

Introduction

Every year, in December, we celebrate Jesus's birth. Think about how significant it is to celebrate someone's birth 2000 years later. *Why do we celebrate a birth from 2000 years ago, but can't remember our own family member's birthday?*

Who is Jesus?

We celebrate Jesus's birth because of **who He is**. His birth was unique because of **who He is**. Today I want us to consider, *Who is the baby who was born in Bethlehem?* Though He appeared quite ordinary ([Isa 53:2](#)), He was someone quite extraordinary. [Philippians 2:6-11](#) explains that **Jesus is the eternal God who humbly lived among His creation and is eternally exalted.**

[Philippians 2:6-11](#) “6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Who is the baby who was born in Bethlehem? This passage introduces us to Jesus before His birth, during His life on earth, and after His death.

Eternal God

What do we know about Jesus before His birth? We don't need to ask this question about most people. There is not much to know about most people before they are born. Scripture teaches that **Jesus is the eternal God**.

[Philippians 2:5-6](#) “5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,”

Form of God

What does it mean to be “in the form of God?” [Philippians 2:6](#) “...though he was in the form of God...” This does not mean that Jesus merely **appeared** to be God or that He was merely **like** God. Scripture teaches that Jesus is truly God and is eternally God.

Scripture teaches that **Jesus is eternal**. If we read in the context of verses 7-8, we see that verse 6 describes Jesus's existence before His birth. Scripture teaches that **Jesus existed from the beginning of creation**. [John 1:1-2](#) “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.” Jesus claimed that **He existed before His birth**. [John 8:56-58](#) “56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”” Jesus said that **He was in heaven before His birth**. [John 6:38](#) “38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” [John 6:41-42](#) “41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”” [John 6:61-62](#) “61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”

Theodotus, a false teacher in the late 2nd century, taught that Jesus was a mere man who was adopted by God at His baptism and was empowered by the Spirit of God. **Jesus did not become God; He is eternally God.**

Scripture also teaches that **Jesus is the Creator**. This is important because **only God creates**. [Isaiah 44:24](#) “24 Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,” [Isaiah 45:18](#) “18 For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): “I am the Lord, and there is no other.” At the same time, Scripture teaches that **Jesus created everything**. [Colossians 1:16](#) “16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (cf. [Heb 1:2, 10](#)).

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus was the first created being through whom God created everything. They mistranslate [John 1:1](#) to state that Jesus is “a god,” not “God.” That is a complete misunderstanding of creation and Creator. According to Scripture there are two distinct categories: Creator and created. [John 1:3](#) “3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” There is no blurred 3rd category.

Jesus is eternal and He is the Creator. Jesus is God. Bart Ehrman, a modern theologian, claims that Jesus never thought of Himself as God. Instead, His disciples taught that He was God. However, **Jesus openly claimed to be God.** He attributed to Himself the **name of God.** [John 8:58](#) “58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am”” (cf. [Exod 3:14](#)). He claimed equality with the Father. [John 10:30](#) “30 I and the Father are one.”” [John 14:9](#) “... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...” Jesus’ **opponents** recognized that He claimed to be God. [John 10:33](#) “33 The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.””

When [Phil 2:6](#) says that Jesus was “in the form of God,” Scripture clarifies that this means **Jesus is truly and eternally God.**

To be grasped

If Jesus is eternally God, what does it mean that He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped? [Philippians 2:6](#) “... though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,”

This does not mean that Jesus **became** God (as we just discussed). Nor does it mean that He **ceased** to be God. Later verses make that clear. This refers to Jesus’s humility and willful submission to the Father in His incarnation (humanity).

Adam grasped at equality with God. That was the essence of Satan’s temptation. [Genesis 3:5](#) “5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” Adam was **not equal** with God, yet grasped at equality with God. Jesus **was equal** with God (He is God), yet He humbled Himself and obeyed the Father (as we read in verses 7-8).

Jesus is the eternal God.

Humanity

What does an eternal God have to do with a baby born in Bethlehem? Scripture teaches that **Jesus humbled Himself by being born as a human.** [Philippians 2:7-8](#) “7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Emptied

In what way can Jesus' humanity be described as "emptied Himself?" [Philippians 2:7](#) "7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

There is a false teaching called the **Kenosis theory**, which proposes that Jesus emptied Himself of deity; that is, He ceased to be God. This false teaching misunderstands deity as something that can be laid aside and taken up again. Deity is not like clothing that can be changed. **Jesus is either eternally God or eternally not God.**

Jesus emptied Himself by humbly submitting to the Father. [Philippians 2:7](#) "7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant..." [Philippians 2:8](#) "... he humbled himself by becoming obedient ..." Jesus said that He only did the will of the Father. [John 6:38](#) "38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." [John 14:31](#) "31 but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father..." Although He was equal with the Father, He did not grasp equality with God. He emptied Himself by submitting to the Father.

Jesus emptied Himself by becoming human. [John 1](#) describes Jesus as the eternal God who created everything, yet He became flesh ([John 1:1-3, 14](#)). He was so truly human that His own creation did not recognize Him as the Creator. [John 1:10](#) "10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him."

Human Likeness

What does it mean that Jesus was "born in the likeness of men" and "found in human form?" **Docetism**, an early false teaching) claimed that all physical things were evil; only the spiritual was good. This was a common Greek philosophical idea in the first century. The **Docetists** applied this philosophy to Jesus, claiming that Jesus did not become human - He only **appeared to be human**.

Jesus was truly human. Jesus shared in our flesh and blood, our physical bodies. [John 1:14](#) "14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." [Hebrews 2:14](#) "14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things ..." Scripture teaches that anyone who denies that Jesus truly became human denies the truth. [2 John 7](#) "7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist."

Jesus had human limitations. God is infinite in wisdom, yet Jesus **grew in wisdom.** [Luke 2:52](#) “52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” God is all-knowing ([Psa 139:1-6](#)), yet Jesus did not know everything. [Matthew 24:36](#) “36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” God needs nothing ([Psa 50:10-13; Acts 17:24-25](#)), yet Jesus hungered, thirsted, and grew tired. God cannot be tempted by sin ([James 1:13](#)), yet Jesus was tempted just as we are. [Hebrews 4:15](#) “15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Unto Death

Why did Jesus, the eternal God, submit to the Father and accept human limitation? [Philippians 2:7-8](#) “7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Jesus humbled Himself to dwell with us. It is counterintuitive to think that God should be humble; He is high and exalted. In reality, it is God’s nature to be both exalted and to dwell with the lowly. [Isaiah 57:15](#) “15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” Jesus became a human to dwell with humanity. [John 1:14](#) “14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...” [Matthew 1:23](#) “23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).”

Jesus accepted human limitation to die. From the beginning, God warned that the **consequence of sin would be death.** [Genesis 2:17](#) “17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” We all sin; therefore, we all die. [Romans 5:12](#) “12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—” Therefore, the cost of forgiveness of sin was death. [Hebrews 9:22](#) “22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” [Ephesians 1:7](#) “7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,” (cf. [Rom 3:25](#); [1 Pet 1:18-19](#)).

How then can you be forgiven of sin? We can do nothing to save ourselves from the consequence of our sin. We can only be forgiven because God is gracious to

us. [2 Timothy 1:9](#) “9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,” (cf. [Eph 2:8-9](#); [Rom 3:24](#)). Jesus atoned for sin by His death ([Rom 3:25](#)), but not everyone is forgiven through Jesus’ death. Scripture teaches that many will still face eternal condemnation ([Matt 7:13, 21-23](#)). Only those who have faith in Jesus will be forgiven and restored to a relationship with God. [John 3:18](#) “18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

Jesus humbled Himself by being born as a human. This is the heart of the entire Bible. Through faith in Jesus, your sins can be forgiven and you can know God.

Exaltation

How should we respond to Jesus’ deity and humanity? He is high and exalted **and** dwells with the lowly in spirit. Because He is both God and man, Scripture teaches that **all people should worship Jesus.** [Philippians 2:9-11](#) “9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Highly exalted

What does it mean that God has exalted Jesus? [Philippians 2:9](#) “9 Therefore God has highly exalted him ...” Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven. The OT prophesied that Jesus would sit on God’s throne, at His right hand. [Psalm 110:1](#) “1 The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”” The NT explains that that this was fulfilled when Jesus ascended after His resurrection. [Hebrews 1:3](#) “... After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”

What is the exalted name that God has given Jesus? [Philippians 2:9](#) “9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name;” In the OT especially, “name” often referred to a person’s identity. For example, [Isaiah 48:11](#) “11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.” That is, what do people think of when they hear your name? The point in [Phil 2:9](#) is that when people speak of Jesus, we should speak of Him as the exalted God.

Every knee and tongue

What should be our response to Jesus? This passage mentions two responses. First, **everyone should bow before Jesus**. Second, **everyone should confess Jesus' deity**. [Philippians 2:10–11](#) “10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

What does it mean to “bow” to Jesus? Bowing can sometimes refer to merely submission or respect. In this context, bowing refers to **worship**. This phrase comes from [Isaiah 45:22–23](#) “22 “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. 23 By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’” There is only one God ([Isa 45:22](#)) and every knee should bow to Him ([Isa 45:23](#)). [Phil 2:10](#), therefore, is claiming that Jesus is that one true God whom everyone should worship.

What does it mean to confess that Jesus is Lord? Lord can be a title of respect - to someone in authority. In the OT, this word is *adonai* (אֲדֹנָי). However, in both the Greek and the English translations of the OT, God's name (YHWH, יהוה) is also translated Lord. You can see this distinction in most English translations in the OT because translators often have LORD in all capital letters when it is translating YHWH.

This distinction is not as clear in Greek or in English. So *which version of “Lord” is meant in Phil 2:11?* The context is that Jesus is eternally God and is worshipped by all people as God. So verse 11 makes the point that Jesus is YHWH, the Lord, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and Earth. All people should worship Him as God.

Worshipping Jesus

When people worship **angels** in Scripture, the angels rebuke them, directing their worship to God alone. [Revelation 19:10](#) “10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” [Revelation 22:8–9](#) “8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”” Jesus also said that only God should be worshipped. When **Satan** offered Jesus the world's kingdoms in exchange for worship him, Jesus rebuked Him.

[Matthew 4:10](#) “10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ””

Yet Jesus accepted worship from people - not just reverence, but worship as God. [John 9:35-38](#) “35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36 He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” 37 Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” 38 He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he **worshiped** him.” Jesus did not rebuke him and soon after said [John 10:30](#) “30 I and the Father are one.””

[Luke 24:51-52](#) “51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they **worshiped** him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,” Again, this is more than reverence. They were not bowing to Jesus; He was in heaven. They were worshipping Him.

After Jesus’ resurrection, [Matthew 28:17](#) “17 And when they saw him they worshiped him ...” Jesus did not rebuke them. He told them that He had all authority in heaven and on earth. [Matthew 28:18](#) “...“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” and commanded them to baptize in the name of the Triune God, including Himself. [Matthew 28:19](#) “19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

Scripture teaches that only God should be worshipped. Jesus confirmed that teaching, yet accepted worship and claimed to be God in those contexts. *Should we listen to His claims?* Here are two reasons from Scripture to listen to Jesus’ claims to worship. First, the Father said we should listen to Jesus. [Mark 9:7](#) “7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”” Second, Jesus’ claims were vindicated by His resurrection. [Romans 1:4](#) “4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” **All people should worship Jesus.**

Conclusion

I recently read something that I think is quite accurate - that only a few generations after your death, no one will remember you existed. Even my great-great grandchildren, who would not be alive without me, will never think of me. No one will talk about me. No one will celebrate my birthday.

Yet, 2000 years later, we still celebrate the birth of Jesus. If we were just an ordinary man, we would have no reason for Christmas. Jesus is not an ordinary

man. **Jesus is the eternal God who humbly lived among His creation and is eternally exalted.** And because of His birth, you can know God.