

Christmas Virgin Birth 09-12-13a

This is Sunday, the 13th of December, 2009, and we're going to depart from our usual excavations in the Gospel of Isaiah to address a topic that actually came up sort of providentially, or in an unplanned way, at the end of our Friday night study this week, or last week, and that is the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the season at which that particular aspect of biblical truth comes into special emphasis, and having pointed out the nature of the presentation of that truth in the Scriptures on Friday and some of the questions that it engendered, I thought it would be a nice time for us to slow down and look specifically at that great and important doctrine of the faith. So we'll take a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll begin.

Father, we are thankful, as always, for the privilege of assembling in your name and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to receive the teaching ministry of God's Holy Spirit as we investigate the truth of your Word together, as we try to understand it and see its applicability and its relevance to our daily walk. We thank you for the preservation of the Scripture, for the gift of the Spirit, so that even though the treasure of truth is contained in earthen vessels, we are able to understand it, to perceive it, and to then receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we meditate on it and look at the meaning and the effect that it has on how we make our decisions and how we live our lives. We pray that you will bless us as we study this together, and through these Scriptures and through the truths that they contain, may all of us come to a greater appreciation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We pray it in His name. Amen.

Well, the birth of Jesus Christ is, of course, the unique event in history. I would imagine that no one could point to a more important event, past, present, or future, than the incarnation of the Son of God. One aspect of that that comes to the fore, especially at this time of year, is the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin. And yet, as we discussed night before last, it is, at the same time, somewhat remarkable that this is not emphasized. It isn't a truth that is picked up or expounded upon, even in the books that give us the fact.

It is specifically stated for us in the Gospel of Matthew. It is specifically stated for us in the Gospel of Luke. But it is somewhat of an eyebrow-raiser to a lot of folks to have it pointed out that if you look at the preaching of Stephen, as recorded in the book of Acts, if you look at the preaching of Peter, if you look at the preaching of the Apostle Paul, all of these in the book of Acts, if you look at the epistles of Paul in Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, look all through the book of Hebrews, look at the book of James, look at 1 and 2 Peter, look at 1 and 2 John, look at Jude, look at the book of the Revelation, there is no mention anywhere in them of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

This would suggest that it is possible to come to saving faith and to be a Christian and to be in a church of growing believers and not hear this doctrine expounded upon. So I think maybe the first thing we should do is to distinguish a couple of things, to make sure that we are focused clearly on what we are talking about. Because while the specifics of Jesus' birth, how he came into being as a child in Bethlehem, is distinct and separate from the fact of his existence as the incarnate, fully human and fully divine person.

So I guess in theological terms, what I would suggest to you is there is a difference between talking about the incarnation, the hypostatic union, the nature of Jesus Christ as both human and divine, and talking about the virgin birth, which is the means by which the incarnation was effected, was made to happen. And it is clear when you study Acts and Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians and all the way through the New Testament canon, that the fact of the hypostatic union is clearly taught, oft repeated, made the grist and the topic of entire sections of teaching. Which leads to the conclusion that you can believe in and observe, interpret, and apply the doctrine of the hypostatic union, that Jesus is fully God and fully human, without knowing how it was brought into being.

You don't have to know about the virgin birth to know that Jesus is the God-man. Does that make sense? There is a distinction. And the New Testament is replete with references to Jesus as both human and divine.

There are only two places where it is specifically communicated to us how that happened. And that is, of course, our birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, each of which has a purpose, each of which gives us a genealogy to document the humanity through which the Lord Jesus came. I made a rather off-the-cuff remark two nights ago that Jesus didn't necessarily have to be born at all. God could have perhaps scraped the dust together for the last Adam as He did for the first Adam. And the Lord Jesus Christ could have come to the earth that way.

And there was a very astute observation made after class, or at least I heard it after class, that, well, but wouldn't that have posed a difficulty for him being a son of David? And yes and no. Because the principle of adoption was so strong in the ancient day. In fact, if you look, there is no word in Hebrew, nor is there a word in Greek, for stepfather. If a father adopted someone as his son, he is the father and that guy is the son. There's no way to distinguish this in the language with a term.

And, in fact, the right to the throne would not have held up, as it were, if Jesus only had lineage through his mother back to David. This is not typically the way that kingship is established. You could certainly, in the absence of any closer heirs, take the son of the daughter of the king and say, well, he's got a better claim than the riffraff to the throne. But there were others, for example, Jesus' brothers, Joseph's actual firstborn son. Joseph is in the line of David, as were no doubt many other cousins and so on.

You know how this works. If you've ever done any genealogy, it's not like there is a single pure line that comes down. You go back five generations and you're talking about 64, 128 different people from whom you are equally descended. And it is more or less a tradition that you retain the name of the son of the son of the son of the son of the son of the son of the son. But you're, you know, that you go back, it's, it's, you know, saying, well, my, my forebear, you know, was in the Revolutionary War. My, my ancestor came across on the Mayflower. Well, yeah, one of 256 or 512 or 1024 other people to whom you are equally related. It's not like you can really hang a lot of prestige on that, except in your own mind.

But the idea is, once he is the adopted son of Joseph, which he was, he was, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph, that for all legal purposes establishes his right. And his right to the throne of David is legally through his adoptive father, Joseph. His legal right to the throne is not through Mary, although she is also descended. And so any way you want to slice it, he's qualified. And he is, in fact, the son of David. It is right to call him the son of David according to the flesh. He is doubly the son of David.

But his legal claim, such as that would be necessary, I think if God says, "You're the king," you're the king. It doesn't matter, you know. David—Jesse wasn't any sort of royalty. And God said, "David's the king," sent the prophet to anoint him. Well, you know, God's authority supersedes any tradition of parental lineage. And if God says, "This is my Son, and He's the king," that would be good enough. Of course, if he had been made out of the dust, and hadn't had a lineage back to David, then there wouldn't be any Old Testament prophecy saying that the son of David would sit on the throne. It's all of these things go together.

But my point is that we need to categorize these different truths. There is the truth of the hypostatic union, that Jesus was the God-man. That is a truth repeatedly communicated and developed in the New Testament Scriptures, in the epistles, in the preaching of Paul in particular, talking about his mediatorship. There is God, and there is man. There is one mediator between God and men, the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that what it says? There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. The man.

So, Jesus' favorite term for himself: Son of Man. Why didn't he call himself Son of Woman? If he wasn't Joseph's son, why is he Son of Man? Because this is man in the generic sense. He is a true human being. He took on our flesh.

So, that's one truth: the hypostatic union, the incarnation of God as man. That stands alone and does not depend on the truth of the virgin birth. It is true no matter how it was accomplished. It was enough in the preaching of the apostles and the teaching in the early church to state it. They didn't say, "Well, how did that happen?" Paul said, "Well, let me explain. He was born of a virgin. The Holy Spirit overshadowed him." He didn't have to go into all that. He stated it, and that's good enough.

He is the Son of God who emptied himself, took on the form of a servant, and came in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, humbled himself, became obedient, even to the point of death, the death of the cross. For this reason, God hath also highly exalted him. That's part of our memory verse package.

So, this is a truth that stands alone. We are informed as to the specifics of how God did it in the virgin birth, but you don't have to know about the virgin birth to understand and believe that Jesus is God and man. The mechanics of it are secondary to the fact of it. It doesn't mean that it's not an important truth, but I'm just saying, there is the doctrine of the Incarnation, the Hypostatic Union, that stands alone, independent. It does not require the virgin birth for its truth. This is manifest in the absence of any talk about the virgin birth throughout the epistles, throughout the Acts, and so on.

Secondly, let's talk about the virgin birth. This is, if you think about it, really something of a—it's not quite a misnomer, but it needs some thought. Now, think about this. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. There is no male of the human race involved in the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus, right? That's the mechanics of the Incarnation. The angel told Mary, "The Spirit of God is going to overshadow you. You're going to conceive and bear a child. You'll call his name," and the whole thing.

Now, that is a woman at the point of conception, by means of God's Holy Spirit. What does that have to do with virginity? You see what I'm saying? Her previous experience with men is not specifically pertinent to that. She could have, hypothetically, had a son, or two daughters, or several children, and still have been miraculously involved in the conception. So, again, the virgin portion of that isn't necessary to the Incarnation. It is a fact that she was a virgin. It is a fact that she had not known a man, but it is not necessary. It is separate from the mechanism by which Jesus was conceived and born.

So, when we say virgin birth, we are generally alluding to his miraculous conception and birth, not so much the difference between Mary having had physical relations and not prior to that occasion. Is there a necessity that she be a virgin at the point that this happened? Well, that's a question that's not addressed in Scripture, and I'm not going to address it either. It's a fact, but could she have had a couple of kids beforehand, and then the Lord Jesus miraculously conceived? I don't know that that would have made a difference.

As an additional point, and now that I've already bent your mind out of shape on this, I'll go one step further. The nature of this as a sign is, of course, based on Isaiah 7:14. We've been through Isaiah 7, and we know the context in which Isaiah announced this sign. God, through Isaiah, said, "Behold, a young woman will conceive and bear a son." And before he matures to a certain point, these are the things that will happen. This is a sign. Matthew quotes this from the Septuagint in connection with the birth of the Lord Jesus.

Now, this has been an occasion for no end of debate. Why? Because in the Hebrew text, the word does not mean a girl of no previous physical experience in this realm. It just means young woman. And in other contexts, in the Old Testament, if you want to talk about a young woman that specifically is a virgin, you have to add that as a separate phrase. This is the difference between *bethulah* and *almah*. We've gone through that. We did that in Isaiah 7.

Suffice it to say that one of two things is true. Either there have been two virgin births, because the sign in Isaiah 7 was a near-term, watch this: Isaiah says, "Ask a sign that what I'm telling you is true, and God will grant it." And the king says, "I don't want to put the Lord to the test," and Isaiah says, "Well, look, if you're not going to pick a sign, God's going to pick one. Behold, a young woman is going to conceive and bear a son, and before that child gets to a certain age, these things are going to happen with regard to your political, military environment," right?

And it would have been meaningless if they had to wait another 600-odd years before the sign came into effect. They'd all be dead. So there was a birth from a young woman, and while that child was still in infancy, the prophetic circumstances that Isaiah indicated came to pass. That was the sign.

Now, there is a sign in connection with the birth of Christ that is announced to the shepherds. Remember what that was? "And this shall be a sign unto you: the child will be virgin born." Is that what it is? "And this shall be a sign unto you." What? "You will find the babe wrapped in grave clothes, lying in an ox trough." Near-term, immediate means of identification.

I suspect you could have wandered throughout Judea and Samaria in the days of the birth of the Lord Jesus, and there was only one baby in the entire region wrapped in grave clothes, laying in an ox trough. That's just not something you run across as a typical thing. This will be the sign. You will see him in death clothes, lying in the place where you feed a sacrificial animal. That's the sign. Shepherds had no trouble finding him. They didn't need a star, apparently. That was the sign.

Now, what I'm getting at here is, think about the virgin birth. How effective would this be as a sign? Suppose I told you, my daughter Elizabeth was not conceived in the natural way. She was born of a virgin. It was a virgin birth. I had nothing to do with that. I'm speaking hypothetically, of course. Her mother was a virgin, and all of a sudden there was a pregnancy. It's supernatural. How effective is this claim as a sign?

What is the immediate first thought if anybody comes up and says, “I had nothing to do with that. It just appeared. It was just a conception. There was no previous physical activity involved. A woman just got pregnant, and out came the child.” Does this work as a convincing sign? How effective is this as a claim? What are you going to do to confirm this? How are you going to verify it? What has been the claim down through history from skeptics all along? There's been a long legend going back to the Jews in Jesus' day that he was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier. How do you disprove that?

Catholics claim that there were no physical changes in Mary due to the birth of the Lord Jesus, that he passed invisibly out of her body without anything so much as a stretch mark. He exited in the same way that he walked through walls later on. He just emerged in that she was still a virgin afterward. This is the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

So how does this work? How do you confirm this? How does this work as a sign? There was a sign in Isaiah's day in chapter 7. Neither Luke nor Matthew claim this as a sign. They state it as a fact. This is what the angel said. This is what occurred. He was supposed to be—he was presumed to be the son of Joseph. Well, that kind of puts it out of bounds as a sign, doesn't it?

If Jesus was presumed to be the son of Joseph, obviously the family didn't run around the community saying, “Guess what? We just had a kid in the family, and he's virgin born.” Everybody presumed that he was Joseph's son. Nobody made an issue. It was private information. It was closely held. Any questions about his legitimacy and the fact that Joseph had to marry her after the fact of her conception? This seems to have given rise to some of these things where he was being called the son of Mary as a pejorative, as an insult. Because normally your honor is through the paternal line in that culture.

So I guess what I'm pointing out here is there is a good reason why the fact of the virgin conception and birth is not elaborated in the Acts or Epistles or the rest of the New Testament. What purpose does it serve? It's not pertinent or germane to John's purpose in his Gospel. “Here are seven signs. These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life through his name.” And John did not choose as sign number one virgin birth. Why? It's not a very swinging good way to have a sign.

It's easily dismissed as a fabrication. You can't dismiss twelve giant jugs of water turning into wine, and there's countless witnesses to this deal. You can't easily dismiss somebody being raised from the dead. You can't easily dismiss five thousand people getting fed. There are certain things that are not so easy to dismiss as signs, and when you write a Gospel and claim that things are signs, it's quite helpful when there are living witnesses who can affirm, you know, “My father was in that crowd. My father ate some of that bread and fish, and he was stunned by it to his dying day.”

Within a generation or two, up to and including the time of John's writing of the Revelation, there were people who had a living memory and testimony. At least they were sons and daughters of eyewitnesses of the things that Jesus did. Within eighty years, it's easy. My grandmother knew Civil War veterans and talked about them. My Aunt Madge knew Civil War veterans and talked about them. I heard what she said when I was a youth, and I have no reason to think that she was making it up. I know my family. I know what their level of integrity is. And if somebody wrote a book and said that the Civil War never happened, I would say, “Excuse me, but I know what my grandmother told me, and she had relatives who were involved in this deal.” And you could not perpetrate a falsehood in the living memory of people who had talked to eyewitnesses, and that's the beauty of the writing of the Gospels.

So, having elaborated this a little bit, let's recap. The virginity of Mary at the time of the conception of the Lord Jesus is a fact. It is given to us in not one, but two different Gospels. It is not an essential fact to the truth of the Incarnation and the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ as God and man. And it's helpful, helps us understand how God did it, in the same way that the fact of God's creation of the universe is manifest in what may be seen. His divine power and Godhead are manifest in creation, Romans chapter 1.

It's helpful to have Genesis chapter 1 to know how he did it, but we don't require Genesis 1 to look around and realize that God is in fact the creator. It is still a truth. In fact, Paul in Romans 1 doesn't reference Genesis chapter 1. He doesn't say, “We know that God created the universe because of Genesis chapter 1.” We know God created the universe because it's manifest in the works of His hand. There is obvious evidence of design and intelligence.

And this just goes on and on and on. We've talked about it in connection with the bogus theories of evolution. Evolution does take place, but it cannot be made to replace the creative act of God. There is a limited realm in which there is adaptation. You look at a Chihuahua and you look at a St. Bernard or a Great Dane and you say, you know, there is a lot of flexibility in a fully programmed DNA molecule. That is not the same as saying that you can start with a couple of organic soup molecules and get that complex. They look at the finished product and its flexibility and its capabilities and say, "Well, this little tiny simple glob of molecules had the same ability." That's like saying, "Look at my car, it's got four tires and it can go down the road at 80 miles an hour. Look at this bicycle tire, it can go down the road at 80 miles an hour." No, it can't. Not with me on it.

So the point here is that while the virgin birth is a truth, when you start looking at the question of what is essential in terms of faith for salvation, what is essential in terms of living faith and application in daily life, it's not one of those essentials without which the Christian faith is going to crumble. So I ask myself now, why would the Bible not make more out of this than it does? Why do the Gospel writers draw no inferences, make no theological claims? Why does the Apostle Paul never mention or even allude to it?

I was looking at, I believe it's Galatians 4:4, where Paul is talking about the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Let me make sure my memory serves on that. Even so, we, this is Galatians 4:3, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But, verse 4, when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons.

And, initially, you might think, well, hey, that seems to be an allusion, you know, Jesus born of a woman. Is he making an allusion to the virgin birth there? Well, he's not. Jesus talked about John the Baptist, and he said, "Among men born of woman, there's none greater than John." Well, was John virgin born? No. So if Jesus talked about John the Baptist as a man born of woman, then you can't read something into that phrase that makes it a unique or special birth. It just means he was fully human, and this is back to your doctrine of the Incarnation.

In fact, the word born is not even here. This is from *ginomai*. It's not a reference even to the physical nature of birth. He became of a woman. He became under the law.

So, it's helpful, I think, to put these things in their categories and recognize their importance, because much is made of the virgin birth. In fact, there were many legendary stories circulating in ancient times about individuals who came into being as the product of human and divine, or god, small g, unions. If you're familiar with the story of Leda and the Swan, Hercules, the demigods, Greek mythology is replete with those who had a god, small g, for a father and a human for a mother.

I think the de-emphasis on the nature of Jesus' birth is understandable in the fact that the apostles had no interest in letting the Gentiles, in particular, confuse who Jesus was. They said, "Oh, well, he's just another one of the demigods. He's just another Hercules. He's just another divine father, human mother kind of a guy." To encourage that kind of syncretism, I can understand why those who were aware and sensitive to the Hellenistic culture didn't make much of that particular truth, because it just leads to confusion and distraction. People want to go talk about that instead of the central truth, which is that Jesus Christ is the Savior and he is qualified to be that.

So, in looking at what the Scripture does say, you have these emphases. First of all, there's an emphasis in Scripture that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. This is Matthew's particular province. His audience is Jewish. His audience has the law of Moses and the prophets and the writings as their authority. Matthew goes to lengths to demonstrate that if you are meditating in the law of the Lord day and night, and you are that tree planted by the rivers of water, you should see the Messiah fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

This is why he constantly alludes back to Old Testament prophecy. We have a faulty perception of what the word fulfill means in that connection. We like one-to-one correspondences. We think, well, you say the sun is going to rise tomorrow, the sun rises tomorrow, that fulfills the prophecy that you made yesterday. Conceptually, a better way to translate that or to understand what Matthew is saying is, this connects. It connects. It's not necessarily a fulfillment, but it's a connection.

You think about Jesus being rejected by his brethren and ultimately becoming their Savior. This connects to the story of Joseph and his brothers. It's not necessarily a prophetic fulfillment, but there is a connection. There is an exemplar. The purpose in making these connections, and this is true in rabbinic teaching, people were familiar

with the Midrash way of teaching. They had had it for centuries from the development of synagogues after the captivity and the teaching function of rabbis. They were used to these connections being drawn.

In the legitimate sense, what this did was show that God was being consistent. This is typical of the way God works. Look at this statement that Isaiah made in chapter 7, that there would be importance attached to a woman having a son who is called Immanuel, God with us, and that deliverance would be connected with his appearance. Matthew says there is a connection.

I've seen worthy scholars, published scholars, go back and say that Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, and it's not. It is a mistake to interpret Matthew in that way. It foreshadows. When you look at that name, God with us, that draws your attention. When will God be with us? But there are many other details of that passage. Is there any indication that Jesus ate honey and curds, or went to the age at which he knew his right hand from his left, and the different things that are in some of these passages? No. But there is a connection. There is an echo. It is typical. You can see the fingerprints of God in these things. He often works according to this pattern. Matthew goes back and says, "Look at how reflective and consistent these episodes are with the way God worked and the way he communicated in the past." Isaiah doesn't say there will come a day when a woman is going to conceive. It's an allusion. It's an echo. It's a relationship.

The reason this is important, and the reason I'm belaboring it, is there is a widespread, almost universal feeling today in Christian circles that the Bible doesn't relate to your life, because it does not address your circumstances. The Bible knows nothing of cell phones and texting and tweeting and the internet. It knows nothing of mood-altering drugs. It knows nothing of abortion. It knows nothing of international economic crises. It knows nothing of the things that face us on a daily basis.

So, it's kind of nice in terms of reverence and knowing that there is a God and Jesus saved us, but now that I'm saved, the Bible is kind of a nice censer of smoke to wave around, but now I have to get back to my life. The mistake that is made is exactly what I'm talking about, that people cannot see the principles and the nature of the way God works in Scripture and bring that into present daily life. The Bible has everything to say about every detail of our lives, if you have eyes to see, and if you're not looking for a one-to-one literal, "Thou shalt not have an abortion." It's not going to say that. There will be things that you look at in Scripture that will inform decisions in every different area, because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

It is seeing the way God works, His character, His priorities, His principles of righteousness, His insistence upon faith and obedience, and interpreting the clues that translates as we observe and interpret and then apply. People want to skip interpretation. "I want to observe and apply. I want to observe and apply." And they take that same view of prophecy, and when Matthew says, "This happened to fulfill the words of the prophet," they say, "Well, wait a minute, that's not observe and apply. That doesn't match," and so they want to invalidate and say, "Well, this doesn't work."

It's a failure to—and I've said this in other contexts—that there are people who get so wrapped up in the physics of a thing, in the material actuality of things, that they can't think in metaphysical or philosophical or ideological terms. That there are transcendent realities, there are transcendent truths that pertain. It's the same truth, and yet it applies in widely different circumstances. You don't need the Bible to tell you your specific circumstance. You can look at the circumstances in the Bible, perceive the transcendent truths, and see the applicability and the effectiveness of those transcendent truths in totally unlike circumstances today. And people just don't seem to grasp that essential truth.

So, back to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was in fact conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, and it's a wonderful truth. And from that we can infer many things: that being fully human through his mother Mary, and being truly divine through his Father, God the Father, and yet there is an intermediate agency of his conception, because it doesn't say that which is conceived in you is of the Father. That which is conceived in you is of the Holy Spirit, and there is a miraculous generation of the physical body of the Lord Jesus by the agency of the Holy Spirit. And through this, God in heaven is his Father, but he is his Father in the divine sense as well as the human sense.

And it's not like these are easy, convenient, soundbite-sized truths. There's a lot to reflect on. You think about the nature of Adam, and did Jesus escape the contamination of being born in Adam because he did not have a human father? And this is a widely held view. It's a solid inference one can make. I think it's probably the case, but I don't put a lot of weight on it because Scripture never makes that claim. We have the facts, and we can draw lines of intersection and arrive at inferences and at deductions, but no passage of Scripture anywhere

addresses the necessity of avoiding a human father in order to escape sin. We just figure, well, this is the way God did it, so this would seem to be the case, and that's fine.

Not an essential truth for faith and practice in daily life. We don't have a lot of virgin pregnancies and births. We don't expect somebody to be sinless. Jesus Christ is unique, and it is sufficient to comprehend and appreciate his uniqueness. And this is what the rest of the New Testament tells us when it does not mention the virgin birth.

And I think there's also kind of a lesson there, that when we talk, especially to believers who are maybe not far along in the faith, certainly when we're sharing the Gospel with those who are not of the faith at all, that is not the time to bring up complexities and things that are likely to be a distraction and lead people away. I think the Apostle Paul was aware of the virgin birth. Luke, who wrote the Gospel that details it, traveled with Paul, and I'm sure Paul was fascinated as Luke had assembled all this information. Paul probably soaked all these things up because Luke had interviewed these people, and Paul said, "What did you find? What did Mary say?" I'm sure he was possessed of all of these facts and others, but he didn't communicate them when he wrote his letters to Gentile churches. Why? Not pertinent. Doesn't serve the purpose. Isn't going to help in bringing these people to faith and obedience.

When he addressed groups of Jews, he said, "If you're going to follow the Judaizers and fall back under the law, you are fallen from grace. You are cut off from Christ." Those are pertinent truths. It's worth considering that the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise, as it says in the King James, and to appreciate those things and to see the miraculous way that God intervened in human history. But it is something that we see and accept because of the veracity and the integrity and the truth of Scripture.

It is not offered as a way to convince us, and, well, it's the virgin birth or nothing. This is one of the signs. If you don't believe the sign, you've rejected it. It isn't presented in that way. The angel did not announce to the shepherds that he was virgin born. The prophecies and the star and the things that brought the wise men did not in any way mention the truth of the virgin birth. Jesus made no issue of it in his teaching. The apostles made no issue of it in their teaching.

So it is helpful to keep these things in mind and keep our observations of truth in Scripture in perspective, while at the same time recognizing that any truth that is stated in Scripture is in fact a truth and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. But obviously we build these things line upon line and precept upon precept, and we see what the purpose of these truths are. And that particular truth is a means of communicating to us the means by which the incarnation, the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man, came into being.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll have a short investigation of that truth as our Christmas holiday message. And that's what we'll do when we come back from the break.