

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

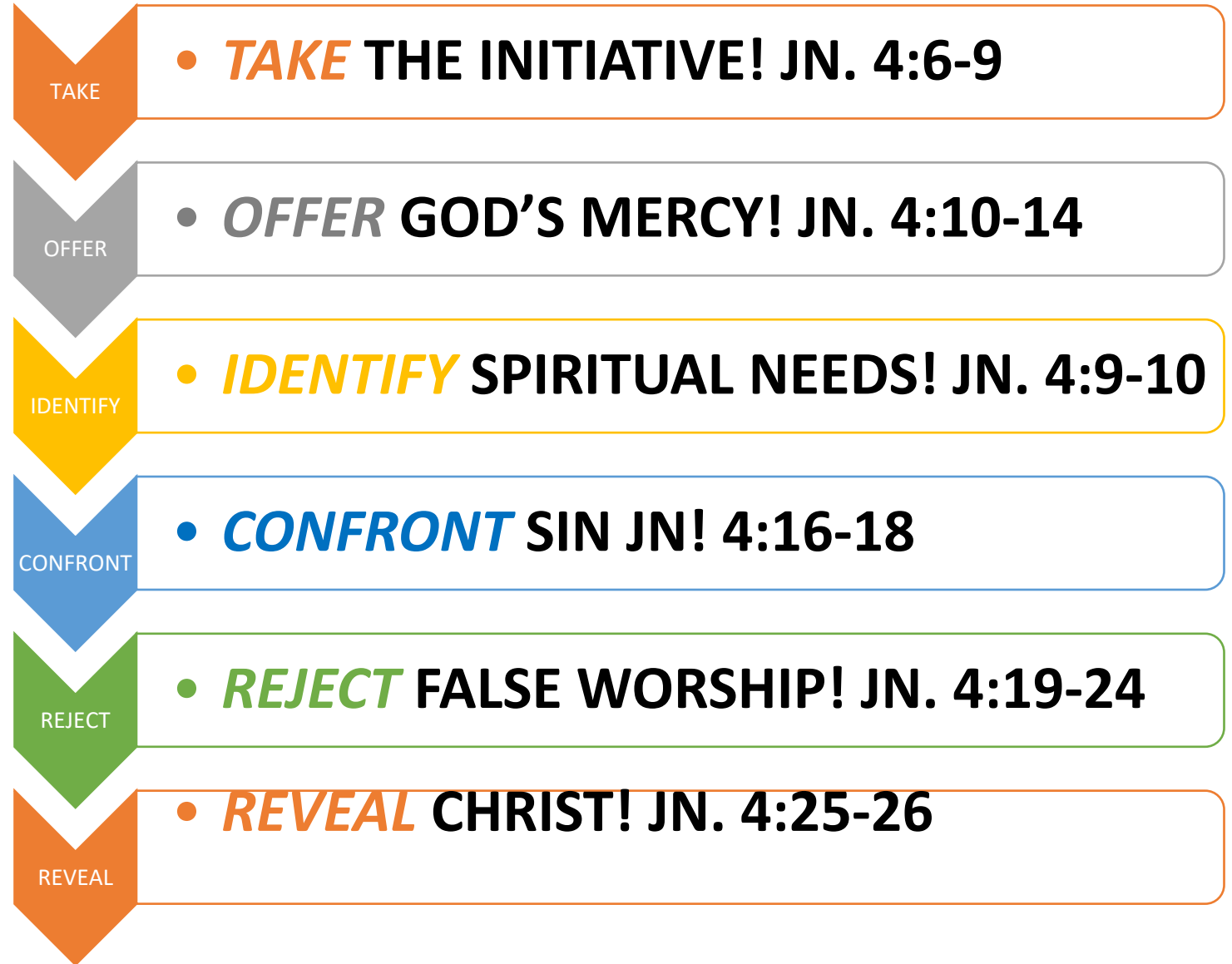


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out, some resting on the ground and others draped over the stone walls of an old building. The stone is weathered and mossy. The background shows more greenery and trees, suggesting a jungle 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*

WHY THE ***VIRGIN BIRTH*** IS **ESSENTIAL**

- You may be wondering why the ***VIRGIN BIRTH***—of all the miracles in Scripture—is so frequently attacked. After all, if one can believe, say, that ***MOSES*** parted the Red Sea, what's the big deal about a **VIRGIN BIRTH**? It certainly isn't as spectacular a miracle. And Scripture devotes relatively little space to describing it. ***CAN IT REALLY BE THAT IMPORTANT?***
- **YES.** The ***VIRGIN BIRTH*** is an underlying assumption in ***EVERYTHING THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT JESUS***. To throw out the virgin birth is to ***REJECT CHRIST'S DEITY***, the ***ACCURACY*** and ***AUTHORITY*** of ***SCRIPTURE***, and a host of other related doctrines central to the Christian faith.

NO ISSUE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE ***VIRGIN BIRTH TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ***WHO JESUS IS***.***

- If we deny that Jesus is God, we have denied the very essence of Christianity. Everything else the Bible teaches about Christ hinges on the truth we celebrate at Christmas—that Jesus is God in human flesh. If the story of His birth is merely a fabricated or trumped-up legend, then so is the rest of what Scripture tells us about Him. ***THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS AS CRUCIAL AS THE RESURRECTION IN SUBSTANTIATING HIS DEITY.***
- ***IT IS NOT AN OPTIONAL TRUTH.*** Anyone who rejects Christ's deity rejects Christ ***ABSOLUTELY***—even if he pretends otherwise. Notice **(1 JN. 4:1-4)**.

“WHAT WAS FROM THE BEGINNING, WHAT WE HAVE HEARD, WHAT WE HAVE SEEN WITH OUR EYES, WHAT WE HAVE LOOKED AT AND TOUCHED WITH OUR HANDS, CONCERNING THE WORD OF LIFE— 2, AND THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED, AND WE HAVE SEEN AND TESTIFY AND PROCLAIM TO YOU THE ETERNAL LIFE, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER AND WAS MANIFESTED TO US—

3, WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD WE PROCLAIM TO YOU ALSO, SO THAT YOU TOO MAY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US; AND INDEED, OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. 4, THESE THINGS WE WRITE, SO THAT OUR JOY MAY BE MADE COMPLETE.”

- **JESUS HIMSELF** viewed the question of **HIS PARENTAGE** as a watershed issue. **MATTHEW** records one of the last confrontations He had with the Pharisees.

“NOW WHILE THE PHARISEES WERE GATHERED TOGETHER, JESUS ASKED THEM A QUESTION: 42, “WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CHRIST, WHOSE SON IS HE?” THEY SAID TO HIM, “THE SON OF DAVID.” 43, HE SAID TO THEM, “THEN HOW DOES DAVID IN THE SPIRIT CALL HIM ‘LORD,’ SAYING, 44, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET’? 45, IF DAVID THEN CALLS HIM ‘LORD,’ HOW IS HE HIS SON?” 46, NO ONE WAS ABLE TO ANSWER HIM A WORD, NOR DID ANYONE DARE FROM THAT DAY ON TO ASK HIM ANOTHER QUESTION. (MATT. 22:41-46)

- **HIS SONSHIP** was the source of controversy on other occasions. JN 8 records another run-in with some leading Pharisees. They told Jesus, ***“WE WERE NOT BORN OF FORNICATION; WE HAVE ONE FATHER: GOD” (JN. 8:41).*** ***“We were not born of fornication”*** is a not-so-subtle jab at Jesus. They implied that ***HE WAS BORN ILLEGITIMATELY***. They twisted the whole point of His miraculous birth to make Him an illegitimate child. They even said later in verse 48, ***“DO WE NOT SAY RIGHTLY THAT YOU ARE A SAMARITAN AND HAVE A DEMON?”***
- The fact is, there is a ***DIRECT PARALLEL*** between those Pharisees and modern religious leaders who hint that the virgin birth is ***UNIMPORTANT*** or a ***FABLE***. ***THEIR CHALLENGES GROW OUT OF UNBELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST. THEY ARE THE EXPRESSION OF SINFUL, UNREGENERATE HEARTS.***

- Contrast their response with that of **PETER**. (**MATT. 16:13-17**) records this exchange between **JESUS** and **HIS DISCIPLES**. Again, **HIS SONSHIP IS THE ISSUE**.

“NOW WHEN JESUS CAME INTO THE DISTRICT OF CAESAREA PHILIPPI, HE WAS ASKING HIS DISCIPLES, “WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS?” 14, AND THEY SAID, “SOME SAY JOHN THE BAPTIST; AND OTHERS, ELIJAH; BUT STILL OTHERS, JEREMIAH, OR ONE OF THE PROPHETS.” 15, HE SAID TO THEM, “BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?” 16, SIMON PETER ANSWERED, “YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.” 17, AND JESUS 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.”

- Notice that the answers proposed by the populace were human ones. They had concluded Jesus was either **JOHN THE BAPTIST**, **ELIJAH**, **JEREMIAH**, or one of the **PROPHETS**. Truth is, **THEY HAD NOT YET GRASPED THE TRUTH OF HIS DEITY. THEY ASSUMED HE WAS JUST A MAN.**

- ***SIMON PETER'S*** response was different. He understood that Jesus was more than a ***HUMAN MESSIAH***, more than an anointed prophet, more than a son of David. ***HE WAS THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD***. ***PETER*** knew because God had revealed it to him (***MATT. 16:17***).
- ***FLESH AND BLOOD*** cannot reach that conclusion. ***SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY***, and ***HUMAN RELIGION CANNOT*** explain who Jesus is. Their adherents will inevitably conclude that He is a great teacher, a good moral example, or even a great prophet of God. ***BUT THEY ALL MISS THE FACT THAT HE IS THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD***.
- ***THAT'S WHY THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS SO IMPORTANT***. For Jesus to be God, He must be born of God. Joseph, a man, and Mary, a woman, cannot produce God. God cannot be born into this world by natural human processes. ***THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD BE GOD APART FROM BEING CONCEIVED BY GOD***.

***HIS HUMBLE INCARNATION, HIS TRANSFORMATIVE MINISTRY,
HIS RIGHTEOUS EXAMPLE, AND, ULTIMATELY, HIS SACRIFICIAL
DEATH.***

***BUT NONE OF THAT MATTERS IF WE DON'T BELIEVE GOD'S
WORD IS ACCURATE ABOUT HIS SON'S PARENTAGE. WHEN IT
COMES TO THE TRUTH OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH, COMPROMISE IS
NOT AN OPTION.***

THE **VIRGIN** BIRTH AND *PROPHECY*

- At the time of **MARY'S PREGNANCY**, the idea of a virgin birth was not completely foreign to the Jews' understanding of their Scripture. Although they misinterpreted it, many of the rabbis exegeted (**JER. 31:22**) **"... FOR THE LORD HAS CREATED A NEW THING IN THE EARTH— A WOMAN WILL ENCOMPASS A MAN."** in a way that suggested the **MESSIAH** would have an **UNUSUAL BIRTH.**
- Their fanciful explanation of that verse (**"MESSIAH IS TO HAVE NO EARTHLY FATHER,"** and **"THE BIRTH OF MESSIAH SHALL BE LIKE THE DEW OF THE LORD, AS DROPS UPON THE GRASS WITHOUT THE ACTION OF MAN"**) at least preserved the general idea that **THE MESSIAH'S BIRTH WOULD BE UNIQUE.**

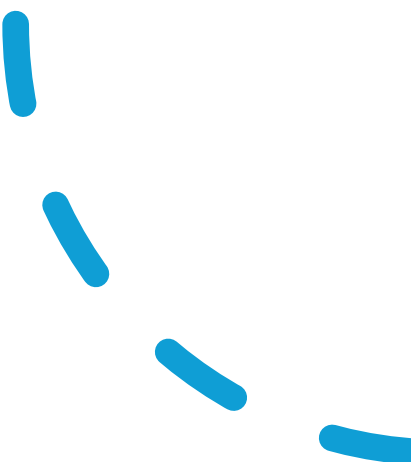
- Actually, the Book of **GENESIS** gives us the first glimpse that Christ's birth would be special: ***“AND I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN YOUR SEED AND HER SEED”*** (GEN. 3:15).
- Technically, ***THE WOMAN'S SEED BELONGS TO THE MAN***, but Mary's impregnation by the Holy Spirit is the only instance in history ***THAT A WOMAN HAD A SEED WITHIN HER THAT DID NOT ORIGINATE FROM A HUMAN MAN***.
- The later ***DIVINE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM*** concerned his ***“DESCENDANTS”*** (HEBREW, ***“SEED”***; GEN. 12:7), a common Old Testament way of referring to offspring. The unique reference in (GEN. 3:15) to ***“HER SEED” LOOKS BEYOND ADAM AND EVE TO MARY AND TO CHRIST***.

- The **TWO SEEDS** of that verse can have a twofold emphasis.
- First, they can primarily refer to all people who are part of **SATAN'S PROGENY** and all who are **PART OF EVE'S**. The two groups constantly wage spiritual war against each other, with the people of righteousness eventually defeating the people of evil.
- Second, the word translated **"SEED"** can be singular and refer mainly to one final, glorious product of a woman—the Lord Jesus Himself, born without human seed. **IN THAT SENSE THE PROPHECY IS DEFINITELY MESSIANIC.**

- (MATT. 1:22–23) CLEARLY IDENTIFIES **JESUS' VIRGIN BIRTH** AS A FULFILLMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY: ***“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.’”***
- **MATTHEW’S** quotation here of **(ISA. 7:14)** confirms that the prophet did in fact predict the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. ***“THEREFORE, THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU A SIGN: BEHOLD, A VIRGIN WILL BE WITH CHILD AND BEAR A SON, AND SHE WILL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL.”***
- The **PROPHET ISAIAH** made this momentous prophecy during the reign of Judah’s wicked and idolatrous **KING AHAZ**.

- The king faced a major military threat from the **ISRAELITE KING, PEKAH**; and the ***SYRIAN KING, REZIN***; both of whom wanted to overthrow Ahaz and replace him with a more compliant monarch. Instead of seeking the Lord's help during that crisis, King Ahaz turned to ***TIGLATH-PILESER***, the brutal ruler of the pagan Assyrians. Ahaz even induced their assistance by offering them gold and silver stolen from God's Temple.
- **AHAZ** refused to listen to ***ISAIAH'S REPORT*** that God would deliver the people from ***Pekah*** and ***Rezin***. Therefore, the prophet spoke the remarkable prophecy of **(ISA. 7:14)**, which told ***AHAZ THAT NO ONE WOULD DESTROY THE PEOPLE OF GOD OR THE ROYAL LINE OF DAVID***. And sure enough, although Tiglath-Pileser destroyed the northern kingdom (**Israel**), deported its population, and overran Judah four times, ***GOD ULTIMATELY PRESERVED HIS PEOPLE JUST AS HE PROMISED.***

- **ISAIAH** also said that before another child (**Mahe-Shalal-Hash-Baz**) was very mature or aware of events, the territories of Rezin and Pekah would be abandoned (**ISA. 7:15–16**). Again, the prophet's divinely inspired words were completely accurate. Before the other child, who was born to **ISAIAH'S WIFE**, was three years old, the two enemy kings were dead. Just as God fulfilled that ancient prophecy about Isaiah's son, so **HE WAS ABOUT TO FULFILL THE ONE CONCERNING THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**.
- **BOTH WERE SIGNS FROM THE LORD THAT HE WOULD NOT ABANDON HIS PEOPLE, BUT THE GREATEST OF THE TWO WAS OBVIOUSLY THE SECOND ONE: THAT HIS SON WOULD ACTUALLY BE BORN OF A VIRGIN, LIVE AMONG HIS PEOPLE, AND DIE FOR THEIR SINS.**

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- In his original pronouncement in 7:14, **ISAIAH** used the *Hebrew* word **'ALMA** for **“VIRGIN.”** That is a significant term, and it's important to understand why the prophet used it. **'ALMA** occurs **SIX** other times in the Old Testament (**GENESIS 24:43; EXODUS 2:8; PSALM 68:25; PROVERBS 30:19; SONG OF SOLOMON 1:3; 6:8**), and in each instance it connotes or denotes **“VIRGIN.”** Until recent times, both Jewish and Christian scholars **ALWAYS** translated the word that way.
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- It is interesting that in MODERN HEBREW either **'ALMA** or **BETULA** can mean **"VIRGIN."** However, **ISAIAH DID NOT USE BETULA** because in Old Testament Hebrew it can refer to a married woman who is not a virgin (**DEUT. 22:19; JOEL 1:8**).
 - It's apparent, therefore, that he used **'ALMA** in **7:14** with the clear, precise conviction that **THE WOMAN WHO WOULD BEAR THE MESSIAH WOULD INDEED BE A YOUNG WOMAN WHO NEVER HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH A MAN.**

- **MATTHEW'S USE OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECY** followed directly in the prophet's path. The apostle was not giving 'alma a Christian "twist" to make its usage fit a theory of the virgin birth. Instead, Matthew gave the term the same meaning as Isaiah intended, demonstrated by his translation of '**ALMA** with the **GREEK PARTHENOS**, the same word used by the Jewish translators of the Greek Old Testament.
- Although **the credibility of the virgin birth** does not rest solely on the use of a Hebrew word, a general understanding of the background and usage of '**ALMA STRENGTHENS OUR BELIEF IN CHRIST'S UNIQUE BIRTH**. It also helps us to see that Matthew, **UNDER THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**, knew exactly what he was doing when he related **(ISA. 7:14)** to the birth of Jesus and declared again the equally amazing truths that **"THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL."**



IN HIS ***VIRGIN*** *BIRTH*, **CHRIST** WAS, IN THE MOST LITERAL
SENSE, **THE SON** WHO WAS
“GOD WITH US.”

