



## Ephraim the Syrian: Concealed and Revealed

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*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever. (Deut. 29:29)*

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Ephraim was a fourth-century Christian teacher and hymn writer among Syrian Christians. It's thought that his songs may have been sung by all-female choirs accompanied by a lyre. As we begin our exploration of the birth of Christ, Ephraim reminds us that it would be impossible for human beings to speak of God had not God revealed Himself through Christ. He goes on to speak of how the physical birth of Jesus makes possible for us to be spiritually born again.

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How can a mortal person speak of you, the All-Life Giver,  
who left the heights of his majesty, and abased  
himself in humility?

You who raise up all in your birth, raise up my weak mind  
to declare your birth;

not that I may fathom your majesty, but that I may  
proclaim your grace.

***Blessed be he who conceals and reveals in what  
he proclaims!***

It is a great marvel that the Son dwelt fully in a body;  
dwelt there fully and it was enough for him; dwelt there,  
though not bound by it.

He was fully within his body, and his bounds reached  
fully to his Father.

He dwelt fully in his body, and at the same time dwelt  
fully in all things.

***Blessed is he who, though without bounds, was bounded!***

Your majesty is concealed from us; your grace is  
revealed before us.

I will be silent, O Lord, of your majesty; and I will  
tell of your grace.

Your grace clung to you, and bowed you down  
to our vileness:

both straightening and enlarging your majesty.

***Blessed be the mighty one who became little and so  
became great!***

Glory to him who became lowly, though lofty he  
was by his nature.

He became the firstborn of Mary in love, though he is the  
firstborn of Godhead.

He became the offspring of Joseph in name, though he is  
the offspring of the Most High.

He became human by his own will, though he is  
God by his nature.

***Blessed be your glory which put on our image!***

Yes, O Lord, your birth has become a mother for  
all creatures;

for it laboured anew and gave new birth to the humanity  
which gave birth to you.

The reason you came to be born was that humanity might  
be reborn in your likeness.

You were born of your people bodily; your people are born  
of you spiritually.

Your birth became the author of birth for all your people.

***Blessed be he who became a youth and gave youth  
to all!***

O Mighty One who became a baby, in your birth have  
you begotten me!

O Pure One who was baptised, let your washing  
wash away my filth.

O Living One who was buried, may I gain life  
through your death!

***Glory to all of you from all of us!***

Pray that this Christmas you might see more of the  
glory of God's grace to us in Christ.