

# What Child is This: Mary



We can't answer the question, "What child is this?" without talking about

the actual, black-and-white, just-the-facts answer. What child is this?

This is Jesus. That's who we're talking about. That's who we're waiting for; that's who's being born. We're exploring what that means by looking at what the other characters in the Christmas story, and it's all in pursuit of knowing Jesus better and allowing his birth to continue to mean more to us this year and every year.

So, we can't do that without talking about the name of Jesus. And we can't ignore that there's been a lot of attention given to what exactly Mary's baby's name would be. But that's pretty typical. All parents go through this. Linse and I have been through it twice, and it's been a real treat for a few reasons. First, we didn't find out the gender of either of our boys before they were born, so we had to have names and options figured out for whoever would make their appearance. Second, we had some factors working against us. Between the two of us, we've been working with children either through an after-school program or in school or youth ministry for our entire married lives. So, we have a pretty healthy "No" list, a list of names that we cannot use because you can't give your child the same name as someone who drove you crazy for weeks at a time.

So, when it came to naming our own boys, we obviously came to Auden Quinn and Simon James. Auden is one of my favorite authors; Quinn is my dad's middle name. Simon is a name we both likes; James is Linse's grandpa's middle name.



**JESUS**


Mary and Joseph did not have this exact problem; all the guesswork and

family connections and helpful suggestions from beloved friends and

total strangers weren't a concern for the Holy Family. Maybe that's one of the perks of being the parents to the Son of God. There were prophecies written about what this

child's name would be from hundreds of years before Mary and Joseph's parents had to make the same decisions. And to make it even clearer, as we read in scripture today, when the angel came to Mary and told her this incredible and life-altering news, the angel made it clear: you'll name this baby Jesus, and he'll be great, the son of the Most High God. And in case there was any confusion, when the angel appeared to Joseph to assure him that this incredible story Mary told him was true, the angel also said, "She'll give birth to a son, and you'll name him Jesus because he'll save the world from sin." So the Holy Family not only knows what they're having (a boy) and what his name will be (Jesus).

What child is this who would have a name like this? Just think of all the things written about Jesus and his very name. **The Prophet Isaiah said that a child would be born with authority placed upon his shoulders, and he'll be called wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.** **The Apostle Paul called Jesus'** name a name above all names. He also said that at his name everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth would bow before it. Before his very name. What child is this?



What did Mary think of all of this?

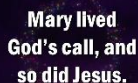
**I can't imagine what Mary thought when the angel appeared to her and**

told her all that was going to take place. That she'd be having a baby.

That the baby would be a son and that that son would have that name, that name that meant so much. We know she had questions because scripture told us that she asked questions. But we also know that she said, "Yes" to the call that God had placed on her life. Most people would have run to the hills if put in the same position, but not Mary. No, her response to all of this was to say to the angel, "I'm a servant of the Lord; let it be

done to me according to your word.” She was willing to let her body and her life be taken over by the Most High God and to live into this call. What child is this that this terrified young mother would respond in faith, would respond with joy because she is God’s servant, would respond with love for this child that made her life way harder and more confusing? What child is this that Mary has the chance to experience the joy of bringing the savior of the world into the world?

Once she gave birth to her son, this is the name he was given just as the angel of the Lord had foretold. As with any child, attributes and characteristics of both a child's mother and father can be recognized and on display.



Mary lived  
God's call, and  
so did Jesus.

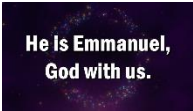
**Mary, the Mother of God, lived fully and faithfully into God’s call, and**

Jesus, the babe, the son of Mary did the same thing. Mary showed us who she was and in so doing gave us a hint into who her son would grow to be. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus begs God to not make him go through with God’s plan. But then he does. He goes to the cross, and it changes the world. I can imagine Mary going through the same thing when the morning sickness was at its worst or she had heartburn constantly or Jesus took up residence in her rib cage and kicked until Mary cried. I can imagine Mary riding on a donkey in labor and just begging for it all to be over. But she endured and brought forth this child, the son of God.

Mary, the Mother of God, faithfully endured and stood by Jesus through his entire earthly ministry. As crowds grew, as crowds shrank, as people turned their backs on Jesus’ teaching. And as Jesus went to the cross. Both his heart and hers would be pierced from the cross experience. This is part of the answer to...What child is this? Regardless of the pain that Mary knew she would experience in watching her son suffer

on the cross, she was present in both his pain and hers. John's gospel account notes that it was Mary, Jesus's mother, who was standing by the cross on that fateful day.

Never would Jesus' mother leave him nor forsake him, especially in his hour of need. Likewise, one of the characteristics of Jesus is the one that reminds us of his continual presence with us as his followers.



He is Emmanuel,  
God with us.

In fact, one of his names is Emmanuel: The God who is with us. Jesus,

like his mother, Mary, is with us in our darkest hour and deepest pain.

Jesus told his followers that no matter what, he would be with them always, even to the end of the age.

So, what child is this? He is God with us. He is God always with us. He is Jesus. And he is our joy not only during this season of Advent but always. Amen!