

Christ in Prophecy

Christmas 8: 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. 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's an evangelistic and healing ministry that's aimed primarily at Africa. Welcome back Dennis.

Dennis Pollock: Thanks, Dave.

Dr. Reagan: Always good to have you.

Dennis Pollock: Glad to be here.

Dr. Reagan: The other person on the set with me today is my colleague, and co-host, Web Minister and Associate Evangelist, Nathan Jones. He is on our website every day answering questions about Bible prophecy and assisting people in defending the Christian faith. Nathan, glad to have you.

Nathan Jones: Thank you, Dave.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, fellas I want us to jump right into this topic. And during the Christmas season I think it is important for us to discuss both the validity of the virgin birth, and also as a necessity of the Christian faith. Folks, the importance of this topic is due to the fact that there is probably no doctrine of the Christian Church that is held in greatest contempt today than the virgin birth of Jesus. It is has been declared non-essential to the faith. And it has been written off as a mythical belief conjured up by some uneducated fishermen who became Jesus' disciples. Yet, the Bible clearly states that Jesus was born of a virgin. Let me just take a moment to read a few verses from the Gospel of Matthew and I want to read them from the Jewish New Testament. This is what it looks like here. This was a translation by David Stern, who is a Messianic Jew who lives in Jerusalem, and it gives the Jewish flavor of the story of Jesus. Beginning here in Matthew chapter 1:18, "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," that's 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.' All this happened in order to fulfill what Adonai had said through the prophet," and I quote, "The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, meaning God is with us." Ok, fellas, how about it: Is the virgin birth a myth that is not essential to the Christian faith? Dennis, let's start with you, you are always the deep theologian.

Dennis Pollock: Well, I don't know about that.

Dr. Reagan: Let's start with you, and have you talk about whether or not this is a myth that is not essential to the Christian faith.

Dennis Pollock: Sure, well, firstly I have to say it's hard for me to understand why people would not believe it. I mean the Bible is filled with miracles. And one of the things that makes an Evangelical an Evangelical is to believe the Scriptures, take them seriously, and accept what they say. And you know there are so many miracles in the Bible, why not a virgin birth? But, let's start in terms of why there had to be one with the idea of normal reproduction. When a baby is conceived what you have is the seed of a man that will penetrate the egg of a woman. And once that penetration has occurred there is an explosion where the very DNA and the nature of that man fills that egg, so you have a combination of the woman, and the man. And the baby is born sometimes looking like the father, sometimes like the mother, but the man's attributes are placed in that egg. Now, along with the guys eyes, or his eye color, or his hair or lack thereof, or whatever else he is going to give to that baby there is a sin nature that somehow mysteriously gets placed in that baby.

Dr. Reagan: Ever since Adam.

Dennis Pollock: Ever since Adam. And once that baby is born and you have your baby and he is so sweet, and he looks like an angel. But guess what? You do not have to teach your baby selfishness, it comes so naturally, so easily. And so, what happens is all of us, me, you, everybody else is born with that sin nature and we are flawed, we make mistakes, we sin, we do things we shouldn't, we have poor judgment. Now, for Jesus Christ to be born into this world, if He is who the Bible says He is which is the Son of God, and God manifest in the flesh, He could not have a sin nature. The process had to be changed; it could not be the normal way. So, rather than the seed of the father penetrating the egg of the mother, what you had was the Word of God coming to Mary, and creating a divine release of God's DNA, and there was no sin nature associated with it. So, when Jesus was born no selfishness, no mine, I, me, I've got to have it. None of that stuff. And therefore He became our Savior because of that divine imputation. He's different from any other man. It's an amazing thing because He looked like a man. He acted like a man. He sweat. He ate meals. He did all the stuff that people do, and yet the Bible says He was the Word. He was with God in the beginning before He ever came along. You had a beginning. I had a beginning. And we all had beginnings, but not Jesus.

Dr. Reagan: You're saying the virgin birth was essential to His divinity?

Dennis Pollock: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: It was essential to His being our Savior.

Dennis Pollock: Right.

Dr. Reagan: Because He had to live a sinless life otherwise He couldn't die for our sins.

Dennis Pollock: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: The wages of sin is death. We die because we're sinners.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: But He's the only person who's ever lived who didn't sin and therefore He did not deserve to die. He died for you and me.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah, it is kind of amazing because on the one hand He had to be like us.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dennis Pollock: He is our High Priest. He had to look like a man. Think like a man. Do like a man, in almost every area, but he had to be totally different from us in the aspect that He had to be without sin whatsoever to be that sacrificial lamb. And He was both, He was both fully man, and yet fully God, and He was like a man in every other way. You know He didn't have the big halo around His head as He walked around. And people didn't just automatically see Him and say, "Well, that is obviously the Messiah. I mean look at Him, He looks just like the painting in my living room." No, He looked like an ordinary Jewish young man. And He was a young man by the way. You know sometimes we think, we'll He was Jesus but He was a 30 some year old man, and to me 30 some seems mighty young these days.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dennis Pollock: But He was also God, and He was ancient, and He had no beginning, so, Jesus an amazing person.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to our discussion of the virgin birth of Jesus. We have seen that the virgin birth is essential to the deity of Jesus and to His role as Savior. If He was God in the flesh He had to be born of God and not of man. And if He was to be our Savior He had to be born without a sin nature inherited from Adam, enabling Him to live a sinless life so He could die for the sins of mankind and not for His own sins. But what about the veracity of the Scriptures on this point? Is the virgin birth a myth or a reality? Before we discuss that question let me set the stage for it by reading another set of verses from the Jewish New Testament beginning with Luke 1:26, "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 Ha Elyon, that's God the Highest. God, will give Him the throne of His forefather David; and He will rule the House of Ya'akov forever, there will be no end to His Kingdom.' 'How can this be,' asked Miryam of the angel, 'I am a virgin?' The angel answered

her, 'The Ruach HaKodesh, will come on you, and the power of Ha Elyon, 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, 'Well, I am the servant of Adonai; may it happen to me as you have said.' And 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. And 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, 'How blessed are you among women. How blessed is the child in your womb! But, 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!" She is speaking of John the Baptist there. "Indeed you are blessed, because you have trusted that the promise Adonai has made to you will be fulfilled. Then Miryam said, 'My soul magnifies Adonai; and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.'" Nathan, let's start with you. What evidence do we have there that Mary was really a virgin?

Nathan Jones: Well I think the strongest evidence is the reaction that people have to Mary. Starting first with Mary's reaction to Gabriel, I mean here it is it has been 400 years the Jewish people haven't heard anything from God. This angel appears to a 13, 14 year old girl and says, "Hello, favored one you are going to give birth to the son of God." And she says, "Well," immediately--

Dr. Reagan: She obviously knew how birth occurred because she--

Nathan Jones: Yeah, yeah and she was of marrying age even at that young age even at that time. But immediately she says, "How can this be, I have never known a man?" or as that interpretation said, "a virgin." It's impossible, physically impossible and Gabriel has to explain it. Now, I assume that her parents and everybody thought she was nuts, but the angel said that Elizabeth would be pregnant in her old age. So more than likely the family knew a miracle has already happened in the family. And how does Joseph react? He doesn't have her stoned like he could, but he reacts quietly. He was going to quietly divorce her because he wasn't convinced until the angel visited him and told him. But then where does Mary go? She goes to a priest's house; Elizabeth's husband.

Dr. Reagan: A priest house?

Nathan Jones: A priest. Now as a priest he would have been required to bring Mary up for adultery because they were considered, she and Joseph in the engagement phase at the time, and she should have been stoned. And yet she feels safe going to him. And then John the Baptist himself in the womb leaps for joy.

Dr. Reagan: I love that.

Nathan Jones: Again--isn't it great! A baby.

Dr. Reagan: Incidentally how many young woman at that time in that kind of society, not the society that we live in today, but that kind would run to relatives to share that they are pregnant?

Nathan Jones: Yeah. Yeah. I mean again and again the reaction of the people, some of them are in little disbelief but overall they believe her, and she seems to be proud of it. She is not hiding. She's not denying it. So, clearly it was something miraculous.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, and also I thought it was interesting that Elizabeth had a word of knowledge from the Lord because she immediately proclaimed, "You're the mother of the Messiah."

Nathan Jones: Yeah, where would she have gotten that unless she in her old age had gotten pregnant?

Dennis Pollock: Well, it is exciting to me to see how people are getting filled with the Spirit right and left. You have Elizabeth, the Bible says she was filled with the Spirit. John the Baptist seems to get his anointing. You know the Bible says he would be filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb, so I think that is when that happened. And later Zacharias when he gets his voice back when John is born he gets filled with the Spirit. So, Jesus, before He's ever born is filling people with the Holy Spirit and there is excitement. And here's something interesting for the last 400 years there has been absolute silence in Israel, nothing's going on. No prophecy. No miracles. No anointing much of anybody. And suddenly things are happening, it's like God is on the move and it's His time to present His Son to the world.

Dr. Reagan: And one of the things that I find very interesting about this is that God knew in His wisdom that people would attack this doctrine. He knew that they would say, "Well, this is just conjured up by a bunch of ignorant fisherman who were following Jesus after He died." You know that they were trying to make Him a god of something. But who was it that was writing all this, Dennis?

Dennis Pollock: Well, it was Luke.

Dr. Reagan: And why is that significant?

Dennis Pollock: Well, he was a physician.

Dr. Reagan: He was a medical doctor.

Dennis Pollock: He was a sharp guy. Yeah. You know one of the interesting things to me is you know you wonder how did Luke find all this out, you know? Now some of it was by word of mouth by the time he wrote this, but there are somethings that you wonder how did he find out? For example later on in the story it tells how when the shepherds came Mary pondered all these things. Luke how did you know she pondered those things? You know what I'm guessing and I think we've got a pretty strong reason to believe this is that Luke sat down with Mary and said, "Mary, tell me from start to finish." "Well, it started out I was in my room just minding my own business and suddenly bam this guy named Gabriel shows up." And she tells the whole story. So she's telling him, "Yeah, and I thought about, I thought about it. I couldn't wrap my mind around it." So, anyway it is an amazing story and it bears all the marks of truth. This is not just some figment of somebodies imagination. And you look at Jesus' life He had the goods, you know, this is not somebody that was proclaimed to be a prodigy and then disappointed and fizzled out. I mean--

Nathan Jones: Nor was it a doctrine from later too because the early Church Fathers you have Tertullian, and Justin Martyr, and Ignatius, they all confirmed it as well. The Early Church from the very beginning believed in the virgin birth, it is not something that showed up hundreds of years later.

Dennis Pollock: And Christians have always believed that until this so called Higher Criticism rose up and people started doubting the Scriptures. But again if God can do all the other miracles, why not a virgin birth?

Dr. Reagan: That's the point. It gets right down modern day critics who call themselves Christians I'm not talking about Atheists, but people who call, basically what you have is people who do not believe in the supernatural. So, they deny the miracles of Jesus. They deny the virgin birth. They deny the resurrection and yet still call themselves Christians. I wonder why they bother?

Dennis Pollock: Thomas Jefferson came up with his own version of the New Testament and he left off every miraculous deed of Jesus, everything that was supernatural and basically turned into a humanistic of us.

Dr. Reagan: He also did not include the resurrection.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: He just cut it out. I mean he put his own New Testament together because he was a rationalist who did not believe in the supernatural.

Nathan Jones: That is why I love that old hymn, "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, then to trust and obey." We just need to trust that the Bible is the Word of God.

Dr. Reagan: Amen. And I think this is--one of the things that is interesting about this is this story is not written like a mythical story. If you are familiar with myths of the Greeks or the Romans or any kind of mythical literature you know it just doesn't even have the flavor of myth. It's written by a highly intelligent medical doctor who wrote a lot of the New Testament, and was a person who knew how babies were conceived and how they were born. He wasn't some guy who was just making up things here.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah, Luke was very precise. Out of all the Gospel writers he seemed to just be very methodical, precise man, wanted to get all his I's dotted and his T's crossed and we can believe him.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I believe it.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah I do too.

Dr. Reagan: And I think--

Dennis Pollock: People that don't need to get saved is basically what happens I think. You couldn't be Born Again and not believe these things.

Dr. Reagan: Amen. Amen.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to our discussion of the truth and essentiality of the virgin birth. Well, fellas do you have any final comments or thoughts that you want to share with us about this topic?

Dennis Pollock: Well we've got several scriptures in the Old Testament that speak about this virgin birth, and one is Genesis 3:15.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, and incidentally those are very important because they make it very clear that the virgin birth was not just some afterthought after Jesus died.

Dennis Pollock: Right.

Dr. Reagan: But it's clearly prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures that the Messiah was going to be born a virgin. In fact even the Jewish Sages accepted the idea that the Messiah would have to be virgin born. So let's look--fact this is the very first Messianic prophecy in the Bible isn't it?

Dennis Pollock: Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, Genesis 3:15 what does it say?

Dennis Pollock: So, it is actually strangely enough God speaking to the Devil, to the Serpent and saying you are going to be cursed, and he says I'll be enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed, He shall bruise your head, you shall bruise His heel. So he speaks of Jesus as the seed of the woman, not your husband seed, but your seed. So the idea is a woman shall, a virgin shall produce a child.

Dr. Reagan: No man necessary here.

Dennis Pollock: No man necessary because He'll be born of the seed of woman.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Dennis Pollock: Ok.

Nathan Jones: I think the most explicit one is Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Right there that prophecy requires that the Messiah be born of a virgin. So, Jesus fulfilled prophecy. Now, they always say that Jesus could fulfill prophecy afterward. You know maybe He could show up at Bethlehem at the right time. How does one get born of a virgin? You can't plan that.

Dennis Pollock: No, you cannot plan that at all.

Dr. Reagan: That's for sure. Well, there are some others though. What about do you have available the scripture another one in Isaiah, Isaiah 9:6?

Nathan Jones: Yes, Isaiah 9:6.

Dr. Reagan: Because it also speaks of the, not only the fact that He would be God in the flesh. You got it there?

Nathan Jones: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and of the increase of His government in peace there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over His Kingdom to order it and establishment with judgment and justice from this time forward, even forever."

Dr. Reagan: He will be Mighty God. What about Micah 5:2 where it also talks about--you know we think of Micah 5:2 in only one regard and that is it is the prophecy about where Jesus will be born in Bethlehem. But the prophecy also says He will be from everlasting. In other words it's another prophecy that He will be God in the flesh, which means He has to be virgin born. Read that for us Dennis.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah. "But you Bethlehem Ephrathah though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the One to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old from everlasting." So, if you just said, "Alright let's see how many people from Bethlehem might qualify as even a possible Messiah, you know they made some splash in the world? They were born in Bethlehem." Well, ok, one, exactly one. And that happened to be Jesus Christ.

Nathan Jones: But Bethlehem wasn't just pointed out here it is also pointing out that it is Bethlehem Ephrathah because there were two Bethlehems, right? Kind of like there is a Springfield in every state.

Dr. Reagan: One up near Galilee.

Nathan Jones: So they actually pointed out the particular Bethlehem He would be born in.

Dennis Pollock: And His goings forth were from of old. He existed before He was ever born, the incarnation. Really the greatest miracle. You know you talk about the miracles of Jesus, the incarnation, the fact that God came and lived inside human flesh for those years, amazing.

Dr. Reagan: You know Dennis one of the things that just occurs me about all of this is that we are talking here about babies in the womb. We are not talking about protoplasm or something like that. We are talking about babies in the womb. We are talking about John the Baptist leaping with joy. We are talking about Jesus in the womb. And yet today people deny that a child in the womb is a human being.

Dennis Pollock: Yeah, Elizabeth when Mary came to visit her and she felt that jumping in her womb said, "The babe that is in my womb leaped for joy." She didn't say, "Well my fetus was responding to your fetus." But it was obviously a baby. And you know even if you are so stubborn and hard hearted that you say well I'm not positive it's a baby. Even if you allow that it might be a baby you have no right aborting that child or promoting abortion, even if there is a chance. But of course if you study the Scriptures it is more than just a chance. And there's a reason why we Evangelicals are universally against abortion, and this is one of those reasons.

Dr. Reagan: And one of the things that always gets me is the hypocrisy of some of those who oppose any kind of limitation on abortion, you know. For example they will say, "Yeah I believe that we ought to have a law that punishes anyone who destroys an eagle egg, because after all that's an eagle."

Dennis Pollock: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: But then they'll turn around and say, "Oh, but we should have abortion."

Dennis Pollock: A woman's right to choose.

Dr. Reagan: I mean, come--a woman's right to choose to murder, to kill.

Dennis Pollock: Exactly. Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: And this is something of course that can be forgiven by the Lord. I know there may be people watching who have had an abortion, they should know that the Lord's grace and mercy can cover that if they repent of it and turn to Him.

Dennis Pollock: But they need to acknowledge it.

Dr. Reagan: But they need to acknowledge it. But if an eagle in an egg is an eagle, why isn't a baby in the womb a baby?

Dennis Pollock: Yeah, absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: I just can't see that there is any difference here.

Dennis Pollock: This passage is very clear about it. And of course you have Jeremiah where God tells Jeremiah "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." If God knows us before we ever get our start then once we start out nobody better mess with us. Imagine if you went to an artist who was creating a masterpiece and he was about half way through. And you say, "Excuse me," and you rip up the canvas and absolutely destroy his masterpiece. Do you suppose he'll be very happy? Well, God is that artist and every time a woman is pregnant He is creating a masterpiece and nobody has the right to mess with that masterpiece.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, I love that passage in Jeremiah where he says in the womb you called me. In the womb you called me to be a prophet to my people. God already had a plan for him. And how many people has He had a plan for and who were aborted and that plan thwarted?

I'm always struck by the sacrifice that God made to have all the power in the universe and put yourself into something so helpless as an unborn baby. I mean--

Dr. Reagan: It's something.

It gets me every time I read that story.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: As we bring this program to a close I want to ask Dennis to look right into that camera in front of you Dennis and tell any person watching that does not know Jesus what they must do.

Dennis Pollock: Sure. The Bible says as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become the Children of God. So, we come to Christ by receiving Him through faith in a simple prayer: Lord Jesus, come into my life. I believe in You. You are the Son of God. You died on the cross. You rose again. Forgive my sins. I put my faith in You. The words don't have to be exact but the heart has to be sincere.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you, Dennis. I really appreciate that. Folks, I want to conclude this program today by reading to you the words from my all-time favorite Christmas card. They begin with this, "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 any 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 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 this tiny nativity scene on my desk at all time. 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