

It's Christmas! Happy Birthday Jesus! We are here to celebrate the gift of God's Son. We are to remember why Jesus came that very first Christmas. Galatians 4:4-5 (NLT) tells us, ***"But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children."***

At Christmas we sing carols about Baby Jesus, carols like Away in a Manger and Silent Night. Sometimes I wonder if we don't like the Christmas Jesus best? After all babies are safe, they are cute and cuddly and can always be given back to their parents. The baby Jesus was helpless, totally dependent on Mary and Joseph. While everyone may want to see the new baby, the baby Jesus can't really help us.

So who is Jesus? Jesus is many things to many different people. This Christmas morning we want to think about who Jesus really is and what difference He makes in our lives. After all, we are here to celebrate Jesus, aren't we.

First of all, Jesus is Jesus. That was the name that God chose for his Son, the name the angel told Joseph to give him when he said, ***"And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*** (Matthew 1:21 NLT) Jesus is Jesus! He is not a great prophet or teacher. He is not in a class with the founders of other religions. He is in a class all by himself. The name Jesus means God saves. Jesus is the One who saves us from our sins and all of their consequences.

Jesus is the Emmanuel. God gave this incredible promise through the prophet Isaiah. ***"The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')."*** (Isaiah 7:14 NLT) Think about that for a minute. The baby born in Bethlehem is God with us. He is not God against us. He is not God removed from us. He is God with us. God entered in a very personal way on Christmas Day. God became a human being. God Son was born of a woman. This is a miracle. It could only happen by the power of God's Spirit. Jesus is both true God and true man.

This is a fantastic promise. It means that God is with us now and always. It means that God is with us on the great days and the not so great days. He is with us when a brand new healthy child is born into our families. He is also with us when stress and sickness, conflict and confusion, fear and frustration, doubt and despair confront us. Because Jesus is our Emmanuel, the promise is Romans 8:39 (NLT) is true. ***"No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

The angel Gabriel said this to Mary about Jesus, ***“He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.”*** (Luke 1:32 NLT) The Son of God is not a tiny little all bundled up by his mother. He is the mature Son of God, the one with the power and authority to rule over God’s people. Gabriel told Mary that His kingdom would never end. The Son of God has all the power and authority of God because they are one and the same. Jesus has the power to create, to restore, to transform lives. He has the authority to show us the way of life.

Ultimately Jesus is Savior and Lord. The angel told the Bethlehem Shepherds, ***“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*** (Luke 2:11) When Thomas saw the Risen Lord for the first time he called Jesus, ***“My Lord and My God.”*** (John 20:28) Jesus saves us from sin and all of their consequences. Those consequences are deadly. Only Jesus can overcome them. Romans 6:23 (NLT) tells us, ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** That gift was won at a great price. The baby born in Bethlehem died on a cross to rescue us and restore us to God’s family. J

Because Jesus saves us from sin and death, He has a claim on our lives. He wants to be our Lord. He wants us to know that God loves us. And He gives us the opportunity to respond to His love. We love God back when we worship Him. We love God when we reach out in love to others around us. I think that is one of the greatest things about the Christmas Season because it is the time of the year when people really do try to help others. Jesus says that whatever we do for those in need we do for Him. We love God when we tell others about Him, when we introduce family and friends to Jesus.

One final thought. Gabriel called Mary the ***“Favored One.”*** Later he said that she had ***“found favor with God.”*** To be favored is to be accepted, loved, and supported. If you wonder how you can be accepted by God, how you can find favor with God; then take a look in the manger, at the cross and the empty tomb. They tell us the story of the God who loves us, the God who has done everything for us to restore us to a right relationship with Him. Because God acted at just the right time to save us, we are His children. That is the Good News of Christmas, the Good News for all of our lives.

May God give you His love, joy and peace this Christmas! Merry Christmas! Amen.