

Question: Why is the virgin birth of Jesus so important to Christians?

Obviously, a virgin birth—without the aid of an earthly father—does provide evidence of God’s supernatural, miraculous power; but much more is involved. When Mary questioned how it could be that she would have a child since she was a virgin, an angel told her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:18, 20). Through conception by the Holy Spirit and birth by a human mother, the human and the divine natures were combined to bring about the birth of the one called “Immanuel,” a name that means “God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 7:14).

Thus, the Bible teaches that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. The writer of the book of Hebrews says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:13; cf. Philippians 2:6-7). The Gospel of John speaks of him as “the Word” that was present “in the beginning” and “was with God” and “was God” (John 1:1-3). A few verses later we are told that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father” (John 1:14). Unlike those of us who are only human, the existence of Jesus Christ did not actually begin at his birth into this world. The apostle Paul said, “He is before all things” (Colossians 1:17). Jesus himself said, “Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). The coming into this world of the eternally, pre-existent God-man was accomplished by the virgin birth.

In addition, the Bible teaches that the coming of this God-man into our world has some important practical implications. By observing his life, we can see what God is like. He said that if you have “seen me you have seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus demonstrated that God understands and has joined into our human experiences of sorrow, disappointment, temptation and suffering by identifying with our humanity. Even though we may not understand why suffering exists, we can now know that God cares and suffers with and for us because of the suffering and death of Christ.

The humanity of Jesus also qualifies the Son of God to serve as our representative with God (Hebrews

2:14). The writer of Hebrews explained that “we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). All of this was made possible by the virgin birth of Jesus: Son of God and Son of Man.

In his book *New Testament Christianity*, J. B. Philips tells a story of an imaginary conversation in heaven between a young angel and a senior angel. After the young angel heard that the Prince of Glory had left heaven to visit “that dirty little ball” called earth, he wrinkled his face in disgust and said: “Do you mean to tell me that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball?” The senior angel answered: “I do, and I don’t think that He would like you to call them ‘creeping, crawling creatures’ in that tone of voice. For, strange as it may seem to us, He loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like Him.” The little angel looked blank. Such a thought was almost beyond his comprehension.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881.] 2011/12/16