

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

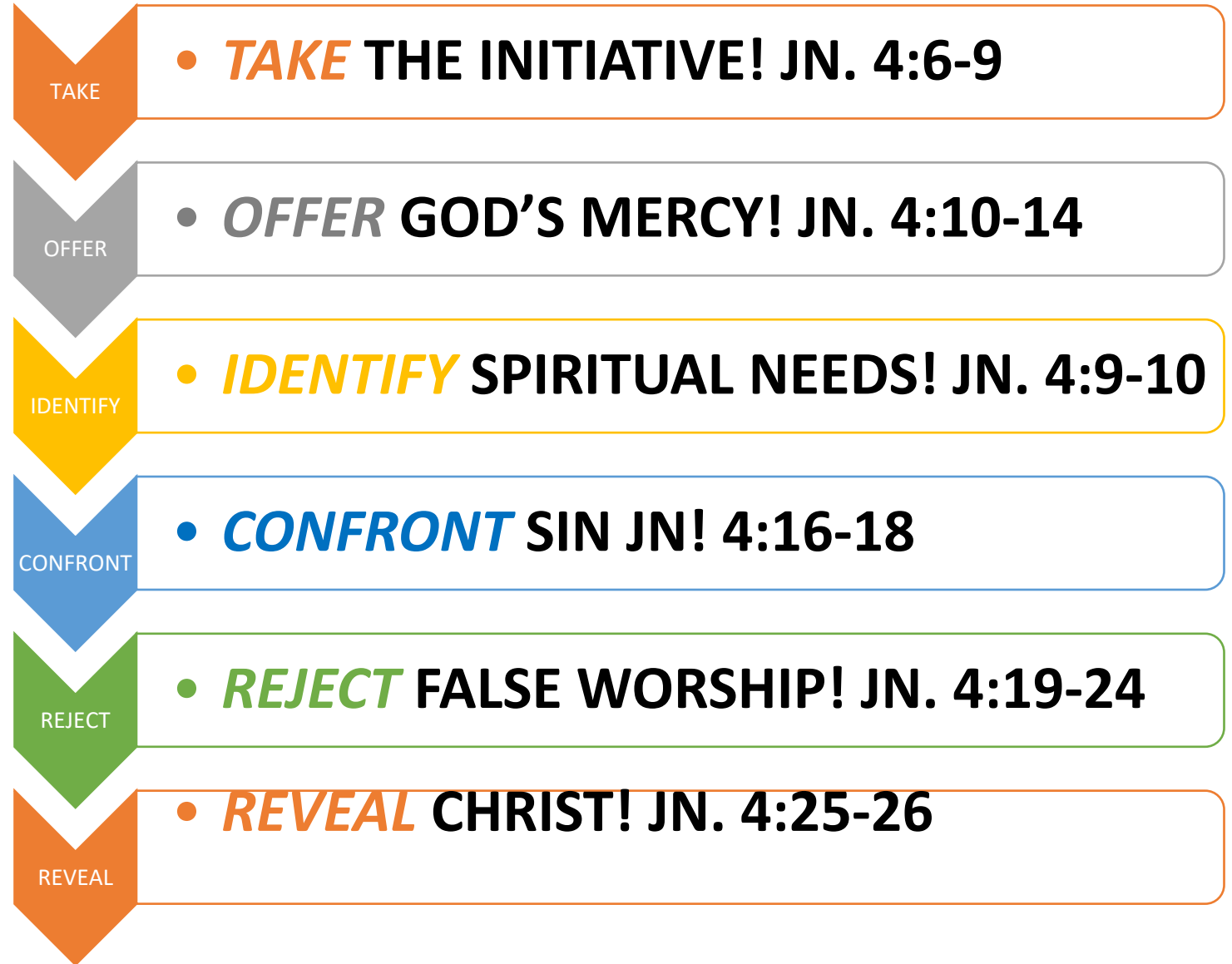




THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

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



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

- We cannot expect the world to accept the fact of *CHRIST'S* *VIRGIN BIRTH*. As with all essential doctrines of the Christian faith, sinful humanity resists embracing the truth of His *unique* birth.
- Tragically though, it's no longer just the unbelieving world that fails to accept the biblical account of Christ's parentage. The *SCIENTIFIC AGE* and the emergence of *MODERN* and *POSTMODERN* theologies during the past two centuries have eroded many professed believers' confidence in the *reality* of the virgin birth. (*ALONG WITH THAT TREND HAS BEEN A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF "CHRISTIANS" WHO BELIEVE IN THE DEITY OF CHRIST.*)

- But such skeptical thinking is foolish and directly contrary to the explicit teaching of all **FOUR GOSPELS, THE EPISTLES**, and the **HISTORICAL TESTIMONY** of the entire early church that Jesus was none other than the **VIRGIN-BORN SON OF GOD**.
- Lending credibility to skepticism, some New Testament commentators will concede that the authors of Scripture sincerely believed **THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT CONCEIVED JESUS WITHOUT ANY ASSISTANCE FROM A HUMAN FATHER**. But such interpreters nevertheless glibly discount the validity of Scripture's claims by immediately asserting that its writers were naïve, uneducated, and subject to the myths and superstitions of ancient times. **ACCORDING TO THE CRITICS, THE GOSPEL WRITERS MERELY ADAPTED SOME OF THE FAMILIAR VIRGIN BIRTH LEGENDS TO THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH.**

- ***SOWING **DOUBTS** ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF GOD'S WORD IS ONE OF **SATAN'S FAVORITE PASTIMES*****. His typical strategy is to try to make some small but foundational element of a great truth appear insignificant, then ridicule it and call it into question. If he can get people to **DOUBT** or **DENY** the smallest foundational truth, ***HE CAN EVENTUALLY DESTROY THE ENTIRE SUPERSTRUCTURE***.
- That's why issues like the ***INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE*** are so important. If the Bible is the Word of God, it must be truth unmixed with error. Each detail—including the ***HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHIC, and SCIENTIFIC*** ones—***MUST BE ACCURATE***.
- If we doubt even one point of biblical truth, we open the door to **DENIAL** and **UNBELIEF** of it all. History verifies the inevitability of this pattern.



• The **VIRGIN BIRTH** is such an issue. Some people see it as a nonessential point or treat it as **MYTHOLOGY**. It is neither. Although the church has not always been careful to guard this precious truth, **IT IS THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING CHRISTMAS STANDS FOR.**

• In fact, no other detail in the **CHRISTMAS STORY** is more important than the **VIRGIN BIRTH**. The virgin birth must have happened exactly the way Scripture says. Otherwise, **CHRISTMAS HAS NO POINT AT ALL.**



• If **JESUS** is simply the illegitimate child of Mary's infidelity, or even if He is the child of Joseph's natural marital union with Mary, **HE IS NOT GOD.** If He is not God, His claims are lies. If His claims are lies, His salvation is a hoax.

AND IF HIS SALVATION IS A HOAX, WE ARE ALL DOOMED!!!

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

- Several years ago an interview was given to a certain pastor of one of our nation's largest churches. Asked specifically what he believed about the virgin birth, he said, "***I COULD NOT IN PRINT OR IN PUBLIC DENY OR AFFIRM THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST. WHEN I HAVE SOMETHING, I CAN'T COMPREHEND I JUST DON'T DEAL WITH IT.***"
- He was subtle about it, but that pastor was *challenging the virgin birth*. His statement implied that ***THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS SOMEHOW OPTIONAL OR IRRELEVANT TRUTH***. It isn't. Satan knows that, even if we don't. Perhaps that is why he has worked so hard to discredit the virgin birth.

ATTACKS BY *UNBELIEVERS*

- The challenges have taken many forms, from **MOCKERY** to outright **DENIAL**. One book claimed that Jesus was the illegitimate child of a Roman soldier who had a love affair with Mary. The author cynically pointed out that Nazareth was located on the main highway between Jerusalem and the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon. Nazareth, he said, was notorious for corruption, vice, and prostitution. Perhaps that is true since Scripture itself reflects that sordid reputation. Before he met Christ, **NATHANIEL** asked **PHILIP**: **“CAN ANY GOOD THING COME OUT OF NAZARETH?”** (JN. 1:46). But to concoct an elaborate story about Jesus’ birth on that basis requires a stretched imagination.
- There’s nothing new about that theory of Christ’s origin. Jesus’ enemies often questioned His parentage (JN. 6:42; 8:41). **“YOU ARE DOING THE DEEDS OF YOUR FATHER.” THEY SAID TO HIM, “WE WERE NOT BORN OF FORNICATION; WE HAVE ONE FATHER: GOD.”**

- As early as the ***eighth century***, an extremist anti-Christian cult popularized the teaching that after Mary married Joseph, she unwittingly conceived a child by a neighbor who came in the dark of the night and had sex with her. She assumed the man was Joseph and because she never saw his face in the dark, she never knew the difference. According to the legend Joseph knew he was not the father, so he left Mary after she delivered a son. Of course, none of that has any basis in historical fact; ***ITS SOLE PURPOSE WAS TO MAKE JESUS ILLEGITIMATE AND REMOVE HIS DIVINE NATURE***. The ***ANTAGONISTS*** who concocted the story wanted only to invalidate Jesus' claim to be Messiah.
- Similar attacks have been made on the virgin birth, even in our own generation. ***HUGH SCHOENFIELD*** in *The PASSOVER PLOT*, a popular book during the sixties, postulated that Jesus was the ***natural son*** of Joseph and Mary.

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- **SCHOENFIELD** viewed Jesus as nothing but a **MASTER CONSPIRATOR** who thought he could be the Messiah and purposely tried to fulfill Messianic prophecies.
 - **SCHOENFIELD** wrote, ***"THERE WAS NOTHING PECULIAR ABOUT THE BIRTH OF JESUS. HE WAS NOT GOD INCARNATE AND NO VIRGIN MOTHER BORE HIM. THE CHURCH IN ITS ANCIENT ZEAL FATHERED A MYTH AND BECAME BOUND TO IT AS DOGMA."***

ATTACKS BY *PROFESSING* BELIEVERS

- Those attacks, coming from avowed unbelievers, are predictable. Other attacks—more dangerous because of their subtlety—have been made against the virgin birth by those who masquerade as friends of Christianity.
- Several years ago, one *INFLUENTIAL THEOLOGY PROFESSOR* concluded that it makes no difference if the virgin birth really happened. We can view it as a *MYTH* in the highest and best sense of the word, he said. Unfortunately, this has become a popular way of thinking. Another church leader called the virgin birth a story on the level of an ANDY CAPP COMIC! That's okay, he hastened to add, because Andy Capp is true—*HE IS TRUE IN OUR IMAGINATION, AND SO IS THE VIRGIN BIRTH.*

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- **THAT'S *NONSENSE*—THE *VIRGIN* BIRTH MEANS NOTHING IF IT RESIDES ONLY IN THE COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION OF HUMANITY.**
 - **IF THE *VIRGIN* BIRTH WAS ANYTHING LESS THAN LITERAL IN THE FULLEST SENSE, *CHRIST* WOULD BE JUST ANOTHER MAN. AND THAT IS WHAT THE ADVERSARIES OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH WANT TO PROVE.**

ATTACKS BY *COUNTERFEITS*

- Another way *SATAN ATTACKS THE VIRGIN BIRTH* is through *COUNTERFEITS*. A number of religions have claimed the equivalent of a virgin birth. For example, *GREEK MYTHOLOGY* taught that Dionysus, the god of wine, was born out of the union of his human mother, Semele, and the god Zeus.
- In *ANCIENT ASSYRIAN MYTHOLOGY*, Semiramis, wife of Nimrod, gave birth to Tammuz, who was supposedly conceived by a sunbeam. That legend was absorbed into Egyptian mythology, where the two are known as Isis and Osiris.
- In *INDIA*, the same tale is told of Isi and Iswara.
- The *CHINESE* have evidence of an ancient mother cult known as the Shing Moo. Their artwork, picturing the holy mother holding a baby in her arms, looks strikingly similar to Christian art portraying Mary.

- In **PHOENICIA** it was Ashtoreth, and Baal was the child.
- One legend about **BUDDHA** claims he was miraculously conceived when an elephant entered his mother's belly. Ten months later Buddha was born.
- **OLYMPIAS**, the mother of Alexander the Great, often asserted that he was conceived by the gods.
- Other, more subtle **counterfeits** have obscured the truth in the Christian world. ***DON'T CONFUSE THE VIRGIN BIRTH WITH THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. That is the teaching that Mary was conceived in her mother's womb as a sinless being, *preserved from* the effects of ADAM'S SIN. Mary was not sinless. However, Scripture says nothing about that; IT IS AN INVENTION OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH, NOT EVEN RECOGNIZED AS OFFICIAL CATHOLIC CHURCH DOGMA UNTIL POPE PIUS IX DECLARED IT SO IN 1854.***

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- Sadly, the ***DOCTRINE OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION*** is only one more ***COUNTERFEIT*** of the ***VIRGIN BIRTH***. It makes Mary's own conception and birth supernatural and elevates her to a level she does not occupy in Scripture (**MATT. 12:46-50**). Mary herself has become an object of ***VENERATION***, contrary to the spirit of Christ's teaching (**LK. 11:27-28**). She has been made into a legend no different from Semiramis or Shing Moo. Such is the confusion the enemy has sown.
 - Some scholars who want to deny Christ's birth have characterized the biblical account as just another in a long line of legends. But all the bizarre myths of human religions stand in stark contrast to the simple reality of Jesus' conception, and ***NONE OF THEM IS ROOTED IN HISTORY.***
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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.***