

Resources:

Charles Ryrie. *Basic Theology*. Pg. 77-280

David Thompson. *Christology Notes*. Texas Corners Bible Church. Pg. 15

S. Lewis Johnson. *The life of Christ: The Virgin Birth*.

Mike Tharp. *Sermon given on 12/22/1019*. Rocky Mountain Bible Church

Lee Strobel. *The Case for the Real Jesus*. Pg. 157-187

THE BIBLE TEACHES US THAT JESUS WAS TRULY AND UNIQUELY BORN INTO THIS WORLD TO A WOMAN WHO WAS A VIRGIN.

Question #1 - In what way does the Bible teach us that Jesus was born to a virgin mother?

The key text concerning this is found in **Isaiah 7:14**. This is the Old Testament prediction of the birth of Christ, and how He would be born to a virgin. *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."*

Now that text seems pretty simple and straightforward, but it does give rise to a number of questions.

I. Who is the virgin Isaiah is speaking about?

According to Charles Ryrie, this can be interpreted in three categories. (A) This is not a messianic prophecy. (B) This is only a messianic prophecy. (C) This refers to both messianic prophecy and immediate fulfillment in Isaiah's day.

We refute the idea that this is not a messianic prophecy because the Bible directly refers to this verse of Isaiah in **Matthew 1:23**, connecting it with the conception and birth of Jesus.

To say this is only a messianic prophecy and had no relation to the context of Isaiah's day is not as easily refuted, but can be refuted this way: The text of Isaiah 7 is God revealing something to the King of Judah, Ahaz. The text says that the "Lord himself will give you a sign," meaning, God would give Ahaz a sign. If this prophecy was meant only to be messianic, Ahaz would never have lived long enough to see the sign. In order for there to be a sign to Ahaz, there needed to be some sort of fulfillment in his day.

It appears to be accurate to view this as both a messianic prophecy and a prophecy of Isaiah's day, leading to the question, "how was this fulfilled in Isaiah's day?" The absolute answer to this is that the Bible does not tell us directly, but Charles Ryrie suggests three answers. (1) This is Ahaz's wife. (2) This is an unknown maiden in Israel. (3) This is Isaiah's second wife to whom he was not yet married when the prophecy was given. If it is Ahaz's wife, then the son would be Hezekiah. If this is spoken of an unknown woman of Israel, then the son would be unknown as well. If this is speaking of Isaiah and a future

wife (in this view his first wife would've already died - 7:3), then the son would either be Maher-shamal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:3) or an unmentioned son of Isaiah.

In light of all this, one fact is certain: The Bible does attribute this woman of Isaiah 7:14 to Mary and the son to be referring to Jesus.

- II. Because the Hebrew word is *almah* instead of the word *bethulah*, could that mean Isaiah is not referring to a literal virgin, but rather, a young woman?

The Hebrew word used is *almah*, which means young woman. The Hebrew word *bethulah*, which is not used in Isaiah 7:14 would have meant this woman was unmistakably a virgin and not just a young woman. This issue has caused many skeptics to deny the doctrine of the virgin birth. Ryrie does point out that *bethulah* cannot be proven to exclusively refer to unmitakeable virginity. He also notes that there is no instance in Scripture that that can prove the the word *almah* does refers to a young woman who is not a virgin.

I think the best way we ought to interpret such a passage and its words is to see how it plays out in the rest of Scripture, and I believe the rest of Scripture confirms that Mary is the fulfillment of this prophecy, and that she was in fact a virgin, which leads us to the next question.

- III. Can it be proven that the Bible defends the pure virginity of Mary?

David Thompson notes 5 major Biblical proofs that Mary was truly a virgin.

- (1) Mary reacted to the angel Gabriel in a way that testifies she was a virgin. **Luke 1:34**
- (2) Gabriel reacted to Mary in a way that testified she was a virgin. **Luke 1:35-37**
- (3) Joseph was still willing to marry her, testifying that he believed her to be a virgin.
Matthew 1:18-24
- (4) Luke testified that she was a virgin after declaring that he did careful research before recording what he wrote. **Luke 1:1-4; Luke 1:27**
- (5) Jesus did not claim that a man was His father; He claimed God was His Father. **John 5:18**

- IV. How can Jesus be named Jesus if Isaiah said His name would be Immanuel?

The name Jesus means "Yahweh saves" and the name Immanuel means "God with us." Jesus' name given to Him was Jesus, not Immanuel, but this is not to be seen as a contradiction in the Bible. Rather, how we can understand this is that Isaiah was describing the character and quality of the person is that he would be "God with us." The Hebrew language and the Biblical text often connects the character of a person to his or her name.

Question #2 - What is the significance of the virgin conception?

1. It is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. **Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23**

Because the Old Testament spoke of one to be born who would be called "God with us" and that one being born to a virgin, it was critical that Jesus fulfill that prophecy in order for God to keep to His previous revealed written word.

2. This would have prevented Jesus from inheriting a sin nature through natural conception.

The Bible teaches that all mankind has been born with a sinful nature. In **Psalms 51:5**, David understood that he obtained His sin nature at conception. The Bible teaches us that sin is passed from parents to children by the transmitted sin nature. **Ephesians 2:3** describes all of mankind as objects of wrath, being guilty sinners by nature, not just by choice. **Romans 3:9-19** also makes it clear that no man is righteous on his own. He is born a sinner. This started with Adam and Eve in the garden and has been passed down through every generation since (**Romans 5:12,16,19**).

The only exception is Jesus. He is the only person of all time that was not born into this world and obtaining a sin nature by transmission of parents. It is only of Jesus that it is said that He was sinless. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, "he knew no sin." And **Hebrews 4:15** says that although He was tempted, He was without sin.

So if we get our sin nature at conception from our parents, and Jesus never sinned, there must have been something unique about Him in His conception. That is exactly what the Bible teaches us. His conception was not a natural conception. His birth was natural, but his conception was not. He was not conceived by two sinners coming together in intimacy. He was conceived by God placing into the womb of a virgin a baby boy. This would make Jesus exempt from inheriting a sin nature, allowing Him to truly be without sin.

3. This would have allowed Jesus to be legally Joseph's child while not being his genetic child.

In **Jeremiah 22:20-30** there is something that appears to disqualify Jesus from being properly in the Kingly genealogy.

Joseph was Jesus' legal earthly father, even though Jesus was not genetically a son of Joseph. Joseph was a bloodline descendant of Solomon, who was the rightful heir to the throne of David.

I'd like to quote S. Lewis Johnson for you: "because of the sin of Jehoiachin, or Coniah, a curse was pronounced upon that line and henceforth no person who was born according to the flesh upon that side of the line could ever sit upon the throne of David and yet it

was the line that possessed the legal title. How is it possible for someone then to reign upon the throne of David? Only if he possesses flesh of David and is preserved from the curse by means of legal relationship to the one who has the right to sit upon the throne according to the genealogy. In other words, if the Lord Jesus were really the Son of Joseph, he couldn't sit on the throne of David. But if he is born of a virgin and that union between Joseph and Mary is legalized and he becomes the legal son of Joseph, he has the legal rights to the throne, but he does come under the curse because he is not of Joseph's flesh. And since he is of Mary who is also of the line of David (*but she was not of the bloodline of Solomon, rather she was of the bloodline of Nathan - Luke 3:31, preventing her from being in the bloodline of Jehoiachin - a descendant of Solomon, but still keeping her in the bloodline of David*), our Lord Jesus is of the seed of David, according to the flesh."

Question #3 - What is the teaching of the immaculate conception and do we believe it?

The immaculate conception is a teaching that says Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born without original sin or its stain. At first thought, one would think this title refers to the conception of Jesus, but a further look will reveal that this teaches Mary was conceived and born without sin. Immaculate means "without stain." This teaching comes from the words said to her by the Angel Gabriel in Luke 1:28.

I believe this teaching not only goes beyond the bounds of Scripture, but it actually is against Scripture, and I'll give you 3 reasons why.

1. The Bible is clear that all (with the exception of Christ) have sinned. **Romans 3:23**

The Bible does not exclude Mary from the condition of sin like it does Christ. The Catholic Church refutes this as a valid argument claiming that children cannot sin before the age of reason, but the Bible does clearly teach that man is born with a sin nature (Eph. 2:1-3; Ps. 51:5). There is no Scriptural evidence to support the teaching that children are without sin.

2. Mary's words indicate her sin condition. **Luke 1:46-47.**

Mary called God her Savior, which we would say, "those without sin do not need a Savior." The Catholic Church refutes this argument saying that, in a sense, it is like God gave her a vaccination and she never had original sin because she was vaccinated at her conception. She still had a Savior because she was vaccinated from the disease but did not have to be cured from it after becoming diseased with sin like the rest of mankind. The problem with this logic is that Mary still died as a result of sin. And that brings us to the third reason.

3. Mary Physically died and hasn't resurrected.

As far as I know, Mary is not still physically alive and living on this earth and there is no Scriptural record of her ascending into heaven without dying. The cause of death is sin (Rom. 6:23; Gen. 2:16-17). Sinners die and their bodies remain in the grave. The reason death has continued to all men is because of sin (Rom. 5:12). If Mary was sinless, there would be no need for her to die. One might say then, "but Jesus died physically and He was sinless." This is true, but Jesus made it clear that He was not murdered, nor did He die due to a sin nature, rather, Jesus, being God, chose to lay down His own life and He had the authority to take it back up again (John 10:18). Scripture is silent on this reality being applied to Mary. She did physically die, but unlike Jesus, there is nothing said of her laying her own life down by choice, nor was she raised back by her own authority. Death could not hold the sinless Jesus in the grave (Acts 2:24). Death has held Mary's physically body in the grave until a future time of resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Question #4 - Was Jesus' birth copied from various mythical pagan stories?

This is a very interesting question and the idea is that the story of the virgin birth of Jesus was actually a common story circulating in mythology during the days of Jesus and that the Christian writings simply borrowed this idea from other mythical religious beliefs.

For a better answer than what I can give, please refer to resources such as Lee Strobel's *"The Case for the real Jesus"* - pg. 157-187, and Ronald Nash's *"The Gospel and the Greeks."*