

An Ordinary Christmas - Jesus Had A Soccer Mom

Sign Title: Jesus had a soccer mom.

December 6, 2009

Every Christmas, the world celebrates the birth of Jesus to his mother, Mary. One of the ways we celebrate the season is setting up nativity scenes showing the baby Jesus in the manger. It is hard to believe but that seemingly innocent manger scene depicts one of the most controversial moments in history. The birth of Christ has drawn a variety of reactions.

- Marilyn Manson: "I hate Christmas. I like to go around and replace baby Jesus in the nativities with a boiled ham."
- Larry King was asked if he could interview anyone from history, who would it be, "Jesus Christ." King said, "I would like to ask him if he was indeed virgin born. The answer to that question would define history for me."
- Bishop Joseph Sprague of the United Methodist Church calls the virgin birth, "a myth".
- Charles Spurgeon, a famous preacher from a previous era, says, "The virgin birth is the greatest fact the history of the world records."

The virgin birth draws strong reactions. What do you think about it? Was Jesus really born of a virgin? Is the virgin birth that important? If Jesus wasn't born of a virgin, would difference would it make? Would it change anything we believe?

This morning we begin a small Christmas series called, "An Ordinary Christmas". In this series we are looking at how God loves to work through

ordinary people who have ordinary problems. This morning we are looking at a very ordinary, young girl named Mary.

What does the Bible teach about the virgin birth of Jesus?

The first hint we have that Jesus would have a virgin birth is in Genesis 3:15.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15

This is one of the first prophecies about Jesus and what I want to notice is that God promises Jesus would be born of a woman. Christ is from *her offspring*. The rest of the Bible talks about children as sons of their father. When it pertains to the birth of Jesus, no earthly father is mentioned.

Flip a few pages forward in our Bible to the book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah is writing seven hundred years before the birth of Christ and this is what he says.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

We hear these words of prophecy all the time at Christmas. Some people struggle with this being a prediction of Christ's birth. The immediate reference to this prophecy was a son, king Ahaz would have. This is partially true. Ahaz did have a son named Hezekiah. He was a great and Godly king, but he wasn't even close to being everything Isaiah prophesied. In Old Testament much of prophecy has dual fulfillment. That means, the prophecy is filled in a partial way immediately but only Christ could completely fill the identity of the prophecy. Let me show you Ahaz's son, Hezekiah couldn't be the one Isaiah is talking about.

Isaiah says this child's name is Immanuel. In Hebrew, names are significant because they describe someone's identity (such as Potters, Millers). Immanuel means, "God with us". This points to the child being more than an ordinary kid.

A few pages later, Isaiah tells us more about this child.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,... Isaiah 9:6-7

Does anyone get the notion that Isaiah's prophecy is about more than a normal baby?

A hotly contested word in Isaiah 7:14 is the word *virgin* because in Hebrews the word used here for virgin doesn't necessarily mean someone who is a virgin, technically it means someone who is a young woman. There is a specific word for virgin in Hebrew and that is not the word used here. Does this mean Jesus wasn't virgin born?

In those days, unlike today, virginity was a very important thing for a young woman to keep. If a young woman wasn't a virgin, according to the law of Moses, she was subject to the death penalty. So ladies waited for marriage. Young women were assumed to be virgins.

The link between the word for *young woman* and *virgin* in Hebrew is so tight that in Genesis 24:16, these words are used interchangeably. Meaning a young woman of this age was a virgin.

The young woman (*young woman*) was very attractive in appearance, a maiden (*virgin*) whom no man had known. Genesis 24:16

Two hundred years before Jesus was born, because so many Jews were rusty with their Hebrew skills, the Jews translated the Hebrew bible into Greek in a Bible called "The Septuagint". You may remember this from our studies in the book of Hebrews because all the Old Testament quotes in the book of Hebrews are all from the Septuagint, not the original Hebrew. In this Greek translation of the Old Testament that every Jews used, the word for *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14 is parthenos. What does parthenos mean? Virgin!

While the Old Testament sketches an outline of Christ's birth picturing him as virgin born, when we get to the New Testament, the virgin birth is clear as day.

...before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit... Behold, the virgin shall conceive... but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. Matthew 1:18-25

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;... for nothing will be impossible with God. Luke 1:34-37

In summary, the Old Testament quietly implies and the New Testament loudly should the miraculous *virgin* birth of Jesus. Jesus did not have an earthly father.

But I heard...

I heard Mary did not have a normal delivery.

Some Catholic theologians have taught Jesus was not born in the normal way, rather, he was born in something like a miraculous C-section. Joseph cranked her arm like she was a slot machine and Jesus just popped out of her gut. That idea comes more from Los Vegas than the Bible.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth;... Micah 5:2-3

Mary had real labor pains. No free ride when it came to giving birth to Jesus.

I heard Mary remained a virgin the rest of her life.

The belief that Mary remained a perpetual virgin arose in the second century. In fact, the Council of Constantinople in 553 declared Mary to be *ever virgin*. Is it true? Did Mary stay a perpetual virgin? Did she tell Joseph every night she had a headache? If she stayed a virgin forever, we have some major problems.

First, the Bible teaches that sex is a good thing. It is a gift of God and that if you are married you are commanded by God to enjoy it often. In fact according to 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 to deprive your spouse of sexual intimacy is sinful.

Second, Matthew 1:25 says Joseph “knew her not until she had given birth to a son.” The clear implication of that is that after Jesus was born, they got busy.

Third, the Bible tells us in multiple passages that Mary and Joseph had other sons and daughters.

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? Matthew 13:55

Where did they come from? Is Mary popping out more virgin born kids? No. The picture is that Jesus grew up in a very normal family and Mary, needed to drive a suburban to him and his brothers and sisters get to soccer practice and

after-school activities. Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary way but Mary was like every other young mother with a family.

I heard Mary conceived Jesus through a fleshly act with God.

The Mormons actually teach that God the Father had physical, flesh-and-bone sexual relations with Mary, and God impregnated her enabling her to conceive Jesus. If that were not weird enough, they also believe that even though Mary had flesh-and-bone sex with God, she remained a virgin because getting busy with God doesn't count.

If that were true there would be a lot of high school guys changing their name to Zeus so they could take Mormon girls to the prom.

I heard it doesn't matter if Jesus was born of a virgin.

A popular young pastor in Michigan created a stir recently when he wrote in his book, Velvet Elvis, the following:

if Jesus had a real, earthly, biological father named Larry, and archaeologists find Larry's tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in to appeal to the followers of the Mithra and Dionysian religious cults...we would essentially not lose any significant part of our faith because it is more about how we live.

What do you think? Is it important that Jesus was born of a virgin? If Jesus wasn't born of a virgin:

First, the only alternative is that Jesus would be an illegitimate child and Mary is not much of a Godly woman after all.

Second, we call Mary's character into question. If Mary was behind the bushes with a guy named Larry, then you have a sexually promiscuous young

woman lying about how her son was conceived. If Mary is nothing more than a sinful con artist then she and her son shouldn't be trusted.

Thirdly, if we deny the virgin birth, we are denying something clearly taught in Scripture. Therefore the Bible either has a big mistake in it, or it contains outright lies. If the Bible is wrong in what it says about the virgin birth, then the authority of the Bible is gone.

What should I think about Mary?

Many people have too high a view of Mary that is not based on Scripture. Some people pray to her, others think she, like Jesus was miraculously conceived. That isn't the Mary of the Bible. As we saw, she was an ordinary young woman. Jesus was born into an ordinary family, Mary went through all the ups and downs of being an ordinary mother and a wife. She went through the stress of parenting, cooking, cleaning and changing diapers. Jesus chose to be born in the womb of an ordinary woman, who raised ordinary kids in an ordinary family. Let's be careful about having too high a view of Mary. While many Catholics and those in the Orthodox faith can have too high a view of Mary, those of us who are Protestants can have just the opposite problem. We can have too low of a view of her.

Mary is not the object of our faith, Jesus is, but Mary is an incredible example of faith for us to follow. Imagine her emotions when the angel told her she would be pregnant before her marriage in a society that shamed, humiliated, and even killed women they assumed were promiscuous. Jewish tradition describes horrible public shaming treatments for women guilty of sexual

promiscuity. Treatments that included a public stripping, binding and beating while the community watched.

Mary knew how difficult her life would be when she heard she would become pregnant out of wedlock. What does she say?

**“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”
Luke 1:38**

That is a young woman who was willing to place incredible trust in God, no matter how weird the curveball was that he decided to throw her way.

She is a woman who is an example for us about how to handle divine privilege. When God thrust her into the spotlight as the fame of Jesus grew, we never see her trying to steal the limelight but she is content to humbly stay in the background and point to Jesus, her own son, as God. She refused to grab attention for herself. She knew she was just an ordinary young woman, that God used in an extraordinary way.

Conclusion

My hope and prayer for us this morning is that each of us would follow one more example of Mary. Mary trusted in Jesus, her son, to forgive her sin. That wasn't because she was a proud mother, it is because she recognized him for who he is. Jesus isn't just Mary's son, the Bible tells us he is fully God and fully man and he never sinned. With those qualifications he died and be the perfect payment for our sin. The Bible tells us that is exactly what he did on a cross between two criminals. When he died he became the perfect once for all sacrifice for our sin, but death could not hold him. He rose from the dead, giving eternal life to all who trust in him. The Bible tells us that one day he will return

and every knee will bow and tongue confess him as Lord. At that time, he will either be your savior or your judge. Have you asked Christ to save you from the consequences of your sin? Have you asked Christ to be in charge of your life?

If you have never asked Christ to pay for your sins and be in charge of your life, would you open your heart in this closing prayer.

Jesus, come into my heart today. I ask your death to be the payment for my sin and your resurrection to new life to be the power to take away my sin. I ask you to be the king of my heart. I give you my life. Amen

Father, in the name of Christ, I ask there are many who experience the gift of salvation today. Amen.



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