

Was Jesus Born Of A Virgin?

December 24, 2022

Merry Christmas! My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you with us on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

When we hear the Christmas story, we hear of Jesus being born of the virgin Mary. Let me ask you a question. Is it important that Jesus was born of a virgin? What do you think?

Today, many consider the virgin birth a relic of the past, a legend, a piece of fantasy from the past. Redbook Magazine took a poll of students studying to be church leaders across various denominations. Fifty-six percent of the students surveyed across the country do not believe Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus in her womb.

The Research Center for the University of California Berkley polled various denominations to get their opinion on the virgin birth. Sixty-nine percent of baptists believed in the virgin birth, sixty-six percent of Lutherans, fifty-seven percent of Presbyterians, thirty-nine percent of Episcopalians, and thirty-four percent of Methodists.

The data is clear. The belief that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus is rapidly declining in our culture. The problem is the virgin birth is not an optional belief for Christians. It is a foundational belief. If Jesus was conceived like any other child, and he wasn't born of the virgin Mary, that changes everything. There would be no reason for us to gather. There would be no hope for us in the face of death. If Jesus wasn't supernaturally conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the entire Christian faith collapses.

Tonight, we are looking at Matthew 1:18-25, which tells us the story of the virgin birth and how it happened.

Background

The Genealogy of Jesus.

Last week, Pastor Kris looked at the birth of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke focuses on the birth of Jesus as experienced by Jesus' mother Mary. The Gospel of Matthew also tells us about the birth of Jesus but it tells us about Jesus' birth primarily from Joseph's side.

Tonight we are looking at Jesus' birth in Matthew. All of Matthew 1 is about the birth of Jesus. It is helpful to know that Matthew 1 breaks into two parts. Two weeks ago, Pastor Jordan taught the first part. It was Matthew 1:1-17. It was a long genealogy. Matthew 1:1-17 tells us the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Joseph, Jesus' earthly adoptive father. This genealogy was proof that on Joseph's side, Jesus was born into David's kingly line.

The Gospel of Luke also contains a genealogy with the story of Jesus' birth, but it is different genealogy. Why is it different? Luke's genealogy is Jesus' family tree on his mother Mary's side. It shows that Jesus was also born into David's kingly lineage on his mother Mary's side of the family.

So the reason we have two different genealogies of Jesus in Luke and Matthew covering Jesus' family tree is because Luke gives us Jesus' family tree on his mother Mary's side of the family while Matthew gives us Jesus' family tree on Joseph's side, his earthly adoptive father.

Matthew covers Jesus' earthly and divine origins.

There is something else interesting in Matthew 1 besides a genealogy of Jesus. It is something we can't see in English, but it is apparent in Greek.

Matthew 1:1-17, begins with these words,...

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.... Matthew 1:1a (ESV)

Matthew 1:1-17 then gives us the earthly family tree of Jesus on Joseph's side of the family.

When we get to Matthew 1:18-25, which are the verses we will study tonight, we read these words.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way... Matthew 1:18a (ESV)

The Greek word translated into English as *genealogy* in Matthew 1:1, is the same Greek word translated as *birth* in Matthew 1:18.

So Matthew 1:1-17 gives us the human origins of Jesus on Joseph's side of the family. Matthew 1:18-25, the second half of the chapter, gives us the divine origins of Jesus. Matthew emphasized that Jesus had human origins and divine origins by dividing his opening chapter in half and providing answers to two questions. What are the human origins of Jesus? What are the divine origins of Jesus?

Matthew 1:18-25 is therefore about the divine origins of Jesus. It was written to answer the question, "Was Jesus born of a virgin?" Let's read Matthew 1:18-25 and see what these verses tell us about the virgin birth.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a

dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1:18–25 (ESV)

These verses give us three angles on the virgin birth. First, the virgin birth was unexpected by Mary. Second, the virgin birth was unexpected by Joseph. Third, the virgin birth was planned by God.

The virgin birth was unexpected by Mary.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:18 (ESV)

Matthew’s account of the virgin birth gives us only one verse to describe Mary’s story about how baby Jesus was conceived in her womb. This verse tells us it wasn’t a normal conception. Mary was engaged to Joseph, but they were sexually pure. They were waiting for the wedding. She was still a virgin when she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

This verse doesn’t tell us much of Mary’s story. If you are like me, you wish you could learn more. We can learn more. Remember what we learned earlier. The Gospel of Matthew focuses primarily on Joseph’s side of Jesus’ birth, but the Gospel of Luke focuses primarily on Mary’s side of Jesus’ conception and birth. If we briefly turn to the Gospel of Luke, he gives us more details about Mary’s side of the story.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” Luke 1:26–28 (ESV)

Gabriel is a high-ranking angel. Apparently, a big part of his job is delivering special messages from God to people. The last time we saw him on assignment was in the Old Testament book of Daniel. Here Gabriel was sent to give a message to a young, humble, ordinary woman named Mary.

She was engaged to Joseph. That means she was probably between 12 to 14 years of age when this took place, since that was the age when women typically married in that culture.

She didn't come from a desirable community. The people of Galilee were generally looked down upon as unsophisticated, rural country bumpkins by the people of Jerusalem.

In Galilee, she came from the city of Nazareth. In Galilee, Nazareth was a town with a bad reputation. It was a small town that housed soldiers for some of the larger Roman cities, like Sephoris. It was known for the atmosphere that comes with housing young soldiers. Today, we might call Nazareth Las Vegas or Sin City.

Mary was engaged to Joseph. Other parts of the Bible tell us Joseph was an ordinary carpenter and probably also a stone mason. The Greek word used to describe his profession includes both carpentry and stone masonry. Joseph was a hard-working man who made a living working hard with his hands.

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married. Engagement in the ancient world was much more binding than it is today. An engaged couple was considered legally married once they were engaged, even though lived apart for

a year until their wedding night. The engagement was so strong that if an engaged woman's fiancé died, she was considered a virgin widow.

So the picture we have of Mary is that she was an unknown, ordinary young woman, engaged to Joseph, living in a town with a bad reputation, but both of them loved and followed God. The angel Gabriel showed up out of the blue and said she was favored by God. What does it mean she was favored by God? Let's keep reading in Luke and find out.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Luke 1:30–33 (ESV)

Mary, you are going to have a baby. This is not going to be an ordinary baby. Let me tell you about him.

You will name him Jesus. Why did God want to name this baby Jesus? Jesus in Hebrew means God saves. Jesus is a Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua. Just as Joshua saved God's people by leading Old Testament Israel into a new life in the Promised Land, the son in her womb would lead God's people out of the slavery of sin into peace with God.

He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. What will make Jesus so great? Every mother wants to have a great child. Will baby Jesus win more Olympic Medals than Michael Phelps? No, Jesus' greatness is far more significant than that. He will be the Son of the Most High. He will not just be Mary's son, but he will be the son of God. I have two sons. They are different from me, but they are of equal value and worth to me. My sons and I are all

humans. Mary was going to supernaturally conceive a son who would not just be her son, but God's son. Mary's son will be a human being as her son but he will also be a divine being as God's son.

The Lord will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Mary was not just going to have a human son, who will also be God, but God will give him the kingly throne over God's people from his ancestor David. Unlike other kings, who reigned a few years and died, Jesus will be the king over God's people and his reign will never end. Jesus will be king over God's people forever! Jesus doesn't sound like an ordinary son born in the ordinary way, does he?

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 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. Luke 1:34–35 (ESV)

Mary was no dummy. She simply asked the angel the obvious question. I am a virgin. How am I going to get pregnant? The angel explained that Joseph would not be the father, but God would be the father. The Holy Spirit would come into her womb. Jesus would literally be the Son of God in the flesh.

As you can imagine, this was an inconceivable privilege, but it was also a massive and unexpected change in her life. When Mary told her parents that she was pregnant, but she was still a virgin, do you think they believed her? Do you think her friends believed she was a pregnant virgin? The one who would be hardest of all to convince would be Joseph. When he heard she was pregnant, his heart would be broken.

What is very clear from the one verse on Mary's conception in Matthew and the more extended discussion of Jesus' conception in Luke, is that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus. Jesus was not conceived in an ordinary way. Jesus was supernaturally conceived in her womb by God. Let's go back to Matthew and hear about the virgin birth from Joseph's side.

The virgin birth was unexpected by Joseph.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. Matthew 1:19 (ESV)

Can you imagine the conversation between Mary and Joseph when Mary told Joseph she was pregnant? How do you tell your fiancé you are pregnant by the Holy Spirit? Like a normal guy, when Mary showed up pregnant, and Joseph knew he was not the father, it broke his heart. He felt he had no choice but to divorce her.

He could do that one of two ways. He could divorce her publicly. That would save Joseph's reputation, but it would destroy Mary's. I am sure there was a bit of his heart that considered that option because he was so hurt to see the woman he loved pregnant by what he thought was another man. Instead of publicly, he decided to divorce her quietly and save Mary's reputation as much as possible.

If Joseph went through with the marriage, people would assume the child in Mary's womb was his child. Mary being pregnant out of wedlock meant massive social shame. If Joseph took Mary as his wife, he would take on himself the social shame Mary was enduring.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:20 (ESV)

It says he was considering these things. I picture Joseph lying in bed with his mind going a million miles a minute about Mary’s unexpected pregnancy. How could Mary do this? He didn’t think she was that kind of woman.

Eventually, he drifted into sleep. That is when an angel appeared to him in his dreams. The angel told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. Mary was telling the truth. She was not unfaithful, but she was pregnant by means of what the Holy Spirit did in her womb. Then, just as Gabriel told Mary more about the identity of Jesus, the angel that spoke to Joseph in his dream also told him a little more about the identity of the baby in Mary’s womb.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21 (ESV)

His name will be Jesus. We already learned that means God saves. Then the angels told Joseph what Jesus would save God’s people from. **He will save his people from their sins.** In Greek, it reads even stronger. It reads, “It is he and no other that will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21 (literal translation)

The reason God took on flesh in Mary’s womb is given here at his birth. Jesus came to save us from our sin. Jesus came to take away our sin and bring us back into a relationship with God.

Remember what the angel told Joseph, “It is he and no other that will save his people from their sins.” There has been and will only be one person in the history of the world who will be able to save us from our sin. That is Jesus. Jesus is uniquely qualified to save us from our sin because he is not just another

human being who can identify with us, but he is also God so he is of infinite worth compared to us. It is Jesus, not Mohammed, Buddha, or Pokemon that can save us from our sin, only Jesus because he is the only man who is also fully God.

So it is clear the virgin birth was an unexpected change in Mary's plans for her life. It was an unexpected change in Joseph's plans for his life.

While all of this was a surprise to Mary and Joseph, Jesus being born of a virgin was not a surprise to God.

The virgin birth was always God's plan.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1:22–25 (ESV)

Matthew, the writer of this gospel, reminds us that the virgin birth of God's son in human flesh to save us from our sins was always God's plan. He quotes from the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 7:14. He wrote these words 700 years before Jesus was born. One day a virgin will conceive a child, but the child the virgin will conceive will be different. That child will be Immanuel, which means "God with us." God taking on human flesh to save us. A woman who is sexually pure will conceive a child that is God.

It was always God's plan to save us from our sin by taking on a body in the womb of the virgin Mary. He didn't just come to live, but he came to die on a Roman cross in our place for our sin.

Matthew closes by telling us that Joseph didn't question the angel's words. He immediately got up from bed when he woke up in the morning, and took Mary

as his wife. Nobody believed Mary was a pregnant virgin. Now, Joseph believed her, and God used Joseph to protect and provide for her.

After Jesus was born, Joseph consummated the marriage. Mary did not remain a perpetual virgin. Mary and Joseph had children together after Jesus was born. We read about these children in the Bible. Jesus' half-brothers and sisters did not believe he was God in the flesh until after Jesus rose from the dead and they met him alive. That convinced them that everything he said about being God in the flesh was true. Two of Jesus's half-brothers ended up writing two books that are in our Bible, the books of James and Jude.

What did we learn?

As we saw at the beginning, a diminishing number of people believe in the virgin birth. They think Jesus was conceived like any other ordinary child. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both tell us that is not true. Look what we learned.

1. Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit, not by a man. Joseph did not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born.
2. Mary and Joseph were told to name the baby Jesus. Jesus means God saves, which is what Jesus came to do. Jesus came to save us from our sin.
3. Mary was told Jesus would be the king over God's people forever.
4. Joseph was told that Jesus, and no other, would save God's people from their sins.
5. God's word in the Old Testament reminds us that this has always been God's plan to save us from our sin.

Very clearly, the virgin birth is not just fable or legend, it is a fact of history. Since Jesus is God in the flesh, that changes everything.

Application

1. If you came here tonight thinking Christmas is a quaint celebration and the virgin birth didn't really happen, don't leave here thinking that way. Now you know the truth. The virgin birth really happened. God took on flesh in Mary's womb. The reason God took on human flesh in Jesus was so he could die on a Roman cross as the perfect substitute for our sin.
2. There is no plan B. It is Jesus and no other who can save us from our sin. Jesus is the only way for anyone to have the sin of their past forgiven by God and the reigning presence of sin in their heart right now be changed by God. All other religions are untrue because their founder are just men, not men who were God.
3. The reason Jesus came is because God loves you. We live in a lonely world. Today we feel lonelier and more disconnected than ever. One message you can't miss at Christmas is the reason Jesus left the throne room of God to take on a body in Mary's womb was so he could die on a Roman cross, in your place, for your sin, to save you from an eternity in the Lake of Fire, because God loves you. In this world, we are desperate for somebody to love us. God loves you more than anyone.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (ESV)

Before you leave there are two things I want you to do.

1. If you know Jesus, this Christmas sing and celebrate with a heart full of gratitude to Jesus for what he did when he took on flesh in Mary's womb to save you. He did it all because he loves us.

2. If you came thinking the virgin birth was just a myth and you didn't know how much God loves you or what God did in Mary's womb to save you, before you leave tonight, in your heart, ask Jesus to forgive your sin, and make you into a new person. He will. Then join the rest of us in celebrating what God did for us through Jesus.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address (www.Christ2RCulture.com) on the copied resource.

