

From the Pastor



Celebrating Christmas

What are some of the traditions that your family has for Christmas? I wonder what traditions Jesus' family had. Remember, for Jesus, Christmas was also His birthday.

You know how we often have small cakes for one-year-olds' birthdays? Jesus' cake would probably have been given to Him in Egypt. Right after He was born, the family traveled to Egypt. Look at how Matthew records that event:

Matthew 2:13 *Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." (ESV)*

When Jesus was a toddler, the family moved back to Israel. The story continues in Matthew:

Matthew 2:19-23 *¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,²⁰saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene. (ESV)*

I wonder if Joseph would have made toys for Jesus on His birthday. I can imagine Mary and Joseph marking the door each year to measure Jesus' height. When Jesus turned three, He would have had His hair cut for the first time. Mary would have started to teach Him the Bible at age five and He would have started to study the Mishnah at age ten. At age thirteen, Jesus would have had His Bar Mitzvah.

Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem for His Bar Mitzvah. On the way home, His parents lost track of Him because He had stayed in the temple. A few days later, they found Jesus in the temple and told Him to come home. This is what is said about Jesus after this event:

Luke 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (ESV)*

Christmas for Jesus was the day to celebrate His birthday. We have a tradition at our church to make birthday cakes for Jesus. I like this tradition because it reminds us that Jesus was just like you and me. He, too, would wake up on His birthday excited to see what gifts He would get.

Christmas for us is the day that we remember God's greatest gift for us: His Son coming to earth like one of us, celebrating His birthday just like you and me.

