

Radiant Church, January 22, 2017  
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**Incarnation: The Birth of Jesus  
Matthew 1:18-25**

The incarnation was real. Christ's identification was complete. His understanding and sympathy are real because he had the same type of physical body we have, and still does. His complete identification means he can save you, whatever your situation.

What we think of Christ is of paramount importance. We can think he is the greatest of teachers and that he is sinless, we can dwell upon his perfection, we can believe he is brave and kind and honest, compassionate and truthful. We can idolize him. We can pray to him. But that is not enough.

Our present culture believes that reality is based on perception and personal experience, not revelation. Miracles are only miracles if they can be rationally explained. If an experience isn't true for all people, then it's true to no one. And Scripture, the Word of God is only to be trusted to the extent it agrees with the presuppositions or conclusions of human reason.

If that's true, no one can know if God exists, if He is sovereign, if He is the Creator, or if He ever really disclosed Himself to us.

As Christians we believe what the Bible says, that all humanity is utterly dependent upon its Creator, that our ability to reason is corrupted by sin and inherently unreliable; but that God overcomes our weakness by giving knowledge of himself and his creation through divine revelation.

Our spiritual birth and growth is inextricably bound up with the size of our vision of Christ. Once we get away from a one-dimensional or overly narrow picture of Christ, once we see the fullness and glory of Christ in the Scriptures, our response and relationship with Him will be changed forever.

**Matt. 1:18-25** *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 from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God is with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his*

*wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

Scandal: Joseph is not the father of this baby, but he assumes the father's role in naming the child. Now, if this scenario is still scandalous in our anything-goes, play-by-your-own-rules culture, imagine how it would have been in their anything-does-not-go, abide-by-God's-rules culture. And this happened in a small town where everyone knows everyone else's business.

Shame: Joseph didn't want to put Mary to shame. But, he wanted out of this pre-arranged, already betrothed marriage. It would look to everyone like she had been unfaithful. That would shame her, and him. He could envision always having to hear the whispers of townspeople. But it was the Holy Spirit who formed Jesus in Mary's womb.

Circumstances: Joseph and Mary were insignificant nobodies from a nothing town. They were peasants. They were poor, uneducated, of no account.

**Joseph and Mary illustrated the mystery of God's grace— the King does not come to the proud and powerful but to the poor and powerless.**

No child born into the world that day seemed to have lower prospects. The Son of God was born into the world not as a prince but as a pauper.

We cannot ever forget that this is where Christianity began, and where it always begins— with a sense of need, a grace-driven sense of one's insufficiency. Christ, himself setting the example, comes to the needy. He is born only in those who are "poor in spirit."

The gospel did not come out of the boardrooms and centers of high finance or the centers of higher learning; it came through a feeding trough and an execution stake.

When he was born, God the Son placed the exercise of his all-powerfulness and all-presence and all-knowingness under the direction of God the Father. He did not give up those attributes, but he submitted their exercise in his life to the Father's discretion.

Though he was sinless, he had a real human body, mind, and emotions— complete with their inherent human weaknesses. As a real baby in the cradle he watched his tiny clenched fist in uncomprehending fascination, just like any other baby. He didn't fake babyhood.

He did not say to himself, "You all think I am a pre-articulate baby, but I am God admiring my brilliant invention. I am your Creator, and I understand every

word you are saying.” Not at all! He was not pretending. This was not postnatal play-acting. He was a baby!

**Philippians 2:6** “who though in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

The wonder and the scandal of the incarnation is seeing the newborn, swaddled Jesus, lying in the feeding trough in the stable, the birthplace of common livestock, and seeing God.

God is All Powerful and Completely Sovereign: God is able to do all his holy will. There are no external constraints on God’s decisions, and he has the power to do whatever he decides to do.

God is called the “Almighty.” He is in possession of all power and authority. Nothing is impossible for God. His power is infinite. Sovereignty is God’s rule over creation.

A.W. Tozer said, “Since He has at His command all the power in the universe, the Lord God omnipotent can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished. His self-sufficiency makes it unnecessary for Him to look outside of Himself for a renewal of strength. All the power required to do all that He wills to do lies in undiminished fullness in His own infinite being.”

He has all power over all things at all times and in all ways.  
He is invincible, unconquerable; His ways cannot be stopped.

**1 Chronicles 29:12** *Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.*

**Isaiah 40:12-28** *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales?...*

Human babies, however, are a different story. For the first two months of life, they can’t lift their heads without help. They usually roll over for the first time at about 4 months, and sit up at around 6 months. They usually start standing at about 9 months, and take their first tentative steps at around 1 year old.

But even then, babies are just getting started. Fine-tuning the most basic survival skills, such as walking and feeding themselves, takes at least another year or more, and the little ones generally remain dependent on parents or

caregivers for well over a decade before they're even able to begin to navigate parts of the world on their own. Or in our present culture, until they're 25 (?)

**Incarnation** Jesus was fully God and fully man in one person. Jesus had human weaknesses and limitations- He had a human body, mind, and emotions. Jesus was sinless.

Remaining as he was, he became what he was not. Jesus was fully divine. He also became what he had previously not been - human as well. Jesus did not give up any of his deity when he became man, but he did take on humanity.

Although Jesus' human nature did not change its essential character, because it was united with the divine nature in the one person of Christ, Jesus' human nature gained a worthiness to be worshiped and unchanging victory over sin, both of which did not belong to human beings otherwise.

Jesus human nature gave him the constitution and ability to experience suffering and death; an ability to understand by experience was we are experiencing; and the ability to be out substitute sacrifice, which Jesus as God alone could not have done.

The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.

### **The Virgin Birth is important**

Important because:

1 Salvation must come from the Lord, by a God who is outside of the human condition. By Gods power not man's weakness. Salvation is a supernatural work. That's why we cannot save ourselves.

2. It united deity and humanity.

3. Made possible Jesus's humanity without inherited sin.

He came as our human, sinless, perfect sacrifice, the only final once-for-all sacrifice for us, in our place.

If we don't accept the reality of the incarnation of God, the super-natural birth of Jesus, initiated by the Holy Spirit yet born to a unknown, barely teenaged girl, we will not, cannot accept the grace of God to us through the salvation accomplished by Jesus, the son of Mary, the Son of God.