

## ***Christ in Prophecy***

### **Conference 10: “Reagan on Truth of the Virgin Birth”**

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#### **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. Stay tuned.

#### **Part 1**

**Dr. Reagan:** Greetings in the name of Jesus, our blessed hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Over the past three weeks we have been sharing with you some of the presentations that were made at our 2010 Bible Conference whose theme was, “Defending the Faith.” We are going to continue this week by showing you excerpts from the presentation I made which was entitled, “The Truth of the Virgin Birth.”

#### **Dr. Reagan Presentation**

I'd like to begin by asserting my thesis right up front, and my thesis is this; 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.

And yet, despite the centrality and the essentiality of the Virgin Birth, it is the most despised, ridiculed and attacked doctrine in all of Christendom. Here are some examples of what I am talking about. Let's begin with Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson was a Deist who rejected the supernatural. I don't know if you knew it or not, but before he died he published his own version of the New Testament. It was a cut and past job in which he cut out the virgin birth, he cut out all the miracles of Jesus, he cut out the resurrection, because he did not believe in the miraculous or the supernatural. And then he wrote this statement about the Virgin Birth, “The day will come when the mystical generation conception of Jesus by the Supreme Being as his father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.”

Or consider this man, Harry Emerson Fosdick, in the early 20th Century, when the German School of Higher Criticism invaded this country, and began to treat the Word of God like it was Shakespeare this man Harry Emerson Fosdick, became the foremost spokesman of liberal theology in the United States. He was pastor of Riverside Church in New York City, which was bankrolled by the Rockefellers. And here is what he had to say about the Virgin Birth, “Of course

I do not believe in the Virgin Birth . . . I do not know of any intelligent ministers who do.” How is that for a condescending statement?

In his book, *In Quest of Jesus*, published in 1983, W. Barnes Tatum, a professor at Greensboro College in North Carolina, called the Virgin Birth “a theological fiction.” Or consider this man Hans Kung, the renowned Catholic theologian who has been censured by the Catholic church for his heretical ideas, but they continue nonetheless to let him teach. He had this to say about the Virgin Birth, “Although the Virgin Birth cannot be understood as a historical-biological event, it can be regarded as a meaningful symbol, at least for that time,” again, another very condescending statement.

Then there is this fellow, theologian Robert Funk, the founder and leader of the notorious Jesus Seminar, he wrote these words about the Virgin Birth: “The virgin birth of Jesus is an insult to modern intelligence and should be abandoned. In addition, it is a pernicious doctrine that denigrates women.” A doctrine that denigrates women? Incredible, just incredible. And then, of course, there is John Shelby Spong, the former Episcopal Bishop of Newark, New Jersey. Here is his observation about the Virgin Birth, “In time, the virgin birth account will join Adam and Eve as clearly recognized mythological elements in our faith tradition whose purpose was not to describe a literal event but to capture the transcendent dimensions of God in the earthbound words and concepts of first-century human beings.” In other words, the Virgin Birth, like the story of Adam and Eve, was just a myth dreamed up by primitive and ignorant people.

I thought of this last night, when Brannon Howse quoted Colossians 2:4 which says, “Let no man deceive you with persuasive words. His words are so beautiful, so intellectual, so persuasive, and so utterly, totally wrong.” Now, the amazing thing about all these quotations I have just given you is that every person I quoted was a professing Christian! We are not talking about attacks on the virgin birth by atheists or agnostics, we should expect those. Their attacks are expected and they come. But I am talking about attacks by professing Christians. And lest you think this kind of unbelief is characteristic only of the most liberal Christians, let’s take a look at this man, Rob Bell. Rob is the young pastor of a mega-church called Mars Hill Church that is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is one of the leaders of what is called The Emergent Church Movement, a movement that claims to be, claims to be Evangelical. In his best-selling book entitled, *Velvet Elvis*, the subtitle being, *Repainting the Christian Faith*, Rob wrote these words about the Virgin Birth, “If you found out Jesus had an earthly father named Larry, they find Larry’s tomb, do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing . . . Could you still be a Christian?” Now I want you to notice how subtle he is in this attack. Without denying the virgin birth, he just proceeds to cast all kinds of doubt on it, and in the process he makes it clear that if it is a myth, it would not jeopardize his faith because he obviously does not consider it to be essential to Christianity. And this man calls himself an evangelical.

So, what about it? Is the Virgin Birth just a bit of mythologizing? Does it really make any difference at all to the Christian faith? The Bible tells us about a lot of very remarkable births. I am sure some pop into your mind immediately. For example, the birth of Isaac to parents who

were nearly 100 years old. And then there were the births of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist all of whom were born to women who had barren wombs.

In like manner, there have been some remarkable births since Bible times like the Dionne Quintuplets in Canada in 1934, the first such birth in which all five lived beyond infancy. And then in 1974 there were the Rosenkowitz sextuplets, in Canada and again the very first birth of its kind in which all of them lived beyond infancy. Then came the McCoy Septuplets in Iowa in 1997, only to be out done by the Suleman Octuplets, boy this is tough, the Suleman Octuplets who were born in California in 2009. But folks, none of these births, as spectacular as they may have been, none of them are the most spectacular birth of modern times. The most amazing birth since biblical times would have to be that of Louise Brown in Lancashire, England on July 25, 1978. She was the very first baby conceived outside the human body, the first "test tube baby." History attests to wombs made fertile, barren wombs made fertile. History attests to amazing multiple births. History attests to conception outside the womb. But none of these births, none of them, 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 of recorded history, for the Bible tells us that He was born of a virgin. And that's where I would like to go right now, I would like to go to the Bible. Let's begin our study of the virgin birth and as we do so let's look for evidence that it really did occur.

Now to set the stage for our discussion, I would like to begin reading in Matthew 1, beginning with verse 18, and I am going to read it out of a version you may not be familiar with. It is called the Jewish New Testament. It is a translation by David Stern, a Messianic Jew in Jerusalem. The purpose of this translation is to show that the New Testament is a book that was written by Jews. You see Jews always teach that the New Testament is a Gentile book. His purpose is to show it is a Jewish book written by Jews, steeped in Jewish culture. He does this by restoring the Jewish names of peoples and places that have been anglicized in English versions. Listen carefully to this very familiar passage. "Here is how the birth of Yeshua the Messiah took place. When His mother Miryam was engaged to Yosef, before they were married, she was found to be pregnant of the Ruach-HaKodesh [the Holy Spirit]. Her husband-to-be, Yosef, was a man who did what was right; so he made plans to break the engagement quietly, rather than put her to public shame. But while he was thinking about this, an angel of Adonai appeared to him in a dream and said, "Yosef, son of David, do not be afraid to take Miryam home with you as your wife; for what has been conceived in her is from the Ruach-HaKodesh. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Yeshua which means, 'Adonai saves,' because He will save His people from their sins." And all this happened in order to fulfill what Adonai had said through the prophet, "The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call Him Immanuel," meaning, "God is with us."

Now, as you can see, the Bible clearly states, point blank without any hesitation that Jesus was born of a virgin. And, I tell you, folks, I don't think that it would be an overstatement to say that Satan hates the fact of the Virgin Birth, with a passion. He hates it because it attests to the

divinity of Jesus, and Satan is determined to do everything he possibly can to convince the world that Jesus was just a man, no one special.

As an example, consider a song contained in the popular Broadway musical and movie called, "Jesus Christ, Superstar." In one of the key scenes in this production, Mary Magdalene sings a song about Jesus while he is sleeping. The words go like this: "I don't know how to love him. What to do, how to move him. I've been changed, yes really changed. In these past few days, when I've seen myself, I seem like someone else. I don't know how to take this. I don't see why he moves me. He's just a man. He's just a man. And I've had so many men before, in very many ways, He's just one more." Notice those words, "He's a man, he's just a man." Satan has orchestrated attacks like this on the fact of the Virgin Birth ever since it was proclaimed to the shepherds in Bethlehem. Philosophers and scientists call it "Oh, just a childish myth." Jewish leaders, from the earliest of times, have written it off as, "a cruel hoax." Saddest of all, many modern day Christian theologians contend that it is, "a non-essential legend." Satan's attacks have been very successful. Today, the virgin birth is flagrantly denied by professors of many Christian seminaries. In fact, I would venture to say that it is the most ridiculed doctrine of the Christian faith. It is usually dismissed as a "johnny-come-lately myth" conjured up by a bunch of ignorant shepherds in the First Century.

This observation is supported by polls. In 1998 in a Harris poll taken of 7,000 clergy in the United States, here were the amazing results: Among American Lutheran pastors; this is not people in the pews these are pastors now. American Lutheran pastors 19% denied the Virgin Birth. Among American Baptist pastors, this is Northern Baptist, American Baptist pastors 34% denied the Virgin Birth; 44% of all Episcopalian priests denied the Virgin Birth; 49% of all Presbyterian pastors denied the virgin birth, 60% of all Methodist clergy denied the Virgin Birth, and 79% of Congregational pastors denied the Virgin Birth. This unbelief among clergy is taking its toll on the American general public. In 1998, same year they took the poll of the ministers 83% of Americans believed in the Virgin Birth. Ten years later, that dropped over 20 points only 61% now believe in the Virgin Birth. Still, these polls show that among the general public there is more common sense than among the clergy.

Now the interesting thing is that this ambivalence about the origin of Jesus is nothing new. You see, even in the time of Jesus, His origin was a matter of constant speculation and ambivalence. In John 6 for example we are told that the Jewish leaders scoffed at His claim to have come from Heaven. They said, "How can you claim that you came from Heaven when we know your mother and 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.

Another interesting thing is that Jesus Himself revealed the reason for all this ambivalence about His origin. Listen to what He had to say in Matthew 16, "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but 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 Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered and said, “Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” His Father had revealed it to him.

Now what is the point of all this? Well the point is this; Jesus said his divinity had been revealed to Peter by God the Father. The point is the only way that anyone will ever know the deity of Jesus is by divine revelation from God. Man will never come to this knowledge on his own; through philosophy, theology, through science. It must be revealed. Man through his own thinking, his own logic will always conclude that Jesus was simply a great scholar or maybe an inspired teacher, or a visionary prophet or a moral leader or whatever. 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. For you see, folks, without the virgin birth, Jesus is in the words of the Broadway musical “just another man,” born with 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 is central to the Christian faith.

Let’s focus for a moment on the essentiality of the Virgin Birth. Why is it so important to the Christian faith? I would argue that there are two reasons at least. Number 1, the Virgin Birth relates to the integrity of the Bible as God’s Word. The Bible says point-blank that Jesus was born of a virgin. If that is not true, then what can we believe in the Bible? If what it says about the birth of Jesus is fiction, then how can we believe what it says about His resurrection? Second, the Virgin Birth relates to the integrity of Jesus as Messiah. In order for Jesus to be the Savior, three conditions had to be met: First; he had to be Human, no angel could die for our sins. Second; he had to be Divine; a mere mortal could not bear the infinite price that had to be paid for our sins. Third; He had to be sinless; a sinner could not die for the sins of others. The Virgin Birth guaranteed the fulfillment of these conditions: Because Jesus was born of Mary, He was Human, because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He was Divine, because He was born holy, without a sin nature, He was qualified to serve as our Savior. Now, this last point is extremely important. You see, even though both Adam and Eve sinned, God placed the responsibility on Adam not on Eve. Romans 5 beginning with verse 12 confirms this. It emphasized the point that just as death entered the world thru one man, Adam, so also, life has come thru one man, Jesus Christ. The point here is that the sin nature is transmitted by the father, and therefore, for Jesus to be born without a sin nature, He had to be born without an earthly father.

And this brings us to another important point. It was not the birth of Jesus that was miraculous. It was after all when you think about it Jesus was in the womb nine months just like you and me. He was born just like you and me. His birth is not what was miraculous. What was miraculous was His conception. In a great miracle of creation, God placed in the womb of Mary, Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's return to the Scriptures and continue with the Nativity Story by reading from Luke 1, again using the Jewish New Testament, and as we do so let's look for evidence of the Virgin Birth. "In the sixth month, the angel Gavri'el was sent by God to a city in the Galil called Natzeret, to a virgin engaged to a man named Yosef, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Miryam. Approaching her, the angel said, "Shalom, favored lady! Adonai is with you!" And she was deeply troubled by his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Miryam, for you have found favor with God. Look! You will become pregnant, you will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Yeshua. He will be great, He will be called the Son of HaElyon. Adonai, God, will give Him the throne of His forefather David; and He will rule the House of Ya'akov forever, there will be no end to His Kingdom."

Now folks, I want us to pause here for a moment, because I want to remind you of something, very important. The person who wrote those verses I just read was a man by the name of 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. And I don't think that was any accident. Think of it, God used a medical doctor, a man of science, to give us detailed facts about the Virgin Birth! And I believe God did this on purpose so that no one could rightfully, rightfully dismiss the story as the mythological imaginings of an ignorant and superstitious person. The witness here is a medical doctor a man of science! Another thing we need to keep in mind as we consider these words is that in that day and time there was no such thing as a shot-gun wedding, they simply did not exist, folks! What happened is that there was a formal marriage contract, called a Ketubah, it was negotiated, it was signed, and when it was signed at that point the couple was considered to be married, but the marriage was not consummated until after a waiting period of at least 9 months to 12 months. During that waiting period the groom built a house for them to live in, usually an addition to his father's house. And the bride proved her faithfulness to the groom. If a woman became pregnant during that time, it was a very serious matter. She was either stoned to death for infidelity or else she was humiliated by a divorce decree. So, Gabriel's announcement that Mary was to become pregnant during that waiting period carried grave circumstances, consequences, to say the least. So let's consider for a moment Mary's response, "How can this be," asked Miryam of the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered her, "The Ruach HaKodesh [the Holy Spirit] will come over you, the power of HaElyon will cover you. Therefore, the holy child born to you will be called the Son of God. "You have a relative, Elisheva, who is an old woman; and everyone says she is barren. But she has conceived a son and is six months pregnant! "For with God, nothing is impossible." And Miryam said, "I am the servant of Adonai; may it happen to me as you have said."

Folks, the first thing we need to notice here about Mary's response is that although she was probably no older, at most than 14 years old probably 13, 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?" And Gabriel responds by telling her that her conception will be miraculous by the power of the Holy Spirit. I doubt that Mary had any idea what that meant, just as we cannot full understand its meaning, but nonetheless, knowing that it would highly complicate her life and her relationship with Joseph, she responded, "I am the Lord's servant, so do to me as you please." That, my friends was an incredibly brave statement of faith.

But Mary's response is not the only evidence of her innocence. Further evidence can be found in Luke's account. Let's continue reading: "Without delay, Miryam set out and hurried to the town in the hill country of Y'hudah where Z'kharyah lived, entered his house and greeted Elisheva. When Elisheva heard Miryam's greeting, the baby in her womb stirred. Elisheva was filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and spoke up in a loud voice, "How blessed are you among women! And how blessed is the child in your womb! But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? "For as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy! Indeed you are blessed, because you have trusted that the promise Adonai has made to you will be fulfilled."

Now I want you to notice the innocence of Mary is attested to over and over again in these verses we just read. 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. I want to ask you a question, how many pregnant unwed girls have you ever seen behave in that manner? They are normally overwhelmed with shame, and the last people in the world they want to know about it are relatives! But the first thing she did was to run to a relative and share the news. And her innocence is further confirmed by the fact that she chose a priestly family to share the news with! You see, Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, was a priest. If Mary was pregnant by fornication, it would have been his priestly responsibility to report her and have her tried divorced or stoned to death.

I think Mary's innocence is also confirmed by the fact by the reaction of Elizabeth when she cried out "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" Folks, she did that before Mary had even opened her mouth before Mary had even told her the purpose of her visit! This 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 great confirmation to Mary of the message that Gabriel had given her. And further confirmation is supplied by John the Baptist who at that time was still in the womb of his mother. That little rascal began to leap with joy in his mother's womb when Mary arrived, because he sensed the presence of the Messiah!

## **Closing**

**Dr. Reagan:** You have been watching excerpts from a presentation about the truth of the virgin birth that I made at our 2010 Bible Conference. In just a moment we will tell you how you can get a copy of the full presentation, together with five others that were made by additional speakers at the conference. Next week, the Lord willing, we will continue showing you excerpts from the conference. Our featured speaker will be Eric Barger and his topic will be, "The Truth of Jesus' Divinity." Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

## **End of Program**