

Christ in Prophecy

Christmas 4: “The Virgin Birth”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Belief in the virgin birth of Jesus is absolutely essential to the Christian faith. To deny the virgin birth is to deny the deity of Jesus, and if Jesus was not God in the flesh, then you and I have no hope whatsoever. Stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. I want to talk with you about the virgin birth of Jesus and why it is essential to the Christian faith and to the identity of Jesus as God in the flesh. And to help me, I have invited two colleagues to join me. The first is my former associate evangelist, Dennis Pollock. Dennis serves now as the Founder and Director of Spirit of Grace Ministries located in McKinney, Texas. It is an evangelistic and healing ministry aimed primarily at Africa and India. And the other person who is going to help us today is our newest staff member, Nathan Jones. Nathan serves both as Evangelist and as our Web Minister. He is on our website eight hours a day answering questions about Bible prophecy and assisting people in the defending of the faith. Well fellows I want us to jump right into our topic we've got a lot of material to cover here. During this Christmas season, I think it is only appropriate that we should spend sometime talking about the validity and the essentiality of the virgin birth. And Nathan, I want to start with you, how about giving us some introductory remarks.

Nathan Jones: The Bible tells us about many remarkable births, but none as remarkable as that of Jesus. Well, for example there is the birth of Isaac to parents nearly 100 years old. And then there are the births of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist all of whom were born to women with barren wombs.

Dennis Pollock: Yes, and I think we should point out that there have been some remarkable births since Bible times like the Dionne Quintuplets in Canada in the 1930's, the Stanek Sextuplets in 1973 in Texas, and the McCaughey Septuplets in 1997 in Iowa.

Nathan Jones: That was easy for you to say!

Dennis Pollock: Well, actually I had to practice a little bit! But, folks, none of those births, as difficult as they are to say, is the most spectacular birth of modern times. The most amazing birth since biblical times would have to be that of Louise Brown in Lancashire, England on July 25, 1978. She was the first baby conceived outside the human body, the first “test tube baby.”

Nathan Jones: History attests to barren wombs made fertile. History attests to amazing multiple births. History attests to conception outside the womb. But none of these births is as amazing, as miraculous, as stupendous as the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Dr. Reagan: Amen.

Nathan Jones: The birth proclaimed to the shepherds of Bethlehem by the angels of God. Now the birth of Jesus of Nazareth is the most unique birth in all recorded history, for the Bible tells us that He was born of a virgin.

Dr. Reagan: And that's where I would like for us to go right now to the Bible. Let's begin our search for biblical evidence to substantiate the virgin birth

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: To set the stage for our discussion, I would like to read a passage from Matthew 1:18-21. And I am going to read it out of a Bible that you may not be familiar with. It is called the *Jewish New Testament*. It is a translation by David Stern, who is a Messianic Jew who lives in Jerusalem. The purpose of this translation is to show that the

New Testament is a book that was written by Jews and is steeped in Jewish culture. He does this by restoring the Jewish names of people and places that have been anglicized in our English translations. Listen carefully now to this very familiar passage put in words that maybe you have never heard before. Beginning in verse 18: “Here is how the birth of Yeshua the Messiah took place. When His mother Miryam was engaged to Yosef, before they were married, she was found to be pregnant from the Ruach-HaKodesh [the Holy Spirit]. Her husband-to-be, Yosef, was a man who did what was right; so he made plans to break the engagement quietly, rather than put her to public shame. But while he was thinking about this, an angel of Adonai appeared to him in a dream and said, “Yosef, son of David, do not be afraid to take Miryam home with you as your wife; for what has been conceived in her is from the Ruach-HaKodesh. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Yeshua [which means, ‘Adonai saves,’] because He will save His people from their sins.” And all this happened in order to fulfill what Adonai had said through the prophet, “The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call Him Immanuel.” (The name means, “God is with us.”)

Nathan Jones: As you can see, the Bible clearly states that Jesus was born of a virgin. And, I tell you, folks, I don’t think it would be an overstatement to say that Satan hates the fact of the virgin birth. He hates it because it attests to the divinity of Jesus, and Satan is determined to do everything possible to convince the world that Jesus was just a man.

Dennis Pollock: The point that Nathan just made was illustrated in a song contained in the popular Broadway musical and movie called, “Jesus Christ, Superstar.” In one of the key scenes in the production, Mary Magdalene sings a song about Jesus while he is sleeping. The words go like this: “I don't know how to love him. What to do, how to move him. I've been changed, yes really changed. In these past few days, when I've seen myself, I seem like someone else. I don't know how to take this. I don't see why he moves me. He's a man. He's just a man. And I've had so many men before, in very many ways, He's just one more.” I want you to notice the words, “He’s a man, he’s just a man.” Satan has orchestrated attacks like this on the fact of the virgin birth ever since it was proclaimed to the shepherds in Bethlehem. Philosophers and scientists scoff at it as nothing but a “childish myth.” Jewish leaders, from the earliest of times, have written it

off as “a cruel hoax.” Saddest of all, many modern day Christian theologians contend that it is “a non-essential legend.”

Dr. Reagan: Folks, today, the virgin birth is flagrantly denied by professors at many Christian seminaries. In fact, I would venture to say that it is the most ridiculed doctrine in the Christian faith. It is usually dismissed as nothing but a “Johnny-come-lately myth” conjured up by a bunch of ignorant shepherds in the First Century.

Nathan Jones: Dave’s observations are supported by a recent survey of Protestant seminaries. The survey showed that only 56% of students polled believe in the virgin birth, and many of those will cease believing before they graduate. The 44% who denied the virgin birth stated that Jesus was born of Mary and Joseph, or of an illicit love affair between Mary and a Roman soldier, or a Greek merchant. Or, they said they just didn’t know where Jesus came from!

Dennis Pollock: Even in the time of Jesus His origin was a matter of ambivalence and constant speculation. In John 6 we are told that the Jewish leaders scoffed at His claim that He had come from Heaven. They said, “How can you claim that you came from Heaven when we know your mother and father?” In John 7 we are told that some of the residents of Jerusalem rejected Jesus’ claim to be Messiah because they said, “We know where you came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he came from.” And in John 8 we are told that some of the people accused Jesus of being born of fornication while others claimed he was a half-breed Samaritan.

Nathan Jones: Another interesting thing is that Jesus Himself revealed the reason for all this ambivalence about His origin. Listen to this passage in Matthew 16, “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’ Now note carefully this last verse. Jesus said His divinity had been revealed to Peter by God the Father. The point is that the only way that anyone will ever

know the deity of Jesus is by a divine revelation from God. Man will never come to this through philosophy, theology, or science. It must be revealed.

Dr. Reagan: You got that right, Nathan. Folks, man through his own knowledge will always conclude that Jesus was just a great scholar, or teacher, or prophet, or leader, or whatever. But Man, reasoning on his own, will always miss the central point that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. And therefore, man operating in the flesh will always deny the virgin birth because the virgin birth and the deity of Jesus are absolutely inseparable. If Jesus is God, then He must be born of God. He cannot be born of human parents. It is therefore my position that to deny the virgin birth is to deny the deity of Jesus.

Dennis Pollock: I would agree, Dave. You see, folks without the virgin birth, Jesus is, in the words of the Broadway musical, “just another man,” born with the flawed sin nature inherited by all of us from Adam. And if Jesus is just another man, then you and I have no hope whatsoever. That’s why the virgin birth is not a peripheral issue. It is central to the Christian faith.

Dr. Reagan: It certainly is, Dennis, it certainly is. And folks, in just a moment we’re going to shift our attention from the essentiality of the virgin birth to the validity of it. In the process we will take a look at the evidence that the virgin birth of Jesus really did occur. But before we do that, we are going to pause for a message about a very special publication of this ministry.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Let’s continue with the Christmas story by reading from Luke 1, beginning with verse 26, once again using the Jewish New Testament translation. It reads as follows: “In the sixth month, the angel Gavri’el was sent by God to a city in the Galil called Natzeret, to a virgin engaged to a man named Yosef, of the house of David; the virgin’s name was Miryam. Approaching her, the angel said, ‘Shalom, favored lady! Adonai is with you!’ She was deeply troubled by his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid, Miryam, for you have found favor with God. Look! You will become pregnant, you will give birth to a son, and

you are to name Him Yeshua. He will be great, He will be called the Son of HaElyon [meaning Son of the most High]. Adonai, God, will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will rule the House of Ya'akov forever, there will be no end to His Kingdom.” Now, before we consider the evidence of the virgin birth that is presented in these verses, I want to remind all of us of one very important fact. The person who wrote these verses was a man named Luke who happened to be a medical doctor. This is important because he gives us more information about the virgin birth than all the rest of the Gospel writers combined.

Nathan Jones: I mean, think of it, folks God used a medical doctor, a man of science, to give us the detailed facts about the virgin birth. And I believe He did this on purpose so that no one could rightfully dismiss the story as mythological imaginations of ignorant and superstitious person. The witness here is a medical doctor!

Dennis Pollock: Another thing we need to keep in mind as we consider these verses from Luke is that in that day and time, there was no such thing as a shot-gun weddings. A formal marriage contract was negotiated and signed at which point the couple was considered to be married, but the marriage was not consummated until after a waiting period of 9 months to a year. During that time the husband prepared a house for them to live in and the wife proved her faithfulness.

Nathan Jones: Dennis, and if a woman got pregnant during that time period, she'd be in trouble. It meant she would either be stoned to death for infidelity or else be humiliated by a divorce decree. So, Gabriel's announcement that Mary was to become pregnant during that waiting period carried grave consequences, to say the least. Let's consider Mary's response.

Dr. Reagan: Okay let's pick up again in Luke 1, beginning with verse 34 reading from the Jewish New Testament. “‘How can this be,’ asked Miryam of the angel, ‘Since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered her, ‘The Ruach HaKodesh [the Holy Spirit] will come over you, and the power of HaElyon [the Most High God] will cover you. Therefore, the holy child born to you will be called the Son of God. You have a relative, Elisheva, who is an old woman; and everyone says she is barren. But she has conceived a son and is six

months pregnant! For with God, nothing is impossible.' Miryam said, 'I am the servant of Adonai; may it happen to me as you have said.'

Dennis Pollock: Now the first thing we need to note about Mary's response is that she was no naive child. She knew what it took to have a baby, and so she immediately proclaimed, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' Gabriel responds by telling her that the conception will be miraculous by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Nathan Jones: And, Dennis, I think it is important to note that the miraculous conception is Bible prophecy.

Dennis Pollock: Amen.

Nathan Jones: I mean at the dawn of history, in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them that one day they would be reconciled to Him through "the seed of woman." That statement clearly implies a Messiah who would be virgin born. Thousands of years later, the prophet Isaiah specifically stated that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. We know from the Talmud that even the Jewish rabbis interpreted these verses to mean that the Messiah would be born of "no earthly father," and that His conception would be "like the dew of the Lord upon a woman."

Dr. Reagan: And Nathan, the Gospel of Luke not only records the fulfillment of these particular prophecies, it also provides confirmation that the conception was truly miraculous in nature. Listen carefully to these next few verses. Beginning here in verse 39, it says, "Without delay, Miryam set out and hurried to the town in the hill country of Y'hudah where Z'kharyah lived, entered his house and greeted Elisheva. When Elisheva heard Miryam's greeting, the baby in her womb stirred. Elisheva was filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and spoke up in a loud voice, and said, 'How blessed is the child in your womb!' 'Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy! Indeed you are blessed, because you have trusted that the promise Adonai has made to you will be fulfilled.'

Dennis Pollock: Notice that the innocence of Mary is attested to over and over again in these particular verses. For example, the first thing they tell us is that Mary ran to a relative, Elizabeth, to share with her the good news of her pregnancy. Let me ask you, how many pregnant unwed girls have you ever seen behave in that manner? They are normally overwhelmed with shame, and the last people they want to know about their situation would be their relatives!

Nathan Jones: You can say that again, Dennis, because her innocence is yet again proven by the fact that she ran to a priestly family. You see, folks, Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, was a priest. If Mary were pregnant by fornication, it would have been the responsibility of Zacharias to report her and have her tried and even stoned to death.

Dennis Pollock: I think Mary's innocence is also confirmed by the reaction of Elizabeth when she cried out, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" She did that before Mary could even tell her the purpose of her visit! The passage says she did it under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Elizabeth was given a supernatural word of knowledge, and this must have served as a confirmation to Mary of the message that Gabriel had given her.

Nathan Jones: And further confirmation is supplied by John the Baptist who at that time was still in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth. He began to leap with joy in his mother's womb when Mary arrived, because he sensed the presence of the Messiah!

Dr. Reagan: Yes, and then people have the audacity to say that a child in the womb is not a human being! But that is another issue for another time. Let's get back to our story here. Folks, we are going to begin reading again here in Luke chapter 1, beginning with verse 46, and it says this, "Miryam said." And here Miryam begins to sing a song. "My soul magnifies Adonai; and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, who has taken notice of his servant-girl in her humble position. For imagine it! From now on, all generations will call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me! Indeed, His name is Holy; and in every generation He has mercy on those who fear Him."

Dennis Pollock: I ask you, folks, what unwed pregnant girl has ever behaved in this manner? The behavior of Mary is the behavior of innocence. And another confirmation of

her innocence is the behavior of her husband, Joseph. Matthew says that because Joseph was a righteous man, he at first wanted to divorce her quietly, but then changed his mind and decided to go ahead with the marriage because an angel appeared to him and assured him of Mary's innocence.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: Well folks, as we have seen, the Scriptures are filled with solid evidence of the virgin birth. And yet, they do not prove the virgin birth because the virgin birth, like the deity of Jesus and His resurrection, must ultimately be accepted by faith. But, we are not called to exercise a blind faith. We are given substantial evidence upon which to base our faith.

Nathan Jones: And even with all that substantial evidence, the world keeps screaming "It is impossible!" In response, we need to keep in mind the words that the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary. He said, "With God, nothing is impossible."

Dr. Reagan: Amen! Nathan, and Amen again. Folks, what the world so desperately needs today is the simple, child-like faith of Mary when she said, "Behold, I am the hand maiden of the Lord; let it be done to me according to the Lord's Word."

Dennis Pollock: In that regard Dave, I'd like to add a word about Mary. You know folks, in the Protestant tradition Mary has been almost completely ignored, probably due to the fact that Catholics have given her so much attention. Now, she certainly is not to be elevated to the status of a god, as some have done, but she does deserve our attention. For one thing, most people don't seem to be aware of the fact that she was probably only about 14 years old at most when she was visited by the angel Gabriel. That was the age of marriage in Israel at that time, as it still is in much of that part of the world. So, we are talking here about a teenage girl who is a model of faith and purity and devotion to God. And one of the keys to her character is revealed in the song of rejoicing that she sang when she was pregnant with the Christ Child. That song, recorded in Luke 1, reveals that she was steeped in the Scriptures. She obviously had been born into a righteous family where she had been taught God's Word from childhood.

Nathan Jones: Nevertheless, Dennis, she was still a sinner in need of a Savior, just like us.

Dr. Reagan: And that's right, Nathan. And she began her song of rejoicing by saying, "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." My Savior, you know like Mary, all of us have sinned folks, all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. All of us need a Savior. Nathan, when people contact you thru our website as they do everyday, asking you what they must do to be saved, what do you tell them?

Nathan Jones: Well Dave, I go back to the ground level, to the very beginning. When God first made mankind we had a perfect, personal relationship with Him. We could walk and talk and see God face-to-face. But, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they rebelled against Him. And they broke that perfect relationship with their sin. And, as the Bible tells us in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." Because of sin, all people then began to die and now face the same just judgment God's going to give Satan and his rebellious demons, namely, Hell. And so, not only did Adam and Eve begin to live in rebellion against God, but we ourselves live in rebellion against God because of our own sin, for as Romans goes on to tell us, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Have you ever lied? Have you ever stolen something? Have you ever committed adultery in your heart by looking at someone lustfully? If you've done even one of those things, then you, too, have sinned. Do you realize that you are a sinner living in rebellion against God and are in need of His forgiveness? Maybe the most wonderful characteristic about God is His love. He doesn't want to send us to Hell, even though His just nature requires Him to do so. God demonstrated His own love for us in this, that even while we were still sinners, He sent His son Jesus to die in our place for our sins. Jesus' death is God's lifeline to us. He's done all the work on the cross. Jesus even beat death for us by coming back to life. But, like any free gift, it must be accepted. If you were floating and lost in an ocean and a ship threw you a life preserver, you'd have to accept it and grab hold of it to be rescued. And the same goes with God's life preserver, God's salvation. When God promised in Acts 2:21 that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. To grab hold of God's promise, pray right now. Dear Jesus, forgive me of my sins. Be my Savior. Jesus in turn will make you a brand new person inside, and when you die, He promises you will live forever with Him in perfect peace.

And that relationship is restored. You are a new creation, and considered a child of God. If you haven't got a Bible, go get one quickly and begin reading the part called the Gospel According to John. Gather with others who have accepted Jesus as Savior so you can grow in your knowledge and relationship with God. And tell others by being baptized and allowing God's Holy Spirit to live in you so that God can guide you in developing your personal relationship with Him.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you, Nathan, I appreciate that. And now folks, let's pause for a moment for a message about a special DVD Christmas album we have produced.

Part 5

Dr. Reagan: I want to share with you three of my all time favorite Christmas cards. The first is entitled, "God's Greatest Gift." And it was a message written by Amanda Bradley. Nathan, how about reading it for us.

Nathan Jones: Sure. Christmas reminds us of God's greatest gift that He sent on that glorious night, Jesus was born in a Bethlehem stable beneath a star's heavenly light. Christmas reminds us to share our faith always and practice God's message of giving, to give when we're needed and do all we can to bring joy and beauty to living. Christmas reminds us to reach out to others as God reaches out from above. Christmas reminds us there will always be hope, there will always be God and His love. May the joy of Christmas fill your heart with happiness today, may the hope of Christmas light your path and guide you on your way. May the promise of Christmas help to show God's boundless love for you, may the blessings of Christmas warm your heart today and always, too.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you, Nathan that was beautiful. And now, Dennis, I would like you to read the second one. This was one was written by a fellow by the name of B. J. Hoff. Okay.

Dennis Pollock: The first time He came, He came gently on a starlit night, in a silent hush, with no fanfare. But when He comes again, the earth will shake, the stars will fall,

as the trumpets of Heaven announce His presence. The first time He came, He was ignored and scorned, despised and rejected and tortured. But when He comes again, all nations will gather to kneel before Him, declaring His glory and singing His praise. The first time He came, He hung on a rugged cross in shame, betrayed by His own, to die as a thief. But when He comes again, He will sit on His throne, as the Universe shouts in triumphant joy and crowns Him everlasting King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He comes to us again and again in many ways, with many gifts. May He come to you this Christmas and make our season of rejoicing all that it was ever meant to be.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you Dennis, that was powerful. And now folks, I would like to conclude by reading my all time favorite card, written by an unknown author. It is entitled, "The Mystery of the Incarnation." He who is Almighty, became a suckling baby. He who is all wise, took on the dumbness of a new born. He whom the heavens cannot contain, was enclosed in a woman's womb. He before whom the seraphim continually cry, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" was born of a sinner into a world under the dominion of sin. He who is unchanging, went through nine months of constant change to enter a world of change. He who is infinite, became but a microscopic cell. He who is all-knowing, had to communicate through baby cries. He who is love, was born outside a hotel because no one had room for His laboring mother. He who is the Creator, became a creature. He who has always been spirit, took on the awkwardness of a human body. He who is eternal, allowed Himself to be bound by time. He who is light, was entombed for nine months in warm darkness. He who is just, was accused of being an illegitimate child. He who is sovereign God, became dependent on a human man and woman for His food and clothing. He who is clothed with majesty, was laid at birth in a cattle trough. He who alone is self-sufficient, had to be cleaned and nursed. He who is life, was born with a death warrant around His neck. Can there be a greater mystery? Can there be a greater miracle? I don't think so, and that is why I keep a tiny nativity scene on my desk all the time. Here's what it looks like. Well, folks, that's it for this week. We hope this program has been a blessing to you. Until next week, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near!"

End of Program