



QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

**WAS JESUS ACTUALLY
BORN OF A VIRGIN?**



QUESTION

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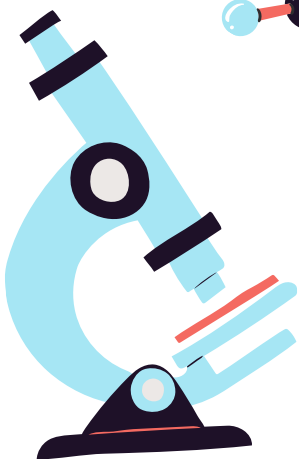
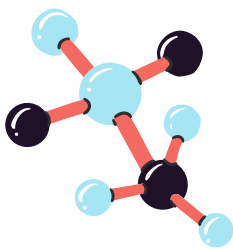
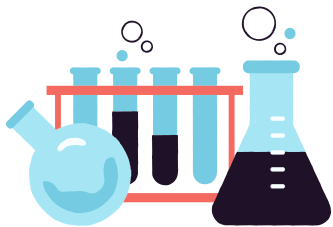
Many skeptics of Christianity deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. They view the entire account as a bunch of primitive, naive, fanciful, unscientific nonsense. Is this a fair and reasonable position? Is there any evidence in support of the claims of the Bible? Or are Christians truly mistaken about the supposed virgin birth of Jesus?

BEFORE WE LOOK AT SOME OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE, WE MUST FIRST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.



THE DANGER OF SCIENTISM

Today, in the 21st century, given the popularity and success of science, many people place a hyper-stress or emphasis on science and the scientific method. The danger being, many of us (often without realising) have moved beyond a healthy respect and appreciation of science, into the worldview of scientism - the idea that science is the sole arbiter of truth, and only through scientific means can we discover what is real and true.



While science can reveal to us a tremendous amount about the natural world and has without a doubt improved the standard of living for millions throughout history, there are limits to science. For example, the scientific method can't reveal to us moral or historical truths. These things lie beyond the scope of science.

As we investigate this question more closely we must be mindful of the presuppositions of scientism (namely, god doesn't exist, miracles aren't possible, the laws of nature cannot be suspended, virgins can't fall pregnant (or give birth) and the danger that they can impede an open and objective investigation of the matter. We need to employ an evidentiary method as we investigate the historical evidence; much like the process used in a court of law. We must weigh up the evidence and infer to the most reasonable conclusion.

THE DANGER OF CHRONOLOGICAL SNOBBERY

Many skeptics contend that the people living in 1st century Palestine during the life of Jesus and at the time the New Testament documents were written, were naive, gullible, simpletons, who didn't know any better. So, this unscientific nonsense about a virgin birth came to be accepted and even promulgated.

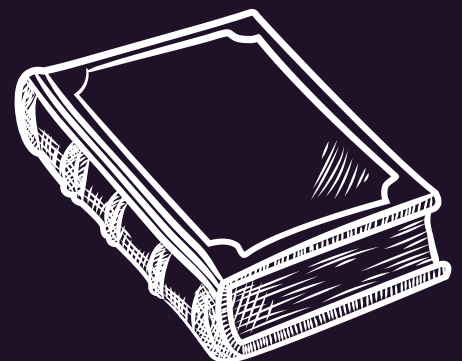
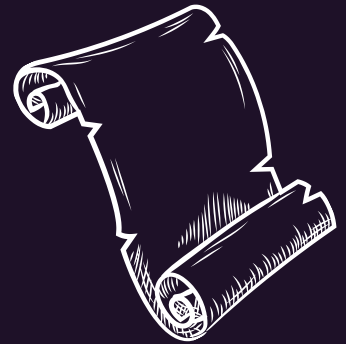
This position is extremely arrogant. The truth is, people back then knew just as well as we do now, that virgins cannot naturally fall pregnant or give birth. The virgin birth, much like the resurrection, was recorded and put in the Bible because the people knew it was a miracle. They knew it was extremely strange but nevertheless absolutely true.



**LET'S NOW ADDRESS SOME OF THE HISTORICAL
CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
WHEN WE INVESTIGATE THIS MATTER.**

THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The writings of the New Testament that record the virgin birth of Jesus have been traced back to early, honest and reliable testimony. The writers who recorded the story were Matthew - a disciple and eyewitness to the events of the life of Jesus - and Luke, doctor and associate of the disciples, who presents many things in the life of Christ from the viewpoint of His mother, Mary. Furthermore, these accounts have been faithfully and reliably passed down to us through history. In other words, we can be confident that the writings of the New Testament were truly written by Jesus' earliest followers, who were honest and accurate in their accounts of the virgin birth of Jesus.



We can also be confident that the New Testament we read today is an accurate and reliable reconstruction of the original writings from the 1st century A.D. Just like a jury in a court of law can trust the testimony of an honest and reliable eyewitness, we can trust the New Testament and its accounts of Jesus being born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38).



OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

It's important to note that the virgin birth was not an invention of the gospel writers or any of Jesus's followers, or even the early church. The "Immanuel prophecy" (Isaiah 7 - 12) is the foundational passage for the Old Testament doctrine of the virgin birth. The prophet Isaiah foretold of the Messiah's virgin birth 700 years before Jesus. Isaiah 7:14 states, *'Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.'* - meaning, 'God with us.' (NASB).

In Luke 1:26-38 the New Testament records the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy...

LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of

David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

RESPONSE OF MARY

It's interesting to note Mary's response. Despite the fact she was clearly pregnant, Mary insisted that she was a virgin. Surely she realised that such a story was totally unbelievable. A pregnant virgin? It's a biological impossibility! A fact she would've known full well.

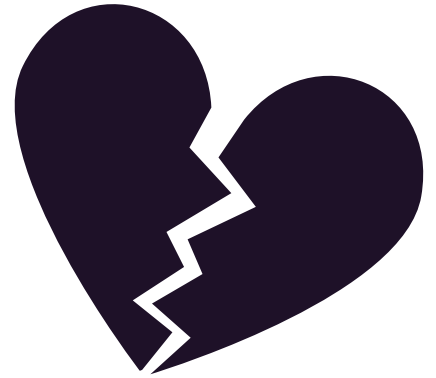


Why didn't she create a more credible explanation? For example, she could've lied and claimed she had been taken advantage of. Instead, she offers the least believable explanation; that she was pregnant by God's Holy Spirit.

WHY DID SHE SAY SUCH A THING UNLESS IT WAS TRUE?

RESPONSE OF JOSEPH

Joseph's response is another important piece of information. After Mary was found to be with child, how did Joseph, her fiancé, react? Naturally, he assumed Mary must've been with another man. Joseph intended to call off the engagement and upcoming marriage.



However, in Matthew 1:20-25 we learn that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, *“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.”* Based on this angelic encounter Joseph believed Mary and took her as his wife.



Joseph made this decision fully aware of the social implications. Marrying Mary would mar his reputation for the rest of his life. So why did he go on and marry her? Because he believed the message from the angel. He knew Mary was indeed a virgin who was pregnant with the Son of God conceived by God's Holy Spirit.

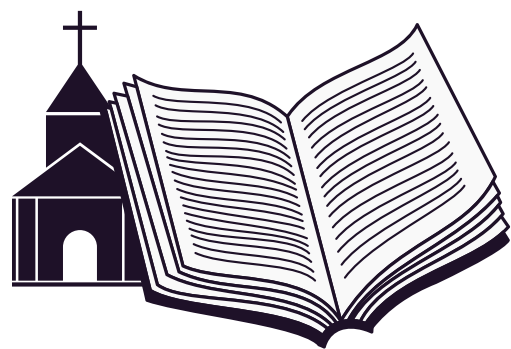
LIFE OF JESUS

The *life of Jesus* is a vital consideration we must take into account when determining whether the *virgin birth of Jesus* is true or false. If the virgin birth is a lie - for whatever reason - Jesus was nothing more than an ordinary man.



We should expect he lived an ordinary life. A life filled with moral failings just like each and every one of us. However, by all accounts Jesus lived a morally perfect life; His character, totally unmatched by anyone else throughout history. What about the countless miracles and supernatural works he performed? How about the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah all fulfilled in Jesus Christ alone? And of course what about Jesus's resurrection from the dead and ascension into Heaven? Surely these are not the accomplishments of an ordinary man. The life of Jesus is a powerful witness to the truth of the virgin birth.

TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY CHURCH



Many skeptics contend that the details regarding the virgin birth of Jesus were added or accepted many centuries after the time of Jesus. This is simply not the case.

Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen notes, *“At about 110 A.D. belief in the virgin birth was no new thing; it was not a thing that had to be established by argument, but had its roots deep in the life of the church.”* In 110 A.D. Ignatius clearly accepted the virgin birth as a well-established fact. Furthermore, clear references to a belief in the virgin birth may also be found in the writings of Aristides (125 A.D.), Justin Martyr (150 A.D.), Irenaeus (170 A.D.), Tatian (170 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (190 A.D.), and Tertullian (200 A.D.).

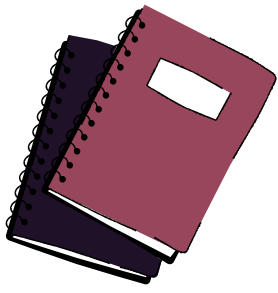
OBJECTION:

MISTRANSLATION OF 'VIRGIN'

Critics often contend that the New Testament writer “misquotes” or “mistranslates” the word virgin from Isaiah 7. The Hebrew word used in Isaiah 7:14 is *‘almah*, meaning “*young woman*”. Yet the gospel writer Matthew, quoting the Greek translation of the Old Testament, used the word *‘parthenos*, meaning “*virgin*”.

Critics contend that Matthew twisted what the prophet Isaiah foretold. However, the truth is, the Hebrew word *'almah'* can mean either *"young woman"* or *"virgin"*, even though there is a specific word for virgin in Hebrew. Readers of Isaiah's time understood he did mean a virgin would conceive. We know this to be true because Jewish scholars over 200 years before Jesus, rendered the Hebrew word *'almah'* as the Greek word for *'virgin'* when translating Isaiah 7:14 for the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament)). Christian apologists Josh and Sean McDowell explain that, *"...Matthew wasn't twisting things at all - he was quoting the Greek translation, considered both then and now to be accurate in translating Isaiah."*





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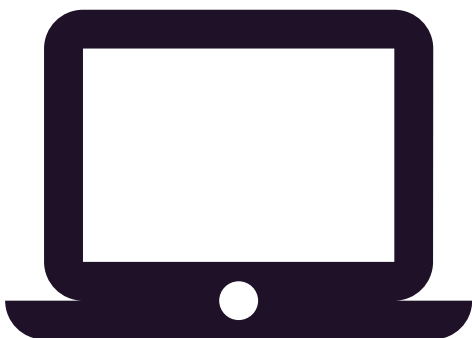




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