

40-02-02-What Child Is This?

Christmas, children, hope, Advent, Christ Child

Matthew 2:1-11

The Christ Child came to change our personal history.

**INTRODUCTION:** (text as Scripture reading; carol sung before)

–*What child is this* whose birth drew worship from *poor shepherds* and *dignified astrologers*, who still today attracts the attention of *old and young*, the *lowly and the famous*? *What child is this?* [The shepherds had to be told by angels to go see this miraculous child; the magi-astrologers had to learn from a wicked king that *this child* whom the stars had announced was someone to “worship.”]

–[George Matheson (minister who wrote “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go.”), described Adam as God’s 1st human child: “We often speak of the story of Adam as a very childish narrative.... Childhood is a permanent element in the human race.... The man who painted Adam *knew* he was painting a child....”

–There’s a special atmosphere and anticipation surrounding the *1st child of young parents*. But *couples may hope for more than can be expected*. They can be disappointed by children descended from Adam, God’s fallen *1st child*.

– What people really long for can be realized only when God’s 2<sup>nd</sup> child, the Christmas Child, is born in their hearts. This 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam, the Babe of Bethlehem, was born **to change our personal history**.

–The familiar Christmas carol we sang, *What Child Is This?*, asks a question which everyone on earth needs to ponder deeply....

## I. What Child Is this Who Changes History?

A. *What child is this* who changed our calendar:

1. Jesus’ birthday divided time (B.C. = “before Christ” & A.D. = *anno Domini* [“in the year of the Lord”])
2. The world resists recognizing this Child:
  - a. Secular educators changed all the textbooks: A.D. to C.E. (“Common Era”) and B.C. to B.C.E. (“before the Common Era”).
  - b. But remember the “Y2K” scare? *2000 years after what?!*
    - (1) Does changing historical terms explain the “*what*” that divided the old BC & AD and still divides CE & BCE?
    - (2) Merriam-Webster defines the Common Era as a noun invented in the 1800s to stand for “*the Christian Era*.”

B. *What child is this* whose birthday is the climax of every year:

1. [A joke in January: “Only 360 shopping days till Christmas!”]
2. [Secular radio stations play old Christmas carols that contain the Gospel message (There’s nothing more evangelistic than *Joy to the World*, *O Little Town of Bethlehem* and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*).]
3. Christmas has become secular, but it still announces Christ:
  - a. The gift-giving reflects the gift of God’s Son to the world.
  - b. It’s not “Santa’s Season” but the Christmas Season (Christ’s Mass: a Church holy day that honors Christ by a special Eucharist).
- C. This Child, who divided history by His 1<sup>st</sup> Advent, will conclude Earth’s history at His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent.

**TRANS:** *What child is this* who divides time, Whose birthday ends each calendar year, and Whose hand will pull the final curtain on Earth’s history? “*This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing: Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The Babe the Son of Mary.*”

## II. What Child Is this Who Fulfills Unfulfilled Expectations?

- A. [Psychologists can point out wrong expectations about having children:
1. “A child would draw us closer and save our marriage.” (or become the tempting last straw to break a marriage apart...)
  2. “We could achieve something in life through a child.” (How unfair! You can’t live your life over again through your children...)
  3. “Friends & family would approve of our having a child.” (Then they’ll tell you how to raise them & what you’re doing wrong...)
  4. “A child will care for us in our old age.” (or abandon you, or move too far away to be of any real help); new China law: “*Visit your parents!*”]

B. But the Christ Child brings “unexpected human fulfillment”

    1. This Child came “to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10)
      - a. Like straying sheep, we had lost our way – **This Child** is the Good Shepherd Who leads us back to God’s sheepfold.
      - b. We had lost our world to a powerful demon – “The reason [this Child] appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8)
      - c. We had lost our strength and motivation – **this Child** came to encourage our hearts with the words, “**Follow Me.**”
    2. Through **this Child**, God creates miracles in people’s lives (especially when He motivates us bless the lives of others...)
    3. When time and trials bring despair, **this Child** goes with us in the journey, and will guide you personally into eternity.)

**TRANS:** *What child is this* who fulfills unfulfilled expectations?

What can we bring to honor Him? “*So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, Come peasant, king, to own Him; The King of kings salvation brings, Let loving hearts enthrone Him.*”

### III. What Child Is this Who Changes Our Personal History?

- A. What if you’d never been born? [The film *It’s a Wonderful Life* tells a great story about how important our we are, how we touch others, how human lives are so deeply interwoven.]
- B. But what if you’ve never been born again? [In his famous story *Christmas Carol* Charles Dickens gave another picture: *Even if a life has been lived in selfishness, the heart can change.*] Maybe the past can’t be *unchangeable*, but there’s still *hope for the future through this Child* who came at Christmas.
- C. What if you’re holding someone else’s “missing Jesus”? [Christmas story about a family who got an extra “baby Jesus” in the manger scene box they bought. So they advertized, “*If You’re Missing Baby Jesus, Call This Number.*” No one called, but that year they began looking from someone who was missing Jesus and they found a poor family to whom they were able to give Jesus in various gifts of love.] (When *this Child* changes our personal history, we will share His love with others who need Him.)

### CONCLUSION:

–The *Christ Child of Christmas did change all of history*, but the way He’s done it is by **changing personal histories**: changing *sinner to saints*... “*Why lies He in such mean estate Where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear: for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.*”

–[As in the story of the extra Jesus in the manger scene box,] the true Babe of Bethlehem never comes packaged alone. There’s **a Jesus to be born in your heart**, and **a Jesus to give away to others**. This year, let’s make room for this Child in our own hearts, and then share Him with those who are “Missing Baby Jesus” in their lives.

Matthew 2:1-11, NIV

- 1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem
- 2 and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”
- 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.
- 4 When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

WHAT CHILD IS THIS? (original version)

1. What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary’s lap is sleeping,  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
While shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The babe, the son of Mary!

2. Why lies He in such mean estate  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
The Cross be borne for me, for you;  
Hail, hail the Word Made Flesh,  
The babe, the son of Mary!

3. So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
Come, peasant, king, to own Him!  
The King of Kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him!  
Raise, raise the song on high!  
The virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy! joy! for Christ is born,  
The babe, the son of Mary!