



Special Issue

O Come, All Ye Faithful



Christmas is the holy moment when the Formless Cosmic Consciousness decided to assume form and dwell among us. This time He chose a Name "Jesus" and pitched His tent in Nazareth, a humble hamlet in Galilee. Christians all over the world celebrate this Divine Drama at Christmas, a word coined from "Christ" and "Mass". "Christ" means "Messiah" or "Anointed One", the title given to Jesus, and "mass" is a religious festival.

Jesus is not only for Christians, Jesus is for humanity. Nay, Jesus is for the whole of Creation. As such the birth of Jesus is a cosmic event. It is therefore necessary to ponder, during this sacred season, the very meaning and significance of Jesus' birth. Who is Jesus? What was the purpose of His birth? What was the message He left for Humanity? How should we celebrate Christmas? How can we make the purpose of Jesus' birth the very purpose of our own birth? In other words, how can we live and die for the same purpose for which Jesus lived and died? These questions have

become very urgent in our world today where people have lost the inner significance of the advent of Divinity.

Christmas is the day Divinity is born in our hearts. The symbol of Christmas is the star; a light in the darkness. That light is not outside oneself but shining in the Heaven within. The celebration of Christmas must take the form of awakening to the Light of Eternal Reality. This is the very purpose of the Descent of Divinity: to make us realize our formless Divine state. How we realize this purpose depends greatly on our understanding and application of the inner significance of the Divine birth. Understanding gives clarity to our intentions; clarity of intentions lends righteousness to our actions and right actions leads man's steps back to his source, God.

Long time ago, the Jewish Prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. Seven hundred and thirty years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Micah had said,
 "But you Bethlehem, though you are small,
 Out of you will come for me one who will be shepherd over Israel,
 One whose origins are from of Old, from ancient times" (Micah 5 :2)

The Prophet Isaiah had written extensively about the coming of the Messiah and His Nature. One of these says,

"A child is born to us! A son is given to us!
 And the government will rest on his shoulders.
 These will be His royal titles: "Wonderful Counselor",
 "Mighty God", "Eternal Father", "Prince of Peace".
 His ever expanding peaceful government will never end.
 He will rule forever with fairness and justice
 From the throne of his ancestor David." (Isaiah 9:6)

Over the years, Israel had lived under many political subjugation. As time passed by, the idea of the Messiah was narrowed to a political figure who was to come to free the Jews from political bondage. This belief became very strong at the time of Jesus when the Jews were under Roman rule. (63 B.C) The Messianic prophecies made the Jews live in hope, waiting and watching for the time when the promised messiah will come. But when finally the messiah came, he came not as a political king with royal birth and prestige, but as a humble poor person born to a peasant family. **Jesus came not as a warring and conquering king but as a humble Lamb. His Kingdom was not of this world. The Kingdom over which he rules is of the spiritual order. He came not to overthrow a political regime but to enthrone a spiritual revolution.** It was a revolution which has turned around the history of humanity ever since He died on the cross.

What is the inner significance of Jesus' birth in a manger? Why did the Maker and Lord of the Universe make do with the cattle's barn? Is this another Divine accident, or is there a hidden lesson for humanity? Jesus knew His Divinity but He never bragged about it. **Instead He emptied Himself and took the position of a servant. He did not just take a low place; He took the lowest place. This is an example for all.**

The manger is a symbol of service. To serve is to stoop down. It is to take the lowest place. It is to empty oneself of every trace of ego. There can be no genuine service without this touch of humility. Our beloved Swami tells us, "The essence of service is selflessness and abnegation of the fruit thereof." But we always cling to our high estates and statuses. We hope and hold to exalted positions and powers. Even when we "condescend" to serve, we serve not as servants but as masters and lords! Again, Swami has emphasized: "If service is done for name and honor and fame and if there is a craving in the

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mind for the fruits of one's actions, then the statement 'Service to man is service to God' has no meaning, nor will one get the results expected." The manger story teaches us that genuine service comes from a heart that has been emptied of all name and fame, power and position, pomp and show. The manger service is a service without ego.

Jesus Came to Save the Animals

There is another important message why Jesus was born amidst the animals. Jesus also came to save the animals! He came to put an end to animal sacrifice (including slaughtering the animals for the gods of our stomachs). Jesus showed this in unmistakable terms.

First, He was born among the animals! The animals welcomed Him in their shed. They were fortunate to hear His very first infant cry - a cry that wiped away all the tears they have shed in the hands of humanity. They saw His Divine smile which told them that God was also with them! They were given the privilege to be the first to behold His Divine face filled with the radiance of Truth.



Jesus always used this expression: "Your faith has healed you" or "Your faith has saved you". Never did He say, "I healed you". What does this mean? It means that the high and the low, the partial and the full does not depend on the name and form of God we adopt, but on the strength of faith of the believer. The fullness of Divinity opens unto us according to the measure of our faith. **We must understand that God is beyond religion and that although it is good to be born into a religion, it is a sin to die in it. All religious denominations are like different schools of spirituality. It is a good thing to be born in one. But we must graduate at one time or the other.** To graduate from the school of religion is to realize the oneness behind the many. Only then can we receive our graduation certificate: "All are one, be alike to everyone". This is the primary message of Jesus' birth.



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