

# THE MIRACLE OF THE MANGER

Luke 1:26-33

Luke 1:26 - 33 (NIV) 26In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

## 1. Could He be who He claims to be?

Consider for a moment the miracle of the manger and the astonishing claims made regarding this child. We know that Jesus was born into the humblest of circumstances.

His mother was a very ordinary, plain, simple, poor young girl named Mary. His birthplace was a stable, a barn or grotto in a small, obscure little town called Bethlehem. More barnyard animals were witnesses to His birth than were people.

Yet at His birth the angel announced, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV). That is a rather remarkable claim!

Jesus himself claimed to be sent from God, the Son of God, and even One with God. He claimed to be the Bread of Heaven and Living Water which alone can satisfy our deepest hunger.

Jesus claimed the authority to forgive our sins and freely offered His grace and mercy. He claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the resurrection, the only hope of escaping God's judgment, the only path to eternal life.

He claimed all authority in heaven and earth, and He promised to return to judge the world in righteousness.

What do you make of such radical claims? You may be one who ignores them altogether. Or, you may be very respectful of Jesus, but you do not take His astonishing claims seriously.

The religion of Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet and teacher. The Hindu religion teaches that Jesus is one way of many to find God. You may try to admire Jesus from a distance, but when it comes right down to it, you think He was just a nice man.

Most of us know who C.S. Lewis was—the author of the Chronicles of Narnia, among many. He points out that Jesus did not leave us the option of just respecting Him as a noble teacher.

Jesus' own claims leave no room for that, yet many think this. Lewis points out that we really have only three options concerning what to make of these astonishing claims of Jesus.

One, either He was who He claimed to be—the Lord of all. Or, two, He was a liar, knowing His claims were false.

Or, third, He believed what He said about himself, but in reality they were not true, which means He deceived himself or was a lunatic.

You see, when it comes to the astonishing claims made by Jesus, there are only three conclusions that we can choose from: He is Lord, just as He claimed; or He is a liar, or He is a lunatic. You see, He cannot be just a nice man.

## 2. So, what if He is who He claims to be?

What if He really is who He claims to be?" Think for a moment about the incredible implications.

At this Christmas time, if He is who He claims to be, then there really is someone who knows your name, who knows when you are sleeping, and He knows when you've been bad or good, and, yet, He loves you, and He longs for you to know and love Him.

If this child of Bethlehem really is the miracle of the manger, if He is who He claims to be, then you have a decision to make. It is a matter of eternal significance.

What you decide about this child born in Bethlehem not only determines your eternal destiny, it also determines your earthly direction as well.

We cannot accept His claims without also recognizing that He has staked His claim on our lives. If He is who He says He is, then all His promises are true.

If He is who He says He is, He really can wipe away a painful past; He can take away your burden of guilt and regret. He can give you a whole new reason to live and fill you with the fullness of His love, His life, and His grace.

### 3. The decision is yours.

Each of us must consider the question, “Who is He really?” and answer for ourselves. No one can decide for us when it comes to this miracle of the manger.

Jesus put the question to His disciples one day. He asked them, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:13-16). How do you answer the question? Is Christ who He claimed to be? Do you believe?

Application: When we consider this child born in Bethlehem, there is an important change, a dramatic change of roles for you and me. You see, when we come before Christ, we do not sit in judgment of Him.

Jesus Christ is Lord and King. The miracle of the manger is God in the flesh. He is judge of all. We do not determine His fate. It is Jesus Christ who will determine our final destiny.

The Bible says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him, for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

The miracle of the manger is that God became flesh and lived among us. God became flesh so He could free us to live the life that He has planned for us. God came so that we could know and love Him.

God became man so that we could become children of God. John wrote in his Gospel, “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

When you open your heart to Jesus and trust Him to be exactly who He claimed to be, you will not be disappointed. Christ will heal your deepest hurts and fulfill your dearest longings.

He will prepare a place for you, a wonderful new home where you will spend forever. Yes it is true—Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be. The miracle of the manger is the Savior of the world.