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## Mini Study

### The Virgin Shall Conceive

*So, The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold! The virgin will conceive and will bring forth a son; and she shall call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).*

*And all this happened so that might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet (Matthew 1:22).*

The very idea of a 'virgin birth' raises a belly-laugh among the sceptics. And, of course, the very concept is humanly speaking impossible, the idea ludicrous. Yet that's what the Scriptures predicted back in the eighth century BC - and later recorded as an historical event. Indeed, man's ultimate survival depends on Isaiah's prophecy becoming fact.

- The prophecy of a birth would be fulfilled some four centuries later. It refers to the birth of Jesus - usually dated around 4BC. The text (Isaiah 7:14) is '*the virgin,*' not '*a.*' Matthew 1:22 records the fulfillment.
- The Isaiah prophecy says (v.15) the virgin's son would be like any other infant: '*He shall eat curds and honey until He knows to refuse the evil and choose the good.*' Jesus grew up fully human, and developed through the normal human life cycle (See Hebrews 2:17, Luke 2:40, 52). Yet He was '*Immanuel - God with us*' (Matthew 1:23).
- The prophecy of a birth to a virgin reflects a prophecy given just after '*the Fall of Adam and Eve*': '*I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*' (Genesis 3:15). It's a reference to Satan's age-long battle to subvert mankind - and a triumphant promise that through a future champion God's plan will succeed. It was a prophecy of a future Deliverer, God's Anointed, His Messiah.
- Sceptics say that '*virgin*' (Heb *almah*, Gk *parthenos*) simply means a '*young woman.*' Note, however, that those who witnessed the events surrounding the birth of Jesus understood its true significance. His birth from Mary was miraculous. Mary '*brought forth*' (Gk *tiko* - Matthew 1:21, 25) Jesus, but Elizabeth her cousin '*brought forth*' (Gk *gennao* - Luke 1:57, the normal process of birth). The concept that Mary had a '*virgin-birth*' went unchallenged in the early church, and was incorporated in the early Creeds.
- Recall that God formed man from earth's physical elements by His divine power (Genesis 2:7). Matthew informs us that: '*... the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.*' (Matthew 1:20) Luke records: '*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for this reason that Holy One being born of you will be called Son of God*' (Luke 1:35). The Father, in other words, by the means of His Spirit, His divine power, impregnated Mary. There was no human intervention.

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- Note that Mary was *'betrothed'* - contracted to be married to Joseph (Matthew 1:18), but in the custom of the time she was his wife (v.20). The Scriptures speak highly of her - *'highly favoured, blessed among women'* (Luke 1:28) and worthy of great honour. Her name means *'exalted..'*
- Over the centuries, however, a mythology developed over the role of Mary - widely known now as *'Our Lady of Fatima.'* She was elevated from *'the mother of my Lord'* - her cousin Elizabeth's words - to become a mediator standing between mankind and God. From being a mother of several children she was lauded as *'a perpetual virgin.'* From being a wholly flesh and blood human - now dead in her grave but awaiting resurrection at Christ's coming - she was transformed, *'assumed,'* into Heaven where she is said to intercede with God. Her weeping statues, supposed miracles of healing, visionary appearances continue to captivate millions of devotees.
- Mary (*'Our Lady of Fatima,'* from the 1917 vision in Portugal) is venerated by a billion or so Roman Catholic Christians, and also by the similar number of Muslims, the daughter of Mohammed being called *'Fatima'*. The late Pope promoted her image worldwide, using her as a bridge to Islam. He dedicated every country he visited to her. She may well have a key role in uniting the world behind the coming antichrist. *'Christmas'* is as much about Mary as it is about Jesus. It is already celebrated worldwide by people of all faiths.

*(All Scripture references are LITV unless otherwise noted.)*

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