

How do we know Christ is who He said He is? - New Testament account of his Birth
Christ was crucified about 30 AD and a fellow named Luke who Believed in Christ did some investigating and wrote a book. In it, he talks a bit about the events that led up to Christ's birth.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary was told in advance that she was going to become pregnant because God was going to create a baby in her. That would make Christ quite literally God's son. We have to read a bit of the book of Matthew to get a feel for what happened next when Joseph realized Mary was pregnant.

Matthew 1:18-25

18This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" which means, "God with us." 24When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

So not only was Mary visited and told who Christ was but Joseph was also told that he was to stay with Mary and be Christ's earthly father. The angel also referred back to the prophets and told

Joseph that Christ was the one the prophets had been talking about so long ago. Now we'll jump back to Luke to get the next part of the time line, which is Jesus' birth.

Luke 2:1-7 - In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

When I was a child I was always confused about how there could be no room at an inn. I thought, how popular was this town that you couldn't find a bed anywhere? I never really realized that because of the census the towns where the census was being taken would be filled with people coming in from all over to register. It was about a three day trip for Mary and Joseph. No wonder the inn was full.

Luke 2:8-20 - And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." 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. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

So now we have many shepherds who have been told by angels that Christ is the Savior and where to find him. They found him and immediately started telling everyone who would listen what happened to them and what they say. With a town full of people there for the census you can bet word spread fast. The next part of our story does not go where I originally thought it would. You see, I'm following a time line here and pointing out the things that show how we know Christ really is the Son of God. But you may have noticed it's sounding a lot like the Christmas story we're all used to hearing. Well, here's part of the story you don't typically hear.

Luke 2:21-39 - On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

So now we have two people moved by the Holy Spirit to say on their own who Christ is when they see Him. They recognize exactly who he is because God has again revealed this to them. Now, if you're familiar with the same Christmas story I am then you may be wondering, "What about 'We three kings from Orient are...?'" Well, I haven't forgotten about them. It just hasn't been their turn yet. When we last left the family they were headed back home. Well, we have to go back to Mark to hear about their visit with Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-12 - 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." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: " '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.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as

you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

And that's where our story ends. We have Magi who likely were astrologers from Persia or Southern Arabia. They certainly weren't kings but they would have been very knowledgeable. And, since they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, I'd say God smiled favorably on them. Notice that they, too, worshiped the child and gave him gifts. We don't know how many Magi there were, but we know what gifts were left.

It's studies like this that remind me that Jesus and His birth are more than just a nice story told to children. Most people may have a few misconceptions about the details but for those who want to know the Truth, it's right here for the reading. And if anything I find that these little inconsistencies strengthen my faith because this Bible isn't just a collection of bedtime stories. It's a history book that focuses on the God who created us and His son who He sacrificed for the forgiveness of our sins.