

Pastor Steven J. Cole  
Flagstaff Christian Fellowship  
123 S. Beaver Street  
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001  
[www.fcfonline.org](http://www.fcfonline.org)

## THE QUESTION YOU MUST ANSWER

Luke 2:10-11

By

Steven J. Cole

December 21, 2008

© Steven J. Cole, 2008

For access to previous sermons or to subscribe to weekly sermons via email go to: [www.fcfonline.org/sermons](http://www.fcfonline.org/sermons)

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture  
Quotations are from the New American  
Standard Bible, Updated Edition  
© The Lockman Foundation

December 21, 2008  
Special Christmas Message

The Question You Must Answer  
Luke 2:10-11

A four-year-old boy and his family were sitting outdoors enjoying lemonade and cookies when a bee started buzzing around the table. The boy was very upset and his mother tried to calm him. "Nathan, that bee is more afraid of you than you are of him," she said. "Look how much bigger you are. Besides, if that bee stings you, his stinger will fall out and he'll die."

Nathan considered this for a moment and then asked, "Does the bee know that?" (Adapted from *Reader's Digest* [06/93], p. 20.)

That was a *good* question! There are important questions in life that we need to ask and answer correctly: "Is there a God?" "How can I know Him?" "Is there life after death?" "Do heaven and hell exist?" "If so, where will I go when I die?" "How can I know for certain that I'm right about the answers to these questions?"

At the root of all these important questions is a crucial question that every person *must* answer. In fact, every person *will* answer this question, either now or at the judgment. But if you wait to answer it until the judgment, it will be too late! You will answer it correctly there, but the answer will condemn you to an eternity in hell without God. So you need to answer it correctly now!

The question you must answer and respond to correctly is,  
"Who is Jesus Christ?"

The correct answer to this question will answer all of the questions I just asked: "Is there a God?" Jesus came to reveal the Father to us. "How can I know Him?" You can only know God through His Son Jesus Christ. "Is there life after death?" Jesus tells us authoritatively how to go to heaven and avoid hell. "How can I know for certain that I'm right about the answers to these questions?" Are the accounts about Jesus and His claims true or false? Is there adequate evidence to believe these accounts? Especially, is there historically valid evidence that Jesus arose bodily from the dead? The apostle Paul did not hesitate to hang the entire Christian faith on the answer to that one question (1 Cor. 15:14, 17).

You will have times when you struggle with doubts that stem from difficult questions: How can a loving God permit the terrible suffering and injustice in the world? How can God be three persons and yet one God? How can certain biblical accounts that seem to contradict each other be harmonized? These and many more questions may trip you up. But if you come back to the correct answer to the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" it will be the bedrock to stand on as you work through your doubts and questions.

You will also have times when you are strongly tempted to sin. How can you resist? It seems like sinning will bring you happiness and pleasure. If you forget who Jesus is, you will probably succumb. But if you remember who He is, you will be able to withstand the temptation.

You will also have times when you will go through difficult trials. It will seem as if God has forgotten you. You won't understand why these things are happening. In your grief, you will be confused. But coming back to this crucial question will give you perspective to sustain you through your trials.

So the correct answer to this question determines how you think and how you live. It determines where you will spend eternity. Thus it is not surprising that the answer to this question is the major focus of each of the gospel narratives. John, for example, plainly states that he wrote his gospel (20:31), "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Arguably, the identity of Jesus is the focus of the entire Bible. But for sake of time, I want to examine this question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" in the context of Luke and then zero in on the words of the angel to the shepherds.

Luke hits the matter of Jesus' identity early and then throughout the book. Luke begins his gospel by telling his original reader, Theophilus, that he has researched these matters carefully (Luke 1:1-4). He claims to write this account so that Theophilus will know the exact truth. In other words, Luke is writing an accurate historical account. This is not fiction!

First, Luke gives the account of the birth of John the Baptist, the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah. Then he follows with the visit of the angel to Mary. He revealed to Mary both the mi-

raculous means of her conception and the identity of her offspring (Luke 1:35): "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

We will come back to the angel's announcement to the shepherds. But just after Jesus' birth, both Simeon and Anna bore witness to the fact that this child was the Lord's Christ, the Savior, and the redeemer (Luke 2:26, 30, 38). When the crowds wondered if John the Baptist might be the Christ, he denied it and stated that he was not fit to untie the thong of Jesus' sandals because Jesus was far mightier than he (Luke 3:16).

Even Satan tacitly acknowledged Jesus' identity when he challenged Him (Luke 4:3), "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Again he taunted from the pinnacle of the temple (Luke 4:9), "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here." He was trying to use the truth to camouflage his temptation. At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, the demons also recognized that He is "the Holy One of God" and "the Son of God" (Luke 4:34, 41). Although they were not and could not be subject to Him, they still knew the truth about who He is.

When Peter experienced the miraculous catch of fish, he instantly recognized that Jesus is the holy Lord and that he had no basis to be in His presence. He cried out (Luke 5:8), "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" When Jesus forgave the paralytic's sins (prior to healing him to prove His authority to forgive sins), the Pharisees grumbled (Luke 5:21), "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Who indeed?

Later, when John the Baptist was in prison, he struggled with doubts. He sent messengers to Jesus asking (Luke 7:19), "Are You the One who is coming, or do we look for someone else?" Jesus sent back the reply, based on a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 35, (Luke 7:22-23), "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." Jesus' miracles and teaching revealed His identity.

Later, when Jesus was having dinner with a Pharisee, He forgave the sins of the woman who anointed His feet. The other guests grumbled (Luke 7:49), "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" Luke repeats the same crucial question after Jesus calmed the storm. The disciples fearfully asked (Luke 8:25), "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?" Later, Herod heard about the miracles that Jesus was performing. He worried that maybe John the Baptist had risen from the dead. So Herod said (Luke 9:9), "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" He asked the right question, but he never answered it correctly!

Later, Jesus asks the twelve (Luke 9:18), "Who do the multitudes say that I am?" After they give some of the incorrect answers, Jesus pointedly asks (Luke 9:20), "But who do you say that I am?" Peter responded with his confession, "The Christ of God." Yet even then, the disciples had many erroneous notions about who Jesus was. They did not understand that the Christ had to suffer before He entered into His glory (Luke 24:26). The ultimate confession comes from God the Father, who testified at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22), "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." And, again at Jesus' transfiguration, the Father testified (Luke 9:35), "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"

If we had the time, we could work our way through the entire Gospel of Luke (as well as the other Gospels) and see the words and deeds of Jesus, all of which testify to His identity. After His resurrection, Jesus explains to the disciples that all of Scripture testifies to Him (Luke 24:27, 44).

But I want to focus briefly on Jesus' identity as the angel proclaimed it to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:10-11), "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." This is a unique statement, in that the word "Savior" is only used two other times in the gospels. In Luke 1:47, Mary said that she "rejoiced in God my Savior." It occurs once in John (4:42). Other than that, "Savior" in the Gospels only occurs here at Jesus' birth. Also, the words "Christ the Lord" translate a Greek expression found nowhere else in the New Testament (Leon Morris, *Luke*

[IVP/Eerdmans], p. 85). It is literally, "Christ Lord." So the angel's pronouncement should arrest our attention.

### 1. Jesus is fully human.

Luke, who probably interviewed Mary, gives more detail to the miracle of the virgin birth than any other New Testament author, explaining that the Holy Spirit performed this miracle in Mary's body (1:34-35). In this unique way, God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus. Jesus was born in the city of David, which is Bethlehem. Luke will go on to show that Jesus grew up as a boy, gradually attaining maturity (2:40-52). Luke also traces Jesus' physical genealogy all the way back to Adam, showing that Jesus was descended from David (3:23-38).

All of these historical details mean that the Christmas story is not a legend, but rather is a true account of the life of a real man. It is based on the eyewitness testimony of credible people. We need to emphasize this in our day. So many legends, such as Santa Claus, have become intertwined with the Christmas story that people lump them all together and forget that the birth of Jesus Christ as reported in the Bible is true history.

Some may ask, "Who cares if it's history or not? The story about Joseph and Mary, the Christ child, the angels, the wise men, the shepherds, and the manger, is a heartwarming tale that children love to hear. It helps everyone focus on peace on earth for a few days every year. So what difference does it make whether it's really true or not?"

It makes all the difference in the world! If it's just a heartwarming legend, you can choose to believe or disbelieve it, based on how it makes you feel. It's a completely subjective decision, binding on no one.

But if the story actually happened as Luke reports, then the birth of Jesus confronts every person with objective facts that cannot be shrugged off as personal opinion. The fact that these events happened means that God exists and that He truly broke into human history in the birth of Jesus in fulfillment of many prophecies. The fact that God sent Jesus as a Savior implies that people without the Savior are alienated from God and desperately need to be reconciled to Him through the forgiveness of their sins.

These facts mean that you don't just believe in Jesus because it makes you feel warm and happy inside, or because He helps you face life's problems or because you like the Christian traditions. It means that you believe the Christian message because *it is true*. Even if it brings you persecution and death, you cling to it because it is authentic history. Jesus came to earth as a man to bear our sins.

## 2. Jesus is the Savior.

The angel tells the shepherds that this good news of great joy for all people is that a Savior has been born. The name "Jesus," revealed to Joseph by the angel (Matt. 1:21), means, "Yahweh saves." Jesus did not come as a nice man offering a new philosophy about life. He did not come as a great moral teacher, offering some helpful insights on how to live a happy life. He came as the *Savior!*

A number of years ago, a toddler fell down a narrow well. Her mother went looking for her as soon as she realized she was missing and was horrified to hear her daughter's voice coming from this deep, dark shaft. Fire fighters and other rescuers soon swarmed on the scene. News media arrived and for hours the attention of the nation was riveted on the desperate attempt to rescue that little girl before it was too late.

That little girl didn't need anyone to give her some ideas on how to live a happy life. She was doomed if someone didn't save her from death. The most important news that that desperate mother could hear in that situation was, "The rescuers have saved your daughter!" When someone is lost and within hours of death unless they are saved, the only news that matters is that a savior has come who can rescue that doomed person.

The good news that a Savior has been born who is Christ the Lord is the best news in the world, because it deals with the most important issue of all, namely, where you will spend eternity. If you die and do not have Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will spend eternity under the judgment of a holy God (John 3:36). But in His mercy, God sent Jesus to save us from our sins!

## 3. Jesus is the Christ.

"Messiah" is the Hebrew and "Christ" is the Greek word for "Anointed One." It refers to Jesus as the Anointed King and Priest, who brings God's salvation to His people. In the Old Tes-

tament, the only two office bearers to be anointed were the King and the High Priest. Jesus brought both of these offices together in one person. The title, Christ, especially focuses on the fact that Jesus is the One who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about the promised Savior. He alone is able to reconcile sinful people to God through His sinless life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection. He is coming a second time, not to offer salvation, but to judge the world and reign in righteousness. Since Jesus is *God's Anointed One*, we dare not ignore or reject Him!

Thus Jesus is fully human. He is the Savior. He is the Christ.

#### 4. Jesus is the Lord.

The title means that Jesus is God. What a mystery, yet true: The man Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is God in human flesh! A mere man could not have died for the sins of the human race. If He had been an angel or some super-human being, He could not have borne *human* sins. But as the sinless God-man, He alone could bear our sins.

The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons say that Jesus is the Savior, but they deny that He is God. But we must interpret *Lord* in light of its use in the Old Testament and in light of its context in Luke. In the Old Testament, the Lord clearly is Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! It is used over 6,000 times in the Septuagint to translate "Yahweh" (Darrell Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50* [Baker], p. 218). It refers to Jesus' sovereignty and deity.

Luke uses the same word in 1:43, where Elizabeth refers to Mary, who is carrying Jesus, as "the mother of my *Lord*." She also adds that Mary was blessed because she believed the word spoken to her by *the Lord* (1:45). In the next verse (1:46), Mary breaks into praise, exclaiming, "My soul exalts *the Lord*..." When Elizabeth gives birth to John, everyone heard that *the Lord* had displayed His great mercy toward her (1:58). As the child grew, Luke states that the hand of *the Lord* was with him (1:66). When Zacharias broke into praise, he blessed *the Lord* God of Israel (1:68). In 2:9, Luke says that the angel of *the Lord* stood before them, and the glory of *the Lord* shone around them. He uses it in 2:23 to refer to "the law of *the Lord*" and "holy to *the Lord*."

If *Lord* means something different in verse 11 than it does in these many other references in chapters 1 & 2, surely Luke would have clarified it. The angel means that Jesus, born to the virgin Mary, is none other than God in human flesh. The Savior had to be man to bear the sins of humans; but He also had to be God so that His sacrifice had merit before God's holy throne. Only Jesus is that unique Savior.

So the correct answer to the crucial question that you *must* answer is, "Jesus is fully human, He is the Savior, He is the Christ, and He is the Lord God." But, you can answer that question correctly and yet go to hell. As we've seen, the devil and his demons know the correct answer to that question, but they are not saved.

5. You must respond to Jesus as your Savior and Lord with personal faith and submission.

The angel announces that this good news of the Savior's birth is for all the people (2:10). But then he gets personal (2:11), "there has been born *for you* a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." You must respond personally by trusting Jesus as the only one who can save you from God's judgment and by submitting to Him as your Lord.

Use these shepherds as an example of how you should respond. They didn't say, "Wow, that was really some experience, seeing all those angels," and sit there the rest of the night with their sheep. They didn't sit around discussing theology after the angel spoke to them. They didn't say, "Thanks for the news, but we've always believed this," and stay where they were at.

No, they responded to the news by believing what God had revealed to them through the angel. Their faith was demonstrated by their going straight to Bethlehem to see it for themselves and then to return glorifying and praising God (Luke 2:15, 20). And what did they see? "Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger" (Luke 2:16). No halo. No angels hovering there. Jesus didn't look like a Savior. No palace. The place looked and smelled like a barn, because that's what it was. They could have scoffed and stumbled over it, as many do.

What about you? Will you scoff or stumble over the simple but profound message that the baby Jesus, born in Bethlehem, whose birth was announced by the angels to these simple shep-

herds, is Christ the Lord, a Savior born *for you*? Jesus didn't leave heaven and come to this earth and go through the suffering of the cross just to give you a boost or a few tips on how to have a happy life. He knew that *you* desperately need a *Savior*. He alone can save you from the penalty of God's wrath because of your sins. But, how will you respond to this good news?

### Conclusion

So the crucial question that you must answer and respond to correctly is, "Who is Jesus Christ?" One day, everyone will get it right. The apostle Paul says (Phil. 2:10-11) that "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

But some will bow on that great day in terror as they hear the Lord say (Matt. 25:41), "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." They responded too late to the question we all must answer, "Who is Jesus Christ?"

But you can respond correctly right now! You can welcome Jesus Christ as your Savior from God's judgment. You can bow before Him now as your Lord. Then on that day you will hear Him say (Matt. 25:34), "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

### Application Questions

1. What would you say to the person who said, "If Jesus works for you, that's great, but that's not my thing"?
2. Why is it crucial to affirm the full humanity and full deity of Jesus Christ? Can a person be saved who denies Jesus' deity?
3. How does answering the question about Jesus' identity affect how we think and live?
4. Is it necessary to *feel* lost in order to get saved? How can we share the gospel with those who don't *feel* lost?

Copyright, Steven J. Cole, 2008, All Rights Reserved.