

# The Point of Christmas: Salvation from Sin

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1



*“What do you want for Christmas?”* Asking that question of others is always a diverse experience. There’s the person who is ready with a long list of things. Then there’s the person who only wants one thing, or the person who is offended by the question, or the person who has no idea what they want.

Now consider what we would find if we asked people not, *“What do you want for Christmas?”* but, *“What do you want for a Savior?”* Perhaps we would uncover similar answers. We’d find the person who has a list of problems this savior would have to be able to solve. Then we’d discover the person with one major issue in their life they want the savior to solve. Maybe we’d find people who feel that God has let them down, and unless the Savior comes up big, it’s only going to make them more bitter. Undoubtedly, we would also identify people who feel like life is pretty good, and they’re not even sure they need a Savior.

The way we answer the question, *“What do you want for a Savior?”* reveals a great deal about the spiritual condition of our hearts. This answer highlights what is important to us and reveals what we believe our greatest needs to be. It discloses whether we are even aware of our need for salvation.

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As we continue with our study of *Christmas: What's the Point?* we turn to [Matthew 1:18-25](#) to see that Jesus, the true Savior, came to save His people from their sins. There are three questions that must be answered as we use this passage to consider the salvation Jesus secured.

**First, as we think about God's provision of salvation in Jesus, what qualifies Jesus to be the Savior?**

2

This critical question was important to the original readers of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew wrote his account to a primarily Jewish audience, who were familiar with the Old Testament promises and prophecies about the Messiah. One of Matthew's goals for this Gospel was to prove that Jesus is the promised Savior, starting this quest by establishing that Jesus was qualified to be the Savior. Matthew is intent on showing how it is that Jesus is qualified to be the Savior, the heir to the Davidic dynasty, even though He is not the biological son of Joseph.

Matthew first tells us, in no uncertain terms, that Jesus is qualified to be the Savior because He was born of a virgin. Notice in our passage that Matthew adds that Mary was with child **by the Holy Spirit**, indicating this was not unfaithfulness to her soon-to-be husband, but a miracle God performed by His Spirit in her. Mary's Son was not a mere human but the product of the Holy Spirit causing her to conceive apart from any relationship with a man. The clear testimony of Scripture is that Jesus was born of a virgin.

What's more, the virgin birth is one thing that qualified Jesus to be the Savior. We need a Savior who is free from the stain of sin, who is not under the curse incurred by Adam, and who can represent us before God. Any child born naturally would have the imputed sin of Adam and already be disqualified from being the Savior. A natural birth simply could not provide a righteous Savior who was undefiled and separate from sinners! In addition, our Savior also must be a mediator. If Jesus was merely human and born of a natural process, He would not be able to represent God to us as our mediator. Jesus is qualified to be the Savior because He is the God-Man, conceived by the Spirit, born as the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Now, that does not solve the problem of His right to the Davidic throne. If Joseph was the rightful heir, but Joseph was not Jesus' father, then how could this baby really be the Savior? Matthew tells us in verse 25 that Joseph legally adopted Jesus. In Jewish culture, fathers took legal responsibility for children by naming them. Joseph, by naming the boy himself, declared that he had adopted Jesus as his legal heir, as his first-born son, even though Jesus was not his physical descendant. Jesus is qualified, then, to be the Savior,

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

not only because He is both human and divine, but because He is also the legal heir to the Davidic throne and promises.

**Second, Jesus' qualifications to be the Savior raises the question of *what kind of salvation did He bring?***

Matthew has the great challenge of showing his readers that Jesus is the Messiah, Savior, and Deliverer, but the reason the Jews didn't see His divine identity and purpose is because they had wrong expectations about what kind of deliverance Christ would bring. Notice what Matthew says about Jesus' salvation in verse 21: **"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."** Jesus' salvation was not political salvation, as the Jewish people yearned for, but salvation from the damning power of sin.

Many passages in the New Testament, especially in Matthew's Gospel, instruct us about what this salvation from sin entails. Salvation from sin means that our sins are forgiven, and that God no longer charges any of our sins against us. Salvation from sin also signifies that we are saved from the effects of sin. Sin has broken our relationship with God so that we are by nature His enemies and under His wrath. The salvation Jesus brought has reconciled us with God so that we are no longer His enemies but members of His own household.

Salvation through Jesus also means we are set free from the penalty of sin. As God's enemies, we were under His wrath and condemned to an eternal fate of suffering and punishment. Because of salvation and through Jesus' righteousness as our garment, however, believers are shielded from God's wrath. Jesus brought salvation that rescues us from sin and its horrific consequences.

**The third question, then, is to whom did Jesus bring this great gift of salvation?**

Matthew answers that question for us in verse 21: **"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."** In other words, the salvation Jesus brought is not unconditional upon everyone who is alive.

Who are the people of God? These men, women, boys, and girls are those who have faith in Jesus Christ and trust in Him for their salvation. The most famous verse in the Bible, [John 3:16](#), makes it plain, **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.** John does not say, "everyone shall have eternal life." The people who receive this salvation are only those who believe in Jesus.

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One of the great errors the Church has fought against is universalism, which is a false teaching that all people will be accepted by God, and hell will have no occupants; or if it does, it will only be occupied by Satan and demons. While hell was created for the devil and his angels, it will also be full of men and women who refused to repent of their sins and to receive the salvation offered to them by Jesus Christ. On the last day, not everyone will be saved. The only people who will be saved are those who had genuine, saving faith in Jesus Christ. Only Christ's people will receive forgiveness of their sins and final salvation, spending eternity in glory with Him.

The answers to these three questions send us back to our opening query: *What do you want for a savior?* Are we like so many in Matthew's day, and in ours, who want worldly power, wealth, health, and other temporal, fleeting things as our main priority? Do we want a worldly savior who will exalt us and make us look great, feel great, and have a great earthly life?

Or do we want to instead be rid of our sins? Do we desire a Savior who will come into our lives, cleanse us, forgive us, renew us, change us, make us holy, and give us, in the end, eternal life? That's the kind of Savior Jesus is. Christ, the baby born to Mary, is God's gift to us, and His work of salvation is the point of Christmas.



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