



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | [believerschapeldallas.org](http://believerschapeldallas.org)

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

“Offspring of the Virgin’s Womb”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The subject for today, it’s “The Offspring of the Virgin’s Womb,” and for our Scripture reading on the topic of the virgin birth we are looking at Matthew chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 25, and then Luke chapter 1, verse 26 through verse 28. Our first passage in Matthew chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 25,

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows, after his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins, (now if you’ll read carefully you will notice in the next verse Matthew gives us an interpretation of some of these things. And so he says,) So all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord, through the prophet saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which is translated ‘God with Us.’ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did

as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her first born son; and he called his name Jesus.”

Now turning over to Luke chapter 1, in verse 26 through verse 28, this is Luke’s account of the annunciation of Jesus’ birth,

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; the virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women. (We in Believers Chapel, I’m sure we don’t have to be told this, I just underlined this fact, but you will notice that Mary is not one who blesses, but one who is blessed, as you can tell if you simply read carefully what is stated.) But when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then 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 bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end. Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? And the angle answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you: therefore also that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible. Then Mary said, Behold, the maidservant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.”

I’ll just make this comment because I had not intended to make it in the message, if you read carefully, Luke chapter 1, you will notice that the flow of thought is such that if our Lord is not born of a virgin there is something of an anticlimax. We have had John the Baptist and his birth recorded. And his birth was recorded as the birth of the ambassador of our Lord, the forerunner, whose mother was barren. And now the virgin birth of our Lord, one senses the climactic nature of this account, and to have our Lord’s birth is only an ordinary birth would be anticlimactic. And so if you simply read the passage over and over you will see that from the standpoint of literature we must have something that is greater than the forerunner’s birth. For this is the climactic subject of the chapter.

Well, may the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and specifically the passages that we have just read which are designed to point out to us the significance of the birth of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the greater son of David who shall rule and reign over the house of Jacob forever.

We thank Thee for the scriptural revelation concerning him, and we especially Lord give Thee thanks for the fact that both of these gospel writers, Luke and Matthew, go on to tell us how that at the time of his suffering the ground of our salvation was accomplished in the merits of his cross work. And we thank Thee that through what Christ has done we can be assured of having eternal life. We thank Thee and we give Thee praise. And at this time of the year when the Christian church has traditionally, for a long time, remembered his birth as the incarnation of the Son of God, the second person of the trinity, we want to give Thee thanks and praise. And we ask Lord that our thoughts and our actions at this time of the year may truly be responses to the greatness of our

Lord’s person and work. Give us, Lord, grace to share the blessings that are ours with others as Thou dost give us opportunity.

We give Thee thanks for the whole Christian church today, and we thank Thee that in spite of the many attacks upon it, down through the centuries, the Christian church still abides today. And we thank Thee that though the enemy has attacked her and attached her doctrines and teachings, Thou hast in Thy mighty power, determined that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Christian church, by virtue of the one in whom they believe, and from whom they receive life, abide still. And we thank Thee Lord for the way in which the Holy Spirit today continues to take the word of God and bring it to the attention of sinners over the face of this globe, causing them in marvelous grace to recognize exactly who and what they are and causing them to turn to him who saves sinners, who is truly, in all of his activities, Jesus the Son of God.

We pray for the sick, we ask Thy blessing upon them and for those who have requested our prayers particularly who, at this time of the year, may be feeling particularly the burden of illness or sickness, or loneliness, or the problems of life, give encouragement and consolation and strengthening. We pray for our country. We ask Lord that Thou wilt give wisdom to our leadership in very difficult days, for all of those in authority we ask for them wisdom and guidance. And now Lord in our meeting we ask Thy blessing upon us, upon this church, Believers Chapel, upon its leadership, upon its members, upon the visitors and friends who are with us here today, may Lord in a mighty work of the Holy Spirit we be touched by the divine truths of the word of God in a new way, as this year comes to an end and a new year begins. Be with us now as we sing, as we hear the word of God. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is the offspring of the virgin’s womb. And of course you’ll recognize the title as taken from the hymn Hark the Herold Angels Sing. The occasion of the message, I must confess, is Uta Ranke-Heinemann book, recently

translated into English, and entitled *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of God*. Professor Heinemann or Ranke-Heinemann has been Catholic Professor of Theology at the University of Essen in Germany, and was recently removed from her position -- that is, recently in the last year or so -- removed from her position of teaching Catholic theology as a result of her views. She is a feminist and what she has done in response is to write an indictment of Catholic sexual doctrine among other things. And the statement that particularly interested me was a statement that was reported in the *New York Times*, not in our local papers and not even incidentally in *Time Magazine’s* account of her removal as an official teacher of Catholic doctrine in the Catholic faculty, was this statement which specifically bears upon the virgin birth. She said in her book, “The biological semen was Joseph’s, but the theological semen was the Holy Spirit’s.”

Now obviously as a Professor of Catholic Theology you cannot stand as a Professor of Catholic Theology if you hold that the biological semen of our Lord and his birth was Joseph’s but the theological semen was the Holy Spirit’s. So if I were a Catholic and one who believed the teaching of the church I would have to say that the removal of Professor Heinemann was very justifiable.

Now we who are Christians but not members of the Roman Catholic Church should not be surprised at unbelief. As long as the Scriptures were believed it was characteristic of the Christian church to believe the deity of Christ, his preexistence, and to believe the doctrine of the virgin birth. But as you discover when you read the history of the Christian church, the denial of the doctrines of the deity of Christ and the denial of the preexistence of Christ, and the denial of the virgin birth, it is associated with the denial of holy Scripture. As long as holy Scripture was believed, the doctrines were believed, generally speaking. But when confidence in the word of God began to subside, then the heresies arose, that’s characteristic and not unexpected to us who have been acquainted at all with Christian thought. What is very interesting about it is that it’s not always black and white. In other words, the modifications of doctrine often take on rather interesting

forms. Take the doctrine of the virgin birth. Professor Emil Bruner of the University of Zurich was a Christian theologian and I think it can be said he was a genuine Christian theologian, although there are many things that Professor Bruner believed that other evangelical Christians might not have accepted but his particular view of the virgin birth may illustrate some of the ways in which departure from truth is minimal and then becomes much greater as time goes on. To Professor Bruner the doctrine of the virgin birth is found in sections of Scripture in which legend has been found. And so the birth accounts are regarded as somewhat legendary or mythical. As far as he was concerned he affirmed very strongly that he believed in a true incarnation and that our Lord was truly the Son of God.

Then there are some, for example, a modern or contemporary professor of systematic theology in one of our institutions, Presbyterian, this one who affirms that he believes in the virgin birth but he does not regard it as essential. In other words, it’s something that may be believed but it is not an obligatory confession. So we have belief all the way from rejection to modified acceptance and we are not surprised because the views concerning holy Scripture have also been different down through recent years. When we think of the virgin birth -- now I want to look at this from the standpoint of the texts, and then also try to answer some of the questions that do arise with regard to this supernatural event -- the accounts of the birth of our Lord are given from different standpoints yet they agree in the fact of his birth and they agree, also, of the manner of his birth.

If you look at Matthew chapter 1, verse 18 and verse 20, Matthew says that our Lord was born of the Holy Spirit. And Luke, in verse 35 of chapter 1 of his gospel, says the angel spoke to Mary and these are his words, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

So Matthew and Luke agree on the virgin birth and they agree, also, on the manner of that birth, it is of the Holy Spirit. It is truly a birth of a virgin, one who had not known a man, to use the scriptural terminology. There are some reasons for thinking, too, that implicitly there are other indications of the virgin birth in the New Testament. For example, just to give you one illustration, Mark refers to the Lord Jesus, of course in his gospel but he never calls the Lord Jesus the son of Joseph. Now that might not mean anything except that he does refer to our Lord as the son of Mary, and that’s rather striking because it was customary in Jewish practice to relate children to their father and particularly from the legal standpoint. So for Mark to say that our Lord is son of Mary, or record an incident in which he is called of son of Mary, has some significance.

Now when we think about the authority of the virgin, virgin birth and I’d like to think about that specifically now for a moment, the thoughts of Bible students go all the way back to Genesis chapter 3, and verse 15, in the text in which has been called the first preaching of the gospel or the protevangelium. We find these words, the Lord god is speaking, and he says to Satan, or the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Now notice that the one who is to come who is to destroy the serpent, or to crush his head, is called the seed of the woman.

Now that’s rather strange, seed of the woman. And we know from Scripture, of course, as the word of God unfolds, the story of our Lord is ultimately the seed of the woman. Seed is associated with men but she is said to have a seed, seed of woman. Not egg, but the seed of the woman. Notice further in reading this text, I have a friend who is now with the Lord, just recently went home to be with the Lord, a fine Christian man who taught theology in one of our evangelical institutions, who used to say with reference to Genesis 3:15 that this is no prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ at all, it’s just a comment about snakes [Laughter]. And so I must confess when I read this I look for things that seek to point out that it’s just not about snakes. But now I want you, as you look at this

particular passage, to notice that it’s written in such a way as to make the vows personal, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall crush you as to the head, you shall crush him as to the heel.” So we have “seed of woman”, we have the “thou” which is personal, and one would think that the other is therefore impliedly personal, “you” and then the “seed of the woman”. But notice also we do not have simply an account of a struggle between Satan and his followers and the woman and her followers, but we have it individualized. Notice he says in between your seed and her seed, “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” So while there’s conflict down through the years between the two seeds, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, ultimately the conflict is individualized and the heel of the seed of the woman is crushed and that’s, incidentally, not a fatal crushing, not a fatal injury. To hurt one’s heel is not fatal. As a matter of fact, my heel hurts at the present moment [Laughter], it has nothing to do with Scripture. I’ve been to the doctor about it and I’m still here. It’s not fatal, at least not yet.

But to crush one’s head is a fatal wound. Now we know that Scripture ultimately leads up to the story of Christ where on the cross, our Lord is crucified. The heel is crushed but it’s not fatal for him. For, as the eternal Son of God, he dies but is resurrected. On the other hand, it was there that he, through his death for sin, destroyed Satan’s hold over men. And ultimately, Satan himself comes under the judgment of God. And as Paul says in Romans 16, “The time is coming in the future when he shall be crushed as to the head.” So as we look at Genesis chapter 3, in verse 15, one can see that there’s more to this than simply a snake story and that so far as the language is concerned, it’s in harmony with such a thing as the virgin birth.

Now if we move over to Isaiah chapter 7, and verse 14, which Matthew cites as being fulfilled in the birth of our Lord, we have a statement to the effect that the virgin shall bring forth a seed and this one shall be called Immanuel, or God with Us; that’s translated the name of Immanuel. Now there’s been a great deal of discussion over that



and this isn’t the time to go into great detail to discuss the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. Let me just sum up some of the things that are important. The word that Isaiah uses, the Hebrew word *almah*, that word is found a number of times in the Old Testament, not a great amount but significantly enough, and it never refers to a married person. On one occasion it specifically and clearly refers to a virgin. On most of the other cases with perhaps one exception because one exception is very difficult to know one way or the other, it refers to virgins. So there is no reason for thinking that the text and this word, which normally means a young woman, is anything other than a young woman of marriageable age, but not married.

But then secondly, the Greek translators when they translated the Hebrew Old Testament, they used the term *parthenos*, which in Greek means a virgin and that’s the term that Matthew uses in chapter 1. So as far as the New Testament is concerned, as far as the subject is concerned, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the translators felt that *almah* referred to a virgin. If they wanted to make it very plain, very clear some have said, they should have used the term “*bethuwlah*” which does mean, also, a virgin. But *almah* means that as well in the Old Testament.

And finally, we have the New Testament statement in Matthew chapter 1 which clearly supports the idea of the virgin birth. Now for the sake of time I’m not going to say anything more, but there are other things that could be said. For example, Paul, when he refers the Lord Jesus in Galatians chapter 4, he refers to our Lord Jesus as, “One who has come to be of women.” And as I pointed out with reference to Jewish practices, it would be unusual for a person to speak of another as, “Came to be of a woman.” If you want to identify someone in Jewish thinking, to identify them by the husband or the man was the customary thing. So to say that he, “Came to be of a woman,” does not affirm a virgin birth, but in the light of the context of the thinking of that time, it’s thoroughly in harmony with a virgin birth.

When Paul says, “Great is the mystery of godliness,” there is something about the death that he seems to be referring to, but again that’s not proof of a virgin birth but it’s in thorough harmony with a virgin birth. But when we look at the two accounts which are so plain and clear, it’s obvious this comes down to the question of whether we are going to believe the Bible to be the word of God or whether we’re going to have doubts about it. It must strike everybody who carefully reads those two accounts, the one in Matthew, the one in Luke, that we have read, it must strike everybody that the Scripture record concerning the virgin birth is a simple and sober account. It does not have any of the flavor of the legendary or the mythical about it. It’s only in an attempt to avoid the sense of this passage that individuals have sought to insert legendary or mythical elements with reference to it.

And of the theories that abound among the unbelievers in connection with this account, then one can not find the slightest indication of them in the accounts themselves. So when we think of the authority of the virgin birth, the thing that particularly is present for us is the simplicity of and the plainness of this account, and the absence of any of the mythical and legendary elements that are supposed to be there by some of our critics. No wonder, then, we sing as one of our great hymns Hark the Harold Angels Sing and its chorus, or its words, “Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the Virgin’s womb. Veiled in flesh the God-head see; Hail the incarnate deity.” But now, can we really believe this? There’s no question, I don’t think, that the Bible teaches it. Belief in the virgin birth is a fact. There is no doubt about that. Even those who disbelieve the virgin birth, admit the church believed in the virgin birth. And they believed in the virgin birth down through the years. In the Apostle’s Creed it’s found, for example, right in the beginning of things, and even before that.

So belief in the virgin birth is a fact -- belief in it. We don’t say that the virgin birth is a fact, but belief in it is a fact. And if that is true, and it is true, then we may give different explanations of how this belief arose. We might say, for example, as some have

said, “The virgin birth is not a fact, I admit the belief is a fact, but the birth itself is not a fact. But rather, it’s something that is derived from the Jews.” Well now, that’s very interesting. It’s very interesting for this reason: because there’s no indication in Jewish literature of the time that anyone ever believed in the virgin birth in connection with Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14. Isn’t that striking? Now here’s a person who says, “It’s from Jewish derivation,” but you cannot find it in Jewish exposition of the Scriptures.

So, it would seem it’s not from Jewish derivation. Or at least that theory doesn’t work. So others have said, “No, it’s not from Jewish derivation, it’s from pagan derivation.” But wait a minute, of all the people who are separated from the gentiles, the Christian church in its beginnings stands out. There was a barrier between the world and the Christians that was great and formidable. For example, the Christians were persecuted in the Roman Empire. The Christians were different, they were separate. The barrier between the gentiles and Christians, or the world and the Christians, was a barrier that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cross except through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So it doesn’t make good sense to say, “Belief in the virgin birth is a fact, but the virgin birth is not a fact, it is something that came from the pagans.” But what makes it even more difficult is this, this belief in the virgin birth found in Matthew chapter 1 in the birth accounts of Matthew, the two chapters, 1 and 2, and in chapters 1 and 2 of Luke, birth account also is from documents or accounts that have Palestinian Jewish connections. Even contemporary theologians today acknowledge that these birth accounts are Jewish documents, or rising out of Jewish thinking. Now that’s very interesting. Of course, Jewish Christian thinking, but Jewish thinking?

So in other words, Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 1 do not give any evidence at all of being derived from pagan documents. So that theory, also, does not seem to hold water. Now I know that it’s possible for an individual to say that there was an interpellation from pagan documents into documents before the New Testament was written by Matthew and Luke, for example, and that they are simply repeating things that

were interpolated long before they wrote. They had documents and Luke said he had certain documents and those documents came from pagans and they included them. In other words, what we have is an interpellation of a virgin birth account from pagan documents. Well, what can you say about an interpellation theory?

Very often Professor Machen used to say the best and only refutation of an interpellation theory is the refutation with Dr. Francis L. Patton pressed in a Princeton University, once gave to a woman who, after he delivered a lecture, came up and asked him, “Dr. Patton, what is the strongest argument against theosophy?” And Dr. Patton is supposed to have said, “Madam, the strongest argument against theosophy is that there is no argument in its favor.” And in connection with the interpellation of pagan documents or pagan accounts into the New Testament, there is absolutely no indication whatsoever of that. So we’ll have to abandon that.

Let’s suppose now we take the other view. That the virgin birth is a fact. We know the belief in it is a fact, but let’s take the viewpoint that the virgin birth is a fact. What should we expect? Well, we should expect in the earlier literature, the Christian church, there was some recognition of it. Well in the old Roman baptismal confession, which is the basis of our Apostle’s Creed, probably dated around 200 A.D. there is a clear reference to the virgin birth. And in the Apostle’s Creed the Christian church has repeated this down through the years, that our Lord was born of a virgin. So this is tradition that goes back that early but actually earlier than that.

For example, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, in Syria who was martyred in 117 A.D., refers to the virgin birth more than once. Speaks of it as one of the mysteries that ought to be shouted aloud. So as early as that, the virgin birth was a common article of faith. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the 2nd Century, approximately, argued with reference to the virgin birth in his discussions with Jewish people. He spoke of the virgin birth, argued for it, and so we have every reason to believe that the Christian church from its earliest beginnings after the time of the apostles, affirmed the doctrine of the virgin birth.

As far as the New Testament is concerned, it’s plain and clear. In Luke chapter 1, the passage we’ve read, we have a clear statement of the doctrine of the virgin birth. It has a Palestinian/Jewish flavor about it and it’s natural to ask the question, “How is it that Luke came to have the truth that he writes about here?” I suggest to you this, we know, as reading the Book of Acts, that it comes from the hand of Luke most likely, scholars generally agree. But also that Luke from time to time was present with the Apostle Paul and with what he records, because he changes from the third person to the first person. Scholars call these the resections of the Book of Acts. They are sections that indicate that he was present when those events occur.

Now we know that Luke was present when Paul was in prison in Caesarea and we know, therefore, that Luke had access to the testimonies of those who were in the land. As a matter of fact, he would have had contact with James, the bother of our Lord, and it is possible, we have no historical reference for this, of course, it’s possible that he was acquainted with our Lord’s mother and may have derived this story directly from her. So he had every reason as an accomplished historian, and he was that, to find evidence firsthand for the doctrine of the virgin birth. So as far as Luke is concerned, there’s good reason to think that he had evidence or at least access to evidence and the account itself being a simple and forthright account, gives to an individual as he reads it the sense of truthfulness about it. And I think it’s so interesting, too, that Luke is the one who writes this account because when you want a birth report you don’t go to a fisherman or you don’t go to a blacksmith, but you want to go to a doctor. And he was doctor Luke, and so he has been appointed by the Holy Spirit, inspired to give us one of the accounts of our Lord’s birth.

As far as Matthew is concerned, do not forget this. If you want to argue against biblical truth, you must also remember that Matthew’s account is an independent account. We do not have one account of the virgin birth, the Bible’s account. We have the account of Matthew, the have the account of Luke. Matthew is independent of Luke. That’s a

mistake that often people make. They will say, “Well, the resurrection, for example, is only spoken of in the Bible.” But wait a minute, the Bible is a collection of testimonies which we know now as one book, but which circulated separately. They were separate testimonies. And so when John testifies to the resurrection, when Mark testifies to it, when Matthew testifies to it, when Luke testifies to it, we have four separate testimonies.

Now Luke does say he used other accounts in writing his account. And then when we have Paul’s account we have another account. So we’re not talking about one testimony, we’re talking about many testimonies. I remember one of my friends in Charleston, South Carolina who was a lawyer and taught the Bible, was the first one to call that to my attention. That what we have is not one account in Scripture, we have many accounts. And in the case of the virgin birth we have two independent accounts.

Now as the rest of the New Testament is concerned we have no clear statement of the virgin birth. It’s rather striking to me, I must confess, that scholars who tend to want to believe Jesus’ words because they fit in well with a liberal gospel and who tend not to believe Paul’s because Paul is so theological. And if you’ll remember, Thomas Jefferson followed them, he used to like to say he did accept the words of the Lord Jesus, they left a great impression upon him, but he could not accept the words of Paul the apostle which he regarded as the mystifications of a professional theologian. So what we have is in the case of the New Testament here is a case where New Testament scholars like to say, “But Paul never says anything about it. Luke says something about it, Matthew says something about it, but Paul doesn’t say anything about it.” I find that rather interesting because liberal scholars as a rule would like to say, “We want to believe the simple words of Jesus because they fit in with the liberal gospel of good works. Whereas Paul’s gospel is not a liberal gospel of good works, “For by grace you are saved through faith, that not of yourselves: it’s the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should perish.” But here they want to follow Paul rather than the accounts of the gospel writers. I think that’s rather interesting.

Well, when we come down to the historic Christ, what do we say about him? Is his life an argument for a virgin birth? Well, think of what Pilate said about him, “I find no fault in him.” What does a dying thief say about him? “This man hath done nothing amiss.” What does Acts, and Peter, say about him? “Why this man has been demonstrated by miracle signs and wonders as approved before God.” The Apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, in verse 21, in a very significant statement, makes this comment concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, “He hath made him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” And John the apostle in one of his comments in his first epistle says, “In him there was no sin.”

Generally we will admit that every effect must have an adequate cause. A unique life, our Lord lived. A unique life must have a unique cause. The doctrine of the virgin birth comports well with the kind of life that Jesus lived. In fact, the virgin birth is a fitting preface to the life that was crowned by resurrection from the dead. Let me come back to the question of the necessity of the virgin birth. Is it important that we believe in the virgin birth? Well, of course from the standpoint of the word of God it’s extremely important. If we believe the bible we have to believe the virgin birth. There is no way. So let’s eliminate that. It’s a question of submission to Scripture but there is more to it than that. It is essential for the Davidic sovereignty of the Lord.

The Old Testament testifies to the fact that the one who shall sit upon the throne and rule over the house of Jacob forever is the son of David. That’s one of the great and clear themes of the Old Testament. There is coming a greater son of David who will rule and reign and of his kingdom there will be no end. So it’s very important then for the Davidic sovereignty that our Lord Jesus be truly qualified to sit upon that throne.

Now it’s rather interesting, I think. Luke puts it very well here when he says, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give unto him the throne of his father David.” But I might have an objection to this because I

happen to know our Lord Jesus has in his ancestry an individual concerning whom the prophets spoke, “Write this man, Jeconiah, or Coniah, childless and no man of his seed shall sit upon the throne of David, ruling and reigning.” It’s a rather startling prophecy, I don’t want to make too much over that but nevertheless if that is true and if our Lord is a descendent of Coniah it would seem to rule out anyone who is the seed of Jeconiah from sitting on the Davidic throne.

In fact, that prophecy, if we take it at its face value, cuts off four of Joseph’s five boys. But there’s one boy whose right to the throne is not cut off by that statement because he’s not the seed of Joseph. And being not the seed of Joseph, he’s not the seed of Coniah, ultimately. And so consequently, if that is true, then what we have in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ is the necessity of the virgin birth because he needs legal title to the throne which Joseph has, but he must not be descended from Joseph biologically, he must not be Joseph’s semen, as Professor Ranke-Heinemann has said. But he must be, Scripture says, conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

So if that is true, then we have the necessity of the virgin birth set forth quite plainly and explicitly. And finally, and perhaps even more important for there is more reason to say, there can be no debate over this, the virgin birth is essential for the divine saviorhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that you know enough about Scripture, you’ve been in Believers Chapel enough to know that if we’re going to have a savior he must be God because only a God can save men. He must also be a man because he must be one of us who can act for us as one of us and take our place and our stead accomplish the redeeming work. And therefore, he himself must be without sin, for otherwise he himself comes under the judgment.

Well, one of the reasons we have a virgin birth is simply this, that our Lord shall not inherit the guilt of sin from Adam. That is fundamentally the reason why we must have a virgin birth. For every child of Adam comes under the guilt of Adam’s sin. That is plainly stated in Scripture as by one man, “Sin came into the world and death by sin; so



death passed upon all men, for all sinned when Adam sinned.” Oh, you don’t like it. You don’t like for Adam to act for you. Ah, you should be thankful and constantly praising God for the fact you had someone to act for you who could act for you in order that someone else could act for you as the holy Son of God. Adam acted and failed but the last Adam, not the second Adam, there is no other, there are only two Adams, the last Adam has acted for men as their representative. And has accomplished in his saving work by bearing the punishment of the guilt of sin. Made it possible for sinners to be saved and that’s why his name is Jesus; he shall save his people from their sins.

And it is essential for a divine savior to be God, to be man, to be without sin, or to put it in the words of our text, “To be conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.” Thus, he can take our original guilt, which he has done, and bear it vicariously for sinners. Well let me, because our time is just about up, close with a few comments. Ultimate as you can see, I hope, the credibility of the virgin birth rests upon the miraculous eventually. We believe that God has given us the word of God and we believe also that God being God is able to do anything. That he is able to bring our Lord into existence as the God-man by virtue of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. God is not imprisoned within natural processes, please remember that. He has created everything, he understand perfectly, he has all power. He is the omnipotent God.

There are so many things we do not understand. I look at these lights here and I want to tell you that ultimately electricity has within its nature something you cannot understand. And the finest electrical engineer, or electrician, or master teacher of electricity, cannot understand. And finally, you may press him to the place where he will have to say we don’t know the answer to that question. Of course, I know if I flip on the switch the light will come on but that’s a far cry from understanding electricity. And we cannot understand the atom, ultimately. There’s so many things in this life we do not ultimately understand. “Admit a god,” someone has said, “that mystery supreme, that

cause uncaused, all other wonders cease, nothing is too marvelous for him to do. Deny him, all is mystery besides.”

I think Mary understood the thing very well because when she was given this magnificent message she said, “How can this thing be, I don’t know a man.” And the answer comes from the angel who says, “With God, nothing shall be impossible.” Think of it, nothing shall be impossible. So I conclude with the Christian church and its testimony, the testimony of orthodox believers down through the centuries. I prefer, of course, the reform strain, the Lord Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

A 12th Century theologian, one of the greatest of the theologians through the centuries, Anselm, once said this, there are four ways for God to make a human body. One way is to make a human body with a man and a woman.” That’s the way you and I are made, a man and a woman. When Samuel Lewis Johnson married Kathleen Spotswood Payne Norvell [ph51:16], there emerged Samuel Lewis Johnson Jr. Those are my two parents. The second way is without a man or a woman. That’s the way Adam was created. The third way is without a woman, that’s the way Eve was created. And then without a man, and that’s the way our Lord came into existence. The eternal Son who took to himself a human nature. And the incarnate Son of God came into our history.

Put it this way: before Joseph was, he is. He is the eternal Son who took to himself human nature and time. I’ve often through the years, because I’ve been preaching in Believers Chapel for a long time, I’ve often concluded some message on the virgin birth with a quotation from Clarence Edward Macartney. It’s impressed me through the years and I’ll repeat it again. For those of you who’ve heard it you can think about something else [Laughter].

But Mr. Macartney, at the conclusion of one of his messages in which he argued the virgin birth, said, “But I would rather burrow in a door than debate and argue, let us

go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass. Come, and with the shepherds and the wise men, let us bow down before him who came that we might become the sons of God. Shepherds, with your staves and shaggy coats, move over. Wise men, with your gifts, your gold, frankincense and Mir, move over please. Wondrous star, with your guiding radiance, move over and make room for me.” That’s the way I feel. When I think of our Lord Jesus Christ and who he is and what he has accomplished, I want to do precisely what the saints of the word of God and down through the centuries have done, I want to worship him as Son of God, eternal savior of men and me.

May God help us, at this time of the year especially. To give him the glory that belongs to him. If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you to put your trust in him. Some of you young people sitting in the audience, there’s no better time to get saved then right now. Confess your sin, acknowledge it before the Lord, acknowledge the greatness of the Son of God, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. Call Jesus because he will save his people from their sins and in his presence we have Immanuel, or God with US, trust him in an act of faith. May God bring you to trust in him and to the possession of eternal life. You can come in this auditorium without him and leave with him and with the forgiveness of your sins, justification of life, the assurance of an eternity in the presence of God. May God help you to make that decision. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the blessings of the word of God and particularly for the message concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for him who loved sinners and gave himself for them. And we thank Thee for the qualifications that he possesses for the office. As the eternal Son, as the second man, as the God-man who delivers sinners. We ask Lord...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**

“Offspring of the Virgin’s Womb” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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