

Why the Birth of Jesus is Celebrated?

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Morning Service for Christmas

Petersham, MA

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Readings: Mark 9:2-13; Mark 14:26; Mark 14:32-42

The celebration of Birthdays.

In the family.

Among friends—Otto by the window.

Great characters, Washington, Lincoln, etc.

Jesus—Not because of his birth. We do not know the date, or the year. Mark, the oldest does not mention it.

In fact the earliest mention of what we now call Christmas, is in the calendar of Philocalus, which was drawn up at Rome in 336, A.D. Up to the end of the third century, the birth was celebrated on Jan 6<sup>th</sup>. Not until 375 was the change made at Antioch from Jan xth to Dec. 25.

So we may say that by the year 400 or earlier the custom of celebrating the birth of Jesus had become a part of the Christian world.

Why? Not because of the legends associated with his birth. They are beautiful poetry, and tinsel with which the package is wrapped. The real significance of the life of Jesus has even to this date dawned upon the vast throngs of Christendom.

The two passages that I read for a Scripture lesson are the two great events in his life, revelations of his character that made his life significant.

I spoke last Sunday of his declaration in the synagogue at Nazareth as to the end to which he was devoting his life.

The enthusiasm and consecration of youth to a great and generous purpose.

In time came the tests.

One before his immediate followers, his disciples. Does he really mean what he says? Has he the stuff to take it, as we would say?

Imagine the feeling of his three disciples when they finally came to the conviction that he could take [it], that he was in the great tradition of his race, the tradition of Moses and Elijah.

Two—Gethsemene.\*\* Face-to-face with the question of whether or not he could go through with the role that he had started. Not easy.

But he tried, and ushered in a new era in human history, and that is why in this year 1947 we celebrate the birth of a Jewish boy born in Bethlehem of Judea nearly two thousand years ago.