

Is Jesus the Messiah?

Christmas

December 21 & 28, 2014

Introduction:

Jesus Christ is the unique Person of human history. By means of the virgin birth, He took on true humanity and began a unique mission to become the vicarious sacrifice to unburden mankind of its sins.

God the Father has a Plan made billions and billions of years ago—sometime in eternity past. The quintessence of the expression of God's Plan is the God-Man-Savior. A perfect plan from a perfect Father glorifies a perfect Son. His Plan was that all creatures would come to recognize the celebrityship of Christ, first of all by the gospel, leading a person to salvation; next by reaching the sophisticated spiritual life; or through a rude awakening in eternity. Where does this leave believers who are ignorant of doctrine and who do not recognize the celebrityship of Christ? They are completely missing the plan of God for their lives, and thus they are losing out on the greatest and most wonderful blessing life can offer! (pp. 32–33)

Yet this need not be the case in any believer's life. Christ can become a reality now through doctrine. Beginning with doctrine, He is the grace source of everything we have of value. Were it not for Jesus Christ, we would have nothing and be nothing.

As for unbelievers, before they get to the Lake of Fire, they will recognize and finally acknowledge, the hard way, that Jesus Christ is the only celebrity of the universe. Unbelievers are going to hell on their knees saying Jesus is Lord!"¹ (p. 33)

One of the mysteries that has perplexed theologians and paleographers is the veracity of the biblical doctrines of Messiah and the virgin birth. An excerpt from an article in *Biblical Archaeology* addresses the problem:

¹ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Celebrityship of Jesus Christ* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1973), 32–33.

Scholars have long sought the origin of the concept of the virgin birth in comparative religions, where there is a wealth of material about miraculous births. Supernatural beginnings are claimed for Zarathustra, Buddha, and Lao Tzu, all founders of religions. In the Mediterranean world it was said that the god Apollo begat men as varied as Plato, Pythagoras, and Augustus. Zeus-Ammon was said to be the father of Alexander the Great. Such legends illustrate the tendency to explain the origins of heroic figures in supernatural terms, but they differ in important ways from the nativity stories of Matthew and Luke. The parallels, for example, consistently involve some sort of sexual union in which a divine male, in human or animal form, impregnates a woman, while Mary's conception through the Holy Spirit is nonsexual.

The attempt to explain the virginal conception in terms of the Jewish background of Christianity yields mixed results. In traditional Jewish thought God does not beget children. When the Old Testament speaks, infrequently, of Israel (Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9; Hosea 11:1) or of the king (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalms 2:7, 89:27) as God's son it is in terms of adoption rather than procreation. Nor did the Jews look for a messiah who would be born of a virgin. Contrary to traditional Christian belief, the original Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14, translated in the King James Version as, "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son," has nothing to do with a virginal conception. A Greek translation of the Hebrew *almah* (young woman) as *parthenos* (virgin) led Matthew to regard the verse from Isaiah as predicting the virginal birth of Jesus.²

Publications such as Biblical Archeology Review commonly take a clinical view of biblical manuscripts' content. If a passage enters into the metaphysical, they ignore the plain reading regardless of other contributing passages of Scripture. In this case, Matthew must surrender to the plain reading of Isaiah rather than Isaiah yielding to Matthew. The exegetical approach surrenders to the inspiration and revelation managed by the Holy Spirit. The two passages are compared in this analysis:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14).

How would the Jews know their Savior had come? God would give them a sign—the miracle of the virgin birth. The Hebrew word עַלְמָה (*almah*) is primarily a "virgin" but can also refer to a "young woman." When a young woman has a child, it is *not* miraculous—in fact, it is very routine! To be a miracle, the birth *must be of a virgin!*

² James E. Crouch, "How early Christians Viewed the Birth of Jesus," *Biblical Archeology Review*, 7–8 (accessed December 19, 2014, <http://members.bib-arch.org>.)

When this word is brought over into the New Testament the Greek word is *παρθένος* (*parthénos*) and always means a “virgin.” One of the primary methods of understanding the Word of God is the comparison of the Old and New Testaments. When an Old Testament verse is quoted in the New, God the Holy Spirit so directed the quotation that the mind of God would be recorded. The sign, therefore, was unequivocally a *virgin*—not a young woman, as some have tried to prove from this passage. (p. 16)

The sign would remain for every generation of Jesus until the fullness of time when Messiah would become true humanity through the virgin birth. The fact that the virgin birth took place historically continues to be a sign to Israel that God has a future for the regenerate of Israel. The four unconditional covenants made to the Jews will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns to the earth a second time! (pp. 16–17)

The promise and the sign is now repeated to Joseph: Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1:23).

The result of the virgin conception would be a Son whose Name would declare Him to be the unique person of the universe—the God-Man.³ (p. 17)

The virgin birth completes a process that began in Genesis 3 and concluded in Matthew 1 and Luke 2.

Identification of the True Messiah:

1. The Greek proper noun **Χριστός** (**Christós**) is the equivalent of the Hebrew proper noun **מָשִׁיחַ** (**Mashiach**) each translated as “the anointed one.”
2. They are appellatives, in the Old Testament referring to kings of Israel and ultimately to the Messiah and in the New Testament as “Christ” referencing Messiah.
3. Failure to grasp the dual personality of Jesus the Christ causes many to misunderstand why Jesus is any different from any other individual that claims divine powers.
4. Jesus must therefore be identified as both God and Man to meet the dual personality test.

³ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Virgin Birth* (Houston: Berachah Tapes & Publications, 1973), 16–17.

5. Once presented, a common rebuttal is the claim of a dual personality read into the text by the ancient rabbis or done so by Christian theologians.
6. Divines, both Jewish and Christian, do disagree on who shall possess the title in due time or who presently does. Jews continue in their anxious expectation of the Person's identity while Christian's retain confidence that He is Jesus.
7. Jewish authorities claim Messiah will appear at a time yet future while Christians generally attest of First and Second Advents, the former transpiring primarily in the first century, specifically from June 17, B.C. 2 until His crucifixion and death on April 3, 33 A.D., and the Second, yet future although at a time imminent.
8. Scripture presents tell-tail clues for the identification of the authentic Messiah/Christ. Signs revelatory to recognition of His Person require research revealing the Anointed One's bona fides made obvious in both testaments.
9. On this subject, Dr. C. I. Scofield poses this question:

Who and what is Messiah? In other words: What marks of identity are attached to this personage in the Scriptures so that the world may be perfectly sure it is not deceived by an impostor, so that it will not be open to any one not the Messiah to maintain a claim to the character, and thus falsely secure to himself the rights that properly belong to the true Messiah. (p. 90)

Of course if there is any prophetic testimony concerning such a Coming One the object of that testimony must be twofold: first, to furnish these very marks of identity of which I speak; and, secondly, to prepare the Jews, and through them the world, to receive this personage when He should come. These two things are evident. God would not send into the world one having such rights as we shall find to belong to Messiah without in some efficient way providing for His authentication.⁴ (p. 91)
10. Thus, credentials cited from Scripture are required to authenticate the portfolio of any that claim the title of Messiah/Christ.

⁴ C. I. Scofield, *Prophecy Made Plain* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1967), 90–91.

11. The prophetic guidelines contained in Scripture that are specifically related to the Messiah – His lineage, His accomplishments, and His Person – are made available for the sole purpose of providing infallible evidence of His authenticity.
12. Thus, the ID test is found in the Bible. The Messiah/Christ must fulfill each and every one with none being excepted. Find that personality and you will have identified the God/Man Savior.