

Born of the Virgin, Mary – Matt 1:18-25

Introduction – The birth of Jesus was a natural and normal act, but His conception was miraculous and extremely problematic for the players involved. The doctrine of the virgin birth reveals far more than simply God doing a random but marvelous work. It reveals something of the identity of Jesus as the holy Son of the Most High God.

Joseph and Mary – Matthew's account of this story is unique to his gospel, focusing on the awkward position Joseph finds himself in. Finding out that the woman to whom he was betrothed was with child, Joseph, a righteous man (v19), intended to divorce Mary quietly, not bringing criminal charges. But an angel appears, declares the miraculous event and promises a great salvation. There had been many pointed signs of momentous redemptive events in Israel's history surrounding the birth of a child from women who were barren. Isaac, Samson and Samuel were all conceived after God had intervened. And now, in Mary's day, her relative, Elizabeth, was about to bring forth John the Baptizer. Mary, of course, was "barren," in a different way. Now, in the midst of God honoring Mary with being the mother of our Savior, He does so with a woman who is betrothed, who is a virgin, and who would bear Joseph many other children after giving birth to Jesus. There are devilish doctrines that "*forbid to marry*" (1 Tim 4:3) as though marriage was a step-down in sanctification. There are also false teachings of Mary being a perpetual virgin, as though that made her more holy. But she had many sons and daughters (Mark 6:3, Matt 12:46-50, John 7:3-5). This gives Matt 1:24-25 significance: Joseph "*did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son.*" Mary's virginity was a normal, expected status for an unmarried young woman – but there is no reason to assume that she had to remain a virgin her entire life.

A Sign – Isaiah had prophesied to King Ahaz as a sign of reassurance to this king of Judah. A woman would conceive, but before her child had grown to the age of knowing to refuse evil and choose good, the king Ahaz felt threatened by would be gone (Isaiah 7:14-16). The word used in Isaiah 7:14, "*almah*" can be translated virgin or young woman, and so a partial fulfillment of this prophecy takes place in the days of Ahaz. Matthew uses the Greek word "*parthenos*," which can only mean virgin, when quoting this passage and pointing to the fulfillment of it in the birth of Jesus.

Mary's Child – The means by which this child was conceived was the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18, Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit, Who had produced the world (Gen 1:2), now produced the Savior of the world from a woman. Thus Jesus was truly Mary's son; she was not just a surrogate mother. He is said to be "*made of a woman*" (Gal 4:4), and the blessed "*fruit of her womb*" (Luke 1:42). And of course this means that Jesus was fully and completely human.

This also points to the fulfillment of the first gospel promise, where the woman's "*seed*" will bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15).

The Son of God - Jesus was and is also fully and completely deity. He is God the Son. He is the second Adam, the Lord from heaven (1 Cor 15:47, John 3:13). Jesus is the only One who has come from heaven.

A Sinless Christ – But the virgin birth also accomplished something else entirely, something necessary for our salvation.

Obviously, Jesus had no earthly father. But why? Why would this be important? We know that Christ was sinless (2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pet 2:22, Heb 4:15). But it is not just that Jesus never sinned and lived a perfectly righteous life. Jesus was set apart as holy by means of the way in which He was conceived –

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35).

All human beings have a covenantal participation in the sin of our father, Adam. But the fact that Jesus did not have a human father means that He did not participate in that covenantal fall. Apparently, our covenantal participation in Adam's rebellion is passed down through the human father – not via DNA or molecules – but through covenant responsibility. In other words, men are the problem.

Covenantal Responsibility from the Moment of Conception – Think about this. To acknowledge this is to acknowledge the responsibility of every father over his child from the moment of conception. This is a tremendously high view (and a scriptural view) of sexual activity between a man and a woman.

Another Roman Error – Understanding this also removes the need to solve the problem of original sin being passed on to Jesus through Mary. The Roman Catholic Church erroneously and unnecessarily teaches the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception – that somehow a miracle was performed on Mary so that she was born without original sin, making her a fit vessel to bear Jesus. But if God can just zap people and keep them from the guilt of sin, why the need for the Cross? (Acts 4:12).

A Second Adam – And so Jesus is born holy, qualifying Him to be our Savior. A New Adam is brought forth in the middle of the story of humanity to solve the unsolvable problem – how can sinners be accepted by and reconciled to God? We are redeemed "*by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Pet 1:19). Adam's sin was imputed to us as our covenant head. Our sins and our sinfulness, however, has been imputed to Christ as our Substitute. And Christ's perfect righteousness and purity has been imputed to us in the New Covenant. The perfection of His life and the absence of our corruptions have been given to you in Christ. Merry Christmas.