

Text: Various

Title: The Christian Doctrine of the Virgin Birth

Truth: The teaching of the virgin birth of Jesus is essential to the Christian faith.

Date/Location: Sunday December 25, 2011 at FBC and 12/26/2021 at FBC

Introduction

Let us think about the Christian teaching on the virgin birth, which is that Mary was a true virgin, that the Holy Spirit worked a miracle in conceiving the child Jesus in her womb, that Jesus was born as a human baby boy in Bethlehem without sin, and that all of these are actual historical facts. Christians read of the virgin birth in the text of Scripture and believe it (Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:34-37).

But there are also *Un-Christian* teachings on the virgin birth. These include outright denials of it as preposterous supernaturalism, or as mythical religious thought. Catholics teach that Mary herself was conceived in a miraculous way and had no other children beside Jesus, thus adding false doctrines to the Christian teaching of the virgin birth.

There are also some useless *speculations* about the virgin birth, including those that eliminate any organic connection between Mary and Jesus, or that posit sin of the man only.

Admittedly the actual “how” of the formulation of the genetic material of Jesus’ human body is left in mystery; but I believe this is because the virgin conception and birth is a *miracle* and as such cannot be fully explained naturalistically. At some point our ability to scientifically explain it must break down. Therefore, we need to be careful to not go beyond the Scriptural teaching lest we say either too much about these details, and perhaps end up with a Christ that is less than human or less than God.

Now, let us think about how important it is to the Christian faith. I believe it is so important that we could adapt one of Paul’s sayings: if Christ was not born of a virgin, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. We would be liars about God if Christ were not born of a virgin while we affirm that He was. The whole

system of Christianity would be futile (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). But Jesus *was* born of a virgin!

1. The Virgin Birth is Essential to the Person of Christ.

a. For Christ's personhood.

In a normal human conception, the embryo is a new person. It seems almost miraculous that a brand new person—with his/her own personality, desires, abilities, will, spirit, and all the rest—is formed in a moment of time.

If this same procedure had been followed for Christ, then the divine person of the Godhead would have been added to an existing person in the human and there would have been a body with two persons!

In the virgin birth there was no creation of a new person, but instead the second person of the Godhead took on a human nature and body in order to be a single person with both a divine and human nature.

b. For Christ's sinlessness

The kind of person that moms and dads produce is always, without exception, a sinful person. Because mom and dad are both sinners, all they can produce is a sinner.

But the child Immanuel was not produced the normal way with a father and mother. There was in fact no new person formed (see above). Rather, an impersonal human nature was added to the divine person of Christ.

The Spirit's work of the virgin birth ensured Jesus therefore had no sin.

c. For Christ's human nature

Jesus was promised to be a real human child who would eventually rule the world (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus was also promised to be a son of David—a real human in the kingly line of David. He therefore had to have some true (genetic) connection to the human race, and He received that through Mary.

d. For Christ's divine nature

Jesus was promised to be “God with us.” Two humans cannot produce something divine. God has to be involved in that!

Not incidentally to those of us who are born again is the fact that Jesus was promised to be God with us, and at the end of His earthly career, He said “I am WITH YOU always.” Jesus is ever “God with us”!!!

Without the virgin birth, you have none of these essential ingredients to a Messiah who can do the work of salvation.

2. The Virgin Birth is Essential to the Work of Christ.

We need a man who can die for other men to take their penalty for them. But he has to be a sinless man and he has to be able to suffer the required penalty for sin.

Is it not reasonable to expect that someone has to be sinless to pay a penalty for the sins of others? Is it also not reasonable to expect that someone has to be able to die to pay the penalty for sins, which is death (Rom 6:23)?

The incarnation not only allowed Christ to die for sinners, but also allowed Him to experience human life personally, to reveal sinless human existence, to demonstrate the dignity of human life, and to reveal God as in Heb. 1:1-3.

3. The Virgin Birth is Essential to the Integrity of God’s Prophetic Word.

Isaiah 7:14 had to be fulfilled. And, it was. The context for the prophecy is Isaiah 7:1-16 and 2 Kings 16. The history is this:

- a. The King of Judah, Ahaz, was confronted with an enemy alliance of Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel in 734 B.C. They planned to take Judah and kill Ahaz.
- b. This posed a threat to the Davidic covenant on two levels—the murder of the current Davidic king *and* an attempt to wipe out the Davidic line.
- c. God would have none of that, and promised Ahaz through Isaiah that the coalition’s evil plans would never come to fruition.

- d. God wished to confirm the promise to Ahaz and to the people of Judah with a miraculous sign. Ahaz, in false piety, refused to ask for a sign, so God chose the sign Himself.
- e. The sign had two parts, to answer to the two-fold threat against Ahaz and the Davidic line.
- f. The first part of the sign was the answer to the threat against the Davidic line. God promised that Immanuel would be born of a virgin. This Davidic/Messianic king (as we know from many other Scriptures) thus guarantees that the Davidic line would never be extinguished.
- g. The second part of the sign had to do with a period of time—a short period about the length of time it takes for a young child to mature to a level of understanding good and evil. The young child called out as an example is Immanuel. The time period probably refers to a period of just a few years. In less than that amount of time, the coalition would be destroyed. And in fact, that is what happened. By 732 B.C. another kingdom—Assyria—had eliminated Syria as a threat and mostly done so with the northern kingdom of Israel as well (they finished the job in 722 B.C.). [I am indebted to Dr. R. Bruce Compton at DBTS for his clear explanation of this prophecy.]
- h. The virgin birth of Christ therefore is a **bold act** of God that guarantees the Davidic covenant will have a king in the Davidic line forever. It is a **bold statement** in which God says to His enemies that they will never carry out what Syria and Israel wanted to do to the Davidic line and the Davidic king. The virgin birth **underscores** the promise of God to Ahaz that God’s Word would come true. If God can cause a virgin to conceive and bear a son, then He can cause earthly kingdoms to disappear. God’s Word is sure. Do not doubt it!

4. The Virgin Birth is Essential Though it May Not Initially Be Understood.

- a. Belief in the virgin birth is not required to enter into salvation. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is *all* that is required.

- b. When a person is truly born again, the Spirit of God takes up residence in them and begins to teach them the things of God. They are induced by the spiritual change that has happened to embrace the Bible's teachings. They do this from the inside out. They are not coerced externally.
- c. This is similar with many other doctrines. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is difficult to understand for any Christian, much less a new convert. A new believer may not understand the second coming of Christ. Believing these is not required to be saved, but a born again person will begin to naturally believe them as he matures in Christ.

5. The Virgin Birth is Essential Because Denying it Indicates a Lack of Salvation.

- a. If a "convert" subsequently rejects the teaching of the virgin birth, he is simply giving evidence of a lack of the saving work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore that person would not in fact be a true believer. A knowing denial of this doctrine discards all that the virgin birth means for the person and work of Christ and the integrity of the Bible as God's word. Without all of that, there is no savior, nor salvation, for a person.
- b. Thus the virgin birth is a "fundamental" because it is an accurate litmus test or barometer of the other doctrine and regard for the Scripture that a person holds.
- c. A denial of the virgin birth demonstrates one's rejection of the supernatural. Christianity is a supernatural, revealed religion. Denial of the supernatural implies no creation, no virgin birth, no resurrection, no crossing of the Red Sea on dry ground, and in short, no Bible. This all is a refusal of God.

Conclusion

The Christian God can do a stupendous miracle like the virgin birth. Are there any other "gods" who can do the same? None! No other "god" has ever truly taken up residence in a man in such a way that He can be said to be the God-man. But Jesus Christ is that man!

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