

Who Is He in Yonder Stall  
Matthew 1:18-25  
December 2, 2015

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

In the mid 1800s, Benjamin Hanby wrote a Christmas song which begins, "Who Is He in Yonder Stall at whose feet the shepherds fall?" The song tells the story of Jesus' earthly life from Bethlehem to his ascension.

However, it's the opening question of this song that is so important. The answer to that question is critical because, if we answer that question incorrectly, we miss the Messiah of God.

You can be mistaken about a good number of things in Scripture and still be saved. You can believe the world took millions of years to develop, when God's Word clearly states that it only took six days. You can even believe that not every word of Scripture is accurate. But if you don't have a clear understanding of just who was lying in that manger, you might not make the train to heaven.

In that stable was born the God/Man, both human and divine; two distinct natures combined in one person. It was no ordinary baby boy in that manger. This little baby possessed the full deity of God Almighty, El-Shaddai. Lying on that straw was the great I AM.

Five things in tonight's reading point to the deity of Jesus. We will examine these five points to help you get the right answer to the question, "Who Is He in Yonder Stall?"

**Our first point is that the virgin birth reveals Jesus' deity.** Verse 18 reads: *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit* (Mt 1:18 ESV).

Joseph and Mary were engaged; they were betrothed. Many marriages of that time were pre-arranged by the families. The betrothal period was the last year before the formal wedding. During that time, the couple was considered to be married, but they lived apart.

It was during this betrothal period that Mary became pregnant.

In human terms, this could only mean one of two things happened. Either Mary and Joseph broke their betrothal by being intimate, or Mary had been intimate with another man. Either possibility would bring disgrace to the families and possible stoning for Mary.

We have nothing that leads us to believe that Mary was unfaithful to Joseph. In fact, when Gabriel appeared to Mary, he said that she had found favor with God. We also hear Matthew call Joseph a righteous man. That being the case, if the baby was Joseph's, I'm sure he would have claimed responsibility. (We're not finished with Joseph. There will be more on him later.)

If Joseph wasn't the father, and some other man wasn't the father, where does that leave us? According to Luke, that was Mary's question. And Gabriel had the answer: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God* (Lk 1:35 ESV).

To call Jesus the Son of God is to say Jesus is of the same substance as God. To be of the same substance as God means he possessed the very nature of God. He was equal to God. Without the deity of Jesus, there is no explanation for the virgin conception and birth.

**The second point is that the angel's words to Joseph point to the deity of Jesus.**

*Her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"* (Mt 1:19-20 ESV).

When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he was probably beside himself. He was undoubtedly torn between doing right by Mary and doing what social decorum demanded. Of course, being human and trying to serve two masters, Joseph made the wrong decision.

An angel brings Joseph a message from God, and in wording of that message Jesus' deity is revealed. The angel said: *for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit*. In the Greek, the word translated here as "from" is ek. Ek literally means "out of." The baby in Mary's womb was formed "out of" the substance of God.

**Our third pointer is that Jesus' mission demanded his deity.** Continuing his message to Joseph, the angel said: *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21 ESV).

The name Jesus means "God saves." Jesus' mission lays claim to his deity. If you remember your algebra, you might remember this equation: "If A=B, and B=C, then A=C."

Over and over, in the Old Testament, God promises to save his people. Now let's apply that to our algebraic equation. If A=B – God saves. And B=C – Jesus saves. Then A=C – Jesus is God.

Why does Jesus have to be God to save us? Sin brought a severe penalty. St Paul writes: *[Sinners] will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might* (2 Th 1:9 ESV). All sinners are under this curse. If it were not for our Savior, we would be under this curse.

The price God set to nullify this curse was the sacrifice of innocent blood. All people are sinners. Therefore, no people possess innocent blood. It would take someone who was more than human to pay the price of sin. It would take God himself.

If Jesus had not been both man and God, the price would still be wanting. As God said through the prophet Isaiah, only he can save: *“I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and I am God. Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?”* (Is 43:11-13 ESV).

**Point number four is that Isaiah predicted Jesus deity.** *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us)* (Mt 1:22-23 ESV).

When the kingdom of Judah was under attack, and King Ahaz was shaking in his boots, God send Isaiah to Ahaz. The prophet told Ahaz that he could ask for any sign and God would supply it to prove to Ahaz that everything would be okay because God was in control.

When Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, God supplied his own. Isaiah tells Ahaz: *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel* (Is 7:14 ESV).

Immanuel means “God with us.” That was God’s assurance to a frightened King – “I’m with you. I’m here to save you. I am the God who saves.” Immanuel says the same things to us today.

**Our last revelation of Jesus’ deity is Joseph’s faith.** In the text, you heard Matthew call Joseph a righteous man, but he was more than that. Joseph was a man of tremendous faith in God. This common carpenter, who never speaks a word in Scripture, who only makes a couple of cameo appearances in the Bible, had a faith that would rival the foremost saints.

God told Joseph what to do, and Joseph did it. No questions asked. No excuses given. Joseph broke all social protocol and took Mary into his house as his full wife before the one year betrothal was completed.

Joseph lived in the same house as Mary, as her rightful husband, without consummating the marriage until after Jesus was born. Later, at God's command, Joseph would pack up his wife and son and go live in Egypt for a few years.

Why would Joseph be so willing to follow such an outrageous game plan? Because Joseph believed that Mary's pregnancy was no ordinary pregnancy. Because he believed that the baby was more than just another Jewish boy. Because he believed that Jesus was the Messiah God had promised over 4,000 years earlier.

Joseph knew the correct answer to the question, "Who is he in yonder stall?" Joseph knew that baby was El-Shaddai. He was the great I AM. He was Immanuel.