

Think about it! (14)

According to the Christian tradition, based on the Bible, Jesus of Nazareth was born in the town of Bethlehem something over two thousand years ago now. It's true that we don't know the date of his birth – the 25th of December is just a pagan "bank-holiday" that was "baptized" and "sanctified" for the sake of convenience – and nor do we know in what year he was born, but there are good reasons for thinking that it was several years "before Christ"!

Anyway, whenever it was, the birth of Jesus was very special; it was so, partly because of the (unique and supernatural) circumstance that he had been conceived without the involvement of a human father; and also on account of the fact (again, unique) of his pre-existence – the one who had been conceived and who was born already existed before that, in fact he had existed for ever! That's why Jesus often referred to his birth as the moment when he had "come" into this world (in other words, from some other world).

One of the many examples of this is Luke chapter 19 and verse 10: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" – probably the most important phrase in the whole of Luke's Gospel, and one that sums it all up. From these words of Jesus we can extract a number of transcendent truths:

(1) His humanity

"The Son of Man" was Jesus' favourite title for describing himself, and it's a title that points to his identifying himself with human beings; he was, in a sense, and he felt himself to be, one of us.

(2) His deity

In the biblical Prophecy of Daniel, as well as in Jewish apocalyptic literature, "the Son of Man" was a divine figure who would one day burst onto the stage of this world.

(3) His pre-existence

By saying, "The Son of Man came...", and not, for example, "I was born...", Jesus alludes to his (eternal) pre-existence as the Son of God, the living Word and the subject of one of the I's within the one and only – but "plural" – divine being.

(4) His mission

Why did that "Son of Man" come?: "...to seek and to save what was lost." In the immediate context (Luke 19:1-10), we have an example of "what was lost": Zacchaeus, a man who was small in stature – and low-down in his business dealings, until, that is, Jesus found him and saved him! But Zacchaeus was just one example of the people that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save."

(5) His love

Love is the link between the other four truths; it's what explains why the pre-existent Son of God became a man in order to carry out a mission like that; he did it driven and motivated by a love that's difficult to understand or explain, and that's impossible to measure.

So, where do you fit into all this? The answer to that question will depend on your willingness (or not) to recognize Jesus as that divine and human, pre-existent and loving, Seeker and Saviour, and to recognize yourself as another person who's "lost" and who needs him.

Andrew Birch
pastor@iglesiapalma.com