

### What Child is This?

What child is this? What's so special about this child? Why celebrate the birth of someone who was born over 2000 years ago? If we set him side by side with any other newborn, he would look extraordinarily ordinary – probably about 7 lbs, 9 oz, 19 ½ inches, a tuft of black hair. What is extraordinary is that he was the only baby in the history of the world to choose his own birthday. None of us decided to be alive. Life is something that happened to us. None of us decided when we would be born. Jesus did.

The Bible points to the many miracles Jesus performed as proof that he is true God, along with the Father the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus is true God, he is eternal, with no beginning and no end. That means that he existed LONG before his birth in Bethlehem. Jesus chose to come into this world because he was on a rescue mission. You see, when the first humans – Adam & Eve – sinfully desired the forbidden fruit and plucked it and ate it, they infected themselves with sin. They missed God's target of perfection. They fell short of God's standard of perfection. They rebelled against what God said to them. Sin is the worst virus ever to infect the human race, far worse than COVID or any mutation. Sin infects all of us and causes all sorts of pains and problems and death which effect everyone.

I am not psychic, but I'm willing to bet a whole lot of money that some of you here tonight:

- Are dealing with a broken heart, or
- Are struggling with some sort of physical pain and problem, or
- Are missing a loved one who was taken away in death, or
- Are worried about the future, or
- Are facing some financial worries, or
- Are stuck in a difficult spot as you care for aging parents, or
- Are a little bit uneasy with the thought of your own death, or
- Are wishing you had a better job, or car, or house, or
- Are burdened by guilt for some things you did, or are doing, wrong.

Do any of those things connect with you? I am willing to bet a whole lot of money that things in your life are not as organized, or under control as you would like. I'm willing to bet that your life is not perfect.

When God created Adam & Eve, everything in the world was perfect. Now, since sin entered the world, everything is ruined. Just like when a computer gets a virus, your computer does not work well and can even shut down and die, this world is broken by sin. Bad things happen that do not make sense. Sin has been passed down from Adam & Eve to every human being, including you and me. We were born infected with sin. And that sinful nature has spills out into our lives in lots of bad and sad ways. When Adam & Eve sinned, God had every right to say to them, "If you want to walk away from me and sin, then you can spend eternity without me in a very real hell." God could say the same thing to you and me for our many sins – our bad actions, our harsh and unkind words, our impure and selfish thoughts.

Parents, do you think your children will really understand how deeply you love and care about them? Maybe when they have their own children. Parents, you know how your heart is connected to your children. You would do anything they needed, no matter what the cost. They are a part of you. God feels the same way about you. God was willing to do anything you needed. He shuddered at the thought of you spending eternity apart from him. And so, Jesus decided to go on a rescue mission to save you and me and the whole world. Jesus chose to come into this world to save you. He chose his own birthday,.

In order to get rid of sin, someone without sin had to enter the human race. When the time was right, the Holy Spirit performed a miracle inside of Mary and Jesus became human in addition to being truly God. He was a perfect human. He was able to live the perfect life that you and I can not. In perfect love, he gives you credit for his perfection through faith, simple trust in your heart. And in exchange for giving you his perfection, Jesus took the guilt of your sins and carried it to Calvary's cross. On the cross Jesus suffered the punishment that we deserved. Because of Jesus, all your sins have already been forgiven. Your guilt is gone. What child is this born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago? He is the child who came into this world to be your Savior. Because of Jesus, we get what we do not deserve. We get life – eternal life.

I'm sure that most of you know the Charlie Brown Christmas TV show. It is, indeed, a classic as Linus recites Luke 2 and reminds Charlie Brown about the true meaning of Christmas. That is good, but it's just a cartoon. Let me tell you the story of a real Charlie Brown Christmas. Lt. Charles Brown was a pilot of a B-17 bomber, known as the Flying Fortress. Not only was it able to drop LOTS of bombs, it also had at least 10 guns for

the 10-man crew to shoot at enemy planes. A few days before Christmas 1943, Lt. Charles Brown was sent on a mission to bomb Bremen, Germany. Enemy flak (air grenades) knocked out one of its four engines and damaged another one. The plane could not keep up with the other bombers in their formation. It dropped behind and Nazi fighter planes swarmed around it like angry hornets. One crew member was killed. Most were wounded in some way. All sorts of systems on the bomber failed and the guns quit working. Somehow the plane kept flying. It managed to get out of the range of the NAZI fighters over Bremen and was limping its way back to England. Along the way, a Nazi pilot, named Franz Stigler, saw it flying by and scrambled in his fighter plane to attack the wounded B-17.

Stigler's brother was killed by Allied forces a year before and, of course, they were at war. Stigler's adrenaline was racing as he sought revenge. He quickly caught up with the B-17 and was ready to shoot it down. Just before he pulled the trigger on his guns, though, he realized that he was within range of the B-17's guns, but they were not firing. He flew a little closer. Still no shots fired at him. He circled the damaged bomber and saw that the crew was wounded and helpless. They were a "sitting duck" in the sky. Something clicked in Stigler's mind. It seemed to him that to shoot at helpless soldiers was more like murder than an act of war. He flew closer and gave some hand signals to Pilot Charles Brown. He then flew alongside the bomber, escorting it out of Nazi controlled territory. Then he saluted Pilot Brown and went back to his base. Pilot Charles Brown managed to guide the plane to a safe landing in England. On that Christmas in 1943, the real-life Charlie Brown did not get what he expected. He received the gift of life for Christmas. After the war, the two pilots met and became good friends. It's a neat story.

Because of our sins, we were as good as dead. We deserved and could expect for God to shoot us down eternally. Instead, he gives us what we do not deserve or could expect. Jesus chose to come into this world so that he could give us the gift of life for Christmas. That is what we are celebrating tonight. What child is this lying in a manger in Bethlehem? He is true God who came into this world to rescue you from sin and death. He is a gift of love to you from the heart of God. He is your life. He is your joy. Hang on to Jesus. Read his love letters to you in the Bible. Talk to him in your prayers. Turn away from the sin in your life and walk with him every day. What child is this? He is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive. He is your Savior. Alleluia! Amen.