

Christmas Special 08-12-19 Virgin Birth

This is Friday night. It's the 19th of December, 2008. We normally on Friday night study the book of Isaiah, but being as close as it is to the Christmas holiday, and as is not usually my custom, we're going to do a little bit of a special study tonight.

It'll be a single session. And what our topic concerns will be coming up in the Isaiah study very soon. We're rapidly approaching, or maybe not so rapidly approaching, chapter 7 of Isaiah.

And you remember in Isaiah 7, 14, there is the statement that a virgin will conceive and bear a son. This is quoted in the Gospel of Matthew relative to the birth of the Lord Jesus. So our topic tonight is the virgin birth.

What's so great about the virgin birth? Why do we talk about it? Is it significant? And you might be surprised at the answer because I was surprised at the answer my own self. So if I was surprised, I expect you to be surprised, at least act surprised whether you actually are or not. Let me first of all point out that we have a Gospel account that tells us that Jesus was born of a virgin.

We actually have two accounts that tell us this, two out of the four. Well, what are they? This is the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. And if you will turn quickly to the beginning chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, we'll look at the pertinent passage there.

In Matthew 1, verse 18, it tells us, Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. Before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. That's your RSV translation.

Your New King James will have something very close. In Luke, we have a little bit more extensive account. In chapter 1, verse 31 and 34 and 35, Behold, Gabriel tells Mary, You will conceive in your womb and bear a son.

You shall call his name Jesus. Mary said, How shall this be, since I have no husband? The angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God.

Later on, of course, Matthew says that this was to fulfill the prophecy spoken by Isaiah, that a virgin will conceive and bear a son. Well, long church tradition has held the importance of the virgin birth, and it has come down to us from several lines of support. First of all are these scriptures that I just read to you.

Secondly, of course, God is in charge of nature, and it's no trouble for him to bring about the virgin birth as one of a number of miracles that are recorded in scripture. We don't find it out of the ordinary that God would be able to do this. And thirdly, there has been the argument, and many of you have heard this, that because of the sin that entered the human race through

Adam, the virgin birth is necessary for the human perfection of the Lord Jesus, that he took on our form and was incarnate and was truly human, yet without sin, and that this was biologically or physically accomplished because of the virgin birth.

And of course, this is a little bit of a circular argument, but we say, well, sin is transmitted in the human race from the Father, on the Father's side. And we assume this because Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but was the son of God. Therefore, by avoiding a human father, the virgin birth accomplishes his sinlessness.

Well, you have the long 2,000 years of understanding about the virgin birth, but if you think about it, much is made of this ever since Jesus' lifetime. There's been a lot of question and a lot of raised eyebrows relative to the virgin birth. You remember that there were people who called him, in sort of a disparaging way, the son of Mary.

And from earliest times, the Jews, the early Jewish writings that were trying to refute that Jesus was the Messiah claimed that he was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier. And this is how the, quote-unquote, virgin birth took place. And the reason that Joseph wasn't the actual father is that Mary basically had had some sort of a relationship with a Roman, and that's why Jesus came into being.

So the first point I want to suggest to you about the virgin birth is this. How much emphasis, historically, and in the church, in the Catholic church, with the Virgin Mary and so on, how much emphasis has been placed on this by tradition and in history, and how much emphasis is actually placed on the virgin birth of Jesus Christ in Scripture? We are a Bible church. We are Bible-believing Christians.

We don't go by tradition. We don't go by creeds. We don't go by, well, this is what we've always done.

We do our best to live our lives in the light of the word of God, right? So if we address any particular topic, rather than appealing to tradition or appealing to the common understanding around us, we would go to Scripture. That's where we get our answers. So this kind of reminds me of a parallel argument.

Much is made in the modern day with the arrival on the scene 150 years ago of Darwin and his theories about evolution and the origin of species and so on, and so much is made of God being shrunken down now because life has been explained and the universe has been explained as having materialistic origins and so on, and so God is sort of irrelevant, and so the argument goes back and forth about creation and about the creation account, and God is the creator of the universe, and God is the creator of life, and did he do it 7,000 years ago in six literal days and so on? And this becomes the topic of the debate. How much time does the Bible spend on creation? Out of the 750,000 words of the Bible, how much of it is devoted to explaining creation and how it got here? How much of the Bible is spent talking about God as the creator of the universe? It's alluded to, it's referred to, right? But as a percentage, if you

took every verse that alludes to God as the creator and as without him was not anything made that was made and so on, you get the first two chapters of Genesis and you get allusions in the Psalms and other places, if you total it all up, what fractional percent of the Bible is devoted to God and arguing that he is the creator? Well, it's less than 5%. It's a tiny fraction, because that's not what the purpose of the Bible is.

There is an argument made by atheists and by secular humanists all the time that gods, small g, plural, gods were invented by men to explain mysteries. And, well, we don't know how everything got here, so let's invent a god and invent a creation story. We don't know where the rivers and lakes came from, so let's invent a flood story.

We don't know where this and the other came from, so let's invent a story about supernatural entities that brought it about. And that gods, small g, plural, were invented, and this includes the God of Scripture, to answer mysteries. And now that we can answer these questions from science, gods of any sort are irrelevant, and they're just a relic of olden days when people didn't know much, and there wasn't any real science going on.

Well, this is a false argument. Look at the Bible. Does the Bible try to explain mysteries? Does it go on and on, chapter after chapter, trying to tell the Hebrews or anybody else where creation came from? Does it try to explain mysterious things? Is that what the purpose of Scripture is? It's not.

That's not what it's there for. This makes an empirical assumption. You know what empiricism is, right? Empiricism is, what can I see? What can I touch? What is the nature of the material world? I'm going to draw conclusions based on substantial evidence.

I can weigh it, I can measure it, I can determine its color, I can compare it to another thing. That's empiricism. Material, substantial, physical conclusions drawn from the same sort of evidence.

And oftentimes this is contrasted with rationalism. Rationalism is, I use my reason, I use logic, I deduce, I work in the abstract, I work in the realm of invisible logical argument to arrive at truth. So you've got rationalism, you've got empiricism.

Science, modern science, physics, chemistry, biology, zoology, all of these, these are what they call physical sciences, and they deal in the realm of empiricism. Let's take this rock, measure how much trace radioactive material is in it versus how much has ostensibly turned to lead, and based on the fact that we believe this rock boiled up as lava from the core of the earth, we'll determine how old it is. That's an empirical argument.

I deduce, I arrive at the conclusion based on the relative amounts of elements that this is how old the rock is. It's an empirical argument. The Bible, hear me now, don't let people drag you off into empirical arguments about the Bible.

Well, the Bible is not scientific. You can't prove anything in the Bible. Nobody can prove the

flood.

Nobody can prove Noah survived three days in the belly of the great fish. Nobody can prove that God created the earth 7,000 years ago, 10,000 years ago, any other number of years ago, in 24-hour days, etc., etc. Don't let yourself get dragged into that kind of argument, because the Bible is not an empirical book.

Now, where it makes statements about empirical things, when the Bible makes statements, I'm not talking about conclusions drawn. I'm not talking about deductions and interpretations. I'm saying where the Bible says.

If the Bible says He created all things, and without Him nothing was made that was made, that's true. That's true of the empirical, substantial, physical universe. God made it.

Does the Bible say anywhere that God created the earth and the universe 7,000 years ago? Does it say that anywhere? No. That's an interpretation. That's an understanding that many people have had looking at Genesis.

They look at the word yom, which is used all different kinds of ways in Hebrew, and they say, well, yom is sometimes a 24-hour day. I'm going to take it as a 24-hour day, because he says evening and morning. But it's an interpretation.

The Bible does not say that they were 24-hour days. It says there was an evening and a morning. Well, Frank Sinatra sang about being in the sunset of his life.

Now the days are short. I'm in the autumn of the year. You know, September song.

Talks about things drawing to a close. Is it literally September? No. It speaks at a higher level.

So the same type of thing applies when you come to the virgin birth. Was Jesus born from a lady who had not had relations with a man? Yes. Mary was a virgin when the Lord Jesus was conceived, and technically speaking, it's the virgin conception.

But how much time does the Bible spend emphasizing that point? You have to look hard. If you read the book of Isaiah as an Old Testament saint, you wouldn't see the virgin birth coming. Because in Isaiah chapter 7, that sign, and the word used there is Alma, A-L-M-A-H, in Isaiah 7.14, Behold, an Alma will conceive and bear a son.

And before he is old enough to know his right hand from his left, certain things are going to happen. It was a sign in that day, and it was literally fulfilled while Isaiah was still alive, and while the king to whom he spoke was still alive. There is an echo, there is a reflection, there is a foreshadowing in that immediate short-term prophecy where an Alma, an Alma in Hebrew means young woman.

It does not mean virgin in the technical sense. In fact, there's another place in the Old Testament where it says an Alma who has not known a man, in the law of Moses, an Alma who

has not known a man. Why would you have to add that phrase? An Alma who has not known a man? Because Alma by itself does not denote that.

You wouldn't say in English a virgin who has never had sex. You don't have to say that. That's what virgin means in English, right? It would be redundant.

Well, in Scripture, Alma by itself just means young woman. That's what it means. There's a perfectly good word that does mean virgin in Hebrew.

It's betulah, B-E-T-U-L-A-H, and that is not used in Isaiah 7.14. So there's nothing in Isaiah that would make someone expect that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. You can see it in retrospect. You can see it connected in Matthew's Gospel when he explicitly connects that passage, but nobody would have seen that coming.

Does the Apostle Paul dwell on the virgin birth at any length? Does he talk about it in 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians? Does he talk about it to Timothy or to Titus? He never mentions the virgin birth. The Apostle Paul doesn't mention it once. How about Peter? Does Peter travel around with the Lord? Does Peter talk about the virgin birth in 1 or 2 Peter? Is it included in Mark's account of Peter's preaching of the Gospel in the Gospel of Mark? Negative.

How about the Apostle John? We've got the Gospel of John. We've got 1, 2, and 3 John. We've got the Revelation.

How much time does John spend talking about the virgin birth? Not a word. Not a sentence. Not a mention.

Nowhere in the Gospel. The virgin birth is a fact, but how much emphasis does the Word of God place on it? Very little. So the first point in our Christmas message is, yes, the virgin birth is a fact.

The virgin conception, Mary had not known a man when she became pregnant. She still had not known a man when the Lord Jesus was born. She did afterward.

The Lord had half-brothers and half-sisters. James and Jude and 2 or 3 others are mentioned in Scripture. But the Bible does not make an issue of it.

It mentions it. So I ask myself, well now, all of the dead seas of ink that have been spilled and all of the controversies that have raged, you know, it was a man named Michael Servetus that got executed in Geneva during the Reformation. Remember when Calvin was operating around in that area? Michael Servetus was executed because he doubted the virgin birth.

He was killed. One Christian killing another over this issue. There have been great church controversies down through the centuries, all centering on the virgin birth and making a great mountain out of this.

The Bible says it and it's true, but our first point this evening is we should endeavor to put our emphasis in the same place where God puts His emphasis. And God does not emphasize the virgin birth. We've seen this principle in the past in areas like evangelism.

Is evangelism a good thing? Is it a wonderful thing to share the gospel of Jesus Christ? Absolutely. How much emphasis is placed on evangelism in the New Testament for church-age Christians? How much emphasis was placed on evangelism to the Old Testament saints in Israel? How often did God say, behold, every tribe will bring forth a couple of missionaries and send them out to the Hittites and the Hivites? How many missionaries did Moses send into the land before they went in under Joshua? How many missionaries were sent in there to try to save the souls of all those Canaanites? The most you can say is two spies got one family converted, Rahab. And that was kind of a last-minute deal, right? How many missionaries got sent? Is evangelism a good thing? Of course.

All of us were evangelized. But where is the emphasis of Scripture? Same thing with the virgin birth. Yes, Jesus was conceived, born of a virgin, the Holy Spirit overshadowed.

All of it is true. But the unconscionable overemphasis of that has created huge problems in the Catholic Church. It has created huge problems down through the centuries because it's not what God is talking about.

So, do you believe me on that point? If you think this is a fair point, just kind of bob your head a little bit so I know you're with me so far. All right. So we say, yes, Jesus was born of a virgin, but that isn't something Scripture makes a big deal of.

Only two of the four Gospels even allude to it, and then it is somewhat indirect. Did Jesus ever talk about the fact that His mother was a virgin? Did the disciples of the apostles? So now, what should we look at in terms of the birth of Jesus Christ? This is the Christmas season. You've got manger scenes and living Christmas trees and all kinds of stuff.

What should we think about when we think about the birth of Jesus Christ? We say, okay, I'm not going to dwell on the virgin birth. It's not a great theological bunch of truth to be derived from that. The Bible doesn't emphasize it.

Paul doesn't teach from it. So what should I think about when I think about the birth of Jesus Christ? What is important about it? Well, I would offer you this thought. It is not who Jesus' mother was or what her condition was.

It's who Jesus' father was. It is the father that we are to dwell upon. Now, this goes back to the idea of the King of Israel being the Son of God.

I'll give you a moment for that to sink in. The King of Israel was viewed as the Son of God, right? David wrote it down in the Psalms. The Lord said to my Lord, This day have I begotten thee.

Thou art my Son. The whole nation of Israel was viewed as God's Son. Remember, out of Egypt I

have called my Son? We'll take a look at that verse here in a little bit, if I remember to get to it.

Jesus is the Messiah. That's the expected one. That's who everyone was waiting for.

What does Mashiach mean in Hebrew? It comes from Mashach, M-A-S-H-A-C-H, Mashach. What does it mean? To anoint. The Mashiach is the anointed one.

How did most people become a king? If Charles ever turns out to be king of England, how is he going to get there? Prince Charles, Prince of Wales. Will he ever be king of England? It seems unlikely at the rate his mother is carrying on. Queen Elizabeth is probably going to be like 150 before she finally checks out.

The Lord will be back before she gives up. I think she's just hanging on to the crown and everything by sheer force of will. But what is the succession in most countries that have a royalty and have a king? You're born into it, right? You're the prince.

Your daddy's the king, and you're his son. You're a lineal descendant of the king. What was the nature of kingship in Israel? How did Saul become king in Israel? The prophet went and found him and did what? He mashached him, mashached him with a horn of oil, poured it over his head, and said, You're the guy.

You are the selected one by God to be the king. Saul started having his problems. God sent the prophet.

And was the next king in Israel Jonathan? Did Samuel go and anoint Jonathan and say, Well, you're Saul's son. You're the guy? Or any others of Saul's sons? How did the next king get selected? Samuel went out and mashached him, looked at all the brothers, all the sons of Jesse, finally called in the youngest one, poured the oil on his head. He became king in Israel by anointing.

Now, who's the third king in Israel? Shlomo. Shlomo is the third king. He's the son of David, right? Is that what made him king? How many other sons did David have? Tick them off.

You've got Amnon, Adonijah, Absalom. He had a thing for naming them, starting with an A, didn't he? He had lots of sons. He had sons with several different wives.

How did Solomon become king? Was Solomon the firstborn? Not by a long shot. How did he become king? He was anointed. As I recall, it was the prophet Nathan that went and poured the oil over Solomon's head and anointed him king.

This is how you became king. It was an anointing. David understood this in the days that he was being hunted by Saul.

Remember, he said, I will not harm the Lord's anointed. He called Saul the Lord's anointed. 1 Samuel 24.6, David says to his men, Far be it from me, because of the Lord, that I should do this thing to my Lord, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord's

anointed.

That's why David refused to attack Saul. Anointed by God. That's how people thought of the king in those days.

When David was able to go down and grab the water bottle and the spear from the sleeping Saul, and then he yelled at him from up on top of the cliff, remember that in 1 Samuel 26? This thing you guards have done is not good. As the Lord lives, all of you must surely die because you did not guard your Lord, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jug of water that was at his head.

David says, I could have killed him in his sleep. Look at this water jug. Look at this javelin here.

You all are lousy guards. You did not guard the Lord's anointed. This was the understanding.

It wasn't Nathan, it was Zadok. It was Zadok and Nathan and Benaiah and the Karathites and the Pelathites went down. This is 1 Kings 1, 38-40.

Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Karathites and the Pelathites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, brought him to the brook Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. They blew the trumpet and all the people said, Hail King Solomon, long live Solomon.

The people went up after him, played on flutes, rejoiced. The earth shook at the noise. He was anointed, mashach.

When you get to Psalm 2, a Davidic psalm, you probably recognize it. Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. What does this anointing mean? It is adoption.

It is sonship by adoption. Who was the first king of Israel? It was God Himself. It was a theocracy, right? Then all the other nations... Remember Samuel told the people, they said, Give us a king.

Samuel said, Look, the Lord is your king. What do you want to be like the nations for? But they insisted and insisted, and so God basically designated a successor. He adopted Saul.

He adopted David. He adopted Solomon. And as His adopted son, now you have this idea of royal succession.

He is the heir of what belongs to the father. So in this adoption, you have the idea of heirship, of inheritance. That's what's going on in the birth of Jesus Christ.

And all of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah are going down in descendantcy from David. You know, there's a point at which you don't have any record of them being anointed anymore,

and you've got all of this bad stuff happening, and one king killing another, and so on. But you come down to the Lord Jesus.

Was He anointed king, or was He born king? What do the wise men say? Do the wise men say, Where is He that is anointed King of the Jews? All of the kings of the Jews were anointed. People understood this. The Lord is anointed.

What do the wise men say? Where is He that is born King of the Jews? It never happened before. Lots of kings had lots of sons, but that didn't make you king. You had to be anointed.

So when the wise men come and say, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? This is unique. This is something special because Jesus was anointed out from His mother's womb. You remember the prophecy that John the Baptist would have the Holy Spirit out from His mother's womb, and the same thing is said of the Lord Jesus.

That anointing was used for a lot of different things. You could be anointed as a prophet. Elisha got the double portion of the Spirit that was on Elijah.

That didn't make him a king. It made him a prophet because it was a prophet's anointing. The anointing for John the Baptist was a prophet's anointing.

The anointing for the Lord Jesus is a king's anointing. What tribe was John the Baptist from? Quick now. Levi, right? His father Zachariah is the priest.

What tribe is the Lord Jesus from? The tribe of Judah. John is sort of a priest and prophet combined. This is one of the reasons he can perform the baptism.

It is a ritual performed on the behalf of others. This is the job of a priest. He also prophesies, communicates the Word of God.

The Lord Jesus is all three in one. He is prophet, priest, and king. His anointing is at birth.

Now, that anointing is confirmed in a couple of subsequent places. We are told about his anointing. First of all, prophetically, in 2 Samuel 7, you remember when the Lord appears to the prophet Nathan and tells him to tell David that David is not going to be building the temple? David had this heart's desire to build the Lord a house.

God comes to Nathan and tells Nathan, you tell David he is not going to be the one. It will be his son who will build the temple. As to that offspring, the Lord says, I will be his father, and he will be my son.

This is 2 Samuel 7.14. Kind of an odd coincidence that Isaiah 7.14, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and that's the sign. Well, in 2 Samuel 7.14, God says, I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men.

There is a prophecy there, because this is true of Solomon and the successors on the throne. But God treats the Lord Jesus as one who has committed iniquity on our behalf and corrected him, scourged him with the strokes of men. It wasn't for anything he had done.

It was our iniquities and our transgressions for which he was bruised. And by his stripes, we were healed. Psalm 89, verses 20-22.

God is speaking, and he says, I have found David my servant. With my holy oil I have anointed him, with whom my hand will be established. My arm also will strengthen him.

The enemy will not deceive him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And you go down a couple of verses. In verses 26 and 27, God says, This adopted son, by anointing, he will cry to me, You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

God says, I also shall make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. It all ties back to anointing. So where are we now, before we get lost? When we're thinking about the birth of the Lord Jesus, the virgin birth is great, it's true, but the emphasis in Scripture is far heavier on not the virgin from whom Jesus was born, but the Father of the Lord Jesus, God the Father.

He will cry to me, You are my Father, my God. What's one of the last things Jesus said on the cross? Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. Last thing he said, you get the seven words, seven sayings of the cross.

The last one is prefaced with Father. He will cry to me, You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. I shall make him my firstborn, highest of the kings of the earth.

That's Psalm 89, 26 and 27. So what is the upshot of this? We see the emphasis on the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit being involved in God the Father bringing forth His uniquely born Son, the Son that He will give on our behalf, John 3.16. Both Matthew and Matthew 1.18 and Luke and Luke 1.35 mention that the Holy Spirit is the intermediate agency through which Mary becomes pregnant and God the Father conceives His Son. Now, there is a quotation, which I gave you previously from Psalm 2.7, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

When is that quoted? Well, interestingly, there's one codex of the Gospel of Luke that puts it in chapter 3, verse 22. Remember the Holy Spirit descending at the baptism by John the Baptist? What were the words from heaven? This is my beloved Son, in whom, or in you, I am well pleased. This is my beloved Son.

The Sonship of the Lord Jesus is emphasized by God the Father at the baptism. Well, the first part of that, this is my beloved Son, in one of the early manuscripts of Greek, it's called Codex Biza or Beze, the voice from heaven says, this is my beloved Son, today I have begotten you. And it quotes back to Psalm 2.7. And there was a recognition, there was an understanding that these are linked.

So that when you get to Acts chapter 13 and verse 30, where it talks about the Lord Jesus, Paul stands up and says, Men of Israel, you who fear God, listen. The God of this people, Israel, chose our fathers and so on. And he gives a little bit of Israelite history.

And when he gets down to verse 22, after he had removed Saul, he raised up David to be their king, concerning whom he testified and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all of my will. From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus. This is Acts 13.23 now.

After John had proclaimed before his coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel, while John was completing his course, he kept saying, What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. One is coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to lose. Then in verse 26, Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

For those who dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not know him, or the voice of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning him. Though they found no cause for death, they asked Pilate that he should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

But God has raised him from the dead. We declare to you, I'm skipping a little now, glad tidings, that the promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled for us, their children, in that he raised up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm, You are my Son, today I have begotten you.

And that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken, I will give you the sure mercies of David. What does Paul link Psalm 2-7, this day I have begotten you? What event does he link that to? Is it the birth in Bethlehem? This day I have begotten you? What day is he talking about? God has fulfilled this for us, their children, in that he has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm, You are my Son, today I have begotten you.

Paul links the begotten Son passage to the resurrection. God himself links it to the baptism in the Jordan. And there are some who try to argue, well this was a development by the early church, that originally Paul's idea was the original one, that Jesus didn't really become God's Son until he was raised from the dead, and then they moved it back to the baptism, and then they moved it back finally to the birth.

That's not it at all. All of these are true. It was affirmed at the birth.

You remember we have a memory verse from John chapter 1. The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. What is emphasized over and over again in Scripture about the Lord Jesus and about his birth? He is the uniquely, the only begotten of the Father. That's emphasized over and over and over and over again.

In the Old Testament, in the New Testament, it is who Jesus' Father is. Not the status of his mother, although that is true as well. So the big final question is, well, so what? I believe you, Sam.

We don't have to worry so much about Mary. We should focus more on God the Father. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. Because he is the mediator between God and men. There is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus.

And this, in a nutshell, we don't have time to go into the details tonight, but when you ask yourself, okay, so the big point is that the Father is who we should be looking at when we look at the birth of the Lord Jesus. That's what Scripture emphasizes from beginning to end. Yes, he is the seed of the woman, but it is his paternity that is emphasized.

So what? Well, what does it tell us in Romans chapter 8? We like verse 28, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. Remember how it continues? For whom he foreknew, them he predestined to be conformed to the image of whom? His Son. Why? That he, Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Now, if Jesus in his humanity is the Son of God, and he is the firstborn among many brethren, who is the father of those brethren? You, if you are the called according to his purpose, are a part of those brethren and sistren. You're a part of that crowd in the center of which Jesus stands. God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that the Lord Jesus Christ could be the firstborn among many brethren who look just like the Lord Jesus, conformed to his image.

Same righteousness, same love for the Father, same selfless love for one another. That's what his image is, right? He loved us, gave his life on our behalf. He was a full expression of the love of the Father.

And if we are the many brethren who stand around him, and we're conformed to his image, then we have that same mind, right? Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and so on, even the humiliating death of the cross. So what's the point? What's your relationship to the Virgin Mary? How related are you to Mary? I would say, not at all. How related are you to God the Father? Think now.

How related are you to God the Father? You're as close as a human being can get, right? Are you conformed to the image of his Son? Are you one of those brethren amongst whom Jesus stands as the firstborn? What is the biggest historical distraction to the Church of Jesus Christ in the last 2,000 years? What has the Catholic Church made a big deal out of? Hail Mary, full of grace. Mary, mother of God. Mary, the co-redemptrix.

Mary, the co-mediatrix. Mary is this. Mary is that.

The Virgin Mary, the appearance at Lourdes, and all these other things. It's all about Mary, right? What is the biblical emphasis for you and for me? Nothing to do with Mary. Mary, wonderful woman.

I look forward to meeting her several million years into the eternity future when I work my way through the line and everybody else ahead of me gets a chance to talk to her. I would love to see her. I think she is certainly one of the great women of all time, without a doubt.

That's the reason God chose her. Great woman of faith. But what is the issue for you and for me relative to the birth of Jesus Christ? It's God the Father, because we have the same Father.

We are sons, and if sons, heirs. Heirs according to promise. And the idea of adoption as sons, just as it was in the Old Testament days for the king, is that when you are adopted as God's child, you become the heir of all of the wonderful things that pertain to God, eternal life, and the glories of the eternal future.

They are yours. So every time this Christmas you see a little manger scene, every time you see a creche, every time you see a nativity, and you see the manger and you see the little child, and you see Mary on one side and Joseph on the other, who's missing in that picture? The most important person is missing. Who is it? It's God the Father.

No man has seen God at any time. You wouldn't expect him to be there. You've got angels, you've got camels, you've got donkeys, you've got sheep, you've got all different kinds of things in a nativity scene.

But you just remember, we are not in the empirical, scientific, materialistic mode. We see the unseen. And every time you look at a nativity, every time you look at a manger, you think about the most important party to that transaction.

It is God the Father. The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He is the reason that we have salvation.

He is the reason that we have a relationship with God the Father. And we can call him our Father. We can cry out, Abba, Father, because we have the spirit of adoption.

That's a great, great message to remember for Christmas. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the wonderful treasure that it yields as we examine it and as we study it together. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us constantly of our opportunity to be conformed to the image of your Son, to avail ourselves of the various things that enabled him to live his human life in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

