



The Birth of Jesus Christ

Matthew 1:18-25

1. What happened? (the events) (verses 18-21; 24-25)

2. Why did it happen? (the reasons) (verses 22-23)

Open your Bibles once again, to the gospel according to Matthew. Last week, we began our exposition of this gospel by looking at "the genealogy of Jesus Christ" (as verse 1 says). Tonight, we will continue by looking at "the birth of Jesus Christ" (as verse 18 says)

In the genealogy last week, we saw many births. For instance, in verse 2 it says, "To Abraham was born Isaac; and to Isaac [was born] Jacob; and to Jacob [was born] Judah, ... and so on and so on and so on. Of these births that took place, none of them requires explanation, except one. All of them were natural births, except one. Of course, the one birth that needs explanation is found in verse 16, "And to Jacob was born Joseph, the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ."

The birth of Jesus Christ was miraculous. The birth of Jesus Christ was unlike any other birth in this genealogy, or for that matter, ever. His birth demands our attention this evening. Beginning with verse 18, Matthew is going to explain for us what was involved with the birth of Jesus Christ. Let me read the passage for us this evening.

Matthew 1:18-25

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, desired to put 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 that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

22 Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

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 arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took [her] as his wife,

25 and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

In an effort to examine the birth of Jesus Christ this morning, I would like for us to ask two questions of the text:

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen?

Let's look first at ...

1. What happened? (the events) (verses 18-21; 24-25)

The story begins in verse 18, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph." Stop there. The first thing that is mentioned in this narrative is the betrothal of Mary and Joseph.

Event #1: The betrothal (verse 18b)

Here were two young people, who were intended to be married -- they were "betrothed." We don't use that word today. The reason is because our society is different than that of the first century. However, when this word is used, you might think "engagement." Mary and Joseph were "engaged" to be married. But, this engagement was different than our society -- it was much more serious! Today, people readily break engagements without any problems from the law. Nothing is technically binding in a legal way until the marriage day. In the Jewish culture, when a couple was betrothed, they were legally married, even before the marriage day. In Matthew 1:19, Joseph is called, "her husband." Additionally, in order for Joseph to call off the wedding, he had to "put her away" or "divorce" her (see Matt. 19:3, where the same word is translated, "divorce").

So, how is it that they became "betrothed"?

It would be nice to tell the story that they were high school sweethearts. She was a cheerleader and he was the star quarterback. They were homecoming king and queen. It would be nice to tell the story of how they loved and adored each other and that they had a very romantic dating time, when Joseph won the precious heart of Mary, which lead to their engagement and marriage.

However, the scenario probably went like this. It started, not with Mary and Joseph, but with their parents. Both sets of parents were probably

quite religious. Joseph seems to have been raised in the faith, for it is said of Joseph that he was a "righteous man" (v. 19). It is certainly the case that Mary was a righteous woman as well. Her parents must have taught her much about the Lord. Listen to her words in Luke 1, "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior ... For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; ... the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name." (Luke 1:46-49).

Mary's parents would have looked at the little boy Joseph growing up and Joseph's parents had looked at the little girl growing up. Mary's parents had spoken with Joseph's parents and had determined that Mary and Joseph would make a good and profitable marriage for each other. An agreement was signed. A dowry was paid. Joseph and Mary were legally betrothed. And the marriage date was set.

According to the Jewish custom, Mary and Joseph had to wait a year before they were married. In our country, we have various lengths of time between our engagements and our marriages. You can meet someone today, get on a plane, fly to Las Vegas, and get married tonight. In our culture, there are times when couples wait more than two years to get married (perhaps one of them needs to finish college first). But in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day, the custom was one year of waiting. The purpose of this time was to demonstrate the purity of the wife. If she had a child during this time, it would demonstrate her unfaithfulness and the husband could call off the marriage.

This is why it was a big deal when it was discovered that "she was with child" (v. 18). She was pregnant. This leads us to the next event, ...

Event #2: The pregnancy (verse 18c)

The natural assumption was that she was unfaithful to Joseph and that she was involved in an immoral relationship, through which a child was conceived. The social stigma at this time must have been great. In our society, the stigma has been reducing over the years as more and more children are being born out of wedlock. I remember that society used to frown upon it much more than it does today. Some of you probably remember when our society scorned births outside of wedlock even more than I remember. Yet, it was probably even more so in the time of Mary and Joseph. This explains, ...

Event #3: Joseph's intentions (verse 19)

Joseph was intending to do the right thing. It says in verse 19 that "Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly." When a righteous man found out that his wife had been unfaithful during the betrothal, the godly thing to do would be to "put her away" (i.e. give her a certificate of divorce). That is what the law required in such a case. That was the righteous thing to do.

But Joseph had another desire within him, which was also in accord with the spirit of the Mosaic Law. As exact and demanding and as the law was, it always stressed mercy to the helpless. For instance, you simply need to read the laws in Exodus 21 and 22 to see how the law required mercy to those who were weaker and helpless (i.e. the orphan and the widow). So Joseph was "not wanting to disgrace her." That is why he would "put her away secretly."

Joseph wanted to "put her away" (i.e. divorce her) because he was righteous, according to the letter of the law. But he also wanted to do it "secretly," because he didn't want "to disgrace her," in accordance with the spirit of the law.

Joseph could easily have put her away and disgraced her. According to Deut. 22, he could have publicly defamed her (v. 14), held a trial, and had her stoned (v. 21). But Joseph wasn't seeking revenge (which a public disgrace would be). He wasn't seeking to "get even." He was attempting to be gracious and kind to Mary, while doing the thing that was prescribed of him in the law.

I am sure that Joseph was not going to act impulsively. He would certainly have thought things through. His heart was fully intent upon doing this. He was ready to act. But then, comes the supernatural twist to the story.

Event #4: God's intervention (verse 20)

God intervened by sending an angel of the Lord to Joseph to tell him the true story -- the part of the story that he couldn't have known apart from divine revelation. Matthew writes, "But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David [this surely was a reference to his lineage as we saw last week in the first half of Matthew 1], do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins' (Matthew 1:20-21). This has already been mentioned in verse 18 with words I skipped, "before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."

Here is the argument of the angel. "This child in Mary's womb is not as the result of immorality, Joseph. Mary has not been unfaithful to you. Rather, Mary has conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Joseph, it is OK for you to take Mary as your wife. Even though the whole purpose of the betrothal period is to check for unfaithfulness, even though it looks as if Mary has been unfaithful, yet, she has been faithful. It is OK to take Mary as your wife."

Now, Let me ask you seriously. Does this sound just a little far-fetched and unbelievable to you? Would you have believed this story? "Your wife to be will have a child, but it isn't because of immorality, it is because the Lord has intervened in history to produce the first child without a human father." Somebody might have said, "Now that's a new one. I've never heard that before."

Perhaps it was like the excuses that I found recently in a Music Newsletter, entitled, "Excuses for Missed Lessons." Here are a few:

- "Sorry I missed my lesson last week. I had a temperature of 107 (degrees) for 5 days."
- One said that "she couldn't come to her lesson because a mouse was caught inside the pedal and every time she pressed the piano it would squish."

- "I was memorizing my song for the TV and Movie recital and I was working so hard, my brain just exploded, so I had to rest my brain and I couldn't come to my lesson."
- "I just was at my horseback riding lesson, and while putting my horse in her stall, [she] went to the bathroom on me. I am unable to completely get the horse manure off my hands. My hands are too sticky and smelly to come to my lesson. Also, I don't want to offend you with stinky hands."
- "Missed two lessons before the Christmas recess because Mom had closed the keyboard cover and was using the piano to display their Christmas cards."

Now that's a new one!

Who's going to believe this? I think that we can often get dulled by the repetition of this story of the virgin birth that we forget the fascination of it. Even this morning, I was listening to the radio, and all of it was focussed around the virgin birth of Jesus. We hear it over and over and over and over again. Yesterday, I had the chance to explain what the Christmas story was about to a man from another country, who didn't really know what Christmas was about. I read to him from this very passage and saw how amazing (and unbelievable) this birth was, because I was reading it as if through this man's eyes. As I read to this man, I thought to myself, "who would believe this?" Joseph did.

Perhaps what made this believable to Joseph was probably the fact that this wasn't the first time that Joseph had heard this far-fetched story. He probably heard it from Mary beforehand. In Luke's account of the virgin birth of Jesus, we see that the angel appeared to Mary before she conceived a child by the Holy Spirit, **"you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ...The Spirit will come upon you"** (Luke 1:31,35).

Mary must have told Joseph about this beforehand. Any engaged couple speaks about plans for the future. Before Yvonne and I were married, we talked about all kinds of things: how would the house be run, who will do what, how will we make final decisions, what will our goals be, what are our dreams, ... In one of these discussions, Mary must have mentioned this to Joseph.

So how did Joseph respond? This is so encouraging. Joseph obeyed the angel in everything. "And Joseph (1) arose from his sleep, and (2) did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and (3) took [her] as his wife, and (4) kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he (5) called His name Jesus" (Matt. 1:24,25). Joseph obeyed in everything.

Let me ask you at this point. When Joseph took Mary as a wife, what did it mean for him and for his reputation? It destroyed it! The most self-protecting thing for him to do would have been for him to have divorced Mary secretly. Then, he would be clear of all charges and would have kept his hands free from apparent sin. But to take her as wife probably meant that he himself would face disgrace. He could try to explain that the child wasn't his and that he was innocent of the entire matter, but in the world's eyes, he would still be seen as sinful. People would surely have claimed that it was either his child (conceived out of wedlock) or another man's child.

We know very little about Joseph's life, but we do find out that Jesus lived with this reputation of being a child born out of wedlock. In John 8:41, we see Jesus in discussion with the Jewish leaders, who insinuated that Jesus was "born of fornication." Furthermore, from His own day until now He has been known to the Jews as "Jesus the Bastard." If Jesus faced it, Joseph certainly would have faced it.

Thus, to take Mary as his wife, would only be to face mockery and rejection from the world. What is encouraging here is that Joseph seems ready to hear God's Word and then respond, no matter how high the price. We ought to learn from a man like Joseph. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Joseph was ready to take the scorn of the world. I believe that Joseph was willing to take the scorn because he understood that the birth was a supernatural birth. This leads us to our last event, ...

Event #5: The Virgin Birth (verse 25)

All of the events thus far, have been leading to this event. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is clearly the focus of these verses. Look at how often Matthew refers to it (four times in these eight verses)....

- Matt. 1:18 - "she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit" (i.e. not by another man) (verse 18).
- Matt. 1:20 - "that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (i.e. not by another man) (verse 20).
- Matt. 1:23 - "a virgin shall be with child" (verse 23).
- Matt. 1:25 - Joseph "kept her a virgin until she gave birth" (verse 25).

It is especially apparent that Matthew goes out of his way to make it clear that the birth of Jesus was by a virgin, who remained a virgin. The focus of these passages is the virgin birth. Similarly, in Luke's account, he mentions the virgin birth four times as well (see Luke 1:27, 31, 34, 35).

The birth of Jesus was extraordinary and miraculous and important. However, in all of scripture, the only other place in which this is mentioned is in Isaiah 7:14, which is quoted here in Matthew. Mark didn't write about it. John didn't write about it. It isn't mentioned in the book of Acts. Paul didn't write about it. It has led some to believe that this doctrine is not important and not essential. May I offer to you this evening, church family, that this is a **very important doctrine**?

It is easily understood why this is mentioned only a few times in Scripture. Mark didn't write about it, because he didn't write about the birth of Christ. John didn't write about it, because he didn't write about the birth of Christ, either. It isn't mentioned in the book of Acts, because Acts records the evangelistic mission and messages of the church. Paul didn't write about it, because he wrote about the problems that the church faced. During Paul's time, the issue of the virgin birth of Christ was not an issue. Had it been an issue, I am sure that Paul would have written about it.

It is worthy to note that the virgin birth was unanimously embraced in the early church. Of course, there were non-believers and skeptics who denied this miraculous birth, but not within the believing community of the early church. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in 110 A. D. wrote about the virgin birth of Christ as a commonly known and accepted fact within the church. Irenaeus (~170 A. D.) and Tertullian (~200 A. D.) spoke of it. It is included in the Nicene creed (as an essential doctrine) in 325 A. D., "I believe in Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, ..." It is included in the Apostle's creed (created during the 4th century), "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Born of the virgin Mary, ..."

Though accepted in the early church, in recent years, this doctrine has come under great attack. German rationalism in the mid 1800's really started the ball rolling with this regard. It has come into modern, liberal, Christian circles. They questioned everything supernatural. Thus, with regard to the virgin birth, doubt was cast upon it, because it was supernatural.

We need to remember that life of Jesus is saturated with miracles. We will see this as we exposit through the gospel of Matthew. Jesus healed blind men. He healed deaf men. He healed men with withered hands. He raised people from the dead. He fed multitudes. He, Himself, raised from the dead. It shouldn't surprise us that His birth was miraculous.

I cannot explain it to you. How can you explain how Jesus healed these people? How can you explain how Jesus fed multitudes? How can you explain how Jesus rose from the dead? You cannot. If you can explain it, it isn't miraculous. Many in the liberal circles today have sought to explain the supernatural by mere natural phenomena. Thus, by attempting to explain many of them, they have no longer become miraculous (i.e. unexplainable). So also with the birth of Jesus Christ. It was a miracle. We simply need to accept it, believe it, and embrace it.

Let's look at our next question, ...

2. Why did it happen? (the reasons) (verses 22-23)

There is a clear purpose given to us in verses 22-23. Let me read it to you (commenting briefly as we go along)

"Now all this took place ..." Matthew was speaking about the miraculous events that surrounded the birth of Jesus: The betrothal, the pregnancy, Joseph's intentions, God's intervention, and the virgin birth -- "all of this."

"that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet ..." As a footnote, notice the way in which we received our Scriptures: **"by the Lord, through the prophet."** God speaks, the prophets write.

"might be fulfilled, saying, ..." Matthew will now quote the prophet Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14, "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."

Matthew's intent here is plain as day. It couldn't be clearer. He said that this child that Mary would bring into this world was a direct fulfillment of what Isaiah, the prophet, had said more than 700 years before Jesus was ever born. I remember receiving a Christmas card a few years ago from some friends. It had Isaiah 7:14 quoted (which is quoted here in Matthew) and then said, "732-715 B.C." after it. This is the point. Long before it happened, it was predicted to happen.

Matthew's purpose is clear. Mary is the virgin. Jesus is the Son. Why did this happen?

Reason #1: To Fulfill Prophecy

Matthew took efforts to point out that the birth of Jesus had to be this way. It was prophesied. This verse is right along the lines of Matthew's purpose in the first couple of chapters of his book. We will run into this again and again and again...

- We saw last week, in chapter 1, that the genealogy of Jesus Christ demonstrates that Jesus was the king from the Davidic line. The scriptures made plain that Messiah had to be born from the line of David. When Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What do you think about the Messiah, whose son is he?" (Matt. 22:42). They knew the scriptures, so they replied, "The son of David." (:42).

- We will see next week, in chapter 2, that the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem. Look at 2:4, Herod had gathered "together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, and began to inquire of them where the Messiah was to be born." They said "In Bethlehem," because they knew that Micah 5:2 so predicted.

- In chapter 2:15, we will find out that Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, "that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'OUT OF EGYPT DID I CALL MY SON.'" [Hos. 11:1].

- Herod slaughtered the babies in Bethlehem that Jeremiah's weeping words might be fulfilled (2:18).

- Jesus moved to Nazareth so "that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" (2:23).

Matthew's purpose in writing these first two chapters (which many have called Matthew's prologue) is to clearly present before those reading the gospel that Jesus was indeed the Messiah as predicted by the Old Testament writers. Matthew's repeated emphasis here upon the

fulfillment of Scripture has led many to believe (and I think correctly so) that Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, who were familiar with the Old Testament scriptures. We shall see Matthew quoting from the Old Testament, again and again and again.

The difficulty in this passage is not at all what Matthew wrote, but rather, what Isaiah wrote. Turn with me to Isaiah, chapter 7.

In this passage, we find that Ahaz, King of Judah was in serious trouble. "Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Joahan, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that (1) Rezin the king of Aram [north of Israel] and (2) Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it" (Isaiah 7:1). You had two kings coming to attack Judah:

1. Rezin, king of Aram -- northern neighbors of Israel.
2. Pekah, king of Israel -- northern neighbors of Judah.

It says in verse 2, "When it was reported to the house of David (that is, the king in Judah), saying 'The Arameans have camped in Ephraim [i.e. just north of Jerusalem], his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.'" This was a very terrifying time for Ahaz. The powerful Arameans were just north of you. They have attacked you. And they plan to attack again. It is as if Canada was a world powerhouse, and they wanted to take over Rockford. They had made allies with Wisconsin and are now camped in Beloit, poised and ready to come in!

This was not an easy time for Ahaz. Yet, remember what we spoke last week of God's faithfulness to David's line? In accordance with His promise in 2 Samuel 7, God would establish His king on the throne of David, which would last forever. Isaiah came to king Ahaz and sought to calm him by saying, "Take care, and be calm, have no fear, and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands" (verse 4). Isaiah insults them. He says that they were once ablaze with fire and flame, but it has almost gone out. They are stubs of smoldering firebrands.

Isaiah then asked Ahaz to test God to prove whether or not this was true. In verse 11, he asked Ahaz to make a wish: "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven" This sign would be for a confirmation of the truth of Isaiah's statements concerning Rezin and Pekah. In his piety, Ahaz refused. So Isaiah would give Ahaz a sign, which would be a marvelous sign. In verse 14, Isaiah said, "Therefore 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." In the next verses, Isaiah continues, "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken" (verses 15-16).

The essence of Isaiah's prophecy was that there will be a child born, and before he knows enough to choose good and bad, the land will be forsaken. In chapter 8, Isaiah gives a similar prophecy, but this time concerning his own son. In verse 3, he says that his wife (who had already had a child) gave birth to a son. In verse 4, he says, "Before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus [i.e. Aram, from whence came Pekah] and the spoil of Samaria [i.e. Israel, from whence came Rezin], will be carried away before the king of Assyria." We know from history that Tiglath-Pileaser did this very thing in 732 B. C. You can read about it in 2 Kings 15,16.

In accordance within a few short years, this threat from the north (these two stubs of smoldering firebrands) were extinguished by Tiglath-Pileaser. Ahaz certainly could have understood this prophecy to mean that a certain woman, who was a virgin, (unknown to us, and possibly to him), would have a child, which signified that God had not forsaken His people, because, "Immanuel - God is with us." God will protect His line of David. God is with us! Immanuel!

Our difficulty in understanding this passage is that Isaiah never identifies the virgin. Nevertheless, Ahaz certainly thought that this sign had been fulfilled, due to the destruction of Israel and Aram by Tiglath-Pileaser from Assyria only a few short years after this prophecy occurred. Perhaps Ahaz understood this virgin to be one who didn't know a man at the time of the prophecy, but through a natural birth, one would be born.

Yet, in a greater sense, this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who was born of a mother who was still a virgin. Jesus Christ was indeed, "God with us" -- God incarnate! -- in a greater way than Ahaz ever knew. This is the sign, which is "as deep as Sheol or [as] high as heaven" (Is. 7:11) -- beyond whatever you could ask or think. Jesus was a sign for us -- a proof that He was indeed the Messiah.

Reason #2: To Bring God into Flesh

The name given to Jesus was "Immanuel." This is a really two Hebrew words, and a suffix.

- "Im" means "with."
- "Anu" is a suffix, which means, "us."
- "El" means "God."

When you these two words and the suffix together, you get, "Im-anu El," which means, "With us God."

The only time that Jesus is called, "Immanuel" is right here in Matthew 1. But this shouldn't shock us. Solomon was named, "Jedidiah," which means "beloved of the Lord," yet he was never actually called Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25). He was known as "Solomon." But the name Immanuel gives us insight into who Jesus was. He was "God with us."

In Jesus Christ, God is with us, ...

... not like athletic fans, who cheer for their team and are often referred to as the 12th member of the team.

- ... not like a hometown referee, who helps his team win through hometown friendly calls.
- ... not like a favored friend, who will help in time of need.

In Jesus Christ, it is like God is (present) with us! He is among us. He is walking in our midst! John said, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt [i.e. tented, lived] among us" (John 1:14). The eternal son of God, who had glory with the Father, in eternity past, who created the world, humbled Himself, took the form of a bond-servant, and was made in the likeness of men (John 17:5; Col. 1:16; Phil. 2:7).

As a result of becoming like a man, God did what He could never do if He never left His heavenly abode:

- He could never have fulfilled the whole law (1 Pet. 2:22).
- He could never have offered His own blood for our sins (Heb. 9:11-12).
- He could never sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).
- He could never have given us an example of how to suffer (1 Pet. 2:21).
- He could never become our great high priest (Heb. 5:1), because high priests are taken from among men.

Various people have tried to understand the necessity of the virgin birth with the Son of God becoming a man. I simply mention them to you. They are not mutually exclusive (i.e. one or more may be true).

- Some have said that the virgin birth was necessary to create a sinless man. Jesus is described as "a holy offspring" in Luke 1:35. The difficulty with this view is that Luke 1:35 isn't conclusive in any way. The fact that Jesus was "a holy offspring" may refer to His sinlessness, or simply to His "set apart" purpose. A greater difficulty is that this theory seems to indicate that the father transmits sin to his offspring, while the mother contributes nothing. There is no Biblical warrant for this.
- Some have said that the virgin birth was necessary to bring into human nature one who already existed. In other words, when an egg and a sperm are united, it creates a soul. However, Jesus already existed. So, the virgin birth was necessary to prevent Jesus from cohabitating with a soul that would have been created at conception. The difficulty with this understanding is that the Bible is relatively silent with respect to when human souls come into existence.
- Some have said that the virgin birth was simply a demonstration of Jesus' supernatural character from the start of His earthly existence. From the day of His conception in the womb of Mary, it was plain that Jesus was no mere man, but rather, the God-man, who would be the Messiah.

At any rate, when God came in the flesh, the King came to be among us. When Jesus often said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," He was saying that "The kingdom is here, now!," because the King was with them. God, the King, is with you. He is among you! He is here. God isn't up there, out there, somewhere, anywhere. God has come here! He is with us.

Reason #3: To Avoid the Curse of Jeconiah

This reason comes from the genealogy we looked at last week. I didn't mention it last week, because I thought that it would make more sense this evening. Look at 1:11, "and to Josiah were born **Jeconiah** and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon."

Another name for Jeconiah was Jehoiachin, who was the last king in Judah before Babylon came and exiled the nation. God's judgment came upon him as a result of the apostasy of Judah. God said, "even though [Jeconiah], the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off; and I shall give you over into the hand of those who are seeking your life, yes, into the hand of those whom you dread, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans" (Jer. 22:24,25). So was God's judgment upon Judah.

Furthermore, the LORD said, "Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; for **no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah**" (Jer. 22:30). Now, Jeconiah had other sons and daughters, as the genealogy in Matthew indicates, "and to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel" (Matt. 1:12). Yet, this man was to be considered childless. None of his offspring would sit on the throne of David.

But how could this be? This is the Davidic, kingly line! How could Messiah come from the kingly line and sit upon the throne if a descendent of Jeconiah was prohibited from sitting on the throne? God's promise to the Davidic line is sprinkled all throughout scripture. In family worship this morning, our family read a verse which repeated this theme. The context described the utter wickedness of Jehoshaphat, yet, "the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David His servant, since He had promised him to give a lamp to him through his sons always" (2 Kings 8:19).

If the sinfulness of a king wasn't sufficient to nullify the promise of God to David, are we to believe that the sin of Judah as a nation was sufficient to nullify the promise? No. So, how could God be faithful to both of these promises? **The virgin birth is the only way to overcome this curse.**

Jesus was from the royal line of David, through Joseph. Yet, he was not from the blood of Joseph. He was from the blood of Mary. This genealogy in Matthew indicates the legal, royal line, into which Jesus was born. If we are right, the genealogy in Luke indicates the actual blood-line of Jesus, which shows Him to be of the line of David, though not through Jeconiah, whose offspring were prohibited from ever sitting on the throne of David. The virgin birth is the only way to overcome this curse.

Reason #4: To Save His People

I take this reason from verse 21, "you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

The purpose of the virgin birth of Jesus is wrapped up in the two names that are given to Jesus in this passage. In verse 21, His name will be Jesus (for He will save). In verse 23, His name will be Immanuel (for He is God with us). The Messiah was given a name, Immanuel, to represent his being: God with us. The Messiah was given the name Jesus, to represent his purpose: God saves.

The name, "Jesus" comes from the Hebrew word, "Yeshua," which means, "Savior." This is exactly what Jesus did in coming.

There are many verse which speak of God saving through the work of Jesus Christ:

"He **saved** us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

"God has **saved** us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2 Tim. 1:9).

"For by grace you have been **saved** through faith; at that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8,9)..

"We are **saved** through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:11).

"Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be **saved** from the wrath of God through Him" (Rom. 5:9).

Notice that there is no uncertainty here. Jesus wasn't so named "to make people savable." Jesus was so named "to save people."

I do ask you, "Are you saved?" Have you bowed the knee to Jesus Christ, the King! Jesus Christ is unlike anybody else. He is God in the flesh. He alone is the one who saves from sin. The purpose of Matthew is to behold Him! Jesus is the Messiah, who has come to rescue His people from the damnation which is caused by sin.

He was Messiah, the son of David (as proved by the first half of chapter 1 of Matthew), who came in accordance with the prophecy given over 700 years before His birth (as proved by the second half of chapter 1 of Matthew). You children, especially, perhaps you have heard about Him time and time and time again. But have you cried to Him for help? Or do you think that you don't need any help?

Earlier I [mentioned](#) a man with whom I had a chance to explain the origin of Christmas. He said that he was interested in Christianity because he realized that he had problems with his life and that he wasn't good enough to solve them on his own. He was looking for help. That's a good start. But what he needs to realize is that he cannot solve them at all! He needs a Savior who can!

Jesus is the only name given among men by which we must be saved. You can be saved from the wrath of God by repenting of your sin, by believing in Jesus, by placing your whole trust in Him, and in Him alone.

Let me finish by quoting from a Christmas Carol we sung tonight. It should be our heart this evening as we have marveled at the wondrous birth of Jesus Christ...

What Child is this, who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain:

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
This, this is Christ the King,
The babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 16, 2001 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.