

## ROUND YON VIRGIN MOTHER AND CHILD

“...The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary... and the angel said unto her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary...you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus’...Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the son of God.’” (Luke 1:26-35). A literal translation of the last phrase in verse 35 is: “the holy thing begotten will be called Son of God.” The King James Version is closer to this literal translation: “...the holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” The season when most of the religious world celebrates this event has come and gone, but the question is: Is it true? Did it really happen?” and more importantly: what is the real significance of the virgin birth? This is a question usually left unanswered in the pageants, songs and sermons characterizing the season and will be forgotten by most Christians until next December, and if remembered at all it will only be remembered as Jesus being a babe in the manger. The virgin birth of our Lord has been denied, neglected, doubted and scorned second only to his resurrection, yet it is one of the most important events found in the Scriptures. This denial and neglect is not from the world (they could care less), but is characteristic of much thought in the religious world. So called reputable scholars who write books, teach in Seminaries and Universities, and are popular lecturers in the religious circles are sowing the seeds of doubt and denial of the virgin birth. The problem here is that the fruit of their teaching is the preaching of their students and followers. Even if the virgin birth is believed, its significance and importance is neglected in our pulpits.

When we note some of the writings of many theologians today we can readily see how their influence has brought about a disbelief and denial of the virgin birth. The following quotes are examples of this fact. In 1965 Hugh Schonfield ignited a controversy in the religious world when he published his book: *The Passover Plot* in which he denies every miraculous element in the New Testament, even suggesting Jesus did not really die on the cross. On the virgin birth, he wrote: “There was nothing peculiar about the birth of Jesus, no Virgin Mother bore him. The church in its ancient zeal fathered a myth and became bound to it as dogma....The account of the birth of Jesus is of course built on legends of the birth and infancy of the great figures of Israel, Abraham and Moses, current among the Jews. But in the Gospel they are brought into relation with the virgin birth legend typical of Greek heroes.” Amazon.com gave rave reviews of the book by many religious figures. Douglas Lockhart, a Scottish writer, states in his book *Jesus the Heretic* (a title that shows his infidelity): “Taking his information from the now lost Nazarene gospel, Luke quite obviously reproduces Issa’s Christmas nativity story of the virgin birth.” Issa was an Egyptian goddess. William Barclay in his commentary: *The Daily Study Bible Series*, which graces many preachers library today, states: “It may well be

the New Testament stories of the birth of Jesus are lovely, poetical ways of saying that, even if he had a human father, the Holy Spirit was operative in his birth...and it may well be that we will desire to cling to the literal doctrine of the Virgin Birth or we will prefer to think of it as a beautiful way of stressing the presence of the Spirit in family life.” It is not only the “modern, unbelieving” scholars that causes confusion concerning the virgin birth, but popular conservative preachers and writers contribute to this confusion. Evangelical scholar Dr. John MacArthur is quoted in *Focus on the Kingdom* as saying “Jesus is not the Son of God because he was born of a virgin.” Popular writer and speaker. Chuck Swindoll in *Understanding Christian Theology* wrote: “When the title Son of God is used of Christ it has nothing to do with his birth to Mary. As Son of God he was not born.” Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible* proposes the same thought by saying his birth had nothing to do with his being the Son of God rather, “it was to bring out the truth that it was not *Sonship* but his *holiness* that was secured by his miraculous conception.” This seems to contradict the angel Gabriel when he told Mary “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over shadow you; and *for that reason* the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). This is spoken in reference to the human nature of Christ, and this passage proves that one reason why Jesus was called the Son of God was because he was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He is also called the Son of God on account of his resurrection when Paul declared the gospel was “concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:3,4). Further: “...He raised up Jesus as it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you’” (Acts:13:33). Greg Demmitt in *A Journal from the Radical Reformation* quotes from the writings of Alexander Campbell: “The names Jesus, Christ, or Messiah, only-begotten Son, Son of God belong to the founder of the Christian religion, and to none else. They express not a relation existing before the Christian era, but relations which commenced at that time. There is no Jesus, no Messiah, no Christ, no Son of God, no Only-begotten before the reign of Augustus Caesar. I have held the idea for sixteen years that Jesus is called the Son of God, not because of an ‘eternal generation’ (which I conceive to be nonsense), but because he was born as the angel described to Mary.”

In order to understand the significance of the virgin birth, we must go back to Genesis (the book that explains a lot of things about God’s dealings with man). When Adam sinned his position as God’s representative to fulfill God’s purpose was lost. This affected all his descendants: “through the one transgression there resulted condemnation of all men...for by the transgression of one the many died” (Rom. 5:15-18). So with the earth cursed and man not being able to fulfill God’s purpose, how could this situation be remedied and God’s purpose in creation realized? But what is God’s purpose? Note carefully: “This was in accordance with the *eternal purpose* which He carried out in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:11). Notice a significant word: *eternal purpose*. The church has been so hung up on the sin of man and Jesus dying for his sins

we have missed the fact that God had a purpose before He created man. Of course God has purposed that man be saved, but that is not God's *eternal* purpose. God's main purpose could not have been to save us because man didn't need saving at first. He was not created lost. He needed to be saved in order for God's eternal purpose to be realized. To understand God's eternal purpose we go back to Genesis 1: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image according to our likeness; and let them rule over...all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth...'and God said, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (vers. 26, 28). God's eternal purpose was for man to rule the earth, have dominion over His creation and bear His image on the earth. Man's sin brought catastrophe upon Adam's race and the curse upon the earth. If God's purpose would ever be fulfilled this had to be corrected. Because of sin and alienation from God man could never remedy the problem and restore creation. God could have destroyed His creation and start over but since He had given dominion to man it was man's problem to solve. Man, having sinned could never bring about correction and fulfill God's purpose. God's eternal purpose was to be reached without sin and now it must be accomplished through victory over sin, that is, by redemption, not only of man but also of the earth. Man had to triumph over Satan who had caused the problem in the first place. Since man was to "rule over...every living thing that creeps on the earth" (Gen.1:28), he was to have rule over Satan. However, man by his disobedience to God had obeyed Satan and had "handed over" his dominion to Satan (Luke 4:6). Instead of destroying Satan along with the creation God placed everything under a curse (Gen. 3:14-19) and promised His plan would still be fulfilled by a man. He declares this in these words: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed, he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen.3:15).

The head of Satan would be bruised by the "seed of the woman", that is by a man. But man had sinned and was in no position to deal with Satan. Before he sinned man had dominion over Satan and all the earth. Now he was under the dominion of sin and there was no way he could fulfill God's purpose. But God was to restore all things through a man and there was not, and never would be one of Adam's posterity capable of the task. God could have created another man but he would not be the "seed of the woman" and what would keep him, in a world that was cursed and under the dominion of Satan from doing the same thing Adam did? There had to be a man who was not of the nature of Adam because men were "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). In order to fulfill God's purpose there would have to be a man that met the criteria of God when He said "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness" (Gen. 1:26) or a "last Adam" (I Cor. 15:45) who would be "holy, innocent and undefiled and separated from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). This could only refer to a perfect and sinless man. Thus Jesus had to be born of God and a virgin in order to be sinless; otherwise he would have had the nature of Adam, a sinful nature. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). All mankind was under the curse of death and would have to pay the wages of sin with their death because "without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22). If there were a perfect man who had never sinned, he could pay the debt for others by dying for them. However no one could die for another because his death would only pay

for his own sin. By the virgin birth there was born a sinless man who could pay the debt for all who had sinned. Thus Paul states in II Corinthians 5:14: "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died". Because Jesus was the perfect unblemished sacrifice, God accepted his death as our death and our debt was paid in full. In his death the power of Satan was broken and the promise of Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled. Satan had "bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, and the seed of the woman had crushed Satan's head."

In Old Testament history the only perfect man to have ever lived was Adam before he sinned, and he is the only one during this period of history who is called "*son of God*" (Luke 3:38), so the only way a man could be perfect and fulfill God's purpose was that he be a "son of God". Therefore the son of God could not be born of earthly parents. In the Scriptures it is the father, not the mother, who begets children. They are begotten by the father and born of the mother. The Old Testament prophets not knowing "what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating..." (I Pet. 1:11), spoke of one who would be born, not of earthly parents, but of a virgin: "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means 'God with us'" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23), "For unto us a child is born, a son will be given." (Isa. 9:6). The angel Gabriel announced the birth of son to *Mary*, not to Joseph as he had announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias, (Luke 1:13). "Behold you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child begotten shall be called the son of God" (Luke 1:31, 35). In the genealogies it is always stated the birth of a son was born to the father, not the mother, but concerning Jesus it was declared: "Matthan begat Jacob and Jacob begat Joseph" but does not say "and Joseph begat Jesus" rather "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ (Matt.1:16, 17). Contrast this with the announcement of John the Baptist: "Thy wife, Elizabeth shall bare *thee* a son (Luke 1:13). There is no *to thee* in the announcement to Joseph; rather, "...and she shall bear a son" (Matt. 1:21). Jesus was not a son born of Joseph, rather: "She shall bring forth a son". Jesus was not a son brought forth to Joseph but to the Father in Heaven.

The significance of the virgin birth is that by his virgin birth Jesus was a new creation, a new Adam. He, like Adam, was a miracle of creation directly from God, but unlike the first Adam who had no link with any earthly human being. Christ, the last Adam (I Cor. 15:45) was linked to humanity by his virgin birth to Mary. The first Adam was tempted in Paradise, and fell, the last Adam was tempted in the wilderness and began the restoration of what man had lost in the garden. A contrast between the two Adams is seen in I Corinthians 15:45-49 and Romans 5:14-21. The reason for the cure upon both man and the earth was the action of one man, so also the lifting of the curse and restoration of God's purpose was the action of one man: "Since by a man came death by man also came the resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (I Cor. 15:21, 22). -All this shows salvation, the resurrection and eternal life are all connected to the virgin birth. To deny the virgin birth is to deny the whole purpose and plan of God He accomplished in Christ.