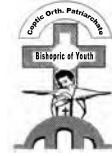


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# **Born Crucified**

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# INTRODUCTION

No doubt that the cross had accompanied Our Almighty God throughout!

The cross accompanied our Lord:

- *In His eternal thoughts, before all ages.*
- *When he was conceived in the Blessed Virgin's womb.*
- *When He was born.*
- *When He started His Ministry.*
- *During the significant moment of His suffering during His crucifixion.*
- *Until He granted us salvation.*

All concluded with joy and happiness in heaven and on earth!!

What is the Lord's message behind all this ? The main lesson is that Christian joy is never void of suffering. And that the suffering of a Christian is

Never void of joy. Behind the darkness of the tomb lies the light of the Resurrection. After the pain of the cross is perpetual glory!

In our celebration of Christmas, let us meditate on the Baby in the manger, and the joy behind the celebrations of Christmas, the joy of the children, family Christmas gatherings and the various religious meetings. Let us delve deeper beneath the reasons of these celebrations and discover the real story behind this birth, which led to the mystery of the Cross, the magnificence of Salvation and the endless love of the Redeemer. It is said about the Lord Jesus Christ that:

*He was born crucified...*

*Lived crucified...*

*And died crucified !!*

He has never left the shadow of the cross, but rather, "***who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame***" (Heb 12:2). We wonder what was attractive about the cross when everything seemed to be accompanied by misery! His heart was full of pain and anguish! Poverty was the mode of His life on earth! Scorn was directed to Him from all directions! He was scourged and nailed with great cruelty and disdain. Is that what our Lord considered as happiness?

**YES** it is happiness for our salvation, and joy for our redemption! It is the happiness of restoring us to our previous image, the image of God Almighty.

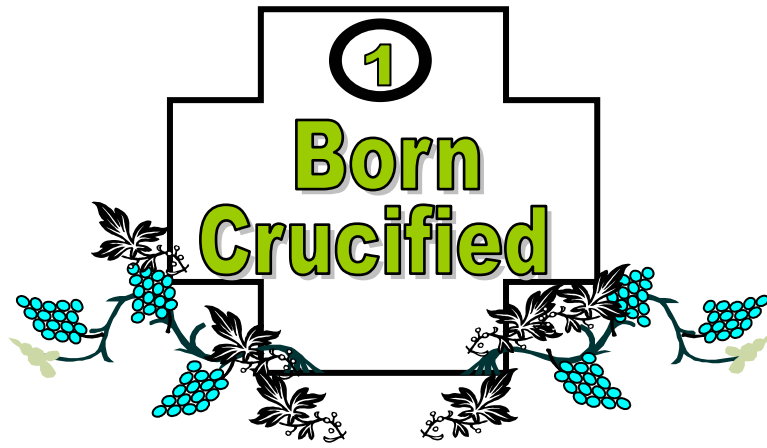
**YES** this is the happiness for which He bore everything. It started with denouncing Himself by taking the image of a slave. He went through the tribulations of the ministry, He endured the various persecutions inflicted on Him by the Jews, and the cruelty of the Romans, all of which was concluded by His glorious salvation, on the cross. The cross which was considered as a curse was changed to a symbol of honour, through which we gained entry to eternal bliss!

Let us venture together on a journey to the cross which accompanied our Lord before His infinite birth, on His birth, up until He was taken up to Heaven. Let us witness the sweetness of the glory which precedes the pain of the Lord's labour, His ministry followed by the glory of salvation!

Let us follow our Lord to the ***MANGER***, to His ***MINISTRY***, And To His ***SALVATION***.

May God allow these pages to be a blessing to our lives through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and through the prayers of our beloved shepherd His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

***His Grace Bishop Moussa***  
**Bishop of Youth**



*"There was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7)*

No doubt this expression, which seems somewhat strange, is absolutely true. It takes us to the depth of the joy of Christmas and the glory of the Annunciation, in order to introduce us to the mystery of the cross, as a royal path through which,, also have to follow.

- ☉ A star appeared in the East...
- ☉ Wise men rejoiced at its appearance
- ☉ Through a long journey they followed the Star...
- ☉ They discovered His birth from Books...
- ☉ They pursued their journey with the guidance of the Star,..
- ☉ They presented Him with gifts professing His Kingship and Priesthood...
- ☉ Angels appeared to shepherds...
- ☉ Praises were heard, "Glory to God in the highest"...
- ☉ Herod was perturbed..,
- ☉ The guides of the temple read the Book...
- ☉ Simeon came by the Spirit to the temple...
- ☉ He professed that salvation had come to the world...
- ☉ Anna, the prophetess, praised the Lord for His redemption..

The joy and glory of the Birth of Jesus Christ does not obliterate the significance of the cross.

### **1- He Renounced Himself:**

*It is written about our Lord Jesus Christ: "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phil 2:6-8)*

Let us enter the manger. What do we hear and see in this stable??

Instead of angels' praises, we hear the sound of animals!

Instead of the songs of heavenly hosts, we hear the voices of humans!

Instead of the majestic kingdom, we see a poor stable!

Instead of witnessing the glory of heaven we see simplicity and poverty!

Instead of a symbol of the eternity, we witness a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

## **In His incarnation:**

- Our Lord crossed from Heaven to earth,
- From eternal to finite,
- From the life of angels to that of humans,
- From justice to compassion,
- From glory to humility,
- From the world of holiness to a cursed and profane world.

## **Through His incarnation He became:**

The good Preacher, Who condescended to come down to the level of the apostles in order to teach them .

The good Shepherd, Who sacrificed Himself for the love of His sheep.

The good Saviour, Who shed His blood for the sake of sinners.

The Incarnated word, who took what is ours and gave us what is His.



Behind this impoverished Baby, Who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, Lay serenely on His Mother's laps, Guarded by a simple carpenter, Was glory and mystery.

This godly Baby, is the Word the Logos, the second Hypostasis in the Triune God, He is begotten of the Father before all ages, light out of light, true God out of true God, consubstantial with the Father. This equality is not usurped for He dwells among the praises of the Cherubim. He came down on earth to save and redeem us and restore us to the heavenly glory and our previous godly image.

He became Man, so that we can share with Him His godly nature.

He became a slave, to deliver us from the slavery of sin.

He became for us wisdom, righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1Cor 1:30)

He became a curse for us in order to redeem us (Gal3:13)

He became sin for us "*that we might become the righteousness of God through Him*". (2Cor 5:21)



## **2- The Humble manager:**

*"There was no room for Him in the inn"*

One wonders what was: the condition of this inn? No doubt, a very simple inn, built out of compressed mud and maybe held up by palm tree ranches.

Even this simple and dilapidated place had no room for the Creator!

Bethlehem was crowded with people coming from all over the world. Augustus Caesar passed declaration for each citizen to register his name in his place of birth.

Amongst this hustle and bustle, and in the tranquillity of the night a beautiful Baby was born in an animals' trough!

And there came a number, different from all previous ones! His number was infinite! As He was a unique Baby, Different from all others! He was the Divine Baby, Both Heaven and earth were shaken at His birth!

Messages were sent from heaven, by means of A Star, Angels and praises.

*A STAR* : Led the travelers in the dark.

*ANGELS* : Announced Salvation

*PRAISES* : Carried the Good News.

*"Glory be to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to all men"*

On earth there were those who rejoiced and those perturbed, by the Good News.

Those who rejoiced were those who were awaiting the Saviour.

Those who were perturbed were the self-centered, and mundane.

The manger became the shepherds' goal! They came to announce the news of salvation! Leaving behind all earthly ties, Searching for the Saviour, their Hope, their Life! Voices of praises were merged, Through the universe! Angels sang, The Star led, The sheep chanted, Men offered gifts, Saint Mary meditated, Saint Joseph served the Saviour with youthful vigour.



In spite of all this glory, the stable was very poor!

But the place does not make the man.

For man adds meaning and dignity to the place.



### 3- THE SHEPHERDS' SACRIFICE:

The shepherds went to visit the Baby Jesus, what did they offer Him?

They offered all their possessions! They offered a sheep fit

for the slaughter, For the Manger Baby, was the shepherd and the Lamb!! The Priest and the Sacrifice!!

#### THE SHEPHERD AND LAMB:

He said about Himself, "*I am the good Shepherd*" (John 10:11) But we saw Him in the Book of Revelation as, "*a Lamb as though it has been slain*". (REV 5:6)

Our beloved Lord was not only a preacher, preaching about love, without loving, or teaching about charity without giving. But He proved His love and charity by becoming a propitiation for us, by shedding His Blood on the cross and with humility He bore our iniquities, for our salvation, "*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth.*" (Isa 53:7).

Thus He became both the sheep and the shepherd simultaneously. "*All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*" (Isa 53:6)



Jesus became our Sacrifice!

*For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us*" (1Cor 5:7)

He was called **PASSOVER** meaning **PASSING** This is in reference to the passing of the Angel of the Lord when He destroyed the firstborn of the children of Egypt and spared the lives of the children of Israel, "*when I see the blood, I will pass over you*" (Exo12:13) Jesus Christ is our Passover!

\* "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Eph 1:7)

\* "*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*" (Col1:14)

\* "*Without shedding of blood there is no remission.*" (Heb9:22)

Note also the various references in the Old Testament to the blood of Sacrifice which refers to Christ our Sacrifice. Some of which are:

#### ✠ THE BURNT OFFERING:

*"This Offering refers to Our Lord's absolute holiness. The sacrifice was examined carefully inside out and offered as a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord "It is a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord."* (Num. 28:6)

✱ THE SIN OFFERING:

A sinner would lay his hand on the animal's head and confess his sins which would then be transferred unto the animal. It would then die in his place by shedding its blood. He would then enter with its blood to the altar. As for its body, it would be burnt outside the door of the tabernacle, as it carried the sins of the person who offered it.

✱ THE GUILT OFFERING:

This offering was treated in the same way as the sins which were directed against God Almighty and His holy Name.

✱ THE PEACE OFFERING:

This did not carry any sin. It was offered by the people as a sign of love, thanksgiving and sharing. That was why it was eaten.

This symbolised the Eucharist, received after real repentance, so that it would not be a conviction to those who partook of it.

The symbol of blood is found all over the pages of the Holy Bible. It is the **BLOOD** of the **SHEPHERD** and the **LAMB**.



## THE PRIEST AND THE SACRIFICE:

Jesus Christ is our High Priest, who took a name above all other names, who established the priesthood of Melchizedek -- the Priest of righteousness, King of Peace -- Who has neither beginning nor end... The Son of God -- the Son of Man -- Who is not an earthly High Priest.... surrounded by weakness, but presenting Himself as ,in. He made Himself an eternal sacrifice for us. "*who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself*" (Heb 7:27)

*For such a High Priest was fitting for us, (Heb7:17) For He testifies"*

*Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinner and has become higher than the heavens"* (Heb7:27).

The amazing thing is that the Priest is Himself the sacrifice!

*"He did once for all when He offered up Himself"* (Heb 7:27).

*"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."* (Heb10:14).

*"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the evil, that is, His flesh" (Heb 10:19-20)*

*"A High Priest over the house of God" (Heb10:21)*



## 4- THE MAGI AND ... MYRRH:

The wise men, studied and meditated on the wonders of the skies! They were well knowledgeable in the field of astronomy. They were aware through Balaam's prophesy that,

(16) "*the utterance of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees... but not now; I behold Him, but not near;... A Star shall come out of Jacob;... A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,.. and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult. "And Edom shall be a possession;.. while Israel does valiantly.., Out of Jacob One shall have dominion," (Num. 24:16-19)*

The Magi waited for hundreds of years, So did the unique Star, Which accompanied the birth of a King! The star appeared, and led the Magi to the baby boy, To the humble accommodation, They fell down and worshipped and presented Him with gifts of:

## GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH

He was offered **GOLD**, for He is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

**FRANKINCENSE**, for He is the King for ever.

But why **myrrh** especially on His birth?

Why **myrrh**, when heaven and earth were rejoicing?

**YES**, it was` the **CROSS** of the Lord!

Since the beginning, the cross was in His heart.

He had it as His first priority for our salvation!!

What was the extend of the bitterness of the Myrrh which Our Lord tasted for our sake?

Was it vinegar "*mingled with gall*" (Matt 27:34) when He taste refused to drink? It was known that vinegar was a sedative to pain. Our Lord yearned to drink the cup of pain to the end. This vinegar, mingled with gall, was a mere symbol to the many different kinds of gall, which Our Lord tasted during His humanity and redemption of human kind.

Jesus Christ was bitter at heart, "*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.*" (Mark14:34)

Bitterness of spirit, *He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree,"* (1Pet 2:24)



## 5- A SIGN WHICH WILL BE SPOKEN AGAINST:

When Simeon came by the Holy Spirit to the temple, knowing that the Virgin Mary and Joseph brought the Child Jesus to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he prophesied, "*this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against*" (Luk2:34)

It is the sign of the Cross... which destroyed Satan! And threw him out of heaven like lightening. So he became the enemy of heaven and together with all his followers waged war and fought the cross with all their powers. They used all their intrigues and abilities to destroy the cross, with no avail. The Jews saw Our Lord as weak, as for us we see the cross as "*the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.*" (1Cor1:18).

### **THE CROSS IS POWER:**

Through which He crushed Satan and opened the gates of Paradise, and gave us eternal Life.

### **THE CROSS IS WISDOM:**

**Redemption** Was Inevitable, in order to save Adam from eternal corruption and death. Jesus Christ died for us, when the **WORD** became **FLESH**, in His incarnation He became **MAN** and was able to represent us and die in our place. In His **DIVINITY** He is omnipotent and infallible. He is capable of crushing sin, Satan and all corruption. He renewed our nature and restored it to its previous image. And on our behalf, carried judgment and the curse, through the cross, as it is, a written, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"* (Gal 3:13)



**HE IS THE CROSS....** On which I crucify my ego, saying with Saint Paul, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" (Gal 2:20)

Through Him I sacrifice all my desires: "*And those Who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires,*" (Gal 5:24)

On Whom I crucify myself to the world and the world to me, "*But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*" (Gal 6: 14)



## 6. A SWORD WILL PIERCE THROUGH YOUR SOUL:

Simeon said to Saint Mary, "*yes, a sword will Pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*"(Luk 2:35)

What is the meaning of the words "**also**" and "**Sword**" ?

The word "**also**" signifies the suffering of Saint Mary, who shared in the suffering of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Mary suffered with her Son and God! ! Thus it was attributed to her that her suffering



was a sharing in Jesus' crucifixion. This is the required participation from all who follow Our Lord, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*" (Luke 9:23) "*I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,*" (Col 1:24)

Is there any **Shortcomings** in Jesus' tribulations? God forbid!

What is then meant by "**lacking**"? Is it more suffering to come? The Head (Jesus) suffered and what is left is for the Body (the Church) to suffer.

As for the word "**sword**", this is in reference to the suffering which the Virgin Mary went through!

Saint Mary went through a lot of afflictions! From the tribulation of the Jews, the violence of the Romans, the devices of the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the Herodians, to the persecution of even the closest people to them.

**B**ut the deepest wound which pierced Saint Mary's heart was the sword of the cross. Here the Blessed Virgin Mary reached her culmination of suffering! How could they kill the One who gave them life? And be cruel to the One who loved them? And extinguish the light which illuminated their path?

**F**or this she cried under the cross saying, "All the world will rejoice at Your salvation, but my heart is pierced with sorrow when I look at your crucifixion, which You have accepted patiently, for Your love to mankind, my Son and my Lord." (from the Ninth Hour Prayer)

#### **SAINT MARY'S HEART WAS DEEPLY WOUNDED • • •**

The cross was never detested, but she loved it, as much as her Saviour. Saint Mary knew :

The Mystery of the *CROSS*...

The Mystery of *Salvation*

The Mystery of *JOY*!!





*"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." (Matt 10:38)*

Our Lord Jesus Christ lived with the Cross set before Him, in His heart, in His thoughts, and in his purpose moreover for it. *"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,"* (Heb12:2)

*What Joy is this my Lord*

To Die and shed Your Blood?

*Cried Carrying our shame?*

It is the joy of our **SALVATION!**

It is written about our Lord, *"that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,* (Luk 9:51) Even the Samaritans did not receive Him, *"because His "face was set for the journey to Jerusalem"* (Luk 9:53)

*Who was awaiting Him in Jerusalem?*

*Is it the triumphed entry of Palm Sunday?*

*Or is it the joy for our redemption?*

### **1- IMPOVERISHED 'WHILE HE IS RICH:**

Born in a stable, Lived in a humble lodging, Helped in a carpenter's shop, That was our Lord's mode ofl.

It is written about Him, *"for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."* (2 Cor 8:9)

### **HE LIVED AS A SIMPLE CARPENTER:**

People knew Him as so, demanding a stool, a table, a simple bed. With great humility and honesty Jesus helped the righteous Joseph, by blessing the work. He was a model to all simple and honest work.

Even Judas Iscariot, the treasurer. was not faithful! Saint John states, that, *"he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it."* (John 12:6) Our Lord was not concerned about the theft or tried to confront or expose His disloyal disciple in front of others, but rather worried about Judas' salvation! After choosing him as one of the twelve, Jesus made sure that Judas attended to all His teaching and miracles, so that he would have no excuse when he betrayed the Lord. Jesus even gave him a warning saying, *"It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot,"* (John 13:26) After the piece of bread Satan entered him, and Jesus said to him, *"What you do, (what you are scheming) do quickly."* (John 13:27) Jesus Christ, the source of our *salvation*, was eager for the *cross!*!

Our Lord led a very simple everyday life: Simple in His food, His clothing, in his association with the Gentiles and sinners. He used to visit Martha, Mary and Lazarus. His disciples consisted of fishermen and the poor. Yes, He became poor, He Who is rich in His Divinity, rich in His godliness, and rich in His creation!!

The Universe, the whole Universe is His making! Everything obeys Him! The birds in the sky, The stars and the galaxy, The fish in the seas, The wild animals, The richness under the surface of the oceans: He is the King of all! But He abandoned all these, And lived among us as a Human, Taking the image of a Slave, And obedient unto death on the Cross!

So that we can be rich through His poverty, for through His crucifixion:

*Salvation Was Completed*

*Paradise Was Opened*

**Satan Was Crushed**

*And We Inherited Eternal Life!*



## **2. REPROACHES FELL ON HIM !!**

The Psalmist prophesied, one thousand years before Jesus' crucifixion saying, "*And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.*" (Psa 69:9) (Rom15:3)

This was what happened during the life of Jesus Christ on earth. He met with many reproaches from the Jews, with reproaches few of those reproaches were:

*"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a gluttonous man and winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Matt 11:19)*

*"Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matt 9: 11)*

*"But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." (Matt 9:34)*

*"Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" (Matt 12:2)*

*"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" -- that they might accuse Him." (Matt 12:10)*

*"Then the Pharisees went out and took counsel against Him," (Matt 12:14)*

*"Put when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." (Matt12:24)*

*"Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And his brothers (His cousins) James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (meaning the wisdom in His teaching and the miracles He performed) So they were offended at Him." (Mat 13:54-57)*

*"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, "and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again." (Matt 20: 18, 19)*

*"Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk." (Matt 22: 15)*

*"Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death," (Matt26:59)*

*"Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! who is the one who struck You?" (Matt 26:67-68).*

*"And while He was being accused by the chief Priests and elders, He answered nothing. (Matt27:12).*

*"But they cried out" Let Him be crucified!" And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." (Matt 27:23-25).*

*"And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. Then when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified." (Matt 27:28-31).*

*"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests, also mocking With the scribes and elders, said, saved others; H-himself He Cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' (Matt27:39-44).*

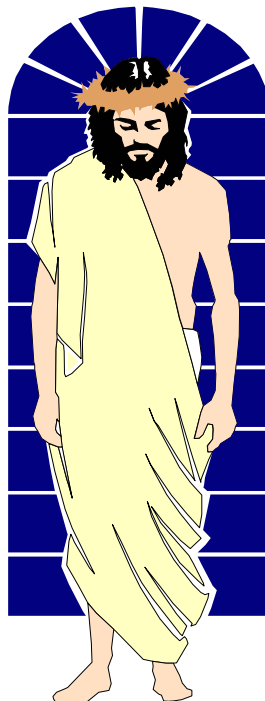
Those miserable people forgot that they were asking the Lord to come down from the cross, and that would be the end, and salvation would be delayed, and our redemption Would have been lost!! But He arose on the cross With His free will, *"I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." This command I have received from My Father" (John10:18)* He is happy to redeem us, but they wished as referred to in Psalm 22

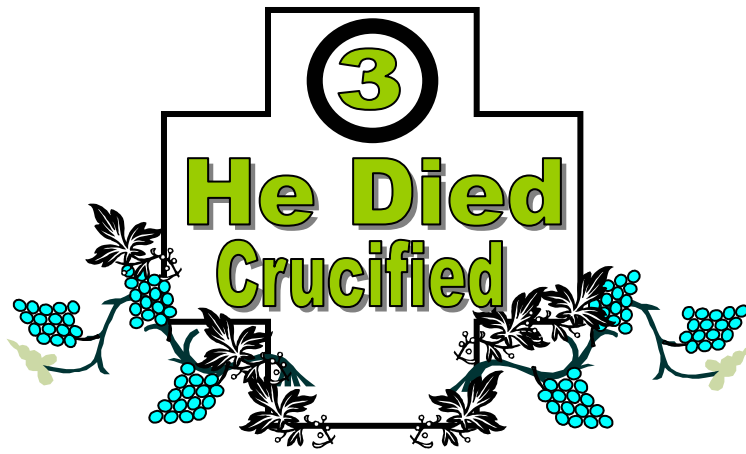
*"Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls Of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths. As a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is Like wax; It has melted within Me, My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." (Psa 22:12-18)*

That is how our Lord lived crucified!  
They labeled Him with appalling names:  
They called Him, a "Deceiver", "insane"  
And *"A Samaritan and have a demon?" (John8:48)*



**Y**es our Lord lived His life carrying His daily cross which never left Him at any time!  
*Because He loved US, Incarnated to redeem us, United us to Himself,  
Saved us and gave us life through His death, In order to enter his Kingdom!*





*"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal3:13)*

As Our Lord was born crucified....And lived crucified.. He also died crucified.

Our Lord had three reasons for His incarnation:

1. *To teach us.*
2. *To save us.*
3. *To be united to us.*

#### **1-INCARNATED TO TEACH AND ENLIGHTEN US!**

Saint Athanasious says concerning Our Lord's incarnation:

"What is the purpose of our creation if we are not acquainted with our Creator How could we comprehend His purpose, without understanding Cod's word and thoughts, which He made available to us through Jesus Christ? God distinguished us from the rest of His creation in order to know and understand Him"

Thus Incarnation was a means for mankind to know God. Saint Paul says, "*God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets. "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"* (Heb 1:1) The prophets were only a means to prepare the path for the Son of God to come in person.

*"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."* (John 1:18).

Saint Athanasious states, "As the righteous Teacher, who cared for His disciples, stooped to their level, so did the Word of God" (Chapter 15:1 from The Incarnated Word)



#### **2. HE WAS INCARNATED TO REDEEM US**

By His incarnation Our Lord was capable of saving us, by fulfilling all the required attributes for redemption.

1. If Adam's sin was committed by a human, it was inevitable then that the Saviour had to be a human,
2. If the price of sin is death, it is inevitable then that the person had to die.
3. If Adam's sin was unlimited, as it was committed against God who is unlimited, then the Saviour had to be unlimited.

4. The Saviour had to be sinless, or else he would have been in need of someone to save him!
5. If God did not want to destroy His creation and to restore Adam to his original image, and create him with a new nature, it was inevitable then that the Saviour had to be a creator!



**HOW THEN CAN ALL THESE QUALITIES BE INCORPORATED?**

It was inevitable that God had to be united to Man. Incarnation was inevitable. So that the Saviour (the incarnated God) was capable of fulfilling the requirements and characteristics of a Saviour:

- 1- In his Divinity He was, Unlimited, Sinless and a Creator.
- 2- In His incarnation he became Man and died.

It was inevitable for the Saviour to die shedding His blood as it is known, "*without shedding of blood there is no remission.*" (Heb 9:22)

It was also impossible for the Saviour to shed His blood without crucifixion, as it was written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*", (Gal 3:13) He carried our curse on His shoulders, "*Cursed is the ground for your sake*" (Gen 3:17)



Our Lord Jesus Christ was then crucified. He was born in a manger for our sake.

But with His incarnation:

He died for us. He shed His blood for us. He was crucified carrying our curse on Himself. Saint Athanasius gave many examples on Salvation, some of which are:

**1- LIKE A KING:**

Saint Athanasius writes, "*If a prominent King enters a great city, and boards in one of its mansions, this city will be extremely honoured, and no enemy will ever venture to attack it. Instead it will deserve all respect and regard, for the King has accommodated Himself in one of its mansions.*

*This was the case with the King of Kings. He came to our world, and chose His accommodation in A body amidst mankind. From then all the schemes of Satan, against mankind ceased, and the destruction of death, which was destined on mankind, was removed.*" (Chapter 9:3,4)

Saint Athanasius continues, "*if the king established a city, and that city was attacked by thieves, as a result of the carelessness of its tenants, no way would the king abandon that city, as he has established it! He would Immediately come to its defence and try his lamest to punish the intruders and protect the tenants from future invasions. " This is the case with our Lord, the Word of the Father, the absolute righteousness! He created man and would never abandon him. He abolished death by presenting His own life as a sacrifices. He rectified Man's carelessness and restore his dignity and all his rights.* (Chapter 10: 1)

This signifies that some of the blessings of Incarnation are:

- 1- Honouring man's nature, by procuring the same nature.
- 2- Honouring all of mankind.
- 3- God's interference for our salvation, in spite of our carelessness.
- 4- Renewing Man's nature.
- 5- We learned a lot about God, through Jesus Christ and His teachings.
- 6- God Himself interfered in order to save us on the Law or he prophets.

**2- LIKE AN ARTIST:**



Saint Athanasios the Great declares:

*"If a portrait of a person is painted on wood and is smudged and ruined, it is inevitable that out of respect for the person, that the painter will summon that piece of canvas. He would hate to see the piece of wood disposed of, although it is only a piece of wood, but he renews the painting by fixing it"*(Chapter 14:1)

Here Saint Athanasios stresses the following points:

- 1- God created us in His image, in His wisdom, His righteousness, His benevolence, His spirituality and His compassion.
- 2- The image is painted on wood which symbolises the body of the earthly Man.
- 3- The painting was ruined by outside factors and eliminate the original authenticity and beauty of the painting, meaning sin and, the conspiracy of Satan.
- 4- Here the man who was originally painted interfered, and came personally to our world, so that He can renew the painting to its original image. This is the meaning of incarnation of the Lord.
- 5- The painting is not re-painted on a new canvas, but rather renewed on the same old one, which represents Man himself. God did not discard of man and created a new creation. This would be contrary to God's wisdom, for why would He have created Man in the first place? It would be against God's love, for not forgiving Adam. It would be against God's dignity, Satan would then rejoice for God's failure in His creation of Adam and Eve, and await the failure of the second creation



### **3- GOD INCARNATED IN ORDER TO BE UNITED TO US:**

This is the third aim for incarnation. As Saint Athanasios says, in his book, **THE WORD INCARNATED** :

It is a well known fact that straw is easily destroyed by fire. Let us consider the following:

If straw is removed away from the fire, although it will not burn, it will still be in danger of the fire at any time. But If the straw is surrounded by asbestos, a material which withstands fire, it is then insusceptible to Fire, for it is encircled with an anti-inflammable substance. (Chapter 44:7)

#### ***Saint Athanasios points out:***

- 1- *That Man by nature is like straw, He is incapable of withstanding God's fiery wisdom, and His Godly nature.*
- 2- *If Man is left alone in front of God's fiery Spirit, he would burn.*
- 3- *But if he is encircled God, and encompassed himself with Jesus, he would be able to be protected and saved.*

Jesus says, **"He who eats MY flesh and drinks MY blood abides in Me, and I in him."** (John6:56)

SaintPaulsays, **"For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ."** (Gal3:27)

- **"But Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Rom 13:14)**
- **"Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" (2 Cor 13:5)**
- **"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (Eph 3:17)**
- **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."(Phil 4:13)**
- **Jesus Christ says, "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one," (John17:23)**
- **"That the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26)**
- **"I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." (John 14:20)**
- **Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John14:23)**
- **"If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." (Rev 3:20)**

#### **INCARNATION THUS BECAME THE WAY OF OUR SALVATION**

- 1- We were carried from the darkness of ignorance, when Jesus our Master came as our teacher.
- 2- We were transferred from the death of sin, when our Lord redeemed us on the Cross.
- 3- We were saved from Man's isolation, when Christ united Himself to us, so that we can share in His godly nature. "He took what is ours and gave us what is His." Saint Athanasius comments, "this does not mean that we become gods, but we remain humans with God in us, as when the sun shines in a room, or the air blowing on one!!"
  
- 4- Let us all rejoice today for the birth of Jesus Christ, our teacher and our redeemer, who was united with our weaknesses. May our celebration for Christmas, may not be based on social joy, or tradition only, but let our celebration be established on theological understanding, and spiritual nourishment, so that we can have a share in our beloved Redeemer, the Manger Baby who was:

**+ *Born Crucified***  
**+ *Lived Crucified***  
**+ *Died Crucified***

May our lord Jesus Christ be glorified for ever!!

