

The Better Way

Volume XXXIX, Issue 37

September 8, 2024

SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

B.C. Goodpasture

“What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is He?” (Mat. 22:42) Was He conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, or was He the natural son of Joseph or of some other unknown man? Did He come from human parentage? This is the crucial question. To it there have been given through all the centuries, in the last analysis, but two answers. The modernists and the fundamentalists can claim no originality for their respective answers. In the days of His flesh, some saw in Him the fiery zeal of the Baptist [John]; some, the flowing courage of Elijah; others, the sad-hearted sympathy of Jeremiah. They thought He was a great man—a man with a prophetic message—simply and only a man. Many would take Him out of the God-class and put Him in the man-class now. Emerson placed Him on a level with Caesar, Plato, and Shakespeare.

I am the owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Caesar’s hand and Plato’s brain,
Of Lord Christ’s heart and Shakespeare’s strain.

However, while He was on earth there were those who, along with Peter, held that He was **“the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Many so regard Him now, but some doubt and others deny. Charles Lamb said: “If Shakespeare should come into the room, we should rise to greet him; but if that Person should enter, we should fall on our knees and kiss the hem of his garment.” Thus men have thought and think of Him.

The modernists, as a rule, insist that it is really not very important as to whether one accepts the virgin birth or not. If it is such an insignificant matter, why do they leave no stone unturned in their efforts to destroy belief in it? How will they explain His divinity if they reject His miraculous birth? The fact those who deny the virgin birth usually doubt the atoning death and doubt the bodily resurrection of Christ. It is very difficult to deny one and hold to the others. The attitude one assumes toward Christ and His mission is largely determined by what one thinks of His birth. So one who accepts the evidence cannot doubt the virgin birth, for the testimony is all on one side.

The loss of Eden is followed with a promise which seems to involve the virgin birth. **“I will,”** said Jehovah, **“put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”** (Gen. 3:15). There is something unusual in this prediction. Hebrew usage gives the preeminence to the man and not to the woman in genealogies. But it is the “seed of the woman,” not the “seed of the man,” that will finally “bruise” the serpent’s head. We can neither account for nor understand such language apart from the virgin birth.

Isaiah looking down seven centuries, saw the maid of Nazareth and foretold the miraculous birth: **“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”** (Isa. 7:14). Matthew, by inspiration, finds the fulfillment of this prophecy in the birth of Jesus (Mat. 1:22-23). There can be no doubt as to the application. However, those who deny the virgin birth try to evade the force of Isaiah’s prediction by saying that the Hebrew word *almah*, here translated “virgin,” means merely a young woman of marriageable age, but not necessarily a virgin. They claim the word *bethulah* would have been used if a real virgin had been meant. It is a fact, notwithstanding, that *bethulah*, which is said to mean a real virgin, is actually used of a bride lamenting over her husband in Joel 1:8; while the word *almah*, which critics say may not mean a real virgin, is used in Isaiah 7:14 and in six other places (Gen. 24:43; Exo. 2:8; Psa. 68:26; Pro. 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8), and always in the sense of an unmarried maiden. Whatever meaning *almah* may have elsewhere, it matters not for the present purpose, so long as usage shows that it means an unmarried maiden in the Old Testament. In applying the prophecy of Isaiah to Mary, Matthew shows that he understood *almah* to mean a real virgin, inasmuch as he knew the facts in Mary’s case. Luther said:

If a Jew or Christian can prove to me that in any other passage of Scripture *almah* means “married woman,” I will give him one hundred florins, although God alone knows where I may find them.

All the writers of the New Testament who give an account of Christ’s birth say it was a virgin birth. Matthew, who wrote for the Jews, tells the story from Joseph’s point of view. He tells how Joseph came to know the facts relative to Mary’s condition. His record follows:

The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily, But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS (Mat. 1:18-25).

After Mary’s betrothal, or engagement, to Joseph and before their marriage, **“she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.”** Her condition was a source of great perplexity to Joseph. It seemed to him that she was guilty of adultery. He was thinking about divorcing her, when the angel of the Lord in a dream explained to him that that which was conceived in Mary was of the Holy Spirit and in fulfillment of prophecy. The explanation was satisfactory to Joseph. His actions with reference to Mary, however, show that he disclaimed the paternity of her conception. Matthew, then, clearly sets forth the virginity of the mother and the deity of the child.

Luke, the physician, has given us Mary’s side of the story. He tells us how the modest virgin came to know that she was to become the mother of a marvelous Son:

The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:26-35).

This language is too clear to be misunderstood. The virginity of Mary is shown by her question, **“How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”** and the deity of her son is revealed in Gabriel’s answer: **“The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow-**

ow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.” Luke **“traced the course of all things accurately from the first”** (Luke 1:3). The narrative bears the marks of genuineness. Perhaps he heard the story from the lips of Mary.

Mark gives no account of the advent of the holy Child. He does not profess to. He begins with the public life and ministry of Jesus. We do not expect him to tell of the wonderful birth. I. W. Avery wrote a history of Georgia from 1850 to 1881. No one expects to find in his splendid work an account of the settlement of Georgia in the early days. The pioneer days do not lie within the bounds of the book. Just so the genealogy and birth of Jesus do not fall within the scope of Mark's purpose in writing his narrative. He starts with: **“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”** He says nothing that contradicts Matthew and Luke, but rather assumes the birth they record; for he introduces Jesus as **“Christ,”** the **“Anointed”**—that is, the Messiah, **“the Son of God.”** Mark tells how God attested Christ as His Son. At the baptism: **“Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased”** (Mark 1:11). At the transfiguration: **“This is my beloved Son: hear ye him”** (Mark 9:7). He records the high claims of Jesus' divine Sonship and Messiahship:

The high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:61-62).

Upon this answer **“they all condemned him to be worthy of death”** for making, as they thought, this blasphemous claim. If He had claimed no higher paternity than the modernists allow, He would not have been condemned. There is no force in the contention that there was no virgin birth because Mark does not record it; for by the same reasoning it could be proved that Christ was not born at all, because Mark says nothing about a birth of any kind. Mark does not report the Sermon on the Mount. Are we to conclude it was never delivered, since he does not mention it?

John, the last writer of the New Testament, writing after Matthew and Luke, does not expressly mention the virgin birth. He begins with the pre-existence of Christ with the Father:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been

made . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth (John 1:1-14).

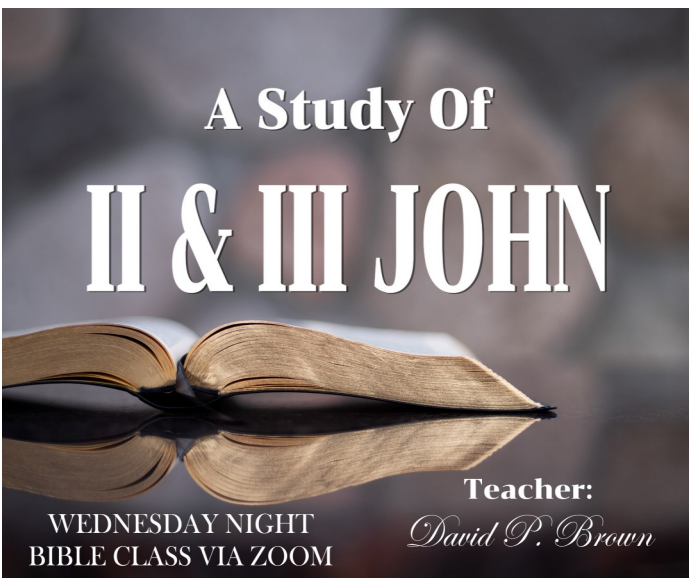
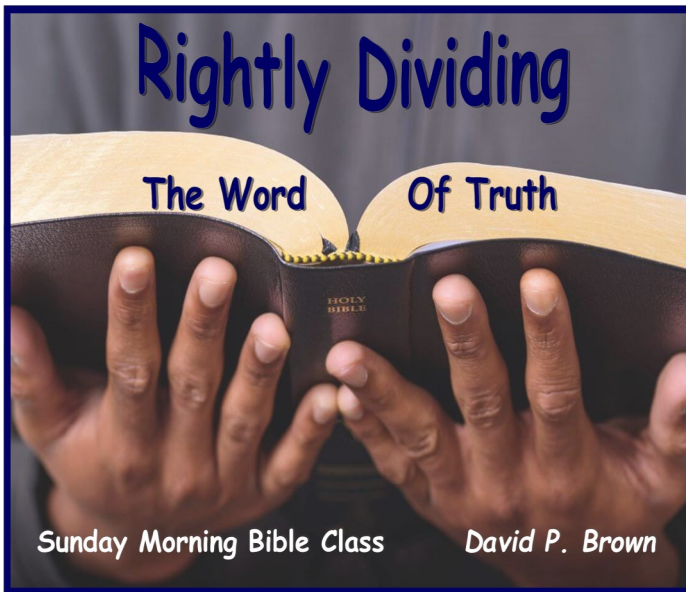
According to John, the **“Word”**—Christ—which was with God, which was God, **“became flesh”** and dwelt among men. How did the **“Word”** become flesh? How did Jesus become the son of Mary? John does not tell; but he does call him **“the only begotten Son”** (John 1:18), **“the only begotten from the Father”** (1:14), **“the Word became flesh”** (1:14). If Jesus was the son of Joseph according to the ordinary course of nature, how was he the **“only begotten Son from the Father?”** And what is the force of the statement, **“the Word became flesh”**? It is easy to understand John in the light of Matthew and Luke—that is, that he who was **“in the beginning with God”** **“became flesh”** by being begotten of the Father through the Holy Spirit and conceived by the virgin Mary. How else could the divine and human natures be united in one person? John, who had Matthew and Luke before him; John, who had cared for the Lord's mother, could not have been true to the persons involved and to the task in hand without setting things aright, if Matthew and Luke failed to report the mysterious birth correctly. He gives no hint of a mistake. His record complements that of the others.

To sum up, then, all the Gospels which deal with the childhood of Jesus tell of the virgin birth; and those which do not mention it say nothing to contradict it, but rather use language that cannot be understood without assuming it. While mention is made of the fact that Jesus was called the **“son of Joseph”** (John 6:42), it is understood that such was the language of appearance and incomplete knowledge. It is not to be expected that His enemies, before the accounts were written, would know the details of His birth. Prof. Noah K. Davis said:

Whoever rejects the supernatural features of this story, while admitting it to have a historical basis, insists on natural order, thus denying the virginity of the mother of Jesus, must fall in with the views of the gossips of Nazareth and hold either that Joseph was a vile seducer and Jesus begotten out of wedlock, a legitimized bastard; or that Mary was a harlot, legally amenable to stoning, who, by extravagant lies, imposed upon the pious simplicity of her fascinated betrothed, and that Jesus, the fruit of this wickedness, was a bastard of unacknowledged paternity.

We cannot believe the sinless Nazarene came from such a source.~

Deceased



THOSE TO SERVE	
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024	
Announcements	Bret Bailey
Scripture Reading	John West <i>Revelation 21:9-27</i>
Song Leader	Gary Blasingame
Prayer	Steven Johnson/Andrew Paluka (AM) J.D. Gunter/Stephen Cohn (PM)
Speaker	David Brown
Lord's Table (AM) <i>(Matthew 27:45-50)</i>	
Stephen Cohn	Jonathan West
Eric Paluka	Joshua West
Lord's Table (PM)	
J.D. Gunter	Bret Bailey
Audio/Video Monitor	Eric Paluka
Camera/Door Monitor	J.D. Gunter
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 <i>(via Zoom Meetings)</i>	
Announcements	Ken Cohn
Speaker	Jonathan West
Bible Class Teacher	David Brown
FOR SEPTEMBER	
Prepare Communion	Gunter
Lock Buildings	Gunter
Prepare Bulletin Board	Mercier/Ferguson

- MARK YOUR CALENDARS**
- **Saturday, September 14th:** Baby Girl Shower honoring Devon & Andrew Paluka. RSVP Anna Cononie if you plan to attend.
 - **Tuesday, September 24th:** Ladies' Bible Class.
 - **Saturday, September 28th:** Fall Fellowship at Walker County Fairgrounds, Huntsville, TX. Sign-up sheets in kitchen.
 - **Sunday, September 29th:** Monthly meal.
 - **Saturday, October 26th:** Fish Hatchery Road Lectureship. "James: Practical Christianity Part 3."
 - **Saturday, November 23rd:** Chili Cook-off at Burroughs Park.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Steve & Kate Baxley, Corey Farmer, Edith Young, Zack Nero, April McCain, Debbie Brannon, Noah & Glenda Hackworth, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Charles & Ann Nero, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orlinda Chumbley, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Who sent 12 spies into Canaan?

Answer to last week's question:
Elisha; 2 Kings 13:21