

What's Jesus Doing on His Birthday ?

Philippians 2: 5-11; Hebrews 1: 3

Birthdays? It depends on where & when

“Today is my birthday. April 17 is what’s on my driver’s license and other documents. But I don’t know for sure, and probably never will. All I know is that I was born in Cambodia, sometime during 1970.

In Cambodia, we didn’t celebrate birthdays, so while my mother & father knew the date, I had no reason to remember it. Instead, my early years were marked by joyous events like the New Year, the Water Festival and various Buddhist holidays.”

- Excerpted from “A Birthday Wrapped in Cambodian History” by Loung Ung; NY Times; April 17, 2005.

No birthday dates recorded in the Bible, but ...

- detailed family trees (genealogies)
- references to actual points in history, such as reigns of kings and emperors

Birthday celebrations – only for the rich

- A poor carpenter's family in Nazareth, 4 brothers and at least 2 sisters
- The likely early death of Joseph
- Such a family would have other priorities

Death more important than birth

- Birth not as significant as how a person lives his/her life

*A good name is better than fine perfume,
and the day of death better than
the day of birth. (Ecclesiastes 7: 1)*


- “When a person is born, it is not known what he will be like when grown and what his deeds will be, whether righteous or wicked, good or evil. When he dies, however, if he departs with a good name ... people should rejoice.”

– midrash on Ecclesiastes 7: 1

Death more important than birth

- Early church more concerned with celebrating the (death and) resurrection of Jesus

Savior: born to die



Today in the
town of David a
Savior
has been born to
you; he is the
Messiah,
the Lord.

Luke 2:11

Christmas ...

- day to celebrate birth of Jesus Christ
- the incarnate beginning of the Son of God
- Incarnation of Jesus Christ: a mystery
- Mystery: a wonderful declaration of spiritual truth, revealed by God through divine inspiration

God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)

Humans

Jesus Christ, Son of God

Jesus took on a human body and human nature



Incarnation

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God ...

(Philippians 2: 5-8a, NLT)

Incarnation

5-8 Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human!* Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life ...

(Philippians 2: 5-8a, MSG)

“Jesus was God and man in one person, that
God and man might be happy together
again.” - George Whitefield (1714-1770)

Advent - Jesus' arrival/coming

“ALREADY”

1ST Coming

(past grace)

RIGHT NOW

“NOT YET”

2ND Coming

(future grace)

Advent: wait expectantly for Jesus' arrival

“ALREADY”

1ST Coming

Birth/childhood

Public Ministry

Died on cross

Resurrection

Past grace

RIGHT NOW

Present grace?

“NOT YET”

2ND Coming

believers will

be with Him

Judgment

new heaven &

new earth

Future grace

What's missing ?

“ALREADY”
1ST Coming

Birth/childhood

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Apostles' Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the

Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

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Luke's account of Jesus' ascension

3 After [Jesus'] suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, ... they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1: 3-4)

7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. (Acts 1: 7-9)

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

(Acts 1: 10-11)



What happened?
Why did it happen?
What difference does it make for us?

What is the ascension ?

- Not merely Jesus' return to the Father
- To “ascend” the throne

King Edward's Chair in Westminster Abbey



The ascension ?

- “steps” and “higher chair” - symbolic
- Official transfer of authority
- Coronation ceremony
- It’s a new enthronement for Jesus
- God-Man Jesus takes His place as new king and head of human race

A new state of being for Jesus Christ

- After resurrection, Jesus still had human nature, but transformed body
- With ascension, Jesus exits space-time continuum into glorified state
- No more time-space limitations for Jesus Christ
- Jesus is now “... actively engaged in the continuation of his mediatorial work” with access of anyone in any place and all at once

No more human limitations

“He is still our prophet, teaching and instructing us with his Word, but now he does it everywhere through the Holy Spirit. He is still our king, but now he guides and directs his entire church through the spiritual gifts he gives his people ... And he is still our priest, counseling and supporting us, but now representing us before the very face of the Father.”

– Timothy Keller, “Encounter with Jesus”

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1: 3)

- **Right hand of throne ~ the one who executed the king's authority and rule**

A “new” enthronement

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... [God’s] incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 [God] exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, ... 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Eph. 1: 18-23)

The complete Hymn to Christ

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

The complete Hymn to Christ

- 9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names,
- 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2: 5-11, NLT)

Ascended Christ: gets things done for our good

And we know that for those who love God
all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his
purpose. (Romans 8: 28, ESV)

“You intended to harm me, but God
intended it for good to accomplish what is
now being done, the saving of many lives.”
(Genesis 50: 20)

Our Lord Jesus' betrayal and death

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

(Colossians 2: 15)

Anxious ?

Feel you can't keep everything going?

- Don't believe in the ascension?
- Not appropriating the present grace of Jesus' first coming?

Ascended Christ is our High Priest

- **Jesus guarantees us that all of God's promises are a "YES" in Him**
 - **Forgiveness of sins**
 - **Acceptance by God**
 - **Father's love for us**
 - **Father's delight in us**

Ascended Christ is our High Priest

26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day ... He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ... 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7: 26-27, 25)

Ascended Christ is our Advocate

...if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins ... (1 John 2: 1-2, NLT)

Missing present grace ?

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**What will Jesus be doing as we
celebrate His birthday ?**