

Title: **SURELY, YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN
THE VIRGIN BIRTH! — DO YOU?**

Text: Isaiah 7:14-15

Subject: *The Incarnation*

Date: Sunday Morning — December 9, 2007

Tape # Z-43b

Reading: *Luke 2:1-35*

Introduction:

Many years ago, another man and I were talking casually during a break at work. He was the manager of the store. For some reason, he wanted to talk about religion. But it quickly became obvious that his object was merely to poke fun and ridicule. After a brief exchange, he smiled sarcastically, and said with a snicker, “**SURELY, YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH! — DO YOU?**” Of course, the other men who were listening thought he had been brilliant, and laughed with great bravado. When the laughter subsided, I responded, “As a matter of fact, I do. I not only believe that Jesus Christ is the virgin born Son of God, I hang all the weight of my immortal soul upon it. Either he was born of the virgin, or I have no Savior.”

Shortly after that conversation, I was transferred to another store. Then Shelby, Faith and I moved to West Virginia. I never saw any of those men again, except the store manager. Just a few years ago, I went to preach for a small church in Germanton, North Carolina, just outside of Winston-Salem. The first man to meet me at the door after the service was my old store manager, Charlie Kieger. — It had been twenty years since I last saw him; but I immediately recognized him and the smile on his face. Only, the smile of sarcasm was gone. He was smiling with joy, anxious to tell me how the Lord Jesus, the virgin born Son of God had revealed himself to him. Today, I want to tell you about him, the God-man, our Savior. My text is Isaiah 7:14-15.

(Isaiah 7:14-15) “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (15) Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

The Lord God promised to send a Deliverer to his people, and said to Ahaz, the king of Judah, “*Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God: ask it either in the*

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depth, or in the height above” (v. 11). But Ahaz did not believe God and refused to ask for a sign, saying, with an air of self-righteous indignation, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD” (v. 12). To that Isaiah replied, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

Proposition: This is a prophecy of the incarnation and virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Deliverer spoken of and promised in this chapter was no mere temporal deliverer from temporal bondage and trouble. The Deliverer spoken of here is the great God, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that because God the Holy Spirit tells us plainly that Isaiah 7:14 is one of the many Old Testament promises of our Savior’s incarnation (Matthew 1:18-23).

(Matthew 1:18-23) “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (19) Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. (20) But while he thought on these things, behold, the 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 Ghost. (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

Divisions: Our text describes four things about our blessed Savior. —

1. His Virgin Birth.
2. His Holy Humanity.
3. His Glorious Name.
4. His Cheerful Sign.

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VIRGIN BIRTH

First, Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of the virgin birth of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. None of us knows the date of our Savior's birth. God has wisely hidden it from men. The one day of the year that it could not have been is December 25th. Christmas day has nothing to do with the birth of Christ. But our text does describe a glorious birthday. It is true, Mary's child was born in a manger, in humility and poverty; but none ever had a birthday like his.

- His birthday was anticipated by saints and prophets for four thousand years.
- All the Old Testament pointed to Immanuel's advent.
- God hung a fresh lamp in the sky to announce his birth.
- The angelic hosts came down to sing at his birth.
- Shepherds and wise men came to bring presents to the Prince of the kings of the earth when he was born.

Our text announces a glorious birthday. It announces the birth of a man who is the eternal Son of God, the Savior of the world (Isaiah 9:6-7).

(Isaiah 9:6-7) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

The prophet's language speaks of a miraculous conception. — "*Behold, a virgin shall conceive.*" Our Savior is born, the Seed of the woman, conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the miraculous intervention of God the Holy Spirit (Galatians 4:4-6).

(Galatians 4:4-6) "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the

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adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

His holy body was prepared in the womb of the virgin for the work he had come to do (Hebrews 10:4-5). Had he been born of the flesh, the Lord Jesus could have done nothing to save us.

(Hebrews 10:4-5) “For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (5) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.”

Isaiah’s prophecy also speaks of a humble parentage. Virginité was Mary’s highest honor. It is true, she was of the royal seed of David’s house. But that was no great honor in her day. It gave her no special privilege, power or position. Our Savior was born in poverty and lived in poverty all the days of his life, by his own choice. He taught us, by constant example, to despise the froth of worldly treasure and position. — (Will we ever learn to follow his example and live by faith in God?) — There is much encouragement here...

- He who was born in poverty, will visit the poor in spirit.
- He who was laid in a rock manger, will visit our hard, stony hearts.
- He who humbled himself, will be the friend of humbled broken-hearted sinners.

Isaiah’s words also imply something of God’s sovereign election. — “A virgin shall conceive.” There were, no doubt, many virgins in the world in those days, but God chose one, only one to be the agent through whom he would bring his Son into the world (Luke 1:26-33).

(Luke 1:26-33) “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, (27) To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. (28) And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women. (29) And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. (30) And the angel said unto her, Fear not,

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Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. (31) And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. (32) He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: (33) And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

- Mary was freely chosen of God. — So are we.
- Mary was highly favored by God. — So are we. — “*Accepted in the Beloved.*”
- Mary was visited by God. — So are we.
- Mary had Christ formed in her. — So do we.
- Mary was blessed of God for Christ’s sake. — So are we.
- Mary rejoiced in God her Savior. — So do we (Luke 1:46-50).

(Luke 1:46-50) “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, (47) And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (48) For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. (49) For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name. (50) And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation.”

- But, God’s favor upon her caused Mary trouble in this world. — The Jews said to the Lord Jesus, “*we be not born of fornication,*” obviously insinuating that he was.

Now, before we move on, let me call your attention to the astonishing wonder of this prophecy. God’s promise here is introduced with the word — “*Behold!*” I told you at the outset, “I not only believe that Jesus Christ is the virgin born Son of God, I hang all the weight of my immortal soul upon it. Either he was born of the virgin, or I have no Savior.” But my hanging all the weight of my immortal soul upon this is nothing. The God of Glory hangs all the honor of his name here.

- No mere man could be so ignorant and foolish as to prophesy that a virgin should bring forth a child!
- None but God himself could bring it to pass.

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- The Lord God not only declares, “*a virgin shall conceive,*” he asserts that she shall still be a virgin when she gives birth to her child. — “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son!*”

Who but God would have made such a promise? Who but God could pull it off? We commonly lay great stress upon the fact that Mary was a virgin when the holy humanity of our Redeemer was conceived in her womb. But that is not the wonder and the mystery of this promise. There is no wonder or mystery to that at all, if the ordinary means of conception had been employed. But the prophecy implied what its fulfillment proved. — This was no ordinary conception and no ordinary birth! This was conception without the aid of a man and a birth that opened a virgin’s womb! When Mary brought forth her son, she was still a virgin!

You will recall that the Lord God gave a special command in the law with regard to the firstborn (Exodus 13:2). God said, “*The firstborn is mine.*” But notice how he identifies the firstborn.

(Exodus 13:2) “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine.”

The firstborn is described as “*whatsoever openeth the womb.*” This law, given back in Exodus 13, was just one of the many reaffirmations of God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 that he would send his Son into the world to redeem and save his people as the Seed of the woman. The womb is opened in conception, not in giving birth. But he who is our Redeemer, Jehovah’s Firstborn, opened his mother’s womb when he came forth from the womb, crying, “*Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!*” Never was the womb opened by birth except by the birth of Mary’s first child.

This is God’s work. It has the stamp of God upon it. He who formed the first Adam out of the dust of the earth formed the last Adam in the womb of a virgin. The Headstone of the corner was cut out of the mountain without hands (Daniel 2:34). What a miracle of mercy we have before us! — The incomprehensible God, that circle whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference nowhere was encircled and cooped up for nine months together in the womb of a virgin! — The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “*The*

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LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man" (31:22); and thus it came to pass! **Behold Jehovah's Firstborn! He opened...**

- “*The womb of the morning*” when he stood forth as our Surety in the eternal covenant with the Father (Psalm 110:3).
- The womb of the virgin when he came into the world to perform his work as our Surety.
- The womb of the earth in his resurrection, when he had finished his work.

HOLY HUMANITY

Second, in verse 15 Isaiah uses very suggestive, figurative language to speak of our Savior's holy humanity.

(Isaiah 7:15) “Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

The word “*that*” in verse 15 should be translated “when,” or “but,” or “and,” anything but “*that*.” If you could figure out how eating butter and honey will cause a man to know to refuse the evil and choose the good, you can soon make yourself very rich. — The text should read, “Butter and honey shall he eat; and he shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

Our Lord's eating butter and honey suggests that he would be born during a time of peace in Israel. Butter and honey are things people rarely take time to make and gather when war ravages the land.

Eating butter and honey is a declaration of our Savior's real humanity. We rejoice in his deity. But we equally rejoice and give thanks to God for the humanity of our Savior. — There was nothing unusual and distinctive about the Lord Jesus but his sinlessness. Our Savior, our God, is a man like us (Hebrews 2).

Spiritually, the butter and honey may refer to the grace that is poured into his lips for his people (Psalm 45:2).

- Interceding Grace.

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- Saving Grace.
- Preserving Grace.
- Cleansing Grace.

The next sentence describes the perfect holiness of our Savior. — “*Butter and honey shall he eat.*” That tells us of Christ’s humanity. — “*And he shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*” That is his holiness. Throughout the days of his life on this earth, our Lord Jesus refused the evil and chose the good.

- In the wilderness.
- In the garden.

GLORIOUS NAME

Third, Isaiah was inspired to give a very special, glorious name to our Savior. — We are told that his mother would call his name “*Immanuel.*” Now, I challenge you to find any place in this Book where our Savior was called by this name. No one ever used this name to address him. What, then, does this mean? Turn back to Genesis 4:26 and you will see.

(Genesis 4:26) “And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.”

The word call means “to worship, or publish, or mention with reverence, or pronounce renown.” That is exactly what Mary did (Luke 1:46-55).

(Luke 1:46-55) “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, (47) And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (48) For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. (49) For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name. (50) And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation. (51) He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. (52) He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree. (53) He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. (54) He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance

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of his mercy; (55) As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”

We who, like Mary, have Christ formed in us by the power of God the Holy Spirit worship, publish, reverence, and extol our Savior as Immanuel, “God with us.” Oh, what a great and glorious name this is for our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Advocate, our Savior, — Immanuel, — God with us! **The Lord Jesus Christ is God with us!**

- By incarnation to redeem us.
- By his Spirit to protect, guide and comfort us.
- In our assemblies to bless us.
- God with us is hell’s terror.
- God with us is his servant’s strength.
- God with us is the sufferer’s consolation.
- God with us is the dying believer’s hope.
- God with us is the song and joy of heaven.

CHEERFUL SIGN

Fourth, the Lord God tells us that our Savior’s incarnation is a sign. — “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” “*The Lord himself shall give you a sign,*” a token of good. The sign, the token of good things the Lord himself has given is the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man our Savior. What are we to infer from the fact that God has come into the world in human flesh?

- Surely, God in our nature is God come to save.
- Surely, if the Lord God has given us his Son, his love for us must be indescribable (Romans 5:5-8; 1 John 4:9-10).

(Romans 5:5-8) “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

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(1 John 4:9-10) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

- Surely, he who gave us his own dear Son will withhold no good thing from us (Romans 8:32).

(Romans 8:32) “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus came into this world, the Prophet Isaiah declared — “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*” Beginning in Genesis 3:15 and going through all the Old Testament, like a light shining more brightly with every new day, from the dawn of revelation until the moment when our Savior burst into this world in our nature, the Lord God gave such clear declarations of his purpose and identified his Son with such deliberate clarity that, were it not for man’s utter blindness and ignorance of all things spiritual, were it not for the complete depravity of the heart of man, and the hatred of God that reigns in every depraved heart, no one could avoid seeing that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah, the King of Israel, our Savior, the Son of God!

- To Adam he said, the Redeemer will be the Seed of woman.
- To Abraham the Lord declared that that one in whom all the nations of the world would be blessed would come through and be his Seed.
- The Spirit of God told Jacob that the Messiah would be of the tribe of Judah.
- The Lord declared to David that he would be of his family, and that he would be Prophet, Priest and King in Israel.
- To Isaiah he told that he would be born of a virgin.
- Micah was inspired to tell us that the place of his birth would be Bethlehem.

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- And he told Daniel the very time when he would send forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem his people from the curse of the law.

Immanuel, we bless Your name,
Our Savior, God, and King!
Our God a Man like us became
That He might mercy bring!

Immanuel – God come to save
The people of His choice:
Immanuel – By Him we're saved!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice!

Amen.