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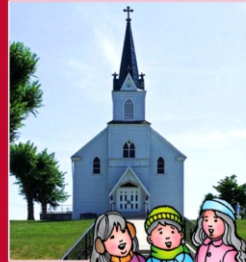


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A Journey of Faith

contents

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A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

Editorial Rev. Vijayesh Lal4	Finding Grace at Christmas Dr. Shantanu Dutta32
A Blessed Christmas 2020 To You Mr. Chacko Thomas07	The Birth of Christ Rev. Richard Masih35
Christmas In Our Time Rev. Kuruvillea Chandy13	Joy To The World Ms. Stuti Farmer38
The Combination Champion Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj18	EFI - NCUT Report 2019-20 Dr. Atul Aghamkar41
A Cheerful Christmas Mrs. Vinita Shaw22	God Answers with Christmas Mr. Amstel John46
The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ Rev. Dr. David Mende25	Advent: Let's Live It Up! Mr. Hansraj Jain48
	Prayer54

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Rev. Vijayesh Lal

THE LIGHT IN OUR DARKNESS

Covid has near crushed the world this year. The virus has killed hundreds of thousands and maimed many among those who recovered after gasping for breath in intensive care units of hard-pressed hospitals. The fear of infection, the uncertainty, and largely ignorance of the malaise, and the unpreparedness of governments has aggravated the crisis. The loss has been personal in possible every extended family, or circle of friends and colleagues. The psychological stress on individuals these nine months is yet to be fully comprehended. We have never been so alone as now, in restrictions imposed by disease, by government diktat, and by suspicion of each other fanned by hysteric media. Families have been sundered in curfews and municipal barricades. The internet

cannot take the place of the human touch, the embrace of a parent, the kiss of a child.

The world stands disrupted and broken by other problems as well. Racism, casteism, trafficking, pollution, inequality, environmental damage, etc. are global challenges that we continue to deal with. They flourish as some anaerobic microbe that thrives in an environment without the oxygen that gives life to others.

Social and political discourse has turned vitriolic in many parts of the world, including in our own country, polarising people like never before. Families, friends, and communities stand divided because of the political leaders, causes, or ideologies they support. Politics, it seems, has



become the means to separate and isolate us rather than bring us together.

Justice mocks itself. The rich and the powerful escape their just deserts, and the poor, the selfless who have spent their lives upholding the cause of the marginalized and the weak, are denied a water-sipper for their quivering hands. Equality, justice, and fraternity are now crimes, and those who seek them are in jail. Hatemongers are promoted in public life. The State joins the criminals in the targeting of communities, religions, and ethnicities. Even love is now taboo, it seems. Every new law criminalises good and once lawful things and opens them to be attacked by non-state actors.

The national economy lies wrecked, and not just by the pandemic but because of arbitrary policies that were not thought through; u n e m p l o y m e n t a n d underemployment have multiplied and a large section of the population i.e., the farmers, our food providers, struggle against hurried and controversial laws that are imposed without proper input or discussions with the stakeholders.

We watch institutions crumble as they are overshadowed by leaders who continue to fail us. But the nation and the world at large seem unaffected, amused to numbness by the mudslinging endless television news shows and the propaganda that reaches them on their electronic devices largely through social media and other digital platforms.

It is a bleak, cold winter that besets us as the year draws to a close.

But the world perhaps was just as dark and maybe more, when the first Christmas approached. It is good to remind ourselves that God does not leave us hopeless or in darkness.

We have just stepped into the Advent season. Advent (adventus) means arrival, and the season is marked with a sense of expectancy or anticipation. It informs us that even when there is darkness all around, God is working, much before we notice. And He promises light, a Messiah, who would be the Light of the world:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (Isa 9:2).



The scriptures speak about the darkness in which the people, created in the image of God, were living, but at the same time there is a declaration and promise of the Light and even when it is still dark, Advent begins. God is working to fulfil His promise of redemption and salvation. There is always hope, because of Him.

And just like His first coming, Jesus Christ, will return to fulfil all the promises of God, and suffering and death will be no more. We must live in expectancy of his imminent return even while the darkness of this present world confronts us.

Like the shepherds (Luke 2: 8 - 20), who heard the heavenly host proclaim the glorious news of the Saviour's birth, and went to see Him, worshipped him, spread the word concerning Him but then returned to their place and lives, glorifying and praising God for the hope they had found, so we must also return, but as people of hope, into the darkness of the world, glorifying and praising God and spreading the word about the present and coming hope we have in Jesus while confronting the

works of the darkness that seems to be all around us.

The darkness may not be immediately over, but we know the One who is the Light of the world, who will finally put an end to it, and He is the one who empowers us to go into the world with the good news that God's light has come.

Earlier, in Isaiah, in chapter seven, we read about the sign of Immanuel. The word Immanuel means God with us. Not against us, or remotely away from us, or even above us, but with us. He chose to step into a world grappling with darkness and sin. He did not leave us struggling but came to be with us and took our place at the cross, paid for us with His blood, and reconciled us to the father because of which we have the promise of eternal life for anyone that believes.

This is the message of Christmas. God's light has come. He is not against us, but for us, and with Him, we will extinguish the darkness of hopelessness by being people of hope, till He comes again and restores everything.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal





What is Christmas all about? We have several straightforward statements in the Word of God about Christmas. Here is one of the significant ones, from the pen of St. John, the Apostle. "... the Father has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the World." John 4:14. This looks like a positive and concise version of the famous John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." It is about a gift to us from God; in the words of the great Apostle Paul, God's "incredible gift." 2 Corinthians 9:5.

Christmas is a worldwide phenomenon. It is partly because of the business it generates, but mostly that Christianity is the world's No 1 religion, followed by Islam and then Hinduism and hundreds others, including the fast growing, the so called Non-Religious religion.

In the northern hemisphere, Christmas trees, Santa, gifts, glitter, lots of food, carols, and more, help turn a bleak winter into a joyous time of the year. Homes, churches, shopping malls and streets are colourfully decorated and brightly lit up, and the centuries old favourite carols are heard everywhere. The decorations and Christmas buying starts even a month before the 25th of December.

In the Global South, where majority of Christians live today, [including a 100 million Christians in China, and Billions in Africa, South America and all across Asia,] we have our versions of the celebration that matches our circumstances, including terrorist attacks and hostile Governments. But countries are going ahead to decorate and lit up their high streets. However, the real Christmas does not depend on any of the above trappings.



The Christmas essentially has to do with the birth of Jesus. He was born about 2020 years ago. This is the 2020th Christmas season. There is no one in all of history whose birth is celebrated as widely and as joyfully as the birth of the Lord Jesus. The Bible doesn't command that we celebrate it. Nobody is forced to celebrate it. But the world does so, voluntarily and spontaneously. Jesus puts a smile on all our faces. It is a joy to remember Him. Those who truly follow Jesus Christ, as hundreds of millions do around the globe, they remember him with much gratitude. It is because He is their Personal Saviour and God. He is like no other God.

Although we do not know the exact date of His birth, we do know that his coming into the world some 2020 years ago had divided world history into two parts, BC and AD. BC stands for Before [the birth] of Christ and AD from the Latin, Anno Domini, meaning "In the Year of Our Lord" which stands for After [the birth of] Christ. I am glad that a day is set apart to remember His coming into our broken, anti-God world in love and humility. His coming for just over 33 years, has already impacted our world significantly. It is because of who He is.

Why is the short life of this lowly and meek Man so significant? We know that He was born in a manger, raised in a poor carpenter's home,

lived in an obscure village, worked as a carpenter for a living. He never wrote a book or led an army or became a sports star to make him an icon in the world's reckoning. Worse still, in his early thirties, (shortly after three years preaching and teaching and doing hundreds of miracles,) the authorities managed to turn public opinion against him. He was condemned to death after two mock trials by the religious and then the political authorities of His day.

He was forsaken by his own nation Israel who cried, "Crucify him", "Crucify him." He was executed by the Romans, like a criminal, on a cross. How has He then become the central figure of world history? Why is that people all over the world celebrate his life.

Billions all over the world love him and follow him. Why is it? For answers to this important question, we need to turn to "the Book of books." The Bible. It may come as a surprise to some that all 66 books of the Bible points to or speaks about Jesus, the Christ. [Christ means "Anointed One", which His title, His office, not his given name.] Incidentally, His name Jesus was not given Him by His parents or family, as usually is the case. It was a name given to Him by the Almighty God, who communicated it by His mighty Angel Gabriel. God the Father named Him. Jesus means "Saviour"



and His given role was to save people from their sins. This is what the angel said to Joseph. Matthew 1:21. That is why Jesus came to earth. And He complete His work in little more than 33 years. Wow. Now the whole world can be saved from their sins and be at peace with God. Amazing.

The long expected One: The Lord Jesus had been expected for thousands of years before his birth. It is recorded in different places of the first 39 [of the 66] books of the Bible. The next four books of the Bible gives eyewitness accounts of His life; from conception/birth to death and resurrection and ascension to heaven. These four books are known as the Gospels, meaning “Good News.” Great four books indeed. I am so glad that I spent seven years of my Teens and Twenties, distributing hundreds of thousands of Gospels all over North India. The remaining 23 books of the Bible tell us how to follow Him. It also reveals the meaning of his lifework and its eternal impact on humanity, both positively on those who receive and negatively on those who reject Him.

The Bible has a lot more to communicate with us about who God is and where He is taking history. You have heard it said that “History is His Story.” I believe it. The information we get from the Bible cannot be found anywhere else. The Bible is a Unique book. It is

a precious gift of God to India and the world. It is a book that should not be ignored. [Please be a Bible Reading Christian. And a catalyst too, to get all to read the Bible. It is world's best seller and had been for hundreds of years.] So, what does the Bible say about Christ's coming to the earth?

The Background to Christmas: The coming of the Lord Jesus to earth had been planned before the heavens and earth was created. Several thousands of years before the birth of Jesus, God made it known to us that this Saviour of the world, [the one to crush 'the serpent's' head,] would come from the Seed of the woman (i.e. without a father being involved, as in normal conception.) This promise could have been made at least four thousand years before Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Only God can make such a promise and keep it.

About a thousand years have gone by when God renewed the promise by and revealed that the Saviour would come from the family line of a man named Shem (one of Noah's three sons). Hundreds of years after Shem, God said to Abraham (descendant of Shem), that the promised Seed would come from Abraham through Sara, even though they were old and childless. [Genesis 12: 1-3. Gen. 18]

The promise was affirmed later to Abraham's descendants, Isaac and



then to one of his two sons, Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. God promised that the Promised One would come through his son Judah and his family. Thus, one of Jesus's names, "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah." See Genesis 49: and Revelation 5.

Again, a thousand years had gone by since Abraham when it was revealed in another book of the Bible that the Saviour would be born in the family of King David (a descendant of Judah). A few hundred years later another book of the Bible said that Jesus would be born of a virgin from David's dynasty (Isaiah 7:14.) This was fulfilled about 750 years after the revelation, when Jesus was born of a Virgin, named Mary. She was a descendant from David's family. It is a miracle. Even Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, was also a descendant of king David.

Although stacked with impossibilities all along these millenniums it became a reality because "with God nothing is impossible." He superintended it. His hand is on the ongoing mission of Jesus. It is safe, as safe as it had been for many millenniums before the birth of Jesus.

Who is this long expected One? Let the angel of the first Christmas answer our question. The answer is in Luke 2:11. Allow me to quote the whole scene, from verses 8-14. "In

the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people. **For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.** This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly, there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

What a scene! Even more what a proclamation! It is Good news indeed. The angel announced the date ("Today") and the place ("in the city of David", which is Bethlehem of Judea") of one of the greatest events ever to take place on this planet. What is it? It is that "A Saviour is born who is Christ the Lord." The Prince of Peace was born in the Middle East. Let us hear John the Apostle explain it.

Theologically speaking, the Apostle John has beautifully summarised the coming of Jesus for us. 1 John 4:14 reads, "... the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of



the world”. Here is God reconciling the world to Himself through mediatory work of Jesus Christ.

Look carefully at the four nouns in this verse. The Father, The Son, the world, and the Saviour. Here you have God **the Father** (the Creator of the universe) taking the initiative to **save** (Salvation), **the World** (which is in rebellion against Him and under His judgement,) allows **the Son** (Jesus) to leave the Father and glories of Heaven to become a true man (sinless, perfect man) to come to earth on that first Christmas day to live, suffer and die in our place, for us all (Indians, Chinese, Africans, Americans, Europeans and all else), that we may be Saved from eternal banishment in Hell, and enjoy eternal sonship in His company. This is the main message of the whole Bible. Jesus Christ is what makes true Christianity unique among all religions.

However, Christmas is not the end of the story. Jesus is the Man to watch. He is God in Human body. The only one of His kind. One of his many names, (because one name alone cannot describe His great Character), it is “Immanuel” meaning God with us. Jesus Christ is God incarnated to be with us; the invisible God who become visible, visible for us. The Apostle John said, “No one has seen God at any time; the only God who was at the Father's

side has made Him known” (John 1:18).

God has only one image on planet earth. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. I am not referring to the so-called picture of Jesus, hanging on the walls all over India. The Apostle Paul wrote about the Lord Jesus saying, “He is the image of the invisible God, ...” We can bow before Him, without sinning against God. And the only place we see His image reflected is as He is described in the Bible.

Apostle John had seen Him, heard Him, and had been with him for more than three years. He was one of the twelve disciples and Apostles of Jesus. He has passed on to us his first-hand knowledge and experience with Jesus, in his writings; the Gospel after his name John, also in his Letters and the special Revelation of Jesus Christ which John received from the Lord Jesus Himself, some sixty years after His death and Resurrection, in the last book of the Bible, The Revelation.

Jesus Christ is good news for the world. He is the Saviour of the world, he came for the whole world, he can make a difference for your life and the life of all in the world, including animals, birds, and all nature. All Creation will be blessed by Him. Make this Christmas, a season in your life to find out more



who Jesus is and what difference He can make to your life. And welcome him into your life. Let him bless you.

Everyone needs Jesus. He alone can save you, forgive you and reconcile you with your Creator God and your Heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." Jesus conquered death and hell. He has paid for your sins by his own precious blood. On that cross, two thousand years ago, he carried our sins on his sinless body. He was wounded for you and me, he suffered and died in our place. The Righteous dying for the unrighteous. Today, he offers Salvation, reconciliation with God as a free gift of God for the asking. He is alive for evermore.

Ask Jesus, now, for His gift. Talk to him, He will hear you, welcome you and pardon you. The Bible promises that your name will be written in His book. It is called, "the Lamb's book of life." That means you have eternal life, and much more. Your name will no longer be in the book of those to be condemned to hell but in the book of the Lamb of God, that is Jesus. He is your eternal security.

Jesus did not come to start a religion. God is not religious. He is

about how we relate to one to another, to all humanity. He taught us to Love the Creator God and to love our fellow humans, he called them our neighbours. God is love, says the Bible. He is also Light in him there is no darkness. He is the light the world needs today.

He is the Man to watch. He is a man you cannot ignore. What are you going to do with Jesus? Your answer has, believe me, eternal significance. May this be a truly blessed Christmas for you,



Chacko Thomas

is presently a Minister-at-large with Operation Mobilisation. He served for 15 years on the OM Ships Logos, Doulos, and Logos II. His ministry has taken him to 107 countries in six continents. One of his few passions is to see the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord and His values blessing the nations. He can be contacted on chacko.thomas@om.org





CHRISTMAS IN OUR TIME

Rev. Kuruvillea Chandy

“What if...?” Let's play that game with the history of Jesus: what if Jesus came to earth in our time? Would He be treated differently than the first time?

These are not simply interesting questions for a sterile academic discussion. They are questions to probe the human condition and the relevance of Jesus and His gospel. There is a need to translate the gospels not only into our vernacular, but also into our experience. Only then are we brought face to face with our desperate human condition, to remedy which there was no other way than Jesus being incarnate, dying in our place for our sins and rising from death to demonstrate that He had conquered our bondage to sin.

Retelling the Story

So, let's go. Jesus is born in our time.

Representatives of the church and its caregiving institutions, come bearing gifts. The first one presents a certificate etched with golden ink and he says, “After all the overhead costs of running our offices, paying the salaries and perks of our executives, I present to you this gold certificate guaranteeing you monthly child support of Rs 500.”

This is really not as imaginary as I suggest. When Susan George's book on world hunger *How the Other Half Dies* was published by Penguin Books, India (1976), the cover picture featured a glass collection box. A hand is seen dropping a coin into the slot at the top. Inside the box, there are five executives at their desks. The desks are connected by a pipeline. The end of the pipeline juts out of the collection box and there is a beggar with a bowl waiting to collect what comes out. The picture signifies that the beggar gets only a



teeny-weeny bit after the five fat executives have all got their cut for channelling the donation to him. That picture says it all. That's how our charitable efforts work. The beggar in the picture represents orphans, poor women, disabled people (oh, we are not to say “disabled”, we are to say “challenged” or “differently abled” as though somehow being politically correct makes it better)...and others in conditions of need.

The second representative (wise man) brought all the “white gifts” collected at special services held in Christian institutions. Members of organisations are encouraged to think about poorer people and give them gifts because they represent Jesus. They are encouraged to bring all the things they don't need – old clothes, old toys and stuff like that wrapped in white paper and lay them at the altar or the Christmas tree in the chapel or prayer room.

The third wise man brought Jesus a lollipop to pacify Him and keep Him from crying.

You are shocked and angry that I have tampered with the Word of God and suggested a sacrilegious scenario in place of the sweet and sublime story of the magi coming to give their gifts to Baby Jesus ([Matt. 2:1-12](#)).

The gospel is never according to the ancient apostles alone. It is always rewritten by every generation of disciples, because the gospel is not only the spoken Word, but has to do with being or existence. As Marshall McLuhan famously said, “The medium is the message.” The words of the gospel are not enough. The message-bearers are themselves the message because they give tangibility and credibility to the message by their character and actions.

At Christmas, the Festival of the Christ Child, the lifestyles and actions of today's celebrants have a jarring effect that prevents people in need from understanding that the story is about the journey of the God of all grace who divested Himself of divine power and heavenly riches in order to communicate a tangible love. In spite of all our Christmas symbols and gestures, no underprivileged child is any nearer to experiencing the love of Jesus.

A Human Baby

While the virgin birth was miraculous, Jesus was an ordinary baby. He did not even have fine clothes to make Him look like a baby prince. He was born in a cattle shed, birthed in a manger (the feeding trough for farm animals) and wrapped in rags (strips of cloth). The



place stank of farm animals and dung. It was dark and cold, and contrary to the carol “Away in a manger”, when the cattle lowed and the baby awoke, Jesus must have bawled like any other baby in the world.

Even today, some babies are born in conditions similar to the birth of Jesus and if we cannot hear them crying it is only because our Christmas music and carol singing drown out the disturbing wails. We just cannot have the beauty of Christmas tarnished by ugly sights and sounds.

Unwanted Child

Sometime later, a termination order went out from the palace of Herod ([v.16](#)).

The sanctity of life – even of the life of children yet to be born – must be a Christian concern. Unwanted babies need not remain unwanted. They can be adopted and loved. Christians, more than others, should begin to adopt unwanted kids. If Joseph had not adopted the Child that was not his, Mary's fate and that of her unborn child would have been death by stoning. That was the way they dealt with the unwanted in that less humane society. Today the unwanted of our society, when allowed to come to birth, are confined to institutions where they are unloved and often not

cared for and sometimes abused. Their existence in abject deprivation and misery is supposedly more humane than stoning them out of misery. That first Christmas involved the adoption of the Unwanted Child. Celebrating Christmas should include the commemoration of that adoption.

As the Christmas story unfolds, we learn that to escape the genocidal army, Jesus and His family became fugitives in Egypt ([vv.13-14](#)).

Today, there are fugitives who simply do not exist in our registers. Only children who can be classified and institutionalised can receive benefits. The children of migrant labourers, pavement and slum dwellers in any city fall outside all our categories. They are with their own people and not in our institutions to be given care. They must leave the God-ordained society of their families and go to Egypt before they can be helped. But must children (to whom the Kingdom of God belongs) have to go into the Egypts we have created to find refuge and relief? The Christ Child and His earthly family all together needed protection. Can we care for children by giving care to whole families?

Little Labourer

When the family of Jesus returned



from the land of slavery and the Child grew up, He laboured beside His adoptive father Joseph. Many educated folks deplore the prevalence of child labour in our country. (Sometimes though, it's all just for papers to be presented at conferences, while they themselves are quite happy to employ under-age children to look after their little ones).

It needs to be noted that some children do need to labour for their very survival. There are orphaned children who receive no institutional help who need to fend for themselves. There are also children whose parents are too poor to not need their children to join them in working for a living. There are runaways living as street children. Our society does not have the means to provide for all needy children. Some have to take care of themselves. That is the reality, and it is a problem cannot be fixed at this juncture.

Apart from survival, some child labour may be viewed as the only education that the underprivileged will receive. They learn by doing. It is indeed an apprenticeship. All learning does not take place in the luxury of a classroom removed from life situations. The lad Jesus learnt the carpenter's trade in Joseph's workshop and the labour did not stunt His growth. It was an

experience that affirmed His humanity and equipped Him for life in the adult world. When children work in conditions that affirm their human dignity, prepare them for adult life with skills to earn a living, the child labour is not demeaning.

The abolishment of all child labour is therefore neither possible, nor desirable. What can be worked for and is an achievable goal is ensuring the human rights of all children. They should not be subjected to inhuman treatment (such as corporal punishment), long working hours and exploitatively low wages. Childhood should not be spent in abject drudgery. I suppose fairy tales such as that of Cinderella were told with a view to motivating and encouraging fairness toward orphaned or deprived children. But there are no fairies to wave magic wands. It is the middle and upper classes that have the power to improve the lives of those who are less privileged than themselves. We are the ones holding the magic wands that can change things.

Festival of Children

Christmas is the festival of the Christ-child. To commemorate that Child of long ago, we must care for children who belong in the Kingdom of the Christ, instead of preventing them from coming to the Lover of children by our attitudes and



lifestyles. “Unto us a Child is given” (Isa. 9:6), and who knows we might entertain angels without knowing it ([Heb. 13:2](#)).

The Christmas story in the gospels does not consist merely of the fact that God became incarnate at a certain time and in a particular situation. It is also the tale of human reactions and responses to God's entry into the human world. Thankfully, not all characters were hostile, or rejection the only reaction. There was Mary willing to jeopardise her proposed marriage by accepting God's plan for her. There was Joseph willing to marry her and accept a baby who was not his by birth. There were simple shepherds who readily believed that the angels were real, not hallucinations. There were magi willing to travel over mountains and through deserts, risking being killed by robbers or accidents along the way.

Still, the rejection is part of the story of the birth of Jesus and it cannot be ignored. “The Word became flesh and lived among us” (Jn. 1:14) but when He came to His own they refused to receive Him ([v.11](#)).

Today, Christians are His own, for we take His name. The question of whether those who are His own today will reject Him as His own did once long ago, is a question that should bother us, because talking of

His Second Coming, Jesus posed the question, “Will the Son of Man find faith when He comes?” ([Lk. 18:8](#))

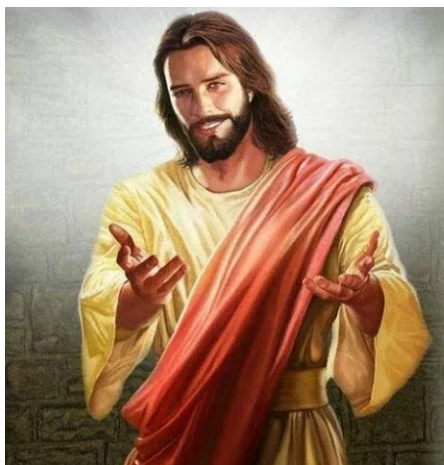
The story of the birth of Jesus thankfully does not end in Egypt. Despite the rejection, God returns to His land and His people. Nor was the rejection at His birth, the only time Jesus experienced it. But every rejection failed to end the Incarnation. God constantly returned to reclaim His own who rejected Him. He even returned from the dead and there is now the promise to return from heaven and end the evil and sorrow of our world. He will wipe away every tear. He will harmonise the world so that wolf and lamb will lie down together, lions will eat straw and infants play near snakes, and such a kingdom shall be established where the Child shall lead ([Isa. 11:6-9](#)).



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JESUS, THE ULTIMATE COMBINATION CHAMPION!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

K. L. Rahul, one of the stars of the recently concluded IPL has an explosive combination of “speed” and “style”. He bats in a classy style yet he scores so briskly. Arjen Robben's 2014 World Cup Goal versus Spain for the Netherlands wedded two rare qualities that hardly come together: speed and skill (watch it on Youtube). But no one has the out-of-the-world unique combination of diametrically opposite characters which Jesus alone has. I call Jesus, “The Combination Champion”!

The Christmas season provides us with yet another occasion to proclaim, defend the uniqueness of Christ and present him as the Ultimate Combination Champion.

Jesus Is PURE as much as He is POWERFUL

While there are so-called god-men – many of whom are hit by sex scandals - in our planet who claim to do miracles, only Jesus has this unique combination: he is pure as well as powerful.

We live in an impure world. We hear of scandals every day. The Bible says every one of us have sinned. In the Old Testament, the wise King Solomon prayed this way: “When they sin against you...” (I Kings 8:46). Notice he did not say, “If they sin against you...” He takes it for granted that the human race – everyone – sins. Apostle Paul declares in the New Testament, “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23).

Only God-in-flesh Jesus is sinless while the rest of the human-race are sinners. The Christmas angel called Jesus, “the holy one” (Luke 1:35).



John wrote this about Jesus: “There is no sin in him, and sin is not part of his program” (1 John 3:5 MSG).

Jesus has done miracles for me. As a 20-year old student of B. Tech. Agricultural Engineering of Allahabad Agricultural Institute, I was admitted in a hospital for wheezing (in 1996). I prayed, “Jesus heal me of wheezing!” I have not had another wheezing attack till now (2020). Jesus healed me! My daughter was declared dead when she was in her mother's womb after a medical scan. The doctor said that her dead cells will be evicted from wife's body through a natural process. But we knelt down and prayed to the Lord Jesus. He did a miracle. He gave her life back. The next time we went for a scan, the scan report said that my daughter's heart-beat was normal. Today, she is a normal 13-year old who give us all so much alloyed joy.

Even the miracles of Jesus have a stamp of uniqueness. While he multiplied bread for the hungry who came to hear him preach, he did not do the same when he was hungry after fasting for 40 straight days in the wilderness. His pure character of unselfishness was reflected in his power demonstration! Yes, no one has had this combination of “purity” and “power” like Jesus! No one has

this combination of “flawlessness” in character as well as the “prowess” in miracle-working power like Jesus has!

Jesus is DIVINE, yet MINE

Surely, there is a God! One thousand monkeys cannot produce a book if they randomly and furiously typed on different computers. But a Shashi Tharoor or a Barack Obama could come-up with page-turning books with ease if you just gave them a mere week to write it! What is the lesson here? It is this: greater the design, the greater the designer! The breath-taking mountains, the beautiful flowers, the vivid valleys – all these point to the ultimate master designer. And that Master Designer is God.

Jesus is the only who with this rare, rocking combination: humanity and divinity. He is the only who is 100% human even as he is 100% God.

That fact that Jesus became thirsty, angry, excited – all pointed to the fact that he was human (as he was God). When I observe from my reading of the Gospel narratives that Jesus enjoyed his sleep amidst the splashing waves, it reminds me that Jesus was human (as he was God). The fact that Jesus knew what was in a human (John 2:24-25), underlines



his identity as God who by definition knows everything. When Jesus mouthed, “Before Abraham (who lived long before Jesus' incarnation) was, I am”, he was claiming to be God, for God by definition has Eternal existence! When the resurrected Jesus accepted Thomas' worship, he was claiming to be God who alone is worthy of our worship!

The details the Bible provides about Jesus' birth tells us he has this out-of-the-world combination of divinity and humanity. Yes, Jesus is both divine and mine (part of my human tribe!). Paul wrote thus: “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4). Every human is born of a woman – even Jesus was. Every human is conceived post a sexual relationship between a man and a woman. But Jesus was not. Matthew narrates this about Jesus' birth: “This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit” (Mathew 1:18). So, Jesus was as much God as he was Human!

Jesus travelled the last mile to show he was human when he chose to die on the Cross. Yet when he bowed his

head and died (John 19:30), he showed he was God (as he got to choose the exact second he would die – something no human could).

As members of the human race, we look for a true friend. The Airtel Advertisement of yesteryears went this way: “Har ek friend, zaroori hota hai (every friend is important - Hindi)... chat room friend...koi classroom friend...shopping mall wala friend...shopping friend...koi exam hall wala friend...copying friend...movie buddy...groovy buddy...hi buddy...bye buddy...joke buddy...poke buddy...every body...sab body...ovvaru friendum theva machan (every kind of friend is needed, friend – Tamil).” To the friend-seeking generation Jesus who is 100% divine, yet 100% human is the perfect friend: a friend who sticks closer than a brother (as the book of Proverbs presents Jesus as).

Jesus LOVED AND LASHED-OUT!

We live in a world without love. One tragic day, Devan Kalathat (an Indian living in the USA), shot his 34-year-old wife, their son, Akhil Dev, 11 years, daughter (just 4 years of age), his wife's brother and his wife, and their 11 month baby girl. He did when they were all in the



kitchen. The police later found served food on the dining table. Then Devan walked up the stairs of his duplex house and shot himself dead. He was so empty that he emptied bullets onto others and onto himself. 'Silk' Smitha, who was known in Kollywood and Tollywood for her erotic dance performances in movies, had a lot of fans. But the number of fans did not stop her from hanging herself from a fan! The emptiness of our loveless human existence is almost palpable.

The words and actions of Jesus come as a healing-balm to our loveless world. He touched lepers during his earthly ministry, lepers who are shunted out of the residences they lived in, lepers who now lived in earmarked colonies outside the city limits. When others would shout, 'unclean, unclean', at the sight of lepers, and run away, Jesus buried lepers onto his bosom in love! He demonstrated his love for us in this while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8, Paul's words).

Yet, the same Jesus also lashed-out. He preached: "Unless you repent, you too will perish" (Luke 13:1-5). Perish is the Bible-word for eternal hell – a place of ever on-going torment. "Stop sinning so that something worse doesn't happen to you" – so said Jesus to a paralytic,

whom he healed (John 5:14, GWT). When he spoke to a woman who was caught in adultery, Jesus said, "Neither do I throw stones at you (words of love), but leave your life of sin (words of lashing out)."

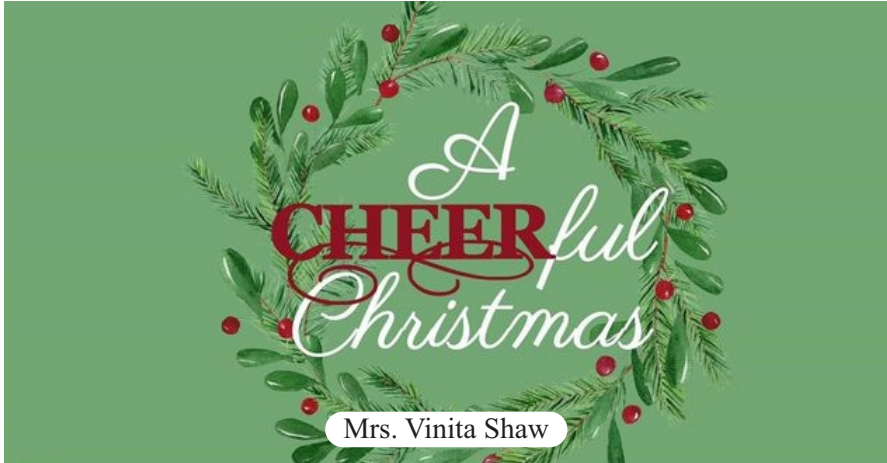
This Christmas will you use every opportunity you get to talk about Jesus, the Ultimate combination champion? For the rest of your life, will you commit to talking about Jesus' uniqueness by talking about divergently opposite qualities he brought together like no one else?



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"This year's Christmas will be a blast", is the sentiment of most folks after almost ten months of misery, caused by COVID-19. All the desires for fun and frolic that have been thwarted are super eager to come out to shake a leg at the tune of 'Jim Reeves', "It is Christmas season, so there isn't any reason, we can dance the Christmas polka....."

Undoubtedly, 2020 has been a harsh year. The abruptness of the pandemic is what startled one and all alike. Total lockdown was something no one ever expected. The fear of the virus and the helplessness surrounding it, has been painful. Around the world people have lost businesses, jobs, salaries and fallen into depression and despair leading them to panic attacks, insomnia, anxiety disorders and ultimately suicides.

The worst part is that the virus shows no sign of relenting, even though speculations about vaccine and the economy surging back around.

With Christmas round the corner, there is undoubtedly this unabated hope that good cheer and festivity will supersede all the pain and despair. We hope the Christmas miracle will drive away all the sadness and replace it with hope, peace, comfort and joy.

For those who have been unable to go on shopping sprees, travel and party, Christmas is a look forward to all kind of indulgences which is justified as for many the forced savings are just crying to be utilised. With vengeance, plans to splurge and spending on one's own self are being made.

However, there is something that we



need to remember as we get ready for Christmas which is that even as we gear up for receiving gifts, there is much that we also need to give away. Infact, it is the giving that actually rings in the Christmas cheer.

As Christians, our spiritual health is greatly impacted by how we give. We know that all we have belongs to God. We also are aware of our responsibilities to offer what we have for the promotion of God's Kingdom. We need to remember it is not only giving or money but also of our time and energy, particularly giving to those who cannot pay us back.

Also, we need to inculcate giving in our young, more so, as we live in a world that is materialistic and likes to hoard.

To a great extent, Rev. and Mrs. G.H. Grose, our Pastor and wife at Green Park Free Church, New Delhi were responsible for shaping our young and impressionable minds. Every year at our Church Sunday school Christmas tree program, we were asked to bring gifts (of a certain value) which we could then exchange with one another. In addition, we were always asked to bring two of each so that we could share one of those with a poor child in the slums where we were all taken. We visited old age homes, orphanages and Cheshire homes to share our gifts, cakes and bring good

cheer as we taught them carols and shared the story of Jesus' birth.

After all, Christmas is first and foremost God giving His only son to the world so that none may perish but have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son so that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16

God loves a generous and cheerful giver with a humble heart. He asks us to give as a response to His grace in our lives.

Deutronomy 15:10 - You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you ,in all your work and in all that you undertake."

Further the Bible reminds us in Proverbs 19:17- ***"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord and He will repay him for his deed"***.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. said Jesus in Luke 6:38.

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the



truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Mathew 25:40.

St. Paul says, Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

This Christmas when we receive, let us not forget to give, specially to those who cannot give us back.

This Christmas let us look around. COVID-19 has opened up many windows of opportunities where our helping hand can go a long way to bring in cheer and goodwill for all humankind.

May the Christmas cheer of giving continue through the year round and may God's Kingdom grow.

Amen



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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. In this passage, we

see that in these last days, God spoke to us through his Son who is supreme over all things. We can see two *truths* in this passage.

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 at 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



narrative, 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 which were prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1) was 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." Make sure that you surrender your life to Jesus this Christmas day!

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

The Greek word for "world" is *aionas* (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. 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, Son's radiance cannot be separated from the deity, for he 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 during 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 develops 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 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 has 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 main message I want to share through 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 for those sins which 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 sermon is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, *Good News of Great Joy!: Expository Sermons on Christmas*. You may contact him for copies of this book.



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DR. VINOD SHAH, DIRECTOR





Finding Grace at Christmas

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

December is the time of year when we get deluged with all things “Christmassy”. Christmas music, Christmas messages and sermons, Advent themed Bible Studies and of course if you happen to read Christian magazines, then articles on the same theme. It can get very exhausting sometimes, I suppose. This year, 2020, surrounded by misery and uncertainty and having worked from home for most of the year, the atmosphere to me seems even more confining. As we plod through to the end of the year, the need and importance of God's grace becomes all the more evident.

This is also the time in which we are called to celebrate the magic that is Christmas. We rejoice as we recall the miraculous birth of the baby born

in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary. We retell the story of the incarnation of God – the God the world did not know and who came into the world in the humblest of circumstances. Jesus was born in a barn, wrapped in a blanket, and laid in an animal trough as his bed. Jesus came into the world to know human suffering and to teach important lessons that would serve humankind forever. Ultimately, Jesus, the light of the world, came to deliver his people from sinful ways and point them toward salvation.

The people were filled with expectation, and still, they didn't recognize Jesus when he appeared to them. They did not know the one who had been sent to deliver peace to a fractured world. They could not



comprehend the rabbi who preached forgiveness and hope. They would not accept the teachings of the carpenter's son who talked about love as the most important guiding principle for life. In these tumultuous times, there are those who are still grappling with the incarnational God who calls us all children of the Holy One. We find ourselves struggling with what it means to be God's shining light in the world. On this day, when we shower our friends and loved ones with presents, how have we gifted the world? What have we offered those with much less? How have we remembered the poor and the suffering? What is our gift to God? COVID shuttered many of our small businesses this year. COVID forced major layoffs at many of our larger places of employment. There is a tremendous fear that many will be left homeless in the aftermath of this global pandemic. COVID has left countless widowed and orphaned.

As we wonder how and why God came to earth, let us be reminded of the grace that has been shown to us simply by God's presence. Our gift to God is our response to the human condition. It is personified in the ways we offer grace to our

neighbors, near and far. During Jesus' physical time on earth, we were shown how to care for those with the greatest need. Jesus did not spend time dining with nobility, despite his divine status. Jesus was never to be crowned an earthly king, which was very confounding to the people of his day. Jesus dined instead with the marginalized and the outcasts. Like a laser beam, Jesus shined a light on injustice and forced his disciples to look inwardly, examining their hearts and minds to find the true meaning of life.

It is God's hope that present-day disciples will take time from the hustle and bustle of a busy holiday season to shine a light on the urgent matters of the day. Just like in ancient times, this world is in need of healing. So many are feeling exhausted after a year of fractured God is nudging us to take on the mantle of discipleship and serve the world in the name of his loving Son. There are numerous issues demanding our attention and there are many ways to get involved in helping all of God's children get to the Promised Land. We are needed now more than ever to share the love of Christ with others who have been waiting a lifetime to hear the good



news of Christmas that offers love and compassion and rescue those in need just as we have been delivered by the power of God's everlasting mercy.

After the celebrations end this season, let us draw our attention once again to creating the world that God intended. Let us commit ourselves to continuing the pilgrimage to the Promised Land with the assurance that God's light will show us the way and all we need to do is follow the directives of the Word.



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And she shall bring forth a son,
and thou shalt call his name

Jesus

for he shall save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21



THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Rev. Richard Masih



The Bible tells us how the birth of Christ took place (Matthew 1:18-25). There are six details that we learn how he was born:

1. He was born of Virgin Mary.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18).

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:23).

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin

betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26,27).

"And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34).

2. He was born of the Holy Spirit.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18).

"But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to



take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20).

"And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy-- the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

3. He was born to save.

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

"And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15).

4. He was born according to the prophecy.

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive

and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:22,23).

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

5. He was born in Bethlehem.

"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" (Luke 2:15).

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2).

6. He was born to bring God to us and us to God.

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:23).

"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he



has made him known" (John 1:18).

Conclusion:

1. Virgin birth ensures the sinlessness and Sonship of Christ.
2. New Testament is rooted in the Old Testament. Read both.
3. Christianity is not a western religion. Christ was born in Asia.
4. Lord Jesus saves us from the penalty, power and presence of sin.
5. God is with us and for us. There is nothing to worry by us.

In this Christmas season, let us thank God for the birth of Christ and receive him in our lives as our Lord and Saviour.



Rev. Richard Masih

in New Delhi. He studied theology in All Nations Christian College, England. He served the Lord for 40 years with the Union of Evangelical Students of India and also authored several books in English. He is available for the ministry of the word in Hindi and English on invitation. He can be reached at Mobile: 9958747748 and richardmasih@gmail.com.

*For a child has been born, for us!
The gift of a son, for us!*

ISAIAH 9:6





When the lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic started, it led me to a lot of thinking. Why do I want to be safe from this virus? Why does staying alive make people happy? What is the one thing I crave for? What is the one thing this world craves for? My answer to these questions somewhat landed at ; Joy! I realized that joy is related to every aspect of our lives. I realized that happiness is something different than joy, **joy runs much deeper.** Now let's relate Joy to Christmas. Take a moment to focus on the true meaning of Christmas, take a moment to focus on the true meaning of Joy, take a moment to focus on the true meaning of life.

Christmas is so much more than the celebration. **Some people don't even think beyond a Christmas tree and a Santa Claus when it**

comes to Christmas. Bringing Christmas trees home was “just a tradition started many years ago by Romans, Egyptians and Ancient Northern Europeans as a decorative item for their homes.” When it comes to the Santa Claus, I'm sure we all know that he isn't real and nor does he belong to the North Pole. History tells us that in the third century, there lived a man named St. Nicholas. He was Greek by birth and a bishop in Turkey. He was a generous giver who gave gifts to children and helped them in many other ways. Just to carry on his legacy, the fictional character of Santa Claus depicting him was introduced. These things may give some people, a temporary happiness.

My friends, Christmas is all about the Love of Jesus and only that love can give you an ending joy. You may



have given up on love, you may have given up on this Corona Virus pandemic to end, you may have given up on finding true joy, but remember that God hasn't given up on you! He came down to this earth, for you, for me and each person of the human race. Yes He was born during Christmas, but don't forget that He was born to die. He knew that the human race is an heir to sin. We humans are naturally sinners because our forefathers sinned and no matter how many good deeds we perform, we'll remain a sinner. Since the wages of sin is death, God couldn't bear that the human race would eternally die and so He made a way, He sent His son Jesus to be born on this earth, to die for the sins of humankind and Conquer death by rising on the third day. John 3:16 says that - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. God offers you the hope of everlasting life if you confess your sins and believe in Him.

The festive season especially in the lockdown may seem overwhelming in many different ways and you may feel suffocated in a room full of expectations. There are days when you will be exhausted with your life, there are times when you will face struggles which you can't even share

with your family, there may be times when you will be deeply hurt, those are the days when you need to **realize that your joy lies in the Lord.**

Celebrate this season by realizing that Christ Jesus was born because “your sin was great, but His love was greater.” No matter who you are or from where you belong, no matter what you've done, He waits for you and longs to heal that broken heart of yours. He wants you to **“experience the everlasting joy by experiencing His love.”**

Now, when you have experienced this joy what can you do to share it with other? When Jesus was on the earth He not just preached the good news of His love but truly cared for the needs of the people. He healed the sick, provided food to the hungry and so on. In order to share the Love and joy of Christ with your friends, you can take out time from your busy schedules and talk to them. You can ask them about their deep struggles and pray for them. The lockdown routine of online classes and meetings is exhausting on a whole different level so try to help your parents by giving them a hand in household works or even preparing a cup of tea for them. Rather than buying gifts for yourself you can shop for the poor children in your



neighborhood. Rather than stuffing your old woolens and blankets in a store room you can clean them and give them to those in need around you.

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her king
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing.”

And Let us not forget to repeat the sounding joy to the ones around us!



Ms. Stuti Farmer
is a college student, pursuing B.Sc 2nd year. She loves to write and fellowship with friends and family.

For
Unto
us a
CHILD
is born
Unto us a Son
is given, and the
Government shall be
Upon His shoulders,
and His Name shall be called,
Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace!
Isaiah 9:6





EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA- NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

Dr. Atul Aghamkar

On behalf of EFI's National Center for Urban Transformation, it is my joy to present this annual report.

We thank the Lord for His protection and provision for all of us thus far during this Coronavirus-pandemic. We were really hoping that this COVID -19 period would soon be over and that we would be able to resume our regular ministries, but on contrary India has been experiencing spikes after spikes, making it difficult even to survive.

To a large extent, this has deeply affected the regular functioning of our ministries as we had to cancel or postpone nine of our planned ministries. Although we have tried to reschedule some of our training programs online, it required lots of effort to plan and implement these programs. Most of us found it challenging to prepare and present

our teaching materials online. However, with the help of an additional set of equipment, we finally manage to conduct a series of our training programs online successfully. Our NCUT staff is now exploring ways to do some of our training programs online for a select number of urban pastors of North India. However, we are waiting on the Lord to intervene and lead us for further.

Please pray for us even as we explore fresh ways of continuing our ministries in the ongoing pandemic situation. We need to be open to the leading of the Lord as we think outside the box to cope with this new situation and make the best use of it. Let us also pray with us for the provision of the sustainability of NCUT ministry, especially as we gear up to use new technology, gadgets, tools, and appropriate



training for our staff in such a changing situation.

Western Zone Urban Transformation Conference

The Urban Transformation Conference held at The Pastoral Care Center, St. Xavier's School Campus, Indira Bridge Crossroads, Hansol. Ahmadabad, on 4-6 February 2020 was the third zonal conference conducted by EFI-NCUT. The theme of the Conference was: "Seeking the Peace and Prosperity of the City" (Jer. 29:7). The Conference was attended by a total of 110 Pastors, and Christian leaders from Punjab, Rajasthan, Western Maharashtra and Gujarat states. These participants represented several urban churches, para-churches, independent ministries, NGOs and mission organizations. This conference was organized in response to the expressed and urgent need of equipping Christian leaders from west zone to engage with cities strategically. We rejoice in the way the Lord has led and used all of us to make the West Zone Urban Transformation Conference a remarkable event.

The Plenary Speakers—Rev. Vijayesh Lal, Rev Dr. Sunil Kolhar, Dr. Laji Paul, Mr. Harrison Kirit, Dr. Atul Aghamkar, Dr. James Patole and Rev. Ashish Hirday--dealt

effectively with some key strategic areas of ministry in the western zone. The plenary sessions were followed by a Q&A session wherein the participants' questions on various missional/ministry related issues and challenges that revealed their interest in exploring practical ways to put into practices some of the insights from the plenary sessions.

The Special Interest Groups (SIG) workshops dealt with varied topics such as Urban Evangelism and Church Planting, Effective Urban Youth Ministry, Evangelistic Potential of Urban Families, Ministry to the Migrants and Engaging with the Urban Professionals. These sessions proved to be practically helpful as they provided valuable insights and deeper knowledge on various aspects of ministries in the city and develop a vision for city transformation.

Rt. Rev. Silvans S. Christian, Bishop of CNI Gujarat Diocese, graciously honored the closing session on 06 Feb 2020. In his speech he reiterated the urgency of urban mission in changing scenario of western Zone. He further emphasized the united, innovative and collaborative efforts to meet the various tasks and challenges, and seize the opportunities to serve the cities.

The participants gained in-depth



knowledge and skills through these sessions for effective ministry in urban settings, particularly in the western zone. Many participants committed themselves to start using these insights to strengthen their ministries in their cities and start partnering with the like-minded churches and mission organizations.

North India Urban Initiatives:

Although we are hoping to continue with physically conducting several of our seminars and conferences in North India and beyond, we have slowly started to explore other alternative forms of conducting these programs online with the help of zoom and google. While praying for God's direction and resources we started to adapt to this new normal reality.

Meanwhile, we followed up with West Zone Conference held at Ahmadabad in February 2020. NCUT is now working on compiling all presentations at the Conference and translating them in Hindi as a resource for all the participants so that these resources may be used by the participants to enhance their ministries. Further to take forward our online urban training programs, several efforts were made to contact the North Indian urban leaders. The response was overwhelming as most urban leaders in North India are deprived of such input for their

ministries. Eventually, after several rounds of discussions, prayers, preparations, God helped us to organizes Webinars for several cities of North Indian states in the months of August and September.

ZOOM WEBINARS

We managed to club together with a select number of cities from the north Indian regions for conducting a series of seminars online with the help of zoom. We accordingly arranged sessions on Biblical Perspectives of Cities and their Relevance for Urban Ministry in India, Ways of doing effective Urban Ministry in Cities of North India, and Utilizing Urban Youth Potential to Enhance the Ministry. Keeping the reality in mind that many urban leaders that are serving in a small set up have been facing financial set back due to Corona related lockdown, we also have decided to add a session on sustainability for ministry.

BIHAR AND JHARKHAND

Our first Urban Awareness Webinar on 5th August 2020 for the State of Bihar was organized. With the help of several local coordinators and pastors' fellowship, we were able to get over 140 participants registered though we could only accommodate 100 of them. The webinar proved to be very useful as leaders from



various cities of Bihar state such as Patna, Gaya, Purnia, Bhagalpur, Bihar Sharif, Madhubani and Motihar enthusiastically participated and received new insights to minister in their cities. Along with Bihar Webinar, we also focused on Jharkhand state and urban leaders from the cities of Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Bokaro, Dhanbad, and Madhupur were benefited from our sessions.

MADHYA PRADESH

The next Urban Awareness Webinar was planned for Madhya Pradesh on 13 August 2020. Here we focused on cities of Jabalpur, Indore, Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior, Ujjain, Sagar, Satna, Ratlam, and Devas. Several Pastors Fellowship leaders in Jabalpur and other cities assisted us in local co-ordination. For this Webinar, we had tremendous responses however, some of the participants were from smaller towns. Due to our limited capacity of 100 participants, we could not accommodate more participants. Several participants shared their experience and requested to arrange more similar seminars.

UTTARAKHAND AND UTTAR PRADESH

On 4th September 2020, we had an Urban Awareness Webinar for the State of Uttarakhand. Major cities

focused were Dehradun, Mussoorie, Haridwar, Nainital, Haldvani, Rishikesh, and Roorkee again with the help of various local leaders and local coordinators. Since we had already conducted seminars in Lucknow, Agra, Kanpur, and Ghaziabad of Uttar Pradesh for urban pastors and Christian Professionals, this time we focused on other cities of Uttar Pradesh such as Prayagraj-Allahabad, Meerut, Varanasi, Bareilly, Saharanpur, Bulandshahr, Bijnor and Noida. During the above Webinars, we received an exceptionally good response both in terms of participation as well as requests for reconducting similar seminars again in Bihar, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

Altogether, more than 260 urban pastors, leaders, and missionaries were able to participate in these three seminars. We also received invitations from a few local mission organizations such as GEMS in Bihar and Pastors Fellowship of Patna and Jharkhand to specifically organize webinars for select pastors and leaders, specifically addressing their urban issues and needs. We are hoping to customize our sessions and work towards serving the North Indian community at large. We are now working on developing resources in Hindi while developing NCUTs virtual ministry both in



English and Hindi. We want to make these resources available specifically in Hindi for urban pastors, leaders, Christian professionals, and mission practitioners that are serving in North Indian cities.

Research and Publication

Our Research, Writing and Publication department is keenly working on various projects as part of our commitment to producing urban resources for the church at large in India. Apart from two major manuscripts that are in the pipeline, we have six booklets that we hope to publish for the benefit of equipping urban Christian leadership in India. Mr. Vadivel Victor is efficiently managing various research, writing and publication wing of NCUT. Please pray that these projects would be completed on time and be made available soon.

Urban Youth Ministries

Rev Ashish Hirday continued to coordinate for youth ministries and other programs in North India.

In the recently held zonal conference in Ahmedabad, Rev Ashish spoke in one of the plenary sessions on the topic: Urban Youth: Trends and Prospect which was well received. He also dealt with the topic: “Urban

Youth: Challenges and Opportunities, Gospelize Series: Youth Ministry to & through Youth.” These practical sessions were packed with tips and practical insights that the participants could use in their ministry contexts.

Besides working on booklets on relevant topics for urban youth ministers, Rev Ashish is also striving to set up a centre for urban youth studies, as part of NCUT-Urban Youth Ministry wing, which will be first of its kind in India.

We are grateful that God has enabled Rev Ashish to also complete his MA program in Family Life Education in May 2020. This additional qualification will certainly help NCUT to develop a focused training programs for urban families in India.



Dr. Atul Aghamkar,
Ph.D, is the director of EFI's National Centre for Urban Transformation and can be reached at urbantransformation1@gmail.com





God Answers in Christmas

Luke 1:35 – Glory of the Most High will overshadow you

How and why we celebrate Christmas is not how and why we see Christmas. It simply happened.

Power of the Most High will overshadow you! O! Mary, why do you doubt?

There is no way to believe – I’m a lowly woman and Joseph is a Dreamer. To see how God works – and where he will be... How will I give birth to the Holy One?

There is no place for us – I’m gossiped about and Joseph is a simple man without the burden of luxury and power. To return God’s favor – who he has become to me... where is the place for my child?

Mary’s visitor left her questions unanswered. How and why remained the power of God. Why me? — you have found favor.

How will it happen? — by the power of God.

How wonderful it is to know God with us is Immanuel (a baby in the arms of Mary)!

What a way to celebrate Christmas believing in the power of God in a helpless babe!

Jesus is God’s answer to your question. How will it be.... May it be.....

Angel convincing her the greatness of the Child and Mary’s half-hearted belief in the promise of God remains to her a Christmas with questions.

But when the time came... everything fell into place. Wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger; the baby was prepared to meet its visitors.

Luke 1:35 – Glory of the Most High will overshadow you

God Answers in Christmas

Mary was unprepared when the



Angel had met her with good news but she prepared her baby for his visitors. To see the sign fulfilled... to worship God Almighty.

Shepherds rushed in from the fields, their hearts overjoyed seeing the baby. Believing the words of the angel had come true. They spread the good-news to the nearby towns and villages.

Wise-men followed his star in the east. Worshipping the baby, they laid down their gifts. Their long-wise sayings silenced in the stable of the inn. The star. The king. The message. The gifts. Mary was truly delighted. Wise-men did spread the good-news to a troubled king.

How would we respond to good-news... unbelievable... if we were in Mary's place? The Shepherds? The Wise-men? How would we see God working out a plan?

But Good-news — plain message glorified hits the Town. Delivered from the sky. Postmen in shining clothes are singers. Not mere singers, angels of singers. Angels from Heaven. God's messengers introducing his Son.

For many will never know how and why God will choose Mary to receive favor above other women. And many will never understand how and why God would reconcile the world to himself.

A sword will pierce your soul —

Mary's child was God's Son.

God will use her questions to bring about deliverance. For Israel and all humanity. In the wake of suffering, injustice, and a tyrannical rule — He will show the way.

The Kingdom above is not far away, it is within you. It is the direction of your soul – toiling in it will bring about the fulfillment of God's purpose for you, your family, and those around you.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is wise to place our questions in the hands of God and watch him direct our heart towards answering the questions of those suffering around us. May God be praised. Amen



Mr. Amstel John

is a budding writer; reasoning and thinking how both the Church and those outside of it can be drawn to Jesus in ways unexplored before. He manages a page — Clarity Ink, seeking to use creative means to inspire and refresh seekers and students of God's word.





It is 14 years since, we planted Sweet-pea creeper in our balcony garden. Ever since, it gave us its first purple petal-like flower, it almost replaced my love for roses. These purple flowers, never fell off their stem although their life-span was done. Instead, from it grew pea-pods. That meant even in its death, it birthed several new sweet-pea creeper plants. I have gathered these pods and planted their seeds in other pots and they are blossoming. This mode of self-perpetuation continues to intrigue me.

“I am sure there is a lesson here”, it had me thinking. Then it dawned. The lesson was profound. Let me elaborate. The sweet-pea pod reminded me of Jesus when using a metaphor had said that without dying there is no transformation. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a

grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24). This is our Creator's ingenious method of letting this gorgeous and soft petalled flower perpetuate itself in the lives of many new plants.

That, I believe, in human terms, spells, living life to the fullest with all its beauty and with Hope. Such a living is very visible for everyone to see and envy its charisma. Their end, when it finally comes, lives on in Hope. That hope is perpetuated How? When it allows the Creator's design for its existence to transform into a pod. That pod, in turn, results in the birth of several more of its kind – sweet-peas that live their lives filled with beauty and hope.

What a fantastic portrayal of Advent!



Jesus came not just to die but to rise again to eternal life. We, who are "linked" to Him, are His pods. In us, He has invested His life - a life filled with His beauty that is marked with hope and a future. Now, when such lives blossom about us can anyone hide it beauty from reflecting without enquiring to the source that gives such life in their world filled with violence, hate, murder, rape, selfishness, suspicion, envy and hopelessness? Jesus came and lived, died and rose from the dead as a man – a sinless man! He had overcome the world and not the world overcome him as it does, us.

That is the message of Advent of 2020. It has returned to once again announce to us, a forgetful people, Hope is born among men – even in Covid-19 times!

As Christian, people are not handicapped or despondent. Rather, times like the current Pandemic, is our time and space within which the Creator wishes us – His “pods” - to blossom and let the beauty of Jesus be seen in us. He has provided no room or space to become pessimistic and miserable over our context. Our task is clear – Jesus through our acts of professional activities, social and public involvement, etc. are invited to let the beauty of Jesus be seen in our response and attitude. And all of

this is done in the midst of death-demanding pandemic. Advent speaks aloud: Death is Dead because the Saviour of all beings is born among men! Now where God dwells, life dwells too!

Are we living in denial?

So, it would appear at the first glance. Paradoxically, it is just the opposite. We are a people of Hope and live pragmatic lives in real time and environment. Perhaps it is easier for us to figure out the content of Advent – its core aspect - than its derivatives. So, let's, together, unwrap the “content” of Advent. Hope!

Why is the term HOPE the essential component in “Advent”?

"Hope Against Hope"

Some scholars suggest that the etymological root of the word Hope shares with the word hop. In other words, it is communicating that to hope for something is to leap in expectation. It is to hop toward possibilities.

The above notion, true or not, the idea carries an exciting point. Today "the concept of Hope has been co-opted by passivity, neutered from its intended action-oriented nature". For example we hear ourselves say,



"We hope the lines aren't too long". Or "We hope for a good diagnosis.", "We hope everything will work out".

Are we talking about wishing, here? Most people alternate the word *Wish* with *Hope*. This is why, when our hopes seem a bit too outlandish, we may call them "wishful thinking." Is that why the Senior Priest Zachariah had a problem believing Gabriel and his message? He had given up 'hope' for a child from Elizabeth that would be their own?

This raises another vital question for us professing and 'professional' Christians. "How possible is it to live life in personal sense of 'hopelessness' (not the absence of Hope as such, but an absence of its practical application!), and yet to continue to religiously present Hope-filled faith? Is that living a duplicitous life or hypocrisy? In Zachariah's case, was his sense of hopelessness based on physical evidence of 'hopeless situation' and practically asking for the impossible?

Pragmatically speaking, Christian hope was never founded on wishful thinking. Christian hope is an expectant leap forward. We take action. We live in motion. In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson depicts the origin of 1 Peter 1:13 this way:

"So roll up your sleeves." Christian hope is about rolling up our sleeves and getting to work. It's a blue-collar sort of Hope, making us ready and willing to get our hands dirty, to labour and toil our way toward expectation and promise.

Advent is our great reminder of this. Toward the end of November, we'll begin to see our homes and our surrounding transformed by twinkling lights, a large star hanging outside in our balconies and our Churches decorated within with the display of Nativity scenes and outside with glowing bright with lights and Christmas Tree with tinsels. However, this season that we're about to enter, is less a journey into history and much more a journey toward the future.

Advent, which comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning *arrival*, is our long and steady lifter of our head that calls us to gaze forward, backlit by history. The light of the Christmas story breaks into the darkness of our past guilt, present pain, and future anxieties, pointing us to brighter days ahead for Jesus returning soon.

That is what the synoptic Gospels announce: "A people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." (Matthew 4:16). Again, Gabriel's visit, this time to Mary, Joseph's



fiancé, conveys - the birth of Israel's long-awaited "Son of David", the greatest king of Israel.

Dr Luke, writing to Theophilus in Acts 1:11, described the ascension scenario. He concluded his narrative by informing Theophilus that after Jesus had disappeared into the clouds, the angel who stood among the disciples reminded these first followers of Jesus saying, *"This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11).

He **will** come back. This is the promise we celebrate and remember during Advent, and it is the bedrock of Christian hope.

So, what shall we do and how shall we live?

Come, "let's roll up our sleeves and get on about the work of Christian Hope because Christ is coming again. We can face anything and everything with resilience, fortitude, and patience" coupled with wisdom, knowledge and a discerning spirit. Advent 2020 comes to remind us of how the story ends and how as He sent his Spirit on the early followers of our Lord, He has sent His Holy Spirit to us his followers today to enable us to live this life – a Life filled with HOPE!

"This is why Paul writes, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ... For in this Hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Rom. 8:18, 24–25)."

Covid 19 or no Covid 19, nothing can take away from us our "Hope" nor its power to empowers us to live a life that blooming with beauty and hope - its prominent fragrance!

May 2020 be our Advent Year overflowing in LIVING HOPE - both in faith and practice now and its torrent over flow through the New Year 2021!

Hallelujah!



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





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1. Old Testament
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6. Missiology
7. Religion (*Subject to approval by the Senate of Serampore College*)

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❖ **IMPORTANT DATES**

Submission of Application Form (BD / M.Th./D.Th.) : 14th January 2021
With late fee : 31st January 2021
Submission of Application Form (Dip.CS/BCS/ MCS) : 30th November 2020

The Prospectus and Application Form can be obtained from the Registrar’s Office. It can also be downloaded from the Gurukul Website (www.gltc.edu).

Send the filled-in application form with all the necessary documents and required fees to:
The Registrar, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute,
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Email: registrargltc@gmail.com; Phone: 044 - 4265 1066.



Intercessory Prayer Points



December 2020

1 TUESDAY Thank God for sustaining us and bringing us to the last month of the year 2020. Thank God for the opportunities given to witness Him. Thank Him also for His protection over you and your family during this global pandemic.

2 WEDNESDAY Pray that God would lift up our spirits and enable us to shift our focus on Him rather than our present circumstances and lose heart.

3 THURSDAY Pray for the work of Dream India Transformation. Dream India Transformation is a 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.

4 FRIDAY Pray for the children as they pursue education through virtual classes. Pray that they may catch up and not lack in every field as they struggle to learn. Pray for the teaching staff to understand and patiently work with them. Pray also for those children who are from economic backward

classes that God would provide their needs.

5 SATURDAY Pray that Covid19 spread would stop. Pray for healing and full restoration for those who are suffering from this virus. Pray for healthcare professionals and medical fraternity that God would protect them and help them to lovingly serve the sick people.

6 SUNDAY Pray that God may use you effectively this month. Pray that you may share Christmas message of God's love with someone needy this Christmas season.

7 MONDAY Continue to pray for the ministry of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray that God may be pleased and bless all the initiatives of EFI for the extension of His kingdom.

8 TUESDAY Pray for Little Flock Fellowship, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Pray that the church may serve the people in around Jalpaiguri and bring many spiritual revivals and growth.

9 WEDNESDAY Pray for Acts India



Missionary Ministries, Tamil Nadu. Pray that they may be an effective transformation agent to turn many hearts to the Lord. Pray for God's overflowing spiritual blessings on them.

10 THURSDAY Continue to pray for the Christian Education department of EFI. Pray that the materials produced would effectively meet the needs of the children and it would lead them to eternal life in Christ Jesus.

11 FRIDAY Thank God for all the missionaries / evangelists working in the field. Thank God for their lives and pray that God will bless them and their families as they continue to live His word.

12 SATURDAY 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.

13 SUNDAY Pray for all the elders of the Church and thank God for their lives and pray that they will be able to build the church according to the biblical standards and build the younger generation in the love of the Lord.

14 MONDAY Pray for Bharat Susamachar Samiti, Dehra Dun. During the last 30 years, BSS has been serving the community very effectively. Pray that many lives may be transformed through this ministry.

15 TUESDAY 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.

16 WEDNESDAY Pray for yourself that you may spread kindness, patience and love this Christmas season so that people around you may see God who is so loving and giving.

17 THURSDAY Pray for Covid-19 disease to stop spreading further. Pray that each individual would take the responsibility and take appropriate steps. Pray for medical teams and others who are working closely in identifying and isolating and treating the patients. Pray for God's intervention and healing.

18 FRIDAY Minorities rights day. The rights of the minorities – whether linguistic or religious – are upheld by the Constitution of India. Pray that minorities in India are treated fairly with dignity and equality.

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

20 SUNDAY 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.

21 MONDAY Pray for Christian Institute Of Management at Chennai,



Tamil Nadu. The mission of CIM is to enable Churches and Organisations in India to achieve management excellence to fulfil their God given Vision and Mission.

22 TUESDAY Pray for all paramedics, doctors and nurses and all working in the hospitals as we combat COVID-19. Pray for double stamina and protection for them. Pray for wisdom and the ability to make quick and wise decisions. Pray that they would serve the sick with deep compassion. Pray also for them that people would understand their service to humanity and support in all possible ways.

23 WEDNESDAY 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.

24 THURSDAY Pray for those who have lost their loved ones during this year. Our heart goes out to them. Pray for God's comfort and peace to fill their hearts. May the Lord wipe away their tears and pour in hope, peace and joy because He lives.

25 FRIDAY Thank God for sending His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who obediently came as a human being and dwelt among us. We love and adore you, dear Lord Jesus. May you come into our hearts today and live forever in us.

26 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.

27 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.

28 MONDAY Pray for Salvation Army, India. Salvation Army was founded with a deep desire to fight against poverty and social injustice. The ministry serves the community for life enrichment without discrimination. Pray that many lives may be empowered and transformed and God may receive the glory.

29 TUESDAY Pray that God in His grace would remove Covid19 soon and restore normalcy.

30 WEDNESDAY Pray for Caleb Mission, Odisha. Pray for the Holy Spirit's intervention and guidance in everything that they do so that many more lives may be touched and changed. Pray for God's kingdom to come in every individual with whom they interact.

31 THURSDAY Thank God and give him all glory, honor, and praise for He is good. He is good in all His ways. There is no one like God. He who has brought us this far will lead us through the year 2021 too.



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Evangelical
Fellowship of
India



One in God; Together for Good.

Introduction

Evangelical Fellowship of India, founded in 1951, is the national alliance of Evangelicals in India. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, it is the custodian of Evangelical faith, movement and values in India, representing the Evangelical voice, building capacity and promoting participation in nation building.

EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance. Its membership includes over 65,000 Churches, over 150 Church related mission agencies and organisations and thousands of individual members.

Our Vision

To see evangelical Churches, institutions and individuals effectively witnessing the good news of Jesus Christ in word, deed and transforming nation.

Our Mission

As an evangelical alliance, serve churches, institutions and individuals through strategic initiatives, capacity building and forging solidarity, thus facilitating the mission of witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and nation building.

Networks

- a. CEEFI (Christian Education Department of EFI)
- b. EFI Publication & Media
- c. EFI National Centre for Urban Transformation
- d. EFI Children @ Risk
- e. Evangelical Trust Association of North India
- f. EFI Micro Enterprise Development
- g. Evangelical Financial Accountability Council (EFAC)

Commissions

- a. EFI Women Commission
- b. EFI Theological Commission
- c. EFI Youth Commission
- d. EFI Religious Liberty Commission
- e. EFI Commission on Relief (EFICOR)

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An NGO in special consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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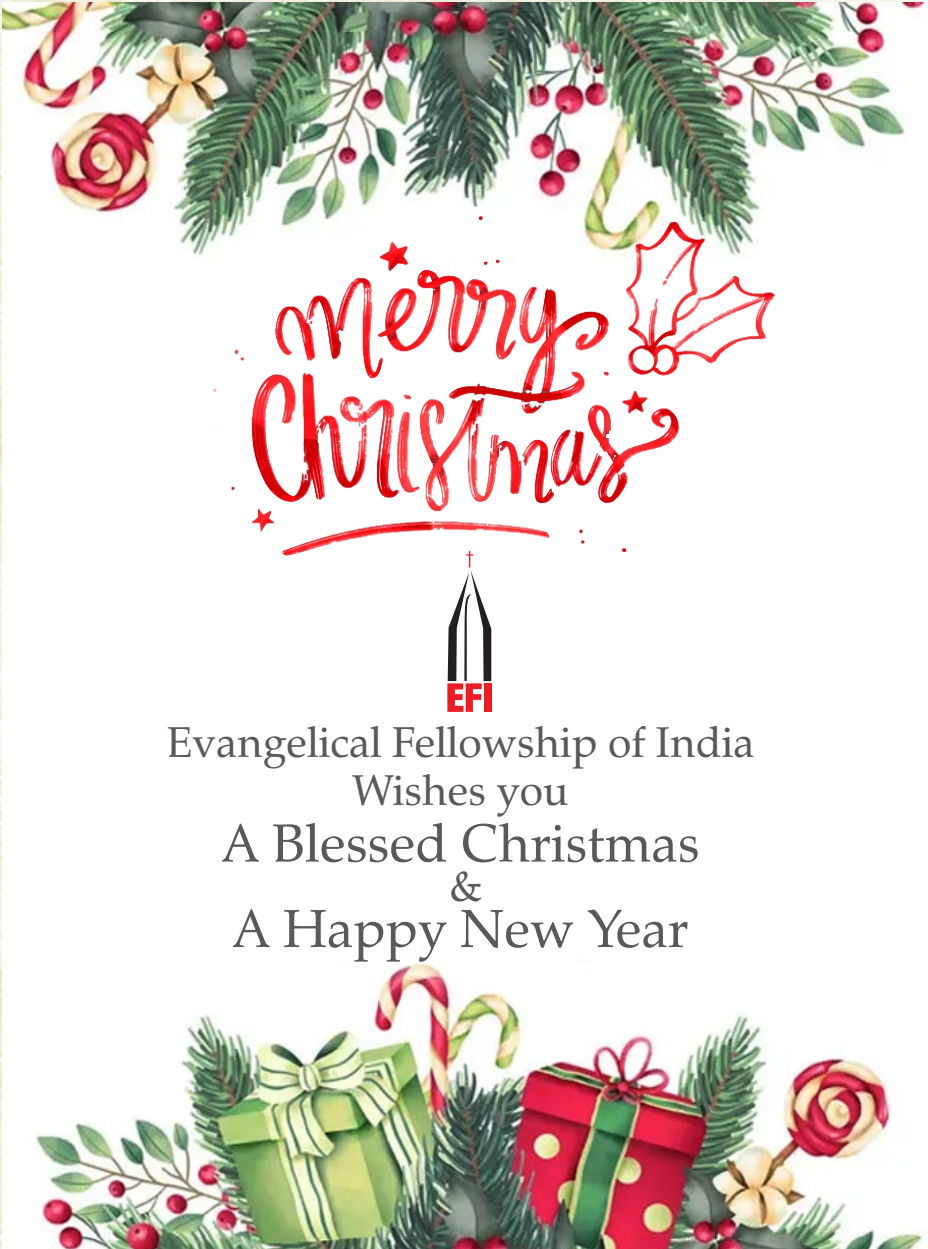
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