

The Questions of Christmas

Rudyard Kipling wrote a short poem called “I Keep Six Honest Serving-Men.” The first line of the poem goes like this:

I keep six honest serving-men (They taught me all I knew); Their names are
What and Why and When and How and Where and Who.

These six honest serving men are questions that we can ask of any topic to gain understanding of it. If we want to know about something, we can ask these six questions. The answers will tell us much of what we need to know.

If you cannot answer these six questions about any given topic, you don’t know much about it. If this information is not available, then maybe the topic in question is not valid; maybe it’s a fraud or a hoax or a myth.

What if we applied these six questions to the story of Jesus’ birth? Do the NT writers provide enough information in their accounts to answer these basic questions? Yes, they do. The NT provides all the information we need to answer all the most significant questions about the birth of Jesus.

I will not be considering them in the same order as Kipling listed them, but I want to consider each question.

- I. Who? Whose birth are we celebrating?
 - A. This is a question of identity; who was Jesus? Identifying Jesus is very important. Jesus asked his disciples regarding his identity — “Whom do men say that I am?” If we get this wrong, we are in deep trouble theologically.
 - B. The Bible gives us several answers regarding who Jesus is.
 1. He’s the 2nd Person of the Trinity—the Son of God; the divine, eternal Logos—the Word.
 2. He’s the God-man; he is the only being with two natures—divine and human. He’s the Word made flesh. He’s Emmanuel—God with us.

3. He's the long-expected Messiah, the king of Israel; the wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace.
4. He's the son of David; i.e., a descendant of King David.
5. He's the son of Mary. He's the offspring of a virgin's womb.
6. He's the carpenter's son. Joseph was his legal father although not his physical father.
7. He's the light of the world. He's the door of the sheep. He's the vine. He's the good shepherd and the chief shepherd. He's the bridegroom.
8. He's the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

This is what the Bible says about who Jesus is. And it's important that we believe what the Bible says about Jesus' identity. Your eternal destiny hinges on what you believe about who Jesus is.

II. How?

- A. How did these things happen?
- B. That's the same question Mary asked of the angel—"how shall this be?"

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

This all happened through a supernatural conception. We cannot explain it; all we can do is affirm that the Word became flesh through a miraculous act of God.

- C. Ultimately, this happened because God ordained it; Jesus' birth was all part of God's eternal plan.

III. When?

We can answer this question in a couple of ways.

A. We can try to provide a particular calendar date for Jesus' birth.

1. Although critics often are skeptical of Dec 25 as the actual date of Jesus' birth, there are good arguments and evidence suggesting that that date may be right.
2. We don't really know that exact date of Jesus' birth, and it's not critical that we know that date.
3. Bible scholars suggest that Jesus was born around 4 BC according to our calendar. How could Jesus be born in "BC"? There was an error/ flaw in the ancient calendar. ...

B. We could also refer to God's timetable for Jesus' birth.

1. The prophet Daniel foretold that the Messiah would be born a certain number of years after King Cyrus gave the approval for the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The birth of the Messiah had to fit into that schedule.
2. Galatians 4:4 *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,*

Jesus was born at just the right time, both chronologically and theologically.

IV. Where?

That's an easy one. The Bible makes it very clear where Jesus was born.

A. The prophet Micah foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

B. The Gospel writers tell us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

- C. And we know the series of events that caused Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem for Jesus' birth. They had been living in Nazareth, about 90 miles from Bethlehem. The only reason they were in Bethlehem was that the Emperor had decreed that a census be taken, and everyone had to return to the place of his ancestors. So it was something of a fluke that Joseph and Mary were there at that time. But it was all in God's sovereign plan—they had to be there. God arranged it all beforehand.
- D. The Bible even gives us the detail that Jesus was placed in a manger shortly after his birth. That gives us another location.

V. Why?

Now we come to one of the most important questions we can ask about Jesus' birth. Why was Jesus born?

- A. We know that it was *not* because of the natural processes of child birth. All of us were born through natural processes. Jesus was not born that way.

- B. The Bible tells us why Jesus was born.

- 1. His highest and ultimate purpose was to do God's will.

John 8:29 ... *I do always those things that please him.*

Heb 10:7 *Then said I, Lo, I come ... to do thy will, O God.*

The highest and ultimate goal for all things in the universe is to bring glory to God and to do his will. Jesus came into the world to fulfill God's will and plan for all things.

- 2. Beyond that, Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

The angel told Joseph to name the child Jesus because "he shall save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21).

Matthew 9:13 ... *I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*

Matthew 20:28 ... *the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

Lu 19:10 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

John 3:17 *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

1 Timothy 1:15 *... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

As many others have said, Jesus was born to die. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world through the sacrifice of himself.

And the way that we enjoy forgiveness of sin is by faith. Rom 10:9

VI. What?

There are at least two “what” questions that we need to answer:

A. *What happened* when Jesus was born?

The word became flesh. The divine, eternal Son of God took upon him a human nature. This is the incarnation.

Philippians 2:7–8 *[He] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

B. *What difference* does it make?

What does Jesus’ birth have to do with me? Why should I be interested in this historical fact? How can the birth of a baby some 2000 years ago have any impact on me?

The answer depends on the “who” question. Jesus makes a difference because of who he is – the son of God, the savior, the prince of peace.

Jesus’ birth is important because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. No man comes unto the father except through him (Jn 14:6).

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

John 8:24 ... if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.

Jesus' birth makes a difference because Jesus is the Son of God, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. About 30 years after his birth, he died on the cross and rose again to save his people from their sins.

The answers to these six questions give us all the information we need about Jesus' birth. How do you answer these questions? You'd better be sure that your answers are right.

Your eternal destiny hinges on how you answer them. If you get the answers wrong, your eternal destiny will be separation from God. If you get the answers right, you will spend eternity in heaven. What does it matter? It matters an awful lot.

For most news reports, it does not matter much if a reporter gets a couple details wrong. If he is mistaken about dates or times, it will not have a huge impact.

But if we get the answers wrong to the questions about Jesus, it will have eternal consequences.

There is no excuse for answering these questions about Jesus wrongly. The Bible provides these answers in very clear terms. I trust that you know and affirm the right answers to these questions.