God with all your heart, soul, mind, and body. Pray that nothing would hinder when you worship Him. Praise Him for who He is and thank Him for what he has done for you and your family.

**4 MONDAY** Pray for the ministry of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray that God would give new vision and new direction for the coming years.

**5 TUESDAY** Pray for Little Flock Fellowship, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Pray that the church may courageously share Christmas

message to those who have not heard about Christ.

**6 WEDNESDAY** Pray for "Dream India Transformation". Pray that this non-profit Charitable organization which started with a vision to see India rise above poverty, illiteracy, injustice, revenge, envy, and hatred in the name of cast, color, and creed will accomplish its goal and purpose.

**7 THURSDAY** Pray for Bharat Susamachar Samiti, Dehradun. BSS has been serving the community very effectively for the last many years. Pray that God would continue to use this ministry so that many lives may be transformed.

**8 FRIDAY** Pray for ministry of Salvation Army, India. Salvation Army was founded with a deep desire to fight against poverty and social injustice. Pray that they may continue to do their good works that would bring glory to God and goodness to mankind.

**9 SATURDAY** Thank God as you enter this Christmas season. Pray that God would refresh and



rejuvenate you as you prepare for the birth of the King of kings. May God bless you and your family.

**10 SUNDAY** Thank God for sending His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to save the world from sin and death. Pray that hearts may be softened and be ready to receive the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

**11 MONDAY** Pray for Acts India Missionary Ministries, Tamil Nadu. Pray that the ministry would spread the love of Christ to those who have not yet known Christ and His sacrificial work on the cross. May God continue to equip them and use them.

**12 TUESDAY** Pray for Christian Institute of Management at Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Pray that they may train and equip Churches and organizations in India to achieve management excellence to fulfil their God given Vision and Mission.

**13 WEDNESDAY** Continue to pray for the ministry of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray for God's provision for works that He has called us to do.

**14 THURSDAY** Pray for Caleb Mission, Odisha. Pray for their ministry to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Pray that they would be effective tools in the hands of God for the extension of His kingdom.

**15 FRIDAY** Pray for the Christian

Education department of EFI. Pray that the CEEFI materials would effectively minister to children and help them grow in maturity of their faith. Continue to pray for the revamping of the syllabus to progress well.

**16 SATURDAY** Pray for yourself that the joy of Christmas may fill your heart and that you may renew your commitment to God who sent His Son to save you from sin and eternal death.

**17 SUNDAY** Continue to pray for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached and received by people despite opposition. Pray that the name of Jesus Christ will be lifted high in our country.

**18 MONDAY** Pray for the preparation for Christmas in different parts of the world. Pray that Jesus, Son of God, second person of Trinity would be lifted high up and worshipped. Pray for many lives to be saved and renewed this season.

**19 TUESDAY** Pray for comfort for the families who have lost their loved ones. As Christmas approach, pray that the Holy Spirit would shift their focus on Jesus, God's precious gift to mankind. Pray for joy and peace for them.

**20 WEDNESDAY** Pray for protection of believers as they prepare and celebrate the birth of Christ. Pray that those who want to disturb would

rather meet the baby King born in a humble manger.

**21 THURSDAY** Pray that you may spread kindness, patience and love this Christmas season so that people around you may see God who revealed Himself through His Son Jesus Christ.

**22 FRIDAY** Pray for your city today. Pray that the Holy Spirit would move mightily and bring God's kingdom in people's heart as believers start preparing the celebration of Christ's birth.

**23 SATURDAY** Pray for the children section of your Church. Pray that they would encounter Christ in the manger this Christmas and that experience would have a life-long impact in their lives.

**24 SUNDAY** Thank God for His precious gift of eternal life through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that the Lord Jesus Christ would be lifted high as we celebrate His birth. Pray also that His kingdom would be extended far and wide for God's glory.

**25 MONDAY** Pray for all the Christmas programs organized in different parts of the country today. Pray for meaningful, joyful, and peaceful Christmas as we celebrate Christ's birth. Pray that we may have humble hearts to receive Jesus into our hearts.

**26 TUESDAY** Pray for the poor and the needy in your neighborhood. Pray and think of ways you can be of any help to them. May God enable you to share what you have as a token of your love for Jesus.

**27 WEDNESDAY** Pray for growth of our country in all aspects. Pray that the people would have high values and care for fellow citizens. Pray for peace and prosperity.

**28 THURSDAY** Pray for your neighborhood today. Pray that God may open the way for you to share about Jesus the Messiah. Pray for hearts and minds to be ready to receive Him as their Saviour and king.

**29 FRIDAY** Pray that the world would be a better place to live because you and I pledge to continue showing kindness to people around us. Continue to pray that kindness and love would replace evil in our society and communities.

**30 SATURDAY** Pray that this holiday season is a time of rest and restoration for Gospel workers and their families. Pray for God's Spirit to encourage them and equip them for the coming years and assignments.

**31 SUNDAY** Praise God for His goodness that endures forever. Despite our unfaithfulness, God still loves us unconditionally. Pray that God's goodness will take us through the new year and beyond.



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Published date on 25 November 2023  
Posting date 26/27 November 2023

RNI. Regd. No. 19728/70 / Postal  
Registration No. DL(S)-01/3241/2018-20  
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and on earth peace, good will toward men.*  
*Luke 2:14*

Evangelical Fellowship of India  
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MERRY  
*Christmas*  
& a very  
*new year*

Rev. Vijayesh Lal  
*General Secretary, EFI*

Printed & Published by Mr. Vijayesh Lal, on behalf of EFI Publication Trust,  
805/92 Deepali Building, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019.  
Printed at Royal Press, B-82, Okhla Phase -1, New Delhi - 110 020.  
Editor Mr. Vijayesh Lal