

## Taking the Birth of Jesus Personally

By Barry Shafer

### The Word

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:1-3).

“Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason He had to be made like His brothers and sisters in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:14-18).

### The Backdrop

What's the most recent unflattering comment you've heard about Jesus? You probably don't have to remember too far back because, as you may have noticed, debate about Jesus has intensified. Was He God? Was He simply a social reformer? Was He a made-up figure put forth by some zealous people of faith called Christians? The Christmas season provides an opportunity for the world to focus on Jesus, but it's not always an accurate focus. You may see news stories about the “historic Jesus,” which is sort of code for a non-God version of Jesus.

### The What

Granted, the idea of someone being all God and all human is pretty out there and sometimes hard to explain. So, maybe the best thing to do is simply experience this idea—that Jesus is all God and all human *personally*.

**Try this:** Spend a few minutes meditating on the two Hebrews passages below. (You may want to print them.) Then as you read the passages, draw a cross over every reference to Jesus, including pronouns such as whom, He and His.

**Then do this:** When you've finished, review what you marked and write on a piece of paper all the descriptions of Jesus that you found. Put each item in one of two lists:

<b>1.) <u>Descriptions of Jesus' relationship to God</u></b>	<b>2.) <u>Descriptions of Jesus' relationship with man</u></b>

## **The So What**

Spend a few minutes meditating on the two lists you just made. After you've pondered, circle two items from each list that stand out the most to you, then jot down your responses to the following questions.

Are there ways you have taken for granted your relationship with Jesus? In what ways?

What temptations continue to nag you? Does it help you to know that Jesus was made like you in every way and was tempted, as well? How does it help? (You may want to check out Heb. 4:14-16.)

It's easy to hear what our culture says about Jesus, but what about you? Who is Jesus to you? In light of the passages you just read, why does it matter to you that Jesus was all God and all human? How would your life be different if Jesus were only all human?

### **Baby Steps to Apply 'The So What':**

1. The next time you hear or read a comment about Jesus that's unflattering or portrays Him as less than who He is, take a stand by weighing in with what it means to you personally that God would become one of us.
2. Filter every temptation through the truth that Jesus was tempted in the same way that you're being tempted. Draw strength from that truth.
3. Write some Post-it Notes® with a simple reminder of these Hebrews passages and place them where you'll see them every day. Here's a sample (feel free to use or improve): *Jesus: all God; all Human; all for me.*