



Front Cover

A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE AND BEAR A SON

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

A number of years ago, I read the results of a national survey made among preachers who were members of, and preached to, a large number of denominations in American. The subject of the survey was the *inspiration* of the Bible. I was both surprised and shocked that a large percentage of them did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible. They did not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. They rejected the miracles of Jesus and the apostles. In the survey a question was asked about their belief in hell. A sizable number of them said that they did not believe that the wicked would be punished in hell. In fact, they affirmed that they did not believe there is a hell. A substantial number of them did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. And, the survey continued with other such questions and one was made to wonder why such men would claim to be Christians and live their entire lives preaching for these various churches.

Some years ago a friend and an elder in the church where I preached occasionally played golf on a Saturday morning with a First Christian church preacher who *pastored* a large university church. In the course of the game, this preacher asked Hague Lindsey, "Do you mean to tell me that you believe such miracles of the Bible as Noah and the flood, the cleansing of Naaman the leper, and Jonah and the great fish," and other recorded miracles? Brother Lindsay then asked him, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" The preacher abruptly closed the discussion by saying, "Lindsay, you are pressing me."

Is it not a travesty on the church of the Lord that the people this preacher represented were once united with us in full fellowship? This is not to infer that all the members of the Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ, deny the miracles of the Bible; but it does say that there are preachers among them who reject those miracles and disclaim the inspiration of the word of God. Some translators of the Bible have rendered the word *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14 as the term *young woman*. And, an astonishing number of people, along

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with those preachers who deny the *virgin birth* of Christ, have made this a part of their religious belief. "I believe in Christ and I think Him to be the greatest teacher of all time" we are told, "but, I do not believe in the miracles of the Bible."

I was visiting in the home of a man in London many years ago and, during one of the conversations, the man of the house injected this statement into our discussion: "These preachers [in the English church] expect me to believe in the crucifixion of Christ!"

In this lesson, I should like to give the Bible reasons for believing in the *virgin birth* of our Lord Jesus Christ and show, therefore, that the word in Isaiah 7:14 must be translated *virgin*.

1. In the first place, the prophet Isaiah states that *God will give you a sign*. Let this lesson bear heavily upon your thinking: the source of this sign is God. God will give it. That makes it authentic in every sense of the word. Furthermore, a sign is something special. What sign would it be for just any maiden or any young woman to conceive and bear a son?

Multiple millions of young women have conceived and born children through the centuries. The latest statistics in the United States show that more than four million young women gave birth to children last year. What is unusual about this? Is the prophet telling us that this had reference to an ordinary, everyday occurrence of the birth of a child whose mother was a young woman?

Maybe we need to look at the word sign as it is used in the chapter and also in Matthew 1:23. The Greek word in the Old Testament Septuagint (LXX) is *semeion* and it means, as defined by the Hebrew and Greek scholars: "A sign by which anything is distinguished; proof, pledge, evidence."

The definition is continued in these words: "a wonder, remarkable event, wonderful appearance, extraordinary phenomenon, miraculous operation, a wonderful work, a miracle" (—Harper). Does the God-given *sign* in Isaiah 7:14 refer to any maiden who bears a child?

Do the mothers who give birth to their children in our hospitals every day in this or any other country meet the criterion of this definition? Is it some kind of a miraculous sign, an extraordinary

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phenomenon, when a young woman bears a child? It makes you wonder what the translators of Isaiah 7:14 were thinking when they rendered the word *young woman* instead of *virgin*. Where was their scholarship? Where was their reasoning? The conception and the birth of a child are a remarkable work of God. Only God could cause this to happen; but He effects it through established natural law which He inaugurated long ago.

2. Another reason for believing that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin and is so considered in Isaiah 7:14, is the interchange of the Hebrew and Greek words in that passage. The Hebrew word for virgin in the passage to which referred is *galmah*, and means an unmarried female. Solomon used this word in Song of Solomon 6:8: "There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number."

The Septuagint (LXX, Greek Translation of the Old Testament Hebrew in 277 B.C.), our oldest translation, rendered the Hebrew word *galmah*, young unmarried

woman, by the Greek term *parthenos*, and here is its meaning: "A virgin, a maid, chaste, virginity, Luke 1:36" (—Harper).

The Greek translation of Isaiah 7:14 is: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Matthew translates this word, *virgin*, from Isaiah 7:14 and as Isaiah called her *the virgin*, in the Greek text, so she is also said to be *the virgin* in his record in Matthew 1:23.

Thayer, in his lexicon, treats the word *virgin*, *parthenos*, in this way: "a virgin, Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; of a young bride; a pure virgin, II Corinthians 11:2; a marriageable daughter." The word is also applicable to men: "a man who has abstained from all uncleanness and whoredom, and so has kept his chastity; one who has never had commerce with a woman."

If this word for *virgin* applies to a man who has never copulated or cohabited with a woman, would it not also apply to the woman who has never experienced sexual union with a man?

Arndt & Gingrich gives this brief definition by using two examples in which the word is used: "The virgin birth of Christ. The

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virgin daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9)" Then, they said that it is "used of men who have had no intercourse with women."

R.C.H. Lenski makes a rather lengthy comment on the word: "Critics deny the virgin birth and say that to thus translate the word in Isaiah 7:14 is misleading. These critics declare: 'The Hebrew has no thought of a miraculous birth, for the term rendered maiden simply means an adult woman, still young enough to become a mother, and is by no means confined to virgins.' But this is only part of the story.

"The LXX translation *galmah* into the Greek, *parthenos*, is virgin. Since the time of Jerome it has been noted that in all of the Old Testament passages where *galmah* occurs it is always used for virgin. Moreover the Hebrew text, the LXX and Matthew have the article, as already noted. The sign is not that a virgin, some young woman, shall conceive in a natural way, but *the virgin*, the young woman who is *the virgin*. The article *the* is particular personal, as well as special; but it is also exclusive, limited. It excludes every other virgin who had not conceived a son by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Other virgins become pregnant by means of a human father."

3. Another important and irrefutable proof that Mary was the virgin of whom the prophet spoke is that she conceived by the Holy Spirit. Let us read the fuller context: "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. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make

her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 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*. And she will bring forth a son and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins' " (Matthew 1:18–21).

Remember that Matthew quoted Isaiah's statement in 7:14. But, the Bible does not include that the *birth* of Jesus was miraculous, but His *conception* in His mother's womb was miraculous. As far as we are able to tell from the record in Luke, His birth was

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natural. Here is the Biblical statement: "So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:3–7).

4. Another truth that strongly establishes that Mary was a virgin in these prophetic passages is her statement to the angle who announced her pregnancy: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. Then Mary said to angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the Angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' " (Luke 1:31–35).

How could this be the normal, natural pregnancy of a young woman or maiden if she had never *known* a man? This was unknown, unheard of—even unimagined that a young woman could conceive and bear a child without the instrumentality of a human father! She was *the virgin*. The angel announced that the child was the *Son of God*.

So, do you think that Matthew made a mistake? Was he a misguided apostle? Had he improperly quoted from the prophet Isaiah? Matthew was inspired. He was one of those who was promised the Holy Spirit to stand by their side. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13).

In that same lesson, but earlier, Jesus said, "... the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to

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you" (John 14:26). So, for translators of the Bible, or other critics of God's word, preachers or otherwise, to contend that the word *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14 means only a *young woman* or a *maiden* with no idea of a virgin, is a defiant, insolent contradiction of the angel of the Lord. It is a disavowal and a renunciation of the inspired servants of the Lord who made the announcement and wrote the record for all mankind to read and accept through the ages.

5. The Son born of a virgin was given, by God Himself, the name of Immanuel—which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14). The angel said His name would be called Jesus "for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31). It was also said by this messenger from God of Mary's virgin-born son, "... that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:25).

The question has arisen as to why other statements in Isaiah 7 are not also prophetic of Christ, His kingdom, and His ministry. The answer is quite simple. The setting, the background, of these Old Testament prophecies of Christ not only contain the prophecies of the Messiah, but usually have a present didactic, teaching, purpose. The word itself means *teaching, instruction*. Let us see what that present generation needed in the way of teaching and how it blended in to the prophetic statement of Isaiah in chapter 7, verse 14.

King Ahaz of Judah turned from Jehovah and sought help from the king of Assyria. When he was instructed to ask a *sign* from God, with a pious, zealous reply, he declined to do so. Was this just a show of devotion to God, springing from pretended religious dedication, or was it genuine? The context (Isaiah 7:10-13) indicates that it was hypocritical on the part of the king. So, Isaiah strongly rebuked Ahaz and told him that God Himself would give him a sign. That sign was that a virgin girl would conceive and bear a son whose name she would be instructed to call Immanuel.

This sign meant to king Ahaz that no helper would arise from the perverted, apostate house of David as was readily seen in the wicked male descendants of this lineage—that all the following evil, malicious ungodly generations would perish. This was the

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didactic, the teaching part that was needed at that time, particularly by these wicked and criminal leaders that seemed to lightly treat their own offenses. But, following this generation of transgressors, from the unnamed virgin, the great

divine Teacher, Helper, Immanuel (God with us) would be born. The prophet calls attention to the wonder and importance of this great event by saying, "Behold, God Himself will give you a sign." I hope you will note how carefully and beautifully the prophetic announcement is blended with the then present lesson (didactic, teaching) of the prophet of God.

Let us briefly recapitulate the central lesson: "a virgin shall conceive ..."

1. The undeniable, irrefutable, and absolute truth that Mary was *the* virgin, and the words used to express this fact are supported by the Greek and Hebrew scholars.
2. She did not *know*, nor had she ever *known*, a man in the sense of being united with a male in the sexual relation of intercourse. Had she done so, she would have been a fornicator and subject to be stoned under the law.
3. The announcement of the event was by God Himself. Let us not accuse Him of making a mistake.
4. The son born to *the* virgin is said to be the Son of God. In fact, He is called the only begotten (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Hebrews 11:7; I John 4:9).
5. Mary was found with child before she and Joseph came together, before they experienced the consummation of the conjugal act.
6. The Holy Spirit placed the seed within the womb of Mary.

These Biblical facts should forever silence the doubters of the inspiration of the word of God. Their position, in the light of the Scriptures to which we have referred and the common sense reasoning that follows, should completely refute their belief and discredit their position. How could one logically accept any of the gospel message and deny this fundamental truth? Does it

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make sense that one affirms his belief in Christ as the greatest teacher of all time and the best moral man who ever lived and, yet, deny His virgin birth and that He was the Son of God?

The apostle John followed the Lord closely for three and a half years of His ministry. Here is what he said about Him: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In verse 18, he called Him the only begotten Son.

In consulting the Greek lexicons as to the meaning of *only begotten*, here is what they say: "singly existent, sole, only, lone, solitary, alone in respect of circumstances" (—Harper).

Thayer gives half a large page in his lexicon to the definition and use of the term, *monogenesis*, and he defines it: "single of its kind, only; to be one's only son or daughter; used of Christ to denote the only Son of God."

Arndt & Gingrich also spend a large section of their lexicon in rendering its meaning: "unique in kind, that is the only example of a category, unique and alone."

Christ is the only begotten Son of God or you cannot trust anything He ever said, any standard He set, or any example He left us to follow. Those who deny the truth, religious or irreligious, have joined the ranks of atheism. Jesus was not even a good man unless He is the Son of God. If He is the Son of God, as the Bible affirms, then He was born of *the virgin* Mary.



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