

## Matthew 1: v. 18-25 - "The Virgin Birth"

Read Matthew Chapter 1: v. 18-25.

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But 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. <sup>21</sup> And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." <sup>24</sup> Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, <sup>25</sup> and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Introduction

Q. Have you ever had a baby? Or maybe you know someone who has had a baby recently?

Whenever it is announced in a family that a baby is on its way, families get very excited.

About 2000 years ago there was an announcement about a baby to be born.

It was going to be the most important birth in all of history.

However there was somebody not very excited about the birth and that was Joseph.

We will discover why in a moment.

In the Bible it records some amazing and spectacular births. There was Isaac born to Sarah, a previously barren woman who was nearly one hundred years old. It was an amazing miracle, but it was still the seed of a man put into the womb of a woman.

(Genesis 18: v. 9-15, 21: v. 1-7.)

The birth of Samuel the prophet, and anointer of Kings, was a miracle birth, Hannah his mother was barren. God answered her prayer and opened her womb and she had a baby. However it started with a seed from a man. (1 Samuel Chapter 1)

We are told in Luke's Gospel chapter 1 that Elizabeth was barren and she gave birth to John the Baptist in her old age.

These were all miracle births and amazing in their own way, however the birth of Jesus, although miraculous, was very different to all those human births in Biblical history.

The reason was that it was a "Virgin Birth" The baby was conceived without a human seed. A normal birth is a little miracle anyway, even in the normal way, but this was something different.

From the passage that we read, there are 5 things that I want to draw out for our attention.

They are all about the “Virgin Birth”

1. The Fact of the Virgin Birth – v. 18.

Betrothal stage.

The custom of betrothal was different from engagement in modern society.

The parents of a young man chose a woman for their son to be married. Sometimes this happened many years before any marriage.

However there was a second stage to the betrothal. This was the legal stage which was conducted before witnesses. This was a legally binding contract that could only be broken through a divorce.

Even at this stage there was no sexual union between the couples. This happened after the official wedding ceremony. The wedding ceremony would take place from 6 months to 6 years depending on the age of the woman.

Sexual unfaithfulness during the second stage betrothal period was considered to be adultery. Under the Mosaic Law, adultery carried the death penalty, by stoning.

With this in mind we come to v. 18 and discover the fact of the “Virgin Birth”

It is very clear from the words in v. 18 that Mary was a virgin and that she had had no sexual intercourse with Joseph. Humanly speaking, yes it was impossible for Mary to conceive and have a baby. Something very miraculous has to happen if somebody is going to have a baby without the seed of a man.

However this fact is the most important fact of the Christmas story.

Without the virgin birth, we would have no reason as Christians, to celebrate this Christmas. We may enjoy Kentucky Fried Chicken, (K.F.C.) eat Christmas Cakes, and receive presents this Christmas, but the real celebration is concerning the fact of the “Virgin Birth”. God coming to this world in the form of a baby.

God is the only person who can make something out of nothing.

Everybody needs matter or something to make something. God doesn't need anything, the Holy Spirit of God can create something out of nothing.

It is an incredible fact but it is a fact that we must believe, or else we have absolutely nothing to celebrate this Christmas.

Q. Do you believe in the fact of the virgin birth?

God left the glory of Heaven and came to this world in the form of a supernatural seed, implanted into the womb of a virgin, growing in the normal way that a baby grows in the womb, but without any of our inbred human sin.

Everybody born into this world, is born with an inbred sinful heart. We can't help it, it is a fact of life.

In Romans Chapter 5: v.12 it says “

<sup>12</sup> When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

If Jesus was born in the normal way, then He would have had a sinful nature. However He wasn't born in the normal way, so therefore He did not have inbred sin in his heart.

It is very important that we understand this.

In the religious world, it doesn't matter whose teaching you follow, these people were all born with a sinful human nature.

However Jesus was different, He came into this world, without any sinful nature in his heart. The Virgin birth is a "Fact" that we must believe, if we are going to enjoy the true meaning of Christmas.

## 2. The Virgin Birth confronted – v. 19-20.

In v. 19-20 the "Virgin Birth" is confronted by Joseph.

We are told that Joseph was a just and upright man, although he would have been upset by the fact that his betrothed wife was pregnant, he wouldn't want her to be stoned to death for adultery.

He thought about ways of how to protect Mary from her situation.

While Joseph was thinking about this, suddenly an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

The Angel said "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."

We know from Luke chapter 1: v. 26 that the Angel was called "Gabriel"

We also know that Mary was about 4 months pregnant at the time.

She had spent 3 months with her relative Elizabeth. (Luke 1: v. 36, 56)

Joseph had to believe what the Angel told him in the dream.

He had to believe that the Holy Spirit of God somehow placed a seed in the womb of his intended wife.

This was a "BIG" thing for Joseph to believe, and it is a big thing for us to believe too.

It required a lot of "Faith" on the part of Joseph to believe the Angel.

However the Angel didn't just announce the fact of the miracle birth by the Holy Spirit, the Angel explained the reason for it.

We now move to verse 21.

## 3. The Virgin Birth Explained – v. 21.

Why the virgin birth? And what is it all about?

The Angel told Joseph that Mary would have a Son, remember, no baby scanning in those days. The Angel said that Joseph must call his name JESUS, and that HE, that's Jesus, will save HIS people from their SINS.

Jesus is a form of the Hebrew word Joshua, in Hebrew it means Jehovah will save.

Up to now a lot of people had been called Joshua, testifying by their names to the Lord God's Salvation.

But this Jesus/ Joshua who would be born to Mary not only would testify of God's Salvation, but HE HIMSELF would be that SALVATION.

By His own work, He would SAVE people from their SINS.

The rescue plan which God had promised thousands of years ago was now about to happen. This baby that was to be born through Mary was going to save the Jewish people from their sins. That is what it says in the text.

Up to now God had accepted the sacrifice of animals as a covering for sin.

The whole Jewish nation knew the seriousness of sin and the fact that without the shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness of sins.

(Lev. 17:11, Hebrews 9: v. 22.)

The Angel was in fact saying that the baby in Mary's womb would grow up and be the Saviour/ Rescuer of the Jewish Nation.

This must have been very exciting for Joseph. One moment he was thinking of how to hide Mary's disgrace, the next moment he would be rejoicing that God had favoured his bride with such an important mission.

The Angel didn't stop there he gave more information to Joseph.

#### 4. The Virgin Birth Prophesied – v. 22-23.

At this point Matthew explains that Jesus's birth was predicted by God in the Old Testament. It was about 750 years before.

If we read this prophecy in Isaiah 7: v. 14 in its context we would find it very difficult to work out why God spoke through Isaiah at this point in time in Israel's history.

It took me a long time to get to the bottom of it but it's worth noting.

The scene in Isaiah chapter 7 is the reign of King Ahaz.

He was a wicked King.

He filled Jerusalem with idols and even burned his own son as a sacrifice to the god Molech.

Let us read Isaiah Chapter 7: v. 1-14 in the N.L.T.

<sup>7</sup> When Ahaz, son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah, the king of Israel, set out to attack Jerusalem. However, they were unable to carry out their plan.

<sup>2</sup> The news had come to the royal court of Judah: "Syria is allied with Israel against us!" So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, like trees shaking in a storm.

<sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Take your son Shear-jashub and go out to meet King Ahaz. You will find him at the end of the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is washed. <sup>4</sup> Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn't need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah. <sup>5</sup> Yes, the kings of Syria and Israel are plotting against him, saying, <sup>6</sup> 'We will attack Judah and capture it for ourselves. Then we will install the son of Tabeel as Judah's king.' <sup>7</sup> But this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"This invasion will never happen;  
it will never take place;

<sup>8</sup> for Syria is no stronger than its capital, Damascus,  
and Damascus is no stronger than its king, Rezin.

As for Israel, within sixty-five years

it will be crushed and completely destroyed.

<sup>9</sup> Israel is no stronger than its capital, Samaria,  
and Samaria is no stronger than its king, Pekah son of Remaliah.  
Unless your faith is firm,  
I cannot make you stand firm.”

#### The Sign of Immanuel

<sup>10</sup> Later, the LORD sent this message to King Ahaz: <sup>11</sup> “Ask the LORD your God for a sign of confirmation, Ahaz. Make it as difficult as you want—as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead.”

<sup>12</sup> But the king refused. “No,” he said, “I will not test the LORD like that.”

<sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? <sup>14</sup> All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).

Rezin, king of Syria & Pekah, King of Israel decided to remove Ahaz and replace him with a King who would go their way.

This was a threat to the people of Israel and the Royal line that would bring forth the Messiah Jesus.

Ahaz, instead of turning to God for help sought the help of the evil king of Assyria.

He even took gold and silver from the temple to pay him for his help.

Isaiah came to Ahaz and told him that God would deliver the people from the two enemy kings.

When Ahaz refused to listen, Isaiah responded with the amazing prophecy.

So how did this prophecy fit this ancient scene?

Well Isaiah was telling the ancient people that no one would destroy the people of God or the royal line of David.

The prophet Isaiah used the plural YOU, indicating that Isaiah was speaking to the entire nation.

God would not allow anyone to destroy his chosen people fully or affect the royal line to the Messiah.

God was in charge of the situation back in Isaiah’s day, even though men tried their best to prevent it.

#### 5. The virgin birth protected – v. 24-25.

Joseph immediately obeyed as the Angel had commanded him. He protected their relationship by getting married right away and not having sex on the honeymoon, in fact not until Mary had given birth to a Son.

As a final act of obedience Joseph called his name JESUS.

The supernatural birth of Jesus is the only way to account for the life that He lived.

A sceptic who denied the virgin birth, once asked a Christian, If I told you that that the child over there was born without a human Father, would you believe me?

The believer replied “YES, if He lived as JESUS lived”

The greatest outward evidence of the virgin birth is the way that Jesus lived His LIFE. He lived it with 100% purity like God.

And Jesus also fulfilled His purpose by being nailed to a cross and took the punishment of the sins of all the people who would put their trust in Him.

Yes we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, but it is through His death that we are saved from our sins.

Application

There are a few applications in this passage that we could draw out, but the big one is that we must put our faith and trust in God’s word, even if it sounds ridiculous to us or impossible in the human realm.

Joseph trusted in the words of the Angel even though it seemed impossible.

This Christmas, believing in a Jesus that left the glory of a Holy Place called Heaven to come to this earth to be your own personal saviour sounds too good to be true.

However it is true and if you want to celebrate with Joy this Christmas, you need to put your faith and trust in Jesus.

If you are new to Christianity may I suggest that you read John’s Gospel and then get messages from the OIC web-site on John’s Gospel?

Let us pray.