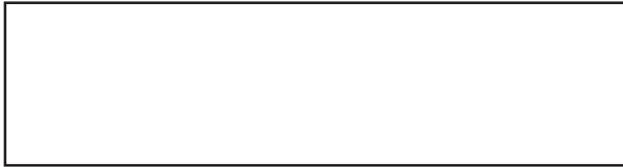


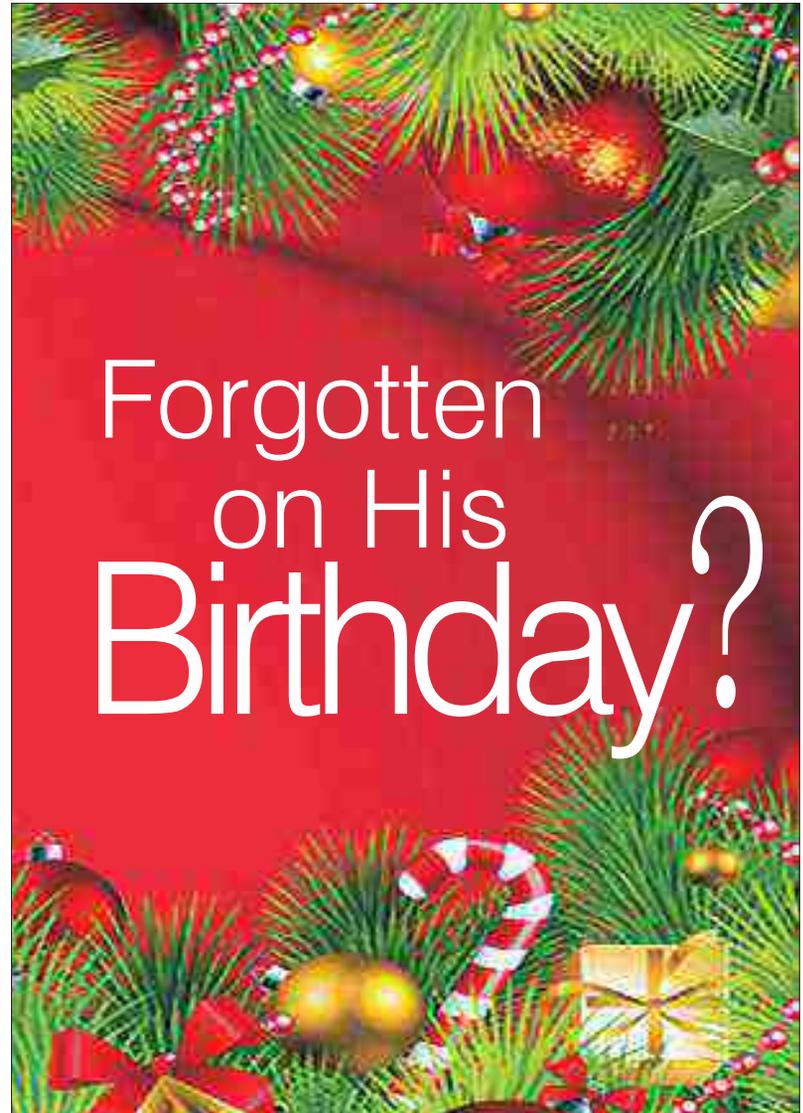
The Spiritual Adviser



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At this moment, children are expecting presents. Youths imagine themselves in their brand new clothes and reflect on how to exploit the general indulgence that surrounds the upcoming events. Parents make plans and dip into their savings. Musicians are working hard to sell their latest albums for consumption during the imminent celebrations. Shopping centres are flooded with the latest arrivals and because of the greed of some businessmen, prices shoot up. There is a resulting rise in the crime wave. This large-scale travelling, buying and selling is simply saying that people are preparing for a great event. There is no doubt about it. It is December. Christmas is around the corner. It is time to celebrate.

December 25, 20..., we are on the morrow of Christmas Eve. There is relative tranquility. The world at large is asleep. Roads are covered with broken bottles and the place is smelling of vomit combined with cigarette smoke and alcohol. The loud music of latest “Bikutsi”, “Zouk” and “Makossa” hits has given way to deep snoring. Children with rounded stomachs and parents all soaked up in alcohol, are lying here and there.

But you can only benefit from the gift and blessings of the liberation and salvation Jesus so dearly bought for you, if you forsake your sins and ask Him to be your Lord and Saviour. Provided you are sincere, you can do this by repeating this simple prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I am a wretched, lost sinner who has sinned in thought, word and deed. Forgive me all my sins and cleanse me. Receive me, Saviour, and transform me into a child of God. Come into my heart now and give me eternal life right now. I will follow You at all cost, trusting your Holy Spirit to give me all the power that I need. Amen.”

If you prayed the above prayer earnestly, then you are forgiven and are now a child of God (1 John 1:9; John 1:12). Henceforth, you will think of Jesus not just once a year at Christmas, but every day, living a life that is pleasing to Him. Only then will Christmas take on its true importance. Only then will Christmas have meaning for you.

For further help in your new life, write to:

God. But simply because He loved you, He came preaching repentance, healing the sick and setting captives free from their bondage. So, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God took human form and came down to earth just to deliver and save you. He declared He did not come for those who are “good” and who, therefore, have no need of Him but for those who admit their guilt of sin and desperate need for His help (Luke 5:31). Is that not good news?

In these days of bad news in nearly every domain, these are the good tidings that Christmas bells are chiming, echoing the words of Jesus, saying, *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted, He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted (victims of emotional and professional disappointments), to proclaim liberty to the captives (slaves to alcohol, drugs, sex, etc) and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”* (Luke 4:18,19) and (Isaiah 61: 1,2). That is the good news of Christmas. If you have never heard good news before, then you have just heard it!

Others are groaning in the emergency ward of the Central Hospital: one has lost an eye after receiving a left-hand blow from a drunken rival over a girl friend, while another is suffering from a fractured skull, after a bottle-missile caught him unawares in “Eldorado”, that night.

Further away, the remains of what were human beings only a few hours before, are lying peacefully on the slabs of the C.H.U. Mortuary, following a ghastly motor accident early that morning. “Well, it is not too bad. They died while celebrating Christmas! They would be rewarded in heaven, maybe. Fortunately they attended this one mass during the year; that of Christmas before they died...” Someone thinks.

After the one hour spent in church admiring the beautiful girls and “calculating” which one of them would be their partners at the dancing that night, where is the Saviour Jesus Christ in all these festivities? How do men celebrate a party in total disrespect for the values for which the Host was born, lived and died to uphold? And did you say they were celebrating the birth of a Saviour? A Saviour from

what? One is tempted to ask. What have they been saved from? What these good people have been saved from is difficult to tell. However, it is evident that they have been saved into Hedonism, the belief that pleasure is the chief good.

On seeing the way mankind -pagans, agonistics, atheists, communists and Buddhists alike, as if they all just got converted and abandoned their hatred and contempt for Christ decides to engage in celebrating and for this, plunges into every wicked deed you can imagine, one would think they were celebrating deliverance from all else except the sins for which Christ died. We may just be celebrating someone else's birthday, Epicurus' maybe, but not Christ's. Definitely not.

Self-deception of this scale and kind stuns the mind and renders language dumb. It is disturbing and regrettable that Adam's race decides to satisfy its most carnal and brutish desires on the day it is believed Christ was born. Nothing is said of His central themes- the priority of the soul and the spirit. Rather, far from being Christians, these are hardened intruders since

no one invited them to any party, let alone the birthday of the Saviour whose salvation they reject!
But who is this man who is forgotten on His birthday?
Who is this Saviour whose salvation is rejected?

About 2000 years ago, in the city of Bethlehem, a baby boy was actually born to Mary and Joseph, a young Jewish couple. Named Jesus, meaning "*He shall save his people from their sins,*" He was also called the Messiah or the Christ, being the one anointed for a special mission (Matthew 1:21; John 4:25). He did not remain the "baby Jesus" the Christmas carols sing about, for He grew up to be the man who by His words and deeds has most significantly influenced the welfare and history of mankind. You only need to read the gospels to agree with me that by His life, death and resurrection, no man ever performed as many miracles as Jesus did. But if He was indeed born, it was for the sole purpose of dying for the sake of Adam's fallen race.

Consequently, at age 33, He was nailed to a rugged cross where He bled and died. He died for you and me, so that by believing in Him, we may be saved from the just penalty for sin that we were bound to receive from