

## IT'S A BOY!

From Luke 2, we listen again to verse 7:

*...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths  
and placed him in a manger...*

Dear Friends in Christ the Newborn King,

What's the first question you ask when somebody has a new baby? If you're like most people you want to know, "Is it a boy or a girl?" "Do I have a new nephew or a new niece?" "Do I have a new grandson or a new granddaughter?" "Is it a boy or a girl?"

Actually, when God blesses someone you know with the gift of a new life, you almost always want to know four things: 1<sup>st</sup> - Is it a boy or a girl? 2<sup>nd</sup> - How's the mother doing? 3<sup>rd</sup> - Is the baby healthy? 4<sup>th</sup> - What are they going to name the baby? The Gospel writer Luke answers these four basic questions about Jesus' birth in the second chapter of his gospel.

**1<sup>st</sup> question - Is it a boy or a girl?** Luke 2:7 *...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.* It's a boy! We have added so much to the celebration of Christmas: parties, presents, lights, decorations, seasonal travel hassles, family get-togethers, the holiday stress of crowded stores and scarce parking. The basic story is so easily lost. Mary of Nazareth gives birth to a baby. It's a boy!

And clearly this baby boy is her first child, her firstborn. Nine months earlier Mary had questioned the angelic messenger who told her she would bear a child. Mary asked, "*How will this be since I am a virgin?*" The angel explained, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*" Now, at the birth of her first child, she remains a woman who is sexually pure, a virgin, a virgin with a firstborn son.

Firstborn sons were important in Jewish families. All firstborn sons belonged to God. All firstborn sons had to be redeemed, that is "bought back" through the sacrifice of an animal at the temple. A firstborn son received two times the amount of inheritance than that given to any of his brothers. There was a lot involved with being the firstborn son. It was an important position with many benefits in a Jewish family. The Gospels tell of Jesus' brothers and sisters, (his ½ brothers and ½ sisters) most notably James, the brother of Christ. But Jesus was the firstborn, a son. It's a boy!

**2<sup>nd</sup> question - How's the mother doing?** Again verse 7, ...*She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger...* The new mother Mary is doing fine. She's already up on her feet, placing the baby into a makeshift crib. That same night she has received visitors, shepherds who told her about multitudes of angels filling the night sky with song, shepherds who came and worshiped her child.

Verse 19 ...*Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.* A woman in distress, a woman in crisis doesn't sit and reflect on singing angels and excited shepherds. Yes, the new mother Mary is doing fine. After all, it's a boy! She is beginning to care for her baby.

**3<sup>rd</sup> question - Is the baby healthy?** Interestingly enough, in the original language, Luke the physician uses a word for "give birth" that implies the live birth of a healthy child. Also, in verse 7 he writes, ...*She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger...* If the baby Jesus had been weak or sick, Mary would not have placed him in a feed box. She would have cradled him in her arms. She would have rocked him, soothed him, prayed for him and kept him warm. If the baby Jesus had been sickly, Joseph would have gone for help. But he was there with Mary because her baby boy was doing fine.

**4<sup>th</sup> question - What are they going to name the baby?** In the culture of Jesus' day, it's a little early to ask this question. You see, a child wasn't formally named until the eighth day. But both Mary and Joseph are in agreement. They each talk of separate visits from an angel. There is no doubt in their minds. This baby boy will bear the name 'Yeshua.'

Tradition tells us that Luke was acquainted with Mary, that he spoke with her about these events even before he wrote his gospel. Even so, the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to answer the four questions most asked at every birth. And so Luke tells us: It's a boy. The mother is doing fine. The baby is healthy. The parents are going to name the baby Yeshua.

So what does all this have to do with you? Millions of healthy firstborn sons have been born to healthy women over the centuries. Why do we make such a fuss over this one birth 2,000 years ago? Let's look at those four answers again.

**1<sup>st</sup> answer - It's a boy!** It is the birth of a human baby boy. Yet we call today the Nativity (birthday) of our Lord. The Apostle John says this is the time that the Word became flesh. God himself became a human being, a baby boy. Consider just what this means. When U of A Coach Sean Miller wants to send a player into the game, he doesn't look for someone wearing maroon and gold or purple and white or silver and green. He looks for someone wearing the red and blue. He looks to his own bench.

It's the same with God the Father. When he needed a substitute to receive your punishment for your sins, a substitute to die for your sins, he didn't send a lamb or a bull or a dog or a cockroach. He sent a human being just like you. Jesus could pay for your sins. He could substitute for humanity because he was born a human being. It's a boy! Hebrews 2:14, *Since the children have flesh and blood, (that's us) he too (that's Jesus) shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death...*

You and I need a substitute. The Bible says very clearly, "*All have sinned,*" and that word 'all' includes you. Every word you speak in anger, every jealous thought, every tidbit of gossip you pass along, every doubt, every one of your worries, every misuse of God's name, every lustful thought, every unkind word or deed, every unkind thought is a sin. And each sin makes you guilty of death in God's justice system. *The soul who sins is the one who will die* (Ezekiel 18:20).

Just look at how we have mangled Christmas. Instead of a time of religious significance, it has become a time of stress and worry, financial strain, family strife, petty squabbles. Forgive us our Christmases Lord, and forgive us our sins, the many ways we have found to do just the opposite of what your Word says. Yes, you and I need a substitute to pay the penalty that our lives of disobedience have earned. And we have a substitute, worthy and willing to stand in for us. It's a boy!

**2<sup>nd</sup> answer - The mother is doing fine.** Jesus was born into a human family. Like you Jesus had a mother and father (step-father), brothers and sisters. Jesus knows from firsthand experience about parents who don't understand you, squabbling brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters who doubt you, who desert you when you need them most. Mother Mary had to be healthy to give Jesus a normal human family. Later on we are told, Mary experienced grief and sadness. A sword of sorrow pierced her heart when her firstborn son died on a cross paying the penalty for our sin.

But Jesus wasn't just born to die for you. Jesus was born to live for you too! He lived a perfect life, a sinless life in a family like yours in the face of the same temptations you face. (He)...*has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin* (Hebrews 4:15). Now, through your faith in Jesus, his perfection, his sinlessness is credited to you. That's how you can stand before God some day, clothed in Jesus' perfection, his righteousness.

A healthy mother Mary was able to nurture Jesus and care for his needs and provide for him as he matured. As mother to his ½ brothers and sisters, she gave Jesus the family, the human family in which he grew up. In so doing, Mary was part of God's plan to make possible Jesus' perfect life for you.

**3<sup>rd</sup> answer - The baby Jesus is healthy.** When you think about it, Jesus had to be a healthy baby. Look at what he faced in his life. Probably within the year he and his parents became nighttime fugitives fleeing to the land of Egypt. While he was still a very young child, Jesus endured the long, difficult trip back from Egypt to Nazareth. Life as a carpenter's son in the hills of Nazareth wasn't an easy existence. It was a life filled with a lot of hard work, manual labor. There were times when the rainfall was less and the harvests were slim, and everybody in a little village like Nazareth would go without, even the carpenter's family.

Later on, Jesus spent weeks at a time in the wilderness. He traveled everywhere on foot. He organized a traveling seminary for his disciples. He served in an arduous preaching and teaching and healing ministry. His body bore beating and scourging and thorns. Only a strong, healthy body could endure all this for you.

**4<sup>th</sup> answer - The parents are going to name the baby Yeshua.** That's the name the angel told Joseph to use, Yeshua. Doesn't sound familiar? From Hebrew to English we translate Yeshua as Joshua. From Hebrew to Greek to English we translate Yeshua as Jesus. But whether you say Yeshua or Joshua or Jesus, the meaning is the same, Savior. Matthew 1:21, the angel said to Joseph, "*...you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*"

O he had many other titles, Christ, Messiah, Anointed One, Son of Man, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Son of Righteousness, but his name was Jesus and Jesus means Savior. Jesus means your Savior. That's exactly what he has done for you with his life and death. Now, through faith in Jesus your Savior, you have the one thing that you need most in this life, the forgiveness of sins, and along with that everlasting life and salvation.

I'm glad you're here today. I'm glad you're here today to once again focus on the basic, underlying fact of Christmas, the reason for the season, the birth of Jesus. We have added so much glitter and fuss and bother to Christmas, the basic story easily gets lost. Today you will hear people around you say Happy Holidays, Ho, Ho, Ho, or even Bah Humbug. But you have a different message to share: It's a boy! Our Savior and King! Happy Birthday. Happy Birthday Jesus.

Let us pray.

O Savior, precious Savior,  
How amazing is your love for us. Even though you knew us and our sinfulness, you became one of us. Even though you knew it would cost your life, still you came, not with might or power but in meekness and humility, you came to save us. May we celebrate your birth today with deepest gratitude and with greatest joy, our Savior and King. Amen.