

December 25, 2005 by Steve Brandon



Why the Virgin Birth?

(Various)

1. It was prophesied (Matthew 1:22).
2. It put God with us (Matthew 1:23).
3. It gave God flesh (John 1:14).
4. It put God under the law (Galatians 4:4-5).
5. It kept God from sin (Luke 1:35).
6. It shows that salvation is all of grace (Luke 1:28, 30).
7. It allowed the woman to have a "seed" (Genesis 3:15).

On this Christmas morning, I would like to take up the topic of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Virgin Birth is indeed the core and crux of the Christmas story. It is the means through which God stepped into time to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:22).

The Bible clearly states that Jesus had no earthly father. Rather, His conception was a direct act of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin, named Mary. This event was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14, some 700 years before the actual conception took place. The actual event is fully explained in Matthew 1 and in Luke 1. There are a few other passages in the Bible that allude to it (though not many).

Though the Bible teaches the virgin birth of Christ, it hasn't kept the world from doubting it. There are many liberal theologians today who would doubt the virgin birth. Many theologians would seek to place the importance away from the manner of His birth to the established fact of His birth. Thus, they would argue, the virgin birth isn't necessary to believe. You simply need to believe that Jesus was born and walked on the planet.

I believe that such an attitude is a big mistake, which lead you to bigger mistakes down the road. When you deny the virgin birth, you deny the supernatural character of the life of Christ right from the start. And thus, you pave the way for refusing to believe in His miracles or in His resurrection. When you deny the virgin birth, you deny the clear teaching of the Bible. And thus, you pave the way for denying other doctrines taught in the Bible. Belief in the virgin birth is important.

The title of my message this morning is in the form of a question: "Why the Virgin Birth?" I want to give you several reasons why it was necessary for the Messiah to come, being born of a virgin. My aim this morning is simple: I want you to marvel at God's plan for bringing Jesus into this world.

After Mary gave birth to Jesus, she was visited by some shepherds. They told her of the angelic vision that they had seen, which caused them to come and see this wonderful child. After they told their story to Mary, we are told that "Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). This is where I want to take you this morning. I want for you to consider the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and treasure it up in your heart, because the virgin birth was the beginning of a miraculous life, that has come to affect us all.

So, ... why the Virgin Birth?

1. It was prophesied (Matthew 1:22).

From of old, the Lord told His people that there would be a day in which a virgin would be with child and bear a Son. This was always the plan of God. He was merely waiting for the right time to come. And in the first century, the right time came. He brought forth a son, born of a virgin. We read the story in Matthew 1:18-25. Ultimately, I want to land on verse 22, but let's consider the context.

Matthew 1:18-25

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. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. 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. '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.'" Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "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."

In verse 22, we see a clear purpose statement for the virgin birth. "Now all this took place **that** what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled." The idea that you get from this verse is that the prophecy of Isaiah was driving history.

I want for you to think about the making of a film. Admittedly, I don't know much about all that is involved with making a film, but I do know that the idea of a movie must first be conceived in the mind of a movie writer. He begins working it out on paper. He describes the events that

will take place. He describes the people who will be involved. He writes down the conversations that the actors will have. Once it is finished, the script is delivered to the director and to the actors. It is the job of the director to orchestrate the events in such a way that the script of the movie is accomplished on the film. In fact, you can even say that the director will do certain things, "so that" the script of the movie is captured on film.

This is almost the idea here with the virgin birth. "Declaring the end from the beginning," God wrote the script of the history of the world. One of the events in history would be a virgin birth. A woman, who had never sexually known a man before (Luke 1:34), would become pregnant. And of course, we know that this happened. Verses 24 and 25 make it clear that Mary was a virgin right on through the time in which she delivered Jesus, "And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took [her] as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus" (Matthew 1:24-25).

Why the Virgin Birth? It was prophesied (Matthew 1:22). But also, ...
2. It put God with us (Matthew 1:23).

I get this from verse 23, which is the substance of the prophecy. "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'" (verse 23).

The prophesy of a virgin giving birth goes beyond the mere birth of a child. The prophesy speaks about the character of this child. This child would be a special child. This child would be God, Himself.

The word, "Immanuel" is a Hebrew word with is a concatenation of three smaller Hebrew words. This is typical of the Hebrew language. It often puts words together like this. The very first word in all of the Bible is the word, "Beroshith," which is really two words put together. "Be" means "in." "Roshith" means "beginning." When you put it together, you get the translation, "In beginning." Or, "In the beginning."

In this case, we have three words put together. "Im" means "with." "Anu" means "us." "El" means "God." You put them together and you get the idea that this child is "with us God." This is exactly what Matthew points out for his Greek readers, who didn't know Hebrew. He translated this word for them. "Immanuel" ... means 'God with us'" (verse 23). This was the purpose of the virgin birth. It brought God to be with us.

Now, certainly, God was able to be with us without the virgin birth. In the garden of Eden, we know that the LORD God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:8). At other times, we know that the angel of the LORD came and walked and talked with those upon the earth. In Judges 13, we read of how Manoah and his wife encountered the angel of the LORD, which they equated to being the LORD himself (Judges 13:22). But, the virgin birth brought God to be with us in a way far different than He had ever done before. The virgin birth allowed for Immanuel, God to be with us, in the flesh, which leads to my third point ...

Why the virgin birth?
3. It gave God flesh (John 1:14).

When God walked with Adam or spoke with Moses or appeared to Manoah, it wasn't as if God became one of them. God was still separated from them and apart from them. But, in the incarnation, God took on flesh and dwelt among us. The passage of Scripture that ought to come to you mind as I speak is John 1:14, which says, "the Word [referring to Jesus Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us."

The idea is that He took up a tent and placed it right among our tents. He lived with us. He spoke with us. He ate with us. He slept with us. It was the virgin birth that brought this about. It was in the virgin birth that the God-man came about. Jesus was fully human, in that He was born of a woman. This allowed God to dwell with us. It allowed Him to walk among us. But, Jesus was also fully God, in that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This allowed God to dwell with us. In His essence, Jesus was God.

Please don't be confused about this. It's not that Jesus was half man and half God. Such a belief was condemned as a heresy by the early church. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was one person with two natures. It is the virgin birth that brought this about.

The significance of God putting on flesh and blood comes in my fourth point this morning. Why the virgin birth?
4. It put God under the law (Galatians 4:4-5).

Paul tells us in Galatians 4:45 what the birth of Jesus did for Him. He tells us that it put Jesus under the law.

Galatians 4:4-5

"But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

The significance of these words is simply that Jesus was born just like all of us! Having been born of a Jewish woman in Israel, Jesus was under the law. As a Jewish boy, He was required to keep all of the commands of the law. He was under the same curse for any disobedience to the law as any other Jewish boy would be. In this way, Jesus was not only like us biologically (with flesh and blood), but also like us social as well. In this case, He too was under the law of God.

You can easily argue that God could have come into the flesh apart from a virgin birth. When God made Adam, He made him from the dust of the ground (Genesis 1:7). When God made Eve, He made her from a portion from Adam's side (Genesis 2:22). In each instance, a human being was made, apart from being born. God could have come into the world by an act of special creation. But, should God have chosen to come into the world as Adam and Eve came into this world, there would always be a question as to whether or not Jesus shared our flesh and blood. Oh, He may have looked the same as we do. He may have spoken like we do. But still, in the back of our minds, there may have been some question about His being. We may easily have surmised that His life was under a different jurisdiction than our own.

But, it was important that Jesus be under the law. In verse 5, we read that He was born under the law "in order that" He might redeem those who were under the law. These are words of purpose. For Jesus to redeem us, who are under the condemnation of the law, He, Himself, needed to be other the law. This is why an angel never could have redeemed us from our sin. This is why God could never have redeemed us without taking on flesh. We needed one to come in our likeness to redeem us. We needed one who was in our same predicament--under the law--to come and save us, which is exactly what God did.

This is no minor point. It was important that Jesus took on flesh and blood. It established him as one of us! And as one of us under the law, Jesus was then enabled to lead us out of bondage to the law. Listen to Hebrews 2:14, "Since ... the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." When Jesus Christ took on flesh and blood, He became like one of us. In becoming like one of us, He could redeem us from the power of death.

Why the virgin birth?

5. It kept God from sin (Luke 1:35).

Turn in your Bibles over to Luke 1. This passage is much like that which is found in Matthew 1. It tells of an angelic visit to explain what was going to take place inside Mary's womb, namely that she would give birth, while still being a virgin. I want to focus upon verse 35, but reading the context will help to put this verse in its place.

Luke 1:26-35

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be. 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 name Him Jesus. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

I want for you to notice how Jesus is described in this verse. He is described as "the holy offspring." I take this to mean that in His conception, Jesus was sinless.

The only way that Jesus could be sinless in His conception was through the virgin birth. Had Jesus been conceived through normal processes, He would have been a sinful being. This is the clear testimony of Scripture. David said of his conception, "In sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). It wasn't that David's mother committed a sinful act when David was conceived. It was that David was conceived in the realm of sin, "Into sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).

Every child ever conceived of human parents is conceived a sinner. You can trace it all back to Adam. When Adam fell, he plunged into sin and brought the rest of humanity into sin as well. Through the one transgression of Adam, condemnation of all men is the result (Rom. 5:18). But, what's the only way to escape this? Have a divine conception, where the child born won't inherit Adam's sin. In Luke 1:35, we read that Jesus was conceived as a holy child. His conception was a direct act of the Holy Spirit.

Now, some theologians would dispute this point, claiming that God could have prevented a human child from receiving the stain of Adam's sin and being born sinless. Certainly, God can do all things (Luke 1:37). However, I believe that the virgin birth shows a clear way for keeping Jesus free from the stain of Adam's sin, while still being born of a woman, under the law.

Why the virgin birth?

6. It shows that salvation is all of grace (Luke 1:28, 30).

When the angel, Gabriel comes on the scene, he speaks to Mary and says, "Hail favored one! The Lord is with you" (verse 28). The same thing comes in verse 30, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God." In both these instances, the word translated "favor" comes from the Greek word, *cariv*, (*charis*) which is most often translated, "grace." In fact, my wife and I named our first daughter, "Carissa Grace Brandon." Her name means, "grace" (as her middle name shows).

You could easily translate verse 28, "Hail one having received grace! The Lord is with you." You could easily translate verse 30, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found grace with God." The fact that God would choose Mary to bring forth Jesus into the world is all an act of God's grace. But, it goes further than that. Think about this entire process of Jesus coming to be a man. Whose initiative is it? It wasn't Mary's. It wasn't Joseph's. It was all God's initiative. Mary and Joseph couldn't have accomplished this even if they had tried. No, the virgin birth teaches us that God breaks into history to come as a sinless God-man, to redeem those who were under the curse of the law. Salvation is God's doing. Salvation is all of grace.

And so, as you think of the birth of Christ today, please realize that it is a demonstration of God's grace to us. It was God's initiative. It was God's doing. This is the message of Christmas! God has broken into history. God has come to be with us so that He might save His people from their sins.

Shortly before the service this morning, I was handed a newspaper article that greatly illustrates our standing before God. It came from the Daily Chronicle (a paper serving DeKalb County), from this past Friday, December 23, 2005. On the front page read the following headline:

"Jury finds Spates guilty of murder." The article gives the following facts of the case, "[Willie] Spates, 45, of Rockford never denied shooting his wife on April 23, 2002, in the upstairs bathroom of his sister's Garden Street apartment in DeKalb." Later, the article said, "A weapons expert testified that 10 of 11 bullets found at the scene in Anita Spates' body had all been fired from Spates' Tech-9 semi-automatic gun. The expert could not tell if one bullet was shot from Spates' gun because of the markings, but he said it did have the same shape and appearance as the others." During the closing statements of the trial, Spates, himself, spoke for almost two hours, seeking to prove his innocence. At one point, he pleaded with the jury, "Please find me not guilty of the crimes I have committed."

This is a great illustration of our plight before God. We stand guilty, beyond a shadow of a doubt. Our only hope is to plead with the Lord, "Please find me not guilty of the crimes that I have committed." Your crimes against the Lord are far more obvious to the Lord than the crime that Willie Spates committed. God sees all that we do. Our only hope is that God won't find us guilty. But here is the good news of the gospel of Christ: you can be found not guilty of the crimes that you have committed.

God has provided a way of salvation through faith in Jesus. It's not as if God lets us go free. Should the judge in the Spates trial let Willie Spates go free, we would all cry aloud, "injustice! He has been found guilty! He cannot go free!" Should the Lord of the universe do something similar, we would all cry in protest as well, "God is unjust! How can He rule the universe?" But, Paul writes in Romans 3 that God is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). He can be just in that the punishment that Jesus took upon the cross is sufficient to satisfy His wrath against those who believe. He can be the justifier in that He causes the guilty to stand as righteous. He does this through faith in Christ.

I have one last point this morning. Why the virgin birth?
7. It allowed the woman to have a "seed" (Genesis 3:15).

I want to consider one verse that we will consider in more detail next week. The verse is Genesis 3:15. This verse comes in context of the fall of man and God's curse upon the serpent, who deceived Eve. God said to the serpent, "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" (Gen. 3:15).

This verse is filled with hope for all of us. Though Adam and Eve fell into sin and would face terrible consequences from the fall, which carry on to us today. Even in the beginning, there was hope! There was hope that one would come and crush the power of Satan. We know that this came about through Christ. Satan would bruise the heel of Christ, but Christ would bruise the head of Satan. Satan bruised the heel of Jesus upon the cross. But through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, He defeated Satan's stronghold: death.

But notice what it says about the woman. It says that the woman would have "seed." If you would look all throughout the entire Old Testament, I don't believe that you ever find a woman having "seed," except for her. It is always the man who has "seed," not the woman. I believe that Genesis 3:15 is a slight foreshadowing of the virgin birth, for it allows the woman to have a "seed."

In this verse is great hope. Though Adam's sin plunged us into sin. Still God promised long ago a redeemer who would ultimately defeat Satan. That redeemer has come. We simply need to believe in Him and we will join in His victory.

Are you one of His people? Have you repented of your sins and embraced this virgin-born child as your only hope in this world? Christ alone is your only hope. Believe on Him!

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