

“COME, LET US ADORE HIM”

“His Unequalled Birth”

Scripture Reading – Luke, 1:26-38

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you”.

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end”.

“How will this be”, Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God”.

“I am the Lord's servant”, Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said”. Then the angel left her.

‘The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.’

Isaiah, 7:14, NIV

This series for Advent is based around the theme: ‘COME, LET US ADORE HIM’.

In it, we consider four different reasons why we should adore Jesus as we prepare ourselves for the celebration of his birth this Christmas. We will look at: **‘HIS UNEQUALLED BIRTH’**... **‘HIS UNBLEMISHED LIFE’**... **‘HIS UNDIMINISHED DEITY’**... and, **‘HIS UNQUESTIONED LORDSHIP’**...

Jesus did not have his start in Bethlehem.

He stepped out of glory, and he did it just for you and me. God becoming flesh was necessary for our salvation. Jesus' Christmas gift to us is his legacy, his life and his Lordship. As you listen to this series, it is my prayer that you will gain insight into his matchless gift to you.

“HIS UNEQUALLED BIRTH”




‘Larry King, the CNN talk show host, was once asked who he would most want to interview if he could choose anyone from all of history. He said, ‘Jesus Christ’. The

questioner asked, “And what would you like to ask him?”. King replied, “I would like to ask him if he was indeed virgin-born. The answer to that question would define history for me.”





“JUST THINKING”, Winter 1998

In December 2002, the BBC aired a programme entitled: ‘THE VIRGIN MARY’.

It suggested three possibilities for the conception of Jesus, if there was no virgin birth:

-  **A sexual relationship with a secret lover...** The programme rejected this suggestion as being very unlikely. There were strong prohibitions in first century Palestine for women who had sexual activity with a man other than her fiancée or husband.
-  **A rape by a Roman soldier...** There was even one ancient writer who suggested this. However, it appears even less likely for the programme editors.
-  **Sexual relationships to her fiancée, Joseph...** The program considered this was a distinct possibility, since engaged couples often did live together in Palestine during the first century.

Recent polls find that many Christians (including Ministers) struggle with this issue.

-  **1988:** 60% of USA Methodist ministers did not believe in the virgin birth.
-  **1999:** 25% of UK ministers did not believe in the virgin birth.
-  **2000:** 10% of USA Christians did not believe in the virgin birth.
-  **2002:** 27% of UK Church of England ministers did not believe in the virgin birth.

One anonymous Hampshire vicar wrote: ‘There was nothing special about the birth of Jesus or his childhood – it was his adult life that was extraordinary... I have a very traditional bishop and this is one of those topics I do not usually go public on. I need to keep the job I have got’.

In December 2004, in a poll for **‘NEWSWEEK’**, 67% stated that they believed the biblical story of Jesus' birth (including the virgin birth, angels, shepherds, star, and wise men) was historically accurate, whilst 24% believed that the biblical story was ‘A THEOLOGICAL INVENTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WRITTEN TO AFFIRM FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST’.

The amazing thing is that 100% of ‘STAR WARS’ fans believe in a virgin birth.

The concept of the virgin birth was introduced in **‘STAR WARS EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE’**, in which Shmi Skywalker, the mother of Anakin, explains that he had no father, and is therefore the product of virgin birth. In the science fiction trilogy, Anakin is also likened to Jesus in other ways because he is continually asserted as being **‘THE CHOSEN ONE’**.

The virgin birth is not incidental to faith and belief, it is fundamental.

This key doctrine of the Christian faith asserts that Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother, the Virgin Mary, without the participation of a human father. This **‘MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION’** took place when the Holy Spirit **‘OVERSHADOWED’** Mary. This was a miracle, something not possible without divine intervention. One reason this is significant is that it shows Jesus' divine and human natures at once united, paving the way for all of humanity to be united with God.

“How will this be”, Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”.

Christians who worship God as the Creator of the universe, should have no doubts that God has the power to create a child in a virgin's womb...

1. THE SACRED MYSTERY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

“How will this be”, Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”. The angel answered, “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... For nothing is impossible with God”.

Luke, 1:34-36, 37, NIV

Mary knew what would happen, but she did not know how it would happen.

Her question was not an evidence of her unbelief; rather, it was an expression of her faith. She believed the promise, but she did not understand the performance. ‘HOW COULD A VIRGIN GIVE BIRTH TO A CHILD?’ was her quite natural response to the surprising announcement of Gabriel.

Gabriel explained that this would be a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Joseph, her betrothed, would not be the father of the child, even though Jesus would later be legally identified as the son of Joseph. It is possible that some people would naturally think that Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph and Jesus was an illegitimate child – and perhaps this would be part of the pain and stigma Mary would have to bear throughout her life.

The Virgin Birth does not depend on your understanding of it to be true.

For example, I do not know how a brown cow can eat green grass and produce white milk that can be churned into yellow butter. We experience many things in life, we do not understand. For example, I do not understand how electricity works, but I do not sit around in the dark wondering and waiting to understand. No, I flick the switch and the light comes on.

Try and learn this lesson today: GOD CAN DO ANYTHING HE PLEASES BECAUSE HE IS GOD.

God made Adam and Eve without a mother and a father. God just took a piece of clay (which he had already created out of nothing – ‘EX NIHILO’) and fashioned the first man, Adam. He took a rib from a sleeping Adam and used it to fashion the first woman, Eve.

‘Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He [Jesus] appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.’

1 Timothy, 3:16, NIV

In this short hymn, Paul affirms the humanity and divinity of Christ.

By so doing, he reveals the heart of the Good News, ‘THE GREAT MYSTERY OF OUR FAITH’ (the secret of how we become godly). ‘APPEARED IN THE FLESH’ – Jesus was a man; Jesus’ incarnation is the basis of our being right with God... ‘WAS SHOWN TO BE RIGHTEOUS BY THE SPIRIT’ – Jesus’ resurrection showed that the Holy Spirit’s power was in him... ‘WAS SEEN BY ANGELS’ and ‘WAS TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN’ – Jesus is divine.

We cannot please God on our own; we must depend on Christ.

As a man, Jesus lived a perfect life, so he is a perfect example of how to live.

As God, Jesus gives us the power to do what is right. It is possible to live a godly life – through following Christ.

The angel ended with a word of encouragement: ‘NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD’.

God gave a similar word to Abraham when he announced the birth of Isaac (see **Genesis, 18:14**). That our God can do anything is the witness of many, including **Job (42:2)**, **Jeremiah (32:17)**, and even our Lord Jesus (see **Matthew, 19:26**). The translation of this verse found in the 1901 ASV is: ‘FOR NO WORD OF GOD SHALL BE VOID OF POWER’. God accomplishes his purposes through the power of his Word (see **Psalms, 33:9**).

If you have any difficulty in accepting this then your God is too small...!

2. THE SAVING MINISTRY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

‘The angel answered Mary, “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, NIV

Whose blood flowed through the arteries and veins of Jesus?

Nowadays, we know that a mother and her baby have totally separate blood supplies. In fact, the mother may have one blood type, whilst the baby may have another. The blood type of the baby is the same as that of the father. It is how courts today establish the paternity of a child.

‘DNA is the most accurate and reliable means of identity verification available for parentage testing. A paternity test can prove with 100% certainty that an individual is not the biological parent of a child. No test available can prove with 100% certainty that a man or woman is the biological parent of a child. There are over 30,000 genes in human DNA. DNA testing can provide a 99.9% probability of paternity, well in excess of the requirement of most courts.’

The Bible tells us that ‘GOD IS SPIRIT’, so he has no blood, or does he?

‘[Paul said,] “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood”.’

Acts, 20:28, NIV

‘Every individual is the sum total of the characteristics of the two parents. These characteristics may be recessive or dominant in you.’

Imagine that **God + God** had a child = the child would be **God**.

Imagine **a human + a human** had a child = **human** child.

Imagine that **God + a human** had a child = **God-man**, not ½ God or ½ man.

Gabriel announced that the Baby would be ‘THE HOLY ONE’.

Therefore, he would not share the sinful human nature of man. His body was prepared for him by the Spirit of God who 'OVERSHADOWED' Mary. The same word is applied to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple (see **Exodus, 40:35**). In a very real sense, Mary's womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God.

JESUS KNEW NO SIN

'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'

II Corinthians, 5:21, NIV

JESUS DID NO SIN

'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

I Peter, 2:22, NIV

JESUS HAD NO SIN

'You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.'

I John, 3:5, NIV

Where there is no sinless sacrifice, there can be no atonement.

Where there is no atonement, there can be no new birth.

Where there is no new birth, there can be no hope of heaven.

'The angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger". Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests".'

Luke, 2:10-14, NIV

3. THE SOVEREIGN MAJESTY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

'The angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end".'

Luke, 1:30-33, NIV

In the film 'SUPERMAN' the young boy Clark Kent shows immense feats of strength.

Coming from the planet Krypton, the rays of Earth's sun provide him with amazing strength. As a young boy, he was able to lift the pick-up truck off his adoptive father when the jack gave way. Of course, in the presence of Kryptonite, Superman became weaker than the weakest human.

In our world today, we read of young children performing 'mighty' acts...

BOY, 7, HIKES THROUGH FREEZING MUD TO GET HELP FOR INJURED MOM

'Authorities say the quick decisions made by a 7 year-old boy saved the life of his mother when the family got into an accident driving home from Thanksgiving dinner. Titus Adams and his sisters, Tiffany, 4, and Tier, 1, were riding in mom's pick-up, snug and warm in their pyjamas. Less than a mile from home, his mother's car veered off the road and rolled five times. She was thrown from the car unconscious. When the truck came to a rest, Titus checked on his two sisters, who both escaped serious injury because they were buckled into car seats. "I tried to open the door, but it was kind of squished closed, so I climbed out of the window", Titus said. Before leaving to get help he comforted Tiffany. "I told her not to let Tier cry", he said. "I promised her I'd be back after I got some help".

'He was in his pyjamas with no shoes and he walked through a muddy field, squeezed under an electric fence and then had to break the gate of another fence to get through. Titus said, "It had barbed wire on the other side so I couldn't go under it. I was pushing it really hard when it fell down". In all, Titus walked about half-a-mile, with no coat, in sub-zero weather. "I just ran a lot". When he arrived at the Galeton Dairy, the boy found an empty office and walked around the building until he found workers and yelled that there had been an accident. The police arrived quickly after. Titus's mother suffered a broken back and neck and ten broken ribs. Paramedics said they found her in critical condition and may well not have lived had Titus waited for a passer-by. 'He saved his mom's life", said his father.'

"SPRINGFIELD NEWS", 1 December 2002

Christmas invites us to view Jesus as a baby.

And yet, in the manger, here is a child that is much, much, more than he appears.

'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.'

Isaiah, 9:6-7, NIV

What is wrong with the world today?

Simple! Jesus is not yet on the throne! The increase of his government and peace has yet to be fully established. When he comes again, he will reign and rule over his kingdom.

'About the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy".'

Hebrews, 1:8-9, NIV

"JESUS CAME TO EARTH SO THAT WE CAN GO TO HEAVEN"