

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

By

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WHY WAS IT NECESSARY? IS BELIEF IN IT ESSENTIAL TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH?

The preacher stood on the steps of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in a Kentucky town and said to me, “No, I do not necessarily believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ. To me it has nothing to do with the gospel.” His congregation had just been pouring out the door, congratulating him on the splendid gospel sermon.

A young preacher stood on the steps of Friends University in Wichita, Kansas during the first “Consultation on Christian Unity” held in that area and said, “I neither believe nor disbelieve in the Virgin Birth. I don’t see what importance it has in the Christian faith.”

Thousands of preachers secretly or publicly deny the Scriptural account of Christ’s birth, and perhaps a vast segment of the church (?) considers the subject to be of so little importance that it is not worthy of an opinion. The ignorance of the Bible account is hardly excusable. But even more significant is the fact that so many fail to understand just WHY the Virgin Birth is important. **Failure to see the meaning of the Virgin Birth is evidence of a failure to understand the meaning of the gospel itself.**

IN DESIGNING THE RACE God required two parents for the production of one child. In the birth of Jesus this law was not exactly suspended, for Mary did not produce the child by herself. She had the help of God, through the power of His Spirit. Although the conception was without the aid of Joseph, her husband, it was not without the aid of God. Anyone who believes in God should not find it difficult to believe in such a creative act on His part. What makes this disbelief more puzzling is that many who question the Virgin Birth claim to believe the Bible to be God’s inspired Word.

Here are some Scriptures relating to Christ’s birth:

“Behold the Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us” (Matt. 1:23). (Note: This is a quotation from Isaiah 7:14. “Some have translated the word in Isaiah as “young woman,” but notice that Matthew, in quoting it, translated it “Virgin.” Therefore it must correctly mean a virgin, or else we must discard Matthew as a reliable writer.)

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary ... And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary: for thou has found favor with God. And, behold, thou shall conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS! (Luke 1:26, 27, 30, 31.)

“And Mary said unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the holy spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:34-35).

It matters not whether we use the term “virgin”; the account leaves no room for any other conclusion but that Jesus was horn of a virgin, had no earthly father, but is in fact the Son of God, at the same time, the Son of Man.

The question remains: why was the Virgin Birth necessary, why is it essentially a part of the Christian faith?

First, then, it was necessary for Christ, in entering the stream of humanity to enter it as a human being in order to live as a man and die a man’s death. The scripture states, “Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime in bondage” (Hebrew 2:14-15).

The entire purpose of Christ in the world centers around this problem of sin and death. Man’s problem is not primarily a social problem, how he treats other men, but it is a personal problem, how to cure the sin in his own life and be justified before God. This done, the social and ethical problems are solved as by-products. The social and ethical teachings of Jesus could have been stated by any, - one who could speak, but stating them does not solve the problem, for man still finds himself inadequate, and in the final analysis a sinner, condemned to death for sin.

Christ then “became sin on our behalf” and suffered the penalty for sin by dying our death. This is in contrast to the “spiritual” atonement insisted upon by so many who fail to see the problem. The death of Jesus was the judgment upon man, for Christ stood in man’s shoes, under the condemnation for man’s sin, taking the death rap for our sins. It was absolutely necessary for Him to be a flesh and blood man in order to die man’s death. It was not merely a “spiritual death” nor the mere suffering in terrible pain that accomplished the purpose. The blood flowed, the breath ceased, and life stopped! This was absolutely essential because that is the nature of judgment upon sinners - “the wages of sin is death.” In the final judgment all sinners will be put to death; even the dead sinners will be raised from the tombs to face judgment (John 5:28) and will be cast into the lake of fire — not a spiritual fire for a spiritual death, but a fire that destroys life. “This is the second death, even the lake of fire” (Rev.20:14). God is able to “destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (Matt. 10:28). It was this destruction, the judgment execution of sinners, which Jesus underwent. Thus he had to become flesh and blood in entering the human race, by being born of woman.

Secondly, it was necessary that He be also the Son of God. Had Jesus been only a man taken from the ranks of humanity he would not have been God in the flesh. He could not

have been the one who “came down from heaven,” nor the one who was with God in the beginning, nor could he have justly been put to death for us. Had God chosen a man from the race to be the sin-bearer, it would have been the greatest travesty of justice ever committed. The gift of life is from God, and the sacrifice of Jesus was the sacrifice of God, not of man. God did NOT reach out and select the finest specimen of His creation, then as a reward for that persons righteousness force upon him the guilt, the burden, the suffering and the penalty for the sins of the rest of us. Yet this is what they would have us believe who deny the Virgin Birth.

The sacrifice on Calvary was a man, all right. But he was God. Man’s creator, voluntarily paying the penalty He had imposed upon sin. This takes the crucifixion out of the category of human sacrifice practiced by the pagans and puts it in the category of God’s justice and mercy, where they are met together in Christ.

Much of today’s “church” is concerned only with political and social reform. Naturally these people, whether preachers or laity, are not concerned with the basic problem of judgment and eternal life, and hence the Virgin Birth doesn’t interest them. But to those who need a Savior, the Virgin Birth is absolutely essential.

This essential factor, the necessity of the Virgin Birth, is a door opening on some important truths for our day.

1. Anyone who denies the Virgin Birth is not just kicking out a bit of puzzling Bible narration, but is actually denying that there ever was a Savior. If Jesus was NOT virgin born, then he was a man conceived by man, the offspring of man and not of God. He could not be “God ... reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). He could not be “Emmanuel” which means “God with us.” He could not have been “sent from God” but would have been the product of Joseph. Jesus plainly states “I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go unto the Father” (John 16:28). If He were only the offspring of Joseph, this statement would be absolutely untrue.

To deny the Virgin Birth is not merely to deny a thing expressed in the Bible. It is to deny that a Savior ever came from God.

2. Since it was necessary for Jesus to take on human flesh in order to die a flesh and blood death, in man’s stead, then the death of man in judgment for sin must be equivalent to the kind of death Jesus died. If Jesus, in meeting sin’s penalty, had to DIE, then death must be indeed the penalty. This takes the superstition and mystery out of the punishment of the wicked, and makes it definite and fearful indeed! “Why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live! (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

3. The increasing publicity given to those who deny the Virgin Birth is ample evidence of the apostasy of the modern church. Fifty years ago any minister who denied the virgin Birth was considered an unbeliever by most churches. Today these churches embrace

such men and advance them to places of honor. In this they are “denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1).

The fact that church leaders of our day deny the, very source of salvation is proof that we are now in the age of the great “falling away.” How much farther away from Christ can one fall than to deny His origin and person? Churches are deceived by these apostates, “uttering great swelling words of vanity” (2 Pet.2:18) because church members generally know little about the Scriptures.

Failing to see the overall purpose of God to redeem a race from death for a new creation, men turn to the incidental side-issues and by-products as objects of faith. True, the way Jesus was born may have no bearing on civil rights, the population explosion and the atomic bomb. But it has everything to do with the faith and strength of the individual who wishes to fulfill the purpose of the Creator: Salvation from sin and resurrection to immortality is possible only through the virgin Birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The one who understands this has a light that marks his path through the maze of world problems, and a savior who goes with him to strengthen him along the way.

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