

Christology – Part 6

The miraculous conception and birth of Christ

In the fullness of time, God sent forth His son.

Galatians 4:4-5 – “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

In the Matthew account, we see that Joseph knows that he is not the father and wants to put Mary away privately. But the angel came and explained to him, and so he went ahead with the marriage.

Salvation did not occur by human effort. Ever since the promise to Eve that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, the expectation of Christ permeated Bible history.

Two of the four Gospels (Matt. and Luke) record the birth narratives. Both accounts clearly indicate/understand Mary was a virgin.

In **Luke 1:26-34**, the angel tells Mary that she will give birth to Jesus. Mary asks, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, overshadow you." He will be called Son of God and He will be “holy” because He is produced by the Holy Spirit. So, Jesus was born without the guilty nature and condemned status that is common to humans.

Catholicism claims that Mary was immaculately (sinlessly) conceived – this doctrine was made official by a papal declaration in 1854 – and that’s why Jesus was free of inherited sin. But the Bible says she’s blessed, but not sinless. She calls God her Savior:

Luke 1:46-49 -- “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has been mindful of the humble state of His

servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is His name.”

The Bible says nothing about Mary’s birth, outside of providing a genealogy that is probably connected to her side of the family. She seems to have been conceived and born quite naturally, sharing human sinfulness and the need for redemption.

Nor does the Bible support the notion of Mary’s “perpetual virginity.” As we’ve seen, Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, but Matthew 1:25, speaking of Joseph, declares, “But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave Him the name Jesus.”

The word “until” indicates that Joseph and Mary did have sexual relations after Jesus was born. And they had several other children (*adelphos*, not cousins) after Jesus was born. Jesus had four half-brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, according to Matthew 13:55. And, He apparently had half-sisters, who the Bible neither names nor numbers, but are mentioned in Matthew 13:55-56.

Mary is not venerated in the bible. In fact, a woman attempted to extoll the virtue of Mary in Luke 11:27 -- “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed!” But, Jesus replied, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.” (v. 28). In other words, obedience to God’s Word is more a more blessed condition than being the woman through whose womb the Savior arrived.

After appearances at the cross (John 19:25) and at Pentecost (Acts 1:14), Mary disappears from the Biblical record. We don’t read about her life, her activity, or her death. Nothing is said that implies she was caught up into Heaven, despite the Catholic teaching of “the bodily assumption of Mary.”

The apostles gave her no prominence nor felt it was necessary to write anything more about her. She is never worshiped, adored, venerated, or memorialized by any Biblical author. No one in the Bible ever prayed to her, nor thought that she could use her authority as a mother in Heaven in order to get Jesus to do her bidding.

Despite the recent notion that she is co-mediatrix with Christ, the Bible says that there is only one mediator, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1John 2:1)

And, 1Timothy 2:5-6 says, "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time."

So, despite the necessity and importance of the virgin birth, Mary was merely a vessel, chosen by God for His purposes, and not anything like the idol that the Church of Rome has made of her.

The significance of the virgin birth is that it demonstrates Christ's complete identification with the human race as well as his uniqueness as the Son of God. His unique birth was apparently necessary in order to make Him a unique man who was both human and divine, filled with a blood of such value that it was accepted by God as complete payment for the sins of His people. He did what the blood of bulls and goats could never do. Being a perfect, spotless, human propitiation, He saved His people utterly and completely.