

The Virgin Birth of Jesus

When I was a boy there was only one version of the Bible that was being preached from, that being the Authorized King James Version. In 1946, the New Testament was translated into a more modern rendering via the Revised Standard Version. A drastic change took place in 1952 when the RSV Old Testament translation was completed. In the Authorized text it reads, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" Isaiah 7:14. The word "virgin" comes to us from the Hebrew word "almah." The Revised Standard Translators chose to translate this word "young woman." Dr. Eugen J. Pentiu commenting on this word writes, "During the period of betrothal, fiancés used to live in their parents' homes, separated, secluded, forbidden from seeing one another. The feminine form, 'almah,' may also be rendered "the concealed one" or even "the veiled one." This last rendition would reflect the custom of engaged women wearing veils over their faces as a sign of seclusion, or concealment, during the time of betrothal. We may mention that, given the ethical standards of the ancient Israelite society, the idea of virginity, though not distinctly stated, is nevertheless implied in the term 'almah.' As is the case concerning the providential woman from Genesis 3:15, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. ' (ha'ishshah, "the woman"), the noun ha-'almah "the concealed one" from Isaiah 7:14 has the definite article attached, which points to a special female character, chosen by God from the very beginning to become the mother of Messiah."

The New Testament quotes from Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Even without comparing the Hebrew and Greek, we come to the undisputed understanding that Mary was a virgin from her own testimony. Mary was told by Gabriel in Luke 1:31, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." Mary's response was given in Luke 1:34, "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" This statement alone affirms the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus.

Not only do we believe the virgin birth because of Mary's testimony, but also because of Joseph's initial response and resulting actions. Matthew 1:18 and 19 says, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily." N. T. Wright observes, "First-century folk knew every bit as well as we do that babies are produced by the union between man and woman. When, in Matthew's version of

the story, Joseph heard about Mary's pregnancy, his problem arose not because he didn't know the facts of life, but because he did." Then Matthew 1:20 goes on to say, "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The Bible tells us in Matthew 1:24 and 25, "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS." We find Joseph obeying the revelation in a dream to take Mary and the Lord Jesus into Egypt to save our young Lord from Herod's slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:13-15). Then, when Joseph, Mary, and Jesus' pilgrimage to Egypt came to a close, Joseph obeyed God in coming back to Israel, specifically to Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23). God's Word called Joseph "a just man" (Matthew 1:19). Joseph would not have gone to all this trouble to protect his fiancé with a child, unless he was convinced this was going to be a virgin birth. Remember, his initial response was not to take her into his watch care, but rather to "put her away privily." Joseph became personally and passionately involved because he knew this miracle to be true.

Why must the birth of Jesus be a virgin birth?

I. TO MAKE THE PAYMENT FOR OUR SINS EFFECTIVE.

John 1:1 and 2: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." The Word (Jesus) is God! There had to be a sacrifice for our sins. It had to be a blood sacrifice, but there was no man's blood without the taint of sin. Enter the Lord Jesus Christ via a virgin. The Bible says in Acts 17:26a, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth..." Because of Adam's fall, man was "blood poisoned." Romans 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Christ was unlike all other men born, because He was not affected by the fall. Even Judas confessed, "I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).

In his book, "The Chemistry of the Blood," M. R. DeHaan, M.D. wrote, "How wonderfully God prepared for the virgin birth of His Son. When He created woman He made her so that no blood would be able to pass from her to her offspring. That blood is the result of the male. Since Adam was the federal head of the race, it is His blood, which transmits Adam's sin. In order to produce a sinless man and yet be the son of Adam, God must provide a way whereby that man would have a human body derived from Adam but have not a drop of Adam's sinful blood. It is only after the male element has entered the ovum that blood can develop. As a very simple illustration of this, think of the egg of a hen. An unfertilized egg is just an ovum on a much larger scale than the human ovum. You may incubate this unfertilized hen's egg but it will never develop. It will decay and become rotten, but no chick will result. Let that egg be fertilized by the introduction of the male

contribution and incubation will bring to light the presence of life in that egg. After a few hours it visibly develops. In a little while red streaks occur in the egg denoting the presence of blood. This can never occur and does never occur until the male contribution has been united with the female ovum. The male element has added life to the egg. Life is in the blood according to scripture, for Moses says: Leviticus 17:11a, 14a, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood... For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof....' Man's blood was defiled, the only payment that would make redemption viable is if the blood of God was shed for us and that is exactly what happened in Jesus' death.

II. TO MAKE THE HYPOSTATIC UNION POSSIBLE.

"Hypostatic" is an adjective that comes from the Greek word "hupostasis." In all of theology you will not find a more precious doctrine. The hypostatic union is the doctrine that in the person of Jesus Christ, the dual nature of deity (God) and humanity (man) are perfectly conjoined. The word only appears four times in the New Testament. One of the most outstanding passages where this word is used is in Hebrews 1:3, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person...." The word used for "person" is "hupostasis." Literally rendered in Greek means "a setting under," in other words, supporting the "person" of Christ in His divinity and humanity. It is the union of God and man. All God and all man. He had to be God to pay for our sins, but He had to be man to be able to die for our sins.

Christ had to become one of us and die as one with us to bring us to God (Philippians 2:6-8).

*Sensitive words by quoted authors have been substituted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.