The World's Most Unusual Birth

*Matthew 1:18-23; Isaiah 7:14*

*January 22, 2017*

**Skip Heitzig**

**PATH**

We’ve seen how God repeatedly makes specific predictions about a coming Messiah throughout the books of the prophets, adding layers of details that exponentially decrease the odds of any success of their fulfillment. It’s one of His unique traits (see Isaiah 41:21-24). In this study, Pastor Skip unpacked a prediction that is simply off the charts—the prediction that the Messiah would be virgin-born. We explore a bit of why the virgin birth is not an incidental occurrence but an absolute necessity.

I. **A Savior Is Promised (Matthew 1:21)**

**A Son Is Predicted (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 7:14)**

II. **A Solution Is Provided (Matthew 1:23)**

**POINTS**

**A Savior Is Promised:**

- The odds against unusual births are staggering. In 2009, one couple had octuplets—all of whom survived—against the odds of one in 20,971,520,000,000.
- The odds against Jesus’ birth are even more staggering. Consider these prophecies:
  - Micah predicted the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
  - Hosea predicted He would be called out of Egypt.
  - Other prophets predicted He would rise out of Galilee.
  - Isaiah predicted He would be born of a virgin.
  - All the odds put together equal one in ten to the seventeenth power. (That’s seventeen zeroes.)

  **A. His name: Jesus**
  - Isaiah 7 predicted the virgin birth would be a sign to the house of David.
  - *Immanuel* means God with us; Jesus’ name denotes His mission: *Yeshua* (Joshua) means God is salvation.

  **B. His mission: to save people from sin**
  - Mankind’s greatest need was Jesus’ greatest mission and accomplishment: the forgiveness of sin. Jesus was on a rescue mission (see John 1:29; Mark 2:17; Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15).
  - God saves sinners, in part, through the virgin birth.

**A Son Is Predicted:**

- When Isaiah spoke these works, dark clouds loomed on the political horizon.

- The problem there is that a girl having a baby is not a sign; it is not supernatural.
- The Septuagint (Greek version written in the first century BC) makes it clear, using the term *parthenos* for the word virgin, indicating a girl who has never had sexual relations.

**Rulers such as Pekah (Northern Kingdom), Rezin (Syria), and Ahaz (Southern Kingdom) were in constant battles. In the midst of this turmoil, God sent Isaiah a sign of a supernatural event: “a virgin shall conceive.”**

**A. His birth: born of a virgin**

- **Parthenogenesis** is the process of conception without fertilization. This happens in nature among certain species (honeybees, frogs, rabbits). But it can only reproduce a genetically identical being—a female. If Mary had conceived by parthenogenesis, she would have had a daughter, but instead she conceived a Son.

  **It was supernatural: the Holy Spirit came upon her. God entered into the single cell in Mary’s womb and impregnated her.**

**A better term may be pneumagenesis—Spirit-conception.**

- The virgin birth is not without controversy. Many Jewish scholars deny the virgin birth and messianic prophecies. However, each proof is an attempt to subvert the text to messianic prophecies.

  - The promise was that the Child would rise out of Galilee.
  - The Virgin Birth not only was an answer to the uniqueness of the Messiah, but it was also a sign of the sovereignty of God.

**B. His description: God with us**

- Isaiah 7 and Isaiah 9 are tied together. Isaiah 9 calls the Messiah “mighty God.” Early commentaries and translations such as Targums, Mishnah, and Midrash equated this text to messianic prophecies.

  - After Jesus came, some rabbis taught that the word used for virgin is alma—any young woman of marriageable age. They didn’t want to ascribe the prophecy to Jesus.

  - The earliest statement of faith—the Apostles’ Creed—says Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. Why is the virgin birth essential to a correct view of Scripture? Why is a biblical understanding of our faith important to the church? What happens when the church strays from the historical-grammatical meaning of the text?

**Practice**

**Connect Up:** God works supernaturally, naturally. In the case of the virgin birth, Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary (natural physiology) by the Holy Spirit (supernaturally). What does this tell us about God’s nature and His sovereignty over all things? Also, how does the virgin birth fit within the specific (found in the Bible, denoting supernatural acts) and general (found in nature, the laws prescribed and created by God) revelations of God? How are the two both related and different?

**Connect In:** The earliest statement of faith—the Apostles’ Creed—says Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. Why is the virgin birth essential to a correct view of Scripture? Why is a biblical understanding of our faith important to the church? What happens when the church strays from the historical-grammatical meaning of the text?

**Connect Out:** As Pastor Skip noted, many people disagree about the virgin birth. Discuss how you’d answer someone who doesn’t believe in the virgin birth. What points would you make? Think of theses important aspects: Jesus’ heavenly origin, His sinless nature, His perfect sacrifice, Christ’s unique nature (God and man), and the trustworthiness of Scripture.