

# How Christmas was born

.....told with an African touch

Written

By

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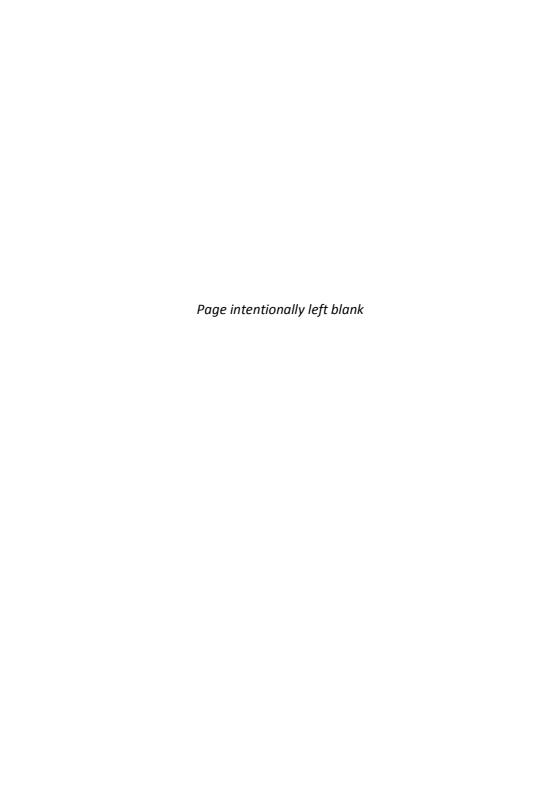
Designed and Published by

**Heart2World Publishing** 

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# CHAPTER ONE

"I am pregnant!"

"For who?"

She see looked straight into his amazed eyes and saw the reflection of a stupid woman in his eyeballs. She didn't know how best to say it but she couldn't lie. She knew he wasn't responsible but she couldn't keep it from him.

She had gone first to her parents with the truth of the matter. It took only the grace of God to restrain her father from knocking her head off her body.

"Like mother like daughter" he had said as he left the room foaming; only he could interpret what that meant.

Her mother on the other just let the tears flow without noise; she bit her fingers like she was the one at the center of the shame. After many minutes of silence, she got up to leave the room as well and said "Don't tell him!"

Which was more grievous, getting pregnant or hiding it? Maria knew she couldn't do it; if she did he probably

wouldn't know the truth but she couldn't do it. She didn't have the heart.

Joe looked at the woman standing before him and felt like some who had paid in gold for a fake product. She was taking his gentility for stupidity. Could she try this rubbish with other men? Was she expecting him to sheepishly accept a child that wasn't his? "Women can be so cruel" he said half to her half to himself.

That night Joe regretted letting her go peacefully he should have closed his eyes to love and shouted out so that she could be a lesson to other infidels. How he hated her now, he had loved her yet she betrayed him so sorely.

That night Joe felt like getting drunk but he feared he would disclose the shameful secret if he did. Instead he drank a concoction that would make him sleep. He had series of nightmares of other men pulling his beloved's legs and tugging her skirt. Water escaped his eyes and his sweat soaked the bed as the visions continued unabated.

Finally, he saw a man standing before him whose clothes shone as light. Joe was surprised he wasn't afraid but he knew that whatever this man told him was the mind of God and the correct step to take. The man touched his shoulder and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Joe woke up with a smile on his lips and with only a name on his heart "Jesus".

#### CHAPTER TWO

Joe didn't know if she told her parents about the pregnancy but with this development they had to have the wedding this month.

Joe wiped his face with the edge of tunic as he entered their compound. The sun was shining bright and hot but he knew the sweat was more of the internal heat than the outward. He saw his soon to be mother in law coming out of the house and braced himself.

What would he say is the reason for the hurry? As he thought on the right words he saw her dash towards him, a cold hand gripped his heart. Did she know anything?

Maria's mother fell before him and buried her tear filled face in his dusty feet. "Please kill me inside, don't kill me outside!" she kept on saying.

Joe knew instantly that Maria had told them. But did she tell them he was responsible for the pregnancy? What exactly did this woman mean by this gesture? Joe wanted to give in to male ego and press further but he remembered the dream.

"Mama, please stand up." He said forcing her up as gently as he could. "I don't know what you are talking about; I am here only to ask that the wedding be this month."

Joe felt a load drop from her shoulders as he spoke. She looked into his eyes with utter disbelief; she had tears running down her cheeks and a smile on her lips. She hugged him fully neglecting traditions prohibiting such gesture. Joe restrained himself from sobbing as well, this baby was going to change many things but he had no choice but to accept it.

Hours later they finalized arrangements but his bride was nowhere in the house.

He didn't ask but knew she must have been sent off to a relative. As Joe left the compound, Abish, Maria's older sister, caught up with him.

Abish never liked him or anyone for that matter. Since her husband divorced her she had fully unveiled the wolf in her. "Carpenter" she called to him grabbing his arm.

"I know my sister is pregnant and you want to cover it up. I won't allow it. I am not the only witch in this house; apparently my sweet sister is not innocent. Everyone will hear!"

Before Joe could protest she left him and dashed off. Joe knew she would do it, and the judgment of the elders in line with the law could be examination by stripes. Stripes are bad but the shame would be worse. There was only one way out - a divine intervention. Joe placed his hands on his chest and turned to the direction of the temple praying for help.

That night the same man Joe saw in the dream visited him and said "Fear not, she that threatens you shall not be able speak until she knows that God rules the affairs of men."

At dawn when Abish arose she opened her mouth but there were no words.

### CHAPTER THREE

"Is there any joy in being pregnant?" Maria thought. If there was, she was yet to see it.

She sat under the oak tree facing the dried well thinking of many things. The well reminded her so much of herself; life had always been a sweet better experience for her.

When she was born her parents had prayed for a male child. The turbulence her mother experienced in the pregnancy period made everyone to

believe the prophecy. It had been said that it would be a male child who would reclaim the kingdom for the Jews.

When she came forth, her mother wept for days fully disappointed that she couldn't give her husband a male child after eighteen years of marriage. After the birth of Abish their first child, they had waited for years and now it came - a girl. It was now too late to give her husband an heir. Her mother called her Maria meaning "Bitter".

Maria looked at the deserted well and felt as dry as the well. Everyone had rejoiced when Joe, the carpenter, asked to marry her. None of the younger men ever looked at her twice, everyone knew her story and struggles; they called her jinxed. Her mother had been so delighted when Joe came, at least the carpenter would free her of her sorrowful presence.

Just when she had something really worthwhile to celebrate this pregnancy happened. If the news of this pregnancy got out she would never be able to face the people again, who would believe her if she told them how the child was conceived.

"Maria! Maria"

Eliza called walking towards her. Eliza, who hitherto was barren but now with

child, was the only one she could confide in after what her parents said to her.

The events of the night Maria arrived here at Eliza's home no doubt reinforced Gabriel's word. Eliza had prophesied for hours about the child Maria carried. If Maria had any doubts left it finished that night; Gabriel gave the news, her monthly flow ceased and Eliza confirmed it without any prior knowledge.

"Maria! Good news! Good news!" Eliza said hugging her as much as her protruded belly would allow.
"Arrangements have been finalised, you are to be married this month."

"What? Joe came?" Maria asked with wide open eyes.

"Yes, he did." Eliza said almost jumping.
"Our God is faithful and you are blessed by Him."

Eliza drew Maria closer and laid her head on her chest. She then said to her in a low confident voice, "Sweetheart no matter what people say about you, remember that you are blessed and highly favored among women. By this child you carry we all shall have redemption."

The wedding day came. Vows were made and the bride became the wife. Joe had only one thing on his mind as the celebration proceeded, how was he to have such a beauty in his house and not touch her for the next eight months?

# CHAPTER FOUR

"Joe dear, its best we get going." Maria said rubbing her hands on the tools her husband worked with. She gazed in the distance tracking the last of their neighbors as they left Galilee. The whole community was now almost full of the original indigenes.

Caesar Octavious had given the instruction for the census. This development was no doubt to increase that which was remitted to him in taxes. The number of tax evaders had been on the increase and the capital's funds could barely meet the construction

projects embarked upon by his administration.

There was a great exodus of people; everyone was going back to their ancestral homes. Joe knew he had to get going as well but there was so much that needed to be done - they needed money. The influx of people into Galilee brought what he needed, Maria was now close to delivery and money was nonnegotiable if he was to get a decent apartment.

Joe looked at Maria and felt a deep pain in his heart. How did he qualify to father this miracle child? On one hand he wasn't a rich man by any standards and he wasn't even close to being a saint. "Lord why me? Why me?" he asked silently looking up to heaven.

Joe held her hands and said, "Dear I promise after this job we will move." Maria squeezed his hands and said a silent prayer for him. She turned to enter the house and Joe thanked the Lord for her. Her humility never ceased to amaze him. He wondered if it was the baby she carried that made her so perfect.

Two days later they embarked on their journey. After nights of sleeping in border communities they eventually got to Bethlehem. Joe knew the area well but the population of people made it different. He had left years ago with his

father to pursue a better livelihood in Galilee. He father and since died and he continued the business.

Everywhere he turned to was full. About two hours ago, Maria's water had bust and they both knew that the baby beckoned. Many things had been revealed in the dreams but not this. Joe was unable to think clearly; he had used up all the ideas he had.

They saw a manger and Maria pleaded with him that they stay there. Joe would have objected if there was possibility for anything close to a decent accommodation but there wasn't. They turned in and he gave the keeper of the manger the amount he demanded.

"Joe dear, I need a midwife!"

It was when she said this that Joe actually remembered it. They needed help and he could see the fear in her eyes. He squeezed her hands with faked confidence as he said "All will be well."

# CHAPTER FIVE

Joe went back to the keeper of manger asking where he could get a midwife. The man collected some more money and sent for his mother. The woman arrived and immediately attended to Maria. "The baby is upon us!" She said with a high pitched voice.

Joe wanted to ask if the woman actually was a midwife but he was satisfied enough to have an elderly woman there with them.

"Push! Push!" The woman kept on shouting.

After about thirty minutes Joe was sweating profusely, he was pacing up and down. His ranting was just below the pitch of the laboring women. Finally the woman asked him to wait outside. Joe was reluctant but he knew it was probably best that he left.

For what seemed like hours he kept on walking aimlessly around the manger. The bleating of sheep did not help matters; Joe felt he was going to lose his mind to worry. "Maybe I should go inside", he thought to himself.

Joe decided and was about to go in when he noticed there was silence. No voices came from inside, the animals gave no sound and the air seemed to go thick. Joe couldn't breathe.

A noise was heard. Joe heard the voice of a crying baby and he rushed in just as the woman shouted "Blessed is the name of the Lord!"

After the baby was cleaned up the woman bowed respectful and left them. Joe looked at his wife and his son; he knew his life would never be the same again. He had imagined that the baby would have special features, like wings, golden skin or even a crown on his head. The baby was nothing of such; he

looked at this 'ordinary child', touched the cheeks of the sleeping baby and said "Jesus!"

That night men came to the manger seeking the newly born king. Joe had no doubt that they referred to Jesus but he said "My wife but to bed today and we are here." The men jumped on one another with great joy and explained to Joe that they had come from the East and had followed his star to the manger.

When they came into the manger, they bowed themselves severally to the ground and proclaimed "Hail the King! Hail the King!"

Joe watching them could not restrain himself as he bowed himself to ground with tears in his eyes saying "Hail the king!"

The men spoke for many minutes about books, prophecies and stars that they had read and followed for many years. They declined holding the baby saying they were unworthy to have physical contact with the King. The men said to Maria, "We are content with what our eyes have seen, men greater than us desired this but didn't see it. We are content."

The men gave gifts to the baby and left.

Joe stood in front of the manger and looked up to heaven. The stars shined brightly and he imagined them singing to one another the glorious thing that had happened in Bethlehem of Judah.

Joe raised his hands high pointing to the night sky and said,

"Praise the Lord!

### About the Author

Seun Adebowale is passionate about raising and training champions in life to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. He writes, he preaches, he teaches and he believes that a few can make a remarkable

positive impact. He lives in Lagos, Nigeria.

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