**THE NECESSITY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH**

[**DECEMBER 16, 2020**](https://drdanmerritt.com/2020/12/16/the-necessity-of-the-virgin-birth/)**/**[**DR. DANIEL MERRITT**](https://drdanmerritt.com/author/asurefoundationdrdan/)

Many years ago I was serving on an Ordination Committee which was interviewing a candidate seeking ordination into the Gospel ministry. The meeting was convening near Christmastime, which gave natural rise to pose to the young man the question, “Do you believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ?” The young man went on a rambling discourse of why the Virgin Birth was not necessary for Christ to be the Son of God!! All urgings by those on the committee for him to reevaluate his erroneous position were in vain, and he became resistant to what he called “an unnecessary doctrine.”

When it came time to discuss and vote whether or not to recommend the young man for ordination, the majority of committee objected to proceeding forward. Why? For if Christ was not born of a Virgin then one’s theology and doctrine of Christ is skewed from the outset.

Sadly, there are those within Christendom who, like the man who sought ordination, see the Virgin Birth as nonessential to the faith and irrelevant in understanding who Jesus was/is. While the Church for the most part has been guilty of only focusing on the Virgin Birth at Christmas, it is the foundation on which other central doctrines of the Christian faith are built.

To reject the Virgin Birth is to dismiss the truthfulness of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the sinlessness of His life, His being qualified to die for our sins, and a host of other related Christian truths related to Christ and the Christian faith.

**Why is the Virgin Birth essential?**

Before we can answer that question let us define what is meant by the Virgin Birth. When the angel announced to Mary that she would bear the Christ Child, she responded, “How can this be seeing I have never known\* a man?” In other words, while she and Joseph were engaged, they had never had sexual relations.

**\*** This euphemism *(to know)* is original to the Hebrew text; The Hebrew root is ידע yāda`, which covers a semantic field similar to that of English *to know.* With people it can be simple acquaintance (Gen. 29:5) as well as a euphemism for sexual intercourse, both from the man's point of view (Gen. 4:1, **4:17**, 4:29; 1 Sam. 1:19; ...) and from the woman's point of view (Gen. 19:8; Jdg. 11:39; I Kings 1:4 ...). To use a verb like *to know* as a euphemism for sexual intercourse is somewhat common cross-linguistically and must therefore not surprise us; it occurs in other languages related to Hebrew (Arabic, Syriac, Ethiopian) but also in Greek and French (although with the latter two it may be a result of literal bible translations introducing the idiom into the language).

The angel told Mary that the birth of Jesus would not come about by the ordinary

method of human generation, but by a totally unique action of God and the Holy Spirit. What was impossible with man was possible with God. Jesus was divinely conceived in the womb of Mary without the seed of a man. Mary conceived Jesus as result of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her (Matthew 1:20-21).

The historical record clearly reveals that Joseph was not the earthly father, and matter of fact, he wanted “to put her away” (Matthew 1:18-19). Yet, told in a dream by an angel that the child in Mary’s womb was the long-promised Messiah,

Joseph had a change of heart and remained loyal to Mary and only had relations with her after Jesus was born (Matt. 1:25).

So, the Biblical record is clear that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her womb by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Having defined the Virgin Birth, why is it essential, important and necessary in our understanding as to who Jesus is and what He came to do?

The Virgin Birth is a necessary Biblical doctrine for several reasons:

**First, the Virgin Birth reveals the truth and accuracy of Old Testament prophesies.**

In Genesis 3:15 the Lord identified the coming Messiah, who would be born of woman, and who would deal a destructive blow to Satan, as “*her* seed.” The Scripture is clear to say “her seed” and not the seed of a male. The promised Messiah was not to have an earthly father, he was to be divinely conceived. He would have to be divinely conceived in order to bring a destructive blow to Satan.

In Isaiah 7:14, the Poetic Prophet prophesied that one of the signs in identifying the coming Messiah was that he would be born of a virgin. Some critics are quick to point out that the Hebrew word is “almah” which means “young maiden” and can mean other than a virgin. While that is true, the word “almah” is used *seven times* in the Old Testament to refer to an unmarried woman who is sexually pure. As well, in the **Septuagint**, the Greek translation of Hebrew OT, the *Jews* translated the Hebrew word “almah” into the Greek “parthenon” which clearly means virgin. So, the Jews themselves understood the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 referred to a virgin birth. That Jesus was born of a Virgin verifies the truth, accuracy and inspiration of the OT prophecies.

**Second, the Virgin Birth affirms the deity of Christ, that He is the God-Man**.

The NT teaches that man’s sin and guilt before a holy God is so great, that a Savior must come from outside of man’s efforts and works; the Savior being both human and divine. Since humanity cannot produce such a Redeemer, the heavenly Father in the Virgin Birth provided a Savior who was wholly God and Man.

The Bible is clear Jesus was both God and Man. John writes, “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God… And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,

14). Paul writes, “For in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).

The Virgin Birth was necessary to bring about the unique nature of Jesus. In His conception, humanity and deity were fused together by the Holy Spirit and Jesus came forth as the God-Man. He was not half man and half God, Jesus was 100% man and 100% God. We see Him as man when He grew weary, when He slept, when He wept, when He experienced pain, when He was thirsty and hungry. We see Him as God when He walked on water, when He cast out demons, when He spoke and the storms obeyed Him, when He fed the 5,000, when He healed the sick, and when He raised the dead.

Christ could not be the God-Man if He had not been born of a Virgin, if there had not been a miraculous fusing together by the Holy Spirit of both humanity and deity. If Jesus had been born of natural parentage, a biological father, and the biological mother, then his deity would be undermined.

**Third, the Virgin Birth affirms the sinlessness of Jesus.**

Without the Virgin Birth one cannot account for Christ’s sinlessness, His perfect life. The Virgin Birth was necessary for Jesus to be pure from sin. All who are born into this world are born with a sinful nature. Our sinful nature is derived from our father, he got it from his father, and so forth and so on all the way back to Adam.

If Jesus had had an earthly father, he would have inherited a sinful nature and He would have been no different from you and me. Because Jesus’ father was God the Father, not the seed of man, but the seed of a woman, there was no sin flowing in His veins. He was victorious over sin and Satan His whole earthly life (Luke 4, Hebrews 4:15).

Because Jesus was sinless, He was accepted as the spotless Sacrifice for our sins. God would only accept a Lamb without blemish (Num 19:2; Deut 17:1), if Christ ever committed one sin, He would have been disqualified from being “the Lamb of God that came to take away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). If Christ was not sinless, He could not have been the perfect Substitute for humanity. As the sinless God-Man, Christ took the hand of holy God and the hand of sinful man in order that the wall of alienation be removed whereby restored fellowship can be experienced. If Christ had not been born of a Virgin that would not have been possible.

**Fourth, the Virgin Birth assures us of the supernatural.**

Skeptics reject the Virgin Birth as being impossible and contrary to natural reason. To accept the Virgin Birth is to affirm the supernatural, to affirm the miraculous. For us to have a supernatural Savior we need a supernatural intervention by God to bring it to pass. The Virgin Birth was God’s trumpet that He has done something extraordinary, He has done something that man cannot fully explain, that He has done something that could only take place as the result of a miracle. [As seen in Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a *sign* (i.e. a miracle): a virgin shall be with child and bear a son…”]

After all, the angel told Mary, “With God nothing is impossible” (Luke 1:35-45). In the Virgin Birth God broke through the chain of human generation and brought into the world a supernatural Savior.

The God whose supernatural presence came upon Mary, continues to work supernaturally in the lives of those whose hearts have been awakened to the saving power of Jesus Christ. Because Christ was supernaturally conceived, He has the power to supernaturally save and forgive the sins of all who will sincerely come to Him in contrition and repentance. Salvation can only come to humanity through the supernatural power from a supernatural Savior who was conceived supernaturally. The miracle of the Virgin Birth assures us that the miracle of individuals experiencing the New Birth is possible.

As we find ourselves in the midst of the Christmas Season, there is no detail in the Christmas story more important than the Virgin Birth. If there is no Virgin Birth, if the conception and birth of Christ didn’t unfold as the Scripture records, then Christmas has lost its meaning and humanity has no Savior. Donald Macleod eloquently writes, “The virgin birth is posted on guard at the door of the mystery of Christmas, and none of us must think of hurrying past it. It stands on the threshold of the New Testament, blatantly supernatural, defying our rationalism, informing us that all that follows belongs to the same order as itself and that if we find it offensive there is no point in proceeding further” (Macleod, The Person of Christ, InterVarsity Press, 1998, 37).

If one denies that Jesus is the God-Man, then the lights of Christmas grow dark and man has nothing to celebrate. But there is Good News, the miracle of the Virgin Birth assures us the lights of Christmas shine brightly and they shine upon the cross of Christ where humanity can find supernatural grace to pardon all our sins.

O, what a Savior!!

Blessings, Dr. Dan (Merritt)

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