

## THE NECESSITY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

That Christ would be born to a virgin was prophesied in Scripture, both in the words of God Himself (Gen3:15) and those of the prophet Isaiah (Isa7:14). While the miraculous nature of Jesus' birth was to serve as a sign<sup>1</sup> to the nation of Israel (1Cor1:22) validating His claim to be the prophesied Messiah, there is much more to it. The supernatural conception/virgin birth of Christ was an absolute necessity for the following reasons:

1) The hypostatic union brought about in the incarnation (i.e., the uniting of divine and human natures in the Person of Christ; 1Tim3:16) cannot be achieved by natural conception—it necessitated a supernatural work of creation (cf. Luk1:34-35).

2) The blood curse pronounced on King Jeconiah and all of his physical descendants (Jer22:28-30) disqualified Joseph (Matt1:12,16) from ever reigning on the throne of David; if Jesus had been the natural offspring (i.e., blood descendant) of Joseph, He would be forever disqualified from becoming King over Israel. However, God's ingenious resolution of this issue is documented in the two genealogies of Christ.

GENEALOGY OF MATTHEW 1. The genealogy recorded in Matthew 1:1-16 is that of Joseph. Joseph was the (foster) father of Jesus, which makes Him a descendant of King David through the royal line of the kings of Judah (Matt1:6-16). This establishes His (apparent) claim to the throne of David (cf. 2Sam7:11-13,16; Luk1:31-33). Unfortunately, this line of descent passes through Jeconiah (Matt1:11) and disqualifies all who are blood descendants of this cursed king.

However, Matthew 1:16 makes clear that Jesus' physical descent was through Mary, but not Joseph. While the English text of this verse is ambiguous<sup>2</sup>, the Greek text is unequivocal. The Greek pronoun **ἧς**, translated "of whom" in this verse, is both *feminine* and *singular*. Thus, the text clearly asserts that Jesus was born of Mary, but **not** Joseph.

GENEALOGY OF LUKE 3. Though not immediately obvious, the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38 is that of Mary. Heli was Mary's father, not Joseph's (Joseph's father was Jacob; Matt1:16). Joseph's name is substituted for Mary's in the genealogy (Luk3:23) for legal reasons<sup>3</sup>. Note that like Joseph, Mary is also a physical descendent of King David, but through David's son Nathan, not Solomon (Luk3:31), such that Mary comes from a Davidic line not subject to the blood curse of Jeconiah. Thus, the two genealogies of Jesus establish that He is a physical descendent of King David legally entitled to the throne of David.

As a footnote to this complex genealogical resolution, it should be recognized that the legitimacy of Christ's claim to the throne of David through his mother Mary depends in part on an obscure exception to the rights of inheritance in the Law of Moses made for the daughters of Zelophehad (Num26:33; 27:1-8; 36:2-12; Josh17:3-4). Lesson: no detail of Scripture (however minute) is insignificant or unimportant!

<sup>1</sup> Note, Christ's claim of a virgin birth was scorned by the Pharisees (cf. Jn8:41).

<sup>2</sup> In the English text of Matthew 1:16, the noun immediately preceding "whom" is "Mary", which would normally make it the antecedent of the pronoun "whom"; however, "whom" can be either singular or plural, so that the physical descent of Jesus through both Mary and Joseph cannot be ruled out unequivocally from the English text.

<sup>3</sup> In Luke 3:23, the Greek word translated "(as was supposed)" is **ἐνομίετο**, which literally means *reckoned according to law* (i.e., son-in-law).