

## **“BORN OF THE WILL OF GOD.”**

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**Scripture Texts: John 1:1-18, esp. vs. 12-13; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-35**

### **Introduction.**

Our faith is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Our faith rests on the supernatural. Christianity is a supernatural faith. A virgin birth, a God-man, a sinless life, many miracles, a substitutionary death, a bodily resurrection, an ascension, a second coming. Our faith is a supernatural faith that starts with a supernatural life born in a supernatural way and ends with a supernatural death and resurrection.

To reject the supernatural is to reject Christianity and Christ.

### **The Virgin Birth**

Christ's supernatural beginning is called the virgin birth. If we were going to be more precise we would not use the phrase virgin birth. Jesus' birth was normal and natural. He was more precisely conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin.

Scripture clearly teaches us that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 and was conceived in the womb of His virgin mother Mary without a human father but by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and was miraculously kept from inheriting the sin of fallen humanity.

In this there are many mysteries hidden from our eyes and from our understanding. And it must be this way. Any truth and any faith that is born in heaven and revealed to mere mortals must be full of things too deep and too wonderful for us to fully grasp. The incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is full of such mysteries.

How important is this teaching of Scripture? Why does Scripture teach it? What difference does it make? So what?

**First, the virgin birth tells us salvation belongs to the Lord.**

The virgin birth says our salvation is entirely God's doing, done at God's initiative. It was His idea, His plan, His execution. Born not of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God.

Joseph did nothing, Mary did nothing other than submit. We did nothing. God chose the time, the place, the manner, the means. It is all of Him. God did everything, He acted for us.

**Galatians 4:4** When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The virgin birth reminds us once again that our salvation comes through absolutely no effort of ours but solely through God. Our salvation is supernatural; it is the work of God, at His initiative. It is always supernatural; it is always the gift of grace.

It was grace for Mary, it still is grace for us. God acted to save us.

One of the fundamental tenets of our Christian faith is our complete inability to save ourselves. Give up your pride in this matter. Give up your self-centeredness in this. Give up your sense of success or accomplishment. Give up your sense of entitlement or that you are better than others. Give up thinking if you can just get your act together then God will accept you or like you.

That's Santa Clause thinking. Santa says if you don't get your act together you won't get anything. Jesus lays down His own life and gives the gift of life to whoever receives Him.

Humble yourself before the holy and living God of your salvation.

**Second, the virgin birth tells us how Jesus is fully God and fully human.**

Way back in freshman biology when we learned about genetics we were taught all that was in our father and mother is in us. We are the sum total of the genetic characteristics of our father and mother. Jesus got all His deity is from His Father and all His humanity from His mother. He had His Father's holiness and He had His mother's eyes.

This is how God did what is described in **Philippians 2:5** Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

In His perfect wisdom God accomplished the incarnation of Christ in such a way that we would see His full humanity in his birth from a human mother and we would see His full deity in His conception in a virgin's womb by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

The virgin birth helps us understand a very rich and deep doctrine, how God could become man, how He could remain what He was and become what He was not.

Conceived in such a ways to show He was God. Born in such a way to show He was man. Jesus is the *Son of God* because God is His father and not Joseph. He is the *Son of Man* because Mary is His mother.

**Third, the virgin birth tells us how Jesus is fully human, yet without sin.**

All of us have inherited from Adam a fallen, sinful nature. It is imputed to us from conception. But Jesus did not descend from Adam in the same way that the rest of us do and it is that difference that helps us understand why and how the guilt and sin that are ours, do not belong to Him.

Mary passed on her human nature but was prevented by the Holy Spirit from passing on her sin nature. Yes, Mary was a sinner and yes, she too needed a Savior.

**Luke 1:35** 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.

Because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit He also is holy. His supernatural and divine conception breaks the connection to sin and makes Him morally pure and holy.

At conception the creator of the universe and of all of life did not despise the virgin's womb. He chose to honor all women and the womb as a sanctuary for His holiness. The eternal and glorious Son of God became a human being. This is why we honor and protect all life from the moment of conception until natural death.

**One lingering question, do you have to believe in the virgin birth to be a Christian?**

Or to ask it another way, what about those who are told about Jesus and come to faith in Jesus but don't know anything about specifics like the virgin birth.

Let's be very clear and say that we are talking about the difference between ignorance about something and rejection of something. The thief on the cross may have had no clue about the virgin birth, but he went to paradise.

It is possible for one to confess with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in his heart that God raised Him from the dead, without getting to the facts of the virgin birth.

A new believer may trust in Jesus Christ for his salvation before he is aware of all the doctrines of the Christian faith. But this doesn't mean the doctrine is unimportant.

The follow up question is can a person be a Christian who once becoming aware of the doctrines of the Christian faith, reject the doctrine of the virgin birth? The answer is no.

While the doctrine may not be necessary for one to be a Christian, it is absolutely essential to Christianity. It is integral to our understanding of Christ and Christianity. Scripture is God's revelation of Himself and His nature and His ways. It is a whole, a complete organism. If we remove one part the whole suffers and begins to become inconsistent and incoherent.

To deny the virgin birth is to reject the authority of the Scripture and at that point all the other doctrines become compromised. When we surrender the authority of Scripture then we will only hold to doctrines on a whim and a wish.

It may not be necessary for an individual person to believe in the virgin birth to be born again. "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." This person is surely saved. But the virgin birth is necessary for Christianity. Our faith and our salvation rest on this miracle of God taking on humanity.

Pastors and seminary professors who deny this doctrine lead churches and denominations astray and do great harm to the flocks under their care.

It is important to preach and teach this and other doctrines because when we don't we start to take them for granted, and then we start to forget them and when we forget them we soon begin to wonder if they are important or even true.

### **Application and Conclusion:**

So what? Who cares? What difference does it make in my life?

*First, in the divinity of Jesus* we are comforted to know that our faith has a strong foundation and that our hope is secure in heaven. All the power of heaven and earth is His and He holds us in the palm of His hand, nothing can remove us or separate us. He is able to do the impossible. Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid.

***Second, in the humanity of Jesus*** we are comforted that He knows us perfectly well and has experienced and suffered everything that we do. He took our guilt, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, was wounded with our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. He has endured Satan's torments and temptations. We can pour out our hearts and our prayers to Him knowing that He hears and understands and sympathizes.

God Himself came to us and is one of us and is forever with us. And He alone is strong and able to save us from our sins. Feed your souls on these truths and share them freely with others that they may have the comfort and joy that are ours.

***Third***, our faith is grounded in incredible mystery and miracles; Jesus is absolutely unique in all of human history. There is no one else like Him. His life on earth begins and ends with the two most incredible miracles. He starts as God being born as a baby without a human father, He ends as God dying and rising from the dead, triumphing over the greatest of all enemies, sin, Satan and death.

***Fourth***, the virgin birth shows us how we can also be born anew or born again. Our salvation and being born again are not by flesh or the will of man, but by the will of God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

This is the point, this is the end game. The Son of God was born so we could be born again as sons and daughters, as children of God. Jesus came from the Father full of grace and truth to give us the right to come to the Father.

Spiritually speaking none of us are naturally born, we are all supernaturally born. Our salvation is not our own doing, not by the exertion of our wills, not by the doing of good works, not by being good.

The power of the most high God must come upon all of us and change our hard hearts and draw us to God so we will become children of God. Eternal life is conceived by the Holy Spirit.

It happened to the Apostle Paul on the Damascus Road. A cold-hearted killer of Christians one moment and the next moment knocked off his horse with a complete change of heart, a follower and lover of Jesus.

We do not know how the Holy Spirit overshadowed the soul of Augustine in a garden near Milan, we only know that new life was created within him, spiritual life conceived in him, as his eyes fell on the last verse of Romans 13.

John Wesley has listening to Scripture being read when all of a sudden his heart was strangely-warmed to what he was hearing.

June 10, 1072 my heart was tugged and pulled into surrendering and finally in the quiet of the evening I surrendered.

We are conceived in sin when our physical life begins, we are conceived by the Holy Spirit when our spiritual life begins. This is why in your parenting and grandparenting you are always going for the heart, not just the external behavior, not just parenting by rules. You are praying for the heart of your child, you are always showing your child their heart, what is in it and how they are acting out of it.

Salvation is the gift of God. What we celebrate at Christmas is the gift of God. Only God can save us from our sins and it is His will to do so. What God did in Mary's womb He can do in our hearts. He still works that miracle.

In this doctrine is rest for our souls, peace for our minds, confidence that our salvation is grounded in the God-man who is now in heaven where our eternal destiny is secure.

*Fifth*, sometimes God's grace won't seem like grace. Sometimes it will blow up our lives like it did Mary's. God's grace trashed her reputation, made her a questionable woman, took her life in a direction she had never planned. Don't despise God's disguised grace, great good comes out of great grace.

***With God nothing is impossible*** (Luke 1:38). What seems impossible in your life? What have you not believed God can do? What will you believe Him for? Will you be like Mary and submit your will to God by faith in His will. Trust what is born of the will of God.

God has not abandoned us and in fact He has gone to the greatest lengths to be with us. He has overcome every hurdle.

Truth of this magnitude calls for a response from all of us. We are reminded that our posture before God is one of complete humility and gratitude and worship.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, we thank you for this glorious truth and this marvelous mystery, too deep to fully comprehend. Thank you for your perfect plan for our salvation from our sin. Thank you for your gift of all gifts.