

Christ in Prophecy
“Christmas 1: The Essentiality and Validity of the Virgin Birth”

© 2008 Lamb & Lion Ministries. All Rights Reserved.
For a video of this show, please visit <http://www.lamblion.com>.

Opening

Dr. Reagan: Belief in the virgin birth of Jesus is absolutely essential to the Christian faith. To deny the virgin birth is to deny the deity of Jesus. And if Jesus was not God in the flesh, then you and I have no hope whatsoever.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope. I'm Dave Reagan, senior evangelist for Lamb & Lion Ministries, and this is my colleague Dennis Pollock. We want to share some thoughts with you about an essential belief of the Christian faith that relates to the Christmas season, specifically the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was born of a virgin.

Dennis Pollock: The Bible tells us about many remarkable births, but none as remarkable as that of Jesus. For example there is the birth of Isaac to parents nearly 100 years old. Then there are the births of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, all of whom were born to women with barren wombs.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, Dennis, and there have been some really remarkable births since Bible times, like for example the Dionne quintuplets in Canada in the 1930s, the Stanec sextuplets in 1973 in Texas, and the McCaughey septuplets in 1997 in Iowa.

Dennis Pollock: That's easy for you to say brother.

Dr. Reagan: No Dennis, it really isn't. I had to practice that for a long time.

Dennis Pollock: I'm sure.

Dr. Reagan: But none of those, as difficult as they are to say, is the most spectacular birth of modern times. The most amazing birth since Biblical times would have to be that of little Louise Brown in Lancashire, England, on July the 25th, 1978. She was the first baby conceived outside the human body, the first "test tube" baby.

Dennis Pollock: Yes, Dave, history attests to barren wombs made fertile, history attests to amazing multiple births, and history attests to conception outside the womb. But none of these births is as amazing, as miraculous, as stupendous as the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the birth proclaimed to the shepherds of Bethlehem by the angels of God. The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is the most unique birth in all recorded history, for the Bible tells us that he was born of a virgin. But before we go to the Word of God for evidence of the virgin birth, let's pause for a song by Jack Hollingsworth.

Jack Hollingsworth singing: Oh Holy Night

Lori Gordoni reading from Matthew 1:18-23: "Now the birth of Jesus was as follows, when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save his people from their sins. Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord to the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which translated means God with us.

Dr. Reagan: Well folks, as you can see, the Bible clearly states that Jesus was born of a virgin. And I'll tell you folks, I don't think it would be an overstatement to say that Satan hates the fact of the virgin birth. He hates it because it attests to the divinity of Jesus, and Satan is determined to do everything possible to convince the world that Jesus was just a man. Listen carefully to the words of this very popular song from the Broadway musical Jesus Christ superstar.

"I don't know how to take this, I don't see why he moves me, he's a man, he's just a man, and I've had so many men before, in very many ways, he's just one more."

Dennis Pollock: Did you notice those words? "He's a man, he's just a man." Satan has orchestrated attacks like this on the facts of the virgin birth ever since it was proclaimed to the shepherds in Bethlehem. Philosophers and scientists scoff at it as nothing but a childish myth. Jewish leaders from the earliest of times have written it off as a cruel hoax. But saddest of all, many modern day Christian theologians contend that it's a nonessential legend.

Dr. Reagan: Yes Dennis. And Satan's attacks have been very successful. Today the virgin birth is flagrantly denied by professors at many Christian seminaries. In fact, I would venture to say that it is the most ridiculed doctrine in the Christian faith. It is usually dismissed as nothing but a sort of "Johnny-come-lately" myth, conjured up by a bunch of ignorant shepherds in the first century.

Dennis Pollock: Well, Dave, your observations are supported by a recent survey of protestant seminaries. The survey showed that only 56 percent of students polled believe in the virgin birth. And many of those will cease believing before they graduate. The 44 percent who deny the virgin birth stated that Jesus was born of Mary and Joseph, or of an illicit love affair between Mary and a Roman soldier, or a Greek merchant, or they just said they didn't know where Jesus came from.

Dr. Reagan: And the interesting thing, Dennis, is that this ambivalence about the origin of Jesus is nothing new. In the time of Jesus, His origin was a matter of ambivalence and constant speculation. In John 6 we are told that the Jewish leaders scoffed at His claim that He had come from heaven. They said, "How can You claim that You came from Heaven when You know we know Your mother and Your father." In John 7 we are told that some of the residents of Jerusalem rejected Jesus' claim to be the Messiah because they said, "we know where You came from, but whenever the Messiah comes, no one will know where He came from." And in John 8 we are told that some of the people accused Jesus of being born of fornication, while others claimed He was a half-breed Samaritan.

Dennis Pollock: You know Dave another interesting thing is that Jesus Himself revealed the reason for all this ambivalence about His origin. Listen to this passage in Matthew 16, "now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, 'who do the people say that the Son of Man is?' and they said, 'some say John the Baptist and others Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'but who do you say that I am?' and Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' and Jesus answered and said to Him, 'blessed are you, Simon bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven.'" Note carefully that last verse. Jesus said His divinity had been revealed to Peter by God the Father. The point is that the only way that anyone will ever know the deity of Jesus is by divine revelation from God. Men will never come to this knowledge through philosophy, theology or science. It must be revealed.

Dr. Reagan: Boy, that's right Dennis. And man through his own knowledge will conclude that Jesus was a great scholar, great teacher, prophet, leader, or whatever. But man, reasoning on his own will always miss the central fact that Jesus is the Son of the living God, and therefore man operating in the flesh will always deny the virgin birth because the virgin birth and the deity of Jesus are absolutely inseparable. If Jesus is God, then He must be born of God. He cannot be born of human parents. It is therefore my position that to deny the virgin birth is to deny the deity of Jesus.

Dennis Pollock: Well, I would agree with that Dave, for you see, without the virgin birth, Jesus is, in the words of the Broadway musical - "just another man," born with a flawed sin nature inherited by all of us from Adam. And if Jesus is just another man, then you and I have no hope whatsoever. That's why the virgin birth is not a peripheral issue; it's central to the Christian faith.

Dr. Reagan: Well it certainly is Dennis. And now folks, in just a moment we are going to shift our attention from the essentiality of the virgin birth to the validity of it. In the process, we'll take a look at the evidence that the virgin birth of Jesus really did occur. But before we do that, we're going to pause for a message from our media director Don Gordoni concerning a very special publication of this ministry.

[bells ringing] Message

Part 2

Lori Gordoni reading Luke 1:26-33: Now the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "hail, favored one, the Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at this statement and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be. And the angel said to her, "do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and He will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

Dr. Reagan: Now, before we consider the evidence of the virgin birth that is presented in these verses, I want to remind all of us of a very important fact. The person who wrote

these verses was a man named Luke who happened to be a medical doctor. This is important because he gives us more information about the virgin birth than all the rest of the gospel writers combined.

Dennis Pollock: And Dave, I don't think it's any accident. Think of it. God used a medical doctor, a man of science, to give us the detailed facts about the virgin birth. And I believe He did this on purpose so that no one could rightfully dismiss the story as the mythological imaginings of an ignorant and superstitious person. The witness here is a medical doctor!

Dr. Reagan: And another thing we need to keep in mind as we consider these verses from Luke is that in that day and time, there was no such thing as shotgun weddings. A formal marriage contract was negotiated and signed, at which point the couple was considered to be married. But the marriage was not consummated until after a waiting period of 9 months to a year. During that time the husband prepared a house for them to live in and the wife proved her faithfulness.

Dennis Pollock: That's right, and if the woman became pregnant during that time, it was a very serious matter. It meant she would either be stoned to death for infidelity or else be humiliated by a divorce decree. So Gabriel's announcement that Mary was to become pregnant during that waiting period, carried grave consequences, to say the least. Let's consider Mary's response.

[background music]

Lori Gordoni reading Luke 1:34-38: And Mary said to the angel, "how can this be, since I am a virgin?" and the angel answered and said to her, "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the Holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." And Mary said, "behold, the bond slave of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Dr. Reagan: Now the first thing we need to note about Mary's response is that she was no naive child. She knew what it took to have a baby, and so she immediately proclaimed, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Gabriel responds by telling her that the conception will be miraculous, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dennis Pollock: And Dave I think it is important to note in passing that this miraculous conception was a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. At the dawn of history, in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them that one day they would be reconciled to Him through "the seed of a woman." That statement clearly implies a Messiah who would be virgin born. Thousands of years later, the prophet Isaiah specifically stated that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. We know from the Talmud that even the Jewish rabbis interpreted these verses to mean that the Messiah would be born of quote "no earthly father," and that his conception would be "like the dew of the Lord upon a woman."

Dr. Reagan: And Dennis the Gospel of Luke not only records the fulfillment of these prophecies, it also provides confirmation after confirmation that the conception was truly miraculous in nature. Listen carefully to the next few verses.

Lori Gordoni reading Luke 1:39-45: Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zechariah and greeted

Elizabeth. And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

Dr. Reagan: Now, as I said before, the innocence of Mary is attested to over and over again in these particular verses. For example, the first thing they tell us is that Mary ran to a relative, Elizabeth, to share with her the good news of her pregnancy. Let me ask you, how many pregnant unwed girls have you ever seen behave in that manner? They are normally overwhelmed with shame, and the last people they want to know about their situation are their relatives!

Dennis Pollock: You can say that again. And Mary's innocence is further confirmed by the fact that she chose a priestly family to share the news with! You see, Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, was a priest. If Mary were pregnant by fornication, it would have been the responsibility of Zechariah to report her and have her tried and stoned to death.

Dr. Reagan: I think Mary's innocence is also confirmed by the reaction of Elizabeth when she cried out "blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" she did that before Mary could even tell her the purpose of her visit! The passage says she did it under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Elizabeth was given a supernatural word of knowledge, and this must have served as a confirmation to Mary of the message that Gabriel had given her.

Dennis Pollock: And further confirmation is supplied by John the Baptist who at that time was still in the womb of his mother Elizabeth. He began to leap for joy in his mother's womb when Mary arrived, because he sensed the presence of the Messiah!

Dr. Reagan: Yes, and then people, Dennis, have the audacity to say that a child in the womb is not a human being! Well, I'd better not get going on that! Let's continue with our search for evidence of the innocence of Mary. The next piece of evidence is to be found in a beautiful song that Mary sings to Elizabeth.

Lori Gordoni reading Luke 1:46-50: And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of his bond slave. For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the mighty one has done great things for me; and Holy is His Name. And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him."

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, I ask you, what unwed pregnant girl has ever behaved in this manner? The behavior of Mary is the behavior of innocence.

Dennis Pollock: That's right Dave, and her innocence is also confirmed by what Matthew tells us about the behavior of her husband Joseph. Matthew says that because Joseph was a righteous man he at first wanted to divorce her quietly, but then he changed his mind and decided to go ahead with the marriage because an angel appeared to him and assured him of Mary's innocence.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I think we are ready to present some concluding observations about the virgin birth, but before we do so, let's pause for another great song by Jack Hollingsworth of Acts 29 Ministries.

Jack Hollingsworth sings *Silent Night*.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you, Jack, for that beautiful song. Well folks, as we have seen, the scriptures are filled with solid evidence of the virgin birth. And yet, they do not prove the virgin birth because the virgin birth, like the deity of Jesus and his resurrection, must ultimately be accepted by faith. But, we are not called to exercise a blind faith. We are given substantial evidence upon which to base our faith.

Dennis Pollock: You know, Dave, we are presented with substantial evidence, but the world still screams: "It is impossible!" In response, we need to keep in mind the words that the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary. He told her, "With God, nothing is impossible."

Dr. Reagan: Amen Dennis, Amen. What the world so desperately needs today is the simple, child-like faith of Mary when she said, "behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to the Lord's Word."

Dennis Pollock: In that regard Dave, I'd like to add a word about Mary. In the protestant tradition she has almost been completely ignored, probably due to the fact that Catholics have given her so much attention. Now, she certainly is not to be elevated to the status of a God, as some have done, but she does deserve our attention.

Dr. Reagan: You're absolutely right, Dennis. For one thing, most people don't seem to be aware of the fact that she was probably only about 14 years old at most when she was visited by the angel Gabriel. That was the age of marriage in Israel at that time, as it still is in much of that part of the world. So we are talking here about a teenage girl who is a model of faith and purity and devotion to God. And one of the keys to her character is revealed in the song of rejoicing that she sang when she became pregnant with the Christ child. That song, recorded in Luke 1, reveals that she was steeped in the scriptures. She obviously had been born into a righteous family where she had been taught God's Word from childhood.

Dennis Pollock: Well, how about you? Do you need to reach out to God in child-like faith like Mary, asking Him to save your soul? If so, I urge you to cry out to God today. Confess that you are a sinner, and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Then find a church where you can publicly confess your new faith and witness it in Christian baptism. You will need to get involved in a community of believers where you can be nurtured in your faith, in prayer, and the study of God's Word.

Dr. Reagan: Well, that's it for this week. Until we meet again, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program