

## The First Christmas: A Celebration of Word Made Flesh

Romans celebrated the birth of the sun god on December 25. After the conversion of Roman emperor Constantine in AD 312, he combined the worship of the sun god with the worship of Christ. Christian leaders in the early period accepted that and saw the "Christ-mass" celebration as a vital part of the process of converting pagans. Though many in the history differ with each other on date but recognize the supremely important event as unique in the world.

Jesus' birth marks the fulfillment of the prophesy throughout Bible and especially the follow-up of the angelic visitation (Luke 1:26-38). God chose Mary for a special assignment which was based on His grace. Though she realized that Jesus was a promised gift of God, the Messiah (1:31-35) but the incident recorded in 2:41-52 indicates that she didn't realize Jesus was God in human flesh.

- The incarnation of the eternal word of God is indeed the greatest and most profound mystery which leads to the unique confession of the church. By becoming human, the eternal Son of the eternal Father took our humanity into union with Himself in order to bridge the divide between God and man.
- The incarnate Son reveals the knowledge of God. The sovereign God over the universe is a complex unity. God is, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and is all the while one God. 'Glory to God in the highest' is an awesome expression of worship in heaven and earth
- The incarnation shows the depths of divine love. God's love reaches everyone in the world for their salvation (Jn, 3:16). God's love through Jesus Christ is extended to all who are ungodly, weak, sinners, and enemies (Rom. 6:5-11). God chose shepherds, despised in the community to be the first witnesses to the birth of Christ (Luke 2:17-18). They represented all who needed cleansing due to strict ceremonial standards in that context
- The outcome of incarnation is upward and downward: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to men on earth whom His favor rests". Because God entered the world in and as Jesus Christ, the meaning of God and the meaning of the world are given definitive expression in Him. When the Church preaches the birth of Christ, it is not just because this is an event of historical significance which deserves to be commemorated, it is because this event is literally the beginning of the gospel. The incarnation is final, decisive and once for all.

God bless you.

In His glorious service,

Rev. K. P. Mathew

(Senior Pastor, IPC Hebron, Los Angeles)

## Sanctum Sanctorum

Thomas Varghese (Saji)

Glory to God in the HIGHEST!! A few strands are interwoven in the usage of the word – Highest.

To glorify God in the highest possible manner.

To glorify God among the highest beings – The Angels.

To glorify God, the highest. The God who is the most high.

To glorify God in the highest Heavens – Not to confine the worship of God to the Earth, but to take the Praise to the ends of the universe or to the ultimate seat of the most high. To the presence of the Holiest. Let us take the thought from here. From the Throne of the Almighty.

In Old Testament, the presence of God was manifested in the innermost chamber of the Tabernacle – The Holy of Holies. The Outer Court, The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. That was how the Tabernacle was divided. The Holy of Holies was the place where the High Priest came face to face with the mighty presence of God Almighty. He would be doing that once a year. He would be Alone.

In New Testament, We ourselves are the Tabernacle. Our Being is the Temple of the Most High. Body, Spirit and Soul. That is how our Being is defined. There is a place in there, where we would be Alone with Him. That place is the ultimate level where we face our creator. We are completely unveiled and naked in that presence. We have no excuses and justifications in that presence. In that ultimate presence, Are we able to give Glory to God in the highest possible manner?

This Christmas season, let us rethink our relationship with God. Is it Glory and Praise, we are offering in the personal interaction with the Almighty in our innermost being. Or, do we fall down dead, as the high priest, with whom He was not pleased.

### Palakkad Mission - Church & Baptism Services

