

# The Perfect Man

by Jeremy Cagle

A friend of mine was speaking at a camp several years ago when a young man approached him and said, “Pastor, I don’t want to think that I have to be perfect to get into Heaven . . .” To which my friend interrupted and replied, “Ah, but you do.”



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Of all the doctrines that have fallen on hard times in recent years, the holiness of God has to be at the top of the list.<sup>1</sup> Professing Christians today tend to think of God as loving and merciful and gracious but they do not see Him as holy. They do not see Him as just and righteous and perfect. Or as being so perfect that only the perfect can come into His presence. They think that close

is enough is good enough when it comes to salvation.

And, because of this, there is another doctrine that has fallen on hard times in recent years and that is the virgin birth of Christ. This article will look at that doctrine from two different angles: why it is important and what its effects were.

## I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

The founder of Westminster Theological Seminary, J. Gresham Machen, described the virgin birth this way:

According to a universal belief of the historic Christian Church, Jesus of Nazareth was born without human

father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary . . . Whatever may be thought of the virgin birth itself, the belief of the Church in the virgin birth is a fact of history which no one denies.<sup>2</sup>

The virgin birth has been universally accepted by Christians for centuries. It has been understood to be a core doctrine of our faith. No one, except those recognized as heretics, denied the importance of this doctrine until very recently in church history.<sup>3</sup>

But that raises the question: Is the virgin birth really that important? Is it a cardinal tenet of the Christian religion? Can it be ignored and Christianity still be called Christianity?

And the answer to that question is a resounding, "No!" The virgin birth is essential to the Christian faith. To quote from Machen again,

One thing at least is clear: even if the belief in the virgin birth is not necessary to every Christian, it is certainly necessary to Christianity. And it is necessary to the corporate witness of the Church . . . Only one Jesus is presented in the Word of God; and that Jesus did not come into the world by ordinary generation [birth], but was conceived in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost.<sup>4</sup>

Everything stands or falls on the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ. Everything in the Christian religion rests on it. Take this miracle away and Christianity ceases to be Christianity. As Machen writes, a person can still be a *Christian* and deny the virgin birth but Christianity *cannot be Christianity* if it chooses to do so. The whole thing falls apart if Jesus Christ had a human

mother *and* a human father. And here are three reasons why.

### 1. God is Perfect.

The Bible says that God is holy and without sin. Whereas we are unclean and, whereas, we are crooked and wrong, God is not. He is clean and everything He does is right. We are sinful. He is sinless.

Isaiah 6:1-3 says,

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said,

"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory."

In the Hebrew language, there is no way to literally say that something is more or most. In Hebrew, something either is or it is not. Something is either this or it is that. There cannot be more of it or less of it, literally speaking. But figuratively speaking, the idea of more or most was communicated to the Hebrews by pluralizing a particular word or phrase.<sup>5</sup>

For instance, to communicate the idea of *more*, the Hebrew writers would write a word twice and to communicate the idea of *most*, they would write the

word three times. They would literally write it out once, twice, and then a third time. So, when Isaiah says here that God is "Holy, Holy, Holy," he is not stuttering.<sup>6</sup> He is saying that God is the holiest thing that there is. He is saying that God is the most holy; that there is nothing more holy or morally pure than God. There is nothing more sinless than Him.

As R.C. Sproul writes,

Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy . . . The Bible never says that God is love, love, love, or mercy, mercy, mercy, or wrath, wrath, wrath, or justice, justice, justice. It does say that He is holy, holy, holy; the whole earth is full of His glory.<sup>7</sup>

Psalm 24:3-5 echoes Isaiah when it says,

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
And who may stand in His holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood  
And has not sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

No one comes into God's presence who does not have clean hands and a pure heart. No one ascends the hill of the Lord who has engaged in falsehood and sworn deceitfully. Because God is sinless, no one can approach God who is sinful. Because God is holy, no one can come to Him who is unholy.

James 2:10-11 takes this even further when the Apostle writes,

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

James says that one sin is enough to send us to Hell. If we break one law, it is the same as breaking all of the law. Because the same God Who told us not to commit adultery told us not to kill. The same God Who told us not to covet also told us not to lie. And if we kill and lie, it is the same as committing adultery and coveting to God. We must be holy as God is holy if we would ever enter into Heaven<sup>8</sup> because God is holy, holy, holy. He is perfect.

### 2. Man is Imperfect.

But man is not like that. He is imperfect. Man is born in sin and he lives in sin and he dies in sin. The Bible is

very clear about that fact. It minces no words telling us that every human being offends God with his actions and will suffer eternally in Hell as a result of them.<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 64:6 says,

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,

And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;

And all of us wither like a leaf,

And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

The word for “filthy garment” in Hebrew refers to the clothing that a woman used to clean herself after her monthly period (i.e., her menstrual cloth).<sup>10</sup> Several passages in the Old Testament tell us that a Jewish woman was to be considered unclean during her time of menstruation. Leviticus 12:2 says,

Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: “When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of menstruation she shall be unclean.”

Leviticus 12:5 says,

“But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for sixty-six days.”

Leviticus 15:19-20 says,

“When a woman has a discharge, if her

discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean till evening. Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean.”

In the Jewish economy, women were considered unclean during the time of their period. They were considered temporarily tainted and had to carry themselves accordingly. And with that in mind, the Prophet Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 64:6 that “all our righteous deeds are like a menstrual cloth.” “All our righteous deeds are unclean.” “All our attempts to obey God’s law are tainted.” No matter what we do, we have sinned against God and have become dirty in His eyes. “And our iniquities, like the wind, sweep us away.”

David repeats this idea in Psalm 51:5,

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.

David takes Isaiah’s argument a step further and says that, not only do we sin by choice, but we sin by birth. We were brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin. The Hebrew word for “iniquity” in this verse is *avon* and means “activity that is crooked or wrong.”<sup>11</sup> It refers to conscious and intentional sin.

If you have ever worked with children, you understand what this verse is

talking about. You rarely, if ever, have to tell a child to stop sharing his toys. Or to stop speaking kindly to his neighbor. Or to stop being so selfless. You have to tell him the opposite. You have to tell them to *stop* hogging all the toys and to *stop* insulting his playmates and to *stop* being selfish. In other words, you have to tell them to do good, not bad. They know how to do bad. That comes naturally to them. What they do not know how to do is good.

And David explains why this is in Psalm 51. It is because we were born crooked and wrong. It is because we were born in sin.<sup>12</sup>

To kind of summarize all of this, Paul writes in Romans 3:10-12,

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written,

“There is none righteous, not even one;  
There is none who understands,  
There is none who seeks for God;

“All have turned aside, together they have become useless;  
There is none who does good,  
There is not even one.”

What was true for Isaiah and true for David was also true for Paul: man is sinful. Every human being on the planet has turned against God and is no longer perfect. We are all imperfect from birth. We have become sinful

and unclean. And we are not righteous.

And, as such, we cannot enter into God’s presence on our own because God is a perfect God.

### 3. One Man Must be Perfect.

And that is why the virgin birth is so important. That is why this doctrine matters. It matters because we need somebody to be perfect for us since we cannot be perfect on our own. We need someone to live a perfect life in our place because the way we live is not good enough to please God.

And the Bible says that this is exactly what Jesus Christ did when He came to earth. He lived a righteous life for us and took our unrighteous lives on Himself at the cross. First Peter 2:24-25 says,

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Jesus became righteousness for us and bore our sins on Himself on the tree. He lived righteously so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

But Jesus could not have done that. . . He could not have been perfect. . . if He had a normal birth. If Jesus Christ had a human mother and a human

father, He could not have died for us because He would have had to die for Himself. The sin nature that we all have would have been passed down to Him genetically and He would have had to suffer for Himself when He died.

Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” First Corinthians 15:22 says, “For as in Adam all die . . .” Adam sinned and sin came down to us all. It was imputed to us.<sup>13</sup> It was put into our DNA. It was transmitted through his nature to our nature and, consequently, in Adam we all die.

So someone had to be born differently to change all of that. Someone had to be born without that sin nature given to them. Someone had to be born not in Adam but in God. Not crooked but straight. Not wrong but right.

## II. THE EFFECTS OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

The Scriptures also give us a lot of information as to what the virgin birth looked like and what its results were. The virgin birth resulted in a perfect birth, a perfect life, a perfect death, and a perfect resurrection.

Someone had to be born perfect. And the Scripture says that this is exactly what happened with Jesus Christ. That is why the virgin birth was so essential. As A. W. Pink puts it,

Finally, let it be remembered that our salvation depends upon this principle and fact: If we were cursed and ruined by Adam’s disobedience, we are redeemed and blessed by [Jesus’] obedience.<sup>14</sup>

And that obedience was only possible because Jesus Christ had the same earthly and Heavenly Father. That obedience was only possible because Jesus came from earth *and* Heaven.<sup>15</sup> He was born a human being but He was born of a virgin and He was born sinless.

And the Holy Spirit was the one responsible for this birth. He took the perfect Son of God and made Him into the perfect Son of Man.

### 1. The Perfect Birth.

The first way that the Holy Spirit ministered at Jesus’ birth was through the Virgin Mary and, in ministering to her, He gave us the perfect birth. It just makes sense that, in order to have a virgin birth, there must first be a virgin.

There must first be a woman who has never had sex with a man. In order to have a sinless human being, a woman must somehow be impregnated with the seed of God.

And the way that happened was not how the Mormon Church describes it. God did not have physical sex with Mary to produce a physical god-child.<sup>16</sup> Instead, the Holy Spirit ministered to Mary by supernaturally impregnating her with the Baby Jesus.

Luke 1:26-35 gives us one account of this.

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.

And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this

be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

Luke was a doctor by trade.<sup>17</sup> So it only makes sense that he would be the Gospel writer with the most information about the birth of Jesus, especially the miraculous element of it. And, as he writes about this birth, Luke says that the Holy Spirit will do two things to Mary. First, He will come upon her. Verse 35 says, “The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . .’” The Greek word is *eperchomai*, which means “to come upon, to arrive.” It can even mean “to overtake or to attack someone.”<sup>18</sup> The idea here is that the Spirit of God would overtake the Virgin Mary and she would conceive and give birth to Jesus.

In his book, *The Holy Spirit*, Sinclair Ferguson describes what it meant for the Holy Spirit to “come upon” someone. “When the Spirit ‘comes’ on an individual, he ‘clothes himself’ with that person’s life, conforming it to his own purposes.”<sup>19</sup> The Spirit would clothe Himself with Mary’s life and conform it to His purposes. He would indwell Mary for a short period of time and enable her to do

what He wanted her to do. And what the Spirit wanted her to do was give birth to the Son of God.

Second, Luke says that the Most High would overshadow Mary. Verse 35 says, “The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you . . .’” The word for “overshadow” in Greek is *episkiazo*, which means “to surround, to encompass, to overshadow.” Figuratively it means “to influence or persuade.”<sup>20</sup> One commentator described its use in this passage as, “The creative influence of the Spirit of God would overshadow Mary to produce a child in her womb.”<sup>21</sup>

This word *episkiazo* was also used at Jesus’ Transfiguration in Matthew 17:5.

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

A bright cloud overshadowed the disciples as they were on the Mount of Transfiguration. It enveloped them and swallowed them up. In a similar way, Luke 1 says that the power of the Most High would overshadow Mary. It would envelop her and consume her and she would conceive a child.

The passage tells us that this child will be no ordinary child. He is given

two titles in verse 35 that demonstrate how unusual He will be. The first is “the holy one.” Verse 35 says, “The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child . . .’”

As was mentioned earlier, everyone born of man is unholy. We are all born into sin because of the sins of our first father, Adam.<sup>22</sup> And, because of this, we need a sinless substitute. Because of our imperfect nature, we need someone with a perfect nature to live in our place and meet all of the requirements of God’s law for us. And that is what verse 35 says was created in Mary’s womb. “The holy Child.” “The holy one.”<sup>23</sup> “The holy offspring.”<sup>24</sup> The Holy Spirit would create a sinless man in the womb of the Virgin Mary.<sup>25</sup>

The second title given to Jesus in verse 35 is “the Son of God.” Verse 35 concludes, “The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.’” The child in Mary’s womb will be her child but He will also be the child of God.

Jesus is called God’s Son because His Heavenly and earthly Father is God. He was born of the Virgin Mary but

He was also born of God the Father. The blood in His veins was God’s blood. The life in His body was God’s life. And, as such, when He was crucified, God was crucified in our place. As Acts 20:28 says,

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

God bought the church with His own blood. He purchased His people at the cost of His own life, that is, the same life which the Holy Spirit used to impregnate the Virgin Mary.

## 2. The Perfect Life.

Not only does the Bible say that Jesus had a perfect birth, it also says that He had a perfect life. Not only was He sinless at conception but He was also sinless for the remainder of His days. And this was due to the fact that He was both God and man. As God, He was holy as God is holy. And as man, He lived a normal human life.

To give some more information as to how this came about, the Scriptures tell us that it was the Holy Spirit Who made it possible for this eternal Son of God to become the Son of Man. John 1:14 tell us,

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory

as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

While John does not mention the Holy Spirit by name in this passage, Luke 1 tells us that the Spirit was the One responsible for the birth of Jesus. And, here in verse 14, John says that the Spirit took the Second Person of the Trinity<sup>26</sup> and clothed Him in flesh. The phrase “dwelt among us” could be translated “tabernacled among us.” The Greek word means “to abide in a tabernacle or tent.”<sup>27</sup> Just as God dwelt among the Jews in the tabernacle and traveled from place to place in a tent,<sup>28</sup> God the Son dwelt among the Jews in the First Century and traveled from place to place in a human body. He lived among us as a human being. He became flesh. He became incarnate<sup>29</sup> – in a carnal, fleshly form.

Colossians 2:9 says it this way, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” In Jesus Christ, the fullness of God lives in bodily form. Jesus is not 50 % God and 50 % man. He is not 25% God and 75% man. He is not 75% God and 25% man. Jesus is 100% both. He came from the womb of a woman but He also came from the seed of God.

This made it possible for Jesus to go through every stage that a normal human being goes through. He experienced birth. He experienced childhood.

He experienced the teenage years. He experienced adulthood and He experienced death. In the words of Irenaeus,

He passed through every stage of life. He was made an infant for infants, sanctifying infancy; a child among children, sanctifying childhood, and setting an example of filial affection, of righteousness and obedience; a young man among young men, becoming an example to them, and sanctifying them to the Lord.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus sanctified or made holy every stage of life because He passed through every stage of life perfectly. As God in flesh, He lived a holy, holy, holy life.

John 1:18 says essentially the same thing.

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

The phrase “only begotten” is a compound word in Greek: *monogeneis*. It literally means “only begotten” or “only born.”<sup>31</sup> It comes from the words *mono* – only and *geneis* – birth. God the Son is the only One Who has been born of the Father. The rest of us (who are Christians) have been *born again* of the Father.<sup>32</sup> But the Son has been *born* of the Father. No rebirth was necessary for Him because His first birth came from God. A second birth was not needed because He never sinned. And, as such, John 1:18 says that Jesus has explained God to us. He knew God

perfectly because He was God.

It might be helpful to point out here that theologians believe that the Holy Spirit created the Baby Jesus *de novo* but not *ex nihilo* in the womb of Mary.<sup>33</sup> *De novo* is Latin for “from the beginning” and *ex nihilo* is Latin for “out of nothing.” The Holy Spirit created Jesus “from the beginning” or from material that was already present but not “out of nothing.” The Spirit did not create everything at Jesus’ birth; He only created the seed of God. Mary’s womb was already there.

The Holy Spirit could have snapped His fingers at Jesus’ birth and had Him appear from thin air but that would not have made Him human. He must be *born*. He must have a mother and develop in her womb and leave her body. And, in making this happen, the Spirit worked with what was already there in the Virgin Mary. As Sinclair Ferguson writes,

This is a divine work of new creation. As in the original creation, the Spirit’s work is *de novo*, but it is not *ex nihilo*. Rather, He works on already existing materials (the humanity of Mary) in order to produce the God-man and through Him restore true order, just as He brought order and fullness into the formlessness and emptiness of the original creation.<sup>34</sup>

To look at this principle of *de novo* – *ex nihilo* from another angle, Jesus was

already in existence when He was born. As the eternal Son of God, there was never a time when He was not. There was never a time when He did not exist. So when Jesus was born, He merely passed from one existence into another. He did not begin to exist as we begin to exist when we are born. The Spirit created from what was already there in the beginning but not out of nothing. Jesus was already there in the beginning<sup>35</sup> and the Spirit took Him and put Him into the womb of Mary to begin life as a human being.

And this is why Jesus Christ was perfect. This is why His life was sinless. It was sinless because it began sinless. Jesus started with a clean slate before God. He started with a tendency for holy behavior and He kept that holy behavior for the remainder of His days.

Several passages mention the perfect life of Jesus, including Romans 5:19, which says,

For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Through the disobedience of Adam, we were all made sinners but through the obedience of Jesus Christ, we can all have the penalty of our sins removed.

Second Corinthians 5:21 also describes the perfect life of Jesus when it says,

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Jesus knew no sin. This does not mean that He was unaware of any sin. This does not mean that He was ignorant about the existence of sin. This simply meant that He did not know any sin experientially because He never sinned. He never gave into temptation and, therefore, He could be sin on our behalf and make us right with God.

Hebrews 4:15, comparing Jesus to a great High Priest, describes His sinlessness in detail.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus endured every temptation that a man could face in this life and He endured it all without sin. His life was perfect. His soul was spotless. And, therefore, He could offer Himself in our place as a perfect, spotless sacrifice to God.

### 3. The Perfect Death.

A third description of the virgin birth in the Bible concerns Jesus’ death. Not only did He begin life perfectly but He also ended it that way.

In regards to this perfect death, there is only one verse in the New Testament that specifically refers the Holy

Spirit to Jesus' crucifixion.<sup>36</sup> It only makes sense that, if the Spirit ministered to the Son by clothing Him in flesh, He would also minister to Him by helping Him die for the sins of the world. Hebrews 9:13-14 says,

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The author of Hebrews says that if the blood of animals temporarily sanctified us from sin, then how much more will the blood of Christ do so! If the Old Testament sacrifices provided a temporary forgiveness for our iniquities, the New Testament sacrifice of Jesus Christ will provide eternal forgiveness for them.

Notice that verse 14 says that, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus offered Himself "without blemish" to God. There was no defect or mark on Jesus' character when He died. His substitutionary sacrifice was perfect. His atoning death was impeccable.

In the Old Testament, animals were not allowed to be sacrificed if they were blemished. In the words of Leviticus 22:17-21,

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or of the aliens in Israel who presents his offering, whether it is any of their votive or any of their freewill offerings, which they present to the LORD for a burnt offering — for you to be accepted — it must be a male without defect from the cattle, the sheep, or the goats. Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it will not be accepted for you. When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.'"

The passage then goes on to describe what this looks like. The animal must not be blind or fractured or maimed or have a running sore or scabs or an overgrown or stunted member. It must not have torn or ripped parts to its body. The Israelites were commanded to avoid offering animals to God animals that were worthless.<sup>37</sup> They must offer animals that cost them something. They must give sacrifices that are truly "sacrificial." God was very clear with the Jewish people: their sacrifices must be perfect.

Hebrews 9:14 says that this is exactly what Jesus' sacrifice was: perfect. It was without any blemish whatsoever. It had no defect and no flaws. And, obviously, the author is not talking about Jesus' physical appearance when he writes this. He is not saying that Jesus was

a very handsome man or that His clothing was clean.<sup>38</sup> He is describing Jesus' character. The character of the Son of God was without sin. His soul had no blemish because He had done no wrong. He never violated any of God's laws and, as such, His death was perfect.

And there are a handful of Scripture passages that describe what this perfect death actually looked like. Isaiah 53:7-9, written centuries before Jesus died, prophesied this about Him,

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its  
shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.

By oppression and judgment He was  
taken away;  
And as for His generation, who  
considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of  
the living  
For the transgression of my people, to  
whom the stroke *was due*?

His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

Isaiah says that the Messiah will be led like a lamb to the slaughter but He will not open His mouth. He will be led innocently to His death<sup>39</sup> and He will not speak out against those who are

killing Him. Verse 9 also mentions that He will die a death with wicked men, although He had done no violence and spoken no deceit. There is not a man on this earth who can say, on the day of his death, that he has done no violence and that there was no deceit in his mouth. But this could be said about Jesus. He died without any sins to confess. There was no violence or deceit on His record. He was sinless.

The New Testament also tells us that Jesus was innocent in His death. Mark 14:61 says that at His trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus gave no answer to His accusers who attacked Him. Matthew 27:14 says that Jesus had the same response before Pilate, "so the governor was quite amazed." The reason Jesus was silent was not because He had nothing to say. It was because He was going to die an innocent man. He was going to die with no violence or deceit in His mouth. He was going to willingly drink from the cup given to Him.<sup>40</sup>

It is an interesting fact that Jesus' death was so perfect and so unusual that it caught the attention of one of the men dying next to Him. Luke 23:39-41 says,

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do

you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

It was obvious to even a hardened criminal that Jesus Christ had done nothing wrong. He was being punished for a crime that He did not commit and a man dying beside Him took notice of it and trusted in Him for salvation. Jesus died a perfect death.

#### 4. The Perfect Resurrection.

And all of the preceding results lead up to this one. Not only do the Scriptures teach that the virgin birth resulted in a perfect birth and a perfect life and a perfect death, but they also teach this miracle resulted in a perfect resurrection. Jesus Christ did not stay dead. He came back to life to demonstrate that God was pleased with His sinless sacrifice. And the Holy Spirit had a part to play in this miracle as well. He did not leave Jesus at any stage of His life, including the resurrection.

Romans 8:11 says,

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

First Peter 3:18 tells us,

For Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

The Spirit raised Jesus Christ from the dead. He brought Him back to life. And the same Spirit Who accomplished that miracle will one day raise us from the dead. If the Spirit was powerful enough to do it with Jesus, Romans 8:11 says that He will be powerful enough to do it with us. If He could raise Jesus 2,000 years ago, He can raise us today.

And, to add to that, the Scriptures tell us that this resurrection was a sign that God was pleased with the sacrifice of His Son. It showed that Jesus’ sinless offering was received by the Father. In Romans 1:4, at the beginning of his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul writes about Jesus and says,

Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and, in doing so, declared Him to be the Son of God. If His birth and His life and His death did not get people’s attention, His resurrection from the dead certainly would! It is a fact of

life that dead people stay dead. The mortality rate is 100% and so is the extended mortality rate. People do not come back to life once they expire. Yet Jesus did. He defeated death. He proved that He was victorious over sin and over the consequences of sin.<sup>41</sup> And this miracle, according to Romans 1:4, declared Him to be the Son of God.

The phrase “according to the Spirit of holiness” is not accidental in this verse. Jesus was raised by the Holy Spirit because Jesus was the Holy One. The sinless Spirit of God brought Jesus back to life because Jesus had lived a sinless life. His resurrection was without blemish, just as His life and His death were without blemish. The Spirit was pleased to raise the Son because the Spirit was pleased with the life of the Son. It was perfect.

The truth of the resurrection should

be an encouragement to us. If we have turned from our sins to live a holy life and trusted in Jesus Christ to be our holy sacrifice for sin,<sup>42</sup> we will one day rise again as well. First Corinthians 15:20-22 says,

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

As Adam sinned and plunged the entire human race into sin, Jesus Christ did never sinned and has brought salvation to the human race. And, with that salvation, comes a resurrection.<sup>43</sup> For those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation, there is coming a day when their sinful earthly bodies will be given sinless Heavenly bodies and they will become perfect, just as their Heavenly Father is perfect.<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSION

“Pastor, I don’t want to think that I have to be perfect to get into Heaven . . .” “Ah, but you do.” My friend’s correction was right. No one will go to Heaven who is not perfect. As Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” No one will see God without being sanctified first. To

say this another way, as the King James Version does, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.” No one will see God who is not holy.

That is the bad news. That is the frightening news. However, the good news is that there is One Man Who has been

holy for us. His name is Jesus Christ. He was born of a virgin, which means that He was born sinless. His earthly and His Heavenly Father was God. And with His sinless beginning, He lived a sinless life and came to a sinless end. He was holy so that we might be holy before God. He died in our place and rose again so that the sins we have committed against God might be wiped away. He is the perfect man.

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!

Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine;

Bold I approach the eternal throne  
And claim the crown, through Christ,  
my own.

Amazing love! How can it be?  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for  
me!<sup>45</sup>

about his coming they were sure that he came specially from God – as we are; this adoration and conviction they associated with God’s special influence and intention in his birth – as we do; but they phrased it in terms of a biological miracle that our modern minds cannot use (*Christian Work* 102 (June 10, 1922) 716–722).

Another example, this one more contemporary, of a pastor who minimizes the importance of the virgin birth is Rob Bell. In his book, *Velvet Elvis*, Bell writes,

What if tomorrow digs up definitive proof that 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 that were hugely popular at the time of Jesus, whose gods had virgin births? . . . I affirm the historic Christian faith, which includes the virgin birth and the Trinity and the inspiration of the Bible and much more . . . But if the whole faith falls apart when we reexamine and rethink one spring, then it wasn’t that strong in the first place, was it (*Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005) 26-27)?

4 Machen, 396-397.

5 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. by R. K. Harrison & Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) 181.

6 Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Greenville, S. C.: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002) 496. Theologians refer to this as the “trisagion” or in Latin the “thrice holy.” “It refers to an ancient liturgical hymn, now used in the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches.”

7 R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1985) 39.

8 1 Pet 1:15-16.

9 For more information about Hell, see the FAQ, “What is Hell Like?” Also see the FAQ, “Why should we talk about Hell?”

10 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. by R. K. Harrison & Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) 625-626.

11 *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. by William L. Holladay (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) 268.

12 For more information about this, see our article “The Depravity of Man” in this edition of /jst/.

13 Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001 ed.) 98. Imputation is “The attribution or transfer of one person’s sin or righteousness to another.”

14 *The Doctrine of Human Depravity* (Pensacola, Flo.: Chapel Library, n. d.) 58.

15 See John 3:13.

## End Notes

1 [www.marshill.com/pastors/mark-driscoll-as-of-3/2/12](http://www.marshill.com/pastors/mark-driscoll-as-of-3/2/12). One example of this would be the extraordinary popularity of Pastor and Author Mark Driscoll, who has made a name for himself by teaching good doctrine while cussing and giving vulgar illustrations from the pulpit. According to his church website, [www.marshill.com](http://www.marshill.com),

Pastor Mark Driscoll is the founding pastor of [Mars Hill Church](http://MarsHillChurch.com) in Seattle, Washington and is one of the world’s most-downloaded and quoted pastors. His audience — fans and critics alike — span the theological and cultural left and right. He was also named one of the “[25 Most Influential Pastors of the Past 25 Years](#)” by Preaching magazine, and his sermons are consistently [#1 on iTunes](#) each week for Religion & Spirituality with over 10 million of downloads each year.

For a pastor to speak profanity from the pulpit and remain one of the most

popular Christian communicators in America, says a lot about our priorities. The holiness of God has truly fallen on hard times.

2 *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965) 1.

3 One example of a modern pastor who denies the importance of the virgin birth would be Harry Emerson Fosdick. In his sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” he says,

We may well begin with the vexed and mooted question of the virgin birth of our Lord. I know people in the Christian churches, ministers, missionaries, laymen, devoted lovers of the Lord and servants of the Gospel, who, alike as they are in their personal devotion to the Master, hold quite different points of view about a matter like the virgin birth . . . those first disciples [the apostles] adored Jesus – as we do; when they thought

- 16 Irvine Robertson, *What the Cultists Believe* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966) 16-17.
- 17 Col 4:14.
- 18 Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996) 230.
- 19 *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 38.
- 20 Thayer, 242.
- 21 John MacArthur, *Luke 1-5* in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009) 57.
- 22 See Rom 5:19.
- 23 New International Version translation.
- 24 New American Standard Bible Updated translation. The King James Version also gives an interesting translation: "that holy thing."
- 25 For another reference to Jesus being born as "the holy one," see 1 Cor 15:45-49.
- 26 Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Revised and Expanded (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008) 726. The Trinity refers to the teaching that "While there is one God, there are three eternally distinct and equal persons in the Godhead, existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is distinct from the other, yet the three are united as one God. The term *Triunity* may best express the idea." Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity and is otherwise known as God the Son.
- 27 Thayer, 578.
- 28 The tabernacle was finished in Exodus 40 and was used by the nation of Israel from Leviticus until 1 Kings 8 when the temple was finished in Jerusalem.
- 29 Erickson, 98. The incarnation is "the doctrine that the Second Person of the Trinity, without giving up his deity, became a human being."
- 30 Quoted in *The Holy Spirit*, 45.
- 31 Thayer, 417.
- 32 Jn 3:3-8.
- 33 Ferguson, 39.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Jn 1:1-2.
- 36 Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965) 49. Charles Ryrie has an interesting discussion in this book about whether "the eternal Spirit" in Hebrews 9:14 refers to "the eternal Spirit of Christ" or to "the eternal Holy Spirit." The Greek language is a little bit ambiguous, so the author could be referring to either. In this article, the position is taken that he is referring to the Holy Spirit.
- 37 This explains why the Lord was so angry with the Jews in Malachi 1:8,  
 "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts."
- 38 Isaiah 53:2 says that Jesus was anything but handsome. "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him."
- 39 Oswalt, 392. The idea of a lamb being led to slaughter in this passage is that of innocence. "Here the issue being emphasized is not unknowingness, but willing submission to what lies ahead. The sheep that is to be slaughtered, the ewe that is to be shorn, does not protest what is about to take place."
- 40 Luke 22:39-46.
- 41 1 Cor 15:54-57.
- 42 Rom 10:9-10.
- 43 For more information about the resurrection, see our FAQ, "What was the resurrection like?"
- 44 1 Pet 1:15-16.
- 45 Charles Wesley, "And Can It Be?" in *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (Nashville, Tenn.: Word / Integrity Music, 1997) 346-347.