



## **Who Is In Charge? How Does Christmas Impact Your Life?**

Several years ago I went to court to contest a ticket I received. A traffic camera allegedly caught me not coming to a complete stop at a redlight. I was certain I had and so rather than just paying the ticket, which was a considerable amount of money, I decided to fight the ticket in court. When I got there, over one hundred were in the court room. More than eighty were there because they were defendants who were going before the judge. There was a police officer standing guard, a court bailiff, a stenographer keeping notes, a translator, and several other court officials. No one among the defendants spoke. We all were silent as rocks out of respect for the proceedings. Only the court officials spoke, and they talked to each other in low tones. When the judge entered the court room from a special door at the front, we all stood in his honor. He called defendants up to the front one at a time and each one was respectful and polite. The judge asked them questions and decided on each case and when finished dismissed them and there was not a peep in reply from the defendants. Court employees did exactly what the judge demanded and if any of the defendants in the gallery dared speak out loud while the judge was conducting business, they were ordered out of the courtroom. It was very clear who was in charge of those hallowed grounds. Not me!

I once watched a movie in which the lead character and his best friend expressed their complete devotion to the baby Jesus. It was a running joke in the film, not because they were mocking Christ but because the characters could not see past Jesus lying in a manger, as if He never grew beyond that stage in life. What made this satire work is the fact that countless numbers of people think of Jesus in the same way. **When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.** (Luke 2: 15-16 NIV) That is Christ and all He is to millions or more. A baby in a manger. Jesus was born in poverty within an inauspicious village. It was so poorly viewed by the people of Israel that when King Herod decided to have killed all the male babies two and younger, no one outside Bethlehem protested.

What set off Herod's savagery was the information he gleaned from the Magi or wise men who came from the East to meet that baby Jesus. **After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."** (Matthew 2: 1-2 NIV) The Magi believed Jesus was a god which is a few steps above a destitute helpless infant. What made matters worse in King Herod's eyes was when he turned to the Jewish scholars to find out where that baby Jesus was, the prophecy they shared from the Bible alarmed him. **"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.** (Matthew 2: 6 NIV Herod may not have believed the Scripture, but He knew key leaders among the Jews did and that made Jesus a terrible threat to his reign, so he tried his best to have Jesus killed, even if it meant the massacre of other babies too.

The prophet Daniel, in speaking of the Son of Man, the term Jesus nearly always used to refer to Himself, provides a starkly different view of Jesus from the sweet baby Jesus idea many have of Him. **"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of**

heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7: 13-14 NIV) That's not exactly the image of a weak and helpless infant. It is the Lord Almighty being described who rules over all Creation. The last book of the Bible says something similar about the baby Jesus. **They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.**" (Revelation 17: 14 NIV)

Let's consider how rather than little baby Jesus, this Lord of lords and King of kings acknowledgement of Jesus looks in real time. When Mary and Jesus and Jesus' disciples were at a wedding feast for a couple who aren't identified in the text, the head of the wedding banquet discovered the groom ran out of wine for the guests. Somehow Mary got wind of this and went to Jesus, wanting Him to figure out what to do. Jesus rather nonchalantly responded, "What does this have to do with us?" Mary turned around and told the servants, **"Do whatever he tells you."** (John 2: 5b NIV) Now, what if they didn't do it? What if the servants decided that filling the six, thirty gallon stone water jars which Jesus commanded to be done was too much work? What if they thought Jesus was a nitwit or a fraud? They would have missed out on the first of the great miraculous signs of Jesus attesting to Him being the Savior of the world. But even more practically, the groom would have been humiliated and the wedding feast ruined by the lack of wine.

We see something similar when a man born blind was approached by Jesus. Jesus spit on the ground, made mud out of it and packed it on the blind man's eyes. **"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent).** (John 9: 7a NIV) What if the blind man decided he wouldn't do it? He didn't know who Jesus was and it was admittedly a pretty bizarre thing to do. The command was quite specific and unambiguous. Do this. Go to this one place and not another. He did so and the blind man saw for the first time in his life. The second most famous miracle of Jesus' life would not have happened if those involved chose to refuse to do what Jesus commanded. Lazarus, the beloved brother of Mary and Martha and great friend of Jesus Himself died and four days later Jesus came to their house to meet with the family and friends. Lazarus, a rotting corpse was past hope. Jesus though gave an extraordinary command. **Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."** (John 11: 38-39 NIV) What if Martha decided that Jesus lost His mind, that His demand was unreasonable, that it wasn't worth her time. What if Martha or the friends there didn't do it? What if they didn't move the stone away because they were smarter than Jesus, better informed than Him?

What would it take to convince you that it is always right to obey Jesus? Is He a baby in a manger who makes a holiday season warm and cozy or the Lord who is King over each decision you make? The Von Trapp family left Austria in 1938 because the Nazis took over their country. Hating everything the Nazis valued including their push toward atheism, they left their estate, their wealth, and the prestige they had at home to start a new life where they could live free. The Nazis offered the father Georg a prestigious naval commission, the son Rupert a medical doctor's position and great fame for the family as a singing group. They chose to live for God and abandon their riches and fame. Interestingly, Maria, the tutor to the children who became Georg's wife was orphaned when she was young, raised to be an atheist by an abusive relative. She only came to faith in Christ because while in college she accidentally attended a Palm Sunday service, thinking it was a concert of Bach music. Hearing the Bible taught and explained, she realized that she had been lied to her entire life in her atheist adoptive home about the accounts in the Bible. Maria never turned back from Christ and she and Georg made the monumental decision to follow Christ as Lord and leave Nazi occupied Austria, even when it cost them their home and their wealth. Jesus was King of kings and Lord of Lords for the Von Trapp family. Is He to you? Are you happy to have a baby Jesus resting quietly in a manger or Christ as Lord over your life deciding for you how you shall live?