

# What Child is This?

(Colossians 1:15-20)

## Introduction

➤ The Christmas holiday (from old English *haligdæg*; “holy day”) is a great occasion to remember the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. While it certainly should not be the only time we remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, it is important for us to intentionally, and intensely, focus on the “incarnation” (being made flesh) of the Son of God; Jesus Christ.

This is why the holiday of Christmas (“Christ’s mass” or “the Mass of Christ”) was created (becoming a federal American holiday in 1870). This is why the great Christmas hymns were written. Like Easter and Thanksgiving, Christmas exists to compel us to remember and celebrate great truths of Scripture. Christmas, of course, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

➤ However, as seems to always be true, such great and godly pursuits do not come easy. Today, it is all too easy to have the celebration of the birth of Christ lost in the midst of our “Christmas” celebrations. If we are not careful, our time and energy and money can be focused on decorating, cooking (eating), shopping, gift-giving (and receiving), and we can spend very little (if any) time and attention of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

✓ **Illust:** Years ago, my was shopping around Christmas time and noticed a sign on a particular store that read “50% off all Christmas items.” So, she went in and noticed a small but beautiful wooden nativity scene. When she took it up to the counter to buy it, the clerk rang it up at full price. When my wife asked about the sale, the clerk said: “We don’t consider the nativity scene to be a Christmas item.”

✓ **Illust:** More recently, I heard a story about the Christmas tree that set the Guinness world record for the most expensive Christmas tree ever (set in 2010). It stood over forty-two feet tall, and was valued (in 2010) at over eleven million dollars! It was decorated with diamonds, and pearls and Rolex watches, and other such expensive things (which makes your string of popcorn look pretty cheap), and located in the lobby of a hotel in the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi).

Commenting on this, Christian pastor/preacher Voddie Baucham said: “In a country where you would be jailed, at best, for preaching Christ publicly – in a country where you could lose your life if you were a Muslim who converted openly and publicly to Christianity – they have a forty-two foot, eleven million dollar, Christmas tree prominently displayed in one of their fanciest hotels. Why? Because we have become very accustomed to the story of Christmas, but not at all to the theology of Christmas” (Dr. Voddie Baucham; 2023 [Ligonier Christmas gathering](#)).

➤ This is a great illustration of how a person can celebrate a Christless Christmas. Even Christians can get so caught up in the secular and commercialized story of Christmas that they fail to put Christ at the supreme center of it all. Though powerful and beautiful, the biblical narrative of the birth of Christ can be reduced, and edited, to be a touching and inoffensive “Christmas” story (even for Christians!). A story told of a sweet young couple, Mary and Joseph. A story told of their long and difficult journey to Bethlehem. A story told of a mean innkeeper who would not give them room, and how Mary was forced to give birth to her son in a barn (where the animals sang, and a little boy played a drum). A story of how shepherds saw and heard a glorious heavenly vision. And oftentimes, an added story told of an old obese man in a red suit, who traveled on a sleigh pulled by magical reindeer, would break into people’s homes and eat all their cookies and drink all their milk.

➤ Let me be clear (and I think I speak for all of us), we are here this morning to worship the Son of God, and specifically to remember and celebrate and be thankful for His miraculous birth as Jesus the Christ! To do this, we must not only know the true story of Christmas but also the true theology of Christmas. By way of introduction, I invite you to turn with me to Luke’s Gospel so that we can have the biblical account of the birth of Jesus Christ in our heads. In the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we find the most detailed account of the birth of the Son of God:

**Luke 2:1-20** ~ “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup>And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. <sup>10</sup>And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’ <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’

<sup>15</sup>When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’ <sup>16</sup>And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

- In order to truly understand what Christmas is really all about, we must understand the true identity and authority of that “*baby*” (Lk.2:12, 16) that was laid “*in a manger*” (Lk.2:7, 12, 16). To help us focus on the theology of Christmas, and not just the story of Christmas, I want us to look at a short but powerfully-loaded passage of Scripture.

**Col 1:15-20** ~ “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

- While this passage of Scripture is not typically considered a part of the Christmas story, it should be. For in writing to Christians in the city of Colossae (Col.1:1), in the first century, the apostle Paul clearly declared Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God (i.e., the one and only Son of God – coexisting, coeternal, and coequal with God – wrapped in human flesh; fully/truly God and fully/truly man). In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul described the sovereign supremacy of Jesus Christ by proclaiming four specific theological truths about the Son of God. Here we see Jesus described in glorious detail. He is, in a word, Awesome! As the incarnate Son of God, Jesus is not only worthy of our highest praise and adoration as our Savior, but also our submission to and adulation of Him as our Lord.

### 1. Jesus Christ's supremacy as **GOD** (vs.15)

- In the first sentence, Paul identifies Christ's supremacy as God in two amazing, God-inspired, phrases: Christ is “*the image of the invisible God*” and “*the firstborn of all creation*” (vs.15). Both phrases are powerful descriptions of the deity of the Son of God.

➤ Jesus Christ has made the invisible God, visible. God is too holy and glorious for any human to look upon (Ex.33:20; Jn.1:18; 1Tim.6:16), but through His Son God has graciously made Himself known. For, Jesus is *“the image of the invisible God”* (vs.15). The word *“image”* (*eikon*; “icon”) means image, likeness, or form. We use the word icon today to refer to a statue or portrait that is a representation of something else. While humans are said to be created in the image of God (cf. Gen.1:26-27; 1Cor.11:7), they are not created in the perfect image of God’s divine being. Although Jesus was fully (truly) human, He was also fully (truly) God. As God’s one and only Son, Jesus is the exact representation of God’s divine essence and nature (2Cor.4:4). We may come to know God as the Creator through looking at creation, but we can only come to know God as the Redeemer through knowing and receiving His Son as our Lord and Savior.

**Heb 1:1-4** ~ “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

➤ In Hebrews 1:3 we read that Jesus is not only the *“radiance of the glory of God”* but also the *“exact imprint of his nature.”* As the *“radiance”* (*apaugasma*) of God’s glory, Jesus is the pure manifestation of God – the expression of God in human likeness. The phrase *“exact imprint”* is a two-word translation of a single Greek word (*charakter*), which first referred to a tool for engraving and then something that was engraved or stamped. It conveys the idea of that which is an exact or precise portrayal or depiction. The Son is not simply a reflection of God, or merely similar to God. He is the exact and definitive representation of God’s divine being.

There has never been, nor will there ever be, a man like Jesus. For Jesus was no mere man. He was, and is, the fully God and the exact representation of God in human form (Col.1:19; 2:9). Unlike every other human being, Jesus is the full and exact manifestation of God’s divine being. Furthermore, unlike every other human being, Jesus is sinless and therefore unmarred by sin and therefore He is not only the full and exact manifestation of God’s divine being, but also the perfect manifestation of God’s divine nature.

**John 1:1-2, 14** ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. ... <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**John 1:18** ~ “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he [i.e. Jesus Christ] has made him known.”

**John 14:9** ~ “Jesus said... ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.’”

➤ In addition to Christ being *“the image of the invisible God”*, Paul further affirmed Jesus’ deity by stating that He was *“the firstborn of all creation”* (vs.15). Although the word *“firstborn”* (*prototokos*; also in vs.18) can also mean first in time or order, here it refers to the first in importance or priority. The Son of God is not a created being. He is the Creator, not creation. He is the self-existing eternal Son of God. He is “firstborn” in the sense of His supreme and sovereign reign over all creation (not chronologically but supremacy). He is the preeminent one!

➤ The Son of God is co-equal and co-eternal with God, and one of us. As the incarnate Son of God, Jesus is “Emmanuel” (or “Immanuel”) – which means *“God with us”* (Matt.1:23). The Son of God wrapped in human flesh. He breathed our air, He felt our pain, He knew our sorrows, He experienced our temptations (yet without sin), and He died for our sins.

**Heb 2:14-18** ~ “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

<sup>15</sup>and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. <sup>16</sup>For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

**Heb 4:14-16** ~ “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

➤ The point is, everything and everyone on the planet, and everything throughout the universe, is subject to Jesus Christ! He is not only the preeminent Son of God, but also the preeminent heir of God. As God, He has the authority and power to reign and rule over all creation.

**Matt 28:18** ~ “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”

**John 5:22** ~ “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son” (see Matt.11:27; Jn.3:35; 5:27; Jn.17:2)

## 2. Jesus Christ’s sovereignty over CREATION (vs.16-17)

➤ The self-existing and eternal Son of God did not sit idly by as God created the universe. Scripture tells us that He is actually the Creator of all things, and as such He is sovereign over all that He created – which means He is sovereign over everything. *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him”* (vs.16).

➤ The one and only Son of God created everything. As God, the Son of God was with and in God as the eternal agent of all God’s creation. That is, God created all things through His Son, Jesus Christ. But not just things on earth. So that we would know the sheer power and magnitude of Christ’s divine power to create, Scripture gives us the scope of all that He created: all things *“in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible”* – including, but not limited to – all *“thrones”* (*thronos*), *“dominions”* (*kyriotēs*), *“rulers”* (*archē*), and *“authorities”* (*exousia*; vs.16).

Some theologians have suggested that the reference to *“thrones ... dominions ... rulers ... authorities”* is specific to the spiritual realm of the “invisible”; that Paul was further describing the invisible realm angels and fallen angels. Others believe that Paul is here referring to the physical and visible realm of human (political/governmental) authorities. Both are certainly true. For Christ is sovereign over all creation – *“visible and invisible”* (vs.16). He *“is the head of all rule and authority”* (2:10).

➤ At the very outset of John’s Gospel, he describes and declares the self-existing eternity of the Son of God as Creator of all things:

**John 1:1-3, 14** ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**Gen 1:3** ~ “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

**Heb 1:2** ~ “...in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

➤ As the Son of God, Jesus is the Word of God. When God spoke creation into existence, He did so by His divine power in and through His Son. Throughout each of the six days of creation, God sovereignly created everything according to His own sovereign purpose and pleasure, and He did this through His one and only Son. The Son of God is the divine expression of God's nature and power. When God spoke creation into existence, He did it through His Son – the “Word” of God.

As the Creator God, the Son of God was never created – He is the self-existing eternal God (1Pet.1:20). In fact, logically, since everything was created by, through and for the Son, He simply could not have been created for He would have had to create Himself. Since nothing was created apart from Christ, we see again that Jesus Christ has always been Creator and was never created. At creation, the Son of God was the divine expression of God's power to create.

In just two verses (vs.16-17), the apostle Paul uses the word “all” four different times to describe the incomprehensible sovereignty of Jesus Christ over all creation – *“For by him all things were created ... all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together”* (vs.16-17).

➤ Not only does Scripture describe Jesus as the Creator of all things, but also as the Sustainer of all things. Notice in verse 17 that Christ is *“before all things.”* This is yet another reference to the self-existing eternality of Jesus Christ. And in that same verse, we read that in Christ *“all things hold together”* (vs.17). The two-word phrase, “hold together” is actually one word in the Greek (*sunesteeken*) which carries the meaning of that which is brought together, or that has been permanently or perfectly framed. What great imagery. The Son of God has created everything, and after creating everything He has perfectly framed His creation according to God's will and for His glory. Here we see that Christ is the one who has not only created everything, but is the very one who keeps that which He has created from falling apart. He sustains all things, as He created all things, by the sovereign power of His divine word:

**Heb 1:3** ~ “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power ...”

➤ In Hebrews 1:3 the word *“upholds”* (*phero*) means to support or maintain, and it carries the interpretation of continual present action. Meaning, at this very moment, all things in creation are being supported and held together by none other than the One and Only Son of God.

So, what keeps the earth from freezing, or melting, or disintegrating, or dropping, or floating away from within the safe confines of our galaxy? Wrong question. It's not what, it's who! Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God, is the one who is (right at this very moment) holding together all of creation. The universe is held together not by an idea, nor by chance, nor by some cosmological accident, nor by some strange or unknown force. It is held together by none other than the Son of the living God. Who as perfectly framed His creation according to His own purpose and pleasure. Among other things, without His sustaining power, gravity would cease to work, planets would not stay in their orbits, and the stars would fall from the sky.

➤ In Col.1:16-17, we see three prepositions that identify for us the scope and magnitude of Christ's sovereignty in and over creation: all things have been created *“by”* (*en*), *“through”* (*dia*), and *“for”* (*eis*) Him. Everything that has been created has been created by Christ. And everything that has been created by Christ has been created through Christ. And everything that has been created by Christ and through Christ exists for Christ – to glorify Him as the preeminent Son of God! (see vs.18). That is, everything ultimately exists to display the sovereign greatness of Christ. This is the true identity and authority of the *“baby lying in [the] manger.”*

**Rev 4:11** ~ “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

### 3. Jesus Christ's supremacy in the CHURCH (vs.18)

- With all the references to Christ's sovereign supremacy over all creation, someone may be wondering, "Why specify Christ's supremacy over the church? Doesn't the church fall under the category of "everything"? Yes, it does; but the church is special – it is "the bride of Christ" – described here as His "*body*" (vs.18). As such, it is deserving of particular attention – above that of mountains and trees, oceans and animals. In addition, Paul here is specifically writing to those in the church at Colossae – those who are a part of the church of Christ. Therefore, he is specifically pointing to Christ's supreme Lordship over them!
- The church (*ekklesia*) here is referred to as "*the body*" (*sōma*; vs.18), of which Christ is the "*head*" (*kephalē*; vs.18). There are many metaphors in Scripture to describe the church: a family, a bride, a flock, a building, a vineyard, and a kingdom. Each metaphor depicts the beauty of the church, and the authority of Christ in the church. Whatever metaphor is used, Jesus Christ is described as the ruler of the church – the Lord of all Christians (i.e., the church universal/invisible, not local/visible). We are the bride, He is the bridegroom. We are the flock, He is the Chief Shepherd. We are the building, He is the cornerstone. We are His Body, of which He is the head.

**Eph 1:21-23** ~ "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." (cf. Eph.4:15, Col.1:24, 2:10-14)

- The church is not a building. It is not a religion or denomination. It is not a religious idea, or some human initiative. The church is not ours to manipulate or control. The church does not primarily exist to satisfy all our wants and needs. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.  
The church is comprised of those who have truly received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Christians are the church, the body of Christ. As such, we are the extension of His will here on earth, and He is the head – leading, guiding, instructing and commanding us according to His will. This is yet again, an important reminder to us as Christians that Jesus Christ is not only our Savior but also our Lord. Many professing Christians today want to express themselves within the grace of Christ as their Savior, but not submit to Him and His commands as their Lord. Simply put, Jesus Christ is both Lord and Savior. A person cannot receive Him as Savior, and yet refuse or reject Him as Lord.
- Here Paul is writing specifically about Christ's relationship to the church. Jesus is the "*beginning*" (*arche*; vs.18, translated "ruler" in vs.16), and the "*firstborn*" (vs.18; *protokos* - also in vs.15), not just in creation but also in resurrection. Both titles refer not to Him being created – for as the Son of God He is eternal and never created – but to His primacy and supreme authority as the Son of God. Jesus Christ is not only the supreme origin of the church, but Christlikeness is also the supreme goal of the church.

**Acts 20:28** ~ "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

**1 Cor 6:19-20** ~ "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (cf. Eph.1:7; 1Pet.1:18-19)

**Acts 9:1-5** ~ "But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup>And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' <sup>5</sup>And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'"

➤ The preeminence of the Son of God certainly goes beyond the church. Paul wrote He is the beginning” and “firstborn” *“that in everything he might be preeminent”* (vs.18). As in English, the word *“preeminent”* (*prōteuō*) means first in authority, importance and/or influence. The Son is preeminent *“in everything”* (*en pas*) – which certainly makes Him preeminent in and over the church.

Upon hearing Peter’s God-inspired declaration that Jesus was *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matt.16:16), Jesus said, *“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt.16:18). The church belongs to Christ. He is the ruler of the church, and He is the foundation of the church. The church exists to glorify Him as the Son of God.

#### 4. Jesus Christ’s sovereignty over **SALVATION** (vs.19-20)

➤ It seems right to conclude, at this point, that since Christ has sovereign supremacy over everything, He has sovereign supremacy even over salvation. In fact, that is exactly what Scripture declares. There is ultimately nothing outside or beyond Christ’s sovereign power or authority – not even our salvation.

**Eph 1:4-6** ~ “...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

**2 Tim 1:9** ~ “[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”

**John 1:11-13** ~ “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

➤ Just as Christ did not create the universe only leave His creation outside of His sovereign influence or control, so He did not die on the cross only to leave those He has redeemed outside of His sovereign influence or control. In speaking of Christ’s sovereignty in salvation, Paul yet again identifies Him as the Son of God and as the Savior.

➤ Paul, once again, declared the deity of Jesus Christ – *“For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”* (vs.19; cf. 2:9; 1:15; Jn.1:1). The Son of God is not partially, or simply like (similar to), God. He is fully God, and in His incarnation (when He became flesh) Jesus was both fully God and fully man – divesting Himself of His divine rights and privileges as God, but never diminishing His divine nature or essence as God (cf. Phil.2:6).

➤ Amazingly, with all the power and authority of God, Jesus came to earth to die humbly and sacrificially on the cross – *“and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross”* (vs.20). The God who created galaxies and the intricate complexities of the human body, is the very same God who perfectly sustains all of creation, and the very same God who died on the cross for our sins. With all the authority and power of God, the sinless Son of God humbled Himself to die an incredibly painful and shameful death for sinners so that we could be reconciled to God.

**Phil 2:6-8** ~ “...though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

➤ He died as our substitute, enduring the consequences of our sin (cf. Is.53:4-6; Rom.5:8). Our sin against God is the result of our rebellion against Him and His will for our lives (Rom.5:10; 8:7). Apart from receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we not only face the just consequences for our sin but remain under God’s wrath (Jn.3:18,36). Through his death on the cross, Jesus Christ reconciled all true believers to God – signing the peace-treaty in His own blood.

**Acts 4:12** ~ “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

**John 14:6** ~ “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (cf. Jn.3:16-18, 36)

- Through Jesus’ sinless (righteous) life, and His sacrificial (substitutionary) death, and His supernatural resurrection, those who receive Him as their Lord and Savior are instantaneously, completely and permanently forgiven of all their sins (2Cor.5:21; Is.53:4-6). Jesus paid the full penalty of their sins, and they are consequently absolutely sinless (righteous) before God. Not somewhat righteous, or even mostly righteous, but perfectly and completely and eternally righteous. Scripture does not say, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as light pink.” No, in prophesying the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, God said through the prophet Isaiah, “*though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*” (Is.1:18).

### Conclusion

- At Christmas time, as always, it is imperative that we understand the true identity of the baby born to Joseph and Mary; born of the virgin Mary.
- ✓ **Illust:** In 1865, after being inspired by reading the biblical account of Christ’s birth from Matthew chapter two, William Dix sat down and wrote a poem that eventually became the great Christmas hymn “What Child Is This?” In this hymn, William asked the question that has been the center of our study this morning: Who is this Jesus? Who was the baby born to the virgin Mary? Who was this child that drew the attention and adoration of the angels and the shepherds and the wisemen? What child is this?

Verse one:

What Child is this, who, laid to rest / On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet / While shepherds watch are keeping?

Here was his poetic and biblical answer (chorus):

**This, this is Christ, the King / Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud / The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Verse two:

Why lies He in such mean estate / Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here / The silent Word is pleading

Verse three:

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh / Come, peasant, king to own Him  
The King of kings salvation brings / let loving hearts enthrone Him.

- The Lord whom we exalt at Christmas is not just a baby in a manger. He is not a character in a children’s story. He is far more. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And He is coming again! His Second Coming will be vastly different than His incarnation:
- ◆ The first time He came, He was veiled in the form of a child. The next time He comes He will come unveiled, and He will be recognized by all as it will be abundantly and immediately clear to all the world that He is the Son, the Messiah, of God.
  - ◆ The first time He came, a star marked His arrival. The next time He comes, the clouds will roll up like a scroll and all heaven will be lit by His glory.
  - ◆ The first time He came, wise men and shepherds brought Him gifts. The next time He comes, He will bring rewards for His own.



- ◆ The first time He came, there was no room for Him at the inn. The next time He comes, the whole world will not be able to contain His glory.
- ◆ The first time He came, only a few were there to welcome Him into the world. The next time He comes, every eye shall see Him, every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- ◆ The first time Jesus came He came as a baby. The next time Jesus comes He will come as Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords.

(adapted from *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p.59).