

Think about it! (19)

The Spanish word for Christmas is "Navidad". It comes from another, similar word, which means "birth". And, as everyone knows (or do they?), the birth that is celebrated at Christmas is that of Jesus of Nazareth, although, as is also well known, Jesus wasn't born in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem, a small town (in those days, at least) some six miles from Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth (up in the north of the country) at the time, but they had to go to Bethlehem to register, because their families were originally from Bethlehem, the town of their famous ancestor, King David, who lived about a thousand years before Christ. So that was how it came about that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

So, why celebrate the birth of Jesus? Well, there are lots of good reasons for doing so, but there are three in particular which stand out on account of their obvious importance:

1. Unlike any other birth, before or after, Jesus' birth – or, to be more precise, his conception – was a virgin birth; he was born to a virgin. Jesus had no human father, just a mother. His conception was supernatural, a real work of God.
2. Unlike any other birth, before or after, Jesus' birth was not the beginning of his existence as a person; he already existed beforehand, and always had, as the Son of God. More than a birth, it was a coming; the Son of God came to this world from the other world, heaven. Without ceasing to be God, he became a human being.
3. Unlike any other birth, before or after, Jesus' birth had a very clear purpose, a mission: to save sinners, giving his life for them. It may seem like a contradiction, but Jesus was born to die; he came here for that very reason: to die, in fulfilment of all the ancient prophecies about the Messiah and Saviour who would come.

For these (and other) reasons we celebrate Jesus' birth, not only every 25th December – nobody knows the real date when he was born, and it's totally unimportant – but every day. When we celebrate his birth, we are also celebrating the salvation of all the people who believe in him.

But as is pretty obvious, the true meaning of Christmas is becoming more and more forgotten about; we're not interested in it; we're more interested in other things: in buying and selling; in eating and drinking; in giving and receiving presents; in a word, in having a good time. "Don't let them spoil our Christmas by sticking religion into it!"

What's the best way of celebrating Christmas? Asking ourselves who Jesus, born in Bethlehem, really was; finding out about him and about the message that revolves around him; believing in him as our Saviour and letting him and the good news of the gospel transform our lives. Eating, drinking and spending money are things that we can do whenever we want, but why not give a bit of time and attention to the message about Jesus?

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