

## The Virgin Conception

Have you ever had questions about the virgin birth of Jesus the Christ? More accurately, we are speaking of a virgin conception followed nine months later with a natural birth by Mary of Nazareth. By the term “virgin birth” we mean that the conception of Jesus was without parallel. It was a supernatural special creation of God. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and planted the Word, the divine life of the Son of God, in her womb. When the angel appeared to Mary with the news of her giving birth to Jesus she was perplexed and responded: “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”<sup>[d]</sup> Literally she says, I do not know a man.

<sup>35</sup> And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”

### The Fact of the Virgin Conception

So in the virgin conception/the birth of Jesus we are stating that Jesus was born without the aid of a human father. His mother’s egg was quickened by the Spirit of God and human semen was nowhere to be found.

Some people have always had trouble with this fact. Usually, however, they are people who have trouble believing in any miracles. Because they do not accept the great, all powerful God of the Bible.

Let me introduce you to the first doubter of the virgin conception of Jesus. He doubted the story perhaps more than any one ever has. His name is Joseph and he was the legal husband of Mary, through the binding engagement called “betrothal.” Now a significant period of time could lapse between the first part of marriage and the marriage consummation. During this period of sanctification of the bride to the husband Mary became pregnant! This was not Joseph’s doings. The Bible says that before Joseph knew Mary as his wife she was found to be with child. Now Joseph knew he was not responsible for this distressing state of affairs. He thought Mary had been unfaithful to him. When Mary explained to him how she had become pregnant by the Spirit of God, he flat-out did not believe it. Joseph did not believe Mary was a virgin.

Knowing that Mary’s soon to be born child was not his own natural child and being a mild mannered and righteous man, Joseph decided not to hold Mary up to a public condemnation but decided to put her away, i.e., divorce her, privately. It was a painful decision for Joseph because he deeply loved Mary. But what else could he do? He was sure Mary had fallen into serious sin and had committed adultery. An offense so serious that it could have resulted in the

death penalty if Israel had not been under Roman jurisdiction. After much deliberation Joseph determined to sever their relationship and terminate the formal marriage betrothal.

But something happened to Joseph after he had decided on this course of action that convinced him that Mary was pure and that he should not be afraid to take her as his wife. Matthew relates the incident - an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," he said, "don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he is the one who will save his people from their sins."

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. The angel's explanation satisfied Joseph, so he took her as his wife, but he did not sexually know her until after she had given birth. When the child was born, he became known as Joseph's child. Although he was not Joseph's biological offspring, he was Joseph's adopted son.

So on the night of Jesus' birth, Joseph was there as Mary's understanding husband as she gave natural birth to her unique child. Jesus was born of a woman without a man's contribution. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. When he was born it was in exactly the same way we are born. The same pain accompanied Mary's labor. The same gestation period preceded his birth as with your birth and mine. The difference was his virgin conception which was entirely without parallel. It was a miracle of God and it was necessary to ensure the sinlessness of the one born as the Savior. This is how the birth of Jesus came about. When he was born, Joseph named him Jesus as the angel had directed because he would save his people from their sin.

Granted, there are a lot of people who do not believe in the virgin birth. But given the life of Jesus and his atoning work what are the alternatives? How else do you explain the presence of a sinless being in a sinful world? Without the virgin conception of Jesus we are left with no explanation of the uniqueness of Jesus character.

The virgin birth is part of the Bible's message. If you deny it you might as well deny all Bible truth. If it is not true, then we have no Savior. The rest of the stories of his life would be unreliable. If Mary was not a virgin, then she was not a chosen vessel of the Lord but an unfaithful wife because Joseph said the child was not his. So you see the virgin conception of Jesus is at the core of the gospel message. It is revealed so that you and I can know who Jesus was and is and run to him for salvation.

### **The Significance of the Virgin Conception**

What does Jesus' miraculous conception mean for us? **First of all**, it highlights His sinlessness and purity. Jesus escaped the curse of original sin that falls upon every child born into the world. Sin is transmitted to human offspring because of the essential solidarity of the human race. When Adam sinned, he did so as the representative head of the human race (Romans

5:12,19). But Jesus is not just another member of Adam's race. He was incarnated by the sovereign action of God. As such he escaped the curse of our sinful nature. When Mary asked how it could be possible for her to have a son as a virgin without a husband, the angel said: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."* The male was by-passed and the transmission of both the legal guilt and the sin pollution that seems to be biologically passed on by the male semen was disrupted. However, Jesus was born with 100% humanity capable of dying. He was tempted externally by Satan and others but he remained the pure, holy, spotless, sinless One. As the spotless Lamb he could die for us sinners. *For him who knew no sin he (God) made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Those who deny the virgin birth lose the Spotless Lamb of God.

Second, the fact that Jesus was virgin born establishes the reality of his divinity. In many ways Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, was an ordinary man. Yet Jesus was no ordinary man. Let me explain. He possessed an ordinary human nature which he received from Mary's DNA. His body was like ours. He grew tired and required sleep. He got hungry and thirsty. He was a real Jewish male from the line of David. But that's not all. Jesus was in fact a person who had two natures. His one person consisted of a union without mixture of the Eternal Word and a human nature like his mother Mary's. As she was told by the angel, he was the divine Son of God. Jesus is the God/Man, Immanuel, Son of God and Son of man. The baby born of Mary is the most miraculous and wonderous baby ever to appear in this world - the only begotten Son of God made man. The virgin conception and birth is an apt entrance for such a One as He.

O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Clearly the Scriptures declare the virgin birth was the instrument God used to bring about the incarnation. This is so essential to our salvation. The Heidelberg Catechism gives a concise explanation in

Question 16, **Why must he be a true and righteous man?**

**A:** He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin. He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner he cannot pay for others.

Question 17. **Why must he also be true God?**

**A:** So that, by the power of his divinity, he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

A real human nature must pay the penalty sin requires by suffering in body and soul. Humanity sinned; humanity must atone. But a mere human could not bear and fully satisfy God's wrath.

His wrath is infinite in quality due to his holiness. Thus, the Savior must be divine. Only through a propitiation by his blood could God be just in forgiving our sin and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26).

So we confess that God was manifested in the flesh and born of a virgin in order to redeem sinful humanity through the sacrifice of the body he offered on the tree of the cross some 33 years later.

A third reason that the virgin conception of the Savior is significant is that it declares salvation is totally of the Lord. When the situation was ready for God's mighty work of salvation in history, he himself took the eternally ordained initiative and acted without the help, without the instrumentality of fallen man. God stepped into the sphere of human failure and he himself in the person of the Son took our place. How did he accomplish this? The appointed Savior was conceived by the Holy Spirit. His conception was a sovereign act of God. He, as it were, started humanity again in the second representative Man, Messiah Jesus, the Seed of the woman. The mystery of the virgin conception proclaims to us that in the divine provision of salvation for humans' man as man is completely set aside. Salvation is of God and is all of grace. Only God's sovereign grace by which he entered our sinful world unstained and became one of us could ever work a work so pure and holy that we can be saved.

Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel.

Jesus entered into the portals of time and space history on a place that can be located on a map. He came into this world through the miraculous conception of a virgin. This act tells us of his sinlessness, his Deity and his sovereign grace. All glory to his name!

Do you believe in the virgin birth? If you reject the virgin birth you lose a sinless Savior and in a word, you lose your Savior God. The God of Christianity has revealed himself in the Jesus, son of Mary, and in losing him you lose your only hope of salvation. This is the time to look upon the virgin born Son of Mary and Son of the living God and confess with Thomas, "My Lord and My God!"

Let us pray:

Virgin born Son of God, grant us a deep faith in yourself. May we come to understand the greatness of your person and the salvation you have brought. As you came into humanity as a babe and grew to be a man, so grow in our hearts that by your grace we may give to others the news of the great Christ-gift of salvation.

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