

Why Believe in Christ's Virgin Birth?

As we enter the Christmas season, we celebrate Christ's entrance into the world. Yet, Christ's birth was anything but normal since He was born of a virgin (Matt 1:18-25). We might ask, "Is it really necessary to believe in the virgin birth?" Why was it so important for Christ to have been virgin-born? At least *six* reasons come to mind.

First, the virgin birth was necessary to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. Isaiah 7:14 predicts that when the Messiah shows up, He will be born of a virgin. The Hebrew word used here is *almah* and it can mean either a virgin or a young maiden. As one studies this word as it is used throughout the Old Testament (Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:25; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8; Prov 30:18-19), it is found in contexts that apply to virgins. The Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament created two centuries before the time of Christ) translators understood well the significance of this since they translated the Hebrew word *almah* with the Greek word *parthenos*, which always means virgin. Matthew also used *parthenos* in his Spirit-inspired translation of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23. Simply put, Isaiah's prophecy given 700 years before Christ was born demands that the coming Messiah be born of a virgin.

Second, the virgin birth emphasizes both Christ's humanity (Luke 2:52) and deity (John 1:1). Christ was both, since He was the unique God-man. He was one hundred percent God and one hundred percent man (also called the Hypostatic Union). The fact that Christ was born of a woman (Gal 4:4) emphasizes His humanity, and the supernatural element of His virgin birth emphasizes His deity.

Third, Christ's virgin birth emphasizes His eternity. Christ has always existed (John 8:58; 17:5; Rev 22:13). There never was a time in which He was not. This point is emphasized in the Nicene Creed, which says Christ was "begotten and not made." Had Christ experienced a natural conception, He would have had a beginning point. Yet the eternal Christ had no beginning point, thus necessitating His supernatural conception through the virgin birth.

Fourth, the virgin birth was necessary in order to maintain Christ's sinlessness. The Bible indicates that Christ was the only sinless man to ever live (John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 2:1; 3:3). If Christ had a biological father, then the Adamic sin nature, which is passed down to all of us, would also have been passed down to Him at the point of conception (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12). Yet, because Christ was sinless, His conception had to be supernatural rather than natural.

Fifth, the virgin birth was necessary in order to protect Christ's bodily atonement. Only an eternal God could pay the eternal penalty for man's sin (Rom 6:23). As explained above, Christ's virgin birth protects His eternity. Also, only a perfect substitute could pay the penalty for man's sin (1 Pet 1:19). God will only accept a perfect sacrifice in the place of the guilty. Such an emphasis on perfection explains why an Old Testament sacrificial animal had to be unblemished (Exod 12:5). As explained above, Christ's virgin birth protects His sinlessness. Thus, the virgin birth protected both Christ's eternity and

sinlessness. Both of these elements are required for Christ to atone for the world's sin debt.

Sixth, the virgin birth was necessary in order to circumvent Jeconiah's curse, which God had placed upon Jeconiah's lineage (Jer 22:30). Christ was a candidate to be cursed since He and His legal father Joseph were in Jeconiah's line (Matt 1:12). However, the virgin birth took Christ out of this cursed line since Joseph was not Christ's biological father. The Holy Spirit used Mary's womb, and Mary was not in Jeconiah's line. It is indeed amazing to consider all that was accomplished through the Messiah's virgin birth: the fulfillment of the prophetic Scripture regarding the virgin birth, the uniqueness of the God-Man's deity and humanity, the effect on His eternity and sinless humanity that qualified Him to bodily atone for the sins of man, and the bypass that God provided for Christ to be born outside of Jeconiah's cursed lineage. In the midst of the hectic Christmas season, let us routinely reflect upon these profound truths. After all, He is the reason for the season.