



Three Christmas Questions

Matthew 1:21

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Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-25

Most of us are familiar with the events that surrounded the birth of our Lord. Even those who never attend church or read the Bible would probably be able to give you a couple of the basic elements of the Christmas story, including the virgin birth, Mary and Joseph, animals, the full inn, Bethlehem, shepherds, and the angelic announcement.

Other things are associated with the Christmas story (although happening some time later) including the star in the east, the visit of the Magi, the giving of the gifts, and Herod's order to slaughter all the male children two

years old and younger.

For believers, all of these details only serve to set the stage for the element of the Christmas story that is of real significance.

What was it really all about? Was it just Magi and a baby born in a manger? Let's focus on **Matthew 1:21** and answer three questions.

"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

Who was the Baby?

Who was this Person that was born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago? Who was this Person who so influenced history that we date all events as they relate to His birth? Who was that Baby in a manger?

First, Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is a **man**. He was born as any other man. He had a mother. He came into the world as a baby. He lived, grew developed and learned. (**Luke 2:52**)

Matthew tells us in his narrative that He was a man Who was given the name of "Jesus." That is a very human name. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua which means "Savior" or "God saves." So although "Jesus" is the name of His humanity, *even that name suggests more than mere humanity*. The angel said to Joseph that this One named Jesus would *"save His people from their sins."*

He is a man, but not **just** a man. The text indicates that He is far more than a mere a man. It is important that we don't forget about Jesus' humanity. He was not a spirit, an illusion, or a phantom. But it is also essential

that we don't forget that this One being born as a man is none other than God Himself!

A couple of things from the text indicate this. First, we have that vital piece of information that Jesus was born of a virgin. Mary had had no relations with a man and yet she was pregnant. This is why Joseph was considering breaking off his betrothal.

The angel had to inform Joseph that this baby was not conceived as a result of human relations or some intimacy with a man. Rather, Mary's pregnancy was the result of a divine act. It was a miraculous conception.

Second, the angel told Joseph that the Baby conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit. This was no ordinary baby, He was the Holy One of Israel, conceived of the Holy Spirit.

This birth was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. **Isaiah 7:14 - Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.**

Then, in case we are prone to miss the import of such a statement, Matthew goes through the trouble of translating for us the name "Immanuel" which means "God with us."

Who is this Baby? He is God with us.

Human? Yes. Completely. Full humanity in perfection – without sin. But also, Immanuel, which is "God with us."

It is important that you and I understand who Jesus Christ is. People are prone to call Him a *good teacher*, a *good philosopher* or a *religious leader*. He has been called a revolutionary, a martyr, and a zealot. He has been labeled as one who simply was ahead of his time religiously and ethically.

But in all these assessments of Christ and His influence upon humanity, there is one common element. They all make Him out to be nothing more than an ordinary man. These evaluations of Christ will grant that He had an extraordinary vision, extraordinary abilities, and was an extraordinary communicator, but, they say, He was just an ordinary man.

One thing that nearly every skeptic and unbeliever will assent to is that He was a good person who did good things. But I have to disagree with the skeptic at this point. He was not good. . . *if He was not God.*

That is to say, if Jesus Christ was not and is not God

in human flesh, then He was not good. Why would I say such a thing? Because, He claimed to be God in human flesh.

For me to assert that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh is not for me to say something of Him that He never said. It is not for me to elevate Him beyond Who He claimed to be. He claimed equality with the Father. He worked on the Sabbath and claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath. He took upon Himself the prerogative of forgiving sins, something only God can do. He claimed the authority of God Himself. He claimed to have the nature of God. He accepted worship as God, claimed the prerogatives of Deity and used divine titles and names for Himself.

Jesus' testimony of Himself is that He is God in human flesh. He claimed to be the I AM – Jehovah of the Old Testament who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and He claimed to exist before Abraham.

Now follow some simple thinking with me for a moment. Jesus was a man who claimed to be God. If He was not, then there exists only two possibilities.

First, Jesus was not God and knew it, yet claimed to be God. He even performed miraculous signs in an attempt to convince others that His claims were true. If He was not God and knew it, yet claimed that title for Himself, He was a liar. In which case, He was not good.

Second, Jesus was not God, but thought He was and therefore He claimed to be God. Now, if Jesus was not God, but thought He was, He was not a liar but a lunatic. He was delusional. We have special padded rooms for people who think things like that! If this is the case, then Jesus was a self deceived lunatic, in which case, you cannot say He was good, can you?

So Jesus Christ is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Who He says He is - Lord.¹

He is Who He claimed to be, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Creator, Redeemer, the God of Israel, the Great "I AM," Immanuel, God with us.

Who was that Baby? He was none other than the only true God - God the Son - equal with the Father, second person of the Holy Trinity who came in human

¹C.S. Lewis was the first to develop the Liar, Lunatic, Lord dilemma. I read it in his book *Mere Christianity*.

flesh. He was the sinless Son of God who became the God-Man.

Why was He born?

This question was answered by the angel in what he said to Joseph. *“You shall name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.”*

He was not born to be a revolutionary or a rebel. He was not born just to teach and do good things. His purpose for coming was *“to save His people from their sins.”*

He lived to die. Jesus said of Himself that He “came to seek and to save the lost.” (**Luke 19:10**) Jesus said that He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (**Mark 10:45**). He knew that He had come to pay the price for the sins of all those that will believe on Him for salvation. He came to shed His blood, to give His life, to die. All of His life was a preparation for His offering of Himself upon the cross as a payment for sin.

You have to look at what Jesus said of Himself. He claimed to be God in human flesh who came to earth to take the penalty of sin upon Himself.

Does it disturb you that I should talk about the death of Christ, His blood, and the cross at Christmas? Well, that is why there is a Christmas. That is why He came. That is what Christmas is all about. It is not about world peace. It is not about a warm fuzzy feeling, family, presents, and eggnog. It is about a Man who was born to die. His birth was all for His death.

He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.

How can I know Him?

One of the saddest things about the Christmas season is that millions will celebrate the birthday of a Person they don't even know. I don't know about you, but I see it as a pointless expense of my energies and ambitions to take a day of my year to spend celebrating the birth of a Person I have never met and do not know. I don't even take a full day off and spend a lot of energy celebrating my own birthday!

Are you going to set aside an entire day of your life to celebrate the birth of a Person you have never met or known? Do you know Christ? Have you ever met

Him? You must ask yourself that question. There may be some of you reading this who have come to Kootenai Community Church for a long time, but have never placed your faith in Christ for salvation.

The most important question you can ask right now is, “How can I know Him?” I'll give you the answer: by faith.

The Scriptures invite all to come to the Savior. You cannot know God apart from Christ. Jesus claimed that no one can come to the Father except through Him. (**John 14:6**)

Before you can know the Savior, you have to understand why you need one. You need a Savior because you are a sinner. You have rebelled against God. You have sinned against a holy God who demands holiness of you. You will stand before Him and He will demand righteousness to enter heaven. You have none. We are unrighteous, unholy. We cannot see the Kingdom of God without a new birth and the giving of new life which is a work of the Spirit of God.

We have sinned, and as sinners we deserve to be separated from God for eternity as punishment for our sin. We deserve God's wrath and without Christ, we are under His wrath. Sin is so hideous and serious because it is an affront to a Holy God. Those who reject Christ will perish. There is a hell, there is a place of punishment for those who do not obey the gospel.

That is the bad news. But there is good news! The good news is that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life” (**John 3:16**). There is a price for our sin that needs to be paid. That price has been paid in Christ. Christ died in the place of sinners. That salvation is offered to you. The righteousness that God demands of you to enter heaven has been provided for you in Christ.

You must believe on Him. You must trust in Him. Acknowledge your sin and your need for a Savior. Believe on Christ today. If you are not trusting in Christ for salvation, then you are trusting in something else.

Maybe you have put your faith in your own good deeds to save you. You are trusting that God will let you into heaven as a result of seeing your goodness. If you believe that, you don't understand the gravity of

your sin. We can do no good of which God can accept because we are sinners who deserve His wrath.

There is only one object of faith by which we are saved and that is faith in the **Savior** who came to die. Trust Him for salvation. Trust Him to take your sin. Trust in the One who **came to save His people from their sins**.

The Word of God declares that there is only one Sacrifice for sin, and He is all you need. You must cast yourself upon the mercy and grace of Christ who died in your place.

That Baby in the manger was the sinless Son of God who lived a sinless life, kept God's perfect holy law on your behalf, then gave His life as an atonement for sin. He died, He was buried and He rose again the third day. He offers you life, forgiveness and salvation. If you don't know Him, turn to Him today, or face Him as your Judge for eternity!

Do you know Him? I beg you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God by the cross, in Christ.

Without Wax-

