

- † I was wondering this week whether Jesus celebrated his birthday like we do. I could not find any definitive source to verify whether Jews in that day celebrated birthdays or not. But it really doesn't matter.
 - I also thought I might research Hanukkah, because Jesus did celebrate that holiday, even though it was not required by Jewish scripture. I thought I might develop some imagery that could connect Jesus celebrating the liberation of the temple with our celebration of Christmas. But Hanukkah doesn't really matter either.
 - On my Facebook page this week, there was a little running debate about the exact date of the birth of Jesus, but this doesn't matter that much either.
 - What matters is that Jesus was born, that our God – who has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – decided the Son should come and be born in the form of a human baby.

- † We call it the incarnation, which means God became human. It sounds absurd. Lots of religions teach that humans can become gods, but we believe the divine Son became human.
 - This is a true miracle, and it is one of the greatest miracles in the Bible, but even that is not the greatest significance of this holiday.

- † One of the names given to Jesus in Jewish prophecy is "Immanuel," which in Hebrew means "God is with us." On Sunday, I mentioned that God being with us was a blessing to us in many ways.
 - As God on earth, Jesus taught us about God in a way we could understand. We could see the nature of God lived out in a human life.
 - As the unique divine-man, Jesus showed us the way of God, the way people are supposed to live as the image of God we were created to be. He provided us with teachings and an example to follow.
 - And because he lived as one of us, Jesus proved to us that God understands us, that he knows how we struggle and suffer, and that he cares.
 - All of that does matter, but it still is not what is most important. It is not the main reason the Son of God would choose to come to be one of us.

- † The main reason the Son of God came to be born as a human baby was to offer us reconciliation with God. Some of my friends get angry when I speak like this, because they want to keep Easter separate from Christmas, but you can't. The Son of God came as a human so that humans could come to be with God.
 - You and I have four problems. We were born with a corrupted human nature. We are held accountable for our species failing to fulfill its purpose of representing God. We each have chosen to walk apart from God at least some of the time. And we cannot fix any of this.
 - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are perfectly pure and righteous. They cannot tolerate impurity and evil, which is what characterizes all of us. But because God knew that we could not fix the problem ourselves, the Son came as a human, not only to show us the way, but to provide the way back to God.
 - By living a perfect human life, Jesus was a worthy sacrifice for each of us in God's eyes. Because he was the divine Son, Jesus could take on all our punishment from God the Father – all the condemnation we deserve – in the process of his death on the cross. And then he could rise from the grave in the resurrection, to prove his identity and accomplishment.

- † This is why he came: so we could have a relationship with God and be adopted into God's family; so we could be forgiven of our impurities and acts of evil, and declared righteous in God's sight; so we could experience spiritual rebirth and transformation of our nature and character, to be like him like the image of God we were created to be; and so we could have an inheritance of eternity spent with God, first in Heaven and then on the renewed Earth.
 - Christmas brings us joy, peace, and a sense of God's love because it was at Christmas that God came to rescue us, to alter our destiny and bring us back to himself. We celebrate the birth of Jesus because it changes everything.