

12-17-17

Series: Christmas

# THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

(2)

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

[Matthew 1:1-25](#)

(Continuation from 12/10/17)

## The Amazing Fact of the Virgin Birth

Here is his clear, uncomplicated narrative of the Incarnation:

[Matthew 1:18-25 \(NASB\)](#)

Matthew declares Jesus' divine lineage in this passage and reveals five aspects of His virgin birth: **its first announcement, Joseph's response to it, the angel's clarification of it, its connection to prophecy, and its actual occurrence.**

### 1) THE VIRGIN BIRTH ANNOUNCED

[Matthew 1:18-25 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

<sup>20</sup> But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

<sup>21</sup> "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

<sup>24</sup> And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife,

<sup>25</sup> but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."

Matthew needs only one verse ([Matthew 1:18](#)) to announce the fact of Christ's virgin birth.

[Matthew 1:18 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: **when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.**

Such a concise statement, though it doesn't all by itself prove the point, strongly suggests that the notion of our Lord and Savior's virgin birth was not simply a man-made story. A human author, writing strictly on his own initiative, would characteristically tend to describe such a momentous and amazing event in an expansive, detailed, and elaborate manner. But not the

12-17-17

Series: Christmas

apostle Matthew. He does relate additional circumstances surrounding the virgin birth, but the basic fact is stated in one simple sentence: **“when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.”**

Matthew devotes the previous seventeen verses to Jesus’ human genealogy but just this part of one verse to His divine genealogy. As the Son of God, Jesus **“descended”** from His Heavenly Father by a miraculous and **never-repeated act of the Holy Spirit**; even so, the Holy Spirit chose to announce that astounding truth by just one brief, declarative sentence.

As all God’s Word does, Matthew’s simple statement contains the solemn tone of authenticity. By contrast, a human fabrication would tend to have that false ring of exaggeration to it, being filled out with much more **“convincing”** material than what this inspired version needed.

Scripture gives us little information about Mary and even less about Joseph. Mary was undoubtedly a godly young woman, probably a native of Nazareth who came from a relatively poor family.

Joseph was the son of Jacob ([Matthew 1:16](#)) and was a craftsman, probably a carpenter ([Matthew 13:55](#)).

[Matthew 1:16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup>“Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.”

[Matthew 13:55 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>55</sup>“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”

Most significant, he was a **“just man”** ([Matthew 1:19](#)), one who placed saving trust in the coming Messiah.

[Matthew 1:19 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>19</sup>“And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.”

Most likely Mary and Joseph were both quite young when they were engaged (**“betrothed”**). She may have been as young as twelve or thirteen, and he not any older than fifteen or sixteen. Such youthfulness at the time of a couple’s engagement was standard for that culture.

Another standard aspect of the Jewish betrothal was its binding nature—society considered the man and the woman legally married even though the formal ceremony and consummation might occur a year later. The purpose of the engagement period was to confirm each partner’s fidelity when the two had little or no social contact with each another.

Mary and Joseph faithfully abstained from sexual relations with one another during the engagement period, as the contract required. That was also in accord with the Bible’s high regard for sexual purity and God’s commands for sexual abstinence prior to the marriage ceremony and for sexual fidelity afterward. Thus, Mary’s virginity was an important indicator of her godliness.

12-17-17

Series: Christmas

However, Mary's virginity protected something much more important than her **own morality** and **godly reputation**. It ensured the deity of Christ and supported the veracity of His teaching and works as the Son of God.

Had Jesus been conceived by natural means, with Joseph or anyone else as His father, He **would not have been God** and **would not have been a true Savior of sinners**. To be in accord with what Scripture reported about His life, He would have had to make false claims about Himself, and He would have had to endorse false stories or hoaxes concerning the Resurrection and Ascension.

Meanwhile everyone would have remained spiritually dead, condemned forever by their unforgiven sins. But we know that all that is absolutely contrary to what God's Word teaches.

The apostle Paul, for example, was also very clear and concise when he reiterated the true nature of the Incarnation: **"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law"** ([Galatians 4:4 NASB](#)). Paul includes no mention of a human father for Jesus because, according to the divine plan, God was His Father.

Jesus had one human parent (**Mary**) so that He could be a man and identify closely with what it means to be human ([Philippians 2:5-7](#); [Hebrews 4:15](#)).

[Philippians 2:5-7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> **"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,**

<sup>6</sup> **who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

<sup>7</sup> **but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."**

[Hebrews 4:15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> **"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin."**

And He had divine parentage, so He could live a sinless life, perfectly fulfill the Law of God for us, and make the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Admittedly, all these centuries after Matthew's divinely inspired Gospel declared that Jesus was born of a virgin, His miraculous conception remains impossible to understand by human reason alone.

God chose not to explain the details of it to us, even as He chose to leave unexplained the intricacies of His creating the universe from nothing, the precise way He could be one God in three Persons, or exactly what happens when depraved sinners are born again as they repent of their sins and trust Christ. Many of the essentials of Christianity God wants believers to accept by faith. Full understanding will have to wait until heaven: **"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now [we] know in part, but then [we] shall know [fully] just as [we] also have been fully known"** ([1 Corinthians 13:12 NASB](#)).

12-17-17

Series: Christmas

## 2) JOSEPH'S RESPONSE TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Initial news of Mary's condition presented Joseph with a **twofold problem**. A caring and responsible person concerned about doing the right thing, Joseph was unwilling to proceed with his original plans once he perceived that a crucial part of those plans was no longer acceptable. His difficulty was intensified by the reality that he was a righteous man, genuinely concerned about doing what was morally and ethically right according to God's Law.

**First**, when Joseph realized Mary was pregnant, he knew he could not go ahead with their marriage. He knew he was not the father and, based on what he knew at the time, he had to assume that another man was.

Joseph's **second** difficult decision concerned how he should then treat Mary. Because he was a good and loving man, he was grieved at the thought of shaming her publicly (a common practice in those days when a wife was unfaithful), and even more so at the prospect of demanding her death, as provided for in [Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#).

[Deuteronomy 22:23-24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>23</sup> **"If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and *another* man finds her in the city and lies with her,**

<sup>24</sup> **then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus, you shall purge the evil from among you."**

We don't know if he felt anger, resentment, or bitterness, but he certainly experienced shame at what he had to assume was true. However, Joseph's concern was not primarily with his own shame and embarrassment, but with Mary's. [Matthew 1:19 NKJV](#) says, **"not wanting to make her a public example, [Joseph] was minded to put her away secretly."**

[Matthew 1:19 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> **"And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly."**

Therefore, Joseph's plan was to divorce Mary secretly, so she would not have to endure the disgrace of everyone in the community knowing about her supposed sin. Not many husbands ever display such firmly held and deeply felt love for their wives. Of course, eventually, when the marriage didn't occur, everyone would have found out that something had gone wrong. But at least in the meantime Mary would be protected from humiliation and death.

The Lord, however, in His sovereign providence and wonderful grace, intervened directly into the situation and spared Joseph the further trauma of actually carrying out his divorce plans. **"But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" ([Matthew 1:20 NASB](#)).**

This verse underscores the miraculous nature of the virgin birth and the supernatural character surrounding the entire event of Christ's birth. It also provides divine assurance to

12-17-17

Series: Christmas

Joseph (“**son of David**”) and to us that Jesus had legitimate royal lineage that legally came through Joseph as a descendant of King David.

The angel’s words provide the ultimate and most irrefutable testimony to the essential truth of the virgin birth and to the proper response Joseph was to have to Mary’s extraordinary situation.

### 3) THE ANGEL CLARIFIES THE VIRGIN BIRTH

But what was the significance of Mary’s pregnancy even though she had not had relations with Joseph or any other man? Joseph likely would have spent some time puzzling over that question if the divine messenger had not immediately clarified his pronouncement with these words:

**Matthew 1:21 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> **“She will bear a Son (bring forth a Son); and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”**

The angel tells Joseph that Mary will actually bear a son. And not just any son, but Jesus, who **“will save His people from their sins.”** God chose the name Jesus for His Son because its basic meaning defined the fundamental, overarching purpose for the Son’s coming to earth.

**“Jesus”** is the Greek form of the Hebrew **“Joshua”**, **“Jeshua”**, or **“Jehoshua”**, each of which means **“Jehovah (Yahweh) will save.”** The baby Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would give birth to in the plan of God would grow up to testify to the Father’s salvation and would Himself be that salvation. By His own sacrificial death on the Cross and triumphant Resurrection from the grave He would save His own—all those who are drawn from sin to repentance and who receive faith to embrace His atoning work.