

THE VIRGIN BIRTH
Isaiah 7:14-16
Matthew 1:18-25

In Isaiah 7 we read one of the most amazing, glorious, and yet debated verses in all of the Word of God. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel". Isaiah predicts something here that had never before been uttered from the lips of man and that had never before even been conceived in the heart of man. A virgin would bear a Son and she would name Him Immanuel, which means "God with us". What a precious truth! God would become flesh and dwell among men!

But this precious truth of the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ has been a target of Satan's flaming arrows ever since the days that He lived upon the earth. The Pharisees not only denied the Virgin Birth, but they also accused Jesus of being illegitimate. Two other groups in the 1st century who denied the Virgin Birth were the Gnostics and the Docetists. And the apostles Paul and John had to refute these heretics in the books of Colossians and 1 and 2 John.

In a letter to John Adams in 1823, Thomas Jefferson, our country's 3rd president, wrote, "And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Mi'ner-va in the brain of Jupiter". So Thomas Jefferson flat out says that the Virgin Birth is a myth and that God was not Jesus' father.

But Jefferson was a politician, not a theologian. What is worse is that many pastors either deny or do not affirm the clear teaching of the Virgin Birth. Harry Emerson Fosdick was one of the most influential pastors in America in the early 20th century. And at the close of one of his services he said, "I want to assure you that I do not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, and I hope that none of you do". A half century later Robert Schuller said, "I could not in print or in public deny the virgin birth of Christ, but when I have something I can't comprehend I just don't deal with it.". But this fence straddling position is nothing more than window dressing on unbelief. Others have claimed that doctrine of the Virgin Birth was concocted by the early church so that Christianity could be competitive with other 1st century religions who also espoused the virgin birth of their god.

But all this questioning of the Virgin Birth gives rise to a greater question: Why does Satan fight so viciously against the doctrine of the Virgin Birth? Let me tell you. The Virgin Birth is the very lynchpin of the entire doctrine of Christ, which is Who Jesus was and what He came to do. Theologian John Walvoord wrote: "The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity. Upon it the whole superstructure of Christian theology depends." What Walvoord is saying is that without the Virgin Birth we have no Christian faith. It all crumbles. And so this

morning I want us to see from God's Word just why the doctrine of Christ is so dependent upon Virgin Birth and why we must tenaciously hold to it in the midst of all assaults upon it.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Matthew 1:18-25. In our text we see three reasons that the Virgin Birth is essential to the doctrine of Christ. First of all, because the Virgin Birth is a supernatural birth. Look at v. 20. Most all of you know of Larry King, who recently retired after interviewing thousands of guests on his CNN talk show Larry King Live. Someone once asked him that if he could interview anyone in all of history who it would be. And Larry King said that it would be Jesus Christ. And this was his explanation: "I would like to ask Him if He was indeed virgin-born. The answer to that question would define history for me." Friends, Larry King has a better grasp of the significance of the Virgin Birth than many preachers. If the Virgin Birth is true, then Jesus can't be just another man. He is different than any man who ever lived, because He had no human father. His Father was God, God the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit, not a human sperm cell, somehow fertilized the egg cell in Mary's body, and a zygote was formed that nine months later would be birthed as the only Person ever born Who was both fully God and fully man. Now, beloved, that is the quintessential definition of supernatural! And because of this supernatural conception and supernatural birth, Jesus has the right to be heard and followed over any other religious teacher who's ever claimed to have a message from God.

And you see, that is exactly what the Devil doesn't want to happen. He wants the world to see Jesus as just another pea in the pod, just another religious guru in the same category with Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, the Dali Lama, or you fill in the blank. The devil wants all of us to believe and practice what David Jeremiah calls Jesusanity. Jesusanity says, "Sure Jesus was a great man. He was a great teacher, a great healer, a great example of moral goodness, and he was a great visionary leader. But that's all he was – just a man". And if you take away the Virgin Birth, this is what Jesus becomes.

I want to ask you today, do you believe in a supernatural God, a God Who is all powerful, or not? Friends, I don't know about you, but a supernatural God is the only kind of God that I want! I don't want a God who is as weak as I am. Nor do I want a god who has to compete with a whole host of other gods for control of the universe today, and do it all again tomorrow. NO! I want a God Who is God alone and all mighty to do whatever He pleases (Ps. 115:3). And if you believe in that kind of God, then to believe that God could cause a virgin to give birth should be no problem at all.

Well, the Virgin Birth is a supernatural birth for sure. But our text tells us that the Virgin Birth is also a saving birth. Look at verse 21. When Jesus Christ came to this earth 2000 years ago, He was on a mission. And His mission was not to be all of those things we mentioned just a moment ago. Now, Jesus certainly was a great teacher, a great healer, a great example, and a great leader. But Matthew tells us clearly the reason that Jesus came to planet earth. Jesus came to save His people

from their sins. Paul affirmed this great purpose of Jesus when he wrote in 1 Tim. 1: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”. And Jesus put it as simply as possible when He said in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”. Jesus came to save sinners. And praise God, that includes every one of us! Jesus came to die for you and to save you!

But you see, dear friends, Jesus could never fulfill His mission of saving the world were it not for the Virgin Birth. For you see, salvation comes in only one way, and that is by a substitutionary death. Paul wrote, “But God demonstrated His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). And he wrote in 1 Cor. 15:3, “Christ died our sins...” (1 Cor. 15:3). Jesus paid our sin debt on the cross. He died so we would not have to die, if we will but repent of our sins, that is, turn from our sins completely, and by faith alone trust Him to save us. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved... (Acts 16:31), but here’s the deal friends. In order for Jesus to die for sinners, He had to be free of sin Himself. One sinner can’t die for another. He is not worthy; he has his own sins to deal with. And so Jesus had to be sin-free if He were to die for you and me. And the only way that Jesus could avoid being born with a sin problem Himself was the Virgin Birth.

We saw last week that every descendent of Adam sinned in Adam. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). In some mysterious way when Adam sinned as the head of the race, you and I were present and we sinned right along with him. We read of this principle in Hebrews 7 where the writer tells us that Levi, a descendent of Abraham, actually paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, and this occurred when Abraham met Melchizedek as Abraham returned from battle. Genesis 14 says that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. And as he tithed so did his descendent Levi.

And so in the same manner, when Adam sinned we all sinned in him. And when you were born into this world, you were born with a sin nature and so was I. And that’s the reason that if Jesus were a descendent of Adam, He would have been a sinner just like you and me and unworthy to die for you and me. But Jesus had no sin nature because He was not a son of Adam. He was the Son of God - by virtue of the Virgin Birth. Praise God, you and I have a Savior because of the Virgin Birth!! Jesus, the holy, sinless, Son of God.

We have seen that the Virgin Birth is a supernatural birth, and that it is a saving birth. But there is third reason that the doctrine of Christ is so dependent upon the Virgin Birth. And that is because the Virgin Birth is a sign birth. Look again at verses 22-23. Matthew writes that the Virgin Birth took place as a fulfillment to a prophecy. It was the prophecy of Isaiah that we read at the beginning of the message. I want us

to go back and read that prophecy again, and this time include verses 15-16. Isaiah prophesies that a virgin would conceive and bear a son, and call His name Immanuel, and before that son could discern between right and wrong the kings of Judah's enemies, Israel and Syria, would be destroyed.

Now, Isaiah's prophecy actually had a double message and a double fulfillment. It was given, first of all, to the kingdom of Judah and Ahaz their king. And scholars tell us that the first fulfillment occurs just about two or three years after Isaiah gave it. That was in 732 BC, when the Assyrian army routed the Syrians and the king of Israel was dethroned. And somewhere in Judah there was an unnamed young woman but whom the people of Judah knew, who was a virgin at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, but had married and had had a son. And she named him Immanuel, and he was Judah's sign. And every time the people saw him he would remember, "God is going to destroy the kings of our enemies before Immanuel knows right from wrong". And when this happened in 732 BC, Judah learned the lesson that God always keeps His word.

Oh, but Isaiah's prophecy also had a distant fulfillment, and it had a much greater, far reaching impact. For Matthew writes this fulfillment was in the birth of Mary's Son. And the text is crystal clear that His birth was an actual virgin birth. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, verse 20 tells us. And it was such an outlandish idea that God had to come to Joseph in a dream to convince him of it. And Jesus would be called "Immanuel", God with us, God in the flesh. And we've already seen that a holy Child from Heaven could not be conceived in the union of two sinful, earthly parents. And verse 25 says that Joseph did not have relations with Mary until after Jesus was born. All of these factors leave no valid argument for anything other than Jesus was born when his mother was still a virgin.

But here's the point. Over 700 years before Jesus was born, God had promised His people that there would be the virgin birth of their Savior. And so the Virgin Birth would be the sign that God had fulfilled His promise! So if the Virgin Birth is not true, then God's promise has failed, and Israel has no hope, nor do we.

Now, let me point out one more thing that allows us to see the emphasis that the Holy Spirit places on the Virgin Birth. Most scholars say that Matthew wrote to convince the Jews that Jesus was their long awaited Messiah. And this is attested to by how the book begins. Look at Matt. 1:1, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ..." Matthew starts out by giving his readers Jesus' ancestry, beginning with Abraham. He did this so there would be no doubt that Jesus was a descendent of Abraham and thus qualified to be their Messiah.

But look now at verse 18 and notice the word "birth". That is the same Greek word that appears in verse 1 that is translated "genealogy". So you could read verse 18 this way, "Now the genealogy of Jesus Christ was as follows..." It is as if God is saying, "Starting in verse 1 I showed you the genealogy of Jesus that proves He was

the Son of Abraham. But now I'm going to show you the genealogy that proves He is My Son, the Son of God".

So hopefully we've seen this morning that the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ is a teaching that has no room for debate in our theology. We cling to the Virgin Birth just as firmly as we cling to salvation by grace through faith. But today I do not want us to leave here with just a head full of theology. I want us to leave with a heart full of thanks. I want you to leave here today with a heart bursting with gratitude and love to the Father and His Son because of the Virgin Birth. So, let me capsule this whole precious truth of the Virgin Birth in one sentence that I hope you'll write down on the tablet of your heart and never forget: God has cared for you, and God has come to you.