

# Christmas Is Jesus (The Virgin Birth)

by Colin Peckham

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*The Virgin Birth is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity that reveals God's love and majesty, and makes possible the Incarnation and the Cross.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:34, John 1:14, Galatians 4:4, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 4:9, Revelation 12:5

**Topics:** "Divinity Of Christ", "Incarnation Theology"

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## Description

Colin Peckham emphasizes the importance of the Virgin Birth in affirming the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. He highlights how the rejection of the Virgin Birth leads to a rejection of essential Christian doctrines, such as the sinlessness of Christ and the authority of Scripture. Peckham points out that the Virgin Birth is not just a historical event but a foundational truth that reveals God's love and the possibility of salvation through the Incarnation and the Cross.

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## Transcript

What think ye of Christ' Whose son is He" asked Jesus (Matt.22:42)

This very question was put to a churchman some time ago by an insistent sixth former, 'If Jesus Christ is not God's Son, then whose son is He'

The reply from this leader amazed TV viewers, 'He was the son of Joseph!'

From earliest times the doctrine of the Virgin Birth was accepted by the church universal. William Barclay concedes that, 'Whatever else may or may not be certain it is certain that by early in the second century the Virgin Birth had become a widely spread and widely accepted article of the Christian faith.' (1)

Tertullian of North Africa (160-225) has a creed in his writings which appears to have been the basis of faith in the North African churches. It includes the words, '... Jesus Christ. born of the Virgin Mary.' The well-known Apostles' Creed which was used extensively in early days and attained its present form by about 550 AD, contains the phrase, 'conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.' The Athanasian Creed states: 'We believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ. the Son of God, is God and man; of the Substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God, and perfect Man.' The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is intimately linked with that of the Incarnation and of the Person of Christ.

Not a new attack

This modern assault on the Virgin Birth is no innovation, but to hear it publicly from a leader of the church has given the enemies of our Lord great cause to blaspheme. Anus of Alexandria in the early 4th century attempted to refute the doctrine of Christ's deity, and modern Arians, the Jehovah's Witnesses of today, continue to propagate his errors. How they must be gloating now!

Nineteenth century protestant liberalism questioned many Biblical truths, among which were the Virgin Birth and the Deity of Christ. Several theologians like Schleiermacher, Strauss and Bushnell, rejected the orthodox belief in the Virgin Birth, but did concede some sort of supernatural conception. Many claimed the necessity for an understanding of the Incarnation suited to modern intelligence and argued that it is impossible to come to any conclusion concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. The attitude of the modern theologians of the liberal school to the Virgin Birth may be summed up in one word: evasion! They wriggle and twist to avoid accepting the straightforward concept of the Virgin Birth as declared in Scripture, and of this ilk is the affable and pleasant Bishop of Durham. Liberals attempt to stir up a 'Christian' faith, but deny the very historic essentials of that faith. Anything connected with the life of Christ is merely church tradition they say, much of which (e.g. the Virgin Birth) is recorded in mythological form. Their view is that faith must be encouraged, but the facts of the faith cannot be proved: the historicity of the event is of no consequence to faith! MacQuarrie states that these essentials are 'partly historical and partly legendary.'<sup>2</sup> We are told that the story is not true, it cannot be true, but believe it just the same, because all else we are calling you to believe is based upon it! Surely if the Virgin Birth were not true, and if the doctrine were not based on an historical event, then any faith built upon it must, of necessity, collapse!

Liberal theologians increasingly adopt the attitude that belief in the Virgin Birth discredits Christ's humanity, for, they say, to be fully human he must have a human mother and father. Thus, Nietzsche says: 'A true man cannot at the same time in a metaphysical sense be truly God,'<sup>3</sup> and Lobstein comments: 'It does away with his full and real humanity ... Does not the traditional theory make him a stranger to our race'<sup>4</sup> By denying Christ's deity they immediately attack two cardinal issues: God's ability, and God's competence to act as He wills in the outworking of His omnipotent sovereignty. But the fact is God can do as He wills even to the extent of conflicting with natural laws.

What rejection leads to

This rejection of the Virgin Birth leads, of course, to a rejection of the sinlessness of Christ. Pittenger argues, 'Had the infant Jesus never told untruths, indulged in temper tantrums ... been spiteful and greedy ... this would have illustrated his abnormality!'<sup>5</sup> Nells Farre says. 'The whole grand myth of Jesus being the Son of God, protected by virgin birth and sinlessness stands in the way of the far more wonderful news of the true gospel . . .'<sup>6</sup> Generally speaking, however, liberal theologians do not deny outright the sinlessness of Christ but they question the reason for it! They wish to preserve a view of Jesus which is intellectually respectable but end up by formulating theories completely contrary to the clear statements of Scripture: 'In Him is no sin' (I John 3.5); 'He knew no sin' (2 Cor. 5.21); 'He did no sin' (I Peter 2.22). The authority of the Scriptures is discounted and the liberals expect us to rely on speculative theological theories as the basis of faith.

To reject the Virgin Birth is to reject 2,000 years of Christian faith including the creeds formulated down the centuries.

To reject the Virgin Birth means that it is impossible to maintain the confidence in other related doctrines of the Bible.

To reject the Virgin Birth is to argue that the Gospel writers were not divinely inspired but misled, misguided, and manipulated in order to 'upgrade' the status of the historical Jesus: or else that they were brilliant first-century 'science fiction' writers, creating the first perfect man.

To reject the Virgin Birth creates another major problem: how then did God become man'

To reject the Virgin Birth is to accuse Mary of immorality, and to imply that Jesus was the illegitimate child of a nameless coward for Joseph never claimed to be His father.

To reject the Virgin Birth implies that Jesus was a liar, for He claimed to be the only-begotten Son of God.

To reject the Virgin Birth is to reject the truth and authority of Scripture. It is to make all truth suspect, and the whole gamut of the supernatural is called into question - including the miracle of the New Birth.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it has not been the agnostic and the atheist who have explained away the miraculous, but the liberal theologians themselves.

The importance of the Virgin Birth

The Virgin Birth becomes the touchstone of faith. Generally speaking, those who reject the Virgin Birth also reject the whole supernatural view of Christ.

The Virgin Birth reveals God, the God transcendent and majestic in glory, yet a God of love and tenderness on earth. He submits to the humiliation of human birth without bearing human sin. The Virgin Birth makes possible the Incarnation which led to the Cross. and for those who believe and trust, to a heaven of glory and eternity. The Virgin Birth brings God to man, and makes the sons of men sons of God. Surely the Scriptures declare, and we affirm, that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

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