

How Did God Become A Man?

Virgin Birth Christology Session 7

Introduction:

- Larry King, the CNN talk show host, was once asked who he would most want to interview if he could choose anyone from all of history. He said, "Jesus Christ." The questioner said, "And what would you like to ask Him?" King replied, "I would like to ask Him if He was indeed virgin-born. The answer to that question would define history for me." (from *Just Thinking*, RZIM, Winter 1998)

1. Amazing Births

- Rarities – multiple births
- Oddities – unusual births
 - Siamese twins
- Complexities – problems after birth
 - NICU = neonatal intensive care unit
 - premature birth
- Awesomeness – every birth is a miracle of life
- But none of these rare or miraculous births are unique
- The Virgin Birth of Christ is unique to history because it is unique in history

2. The Incarnation = God became flesh

- "incarnation" does not appear in the Scripture, but "in" and "flesh" appear together in reference to Christ
- *In* = in; *Carne* = flesh

Isaiah 9:6 ⁶For unto us a **Child is born, Unto us a Son is given**; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

John 1:14 ¹⁴And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

1 John 4:2 ²By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come **in the flesh** is of God,

2 John 7 ⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming **in the flesh**. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Romans 8:3 ³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own **Son in the likeness of sinful flesh**, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

3. **Biblical Facts About The Virgin Conception Of Christ**

- Charles Ryrie remarks: "The Virgin Birth was the means of the Incarnation. The Incarnation, once accomplished, is a lasting state for our Lord. It began at His birth and continues (albeit in a resurrection body now) forever. In contrast to the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth was an event that lasted only a matter of hours." (*Basic Theology*, Moody Press, 1999, p. 278)
- Carl F. H. Henry declares that the Virgin Birth is the "essential, historical indication of the Incarnation, bearing not only an analogy to the divine and human natures of the Incarnate, but also bringing out the nature, purpose, and bearing of this work of God to salvation."
- Stephen J. Wellum: "the unique birth of Jesus is not some strange occurrence in history; it is part of the plan and promises of God now coming to fulfillment." *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ (Foundations of Evangelical Theology)* (Kindle Locations 6170-6171). Crossway. Kindle Edition. (2016-11-16)

A. The virgin birth is accounted in Matthew 1 and Luke 1

B. Jesus' genealogy through Joseph does not use the term "begat" with Joseph, though used 39x in Matthew 1:2-16.

Matthew 1:15-16 ¹⁵Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

C. Joseph and Mary's "betrothal" stage in marriage required sexual abstinence

Matthew 1:18, 20 ¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was **betrothed** to Joseph, **before they came together**, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit ... ²⁰But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

D. Joseph considered divorcing Mary when he found out she was pregnant. He would not do that if the baby was his child.

Matthew 1:19 ¹⁹Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

Luke 1:34 ³⁴Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

E. Mary is called a "Virgin"

Matthew 1:23 ²³"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Luke 1:27 ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

- *Parthenos* = virgin, one who is sexually pure
- Classical uses of *parthenos*:
 - Euripides: "My soul is virgin" (*Hippolytus* 1006)
 - Aeschylus: describes water that flows from a "pure spring" (*Persae* 613)
 - Apollodorus describes a young girl named Atalanta who desired "to remain a virgin" when she reached puberty (*Bibliotheca* 2.9.2)
- The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses *parthenos*:
 - Leviticus 21:3 "virgin sister ... who is not espoused to a man"
 - Judges 21:12 "young virgins, that had not known man by lying with him"

F. Joseph Maintained His Sexual Abstinence With Mary Until After Her Birth

Matthew 1:25 ²⁵and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

4. A Miraculous Conception

- I do not believe that the Virgin Birth was miraculous – if we look at the labor & delivery, itself
- I believe in the virgin birth, but it was not the birth that was the big miracle
- Her pregnancy and birth were probably quite natural – contractions, pain, etc.
- The real miracle is the **Conception** – that she conceived as a virgin – not through *in vitro* fertilization but by the Holy Spirit
- ie/ July, 1978 – Louise Brown born (5 lb, 12 oz) in England as the first "test-tube" baby conceived outside the human body
- Robert Gromacki: "From the production of the egg out of Mary's ovary to the actual birth, the fetal state in Mary's womb was entirely under the controlling, sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit." (*The Virgin Birth*, Baker Book House, 1984, p. 83)

5. The Controversy Surrounding the Virgin Birth of Christ.

- "Ever since the Enlightenment, critics have treated the virgin conception as a myth or a legend." *Wellum, Stephen J. (2016-11-16). God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ (Foundations of Evangelical Theology) (Kindle Locations 6242-6243). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*
- Christianity Post reports that 66% of Americans believe in the Virgin Birth in 2017 (down from 73% in 2014). 54% of those 18-29 believe in the Virgin birth (down from 70% in 2014).

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/fewer-americans-believe-jesus-was-born-of-a-virgin-study.html>



The shepherd that missed out.

- Phillip Yancey recalls an episode of *Thirtysomething* "in which Hope, a Christian, argues with her Jewish husband, Michael, about the holidays. 'Why do you even bother with Hanukkah? She asks. 'Do you really believe a handful of Jews held off a huge army by using a bunch of lamps that miraculously wouldn't run out of oil?' Michael exploded. 'Oh, and Christmas makes more sense? Do you really believe an angel appeared to some teenage girl who then got pregnant without ever having had sex and traveled on horseback to Bethlehem where she spend the night in a a barn and had a baby who turned out to be the Savior of the world?'" (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 30)
- Liberal German New Testament scholar Gerd Luedemann defiantly declares: "The tomb was full and the manger empty."
- **Attacks:**
 - To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin
 - Contrived By Man To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14
 - Matthew & Luke Contradict Each Other
 - An Illegitimate Child

View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man
Prompting	Mary Is A Suppressing Symbol	Mary Is An Honored Woman
Prophecy	Contrived By Man To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14	Intended By God To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14
Pen	Matthew & Luke Contradict Each Other	Matthew & Luke Supplement Each Other
Product	An Illegitimate Child	A Sinless Savior
Priority	Belief In Virgin Birth Is Optional	Belief In Virgin Birth Is Necessary

I. The Purpose Of The Virgin Birth

View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man

A. Criticism: The Virgin Birth Was Intended To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin

- Author Patrick Campbell (*The Mythical Jesus*) and Episcopal Bishop J.S. Spong espouse that "...the virgin birth account [is a]...clearly recognized mythological element in our faith tradition whose purpose was not to describe a literal event but to capture the transcendent dimensions of God in the earthbound words and concepts of first-century human beings."
 - Christian Answers responds: "Both men, however, overlook a simple fact: No respectable Jew would have ever condescended to buy into a Greek/Babylonian mythological base for an account dealing with the birth of his/her Messiah." (<http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aiaa/virginbirth.html>)

- Rev. John Drury, Chaplain of All Soul's College, Oxford University: "Virgin births were a rather Gentile thing...You get it in a lot of the legends in Ovid where the god impregnates some young girl who has a miraculous son."
- **Greek mythology - Zeus** is considered the father of gods and men
 - Dionysius (god of wine) was born out of union of human mother Semele & god Zeus
 - Diana conceived Perseus from Zeus by a shower of gold that descended upon her while she was in seclusion
 - Hercules was Zeus' child from a mortal woman
 - Even Alexander the Great is mythically said to be conceived by a clap of thunder and lightning striking Olympias' womb, then her husband Philip was required to seal up her womb. Another legend says that Alexander was conceived by Olympias swallowing a pomegranate.

The Consorts and Children of Zeus (<http://www.messagenet.com/myths/bios/zeusfam.html>)

Consorts	Children				
Alkmene	Herakles http://www.messagenet.com/myths/bios/heracles.html				
Danae	Perseus				
Demeter	Persephone				
Dione	Aphrodite				
Io http://www.messagenet.com/myths/bios/io.html	Epaphos				
Laodameia	Sarpedon				
Maia	Hermes				
Metis	Athene				
Semele	Dionysos				
Europa	Rhadamanthys	Minos			
Leto	Apollo	Artemis			
Leda	Helen	Kastor	Polyde kus		
Hera	Ares	Hebe http://www.messagenet.com/myths/bios/hebe.html	Eileith yia		
Eurynome http://www.messagenet.com/myths/bios/eurynome.html	The Graces:	Euphrosyne	Thalia	Aglaia	
Themis	The Fates:	Klotho	Lache sis	Atropo s	
	The Horai:	Eunomia	Dike	Eirene	
Mnemosyne	The Muses:	Kalliope	Euterp e	Melpo mene	Poly mnia
	Terpsichore	Kleio	Thalei a	Ourani a	Erato

- **Augustus** – sired by the god Apollos while his mother was asleep

- **Remus and Romulus**, the legendary founders of Rome, were supposed to be born of the god Mars and a priestess named Rhea Silvia
 - Romulus is the legendary first king of Rome
 - Picture: Remus and Romulus
 - "Their mother, Rhea Silvia, had been forced to become a Vestal Virgin by her uncle, Amulius, because he had overthrown her father, Numitor, and wanted to ensure she would not have any sons that might attempt to overthrow him. However, the god Mars came to her in her temple and of him she conceived her two sons, Romulus and Remus. When they were born, Amulius ordered Rhea Silvia to be buried alive (the standard punishment for Vestal Virgins who did not remain celibate) and ordered a servant to kill the twins, but the merciful servant set them adrift in the river Tiber." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romulus_and_Remus)
 - The twins were found by Tiberius, the river god and nursed by a wolf
 - Found and raised by Faustulus and his wife, Acca Laurentia
 - As adults, they overthrew Amulius, reinstated Numitor (their grandfather), and established Rome (around 753 B.C.)

- **Other Religions And Cultures**
 - Assyrian mythology - Tammuz born of Semiramis (wife of Nimrod) conceived by a sunbeam (they should have called him "Ray")
 - Egyptian mythology - Isis & Osiris
 - India - Isii & Iswara
 - China - ancient mother cult called Shing Moo
 - ancient artwork depicts holy mother carrying baby
 - striking resemblance to Mary's art depiction
 - Phoenecia - Ashtoreth with Baal as child
 - Buddha - claims being conceived when elephant entered his mother's belly -Buddha was born months later (No wonder he was so fat!)
 - For reading on the topic of the Virgin Birth as an Imitation, see John MacArthur's, *God With Us*, pp. 42-43 and Lutzer, *CHRIST Among Other gods*, pp. 66-67

- Even the Catholic's Immaculate Conception is a dangerous imitation by claiming that Mary must have been virgin born - if not conceived without sin

B. Correction: The Virgin Birth Was Intended To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man

1. The Purpose Relates To Christ's Preexistence

John 1:1-3 ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 1:14¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 8:57-58⁵⁷Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Colossians 1:16-17¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

2. The Purpose Relates To Man's Penalty

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death

- Human - to die for the penalty for sin
- Divine - death effective for all man kind

1 Peter 2:24 Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit

3. The Purpose Relates To Reasonable Possibilities

a. Born Of A Good Human Father And Mother

- Result: only a good human, but **no deity**
- Psalm 51:5 - David conceived "in sin"
- not that conception is sinful, but parents are
- Psalm 58:3 - sinners from birth

b. Born Out Of Heaven

- Like Greek mythology - union of sun and moon - like angelic being
- Problem: **No Humanity**
- can't represent mankind as a priest or a kinsman redeemer

c. God Reincarnated Into An Already Existing Human

- If true - then not really human
- Created in another person with another personality
- Result: **Confusion**

d. Born Of A Virgin

- *Parthenogenesis*: *parthenos* = "virgin", *genesis* = "birth/beginning"
- The virgin birth is the most logical solution
 - "Through the miracle of the virgin birth, the eternal Son reached out and took to himself a true and complete humanity without diminishing his

essential deity. He united deity and humanity inseparably and eternally in one person." (Ron Rhodes, *Christ Before The Manger*, p. 181)

4. The Purpose Relates To Fulfilled Prophecy (Jer 22:30; cf. Mt 1)

Jeremiah 22:30 "Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'"

- Genealogy - important for proof
ie/ Collie - purebred - papers prove it
- Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' kingly lineage from the covenant promised to Abraham, through David's kingly line to Joseph
 - the royal line is passed from David through Joseph, because Joseph is the legal father of Jesus
 - Solomon & Jeconiah to Joseph
 - curse for Jeconiah's descendants ending David's line, yet only David's descendants could become king
 - none of Jeconiah's 7 sons took the throne
 - Virgin birth solves problem
 - step son of Joseph - Jesus had legal right to David's throne, but not biological son avoiding the curse
- Wellum: "Specifically, Matthew links Jesus to the promises of God that have developed through the biblical covenants of the Old Testament to create the expectation that the Creator– Covenant Lord himself will come in and through the Davidic king to redeem humanity and restore his creation. In this redemptive-covenantal context, Matthew emphasizes the work of God through the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ (see 1: 18– 25)." *Wellum, Stephen J. (2016-11-16). God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ (Foundations of Evangelical Theology) (Kindle Locations 6171-6175). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*
- Wellum continues: "God himself worked supernaturally to conceive in Mary the human nature of the eternal Son, such that as a man he would take up the Davidic-messianic vocation of saving the people of God. Anyone steeped in the Old Testament would immediately recognize two important points: (1) the stress on the agency of the Holy Spirit tied to the expectation of the coming Messiah and messianic age (see Isaiah 11; 42; 61; Joel 2:28– 32); (2) the fact that this child will save his people from their sins according to the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31: 34. The angels' announcement and the virginal conception are interpreted within the promise-plan of God according to which God's long-awaited King and kingdom are now at hand. And, citing Isaiah 7:14 Matthew confirms that we should interpret the conception and birth of Christ in terms of God himself coming in the flesh to be with his people through their deliverance: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his

name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)" (Matt. 1:22– 23)." (Ibid, Kindle Locations 6182-6191)

- Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' human lineage from Adam to Mary
 - Luke 3 - Jesus is also a blood relative of David through David's Son, Nathan (not the prophet)
 - Only through Mary does Jesus have a royal bloodline
 - Joseph is mentioned as the "son of Heli" (Lk 3:23), but Heli is Mary's father (Joseph's father-in-law) who had no sons of his own
- Matthew & Luke's account confirms that His lineage is consistent with the Promised Seed promised in Genesis through Abraham
 - Seed of the Woman - Eve (Gen 3:15)
 - Through Seth (Gen 4:25)
 - Through Noah (Gen 6-9)
 - Through Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)
 - Through Isaac (Gen 17:19)
 - Through Jacob (Gen 28:14)
 - Through Judah (Gen 49:10)
 - Through Boaz, Obed, Jesse & David (2 Sam 7:12-13)

5. The Purpose Relates To A Sinless Savior

Q: Is faith in the virgin birth essential for one to be truly saved?

Without The Virgin Birth:

- **Our Savior Would Not Be Divine**

- "Eliminating the Virgin Birth from the Incarnation leaves us at a loss to explain how the divine Son of God could enter the human race without the taint of sin and still be fully human and fully divine at the same time." (Frame, *ibid*)

- **Our Savior Would Not Be Sinless** (2 Cor 5:21)

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- **Our Salvation Would Not Be Effective**

- "There is no salvation as we know it without the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, and the sinlessness of Christ. Only the virgin born, sinless Son of God can die for our sins. Otherwise He is, as some theologians suggest, a self-appointed, radical martyr – the victim of His own inadequacy." (Frame, *ibid*)

II. The Prompting Of The Virgin Birth

View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man
Prompting	Mary Is A Suppressing Symbol	Mary Is An Honored Woman

A. Criticism: Mary Is A Suppressing Symbol Against Women

- Liberals claim that the exaltation of Mary as a virgin is part of the plot of male dominated Christians to suppress women.
- Bishop John Shelby Spong, an Episcopal Bishop from Newark, wrote a criticism on the virgin birth called *Born Of A Woman: A Bishop Rethinks The Birth Of Jesus* (Harper San Francisco, 1992). He writes: "No female figure in Western history rivals her in setting standards. Since she is known as 'the virgin,' she has contributed to that peculiarly Christian pattern of viewing women primarily in terms of sexual function. Women may deny their sexuality by becoming virgin nuns, or women may indulge their sexuality by becoming prolific mothers. But in both cases, women are defined not first as persons and second as sexual beings but first and foremost as females whose sexuality determines their identity. This means, in my opinion, that the literalized Bible in general, and the birth narratives that turn on the person of the virgin in particular, are guilty of aiding and abetting the sexist prejudice that continues to live and to distort women even as late in history as these last years of the twentieth century. I want to challenge publicly and vigorously this view of both the Bible and the virgin tradition and sexual images that gather around the stories of Jesus' birth." (p. 2)
- Albert Mohler reveals the feminist position of Jane Schaberg: "*In The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*, Jane Schaberg accuses the church of inventing the doctrine of the virgin birth in order to subordinate women. As she summarizes: 'The charge of contemporary feminists, then, is not that the image of the Virgin Mary is unimportant or irrelevant, but that it contributes to and is integral to the oppression of women.' Schaberg states that the conception of Jesus was most likely the result of extra-marital sex or rape. She chooses to emphasize the latter possibility and turns this into a feminist fantasy in which Mary is the heroine who overcomes. Schaberg offers a tragic, but instructive model of what happens when ideology trumps trust in the biblical text. Her most basic agenda is not even concerned with the question of the virgin birth of Christ, but with turning this biblical account into service for the feminist agenda." ("Can a Christian Deny the Virgin Birth?", December 19, 2003, http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2003-12-19)

B. Correction: Mary Is An Honored Woman

- As a Protestant, I do not agree with the degree that Mary has been venerated by the Roman Catholic Church. She is to be honored, but not worshiped.
- Catholics believe that she never sinned and conceived in moral perfection. This view of the **Immaculate Conception** is based on the reasoning that a sinner could not give birth to a sinless Christ.

- The Catholics defend the Immaculate conception on their apologetic website, www.catholic.com:
- "The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived without original sin or its stain—that's what "immaculate" means: without stain. The essence of original sin consists in the deprivation of sanctifying grace, and its stain is a corrupt nature. Mary was preserved from these defects by God's grace; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace and was free from the corrupt nature original sin brings.
- "Fundamentalists' chief reason for objecting to the Immaculate Conception and Mary's consequent sinlessness is that we are told that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Besides, they say, Mary said her "spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47), and only a sinner needs a Savior.
- "Let's take the second citation first. Mary, too, required a Savior. Like all other descendants of Adam, she was subject to the necessity of contracting original sin. But by a special intervention of God, undertaken at the instant she was conceived, she was preserved from the stain of original sin and its consequences. She was therefore redeemed by the grace of Christ, but in a special way—by anticipation.
- "Consider an analogy: Suppose a man falls into a deep pit, and someone reaches down to pull him out. The man has been 'saved' from the pit. Now imagine a woman walking along, and she too is about to topple into the pit, but at the very moment that she is to fall in, someone holds her back and prevents her. She too has been saved from the pit, but in an even better way: She was not simply taken out of the pit, she was prevented from getting stained by the mud in the first place. This is the illustration Christians have used for a thousand years to explain how Mary was saved by Christ. By receiving Christ's grace at her conception, she had his grace applied to her before she was able to become mired in original sin and its stain.
- "The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that she was 'redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son' (CCC 492). She has more reason to call God her Savior than we do, because he saved her in an even more glorious manner!" (http://www.catholic.com/library/Immaculate_Conception_and_Assum.asp)
- Mary call Jesus her "Savior" in Luke 1:47 – **Would Mary need a Savior if she was the Mother of God?**

Luke 1:47 ⁴⁷And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

- Eternal relationships are exalted over earthly relationships (including Mary) Matthew 12:46-50 – **Would Jesus speak this way to the Mother of God?**

Matthew 12:46-50 ⁴⁶While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. ⁴⁷Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." ⁴⁸But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My

brothers?" ⁴⁹And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

- Catholics believe that she remained a **perpetual virgin** – yet the Bible records that she had sons and daughters after giving birth to Jesus – including James & Jude who contributed books to the New Testament. Interestingly, Protestants Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and John Wesley believed in the perpetual virginity of Mary, though most Protestants do not hold to this view.
 - The New Bible Dictionary contributes: "Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy believe also in a literal virgin birth, whereby the baby passed out of Mary's body in such a way as to leave her virginity anatomically unimpaired (virginity *in partu*, 'in giving birth', as well as *ante partum*, 'before ... '). This belief is found first in writings of Syrian origin from the mid-2nd century, such as the *Protevangelium of James*. It quickly became a standard part of the doctrine of Mary's 'perpetual virginity', *i.e.* including also virginity *post partum*, 'after giving birth' to Jesus (so that *'the brethren of the Lord' could not have been Mary's children). The Reformers were virtually unanimous in holding to Mary's perpetual virginity." (D.F. Wright, "Virgin Birth," New Bible Dictionary, Intervarsity Press, 1996, p. 1226)
 - Catholics assert their view in "Mary: Ever Virgin:" "Most Protestants claim that Mary bore children other than Jesus. To support their claim, these Protestants refer to the biblical passages which mention the 'brethren of the Lord.' As explained in the Catholic Answers tract *Brethren of the Lord*, neither the Gospel accounts nor the early Christians attest to the notion that Mary bore other children besides Jesus. The faithful knew, through the witness of Scripture and Tradition, that Jesus was Mary's only child and that she remained a lifelong virgin."
 - "The perpetual virginity of Mary has always been reconciled with the biblical references to Christ's brethren through a proper understanding of the meaning of the term "brethren." The understanding that the brethren of the Lord were Jesus' stepbrothers (children of Joseph) rather than half-brothers (children of Mary) was the most common one until the time of Jerome (fourth century). It was Jerome who introduced the possibility that Christ's brethren were actually his cousins, since in Jewish idiom cousins were also referred to as "brethren." The Catholic Church allows the faithful to hold either view, since both are compatible with the reality of Mary's perpetual virginity." (http://www.catholic.com/library/Mary_Ever_Virgin.asp)

Matthew 1:25 ²⁵and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

- This passage suggests that Joseph did have sexual relations with Mary after Jesus' birth.
- The Catholics believe that praying to Mary will make God more favorable to our prayers – when the Bible never talks about praying to Mary, or that Mary occupies the throne of God, or has greater ability to convince her Son to listen to us

1 Timothy 2:5 ⁵For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

- Christ is the only Mediator between God and man, not Mary.
- But because the Protestants see the Catholic view of Mary as so extreme in her elevation, sometimes we try to go the opposite way – even to the point of knocking down Mary and failing to appreciate her in the same way that the Lord has appreciated her
- Mary was not the giver of divinity to Jesus. All of the conception was done by God. But could you imagine her role as the *theodokus* (mother of God) – at least when she was raising Christ as a child?
 - When she was **pregnant**, she contained a perfect man that was fully God
 - every one’s so excited with a precious pregnancy – how much more knowing that in your womb you were housing the very Son of God

Luke 1:26-37 ²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And having come in, the angel said to her, **“Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”** ²⁹But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, **Mary, for you have found favor with God.** ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” ³⁵And 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. ³⁶Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible.”

III. The Prophecy Of The Virgin Birth
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View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man
Prompting	Mary Is A Suppressing Symbol	Mary Is An Honored Woman
Prophecy	Contrived By Man To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14	Intended By God To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14

A. Criticism: The Virgin Birth Was Contrived By Man To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

- Critics will claim that early Christians concocted the notion of the Virgin Birth to fulfill Old Testament prophecy in an effort to impress the Jews of the fulfillment of Isa 7:14

- Liberals believe that Matthew was confused about the Hebrew word *almah* which means young maiden.
 - Dominic Crossnan, a Catholic member of the liberal "Jesus Seminar," in his book *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), stated how Isaiah 7 was about destruction, but Matthew chose to alter the interpretation to one of hope. "Matthew ... read the prophecy of Isaiah as one of hope rather than despair and took its term *virgin* to apply not only to the prior state of the mother but to her continuing state even during and after conception." (p. 17)
 - Crossnan's interpretation does not account for literal interpretation, divine inspiration or double fulfillment of prophecy.
 - Crossnan then accuses Luke of sympathizing with Matthew's misguided optimism.
 - "Thus, with the substitution of *Jesus for Immanuel*, the common Christian tradition independently inherited by Matthew explicitly and by Luke implicitly derived the virginal conception from an interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. Clearly, somebody went seeking in the Old Testament for a text that could be interpreted as prophesying a virginal conception, even if such was never its original meaning. Somebody had already decided on the transcendental importance of the adult Jesus and sought to retroject that significance on to the conception and birth itself." (p. 18)
 - But the term for "virgin" (*almah*) does not always mean a virgin, it could mean a young maiden
 - it is easier for revisionists to identify any young woman, virgin or not, as the one to fulfill Isa 7:14
 - it is less reasonable for revisionists to complicate the fulfillment of Isa 7:14 with a more difficult concept of the virgin birth
 - it is not reasonable for the early Christians to spread the good news of Christ with great zeal if they knew they originated an outrageous lie that people would not naturally believe in
 - *Almah* = could mean "young maiden"
 - *Betula* – is a more specific OT term for virgin and could have been used by Isaiah if he intended a virgin

B. Correction: The Virgin Birth Was Intended By God To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14

Context of Isaiah 7:1-16:

- Kings Rezin (Syria) & Pekah (Isr) against Ahaz (Judah)
- Ahaz & Judah were fearful
- God offers a sign for encouragement
- Ahaz, being cocky, felt he did not need one
- God gives sign to Judah ("You" = plural)
- "In response to the king's refusal to ask for a sign from God, Isaiah announced that God would give the 'house of David' (the royal Davidic line) a sign of His own. In view of the

eventual conquest of Judah by the Babylonians, future generations of Jews would need the assurance that the Messianic line would survive. While the Davidic line will appear to be cut down, out of its roots will come the Branch, Immanuel, the Child Ruler who will fulfill all of these prophecies. Thus, the entire section (7:1 – 12:6) should be seen as a unit with one prominent person in view throughout.” (Edward Hindson, “The Virgin Birth”, *The Fundamentals for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Mal Couch , Kregel Publications, 2000)

- John MacArthur: “... the context itself indicates the accuracy of God’s own New Testament commentary:
 1. In the immediate context, Isaiah 1-12 prophesies divine judgment against Israel and eventual peace, which the Messiah will bring on the nation and the whole world
 2. Isaiah does not provide any specific contemporary fulfillment – he leaves the “virgin” unidentified.
 3. Since Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign for himself and his time (Isa 7:10-12), God announces a sign for the “house of David,” one not limited to Ahaz or his time (Isa 7:13-14)
 4. The word “virgin” (Heb. *’almah*) refers to a young woman who has not had intimate relations with a man (see Gen 24:43; Ex 2:8; Song 1:3). The suggestion that *betulah* is the correct Hebrew word for “virgin” seems to be contradicted by the use of the term in Genesis 24:16, which adds “whom no man had known” (Gen 24:16) in order to make *betulah* (“maiden”) refer to a virgin. The term *’almah* requires no such qualification. The Septuagint, the ancient Jewish translation of the Old Testament into Greek, translates the Hebrew term with *Parthenos* the same word appearing in the New Testament at Matthew 1:23.” (*Biblical Doctrine*, Crossway, 2017, pp. 261-262)
- “*’Almah*” = young maiden
 - used 9x in OT & 8 out these 9 must mean virgin
 - that intent is meant, but leaves a door open for critics
 - ie/ young maiden, not necessarily a virgin
- *Betula* – OT term for virgin, specifically
 - yet even that term is used to refer to a married woman or young widow (Dt 22:19; Joel 1:8)
- Charles Ryrie clarifies: “In this prophecy Isaiah foretold the means of the Incarnation as being a virgin birth. Liberals have challenged the translation ‘virgin’ for the Hebrew word *almah*, stating that *bethulah* should have been used if Isaiah unmistakably meant virgin. It is true that *almah* means a sexually mature, marriageable maiden, and *bethulah* means a separated woman, usually a virgin, but not always (Esther 2:17; Ezek. 23:3; Joel 1:8). Thus it is not true to say, as the critics do, that *bethulah* would have been a more precise word to use if Isaiah clearly meant virgin.
 “Apparently *almah* is not a technical term for virgin but refers to a young woman, one of whose characteristics is virginity (Gen. 24:43). There is no instance where it can be proved that *almah* designates a young woman who is not a virgin. The Septuagint translates it by *parthenos* in two of its seven occurrences, as does Matthew 1:23. Thus the word means a young woman of marriageable age, one of whose characteristics was virginity, and necessarily so in the case of the fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ’s birth.” (*Basic Theology*, Moody Press, 1999, p. 277)

- “shall conceive” = lit. pregnant
 - so text points to a pregnant virgin
- “Immanuel” = God with us

IV. The Pen Of The Virgin Birth

View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man
Prompting	Mary Is A Suppressing Symbol	Mary Is An Honored Woman
Prophecy	Contrived By Man To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14	Intended By God To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14
Pen	Matthew & Luke Contradict Each Other	Matthew & Luke Supplement Each Other

A. Criticism: The Biblical Authors Contradicted Each Other

Ie/ Time Magazine, December 13, 2004, “Behind the First Noel” by David Van Biema

- The Angelic Message:
 - Matthew – unnamed angel to Joseph
 - Luke – Gabriel to Mary
- Star-struck:
 - Matthew wrote about the star to appeal to Jewish numerology and other faith’s interest in astrology, but there was not real star
- Residential Problems:
 - Matthew: magi visited Jesus in a house
 - Luke: Jesus was in a manger
 - This is posed as a contradiction by some: but the difference is between a shelter structure and a furniture for sleeping
 - “manger” = lit. a feeding trough
- Hometown Confusion:
 - Matthew writes about Bethlehem as Luke’s birthplace
 - Mark omits Bethlehem and focuses on Nazareth as Jesus’ hometown
 - “A growing majority, however, conclude that there is simply not enough textual agreement to declare Bethlehem a historical given.” (Van Biema)
 - The critics say that Matthew wrote of Bethlehem to appeal to the Jews who’s King David was from Bethlehem, but there is not enough evidence to prove Jesus was born in Bethlehem
 - Why not take the Bible at it’s word? Why pick and choose what you want to believe? There’s no inconsistency with being born in one place and raised in another!

Ie/ I was born in SF, but raised in SSF – SSF is my home town

- Modern scholars have complicated this:
 - Find this a contradiction and an inconsistency
 - Matthew tried to parallel this to the dream of the OT Joseph to arouse Jewish interest
 - Flight from Egypt, promise to Joseph – relates more to a Jewish audience
 - Luke embellished the story with a detained announcement, a visit to Elizabeth, a leaping fetal John the Baptist, and several songs of response (ie/ Magnificat of Mary) to arouse Greek interest
 - “In such sagas, a hero is not a hero unless his birth reflects the magnificence of his later achievements, and such super-nativities, originally attached to great figures from antiquity like Alexander the Great, were at that point bestowed upon Roman leaders within decades of their actual deaths.” (Van Biema)
- Thus it was contrived that Jesus’ virgin birth is not true, but contrived, because of inconsistencies
- The observations of Matthew’s focus of writing to a Jewish audience and Luke to a Greek audience is correct, but:
 - Assumptions are made manifest where the critic relegates the Bible merely as the work of man, while believers assume the Bible is the revelation of God
 - Observations get extrapolated to absurdity because of reading in one’s opinion rather than accepting revealed fact
 - Conclusions lead to contradictions because the goal is to contradict revelation rather than unite revelation

Ie/ Bishop John Shelby Spong, Newark, NJ believes the Bible is fiction and not intended be understood literally. The Virgin birth was an attempt to cover up a rape.

- “There was nothing objective about the gospel tradition. These were not biographies. They were books to inspire faith” (*Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus*)
- In other words, Shelby believes that Matthew and Mark knew they were writing fiction and that they knew others would read it as such

B. Correction: The Biblical Authors Supplemented Each Other

1. The Biblical Authors Combine To Give A Fuller Version History

Matthew 1:18-25	Luke 1:26-38
¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about	²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among

these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." ²²So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." ²⁴Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

women!" ²⁹But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" ³⁵And 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. ³⁶Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

- Two Authors Gave Two Perspectives
 - Ie/ Police officer interviewing several witnesses at an accident or crime scene and piecing together the testimony
- A Story Is Coordinated, Not Conflicted
 - The story is fuller as the several parts fill in the gap of our understanding

2. The Genealogies Differ In Emphasis Without Contradiction Of Content

- Wellum: "Matthew begins with Abraham and moves forward to Jesus; Luke begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam. Matthew traces the line through Jeconiah, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel; Luke traces it through Neri, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel. More significantly, Matthew traces Jesus's ancestry through the kingly line of Solomon; Luke traces the line through David's son Nathan (Luke 3: 31; cf. 2 Sam. 5: 14). Given these differences, many contend that these accounts are incompatible." *Wellum, Stephen J. (2016-11-16). God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ (Foundations of Evangelical Theology) (Kindle Locations 6253-6256). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*
- Luke traces Josephs physical lineage (David to Nathan)

- Matthew traces Jesus' kingly line (David to Solomon)
- Both lines converge with Joseph
- Wellum: "Luke provides Joseph's actual descent back to David through his physical father Heli, to his father Matthat, and then further back to Nathan and David; and Matthew provides the kingly succession by starting with David and working to Joseph. In this view, there are a number of suggestions to help explain the two different men, Jacob (in Matthew) and Heli (in Luke), named as Joseph's father. In most proposed solutions, they are regarded as different people based on the assumption of a second marriage (sometimes a levirate marriage; cf. Deut. 25: 5– 10; Matt. 22: 24). In this case, Joseph would be the legal son of Jacob but the physical son of Heli, hence the reason for two lines of ancestry." *Wellum, Stephen J. (2016-11-16). God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ (Foundations of Evangelical Theology) (Kindle Locations 6265-6270). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*

3. The Virgin Birth Is Assumed As Historical Fact In The Writing Of The Biblical Authors (Isa 9:6; Jn 1:14; Gal 4:4; Rom 8:3)

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us *a Son is given*; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

John 1:14 And the *Word became flesh* and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, *God sent forth His Son, born of a woman*, born under the law

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by *sending His own Son* in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

- "The supernatural character and virgin birth of the Messiah was, for many centuries a well-established Messianic belief among the Jews" (Victor Buksbazen, *Miriam, The Virgin of Nazareth*, p. 82).

V. The Product Of The Virgin Birth

View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man
Prompting	Mary Is A Suppressing Symbol	Mary Is An Honored Woman
Prophecy	Contrived By Man To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14	Intended By God To Fulfill Isaiah 7:14
Pen	Matthew & Luke Contradict Each Other	Matthew & Luke Supplement Each Other
Product	An Illegitimate Child	A Sinless Savior

A. Criticism: There Was No Virgin Birth, Christ Was An Illegitimate Child

- Pharisee's cheap shot at Jesus:

John 8:41 " We were not born of fornication; we have one Father - God."

- Critics charge that the Virgin Birth was concocted to strengthen Christian teaching
- "In such sagas, a hero is not a hero unless his birth reflects the magnificence of his later achievements, and such super-nativities" (Van Biema)

1. A Fib – To Protect Mary

- To keep Mary's reputation unsullied, critics believe that the Virgin Birth was an excuse or a cover up of her premarital indiscretions or possible rape

Ie/ Time Magazine, December 13, 2004, "Behind the First Noel" by David Van Biema

- "Critics may also have alleged that Jesus' birth early in Mary's marriage to Joseph was the result of her committing adultery; much later Jewish sources named a Roman soldier called Panthera. Those accusations, some scholars believe, account for the verse in Matthew in which Joseph considers divorcing Mary before his dream angel allays his doubts." (Van Biema)
- Other critics suggest Mary was not virgin born but raped because Jesus was called illegitimate by His peers and because no one had "lain" with Mary – that this suggests rape (feminist Jane Shaberg, University of Detroit Mercy)

2. A Fable – To Embellish Christ

- "There was nothing peculiar about the birth of Jesus. He was not God incarnate and no virgin mother bore him. The church in its ancient zeal fathered a myth and became bound to it as dogma." (Hugh Schoenfield, *The Passover Plot*, p.42)
- "[Spong] argues that 1) the birth narratives in the New Testament are fanciful stories which are not to be taken literally; and, 2) that Mary was quite likely the victim of rape; and, 3) the virgin birth has contributed immeasurably to an artificial and destructive view of women because Mary has been used to force women to fit into the stereotyped role of motherhood; and 4) Jesus was probably married, most likely to Mary Magdalene....Spong [says] that the virgin birth was never intended to be taken literally, but to inspire faith." (Lutzer, p. 68,69, summarizing John Shelby Spong, *Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks The Birth Of Jesus*)
- If Jesus was born of natural parents - would not be sinless, reduced only to a good man

B. Correction: There Was A Virgin Birth, Christ Is A Sinless Savior

1. The Humanity Of Christ Depends Upon It

A birth makes Christ a man who is qualified to represent us as a Redeemer.

Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you [serpent/Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

- The Savior had to be a male
- This Redeemer was to be born of a woman (a physical father is not part of the plan)
- John MacArthur: "Thus, the very first messianic prophecy directs attention to the woman, unlike the genealogy of Genesis 5, which lists only fathers. By omitting any relationship to Adam, God suggests that the promised offspring will not partake of Adam's sin. As the first Adam was fathered by God (see Luke 3:38, 'Adam, the son of God'), so the second Adam, Jesus Christ, was fathered by God, not by a human male (Matt 1:18-20)." (*Biblical Doctrine*, p. 261)

Galatians 4:4-5 "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

- Stephen J. Wellum: "The apostle Paul emphasizes the human birth, descent, and role of Christ. Galatians 4:4 speaks of Jesus being 'born [*genomenon*] out of [*ek*] a woman' rather than through (*dia*) her. Paul uses the preposition *ek* to stress that in his birth, Jesus did not merely use Mary's humanity as an instrument for entering the world but shared in her human nature so that he would live as all Jewish men, 'born under the law' (v.4b). Similarly, Romans 1: 3 tells us that the Son 'was descended [*genomenou*] from [*ek*] the seed [*spermatos*] of David, according to the flesh." Paul again uses the preposition *ek* to deliberately affirm Jesus's human nature: he is a man who belongs to and shares in the same lineage as David's descendants. And Paul both assumes and explains the importance of Jesus's humanity when he compares the "one man" Adam and the 'one man Jesus Christ' (Rom. 5:14– 16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:21), and in his confession that there is only one mediator between God and man, 'the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2: 5; cf. Acts 17:31). So we can conclude with Wells that 'these affirmations appear to rule out any possibility that Paul's view of Jesus was that he was in any way less than fully human.'" *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ (Foundations of Evangelical Theology)* (Kindle Locations 5641-5652). Crossway. Kindle Edition. (2016-11-16).

2. The Deity Of Christ Depends Upon It

The Virgin Birth is the means in which God sent His eternal, pre-existent Son.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He *sent* His only begotten Son"

- John MacArthur: "... the virgin birth allows for the preexistence of the divine person and nature. The eternal Son of God existed before the miraculous conception in Mary's womb. The normal human process of conception would have produced a second person, not just a human body and nature. Jesus, as the God-man, is but one person with two natures." (*Biblical Doctrine*, p. 262)

3. **The Sinlessness Of Christ Depends Upon It**

The Virgin Birth is the only means Christ could become a man without inheriting a sin nature.

Luke 1:35 "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."

- Alva J. McClain: "A sinless man in the moral realm would be a greater miracle than the virgin birth in the biological realm." (cited by Lutzer, p. 65)
- James Orr: "It is objected that birth from a Virgin does not itself secure sinlessness. But turn the matter round, and ask: Does not perfect sinlessness, on the other hand, imply a miracle in the birth?" (*The Virgin Birth of Christ*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1907, p. 189)
- A. B. Bruce: "A sinless man is as much a miracle in the moral world as a Virgin birth is a miracle in the physical world." (*Apologetics: Or, Christianity Defensively Stated*, 8th ed., Scribner, 1905, cited by Wellum)

4. **The Salvation Of Man Depends Upon It**

The Virgin Birth demonstrates that salvation can only come from God.

Galatians 4:4-5 "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

- B. B. Warfield: "He who casts himself upon Jesus as his divine Redeemer, will find the fact of the Virgin Birth of this Savior not only consonant with his faith and aid to it, but a postulate of it without which he would be puzzled and confused." ("The Supernatural Birth Of Jesus", *Biblical and Theological Studies*, p. 168)

5. **The Integrity Of God's Word Depends Upon It**

The Virgin Birth is a core teaching of the Scriptures – if it is not a historical fact, then the Word of God is unreliable.

- James M. Boice: "When we ask whether the doctrine of the virgin birth is true or false, we are asking far more than simply, Did Jesus have a virgin birth? We are asking, What is my view of Scripture and, therefore, what is my view of Christianity?" (*The Christ of Christmas*, p. 47)

VI. The Priority Of The Virgin Birth

View	Criticism	Correction
Purpose	To Rival Other Religions With A Fable Of Divine Origin	To Bring God Incarnate To Be The Righteous Savior Of Sinful Man
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Product	An Illegitimate Child	A Sinless Savior
Priority	Belief In Virgin Birth Is Optional	Belief In Virgin Birth Is Necessary

A. Criticism: Belief In The Virgin Birth Is Optional

- The liberal view of the virgin birth is that it doesn't matter if you believe in a virgin birth.
- Liberal pastor, Harry Emerson Fosdick, gave a sermon called "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," at the First Presbyterian Church in New York City. He asserted that those who believe and disbelieve the virgin birth could still find agreement. He said: "But, side by side with them in the evangelical churches is a group of equally loyal and reverent people who would say that the virgin birth is not to be accepted as an historic fact. To believe in the virgin birth as an explanation of great personality is one of the familiar ways in which the ancient world was accustomed to account for unusual superiority." He divided Christians into two groups: fundamentalists (who believe in the virgin birth) and "enlightened" Christians who don't have to be chained to the Bible for their belief.

B. Correction: Belief In Virgin Birth Is Necessary

- Southern Seminary president Albert Mohler writes: "Must one believe in the Virgin Birth to be a Christian? This is not a hard question to answer. It is conceivable that someone might come to Christ and trust Christ as Savior without yet learning that the Bible teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin. A new believer is not yet aware of the full structure of Christian truth. The real question is this: Can a Christian, once aware of the Bible's teaching, reject the Virgin Birth? The answer must be no." ("Must We Believe the Virgin Birth?", December 22, 2004, http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2004-12-22)

Conclusion:

1. Face The Facts
2. Faith The Facts

Worship:

Born that man no more may die
 Born to raise the sons of earth
 Born to give them second birth

Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the newborn King!"

