

A BABY? WHY A BABY?
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When it came to the salvation of humanity, it seems to me that God had many options to choose from. Well, not another flood – he'd given his promise about that one. But this is God, and he'd be more than able to send angel messengers throughout the earth, or speak through thunder and lightning, or even to just show up in all his majesty and start talking. Overthrow the Romans? No problem. Re-establish Israel's rule? As good as done.

However – express God's great love for his people? Draw his children together, cleansing them through Jesus Christ, helping them to live lives filled with God's grace and forgiveness and joy as they carry out God's mission together? Well, no. Not so much.

I heard a story a long time ago – it's so old, you've probably heard it, too. A man was in his living room one afternoon, watching a flock of birds who'd gathered on his lawn. They'd begin to fly and then get confused, not realizing that what looked like empty air was actually a huge glass picture window. As the man watched, two birds crashed and died. He was upset and concerned and ran outside, waving his arms and trying to warn them. He shouted at them to go away. And of course, all that happened was that he terrified the birds and they flew everywhere.

He went back inside. As he watched, birds began returning. A couple more birds died. The man was more and more upset and beginning to be desperate to find a way to let the birds know they were in danger. And he thought, "They'll never listen to me this way. If I could just be a bird for a few minutes, I'd be right with them and they wouldn't be afraid and I could tell them how to save their lives."

Which is at least one of the reasons why Jesus Christ, our Savior, Son of God, came to us as a baby. Why should we be afraid of a baby? Jesus grew up as a child and young boy, raised by his parents. Everyone around him watched it happen. He was never wealthy, exalted, or particularly favored. As a man, he was a homeless, itinerant rabbi, who wanted only to proclaim and, even more important, demonstrate the kingdom of God here on earth – righteousness, peace, and joy.

His life was normal, often painful, very human. Hebrews tells us that even Jesus learned obedience from the things that he suffered. We can't look at his arrest and crucifixion and say, "Well, he was God, you know. Probably wasn't all that bad for him." Yes, Jesus was God. Jesus was also 100% human. If he had not come as a baby, grown up as a man, and suffered as he did, how could we expect him to understand our own sufferings?

God knew that anything else would just terrify us. God was so intent on saving our lives and making us his own that he was willing to become one of us, with all the humility and pain and joy that are part of being human. And so we still sing today,

Come, and worship, come and worship; worship Christ the newborn king.