
Sermon Notes

September 17, 2023

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Conceived of the Spirit, Born of the Virgin Luke 1:26:35

The Person of Christ

- ❖ The Apostles' Creed provides a bare bones outline of Jesus' ministry in both His 1st & 2nd comings to earth
- ❖ At His 1st coming, Jesus enters and exits the world in supernatural ways
 - a virgin birth
 - an ascension back into heaven
 - although Jesus is fully human, He is more than a man
 - Jesus is fully God
- ❖ Jesus' full divinity is united with Jesus' full humanity in a single, inseparable person
 - a supernatural conception
 - a normal human birth
- ❖ It took the early church several centuries to sort out all the implications of Biblical truth and to understand the nature of Jesus as the fully human, sinless, Son of God
 - a good man? a good teacher? an angel in human form?
 - divinely created? adopted by God at His baptism?

The Conception of Christ

- ❖ Doubts about Jesus' conception are not just an ancient dilemma
 - skepticism about Jesus' conception and virgin birth has permeated the church during the last century and a half
 - an "entrance myth" that balances out His "exit myth"
 - the objection that a virgin birth is biologically impossible
 - rationalism and naturalism have been working overtime since the 18th century to rid Christianity of any vestige of the supernatural
 - the unique, virgin birth of Christ is an historical issue, not a scientific issue
- ❖ Will the church hold the line on what we confess in the Apostles' Creed that Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin, Mary?
 - the Christian faith stands or falls on the basis of the uniqueness of Christ
 - Mary's testimony about herself: *How will this be, since I am a virgin?* (Luke 1:34)
 - the angel's words to Joseph: *do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.* (Matthew 1:20)
 - the efforts of Protestant liberalism to demythologize Christianity
 - minimizing the importance of the virgin birth by claiming it is an obscure point which has little meaning or consequence for those who follow Christ

The Importance of Christ's Virgin Birth

- ❖ If Jesus were not conceived by the Holy Spirit, He would have a human father and thus, not be divine
- ❖ If Jesus were not God, the gospel would not offer salvation
 - Jesus alone serves as a perfect substitute **for our sin**, and He only is capable of offering an effective sacrifice **for** sin because He is both fully God and fully human
 - if Jesus were not fully God, the merits of His sinless life and atoning sacrifice could not be applied to all who believe in Him
- ❖ If Jesus were not fully human
 - He could not die a physical death
 - He could not be tempted in every way that we are
 - He would never fully identify with our weaknesses
- ❖ A belief in the supernatural incarnation of Jesus is absolutely essential to understanding the significance of Jesus' cross
 - the fulfillment of prophecy
 - the fulfillment of promise (Genesis 3:15)
- ❖ Martin Luther notes: "Through Jesus' supernatural incarnation by the Holy Spirit, the work of new creation is initiated."
 - God's supernatural intervention in history is needed in order for Him to hit the "reset" button and inaugurate a new beginning
 - through the miracle of the gospel, which starts with the virgin birth, God brings forth new life from sinful people like me and you

The Virgin, Mary

- ❖ We confess our faith in the reality of the incarnation, not the glory of Jesus' mother
 - yet, there is much for us to learn from the example of Mary
 - J. I. Packer "Mary should have our honor, not for her sake, but as the role model for a Christian, man or woman, par excellence."
- ❖ Mary saw herself simply as a saved sinner (Luke 1:47)
 - the privilege and the price of cooperating in God's plan
 - though there may have been some early missteps in Mary's understanding of her Son's mission and His methods, Mary is one who clearly lives on the cutting edge of having a living faith in her son (Acts 1:14)
- ❖ We must see the miracle of Christ conceived in our hearts just as He was conceived in Mary's womb

Personal Reflection

1. How would you explain to someone else why belief in the virgin birth of Christ is essential to Christianity? Do you have any reservations about or reluctance to embrace this truth yourself? If so, plan to discuss your hesitations with a trusted Christian friend.
2. In what ways does belief in Jesus' supernatural incarnation cause you to more fully understand the significance of Jesus' cross?
3. What important lessons can you learn from the life of Mary? How will you put those lessons into practice?