

# The Essential Doctrine of the Virgin Birth

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Let's grab our Bibles and go to Matthew 1. Actually this is a message I had ready for you last Sunday and it's a little weighty for Christmas morning but I'm going to do it anyway because it was already ready, all right? Matthew 1, we'll look at Matthew's account of the birth of Christ and talk this morning about the essential doctrine of the virgin birth. Brothers and sisters, Jesus being born of the virgin is not just a thing we lean toward in our doctrine, it is essential to the Christian faith. It is foundational to the Christian faith.

Matthew 1, beginning in verse 18,

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Now, let me balance that with Hebrews 5:9, speaking of Christ, "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal life." And that's what happened on Christmas morning and that's why it's so wondrous and so exciting was finally after all of the partial had been shown, the perfect came.

You see, the Old Testament as the old preacher one time said, "Get out your hymnbook," and everybody reached for their songbook and he said, "No, get out your Bibles. It's all about him." From Genesis through Revelation, it's all about him. As a matter of fact, one of the ways to show this and, goodness, there would be not enough time to show all the

ways but is in all of the typologies of Christ from the Old Testament and there what the Bible says in Hebrews 10:1, these things are "only a shadow of the things to come." So all through the Old Testament we have pictures and portraits and shadows and you can generally put the word "shadow" or "type" over all of them but they all pointed to Christ, but when Christ was born, the thing itself has come. The perfect. The partial is done, the perfect has come. For example, in the Old Testament we have Abel as a picture or a type of Christ. We have Abraham as a type of Christ. We have Moses interceding for the people to save them, it pictures Christ. He is a type of Christ. David, the prophets, all the priests, all the kings, all were something of a foreshadowing of the one true prophet, priest and king that was coming, the real one, Jesus Christ. That's what makes Christmas so exciting, he is here. I mean, when Jesus comes, it's on. We are no longer hoping in the types and the shadows and the portraits, he has come.

And then not only just people but events like Abel's sacrifice. When Abel brought the animal sacrifice, that was a portrait, a shadow, a type of Christ and his sacrifice. And we have Adam and Eve being covered with the skin covering their guilt and their shame. That's a type of Christ as he covers and it is the only true covering for our sin, our guilt and our shame. The ark, Noah goes into the ark and the ark protects God's people from the floodwaters of judgment. Jesus is the ark that protects us from the judgment of God. And on and on we could go. The brazen serpent. Moses raises up a serpent on a pole and every Jewish man or woman who would look at that serpent would be healed. Jesus became a serpent for us, taking our sin on the cross and if we look to him in faith we are saved. These are shadows and types. The whole Passover ceremony, all of David's victorious reign, all are types of Christ. Then the ceremony, all of the offerings through all of the years, the sacrificial system, the great Day of Atonement, the Passover feast and ceremony, all the priestly washings and all that entire system was a portrait, it was a foreshadowing of Christ.

Then the structures used in Jewish worship throughout the Old Testament. The temple itself was a type of Christ. Every lamb, every goat, every bullock, every turtledove, every pigeon, every animal sacrifice was only a partial; it wasn't the real thing, it was a shadow, it was a type of Christ who was to come. The brazen altar where the animal was sacrificed pictures Christ's sacrifice. The candlestick in the temple, he is the light of the world. The laver where the priest would wash, he's the only true cleansing. The Holy of Holies where men and God could come together, he's the only one that brings a true holy God in fellowship with sinful men. The mercy seat, Jesus is our mercy seat. All of these things are but a shadow of the thing to come.

Well, Christmas morning, the thing has come. That's why it's a wonder. That's why it's a glory. Now, if I'm walking down the road and the sun is setting behind me and my shadows are kind of like it is right here, the shadow is out in front of me and all of a sudden I see another long shadow coming up, it's getting bigger and bigger and bigger out in front of me, I know that means someone is coming right behind me. I don't see them yet but finally when they come up, I see them. Well, that's what Christmas morning is, the perfect has come. Brothers and sisters, it is absolutely essential for him to be

perfect. He had to be virgin born. If he's not perfect, then he's not sufficient for our salvation.

Now, I can't cover nearly all that I have that I would like to share this morning but let me glean through this for just a few moments, if I could. First of all, I. let's talk about some of the attacks on the virgin birth that have been coming down the pike really for generations. None of this is new at all. One of the pastors of the largest churches in America said, "I could not deny or affirm the virgin birth of Christ." It's been, I think it came out of German heresies some years ago that Jesus was the illegitimate child of a Roman soldier who had a love affair with Mary. One religious professor and this is probably a Harvard or Princeton or Vanderbilt Divinity school kinda guys said, "It makes no difference if the virgin birth really happened." Another college professor says, "Well, the virgin birth is a story on the level of an Andy Capp comic strip," and he says, "Well, that's okay because Andy Capp is true in our imagination and so is the virgin birth." So this is what has happened in scholarly circles as we begin to do what satanically inspired philosophy has done from the beginning and that is to say that if you need to believe that, that's okay, man needs a belief system. Friends, it is not sufficient just that you need a belief system, it must be historically true that he was virgin born.

On and on and on we could go. As a matter of fact, I think one of the things that is happening today is worse than the attack. I don't hear that much of attacks on the doctrine of the virgin birth, what I find it's just absolute neglect. It's just kind of like we're all theological. Nobody even thinks about it or talks about it as being important. It's like it's just a non-issue out there. It's actually dying by neglect. I understand that our President sent out his Christmas card this year and for the eighth year in a row does not mention Christ. Maybe that's been the pattern of other Presidents, I don't know, but it's that kind of neglect I'm talking about. I mean, when you have most modern and popular evangelical Christian pastors preaching sermons that are mostly centered on how you can do better now, how you can have a more successful life now, how you can feel better on Monday, when that's all you have and the whole notion of the day rather is just help men psychologically, help them emotionally and throw in some cosmetic Christianity on the outside to make it look authentic. But listen, Christianity – listen to this now – Christianity is not right or true or best because it can make you happier or it can give you a more fulfilled life. That's not what makes it right or true or best. It's right and true and best because it comes from the fully right and totally true God. And it may mean that we carry a cross for a time. It may mean that we have disappointing seasons to follow him. Christianity isn't about just being up all the time. Now, thank God there are up times, amen? There are joyous times but it's more than that, it's about the truth.

It's interesting to me that Satan's ploy hasn't changed since the Garden of Eden. He has done the two things: he tries to get us just to neglect truth or even attack truth. He comes to Adam and Eve, Eve specifically in the garden of Eden and he said, "You know, Eve, has God said you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" I mean, it's almost like, "You know, is that really important? Do we need to focus on that, Eve? Just sort of put it on the sideline." Something of a neglect. Then a little bit later as he continues with Eve, he says in Genesis 3:4, "You surely shall not die." Now, that's an out-

and-out attack. God said, "If you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall die," Satan says, "No, you surely shall not die." So whatever is vogue in the present culture, Satan comes at you from one of those two approaches almost all of the time.

Here's what we need to remind ourselves: we must understand that man is such a sinner, man is so fallen, man spiritually speaking is in such a desperate place, we must have a divine intervention. And pastors need to preach that way, preach to the end that they are hoping and believing the Spirit of God will actually intervene in the hearts of men. A divine intervention. I really, I do want you to have a better life. I do want you to get ahead. I want our young guys to have dreams and take the initiative and build companies and be wealthy and have influence. That's all good in God's sovereign purposes if he allows that for you. That's all good but that's not what we're about primarily. We want you to know the truth and Christianity is a religion that expects a divine intervention in the hearts of the listeners, not just that you're going to feel a little better and do a little better this next week. As a matter of fact, everything about Christ and everything about the Gospel and everything about Christianity is supernatural. When Jesus was here, he worked miracles. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus ascended into heaven. And the miracle of the virgin birth is harmonious with the whole of his life and his ministry. And then the work of conversion. The Gospel is preached. The Spirit of God moves. He woos men to himself. He convicts men of sin. He regenerates their hearts. He sustains them and sanctifies them and then one day he glorifies them. From the moment you are first wrought upon by the Spirit of God to the moment of your glorification, it's a divine intervention. It's a miracle work of God. And if it's not, let's just throw all this out and study Freud and Skinner and try to be a little bit happier next week.

We lashed ourselves to the requirement of this miraculous aspect and, of course, foundationally that he was born of the virgin. As a matter of fact, the virgin birth is the foundational assumption in everything the Bible teaches about Jesus. If you throw out the virgin birth, you throw out his deity. If you throw out the virgin birth, you reject the accuracy of Scripture. If you throw out the virgin birth, you reject his sinless life. You throw out the virgin birth, you lose the adequacy of his substitutionary atonement. He is no longer qualified to atone for our sins. So this is not an optional truth. It is indeed a mountain to die on. He was the virgin born Son of God. You see, to reject the virgin birth is to reject Christ's deity and if you reject Christ as the divine one and only Son of God, you reject Christ absolutely. Anything less than the virgin born, God Incarnate, absolute Son of God is a loss of who Christ actually is.

Now, a few things from the Scriptures, how the Scripture record asserts the virgin birth and, again, we could spend weeks and weeks and weeks on all of the truths about Christ, especially from the Old Testament being fulfilled, and even on the more narrow application of his virgin birth but two or three quick passages here. First of all, Matthew 22:41-46 as the Lord himself is speaking here, "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 'What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?'" What a question, "Whose son is He?" And, "They said to Him, 'The son of David.'" He said to them, "well, if that's all he is, that's what Christ is saying, 'Then how does David in the Spirit called Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The Lord said to My Lord, 'Sit at My right

hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet"? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son? No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question."

And then John 8:41, "'You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.'" I don't have the rest of my verse but what Jesus goes on to say is, "Then I am as you are accusing me to be born of a false, I am born of fornication, but I'm born of the one true God for I proceeded forth and have come forth," where? "From God." Now, all of these passages are not just incidental statements, they are in context of Jesus declaring his divine origin. He did not have a human father.

Matthew 16:13-17, "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" Here's the answer, here's the right answer for everyone, "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,'" which implies the virgin birth, of course, "And Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'" So here we see Christ himself very pointedly not just affirming but declaring and requiring, "I am wrought of God. I'm not the son of Joseph."

A couple of Old Testament, as a matter of fact, three quick Old Testament texts. Well, one of them that would probably be new to you but, first of all, Genesis 3:15 as we have the truth of Jesus being the prophetic one coming of the seed of the woman, "I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." Now, that is very very peculiar because in every other scriptural use of "seed" in this context is always the male seed but here it's only her seed which teaches the virgin birth. No man had an agency in the birthing of Jesus.

Jeremiah 31:22, "For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth-- A woman will encompass a man." Now, the old Jewish scholars held as I firmly believe, that the birth of the coming Messiah, what this is teaching, will be without the agency of a man, of a male person, a human father.

Then Isaiah 7:14, the more familiar passage that we're all used to, "the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." Now, the word "virgin" there as you've heard me say before, doesn't absolutely have to be an unmarried woman or a woman who has not known a man, but in every usage in the Old Testament possibly, 1. it absolutely has to mean a woman who has not known a man. But here's the clincher: you come over to the New Testament use of this Old Testament prophecy like our text today, Matthew 1:23 where he quotes from Isaiah 7:14, and what Greek word does the New Testament writer use? He uses a Greek word that can only absolutely and only refer to a young woman who has never known a man. And I didn't point it out because of time but if you look at our text that we read from

this morning, you'll notice that kind of in an amplified or redundant fashion the writer wants us to get the virgin birth of Christ: Joseph kept her chaste until they were married; the virgin shall be with child. Over and over the statement that he is the virgin born Son of God. So folks, once again, we have to regroup ourselves in this mush of sentimental, vague, Christmas stuff and lash ourselves afresh to the truth of what this time is about and what we're trying to celebrate. God invaded humanity. God became man through the agency of the virgin Mary.

Now, in summing up and in conclusion and, trust me, I've left out a lot, but in summing up in conclusion, let's talk about the virgin birth is completely true, first of all, because man is utterly sinful. Man is utterly sinful. Here's the point, as I said in the beginning: Jesus didn't come because you needed a little help. Jesus did not come primarily because you needed a teacher to help you understand how to better approach life. Jesus came because you and I, mankind, needed a miraculous divine intervention that could enable us to stand just before a holy God. You know, you can really back up behind every bit of this and go to the doctrine of man. As a pastor who is orthodox and tries and strives, as all of us do, to believe in the historic biblical doctrines of the faith, you sometimes get bewildered as to which one do I need to address next because they are all under such attack, but mostly they are under attack from neglect. I mean, I could take you to pulpit after pulpit after pulpit and brothers that I think are good men, but the neglect – now listen to me – the neglect to preach thoroughly the weightiness of man's condition, his fallen condition before God, is so glaringly deficient because if we're just kind of not right with God and it's not that big a deal, then we don't need hardly any of these doctrines, but if you understand him as the infinitely holy God and see us as we are, totally depraved before this holy God, then you come to the virgin birth and you grasp afresh, "Oh, absolutely, he must be fully divine. He must be born of the virgin because our need is so great." It would require that.

2. The virgin birth is completely true because God is completely holy. He is utterly holy. Here's the point, there are some things God cannot do: God has no capacity to mingle with sin. Now, Jesus walked among sinners but in his being, there was no sin element and so God being God and God being holy, the virgin birth must have happened because God can't come down here and somehow synchronize himself with fallen humanity and the sin of man is passed on from the seed of man. So as God used the egg, if you will, of Mary, he was conceived through that egg by the agency of the Holy Spirit, thus maintaining the utter holiness of God. Listen now, mystery upon mysteries, wonder upon wonders: fully God, fully man, fully sinless. The virgin birth is essential because God is utterly holy.

Now, one aspect of this is: salvation is of the Lord. He had to be fully God to fully save. None of this nonsense from pagan antiquity that Jesus is just another form of demigod. He's one of these that is higher than man but not fully God and there is some of this in liberal theology today and liberal pulpits today that, "Well, yeah, we do revere him but he's not God of very God." No, Jesus wasn't just kind of God, he is God of very God.

The virgin birth is completely true because we are utterly sinful. The virgin birth is completely true because God is completely holy. Thirdly, the virgin birth is completely

true because nothing is too hard for God. This is the thing that's amusing to me, in classical liberalism, you throw out all the miracles of the Bible. Everything from Genesis 1:1 all the way through the Bible, they'll tell you we need to learn from the Bible and we can get some theological concepts from the Bible but the Bible isn't trustworthy and it doesn't really teach that these miraculous things happened. But here's the issue: did God intervene in the affairs of man? Period. If you believe that, then all of the miracles of the Bible are no stretch at all. If he is God and he is omnipotent, nothing is too hard for him. He can speak and out of nothing, ex nihilo, out of nothing he can create all things. If he is God, he can create an ark that can take a worldwide flood and sustain a family of people. If he is God, he can make an iron ax head float. If he is God, he can part the Red Sea and then bring it back together again and kill all the Egyptians. These miracles are nothing if God has chosen from time to time to involve himself in the affairs of men. But here is where liberals are – listen – they don't have to deal with a God bigger than themselves because if they do, they have to humble themselves and yield to the authority of another and they don't want to yield that. Why? Because Satan is always behind that. Satan never wants to submit and yield but as Christians, there has been a work of grace done in our hearts where we gladly humble and bow ourselves before an Almighty God and so it's no stretch that he created all things by the spoken word, it's no stretch that the ax head could float and it's absolutely no stretch that the virgin could conceive of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is too hard for God.

Well and lastly, the virgin birth is completely true because God has multiplied mercies. He did such a mind-stretching, actually mind-exploding thing. When you try to wrap your head around God in human form but sinless and did all this to save us, you just humble yourself afresh and anew as Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:4, he is the God who is rich in mercy. This Christmas, friend, I want you to understand God is not a God who just has some mercy, he is a God who is rich in mercy. When you hear that story of the birth of Christ, it ought to resonate in your soul he came and did that because he's a God who is rich in mercy toward us sinners.

He is rich in mercy. He is rich in mercy in that he will save fully. Now, what I mean by that is he doesn't just save us from a few problems, he doesn't just save us from having a hard day, no, he saves us to the uttermost. He saves us fully all the way to the extent of saving us from the eternal wrath and judgment we deserve – now listen – to making us a joint heir with his one and only true Son, Jesus Christ. That's an utter salvation. He's an only – listen – only true deity. Only if Christ was fully God could he save utterly and wholly like that. I don't know about you but I don't want – I hate to pick on him all the time but he's such easy prey, Joel Osteen. I don't want a God like that. I mean, are you kidding me? Your best life now? Travel some of the things we've traveled and some of the heartaches and despairs and the difficulties and the crushing blows of living this life in a fallen sinful world, both our own sin and the sin around us, and you'll find out: I don't think I want anything of now. I want something better than now. I want someone who can save me and bring me into the wonders and the pleasures and the glories of the eternal presence of God.

He is virgin born because he is going to with his multiplied mercies save us fully and if he is truly God, then he is one of infinite value and worth and he therefore could die in finite time and render an eternal redemption for all of his children. He had to be virgin born to do that. You see, one reason why the writer to the Hebrews said that all of these other offerings that the priest would offer through all of these decades and centuries were never sufficient is because they were all animals. They were not human. We needed a human to satisfy our need because we are humans. But those animals also were inadequate and deficient because they were not divine. We needed a divine salvation. Jesus in mercy has both. In mercy he came for us fully human, fully God, for a full redemption and salvation. You can study the annals of human history, no other so-called religion can come close to such a Gospel. God took on flesh to save us to the uttermost and he can because he did.

Hebrews 10:5, did you have that to put up there, Tommy? Perhaps not. Let me just read it for you if I've got it in my notes here. I love the way it is worded here. "Therefore, when He comes into the world" – now listen – "He says, 'A sacrifice and offering You have not desired,'" in other words, no more of the priest bringing these offerings out of this world. "A sacrifice and an offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me." God took on a body that it might be finally, finally, after all the thousands, the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands, no doubt even the millions of sacrifices of lambs and goats and bullocks and turtledoves and pigeons, after all of those incomplete, partial, imperfect, finally God becomes man to become our sacrifice and our Savior. The virgin birth is essential for this.

He came to save us fully and he came to save many. Because he is who he is and he has done what he has done, he can save Jew, he can save Gentile; he can save rich, he can save poor; he can save black, he can save white; he can save the educated, he can save the uneducated. Hebrews 9:28, this Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many because he is fully God and fully man. One sacrifice for all sin for all time. And friend, if you slightly dampened the essentiality, if that's a word, of the virgin birth, you lose all of this potential. He must be, he had to be virgin born. He is the perfect, as Hebrews 5:9 told us and we shared it at the beginning, "having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." We had the partial, we had the shadows, we had the types, but on Christmas morning finally, finally, the perfect came.

And my friend, listen, some of you here today are not saved. Listen to me: he is mighty to save. He is mighty to save and all that is required is for you to confess your total bankruptcy, your total inability, your complete dependency on that salvation and not on yourself. You can't join enough churches, you can't be baptized enough times, you can't take the ordinances or the sacraments, you can't clean up your life enough, that's only a partial, incomplete, deficient approach. You have to come fully and wholly and say, "O Christ, you and you alone are my hope. Period. Because I believe when you were born, the perfect came." The final one has come and that's why we celebrate Christmas.

Let's stand together in prayer.