



Volume 3, Issue 6

December 2020

CHRISTMAS EDITION

JESUS: The Lion and the Lamb

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

In the creative series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis portrayed a lion (Aslan) who in love gives his life as an atoning death on a stone table, and then in resurrection power conquers evil and its consequences forever. Everyone acquainted with this series knows that you can't help but love the peaceful, sensitive, patient, all-knowing, righteous, and victorious lion.

Of course, C.S. Lewis is depicting the fictitious Aslan in the role of the real-life Jesus Christ. Unlike the Narnia world of "make-believe," **Jesus was a real man who entered earth's history** through birth from a **real mother**. He grew in wisdom and stature in a **real family**; studied in a **real school**; and lived in a **real town** with other **real people**. As the apostle John later said, "...we have heard...we have seen with our eyes...and our hands have touched...the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

A popular worship song has captured very simply this truth of the Christian faith, "How Great is our God – sing with me... Lion and the Lamb, Lion and the Lamb." Indeed, Jesus is identified in Scripture in a paradox of being both a Lion and a Lamb.

The Lamb

Jewish tradition and prophecy was settled that the Messiah was to be born



in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and was to be first revealed from the "tower of the flock" – a special shepherd watch which lay close to Bethlehem but on the road to Jerusalem (4:8). A rabbinic rule provided that any lamb born in a flock from Jerusalem to Bethlehem must be **presumed to be for Temple sacrifice**.

No wonder the angel whom God sent to that hillside near Bethlehem had a message of such joy for all the people:

"...today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior; who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Destined for sacrifice, Jesus (the name literally means "Savior") was introduced to the world by John the Baptist simply as "...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)! Christmas

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Merry Christmas

The entire staff of *FaithSearch* International wish you a **blessed Christmas season**. We are offering this special, expanded edition of *Paraclete*, filled with Christmas Bible truth and devotional thought, as a reminder and encouragement to **keep the Christ child as the focus of your celebration**. Use these resources for your own spiritual growth and share them in your family and friends at holiday gatherings. 



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Did You Know? Questions We Wonder about Christmas

You may have wondered about these things. You may even be asked about them. We were wondering...

1. Where did the word "Christmas" come from, and what does it mean?

The end of the word ("mass") in English is "missa" in Latin, a form of the verb "mittere" which means "to send." Thus Christmas is literally "Christ is sent" or "the sending of Christ"



2. Is the use of "Xmas" a secularizing or absenting of Christ from Christmas?

This abbreviation of Christmas actually dates back to the first century church. It is not sourced in our letter "x" but rather the Greek letter X (chi) which is the first letter in Xristos (Christ). Hence it was used initially as an abbreviation for the Messiah (like your own initials). Of course, today many may use it with the letter "x" to avoid identifying Christmas with Jesus, when in fact the opposite is true.

3. Are Christians really guilty of celebrating a pagan holiday (as skeptics allege) by observing Jesus' birth on December 25?

The pagan holiday Saturnalia, for the Greek god Saturn, was celebrated on December 25.

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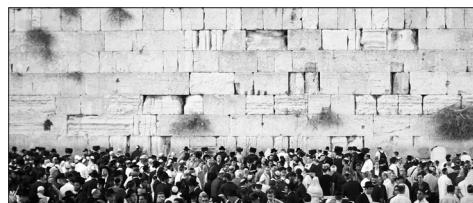
Lion and the Lamb

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is all about the **celebration of the arrival of this Lamb** – Immanuel: God with us (Matthew 1:23).

The Lion

The patriarch **Jacob** called his many sons together and prophesied about their future (Genesis 49). Concerning his son Judah, he referred to him as **a lion whose rule (scepter) would not cease** until his staff would be passed to Him to whom rule rightly belongs, and to whom all the nations would eventually be obedient (vv. 9-10). The role of a lion and the ruler's staff was passed to Judah's descendant, Jesus, forty years before the loss of Israel's rule when destroyed by the Romans (A.D. 70).



The Western Wall in Jerusalem is a site of prayer and mourning for the destruction of the Temple.

Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, having conquered death through the power of His resurrection, is then identified with absolute authority in John's vision into the heavenlies: “See, the *Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals*” (Revelation 5:5).

Praise to the Lion and the Lamb

In the very next line of Scripture John records: “*Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne...*” (Revelation 5:6). John concludes with exultation:

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand... In a loud voice they sang:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

How Great Is Our God... sing with me...Lion and the Lamb!! 

Reference: The song "How Great Is Our God," written by Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, and Ed Cash, was released in 2004.

JESUS: The Shepherd and Lamb

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch*
President

Only in fiction can one imagine a lamb becoming a shepherd! That would be quite a role reversal. Yet there in the book of Revelation, with the prophecy of the “*great multitude which no one could count*” worshiping before the throne of God, we are told that “*the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd*” (Revelation 7:17a).

The Lamb

Jewish tradition and prophecy was settled that the **Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem** (Micah 5:2) and was to be first revealed from the “*tower of the flock*”—a special watch which lay close to Bethlehem but on the road to Jerusalem. A rabbinic rule provided that **any lamb born in a flock from between Jerusalem and Bethlehem must be presumed to be for sacrifice**.

*It was, then, on that wintry night of the 25th of December, that shepherds watched the flocks destined for sacrificial services, in the very place consecrated by tradition as that where the Messiah was to be first revealed.**

Those who tended these flocks were **not ordinary shepherds**, but those who tended year-round the lambs destined for Temple sacrifice. How very providential it was, that the birth of the

* Quote from *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by Alfred Edersheim, Eerdmans, p. 187, 1965.



Lamb of God should be announced first to those whose vocation would help them anticipate that this “*Savior, who is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11) would have a future destiny in Jerusalem.

Fittingly, John the Baptist's introduction of the adult Jesus was, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Two thousand years before Jesus' birth, God had provided a preview through the life of the patriarch **Abraham** of this truth (Genesis 22). The lamb which God provided on Mt. Moriah (the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) to spare the physical life of Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 22:8, 13) foreshadowed the Lamb (Jesus) whom God would provide at **the same place 2,000 years later** so that those who are of the faith of Abraham could have spiritual and eternal life (Romans 4:16).

The Shepherd

Yet, the Bethlehem Lamb, “*unblemished and spotless*” (1 Peter 1:19) and born “*for all the people*” (Luke 2:10) **claimed during His ministry to be a shepherd** (John 10:11). The ancient Psalmist also declared, “*The Lord is my shepherd...*” (Psalm 23:1).

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Did You Know?

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ed from about December 17-23. We do not know the exact date of Jesus' birth, but whether it happened to occur at a similar time as a pagan holiday is irrelevant. Christians do not “worship” a pagan holiday or any holiday. We take time to “remember” the birth of Christ, God become flesh, on that day. 

The Shepherd and Lamb

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Shepherds in ancient Israel were generally a **despised class**. Because of a bad reputation, their testimony was not allowed in law-courts. Furthermore, the nature of their calling kept them from observing the ceremonial ordinances, thus excluding them from religious acceptability. By Jewish standards, shepherds were the spiritually “lost sheep” of Israel.

During His ministry, Jesus identified Himself as the **Good Shepherd**. In His own words He came “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). He said, “*I am the door [for the sheep], if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved...*” (John 10:9).

How symbolic, then, that God should choose to send the angels to announce a **sacrificial Lamb** (“Savior”) **first to the lost sheep of Israel**—thereby anticipating His role as the “*Good Shepherd*”... who “lays down His life for the sheep!” (John 10:15)



Finding Pasture

The prophet Isaiah declared that **all humanity is lost**, and explained the way by which these lost sheep become “*the sheep of His pasture*” (Psalm 100:3): “*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:6).

As a result, coming full circle to where we began, the **Lamb** at the center of the throne, also fulfilling the role of the **Good Shepherd**, “*shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes*” (Revelation 7:17b).

Therefore: “*Do not be afraid...*” 

How well do you know what the Bible says about Christmas?

Take this **Christmas IQ quiz** and you may be surprised! Remember, it's only what the Bible says. After you choose your answers, get your Bible and look up the passages provided.

- 1. Joseph and Mary were from:
a) Bethlehem b) Jerusalem c) Nazareth
d) Egypt e) Minnesota f) none of the above. [Luke 2:4, 39; 4:16]
- 2. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem? a) camel b) donkey
c) walked d) Volkswagen e) Joseph walked, Mary rode a donkey f) none of the above [Luke 2:4-5]



- 3. What did the innkeeper tell Mary and Joseph?
a) “There is no room in the Inn” b) “I have a stable you can use”
c) “Come back after the Christmas rush and I should have some vacancies”
d) none of the above [Luke 2:7]
- 4. Mary was a virgin when she delivered Jesus. (T or F) [Matthew 1:25; Luke 1:34-35; Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23]
- 5. The manger of Jesus was a:
a) stable for domestic animals b) a room for animals in the house c) a feeding trough d) a barn [Luke 2:7]
- 6. Which animals were present at Jesus’ birth?
a) cows, sheep, goats b) cows, sheep, camels c) sheep and goats only
d) misc. barnyard animals e) none of the above. [Matthew 2; Luke 2]
- 7. How many angels spoke to the shepherds?
a) one b) three c) a ‘multitude’ d)
none of the above. [Luke 2:9-15]
- 8. What “sign” did the angels tell the shepherds to look for?
a) “This way to baby Jesus” b) a star over Bethlehem
c) a meek & mild baby d) a house with a Christmas tree e) none of the above.
[Luke 2:12]
- 9. What did the angels sing?
a) “Joy to the world, the Lord is come” b) “Alleluia” c)
“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given” d) “Glory to God in the highest, etc.” e) “Glory to the newborn King”
[Luke 2:14]
- 10. How many magi came from the East to see Jesus? (write the correct number)
[Matthew 2:1-12]
- 11. The magi found Jesus in:
a) a manger b) a stable c) a house d) a Holiday Inn e)
a good mood. [Matthew 2:11] 

The Man and the Birds

This anonymous story was popularized by radio broadcaster Paul Harvey’s annual reading.

The man to whom I’m going to introduce you was not a scrooge. He was a kind decent, mostly good man. Generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn’t believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas time. It just didn’t make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. **He just couldn’t swallow the Jesus Story, about God coming to Earth as a man.**

“I’m truly sorry to distress you,” he told his wife, “but I’m not going with you to church this Christmas Eve.” He said he’d feel like a hypocrite. That he’d much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the midnight service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound... Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a thud... At first he thought someone

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- 10. How many magi came from the East to see Jesus? (write the correct number)
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- 11. The magi found Jesus in:
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a good mood. [Matthew 2:11] 

The Man and the Birds

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must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.



Quickly he put on a coat, galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, **but the birds did not come in**. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them...He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms...Instead, they scattered in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn.

And then, **he realized that they were afraid of him**. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me...That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

What Child is this?

And thou shalt call

His name Jesus

(Mt. 1:21), **Prince of**

Peace (Isa. 9:6), **Mighty**

God (Isa. 9:6), **Wonderful**

Counselor (Isa. 9:6), **Holy**

One (Mk. 1:24), **Lamb of God**

(Jn. 1:29), **Prince of Life** (Acts 3:15),

Lord God Almighty (Rev. 15:3),

Lion of the Tribe of Judah

(Rev. 5:5), **Root of David** (Rev. 22:16),

Word of Life (1 Jn. 1:1), **Author and Perfecter of our Faith** (Heb. 12:2),

Advocate (1 Jn. 2:1), **The Way** (Jn. 14:6),

Sunrise (Lk. 1:78), **Lord of All** (Acts 10:36),

I AM (Jn. 8:58), **Son of God** (Jn. 1:34),

Shepherd and Overseer of Souls (1 Pet. 2:25),

Messiah (Jn. 1:41), **The Truth** (Jn. 14:6), **Savior**

(2 Pet. 2:20), **Chief Cornerstone** (Eph. 2:20), **King of Kings** (Rev. 19:16), **Righteous Judge** (2 Tim. 4:8),

Light of the World (Jn. 8:12), **Head of the Church**

(Eph. 1:22), **Morning Star** (Rev. 22:16), **Sun of Righteousness** (Mal. 4:2), **Lord Jesus Christ** (Acts 15:11),

Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), **Resurrection and Life**

(Jn. 11:25), **Horn of Salvation** (Lk. 1:69), **Ruler** (Mt. 2:6),

The Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8).

"Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

"If only I could be a bird," he thought to himself, "and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe, warm...to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see and hear and understand."

At that very moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells – "Adeste Fidelis" – "O Come, All Ye Faithful" – listening to the bells pealing

the glad tidings of Christmas. Of the incarnation of God to earth.

He recognized in his own thoughts toward the helpless birds, God's very heart toward helpless mankind. Helpless and thankful, he sank to his knees in the snow.

The **FaithSearch** Paraclete is published by **FaithSearch** International, an interdenominational, donor-supported, 501(c)(3) organization, based in Edina, MN, USA.

FaithSearch is a member in good standing of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

