

A newborn baby is lying in a manger, wrapped in a white cloth. The baby's face is visible, and the cloth is draped over its head and body. The background is dark and out of focus, with some light reflecting off the cloth.

Jesus

God Saves Those  
Who Believe

*You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His  
people from their sins.*

—Matthew 1:21

# God with Us



The central figure in the entire Christmas story, the most important part of your nativity scene, is the baby in the manger: Jesus Christ.

C. S. Lewis said the greatest miracle of all time was not the atonement, and it wasn't even the resurrection. The greatest miracle of all time was the incarnation: that God, the great, majestic Creator of this universe, poured Himself into this tiny baby, Jesus. That is beyond our comprehension. Not only *how* could God do such a thing, but *why* would He do such a thing? The Almighty God of heaven came to earth and placed Himself in Mary's womb, to be born on a cold night and then to sleep in a stable with the animals.

Why would the Son of God leave the throne of heaven and be born in an animal feeding trough, live a humble life, and suffer a painful death? Jesus didn't come to earth to teach us great truth, and He didn't come to set a great example. Jesus was born that first Christmas for one reason, and one reason only: to die for our sins on the cross, to provide the only way to God the Father.

We see that even in His name, *Jesus*. Jesus is the Old Testament name *Joshua*, which means "the Lord saves." The angel said to Joseph, "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The wise men even understood that. The wise men brought three gifts. They brought gold. That's what you brought a king, representing His deity. They also brought frankincense, which was a sign of purity. And the third gift they brought was myrrh. One of the most common uses of myrrh in New Testament times was to preserve a dead body. The wise men understood that this baby was born to die for the sins of the world.

It wasn't comfortable, yet the Bible says God was willing to leave the comfort of heaven to come to earth, to be born in a stable. Why? So that one day He could offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Describing the incarnation, the apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:5–8:

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

# Ordinary People, Extraordinary Savior



There are not many ways to God; not all roads lead to heaven. If there had been any other way for us to have a right relationship with God, then the Christmas story would have been unnecessary. But the reason that the God of the universe was willing to empty Himself, take the form of a bondservant, and become obedient to the point of death on a cross, was that it was the only way for the forgiveness of sins.

Every time you look at Jesus in the manger, ask yourself: “Have I trusted in God’s only provision for my sins?” God saves those who believe in Jesus for eternal life. Jesus said it this way: “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 3:16). Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?

*God saves those who believe.*

## Questions for Reflection

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1. Have you received God’s gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus?
  2. Is anything distracting you from committing your life completely to Jesus? If so, what can you do to remove those distractions and focus on becoming like Him?