

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

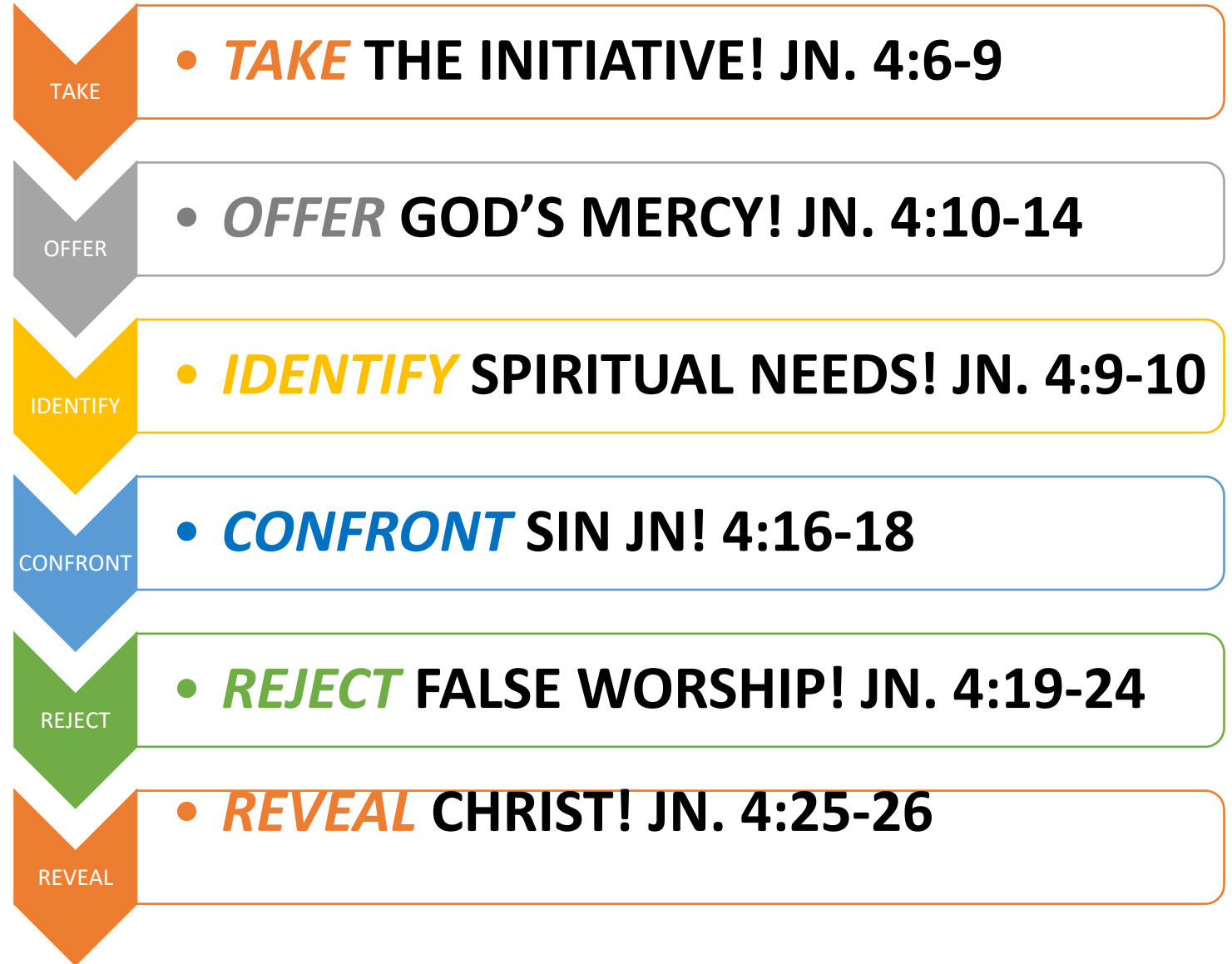


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out, some resting on the ground and others draped over the stone walls of an old building. The stone is weathered and mossy. The background shows more greenery and trees, suggesting a jungle or forest setting. The overall scene is one of nature reclaiming human-made structures.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”



I. WHAT'S *SO IMPORTANT* ABOUT CHRIST'S *VIRGIN BIRTH*

II. THE *ASSAULT* ON THE *VIRGIN BIRTH* OF CHRIST

- ATTACKS BY *UNBELIEVERS*
- ATTACKS BY *PROFESSING* BELIEVERS
- ATTACKS BY *COUNTERFEITS*

III. WHY THE *VIRGIN BIRTH* IS ESSENTIAL

IV. THE *VIRGIN BIRTH* AND PROPHECY

GOD BECAME A ***MAN***.

- That foundational gospel truth is pictured in every manger scene you'll see around during the Christmas season. Though the ***INCARNATION*** is culturally familiar, it's utterly foreign to the ***unbelieving*** world.
- Unfortunately, a heart attitude of unbelief concerning Jesus' identity has characterized the majority of men and women since the Fall. The ***JEWS*** who opposed Christ vividly illustrated that attitude on more than one occasion for example **(JN. 5:18)** ***"FOR THIS REASON, THEREFORE THE JEWS WERE SEEKING ALL THE MORE TO KILL HIM, BECAUSE HE NOT ONLY WAS BREAKING THE SABBATH, BUT ALSO WAS CALLING GOD HIS OWN FATHER, MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD."*** But such hostility and lack of faith should not discourage us or deter us from embracing and defending the truth of Christ's virgin birth.

- The **APOSTLE PAUL** reminds us, ***“FOR WHAT IF SOME DID NOT BELIEVE? WILL THEIR UNBELIEF MAKE THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD WITHOUT EFFECT? CERTAINLY NOT! INDEED, LET GOD BE TRUE BUT EVERY MAN A LIAR”*** (ROM. 3:3–4, 10:16; ISAIAH 53:1). The world’s opinion, popular as it might be, is rarely a reliable source of truth.
- Undoubtedly, therefore, the **HOLY SPIRIT** acted with significant purpose in devoting an early passage from the **GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**, to establish right away the **HUMANITY** and **DEITY** of **OUR LORD**. His incarnation, properly understood, is foundational to Christianity.

“THERE COULD HAVE BEEN **NO** GENUINE WORK OF **REDEMPTION** APART FROM THE FACT OF GOD BECOMING MAN.”

- BY BEING BOTH **COMPLETELY GOD** AND **COMPLETELY MAN**, RECONCILING PEOPLE TO HIMSELF THROUGH HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH AND PHYSICAL RESURRECTION.

“IF JESUS HAD *NOT* BEEN BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE, THERE WOULD BE *NO* GOSPEL.”

- Many skeptical New Testament commentators will concede that **MATTHEW** and other authors of Scripture sincerely believed and taught that **THE HOLY SPIRIT CONCEIVED JESUS WITHOUT ANY ASSISTANCE FROM A HUMAN FATHER**. But such interpreters nevertheless carelessly discount the validity of Scripture's claims by immediately asserting that its writers were naive, uneducated, and subject to the myths and superstitions of ancient times.
- As I've already mentioned, according to the critics, the **GOSPEL WRITERS** merely adapted some of the familiar virgin birth legends to the story of Jesus' birth. But nothing could be further from the truth. Matthew's account, for example, **READS AS HISTORY**, but it is history he could know and record only because **GOD REVEALED IT AND ACCOMPLISHED IT BY MIRACULOUS INTERVENTION**.

- **MATTHEW'S WORDS** are far superior to the immoral and repulsive nature of the secular stories he and the other writers allegedly drew from. Here is his clear, uncomplicated narrative of the **INCARNATION**:

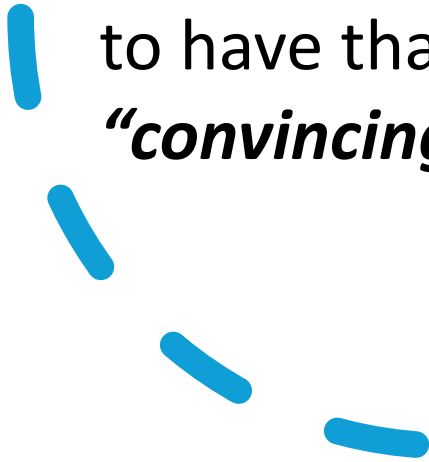
“NOW THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST WAS AS FOLLOWS: AFTER HIS MOTHER MARY WAS BETROTHED TO JOSEPH, BEFORE THEY CAME TOGETHER, SHE WAS FOUND WITH CHILD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEN JOSEPH HER HUSBAND, BEING A JUST MAN, AND NOT WANTING TO MAKE HER A PUBLIC EXAMPLE, WAS MINDED TO PUT HER AWAY SECRETLY. BUT WHILE 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.”

“SO, ALL THIS WAS DONE THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY THE LORD THROUGH THE PROPHET, SAYING: “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” WHICH IS TRANSLATED, “GOD WITH US.” THEN JOSEPH, BEING AROUSED FROM SLEEP, DID AS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD COMMANDED HIM AND TOOK TO HIM HIS WIFE, AND DID NOT KNOW HER TILL SHE HAD BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRSTBORN SON. AND HE CALLED HIS NAME JESUS.”
(MATT. 1:18–25)

- **MATTHEW DECLARES JESUS’ DIVINE LINEAGE** in that passage and reveals 4 aspects of His virgin birth: ***ITS FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT, JOSEPH’S RESPONSE TO IT, THE ANGEL’S CLARIFICATION OF IT, AND ITS ACTUAL OCCURRENCE.***

THE SIMPLE *ANNOUNCEMENT*

- If you didn't pay careful attention, you might pass right over one of the most important announcements in the New Testament: the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. Matthew took only one verse to announce it. Such a concise statement, though it doesn't all by itself prove the point, strongly suggests that our Lord and Savior's virgin birth was not simply a man-made story.
- A human author, writing strictly on his own initiative, would tend to describe such an amazing event in an expansive, detailed, and elaborate manner. But not the ***APOSTLE MATTHEW***. He does relate additional circumstances surrounding the virgin birth, but the basic fact is stated in one simple sentence:
"AFTER HIS MOTHER MARY WAS BETROTHED TO JOSEPH, BEFORE THEY CAME TOGETHER, SHE WAS FOUND WITH CHILD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

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- **MATTHEW** devotes the previous **17** verses to **JESUS' HUMAN GENEALOGY** but just this part of **1** verse to **HIS DIVINE GENEALOGY**. As the Son of God, Jesus **"DESCENDED"** from His heavenly Father by a miraculous and never-repeated act of the Holy Spirit; even so, the Holy Spirit chose to announce that astounding truth by just one brief, declarative sentence.
 - As all God's Word does, **MATTHEW'S** simple statement contains the solemn tone of **AUTHENTICITY**. By contrast, a human fabrication would tend to have that false ring of exaggeration to it, being filled out with much more **"convincing"** material than what this inspired version needed.

- Scripture gives us little information about **MARY** and even less about **JOSEPH**. **MARY** was undoubtedly a godly young woman, probably a native of Nazareth who came from a relatively poor family. **JOSEPH** was the son of **JACOB** (**MATT. 1:16**) and was a craftsman, probably a carpenter (**MATT. 13:55**). Most significant, he was a **“JUST MAN”** (**MATT. 1:19**), one who placed **SAVING TRUST IN THE COMING MESSIAH**.
- Most likely **MARY** and **JOSEPH** were both quite young when they were engaged or as **MAKAYLA**, (“betrothed”). She may have been as young as **twelve** or **thirteen**, and he not any older than **fifteen** or **sixteen**. Such youthfulness at the time of a couple’s engagement was standard for that culture. Another standard aspect of the **Jewish betrothal** was its binding nature—society considered the man and the woman legally married even though the formal ceremony and consummation might occur a **year** later.

- The purpose of the engagement period was to confirm ***EACH PARTNER'S FIDELITY*** when the two had little or no social contact with each another.
- ***MARY*** and ***JOSEPH*** faithfully abstained from sexual relations with one another during the engagement period, as the contract required. That was also in accord with the Bible's high regard for sexual purity and God's commands for sexual abstinence prior to the marriage ceremony and for sexual fidelity afterward. Thus, ***Mary's virginity*** was an important indicator of ***her godliness***.
- However, Mary's virginity ***PROTECTED SOMETHING MUCH MORE IMPORTANT*** than her own ***morality*** and ***godly reputation***. It ensured the ***DEITY OF CHRIST*** and supported the veracity of ***His teaching*** and ***works*** as the ***SON OF GOD***.



“HAD JESUS BEEN CONCEIVED BY NATURAL MEANS, WITH JOSEPH OR ANYONE ELSE AS HIS FATHER, HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN GOD AND WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A TRUE SAVIOR OF SINNERS. BUT WE KNOW THAT IS ABSOLUTELY CONTRARY TO WHAT GOD’S WORD TEACHES.”



- The **APOSTLE PAUL**, for example, was also very clear and concise when he reiterated the true nature of the Incarnation: ***“BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME HAD COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN”*** (GAL. 4:4). **PAUL** includes no mention of a **HUMAN FATHER** for Jesus because, according to ***THE DIVINE PLAN, GOD WAS HIS FATHER.***
- **JESUS HAD ONE HUMAN PARENT (MARY)** so that He could be a man and identify closely with what it means to be **HUMAN**. Notice (PHIL. 2:5-7) ***“HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, 6, WHO, ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED, 7, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT, AND BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN.”***

- **AND HE (JESUS) HAD DIVINE PARENTAGE SO HE COULD LIVE A SINLESS LIFE**, perfectly fulfill the Law of God for us, and make the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
- Admittedly, all these centuries after *Matthew's divinely inspired Gospel* declared that **JESUS WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN**, His *miraculous conception* remains impossible to understand by human reason alone. God chose not to explain the details of it to us, even as He chose to leave unexplained the intricacies of *His creating the universe from nothing*, or the precise way *He could be one God in three Persons*. Many of the essentials of Christianity God wants believers to **ACCEPT BY FAITH**. Full understanding will have to wait until heaven:

“FOR NOW, WE SEE IN A MIRROR, DIMLY, BUT THEN FACE TO FACE. NOW [WE] KNOW IN PART, BUT THEN [WE] SHALL KNOW [FULLY]” (1 COR. 13:12).

JOSEPH'S *RESPONSE*

- Have you ever imagined being in *JOSEPH'S* shoes? Think about his predicament. Joseph is a righteous man, betrothed to a chaste young woman. The future looks bright as he maps out plans to build a family with his soon-to-be bride. But then he hears the shocking news—*MARY IS PREGNANT*. That's no small dilemma for Joseph, especially since he is obviously not the father of the child.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?