

Three Questions for Christmas

Purpose of Revelation: To reveal the full identity of Jesus Christ and to give warning and hope to believers.

Author: The Apostle John

Letters to the churches: Near the end of his life, John receives a vision from Christ, which he records for the benefit of the seven churches in Asia and for the Christians throughout history.

This is the only book in the New Testament that promises a blessing to those who listen to its words and do what it says.

Christ demonstrated **his great love** by setting us free from our sins through his death on the cross, **guaranteeing us** a place in his kingdom.

Revelation 1:5 - And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

You never know how a baby will turn out.

- Parents have been wondering about babies since time began.
- **It must have been that way when Jesus was born.**

Luke 2:19 tells us that after ***the shepherds visited Mary*** and shared what the angels had said to them, **Mary:**

Luke 2:19 - But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart.

There was certainly a lot to think about:

Luke 1:33 - And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

Luke 2:11 - For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:35 - (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

The last verse of Mark Lowry's 'Mary, Did You Know?' poses the question:

- Mary, did you know that *your baby boy is Lord of all creation?*
- Mary, did you know that *your baby boy will one day rule the nations?*
- Did you know that *your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?*
- This sleeping child you're holding is *the great I am.*

You never know how a baby will turn out, do you?

- This one turned out to be the Savior of the world.
- But **not** everyone knows that, understands it, or believes it.

As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, **let's remind ourselves once again who Jesus is.**

Revelation 1:5 offers a threefold picture of our Lord.

And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. **To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.**

This verse is part of John's introduction to his book where he introduces himself and wishes his readers grace and peace.

Here is his description of Jesus Christ: *Who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."*

These three phrases help us understand the identity of the baby born in Bethlehem.

Each one answers a question we would like to ask about Jesus Christ.

Question # 1: Can I Trust Him?

The first question is the most basic of all.

The men and women of this generation **have heard the name of Jesus many times.**

- What they want to know is very simple, "Can I trust him?"

In a world of religious charlatans and fakes, this is where we must begin.

We discover the answer in John's first title.

- He calls Jesus **"the faithful witness."**
- **A witness tells** what he has seen or heard.
- **A faithful witness** is one whose testimony is reliable every time.

John means that *Jesus Christ can be relied upon to tell the truth*.

When he speaks, he speaks only the truth.

1 Timothy 6:13 speaks of *"Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate, made the good confession."*

1 Timothy 6:13 - 13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

What did he say when he stood before Pilate?

John 18:37 - Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?"

Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, **that I should bear witness to the truth**. *Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*"

Jesus Christ is the supreme truth-teller, and those who want to find the truth must listen to him.

Every person must deal with this fundamental issue about Jesus, "Can I trust him?"

Some people will answer yes, others will say no.

Until this issue is settled, there is no point in talking about anything else.

Many years ago, Bob Harrington, the Chaplain of Bourbon Street, and Madeline Murray O'Hair, the famous atheist, had a debate on the Donohue TV program.

At one point, someone in the audience asked Mrs. O'Hair what she was going to do when Jesus returned.

- **What would she say then?**

With great confidence, she declared, “**It won’t happen**, so I don’t have to worry about that.”

To which ***Bob Harrington replied***,

- “**The Bible contains 318 verses that *speak of the return of Jesus Christ***.
- **She just said *he isn’t going to return***.
- Over here **you’ve got 318 verses** in the book of God.
- And over there you’ve got **one verse from the book of O’Hair**.
- **Now, who are you going to believe?”**

That’s the key question. Who are you going to believe?

Let’s suppose you **don’t want to** take my word for it. ***Read the record for yourself.***

Can I trust him? Yes, I can, for he is the faithful witness.

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Question # 2: Does He Have the Power to Help Me?

That naturally leads to another question.

“If I trust him, does he have the power to help me?”

The answer is found in **John’s second title** for Jesus Christ.

He calls him “**the firstborn from the dead.**”

- This refers to **his resurrection from the dead**.
- **When he rose from the dead**, he was the “**firstborn from the dead.**”

What exactly does that mean?

It means he is the first person who ever rose from the dead never to die again.

During his earthly ministry Jesus raised several people from the dead, including Lazarus who had been dead four days (John 11).

Each occasion was a remarkable miracle, but they had this **one thing common**.

- **All the people Jesus raised from the dead would eventually die again. *But not Jesus himself.***

When Jesus came forth from the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, **he rose once and for all.**

- When he left the grave, **he left for good.**

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead in the sense, that he is the first in a long line of people, **who will be raised from the dead never to die again.**
I find great comfort in this.

Over the years, I have officiated many funerals.

- I know what it's like to stand at the graveside and ***try to say something hopeful*** in the calloused face of death.
- ***It's not easy to pray*** when someone you love has been taken from you.

No wonder the Bible calls death **"the last enemy"**

1 Corinthians 15:26 - The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

In those moments, ***I find strength in one thing and one thing only.***

Jesus has conquered the grave and done what no mortal man has ever done.

He has come back from the dead never to die again.

What happens to those who believe in him?

Thank God, we are not left to wonder or to speculate.

God himself has spoken on that subject.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 - For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

"If we believe." *It is as simple and as difficult as that.*

- You will never convince yourself of the resurrection by camping out in a cemetery.

If you go to a cemetery and wait for a resurrection, you'll have to wait a long time.

After all, the last one happened over 2,000 years ago.

We have the word of God which overrides anything we can see with our eyes.

- **Our faith in the resurrection of the dead doesn't** rest in what our eyes can see.
- **Our faith rests in** that act of God whereby ***he raised Jesus from the dead.***
- **If God can do that, he can do anything.**

Does Jesus have the power to help you?

Yes, he does, for he is the firstborn from the dead.

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Question # 3: Will He Take Care of My Future?

“Suppose I do trust him, and suppose he does have the power to help me, will Jesus take care of my future?”

The answer comes in **John's final title for Jesus Christ**. It is breathtaking in its scope. ***He calls Jesus “the ruler of the kings of the earth.”***

Ruler means he is the ultimate authority over all the kings of the earth.

- They are great, **but he is greater.**
- They are mighty, **but he is mightier.**
- Millions answer to them, **but they answer to God.**
- **He is not** merely one of the kings. ***He rules over them all.***

When John Piper preached on this phrase, he put the matter this way:

If George Bush says to Jesus, “How can you be the ruler over me?”

- ***I have my office by*** the election of the people of the United States, a sovereign nation, and by a constitutional inauguration and installation,”
- **Jesus will answer, “I have my office as ruler over you by God's election and by my resurrection from the dead, my indestructible life, and my installation at God's right hand.”**

The quote is still true no matter who occupies the White House. It's as true for George Washington as it is for George Bush. It's as true for Abraham Lincoln as it is for John Kennedy, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, or Joe Biden.

In the first century, **the mighty emperor Nero** thought he was the ruler of the kings of the earth.

He held in his hands the power of life and death.

- He ordered the burning of Rome and then **blamed it on the early Christians.**
- He had **Paul the apostle beheaded,**
- Thinking that the troublesome Christian movement **would die with him.**
- But now 2000 years have passed, and **the tables have turned.**
- We name our dogs Nero and our sons Paul.

Who are the rulers of the earth John is talking about?

They are political leaders in their offices, mayors and councilmen, chairmen and governors, congressmen and senators, presidents and prime ministers.

There're small-time kings who rule tiny realms and mighty kings who rule vast empires.

Jesus is ruler over them all. It's true this world is in a mess. That's why it's hard to believe this is true.

All the evidence seems to move in the opposite direction.

- **The baby-killers** are untouched, the politicians break the laws they write, the drug dealers make their millions, and the nations arm themselves for destruction.
- When you look around, **you could make a good case that Satan is the ruler of the kings of the earth.**
- **But it only seems that way.**
- **Satan has no power** except that granted to him by God.
- In due time, **Jesus will step back on** the stage of world history.

Think about it.

The hands that were nailed to the cross will someday rule the world. *Though we do not see it today, it is certain* and sure of fulfillment. That's what the book of Revelation is all about.

Read it for yourself and see how the story ends.

In the meantime, right now and at this very moment, he is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

- By him they reign. By him they are restrained.
- By him they are replaced.
- By him they will be judged.

Proverbs 21:1- The Lord Considers the Heart - The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Will Jesus take care of my future?

Yes, he will, for he is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

You're in good hands ***when you are in his hands for those hands rule the universe.***

But that wasn't evident on that first night in Bethlehem.

A casual onlooker would not have suspected the earthshaking events that were taking place, in a forgotten stable, in a tiny village, in a remote corner of the Roman Empire.

- The prospects for the young child **didn't seem very promising**.
- **You can never tell how a baby will turn out.**
- **But this one would surprise us all.**
- And we are still surprised by him 2000 years later.

CLOSE: What is the application?

Grip fast to Jesus Christ. There is no security anywhere else. Today, as yesterday, and tomorrow as today, **he is the answer to the deepest questions of life.**

We all need him, and we need him more than we know. This truth is worth repeating; you're in good hands when you are in his hands, for those hands rule the universe.

- ***Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King.***
- **Place your life in his strong hands and you will never be disappointed.**

Can I Trust Him? - Does He Have the Power to Help Me? - Will He Take Care of My Future?