

The Miracle of the Virgin Birth

Series: Road To Immanuel

Isaiah 7:1-7:16

There's a story told about a man who was a very militant atheist but he sent his son to Trinity School because, despite its Christian roots, it was a great school.

After a month, the boy comes home and says casually,

"By the way Dad, do you know what Trinity means? It means the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

The father barely controlled his rage. He seized his son by the shoulders and declared, "Danny, I'm going to tell you something right now and I want you never to forget it. There is only one God and we don't believe in Him!"

Now, that's the kind of attitude you'd expect from a committed Atheist.

But, by contrast, King Ahaz in our story today was a very religious man.

Let me refresh your memory on what "religion" is. Religion is man's attempt to get to God. Ahaz WAS religious. He worshipped a multitude of gods... but not the God of Israel.

And because Ahaz rejected the LORD... II Chronicles 28:19 tells us:

"The LORD had humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had promoted wickedness in Judah and had been most unfaithful to the LORD."

Ahaz reigned in Judah for 16 years and made every effort to destroy the religious foundations of the nation of Judah. He shut the gates of the temple, and melted down the Temple vessels for the gold and silver in them. He offered burnt incense on high places throughout Judah. And he set up altars on his roof so he could worship the stars, moon and sun.

II Kings 16:2-4 tells us “... *Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.*”

And at the time of Isaiah 7, Ahaz is in serious trouble.

Two of his arch-enemies - Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the king of Israel had marched against Judea and were even now at the gates of Jerusalem. These nations had gone to war against Ahaz in the past and Judah had suffered terribly for it.

Now Rezin and Pekah are preparing to come back for seconds, and Ahaz is petrified.

He's decided his best option was to look for an ally that was big enough to help him defeat his enemies, and he believes the best candidate is to the north.

He appeals to the King of the Assyrians, for help.

This was a really bad idea.

Assyria was an extremely vicious and wicked nation.

Additionally... it turned out that when Ahaz DID form his alliance with Assyria the alliance did him more harm than good. 2 Chronicles 28:20 tells us, "*Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came to him and distressed him, and did not assist him.*"

Assyria never even helped Ahaz defeat his enemies.

In fact, King Ahaz ended up paying "protection money" to Assyria to protect his nation from Assyria's soldiers.

But before Ahaz sealed his bargain with Assyria, God wanted to offer him another option.

God sends Isaiah and has him tell Ahaz that first: the invasion will never happen.

Neither Rezin nor Pekah would live another two years. And sure enough: within that period of time, both were assassinated.

Then God offered Ahaz assurance that he would do as He promised.

He tells Ahaz: ask me for a sign – any sign. It can be as deep as the depths of the sea, or as high as the heavens. Just ask for a sign so that you'll know I'll do what I say. But Ahaz turns God down. He gives a pious excuse "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." Isa 7:12

But Ahaz has never been a pious man – he truly hates the God of Israel.

So, he just politely tells Isaiah – and his God - to go take a hike.

Ahaz didn't really believe Isaiah's God could do anything, so he's not interested.

He's just like the atheist who said he doesn't believe in God.

The only difference is that Ahaz has the trappings of being religious, but as far as the God of Israel goes Ahaz doesn't believe. He's a **practical** atheist.

So God says "Fine. If you don't want to ask for a sign... I'm going to give you one anyway"

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

But Ahaz just turned away and ignored God. He didn't believe the prophecy.

He refused to accept the proclamation that a virgin would be with child.

And (you know) there are people today who don't believe it either.

When they hear about the virgin birth – many people... even religious people ... turn away in disbelief.

A number of surveys taken over the past several years indicate that nearly a quarter of America's clergy and professed theologians don't believe in the virgin birth. Now, that makes no sense.

How could a preacher/theologian possibly reject-such a central doctrine in the Bible? Very simple: They say they believe in God but they don't really believe in a God who matters.

Like Ahaz, they're religious on the OUTSIDE... but on the INSIDE they have no faith.

Now, if it was ONLY the prophecy out of Isaiah that maintained the virgin birth... that would be one thing. There are things about the prophecy that someone could read in a different way.

But let's consider Matthew for a moment. He tells us in chapter 1 and verses 22-23, that Jesus' birth to Mary...*took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:* ²³ *“Behold, **the virgin** shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name ^[y]Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”*

Essentially, the preachers and professors who reject the virgin birth are calling Matthew a liar. And they're also calling Luke a liar because he told the same story.

*Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to **a virgin** ^[t]engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the ^[s]descendants of David; and the virgin's name was ^[i]Mary. (Luke 1:26-27)*

How had this virgin become pregnant?

* The angel Gabriel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

* And Matthew agrees. In his Gospel Gabriel tells Joseph “do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy

Spirit.” (Matthew 1:20)

There is no getting away from the fact that both of these Gospel accounts are saying that Mary was NOT just an unmarried young lady... she WAS a virgin. So, if these Gospels are so clear about Mary being a virgin, why would these preachers/theologians deny such an obvious New Testament teaching?

Well - because they don't believe it!

When it comes to the virgin birth-they say “I can't BELIEVE that would ever happen!” And that's it!!! They can't believe it... so it couldn't possibly have happened. It's unreasonable; it's unfathomable, it's never happened before

And GOD JUST COULDN'T DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

If **they** can't imagine it... it can't possibly have happened.

They say they serve God, but theirs is not a God that can really do anything amazing. They don't serve a big God... they just serve a “little god.”

There's a true story about a theology professor who was sitting in the audience when one of his students had returned after 12 years to preach in chapel.

At the close of the meeting the old professor came up to his former student, cocked his head to one side in his characteristic way, extended his hand, and said, "If you come back again, I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once.

I am glad that you are a big-godder.

When my boys come back, I come to see if they are big-godders or little-godders

and then I know what kind of ministry they're going to have."

Some men have a little god, and they are always in trouble with him.

* He can't do any miracles. He can't protect His Bible from errors.

* He doesn't intervene on behalf of his people. They have a little god and I call them little-godders.

Then there are those who have a great God.

* He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast.

* He knows how to show Himself strong on behalf of them that fear him.

You have a great God; and He will bless your ministry.

These supposed religious leaders - who reject the virgin birth - are "little godders".

Their god can't do anything. He's limited by their imaginations.

And because that is true, they end up being just like Ahaz.

They don't really believe their God can do anything that they cannot imagine, but they go through their religious motions – pretending to be pious when they are actually just telling God to go take a hike.

Now, I understand all that (big God/ little God) but why should I care?

I mean, why should the idea that Jesus was born of a "virgin" even matter to me?

Well, it should matter to me because it matters to God.

This was what God had prophesied.

It reminds me of a popular bumper sticker I used to see several years back, "God

said it, I believe it, that settles it!” When I first saw it, being an avid believer in the absolute sanctity of God’s Holy Bible, I liked it! But then, upon further reflection, I realized it was not really accurate – there were 3 too many words. You see, it doesn’t matter if *I* believe it, if God said it, that settles it. The truth of God’s Word does not depend on OUR belief of it. If God said it, it’s true whether I believe it or not!

Many people look first to Isaiah 7 for the prophecy of the virgin birth, but it actually began back in Genesis 3 which records the world’s first eviction notice. Adam and Eve were tossed out of the garden because of their sin. But before God evicted them... He made Satan a promise: He said

““Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity (hatred) between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:14-15)

Notice, the prophecy didn’t say Satan’s head would be crushed by the offspring of **a man**. Or of the offspring of **a man and woman**.

This *child was to be the offspring of a WOMAN*.

Now, to make clear how unusual this was, you need to understand that the Bible

rarely ever spoke of a child as the offspring of the woman. A child was usually referred to as the offspring of the father.

Galatians 4:4 picks up on this and tells us, *But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, **born of a woman**, born under ^[e]the Law.* Not born of a man and a woman... but born of a woman.

Why was the Messiah to be born of a woman (not a man AND a woman)?

Well, because Jesus came to earth to be our sin-offering.

If Jesus had been born of a mortal woman and a mortal man... he would have been completely mortal. But God didn't send a "mortal" to die for us. He didn't send a prophet to die in our place. God didn't send a nice man to die for our sins.

God came down in human form and shed HIS blood for our sins.

Now, think about it: If Jesus had been merely a mortal – he wouldn't have been the perfect sacrifice. But a sacrifice was required by God's law to be perfect, without blemish.

A sacrifice for the sins of mankind would therefore have needed to be a perfect sacrifice. He would have needed to be totally perfect, totally good.

But Jesus Himself said "*There is only One who is good*" (Matthew 19:17)

All the rest of us fall under the condemnation noted in Romans 3:23,

"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Thus, I could not die for your sins. I have sin in my life. I have blemishes on my

soul. And you couldn't die for my sins.

No matter how nice a person you are – you have still sinned and fallen short of God's glory. A perfect sacrifice has to be sinless, and neither you nor I could ever be that perfect sacrifice. Only God is good. Only God was perfect enough to step into our place and die for our sins.

That's why, speaking about the coming Messiah, Isaiah declared:

“(God) saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. (Isaiah 59:16-17)

God knew there was no mortal being who was capable of rescuing His creation, so He did it Himself. He clothed Himself in human form and came to die on the cross for our sins. If that were not true, John 3:16 would be robbed of its power.

If God did not step down from heaven to take our sins, it would read:

“For God so loved the world that He sent SOMEONE ELSE.”

But God didn't send someone else. He did it for us, because we couldn't do it for ourselves.

When the angel declared the prophecy to Mary, Matthew tells us: “this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child

and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" —which means, "God with us."” (Matthew 1:22-23)

When Jesus was born of Mary... He was literally God with us.

If He hadn't been born of a virgin that could not have been true.

Being born of a mortal woman He was completely human.

And being born of the Holy Spirit He was completely God.

The people who reject the virgin birth are rejecting God's Word.

They don't believe Jesus could be born of a virgin because God couldn't do that.

And thus, they end up rejecting a Jesus who is capable of doing anything powerful in their lives.

There was an agnostic who asked a Christian doctor if he really believed in the virgin birth of Jesus. The doctor thought about that a minute and then told his friend that... “If a person lived the kind of life that Jesus lived; performed the miracles; healed the sick; and raised the dead as Jesus did; taught great truths that transcended current philosophical thought like Jesus did; was crucified on a cross; bodily arose from the grave on the third day; and ascended into heaven before many witnesses as Jesus did, “Yes, I think I might be inclined to believe such a person could be virgin born!”

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” John 3:16

‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" —which means, "God with us.’” Matthew 1:22-23

Remember the good news I told you last week. God has a plan. God is the plan.

That plan has a name; Immanuel – God with us. Please plan to join me again next week as we continue studying the greatest love story ever written; Immanuel.