



Ministry of the Word

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Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Subject: Part 3 – The Divine Origin of Jesus: The Virgin Birth

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." ²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Matthew's Gospel opened with the genealogy of Jesus, ensuring we understand that Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of David. Now he discusses His divine origin in verses 18 to 25 which we will concentrate on this morning. As we go through the Gospel according to Matthew, take note that Matthew's style repeats the Old Testament prophecies which were being fulfilled. This is the only gospel that does this and we will see an example of it when we get to verse 23. In verses 24&25, it states that Jesus is absolutely God and yet absolutely human.

In Matthew Chapter 22 verse 42, Jesus asked the Pharisees “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” The Pharisees did believe that the Messiah was coming, but they did not really take into account every single prophesy given in the Torah in relation to the true Messiah, they also may not have fully understood them either, remember that the New Testament explains the Old. Yet when we look back, we can clearly see that Jesus fulfilled all the specifications of prophecy in the Old Testament to the Letter. For example it was prophesied –

- He would be born of a virgin – Isaiah 7:14; And He was - Matthew 1:18,25
- He would be born in Bethlehem – Micah 5:2; And He was - Matthew 2
- He would be taken into Egypt – Hosea 11:1; And He was – Matthew 2:15
- He would heal the sick and make people whole – Isaiah 55; And He did – Matthew 8
- He would be crucified – Psalm 22:14-17; And He was – Matthew 27v31
- He would die for our sins – Isaiah 53; And He did – Matthew 20v28
- He would be raised from the dead – Psalm 16:11; And He did – Matthew 28:1-10

Matthew is giving the answer of who the Christ, the Messiah, is here in the first chapter of this gospel. He squarely faces his Jewish readers and all the readers of all the ages, and he gives them the answer. The genealogy of Jesus tells you whose son he is, David. And the birth of Jesus tells you whose son he is, God. Jesus is the Christ, who in his humanity is the Son of man and yet in his divinity, the Son of God. Now if Matthew 1:1-17, the genealogy, were all that could be said, then Christ may have had the legal right to be the king, but he could have never redeemed men.

Why is this so important? The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity. The whole framework of Christian theology depends upon it. The whole essence of Christianity, is founded on the fact that Jesus is God in human flesh. This is something made clear at the very birth of Christ, an essential doctrine. If Jesus was born simply of human parents, there is no way to describe the reason for his supernatural life. His virgin birth, his substitutionary death, his bodily resurrection and his second coming are all part of deity. You cannot isolate any one of those and accept only that one and leave the rest or vice versa, accept them all but one. Therefore, it is surely no accident that the beginning of Matthew’s gospel, at the outset of the New Testament, is devoted to establishing both the regal humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus’ being both human and divine, there is no gospel. The essence and the power of the gospel is that God became man and



that, by being both wholly God and wholly man, He was able to reconcile men to God. One of the reasons and purposes of Matthew's writing his gospel account may have been partly apologetic; not in the sense of making an apology for the gospel but in the more traditional sense of explaining and defending it against its many attacks and misrepresentations. Matthew is writing here not simply just to lay out the facts, but to counter misrepresentations of Jesus' person. He is writing to counter a certain slander. Jesus' humanity was often maligned and His deity often denied. One of the repeated slanders levelled to the Christians was that Jesus was born out of wed-lock! These slanders occurred during His earthly ministry, and certainly after His death and resurrection. It was Jesus' claim of deity, however, that most incensed the Jewish leaders and brought them to demand His death.

“For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

History informs us that even the conservative Pharisees did not generally believe that the Messiah would be divine. Had Jesus not claimed to be more than the son of David, He may have begun to convince some of the Jewish leaders of His messiahship. Once He claimed to be God, however, they rejected Him immediately.

And so we must face the question that Jesus posed to the Pharisees again. Whose son is he? This is something that we need to have the upmost clarity on in these days. Jesus said that in the last days, many will come claiming to be the Christ. Well if you want to know about counterfeit money, what do you do? You study the real thing. You can never study it enough either, and the same for Jesus and His word.

Over recent years religious polls have uncovered that liberal theology has so impacted the church that a large percentage of professing Christians no longer believe in the virgin birth and as a result in the deity of Jesus Christ. You would have to ask the question why would they want to call themselves Christians if they don't believe in the Scriptural teaching concerning Him? A pastor of one of America's largest churches was asked specifically what he believed about the virgin birth, he said,

“I could not in print or in public deny or affirm the virgin birth of Christ. When I have something I can’t comprehend I just don’t deal with it.”

If that is not an outright denial of the Deity of Christ I don’t know what is. Real deity demands what the Scriptures teach and it affirms a real virgin birth. Fallen man has not only turned from God but is at war with God. It not surprising that he will not bow to Scripture and be guided by it. No he has set himself up as judge and jury of it and will pick and choose what he wants.

Just think about it for a moment? According to Scripture you needed 2 or 3 witnesses in a court of law to make a testimony stand. We have four eye witness testimonies, the four Gospels and Acts. There is no way that denial is permissible! In fact the truth concerning Christ is right through the Epistles, the whole of the New Testament. Paul spoke about eye witnesses concerning Christ, even the Old Testament is all about Him. There is only one way to God, and that is through his True son, Jesus Christ, not through someone-else’s version of who he is. We are faced, if not more than ever with the same slanders against Jesus. Many people still today are willing to recognize Him as a great teacher, a model of high moral character, and even a prophet from God. Were He no more than those things, however, He could not have conquered sin or death or Satan. In short, He could not have saved the world. He would also have been guilty of grossly misrepresenting Himself. It is so important that you know this and believe it with all your heart for your soul depends on it as well as those to whom you speak or witness to. While the critiques may not believe, it is the testimony of the Scriptures that Mary was a virgin. John MacArthur wrote;

“One critic has waived his fist at God and called Him an unholy liar with these words: “There was nothing peculiar about the birth of Jesus. He was not God incarnate and no virgin mother bore him. The church in its ancient zeal fathered a myth and became bound to it as a dogma.” But the testimony of Scripture stands.”

It is not the testimony of man, but of God. So when we come to verse 18 we need to take on board the volume of which it speaks.



“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.”

Also verses 22 and 23 –

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

There are some amazing births recorded for us in the Old Testament for instances Isaac was given a natural birth by a 100 year old woman, remember that miracle? but he was not the Saviour. Manoah’s wife was barren yet she gave birth to Samson, but he was not the Saviour. Then there was the birth of Samuel who became the anointer of kings and prophet, but he was not the prophesied one. Even when we come to the New Testament and to John the Baptise also born to a barren woman, filled with the Holy Spirit and many thought it was him but he was not the Messiah. The birth of Jesus surpasses all of these because he is the Messiah and Saviour.

The virgin birth should not have surprised those Jews who knew and believed the Old Testament. Because of a misinterpretation of the phrase *“A woman shall encompass a man”* in Jeremiah 31:22, many rabbis believed the Messiah would have an unusual birth. They said, *“Messiah is to have no earthly father,”* and *“the birth of Messiah shall be like the dew of the Lord, as drops upon the grass without the action of man.”*

But even that poor interpretation of an obscure text (an interpretation also held by some of the church Fathers) assumed a unique birth for the Messiah. Not only had Isaiah indicated such a birth in chapter 7 verse 14 which is the verse that Matthew quotes in verse 23; we also see it way back at the start in Genesis 3, were we get a glimpse of it.

God spoke to the serpent of the enmity that would henceforth exist between *“your seed and her [Eve’s] seed”* (Genesis 3:15). In a technical sense the seed belongs to the man, and Mary’s impregnation by the Holy Spirit is the only instance in human history that a woman had a seed within her that did not come from a man. The promise to Abraham concerned *“his seed,”* a

common way of referring to offspring. This unique reference to “*her seed*” looks beyond Adam and Eve to Mary and to Jesus Christ.

The two seeds of Genesis 3:15 can be seen in a simple sense as collective; that is, they may refer to all those who are part of Satan’s progeny and to all those who a part of Eve’s. That view sees the war between the two as raging for all time, with the people of righteousness eventually gaining victory over the people of evil. But “seed” also can be singular, in that it refers to one great, final, glorious product of a woman, who will be the Lord Himself—born without male seed. In that sense the prediction is messianic. It may be that the prophecy looks to both the collective and the individual meanings. Paul is very clear when he tells us that

“When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman”
(Galatians 4:4)

The account of Jesus’ divine conception strongly suggests that the story was not man-made. Verses 24 and 25 of Matthew 1 is very clear –

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Joseph had married Mary during this time, but they did not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born. It is simply not characteristic of human nature to try to describe something so absolutely momentous and marvellous in such a brief space. Our inclination would be to expand, elaborate, and try to give every detail possible. In His divinity He “descended” from God by a miraculous and never to be repeated act of the Holy Spirit; yet the Holy Spirit does nothing more than authoritatively state the fact.

In verse 18, the word “birth” is the very same Greek word as the word in verse 1 of chapter 1, where it says the book of the genealogy. So the word birth here is the same word for “genealogy.” Simply, Matthew is underlining that he is now giving you the genealogy of Jesus from the divine side and he was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God. So how does he explain the miraculous conception? Simply, Mary was found with child.

Frederide Dale Bruner wrote (in his 1987 Matthew – A Commentary, Pg24)



“It is the Holy Spirit and not human initiative that brings Jesus into personal life (then Mary’s, now ours). When Jesus Christ comes to anyone in history, even in his Advent coming to Mary, it is always the work of the Spirit, not of human preparation or enterprise.”

Jesus was born of an earthly mother without the need of an earthly father. Matthew points out that Joseph was the ‘husband of Mary, or whom was born Jesus, who is call Christ’ and that Joseph did not beget Jesus Christ. Catholics have seen this event as an occasion to elevate Mary to a position of equality in certain respects to Jesus Himself. But the Bible is very clear, Mary was the mother of human Jesus, the mother of Jesus in history not of eternity, so it’s not right to think that she is the mother of God. Jesus existed before Mary, and Mary’s family or even Joseph, or any of his earthly ancestors. Hence why Hebrews 13v8 can say ***‘Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.’***

Warren Wiersbe’s wrote in his book Be Loyal –

“If Jesus were conceived and born just as any other baby, then He could not be God. It was necessary for Him to enter this world through an earthly mother, but not to be begotten by an earthly father. By a miracle of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary, a virgin (Luke 1:26-38)”

So Matthew records for us clearly that God entered the flesh by a virgin in which seed was planted by the Holy Spirit. Nothing new for the Holy Spirit in this sense. He was co-creator of the universe, nothing is impossible to God. Go back to Genesis 1, he brooded over the emptiness and the nothingness and he created everything. In Acts chapter 1, he moved upon the situation of people gathered in the upper room and he created the church. And why shouldn’t he be able to create the marvellous miracle of the virgin birth? Christ came.

Galatians 4 verses 4 and 5 tells us –

“ born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Made of a woman, bypassing the curse of Jeconiah. Stop and pause for a moment. Ask yourself, could God really become a human being? Never in any other religion has another so called god, even desired to do so like our God. Why? God chose this way so that He could be truly the Kinsman Redeemer of Men. To be a Kinsman, he had to be human but to save

He had to be God. It goes back to what we have looked at the start. If Jesus had had no human parents, then he wouldn't have been man at all. He wouldn't have been partaker of our flesh.

On the other hand, if Jesus had two human parents, he could not have avoided the contamination of humanity. So he had to be the child of man and yet the child of God, and that's exactly what he was. He was born of a sinner, and yet he was sinless because he is God. Deity cancelled humanity's curse. The water of the nature of God drowned the fire of the nature of man. So the virgin birth conceived. Jesus was really born under supernatural circumstances.

Matthew cites several things;

Matthew says; "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ (not simply Jesus, but Jesus Christ—the Hebrew Messiah) came about. Mary was found with child by the Holy Spirit (v.18). What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit (v.20). Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a son. They will call Him Immanuel "God with us"(v.23).

Matthew presents these facts to confirm the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Isaiah 7:14;

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel".

The setting of Isaiah's prophecy was very simple. King Ahaz was terrified that the kingdom of Judah might be destroyed by Syria and Israel. Ahaz was sitting down in the bottom of the southern kingdom and worried about north Israel and Syria. He was afraid they were going to come down and were going to wipe out the kingly line. So he was really afraid that they would lose the kingly line. So God said to him, "Let me give you a promise. Nothing's going to happen to the kingly line. Here's a sign. A virgin shall be with child and that child will be Immanuel, God with us." God basically said, "You look down the corridors of history and there will be a virgin born child and he will guarantee you that David's line will never be broken."

Jesus came into the world fulfilling that prophecy given by Isaiah to Ahaz, to show that God will keep his promise and the throne of David will never be broken forever and ever and ever and ever. So once again, the virgin birth is clarified.

It says in Isaiah, that they should call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is what? God with us. El, the last two letters of that word, are the name for God. Immanuel means “God with us”. Some may say, “But they never called him Immanuel.” No, because that is a description of who he is, not his title as far as name is concerned. According to Isaiah, He has many titles and descriptions of who He is, and what His mission would be, including Immanuel. Immanuel, God with us, infinitely rich became poor, assumed our human nature, entered our sin-polluted atmosphere without ever being tainted by it, took our guilt, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, went to heaven to prepare a place for us, sent His Spirit to dwell in our hearts, right now makes intercession for us, and will some-day come to take us to be with Him. No wonder the apostle Paul said, “Through His poverty, we are made – “what? – rich”. Jesus is Immanuel. Jesus is God with us. Jesus is God revealed in human form.

The divine will, made His way into the world divinely as well as humanly. Christ coming into the world was not just miraculous but also natural, as any other child’s birth. Like for so many, birth of a child can and does pose problems. Jesus’ birth caused problems not just for Mary, or Joseph but even those around Him.

Can you be a Christian and not believe in the Virgin birth? You can be a Christian and be wrong! You can be a Christian and be deceived. It is possible! But let’s look at the facts. The Bible teaches the virgin birth—and therefore you would have to reject the Bible’s revelation! Rejecting God’s Word is a serious matter. Rejecting God’s Word leads to compromise and compromise leads to disobedience in other areas. *On what basis would you reject the Bible’s testimony?* You might say “on the basis that virgins don’t give birth to children.” I would say; “Dead people do not come back to life.” Why then believe in the resurrection?” If Jesus was not born of a virgin—then the Scriptures are false. The early creeds of Christendom are false. Since all contain the words; “I believe in Jesus Christ. . .conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary” (The Apostle’s Creed).



Does the Christian who has experienced the new birth find a resurrection impossible? Does the Christian who has received Christ find the opening verse of Genesis impossible to believe? If God can make a new creation in Christ—is anything impossible?

Bruner wrote: “*The personal miracle makes the historical miracle credible*”

Next week we will come back to these verses, but will be looking more closely at Mary and Joseph, who were the first people to experience the incarnate Christ.

Amen.