



Vintage Jesus Notes

Chapter 5 - Why Did Jesus' Mom Need to be a Virgin?



Chapter Summary

The virgin birth is perhaps one of the most confused and distorted miracles of the gospel. Some have elevated Mary as an idol, other Christians in response have lowered Mary to almost non-existence and others distort aspects of her life elevating her to some form of super human. In this chapter we want to clarify exactly what scripture says about the virgin birth and why this is crucial to our Christian faith.

By the end of this chapter we should have a biblical view of the virgin birth, agreement on the importance of this miracle and be able to identify false teachings and put to bed some myths about Mary and the birth of Jesus.

You can visit the Vintage Jesus website to see videos and audio of this series:

<http://relit.org/vintagejesus/downloads.php>



Notes

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

The virgin birth is the second most controversial miracle in all of history behind the resurrection.

Various views of the virgin birth

1. Larry King when asked if he could interview anyone from all of history said, "Jesus Christ". When asked what he'd ask, King replied, *"I would like to ask him if he was indeed virgin born. The answer to that question would define history for me."*
2. Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *"The greatest and most momentous fact which the history of the world records is the fact of his birth."*
3. Episcopalian bishop John Spong: *"In time the virgin birth account will join Adam and Eve and the story of the cosmic ascension as clearly recognized mythical elements in our faith tradition whose purpose was not to describe a literal event."*
4. Thomas Jefferson in a letter to John Adams: *"The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His Father, in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter."*

What does scripture teach about the virgin birth of Jesus

5. The promise of a virgin birth begins in **Genesis 3:15**, *"I will put enmity(hostility) between you(serpent/enemy) and the woman, and between your offspring and her(Eve) offspring; he(Jesus) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*
 - 5.1. promises Jesus would be born of a woman
 - 5.2. unusual because the rest of scripture speaks of children born of their father. Here no father is mentioned for Jesus which implies he would not have a biological father
6. Paul speaks similarly in **Galatians 4:4**, *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law"*



7. Isaiah prophecies the virgin birth 700 years beforehand. (**Isa. 7:14**)
 - 7.1. By naming the son "Immanuel" God promised more than just a male baby, the name means "God is with us"
8. Isaiah prophecies this virgin birth will give us much more than just a male baby. (**Isa. 9:6-7**)
9. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Genesis and Isaiah is clearly recorded in Matthew and Luke, clearly written that Mary was a virgin (**Matt. 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38**)
10. In summary, the Old Testament both quietly implies and loudly prophecies the virgin birth of Jesus. The writers of the New Testament go to painstaking detail to emphasize that Jesus mother Mary was a virgin and conceived through a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

What scripture does NOT teach us about the virgin birth

1. Scripture does NOT teach that Mary did not have a normal delivery.
 - 1.1. Some catholic theologians taught Jesus wasn't born normally through Mary's birth canal. The implication being some miraculous c-section.
 - 1.2. Scripture gives no indication that Mary's delivery was anything abnormal or miraculous, in fact it contradicts that notion. (**Micah 5:2-3**)
2. Scripture does NOT teach that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life.
 - 2.1. Argument for "perpetual virginity" began as early as the 2nd century and was cemented with the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D and declared Mary "ever virgin" or semper virgo.
 - 2.2. Joseph couldn't have been very happy about this. This is inaccurate for 3 reasons:
 - 2.2.1. God designed marriage for physical union (**Genesis 2:24**) and said that depriving marital intimacy is a sin. (**1 Cor 7:3-5**)
 - 2.2.2. **Matt 1:25** says they did have sex. "*But he knew her not **until** she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*"
 - 2.2.3. Scripture repeatedly states Mary had other sons and daughters. (**Matt 12:46-50, Matt. 13:55-57, Mark 3:31-35, Mark 6:3-4, Luke 8:19-21, John 2:12 ...**)
 - 2.3. Jesus conception was unique, it was no special anointing on her life to forever have virgin births.
 - 2.4. Scripture teaches Mary was a virgin **until** the birth of Jesus.



- 2.5. Much of the opposition to this is based on the false belief the sexual intimacy is somehow unholy and unfit for a person like Mary.
3. Scripture does NOT teach that Jesus' virgin birth was a myth taken from other religions.
 - 3.1. In mythology there are stories of gods having children, as a result some speculated that Christians stole the idea.
 - 3.1.1. Some myths came after the Isaiah prophecy, therefore they could not have been the origination of the story.
 - 3.1.2. The myths speak of gods having sex with women, not a virgin birth.
 - 3.1.3. The myths don't involve real humans in history, but fictional characters.
4. Scripture does NOT teach that belief in the virgin birth proves the deity of Jesus.
 - 4.1. Just because some believe the virgin birth doesn't mean they believe in the deity of Jesus.
 - 4.2. Jehovah Witnesses believe in the virgin birth, but wrongly believe Jesus is the incarnation of the archangel Michael.
 - 4.3. Even some Muslims believe in the virgin birth but certainly not the deity of Jesus
5. Scripture does NOT teach that sin nature is passed only through the male line.
 - 5.1. many theologians have this belief (Luther, Augustine)
 - 5.2. reasoning goes that if this is true then Jesus had to be born of a virgin to be sinless
 - 5.3. Scripture does teach that the sin of Adam brings death and condemnation to us all (**Romans 5:12-21**). But it doesn't teach that sin only comes to us through our dads.
 - 5.4. scripture seems to connect sinfulness with conception (**Psalm 51:5**)
 - 5.5. This line of logic (sin only passing through male line) implies that women are not as depraved (or depraved at all) as men, scripture denies that. (**Romans 3:23**)
 - 5.6. some go further and say Mary didn't sin either and was immaculately conceived as well
 - 5.6.1. scripture denies and so does Mary (**Luke 1:46-47**) <- Mary called Jesus her savior, only sinners need and call Jesus savior.
 - 5.6.2. Mary brought sin offerings to the temple as well. (**Luke 2:22-24**)



- 5.7. Jesus was without sin and had no sin nature, not because Mary was without sin but by the protection of the Holy Spirit.
- 5.8. Scientists have made big genetic engineering advances, if one day a father is not needed for reproduction should that man be considered sinless as well?
6. Scripture does NOT teach that Mary had sex with God.
 - 6.1. This is what the Mormons believe. They also believe Mary remained a virgin because sex with God didn't count.
7. Scripture does NOT teach that Jesus' virgin birth is unimportant.
 - 7.1. Dr. Al Mohler was asked if a true Christian can deny the virgin birth, his response was decisive and true. *"The answer to that question must be a decisive No...Christians must face the fact that a denial of the virgin birth is a denial of Jesus as the Christ. The Savior who died for our sins was none other than the baby who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin. The virgin birth does not stand alone as a biblical doctrine; it is an irreducible part of the biblical revelation about the person and work of Jesus Christ. With it, the Gospel stands or falls."*
 - 7.2. Rob Bell(Emergent pastor) speculates, "if Jesus had a real, earthly, biological father named Larry, and archaeologists find Larry's tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in to appeal to the followers of the Mithra and Dionysian religious cults that were hugely popular at the time" we would essentially not lose any significant part of our faith because it is more about how we live. Bad move on 4 accounts
 - 7.2.1. Only alternative to scripture's account would be Mary was a sinful woman who conceived Jesus illegitimately, which was the accusation in Jesus' day (**Matt. 13:55, Mark 6:3, John 8:41**)
 - 7.2.2. If not born of a virgin then the story of Jesus changes dramatically. If Mary is nothing more than a sinful con artist, than neither she nor her son Jesus should be trusted.
 - 7.2.3. Bell states that DNA testing should be trusted over scripture. This means there can and should be authorities higher than scripture, which is dangerous and diminishes the perfection, authority and trustworthiness of God's word. Scripture is flat out lying if virgin birth is untrue.
 - 7.2.4. The early church was firm in their belief of the virgin birth, there was no controversy.

What are we to make of Mary?

1. Traditionally Mary has either been maligned or made over.
2. God kindly works through us by his power and grace. Scripture shows that God honors motherhood and women of faith like Mary.



3. Catholic and Orthodox Christians make too much of Mary, but Protestants are guilty of overreacting and making too little of Mary.
4. Mary is not the object of our faith but an example of our faith.
5. Mary was told she would be pregnant outside of marriage, knowing she could die for that. Instead of running away and denying God she accepted God's call. "*Behold I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*" (**Luke 1:38**)
6. Mary is a wonderful example for all Christians, particularly women and especially young women.
7. Martin Luther deftly commented that while the virgin conception was God's greatest miracle in Mary's life, the fact of her faith in God was perhaps her greatest miracle of all.