

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST¹

Conceived by God and Born of A Woman... **Message 2 of 3**

According to the Gospel of Luke, in Nazareth of Galilee, a young woman found herself in the presence of Gabriel, the angelic messenger of the Lord, whose name was known to the Jews of the day as Almighty God. He had promised a Savior—the Messiah who would save them from their sin. And so each year more than a billion Christians commemorate our Lord's Nativity.

- Amid candlelight, carols and commingled smells of cedar and incense, the old tale unfolds: Gabriel's visitation, the journey to Bethlehem, the arrival of the baby in a manger, the glorious announcement to the shepherds in the night, the star in the East, the mission of the Magi.

Through the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth, God became human. This is the sensational and mysterious truth of the events of the Christmas Story. The Creator chose to become man in order to deliver humanity from the meaninglessness and depravity that were the result of man's own sin and sinful rebellion.

2004 years ago God determined that it was time for the Savior to come to earth. Everyone needed him very much, though they didn't know it, for no one was pleasing God. All the people in the world were sinners, just as Adam and Eve had been. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God promised them that a Savior would come someday to take away their sins. (See Genesis 3:15)

In this series we will unwrap God's perfect gift—the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

- What do the Scriptures say about the nature of Christ's birth?
- Moreover, what significance does this truth have for our lives and ministries?
- We will draw out some practical meaningful applications of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth so that we will be, "...*the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks.*" (John 4:23-24)

In the first message we saw that the historical record of the Christian church is clear:

- The church has steadfastly maintained that Jesus Christ is the God-man.
- He was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit in a miraculous, divine-creative act.

The notion of Jesus having been born as one person with both divine and human natures surely entails "mystery", yet this is the foundation of the Church's understanding of his uniqueness as the God-man.

The central events in the gospel Nativity accounts are Mary's virginal conception, which renders her child a truly unique figure, and Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, which makes him the long-expected Davidic Messiah. The early church insisted on the virginal conception as the logical beginning to a story that climaxed with the death, burial and physical resurrection of this divine-human being. The two separate miracles form a theologically perfect whole. Through divine intervention, in fulfillment of the Messianic Prophecies, Jesus was seen to be both divine and human.

What do the Scriptures say about the nature of Christ's birth?

Mathew's gospel is fulfillment oriented. He wrote to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was the One in whom all redemptive hopes and promises of Old Testament Messianic prophecy

scriptures were bound up. A broad overview of the Bible reveals that in the Old Testament Jesus is prophesied; in the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John he is revealed and in the Book of Acts and the 24 epistles he is preached or explained.

Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy... from Abraham to Joseph

Matthew 1:1-2, 16-17 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,... ..and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

Jesus is the fulfillment and demonstration of God's grace both to Israel as promised in the Davidic covenant and to Abraham that "*in his seed all nations*" would be blessed.

The genealogy of Jesus' is surprising in that it included a number of women who were not famous but "infamous." Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba were all non-Israelite women of questionable repute. Tamar and Rahab were prostitutes, Ruth a descendant from an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter; and Bathsheba was involved with King David in adultery and murder of her husband.

The questionable women in Jesus' background may not be the "kind" of women we might highlight in our backgrounds. But God extends grace to sinners and uses these women, "warts and all," to be the female ancestors of the Messiah... the redeemer of Israel and all people, in order to achieve his greatest redemptive act of all!

In this way, God prepares the reader of Matthew's gospel for Mary and the scandal of her "out-of-wedlock" pregnancy. Before she and Joseph "came together" (in sexual union after marriage), she "*was found to be with child*" (Matthew 1:18) Matthew then notes, "*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet*" (Isaiah). In other words, Jesus' birth through a virgin exactly fulfills Isaiah's Messianic prophecy.

Jesus is "God with us (Immanuel)," born of a virgin, in order that his redemptive purposes would be met in him. The hopes of Israel and all humanity are bound up in the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus. In Jesus, God would be "present" with his people—Israel; and able to "bless" all nations (gentiles) through him.

Galatians 3:14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Luke's gospel and his account of the birth of Christ

Luke's Nativity narrative highlights ways in which Jesus meets the needs of sinners. This is symbolized in his gospel by the poor and disenfranchised. Luke's gospel begins with Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were to be the parents of John the Baptist. We read that they were childless, "*Elizabeth was barren, and they were advanced in years.*" (Luke 1:7-8)

To Luke's original readers this would have suggested God had cursed the couple. Barrenness amounted to a scandalous situation in Israel, one that only God could remedy by removing the curse. Mary, too, is portrayed as disenfranchised, though her disenfranchisement centers in her "sin," the fact that she is pregnant outside of marriage.

Yet in both instances, God has the last word. Zacharias and Elizabeth give birth to John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, whose ministry will be to the people of Israel through repentance. Through them and the ministry of their son, all Israel is blessed. And Mary, though under a cloud of suspicion for her "illegitimate" pregnancy. Becomes the mother of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of Israel... and of all humanity. The "Holy One" born of Mary is sinless, conceived supernaturally for the redemption of sinners.

The annunciation of the child's birth to shepherds further stresses God's concern for the oppressed. Shepherds were considered by most Israelites as "perpetually unclean," base fellows; and were shut out of "proper" society.

God reversed the fortunes of these disenfranchised people, just as through their obedience to his Word, he reverses the fortunes of sinful humanity. In the persons of Zacharias and Elizabeth and Joseph and Mary, we see God working through otherwise unfortunate circumstances to achieve his purposes. God's purposes prove to be greater than those affected could even begin to hope.

God was at work to reclaim these folk's circumstances and to bring about his answer, not just to these "apparent" problems but to humanity's greatest problem: **the need for redemption**. This could only come through the person and work of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

In Luke's gospel we see the masterfully woven truth of Jesus' virgin birth in such a way as to point out God's great grace, displayed in his concern for even the lowliest members of society.

Galatians 3:26-28 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The impact of the virgin birth on the lives of believers like you and I

The theological truths of the Virgin Birth speak powerfully to our lives as God's people. In many ways, these truths commend themselves to us as the means to strengthen our faith, encourage our hearts, and proclaim to others the hope of salvation in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus.

God's great grace and humanity

The doctrine of the Virgin Birth speaks to us today of assurance... of God's commitment to his Creation and to those created in his image and likeness. God created us as persons in his own image for his own purposes. People were not created "for themselves," or to be free from a relationship to God.

We were to understand our value and our worth, and to find our dignity in terms of being image-bearers of the one true, living God. But the relationship people were to have to God and to creation were short-circuited by the sin of Adam and Eve. In violating God's creation ordinances, Adam and Eve plunged themselves and the entire future human race into wicked rebellion against God, resulting in utter despair and hopelessness.

Jesus, God the Son, entered into human history through the Virgin Birth to accomplish the undoing of Adam's sin by living in perfect obedience to the Father and carrying out God's will on behalf of fallen humanity.

1 Tim. 1:15-17 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

In all of this, we see the commitment of God to us as his children. He himself entered into our existence so as to take upon himself the penalty for our sinfulness and to reclaim us for his holy purposes. This speaks powerfully to our value as people... we are the image bearers of God. The church of Jesus Christ—his body here on earth—you and I, and all believers; by heralding the truths of God's grace to his creatures can call people everywhere to a true appreciation of their value as reflections of God's image.

2 Cor. 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**Amid our hearts can be found
the fullness of God's perfect gift of love...
the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ—our Savior
Immanuel—God with us!!**

The theological truths of the Virgin Birth speak powerfully to our lives as God's people and in the third and last message in this series we will continue draw out more practical and meaningful applications of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.

ⁱ Based on Chapter 3 by Robert K. Rapa, from "Foundational Faith" Moody Bible Institute