

MONTH OF JESUS: HIS BIRTH

Luke 2:6-7 ... “So it was that while they were there [in Bethlehem] the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

When you tell children the story of David and Goliath, they are most interested in the size of Goliath? How tall was he? Was he as strong as Superman? Children do not understand that the most important aspect of this story is David's obedience to God. When we tell the story of Jonah most people are interested in the fish. Was it a huge whale? Did it stink inside? They miss the point that the story is about Jonah's disobedience to God. Jesus walked on the water not so he could stay dry, but to help his disciples increase their faith, just as God parted the Red Sea not so the Children of Israel could cross on dry land, but to demonstrate his power and increase their faith. He could have just as easily provided a fleet of boats, but that would not have impressed the Israelites.

Why did Jesus come as a baby? Why did God not simply send him to earth full-grown, in a cloud with trumpets and fireworks? A big entrance certainly would have greatly impressed everyone. However, God sent Jesus to be born as a baby, to grow up as a young carpenter, and then to have a short – 2 or 3 year teaching ministry – so that he could more easily relate to the people; so they would listen to him because of his wisdom, not because he roamed around Israel with a brass band. Today when a king or president travels to an event, he may arrive in a big jet, helicopter or limousine, surrounded by body-guards with flags waving and mobs of people clamoring to see and touch him. Few people listen to his speech; they are more interested in the spectacle of his arrival and visit; they press close for selfies.

Had Jesus arrived in that manner, few would have listened to what he had to say, while others would have accused him of not understanding the hardships they face. Only a God who took the form of a man, who was born as a baby and had to be trained as a child, who experienced the same troubles and temptations as other men, and then spoke to them without fanfare could be taken seriously. When we tell the story of Jesus' birth, it is important to make sure our children understand the significance of his birth, not just that he was born in a barn, or that his first bed was a feeding box for cattle. His mother went through the same pain and agony of giving birth as women do today (except there was no caesarian option then). The baby Jesus surely cried when he was hungry or wet, and he had to be taught to walk and talk.

Jesus, the baby and child, is relatable by us because he is like us. Had he come as a full-grown man in a cloud, we could not imagine him being like us. He was able to teach about humility because he lived a humble life. He was able to teach about helping the poor because his family was poor. Jesus came as a baby and grew to be a man – just like us – so that we would trust him and listen to his wisdom.

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