

Message Description

- The virgin birth sounds to many like a fable or a meaningless tradition or something from an odd and old religious creed. Could the virgin birth have been a real thing? And why would it matter? And further, what would it really mean to me? In this message, we will rediscover the wonder and relevance of this biblical truth. We will marvel at how all the pieces of God’s redemptive work fit together and call us to him.

Introduction

— Unusual births...

— Today...

- In the Bible...
- The most unusual birth is that of Jesus...

— Turn to **Matthew 1**.

— We have four Gospels.

- They each tell the story of Jesus but from different perspectives.

- This adds richness to what we know of Jesus and his life and ministry.

- **John** tells the story around seven miracles or signs that prove the divinity and reveal the mission of Jesus.

- **Mark** focuses on Jesus’ actions and encounters with others.

- **Luke** gives more detail and shares more of the words of Christ than **Mark** does.

- **Matthew** adds the perspective of how Jesus’ life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and satisfied the Jewish longing for the coming Messiah.

- What we traditionally call the Christmas story is found primarily in **Matthew** and **Luke**.

- **Matthew** focuses on the account from Joseph’s perspective.

- **Luke** focuses on the account from Mary’s perspective.

- This morning we will look at the mystery from the virgin birth from both perspectives.

— Read **Matthew 1:18-25**.

— **1:18**

- Betrothal (engagement) in the first century Jewish world...

- What **Matthew** covers in this one verse is elaborated in five verses in **Luke 1**.

- **Luke 1:31** | [The angel Gabriel said:] *Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.* (CSB)

- **Luke 1:32** | *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.* (CSB)

- **Luke 1:33** | *He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.*” (CSB)

- **Luke 1:34** | *Mary asked the angel, “How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?”* (CSB)

- **Luke 1:35** | *The angel replied to her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.* (CSB)

- We call this the “virgin birth,” but that is not an accurate term.

- It’s the conception that was miraculous, not the birth.

- **Dr. James Leo Garrett: “The miracle lay in the manner of the conception and not in the manner of the birth.”**

- There is much false teaching about this today...

- *Mary was sinless.*

- *Mary was perpetually virginal.*

- *The birth involved some kind of divine C-section instead of being a vaginal birth.*

- This false teaching does not come from the Bible.

- It comes from the *Gospel of James* (Protoevangelium of James) which is an apocryphal gospel written in the second century.

— **1:19**

- Stoning was the legal prescription for this sort of adultery (**Deuteronomy 22:23, 24**).

- Strict conformity to that legislation was not widely practiced in the first century.
- Joseph wanted to show her kindness and legally break the relationship quietly.
- **1:21**
 - The name Jesus means “Savior”.
 - It was a common name.
 - Same as the name “Joshua” in the Old Testament.
 - The name was given to sons as a symbolic hope for the Lord’s anticipated sending of salvation through a Messiah who would save the people from oppression.
 - But the angel points to a different (and much more important) meaning for the name “Jesus.”
 - Jesus: *“He will save his people from their sins.”*
 - THAT IS THE MISSION OF CHRIST!
- **1:23**
 - This is a quote from **Isaiah 7:9**.
 - Here Jesus is called, “Immanuel.”
 - God with us.
 - Why two names or titles (Jesus, Immanuel)?
 - “Jesus” specifies what he does (“*God saves*”).
 - “Immanuel” specifies who he is (“*God with us*”).
- **1:25**
 - Mary was not perpetually virginal.
 - Mary and Joseph went on to have normal marital relations.
 - Mary and Joseph had more children the normal way.
- Now, what about this so called, “virgin birth” (that was really a virgin conception) ...
 - Is this really important?
 - Listen to a couple of famous theologians from Texas:
 - **John F. Walvoord of Dallas Theological Seminary said: “The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity. Upon it the whole superstructure of Christian theology depends.”**¹
 - **The great evangelist and author John R. Rice (from Dallas Baptist University) asserted: “All Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the virgin birth. If Jesus had a human father, then the Bible is not true.”**²
- Let’s see if we can determine from Scripture why the virgin conception of Christ is so important...

Why is the Virgin Birth Important?

I. It is important because it is in the Bible.

- That seems too obvious to be helpful, but there is an important lesson to learn here.
- The Bible clearly establishes the virgin conception of Christ at least in **Matthew 1** and **Luke 1**.
 - Therefore, to deny the virgin conception is to deny the veracity of God’s Word.
 - It is to deny the factual basis for the story of Jesus.
 - It is to deny the Gospels.
 - And it is to deny the power and sovereignty of God.
- When someone denies the virgin conception of Christ, he is saying one of two things.
 1. *God is not powerful enough to cause a virgin conception.*
 2. *God’s word is not reliable enough to lead me to believe in a miracle.*
- A person could indeed hold one or both of those views, but not without jettisoning the entire Christian faith.
 - If God is not powerful enough to alter the normal laws of nature then he is not God.
 - If he cannot cause Christ to be born of a virgin, then he cannot save you from sin and death.
 - If God’s word cannot be relied upon to tell us how Jesus’ earthly life began, then it cannot be relied upon to tell us how it ended.
 - If we can’t trust the story of the incarnation, then we cannot trust the story of the crucifixion and the resurrection.
- So, to all those who claim to be Christians and deny the virgin conception of Christ, I say: “Repent and believe” (**Mark 1:15**).
- About one-hundred years ago, there was a group of Christians who were called the fundamentalists.
 - There are good and bad things that could be said about that group.
 - But one thing they did was list what they considered the “Fundamentals of the Faith.”
 - These were five things a genuine Christian must embrace.

- They taught that to deny one of these fundamentals was to deny the faith.
- The Fundamentals
 - *The deity of Christ*
 - *The inerrancy of Scripture*
 - *The substitutionary death of Christ on the cross*
 - *The bodily resurrection and physical return of Christ*
 - *The virgin birth (virgin conception)*
- I think that is a pretty good list.
- In the early church, they had creeds they would recite when they were baptized (and at other times) that summarized the basics of the faith.
 - One such creed (The Apostles Creed) began like this...
 - *I believe in God, the Father almighty creator of heaven and earth.*
 - *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.*
 - *He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.*
 - *He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.*
 - *He descended to the dead.*
 - *On the third day he rose again.*
 - Again, right in the middle of that creed: The virgin conception.

II. It makes possible the impossible: Jesus is **fully divine**, and Jesus is **fully human**.

- **Matthew 1:23** | *See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."* (CSB)
 - "Son" points to his humanity.
 - "God with us" points to his divinity.
- One of the amazing yet difficult to understand things about Jesus is that he is fully human and fully divine.
 - He isn't half and half.
 - He isn't quasi-human or quasi-divine.
- Why is Jesus' dual nature important?
 - Because he is the perfect mediator.
 - Perfect because he...
 - He takes the hand of man as a man...
 - He sits at the right hand of God as God...
 - Jesus is "fluent" in both worlds...
 - **Illustration**
 - **For Thanksgiving we had some friends from the community in our home.**
 - **One lady is a professor at SFA, and she is from China, and is fluent in Mandarin.**
 - **So, we pulled out some old videos we have of our daughter, Rae, talking to us in the early days when she could only speak in Mandarin.**
 - **We've always wondered what Rae was telling us.**
 - **My oldest daughter speaks Mandarin but the cadence of Rae's speech was too rapid for Hannah to pick out the words.**
 - **Our friend was able to watch and listen to the videos and translate.**
 - **Because she knew Mandarin, she understood Rae's words.**
 - **Because she knew English, she could convey those thoughts to us.**
- Jesus, being fully human and fully divine is the perfect mediator between us and the Father.
- How could Jesus be fully human and fully divine?
 - Well, God could likely have done this in many different ways.
 - Let's be careful that we don't limit God.
 - But God chose to do this in a beautiful and illustrative way!
 - Note two main points of the story...
 - Jesus had an earthly mother like every other person ever born.
 - Yet Jesus was conceived by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 1:35**).
 - It probably would have been possible for God to create Jesus as a complete human being in heaven and send him to descend from heaven to earth without the benefit of any human parent.³
 - But then it would have been very hard for us to see how Jesus could be fully human as we are, nor would he be a part of the human race that physically descended from Adam.⁴

— On the other hand, it probably would have been possible for God to have Jesus come into the world with two human parents, both a father and a mother, and with his full divine nature miraculously united to his human nature at some point early in his life.⁵

— But then it would have been hard for us to understand how Jesus was fully God, since his origin was like ours in every way.⁶

III. It points to the inherited nature of sin and the sinlessness of Christ.

— All humans have an inherited legal guilt and a corrupt moral nature from their first father, Adam.

— (Sometimes called “inherited sin” or “original sin.”)

— **Romans 5:12** | *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.* (CSB)

— Note that it says sin entered through Adam though Even also sinned...

— We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners.

— But the fact that Jesus did not have a human father means that the line of descent from Adam is partially interrupted.⁷

— Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way in which every other human being has descended from Adam.⁸

— And this helps us to understand why the legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ.⁹

— We see an allusion to this in the word “*holy*” found in **Luke 1:35**.

— **Luke 1:35** | *The angel replied to her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.* (CSB)

— So, why didn’t Jesus inherit a sinful nature from Mary?

— The mystery is in the divine conception in **Luke 1:35**.

— But, regardless of the mechanics of the miracle...

— This is wonderful because not only is Jesus the perfect mediator (previous point) but he is also the sufficient sacrifice!

— If Jesus would have had a sin nature, then he would have been a slave to sin.

— If Jesus would have had sin, his death would not have been to pay the penalty for our sin but his own sin.

— **Illustration**

— **If you owe the IRS \$1,000 and I owe the IRS \$1,000...**

— **And I send them a check for \$1,000 and tell them to count that for both of us, that won’t work!**

— **My \$1,000 check would only be sufficient to cover my own debt.**

— **You would still be in debt to the IRS.**

— Jesus was sinless in both nature and activity.

— Therefore, his death was sufficient to pay the penalty for my sin!

IV. It demonstrates that salvation is not by human effort or human worthiness.

— The virgin conception of Christ points to the valuable truth that our salvation is not by human effort or human worthiness!

— First, let’s talk about human effort...

— The conception was not by the agency of Mary and Joseph.

— This all began as a work of the Lord!

— **Galatians 4:4-5** | *When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* (CSB)

— **Ladies, which is better?**

— **You hound your husband/boyfriend about getting you flowers... You point out that all your friends have received flowers... You remind him of all the selfless things you do for him... You insist that flowers better be delivered by the end of the week or else... And he gets you flowers.**

— **Your husband/boyfriend truly surprises you with flowers and says, “No strings attached. I just want you to know how much I love you!”**

— Flowers and salvation are not in the same category, of course.

— But the virgin conception reminds us that “*while we were still sinners*” Christ reached out and made a way!

— **Romans 5:8** | *But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (CSB)

— Next, let’s talk about worthiness...

— There was nothing particularly deserving about Mary.¹⁰

- Probably countless Jewish girls could have served to give birth to the Son of God.¹¹
- Certainly, Mary manifested qualities that God could use, such as faith and dedication (**Luke 1:38, 46-55**).¹²
- But she really had nothing special to offer, not even a husband.¹³
- That someone apparently incapable of having a child should be chosen to bear God's Son is a reminder that salvation is not a human accomplishment but a gift from God, and an undeserved one at that.¹⁴

Conclusion

- The virgin conception...
 - It is a fundamental pillar of our faith.
 - It is a reminder that Jesus is both the perfect mediator and a sufficient sacrifice.
 - It heralds the truth: God loves us and has made a miraculous way!
 - That is why we celebrate Christmas!
 - That is why we must respond to his invitation!

Discussion Guide

Connect

- There are many parts to the traditional Christmas story (The angel announcements to Mary and Joseph, the birth in the barn/cave, the angels and shepherds, the wisemen, etc.) What parts of the story have been especially meaningful to you through the years?

Discover

- Which statement or experience stood out to you from the worship service?
- Read Luke 1:26-33.
 - What must this angelic announcement have been like for Mary? What might it have been like to balance the fear and the excitement that must have come to Mary being pregnant in such a unique way and in such a unique circumstance?
 - When the angel Gabriel said to Mary, "You have found favor with God," do you think that was more about who Mary was or who God was? Why?
 - What does it mean that his kingdom will "have no end?"
- Read Matthew 1:18-23.
 - What does verse 19 say about the character of Joseph?
 - The angel said the baby should be named Jesus because "he will save his people from their sins." What was the angel referring to? How do you think this might have differed from the expectations of the people of that day who were awaiting a Messiah? How does that differ from what people are looking for from Christianity today?
 - What is the meaning of Immanuel? Why is such a comfort and encouragement for believers today?
- Read Matthew 1:24-25 and Luke 1:34-35.
 - Why was it important that Mary be a virgin when Christ was born?
 - Why is it better to call this a virgin conception and not a virgin birth? What is the difference?
 - What is the implication of the virgin conception with the theological statement that Jesus is fully human and fully divine?
- Read Romans 5:12, 15-19.
 - What does the Bible mean when it says that sin entered the world and spread to all people through one man (5:12, 17)?
 - If through the sin of one there is condemnation for everyone (5:18), why is this not true of Jesus?
 - How does Jesus not having a sin nature (inherited sin) affect us (5:17, 19)?

Respond

- Can a person be a Christian and at the same time deny the virgin conception of Christ? Why is this Bible doctrine so important? Why is it fundamental to the faith?
- How can a full understanding of the implications of the virgin conception add to a Christian's worship and celebration at Christmas?

Bonus for Thinkers

- The Roman Catholic church adds much to this doctrine that is not found in Scripture. One of those additions is that Mary was sinless. How does this view undermine the theology of Salvation found in Romans 5 (and other places)?

Outline Ideas

— #1

- Why is the virgin birth important?
 - It is important because it is in the Bible.
 - The Fundamentals...
 - The critics...
 - It makes possible the impossible: Jesus is fully divine, and Jesus is fully human.
 - It points to inherited nature of sin and the sinlessness of Christ.
 - It demonstrates that salvation is not by human effort or human worthiness.

General Notes on the Virgin Birth

- **The world has experienced unusual births. International notoriety followed the birth of the Dionne quintuplets in Ontario in 1934, the births of the Fisher quintuplets in South Dakota in 1963, and the birth of Stanek sextuplets in Colorado in 1973. More recently, the United States has seen the spectacular birth of the Chuckwu octuplets in Houston in 1998. With the increase of the usage of fertility drugs and pills, more multiple births continue to be reported.** However, the only unique birth still remains the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. There has not been another birth like His, nor will there ever be.¹
- Scripture clearly asserts that Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father.²
- The doctrine of the virgin birth is based upon just two explicit biblical references—**Matthew 1:18-25** and **Luke 1:26-38**. There are other passages in the New Testament which some have argued refer to or at least allude to or presuppose the virgin birth, and there is the prophecy of **Isaiah 7:14**, which is cited by **Matthew (1:23)**. But even when these passages are taken into consideration, the number of relevant references is quite few.³
- Dr. Wright says (in an article of that title) is also true – Jesus is “**The Most Dangerous Baby**,” but not only for the reason the good doctor argues. **Jesus is the most dangerous baby in the world because of the virgin birth.**⁴
- The Jewish religious leaders believed that the promised Messiah would be the Son of David, a human member of the royal family. He would be that, nothing more and nothing less. They rejected the notion that the Christ could also be divine.⁵
- John F. Walvoord of Dallas Theological Seminary said: “**The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity. Upon it the whole superstructure of Christian theology depends.**”⁶
- **Fundamentalists** have been marked by their acceptance of these major doctrinal concepts: **the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection, and His second coming.**⁷
- In Mary’s magnificat (vs. **46-55**), she made no reference to Joseph. God received the entire credit for her conception. She stated among other things: “For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name” (v. **49**). This could possibly refer to the predicted overshadowing power of God at the time of conception (cf. v. **35**). In his narrative of the birth of Jesus, Luke reported that Joseph went to Bethlehem “to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child” (**2:5**). If Mary had been pregnant by Joseph, Luke no longer would have identified her as “his espoused wife” (cf. **1:27**). The period of betrothal would have ended with the first act of sexual intercourse between them. Even after Joseph took into his house Mary, and after the explanation of the angel, he “knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son” (**Matt. 1:24-25**). There were no sexual intimacies between Joseph and Mary before their betrothal, after the betrothal but before her conception, and

¹ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 224.

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 529.

³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 760.

⁴ John Weldon and John Ankerberg, *The Virgin Birth – the Celebration of Christmas as Proof of the Virgin Birth* (Chattanooga, TN: ATRI Publishing, 2012).

⁵ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 11.

⁶ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 13–14.

⁷ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 14.

after her conception but before the birth of Jesus. **The first sexual relationship between them occurred after the birth of Jesus.**⁸

- **The doctrine of the Virgin Birth only presents difficulties to those who question the literal, historical accuracy of the gospel narratives, the sovereignty of the Almighty, and the deity of Jesus Christ.**⁹
- Adolf Harnack, a German rationalistic theologian who denied the deity of Jesus Christ, nevertheless admitted: “It is certain that already in the middle of the second century, and probably soon after its beginning, the birth of Jesus from the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary formed an established part of the Church tradition.”¹⁰
- The Apostle’s Creed, produced in Gaul about the fifth or sixth century, was based upon an old Roman baptismal confession, dated as early as a.d. 200. Both Tertullian and Irenaeus used the latter in the middle of the second century. The key text read: “Born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary.” The convert, before his baptism, had to include that truth in his confession of faith. That shows that the doctrine of the virgin birth was so firmly entrenched in the life of the early church that it was deemed to be one of the fundamental doctrines. No one would be admitted into a Christian assembly nor recognized as a genuine believer without faith in it.¹¹
- The genetic relationship of Jesus to Mary, to Israel, and to the human race is absolutely necessary for the proper interpretation of Matthew’s analysis of Jesus’ sojourn in Egypt: “When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son” (**Matt. 2:14-15**).¹²
- Why did God need to become man? And why was it necessary for Him to become incarnate through the virgin birth? The Scriptures give definite answers to these searching questions.¹³
 - **To Reveal God to Man**
 - Christ “declared” God to man. He exegeted (*exegesato*) the Father. He led the hidden God out into open view so that everyone could see what God was like. **Is God emotional? Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35). Is God righteous? Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple courtyards (Matt. 21:12). Is God only concerned about adults? Jesus desired the little children to be brought to Him (Matt. 18:1-10).** Some things could be learned about God from an investigation into the created world, but God had to become man in order for man to come to know God as a warm, personal being, completely concerned about man’s basic needs.¹⁴
 - **To Provide Redemption for Man**¹⁵
 - To acquire a true humanity and thereby provide redemption for man from the penalty, power, and presence of sin, God the Son had to be virgin born. No other method of incarnation would have secured the needed mediator and example.¹⁶
- The great evangelist and author John R. Rice asserted: **“All Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the virgin birth. If Jesus had a human father, then the Bible is not true.”**¹⁷
 - To confess the virgin birth is to confess the deity of Christ; to confess the deity of Christ is to confess the virgin birth. They are inseparable, Siamese twins. Conversely, to deny the virgin birth is to deny the deity of Christ; to deny the deity of Christ is to deny the virgin birth. No person can logically accept one and reject the other. Christ is not God because He was virgin born, but because He was and is God, He had to be virgin born to obtain a real humanity.¹⁸
- **A little boy was drawing a picture, and his mother said, “Son, what are you drawing?” He said, “I’m drawing a picture of God.” She said, “You can’t do that.” He said, “Why?” She said, “Because no one knows what God looks like.” He said, “They will when I’m finished.”** Well, friend, I want to tell you, the portrait of God is not what some little boy has scribbled; the portrait of God is Jesus—it’s Jesus! Do you want to know what God is like? You’re going to find that God’s glory is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. God became a man. He became the God-Man, that God’s glory might be revealed. And Jesus Christ could say, *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* (**John 14:9**)¹⁹
- The Theological Meaning of the Virgin Birth²⁰

⁸ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 86–87.

⁹ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 94.

¹⁰ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 97.

¹¹ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 99.

¹² Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 114.

¹³ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 155.

¹⁴ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 157–158.

¹⁵ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 158.

¹⁶ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 161.

¹⁷ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 224.

¹⁸ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 224–225.

¹⁹ Adrian Rogers, “The God-Man,” in *Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive* (Signal Hill, CA: Rogers Family Trust, 2017), Is 9:6–7.

²⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 771.

- On one level, of course, the virgin birth is important simply because we are told that it occurred.²¹
 - Thus, rejecting the virgin birth has implications reaching far beyond the doctrine itself.²²
- Not...
 - In other words, his being both divine and human did not depend on the virgin birth.²³
 - We conclude that Jesus' sinlessness was not dependent on the virginal conception.²⁴
- 1. The doctrine of the virgin birth is a reminder that our salvation is supernatural.²⁵
- 2. The virgin birth is also a reminder that God's salvation is fully a gift of grace.²⁶
 - That someone apparently incapable of having a child should be chosen to bear God's Son is a reminder that salvation is not a human accomplishment but a gift from God, and an undeserved one at that.²⁷
- 3. The virgin birth is evidence of the uniqueness of Jesus the Savior.²⁸
- 4. Here is another evidence of God's power and sovereignty over nature.²⁹
- Dale Moody was correct in 1953 when he pointed out that "virgin birth" is a misnomer for Protestant theologians, inasmuch as the miracle lay in the manner of the conception and not in the manner of the birth.³⁰
- The doctrinal importance of the virgin birth is seen in at least three areas.³¹
 - 1. It shows that salvation ultimately must come from the Lord.³²
 - 2. The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person.³³
 - 3. The virgin birth also makes possible Christ's true humanity without inherited sin.³⁴
 - Such a conclusion should not be taken to mean that the transmission of sin comes only through the father, for Scripture nowhere makes such an assertion.³⁵
 - But why did Jesus not inherit a sinful nature from Mary?³⁶
 - A better solution is to say that the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary must have prevented not only the transmission of sin from Joseph (for Jesus had no human father) but also, in a miraculous way, the transmission of sin from Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you ... therefore the child to be born will be called *holy*" (Luke 1:35).³⁷
- The virgin birth is doctrinally important because of:³⁸
 - (1) The doctrine of Scripture. If Scripture errs here, then why should we trust its claims about other supernatural events, such as the resurrection?³⁹
 - (2) The deity of Christ. While we cannot say dogmatically that God could enter the world only through a virgin birth, surely the incarnation is a supernatural event if it is anything. To eliminate the supernatural from this event is inevitably to compromise the divine dimension of it.⁴⁰
 - (3) The humanity of Christ. This was the important thing to Ignatius and the second century fathers. Jesus was *really* born; he *really* became one of us.⁴¹
 - (4) The sinlessness of Christ. If he were born of two human parents, it is very difficult to conceive how he could have been exempted from the guilt of Adam's sin and become a new head to the human race. And it would seem only an arbitrary act of God that Jesus could be born without a sinful nature. Yet Jesus' sinlessness as the new head of the human race and as the atoning lamb of God is absolutely vital to our salvation (Rom. 5:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22-24).⁴²
 - (5) The nature of grace. The birth of Christ, in which the initiative and power are all of God, is an apt picture of God's saving grace in general of which it is a part. It teaches us that salvation is by God's act, not our human

²¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 771.

²² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 771.

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effort. The birth of Jesus is like our new birth, which is also by the Holy Spirit; it is a new creation (**2 Cor. 5:17**).⁴³

Matthew 1:16

- In the genealogical list, he used the literary format: A begat B, and B begat C, and so forth (vv. **2–15**). However, when he came to the relationship of Joseph to Jesus, Matthew changed the style radically: “And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (v. **16**). The Greek word rendered “whom” is the genitive feminine singular relative pronoun *hes*. Its grammatical antecedent could only be the female Mary, not the masculine Joseph. All forms of the word “begat” were aorist active indicatives until Matthew switched to the aorist passive indicative for the birth of Jesus by Mary. These abrupt changes definitely show that Joseph did not beget Jesus, but that he was simply the husband of Mary.⁴⁴

Matthew 1:18

- In Matthew’s birth stories, the main focus is on Jesus, whereas in the Lukan stories there is also a focus on the family of and birth of John the Baptist. The explanation of this difference is simple. Luke is writing a historical monograph, not a biography of Jesus, and his focus is on what he deems to be the pertinent events in salvation history. The First Evangelist, however, is writing an ancient Jewish biography of Jesus.⁴⁵
- **betrothed.** Jewish betrothal was as binding as modern marriage. A divorce was necessary to terminate the betrothal (v. **19**) and the betrothed couple were regarded legally as husband and wife (v. **19**)—although physical union had not yet taken place.⁴⁶
- The secret influence of the Spirit is more minutely described in **Luke 1:35**.⁴⁷
 - **Luke 1:35** | *The angel replied to her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.* (CSB)
- On the virginal conception in particular, it is often said that such a belief stems from prescientific superstition. But even the relatively primitive stage of first-century science was sufficiently advanced for people to know that in every other known instance it required a biological father as well as a biological mother to produce a human child. The Christian notion of a virginal conception was no more plausible in first-century Judaism than it is in the twentieth-century Western world, yet it has formed an integral part of Christian belief for two thousand years.⁴⁸
- Though Matthew expounds nothing of its significance here, the virginal conception has regularly been understood as a way by which Jesus could be both fully human and fully divine. His father, in essence, was God, through the work of the Holy Spirit; his mother was the fully human woman, Mary. As fully God, Jesus was able to pay the eternal penalty for our sins (v. **21**) for which finite humanity could not atone. As fully human he could be our adequate representative and substitutionary sacrifice.⁴⁹
- The term **virgin birth is a misnomer**. Neither Matthew nor Luke describes Jesus’ birth at all but only his conception. The apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* 19:3, an important source for the traditional Catholic doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity, is in fact the main source for the unscriptural notion that Mary’s hymen was not broken at the time of delivery.⁵⁰
 - The **Gospel of James**, also known as the **Protoevangelium of James**, and the **Infancy Gospel of James**, is an apocryphal gospel probably written around the year AD 145, which expands backward in time the infancy stories contained in the Gospels of **Matthew** and **Luke**, and presents a narrative concerning the birth and upbringing of Mary herself. It is the oldest source to assert the virginity of Mary not only prior to, but during (and after) the birth of Jesus.⁵¹

Matthew 1:19

- Betrothed partners were referred to as **husband** and “wife” (v. **20**), though they were not yet considered to be married, and having sexual relations during that period was considered immoral.⁵²
- Stoning was the legal prescription for this sort of adultery (**Deut. 22:23, 24**).⁵³

⁴³ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1249–1250.

⁴⁴ Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: A Biblical Study of the Deity of Jesus Christ* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 94.

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⁵¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_James

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- The phrase “a just man” is a Hebraism suggesting that he was a true believer in God who had thereby been declared righteous, and who carefully obeyed the law (see **Gen. 6:9**).⁵⁴
- He is called a “righteous” man, which for Matthew does not imply sinless perfection but regularly refers to one who is law-abiding, upright in character, and generally obedient and faithful to God’s commandments.⁵⁵
- To “put her away” would be to obtain a legal divorce (**19:8, 9; Deut. 24:1**), which according to the Jewish custom was necessary in order to dissolve a betrothal.⁵⁶
- **divorce her quietly.** Joseph intended to maintain his personal righteousness, yet he desired to show compassion even though Mary appeared to be an adulteress.⁵⁷

Matthew 1:20 Notes

- It is true that the involved parties in the sin of adultery could be sentenced to death (cf. **Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22**), but **strict conformity to that legislation was not widely practiced in the first century.** Joseph opted for the relaxed method. The phrase “while he thought” (**Matt. 1:20**) is not an adequate translation of the aorist passive participle *enthumethentos*. Literally, it means “after he thought.” After debating what to do, he made up his mind, and then retired to bed.⁵⁸
- **To call Joseph ‘son of David’ (elsewhere used only of Jesus) highlights the importance of Joseph to the incorporation of Jesus into the Davidic line.** The incorporation will happen through his taking Mary as his wife and the naming of Jesus by Joseph.⁵⁹

Matthew 1:21

- The name **Jesus** was given to sons as a symbolic hope for the Lord’s anticipated sending of salvation through a Messiah who would purify his people and save them from oppression (see note on v. **1**). But the angel points to **a more important theme: to save his people from their sins.**⁶⁰
- He is to be named Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*), which means *Yahweh is salvation* or “the Lord saves” (NIV marg.). His ministry will not first of all involve the physical liberation of Israel from its enemies but the spiritual salvation of God’s people by removing the alienation from God which their sins have created. An echo of **Ps 130:8** appears here.⁶¹
- What might be involved for Matthew in being saved from sins can be clarified by looking at his later references to ‘sins’: John the Baptist’s ministry provokes the confession of sins (**3:6**); Jesus himself forgives sins (**9:2, 5, 6**).⁶²
- **The name Jesus means “Saviour.” It is the same name as “Joshua” in the Old Testament. It is given to our Lord because “he saves his people from their sins.”**⁶³
- “Jesus” is a very encouraging name to heavy-laden sinners. He who is King of kings and Lord of lords might lawfully have taken some more high-sounding title. But he did not do so. **The rulers of this world have often called themselves Great, Conqueror, Bold, Magnificent, and the like. The Son of God was content to call himself “Saviour.” The souls who desire salvation may draw close to the Father with boldness, and have access with confidence through Christ.** It is his office and his delight to show mercy. “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (**John 3:17**).⁶⁴

Matthew 1:23

- Observe in these verses the two names given to our Lord. One is “Jesus,” (**25**) the other “Emmanuel” (**23**). **One describes his office, the other his nature.**⁶⁵
- “Immanuel” is translated for the benefit of those in Matthew’s audience who could not understand the Hebrew.⁶⁶
- **The name “Jesus” specifies what he does (“God saves”), while the messianic title “Immanuel” (v. 23) specifies who he is (“God with us”).**⁶⁷

⁵⁴ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1393–1394.

⁵⁵ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 58.

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Matthew 1:25

- The grammatical construction translated “until” strongly suggests (but does not prove) that Mary and Joseph proceeded to have normal sexual relations after Jesus’ birth.⁶⁸

Matthew 2

- When the magi, or wise men, came to Jerusalem, they asked Herod: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (**Matt. 2:2**). Worship of royalty was practiced in the Near Eastern world, but the worship of an infant to the exclusion of his parents was not known. To the Jew, the worship of any human being was both repulsive and blasphemous. These magi, who had calculated from ancient Jewish prophecy the exact time that the Messiah would appear (**Dan. 2:31–45; 7:1–28; 9:24–27**), saw something distinctive in this child. Later, “when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (**Matt. 2:11**). **The magi did not worship Mary, or Mary and Joseph, or Mary, Joseph, and Jesus; they worshiped only Jesus. Their gifts were presented also only to Him.**⁶⁹

Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23 Notes

- The total absence of sexual intimacies is clearly seen in the word “virgin” (*parthenos*). Jesus Himself used this word three times in the parable of the ten virgins (**Matt. 25:1, 7, 11**). Luke used it twice of Mary (**Luke 1:27**) and of Philip’s four prophetic daughters (**Acts 21:9**). Paul differentiated between a wife and a virgin (**1 Cor. 7:34**; cf. **7:25, 28, 36–37**). Spiritual faithfulness was equated to chaste virginity (**2 Cor. 11:2**). The word was even descriptive of men who had no sexual relationships with women and who were totally yielded to God (**Rev. 14:4**). Since sexual abstinence is essential to the meaning of *parthenos*, then not only was Mary a virgin, but also the divine intent of **Isaiah 7:14** involved true virginity. **The best commentary upon the Old Testament is the New Testament; therefore, the Christian must view the prophecy through its fulfillment in Christ. The clear interpretation of Matthew 1:22–23 should explain whatever ambiguity one might find in Isaiah 7:14.** This is the proper order of Christian exegesis.⁷⁰

References

— **Matthew 22:42** | “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They replied, “David’s.” (CSB)

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