

Come and Worship. (John 1:18)

* Friends, we are all familiar with the passage from Luke's Acts ch.8 where it tells about eunuch, the official of the Ethiopian queen who had come up to Jerusalem for worship. After worshipping to the LORD he headed back to Ethiopia. While he was sitting in his carriage, he opened the book of the prophet Isaiah to read it. But it was not clear to him when he came across the message where it introduced the "suffering servant of the LORD." Probably that time he prayed to God for help and soon a helper appeared, Philip, one of the "seven" archdeacons. Philip asked the man, "Is the sense of what you are reading clear to you?" "How is that possible when I have no guide?" was the answer. It was impossible for men to grasp the significance of the "suffering servant of the LORD" if God would not help them.

* Nowadays the word "communication" is very common, it means "exchange of information or ideas." For instance, the cell phone, it takes pictures, written and spoken messages, and then it can respond information instantly from almost anywhere in the world; or the new computer's technology; in all media varieties, makes communication faster around the globe. Compared with the new opportunity for sharing information, let's see in what way God chose to communicate with us. The text from John's Gospel says that God communicates with us by means of His Word, spoken and written. But 2000 years ago God revealed His Word in flesh, who is Christ the LORD. Christ himself is the light that reflects the mind of God and reveals God to men. John says that Jesus Christ is the One and only One source through whom the knowledge of our salvation became known and available. Notice that our growth in knowledge of these things is sufficient and has no limit. Other words, "No matter how high a bird flies, it has to come down for water."

* Now let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father as you revealed the Word to Apostles and Evangelists for us, we employ You, strengthen us in faith and understanding of the Way of Life so that having Him we might be saved by your abundant grace through Lord Jesus who reigns and lives with you and the Holy Spirit, One God now and forever. Amen.

* In the words of Isaiah the prophet: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined" (Is. 9:2). When all was still and it was midnight, the almighty Word of the Lord appeared in flesh, the Light shone forth from the manger. The Wise Men hastened to see and worship that Light. And when they found the newborn King they kneeled before Him and gave their presents. The Wise Men worshiped Him in spirit and truth witnessing about a newborn King of all nations, Messiah, who came to be our Way of Life; for God has given us His Word, and the Word became flesh. The Son left the royal throne and dwelled among human race. Beloved, this is the message we are given to believe and by believing we may have life in his name.

* In the moment when Christ was born the two houses that located in opposite directions were ready to receive the newborn King. The splendid Temple in Jerusalem and poor Stable in Bethlehem, both palaces were temporary shelters for our Lord. The difference between these two constructions is obvious. On the one side,

it shows King's supernatural, extraordinary authority and, on the other side, his extreme humiliation and subjection to the Father. Thinking back to Isaiah's message, with that Ethiopian man we are given to believe in such King, suffering "servant of the Lord," betrayed, mocked, tortured and finally crucified. In that King we are given to believe so that by believing we may have life in his name.

* Beloved, Christ's appearing in this world that we call Epiphany, would be not beneficial for us if he would come just to amaze us exhibiting his greatness, power and wisdom. But contrary to this, the King born in the manger! It proves a different purpose of his appearing!!! The Word became flesh and dwelled among us in order to make us His likeness, as the servants of the Lord and after resurrection to introduce us in the heavenly realm as the royal priests of eternal God.

* Friends, take a look at the cover of your folders. Do you see the temple? It is significant that a temple and palace for a king are synonymous in Hebrew. Do you notice how it is beautiful? Now realize, if this construction, made by human hands, looks so attractive then how more greater do you think was a house in paradise having been made by God's hands for Adam and Eve? Friends, and by the way, believe me, it should not to be important, -- the beauty of the Adam's house or the beauty of St. Peter and St. Paul basilica in Rome or St. Luke in Elizabeth or any other outstanding construction in the world. The important is, guess what? Yes, you are right! God Himself, because He is the builder of the human temple and we are the products of his hands and any other temples and palaces in the world are less important compared with human body. God not only designed our complicated bodies but He has decided them to be his possessions. He cleans us from our sins; He saves us from our sinful nature and from all kind evil beings; He blesses us in all kind of goodness; He sustains us in life.

* Friends, just rhetorical question, do you think a palace makes a king or vice versa? I think all dwelling places the king might choose for himself to be his palaces. How much do you think the worlds richest British Museum would pay for only one original piece of wood from the manger, where the newborn King Jesus, 2000 years ago, was placed by his Mother's hands? I am pretty sure, there should be enough cash to build a new palace for British royalty. After all, has anybody thought that a palace makes a king? "For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: "This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will for joy. (Psa 132:13-18)

* Thinking over this message many scholars state that it tells about group of people who were called out of this world and follow the Father's will. Here the prophet speaks in behalf of Church that was ransomed by the precious blood of our LORD. According to this message, we should be blessed in the present age as well and have peace of mind and heart. In the Meantime, the reality of this time forces us to be anxious about "bread" because we need to pay off our bills, but another powerful motivation of this time tells us to go in that dwelling place, where we can reflect on God's steadfast love. Here is God's dwelling place; here we received

forgiveness of our sins for Christ's sake; here by blood of our Lord we have approached the Holy of Holies in order to be blessed and receive the help in time of our needs. There is no power in this world that can separate us from the love of our LORD, there is no power that can snatch us from the loving hand of our Heavenly Father. And there is only one way, truth and life, --- The LORD JESUS who dwells among his people. He cleans us from our sins, gives peace in our trembling hearts, and leads us by way of life. To whom alone belongs all glory, dominion, power and our worship. Amen.

* Friends, excuse me, but the sermon is not yet over. In closing I need to say something important. To help you understand this idea I decided to employ the image of Rabbi Hakham Yochanan. Once he was asked by his disciples about a believer whose knowledge became greater than his good deeds. Here it is what Ribbi Hakham Yochanan said. I would be compare such a man to a tree that has many branches but few roots. Along comes the wind and uproots it, overturning it completely, even as Jeremiah says: "For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited." Then the disciples asked, "To what shall we compare a believer whose good deeds exceed his knowledge of right and wrong?" In return Ribbi Hakham Yochanan said, "... to a tree that has few branches but many roots. Even if all the winds in the world were to come and blow upon it, they would not succeed in budging it from its place, as it says: "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and spread out its roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but its leaves shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

**The Word of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
Amen**