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# The Bible Teaches the Virgin Birth

Eric V. Snow, sermonette, 12-10-2010, Ann Arbor, MI, UCG-IA

Do you think that wherever you go, “it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas”? Is this week’s noticeable snowfall around here making you dream “about a white Christmas”? Is this “the most wonderful time of the year” spiritually? Well, we in the Church of God know better than that. Over the next two weeks, this annual storm of paganism, materialism, and commercialism will hit us with its full fury. But even as this deceptive, category 5 hurricane moves ashore and so closely into our lives, can we find a bright silver lining in its dark clouds? Amidst all the malarky about Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the red nose reindeer, and the Grinch who stole Christmas, can we find and focus on the small flicking light of spiritual truth that this holiday is allegedly about? We in the church of God should be willing to discuss a certain true teaching of the Bible even when most of the world is deceived into celebrating a holiday that’s supposedly

about Jesus' birth. It is a true scriptural teaching and a historical fact that God the Son was born miraculously of a virgin about 2013 years ago. Let's now take this opportunity to spotlight a messianic prophecy that the Jews have long said Matthew quoted out of context.

S.P.S. By applying the principle of duality in prophetic fulfillment, we can know Isaiah 7:14 was about Jesus' birth also.

Now, bah humbug, I really wish that the Grinch had succeeded in his plot to steal Christmas . . . but, God's truth is God's truth. We in the COG shouldn't be aware to discuss any true Biblical teaching, regardless of whatever people in the world are saying about it whenever. Or whether they are dreaming about a white Christmas.

Matt. 1:18-25, esp. 23

This account makes it very clear that Jesus was born of a virgin. True, skeptics commonly claim that's not possible. But obviously the Creator who created life originally certainly can perform a miracle so that a virgin woman can have a baby. If Jehovah can make Adam from the dust of the earth, and Eve from Adam's rib, it's much

easier for Him to make a virgin give birth. But it isn't the focus of my message today to refute the assaults of atheists and agnostics on the Bible's historical reports of miracles done by God.

Instead, let's turn now to analyze what traditional Jews claim. They will attack the story of Jesus' from another direction: They will claim that Matthew quoted Isaiah 7:14 out of context and that the word "almah" used here doesn't mean "virgin."

Two main points in reply: 1. The duality principle of prophetic fulfillment refutes this argument. Later, I'll take up point 2. The word "almah" can mean "virgin."

Isaiah 7:10+

The evil king Ahaz had a military crisis on his hands: The kings of Israel and Syria had invaded Judah and attacked Jerusalem. Ahaz paid off the Assyrian Empire's king to attack them from behind (see 2 Kings 16).

V. 13

Duality principle: 1. A preliminary fulfillment at the time, a child born of a virgin at marriage. 2. The main fulfillment was when Jesus was born of a virgin. The principle of typology: Someone or something serves as a forerunner that represents a Biblical truth that has a more complete revelation later.

Fundamental basis of truth of Jesus as Messiah: Jesus' miracles and teachings showed that God sent Him on a mission to reveal the Father to humanity. Greater sign of greater truth: For a young woman to give birth is common, but for a virgin to give birth, that's **really** miraculous. As the biblical scholar J. Gresham Machen asked: "Why should an ordinary birth be regarded as a 'sign'?"

Now let's turn to point 2: The word "Almah" can mean "virgin." This word can be translated "virgin" or (notoriously) in the RSV as "young woman." By itself, the word is somewhat ambiguous. Rebekah was called an "almah" (**Genesis 24:43**) [turn to if have time] when she hadn't yet "known" a man. Also called a "bethulah," (v. 16), which can be somewhat ambiguous also in meaning. Standard claim is that if "bethulah" means "virgin," then "almah"

can't, but this chapter shows otherwise, when both words are used about Rebekah before her marriage to Isaac.

In the Ugaritic language and the Carthaginian dialect of Phoenician, the equivalent term for *almah* also means "virgin." Ugaritic was a Semitic language very similar to Hebrew, so scholars analyze its words to learn more about the meanings of ancient Hebrew language's words. As the scholar James Smith reasons, if the woman giving birth were unmarried, an illegitimate birth makes for a poor sign from God!

It's significant that the pre-Christian Septuagint's translator used "parthenos," Greek word for "virgin." Although one can try to water this down, the word almost always means "virgin." The famous pagan temple to the goddess Athena in Athens is called the Parthenon: Athena was regarded as a virgin, unlike (well) Aphrodite/Venus. "Parthenia" means, "virginity as a state of being," (see Luke 2:36) according to Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich's Greek-English lexicon, p. 626.

Basic interpretative issue: Do we go with the main meaning of the word, (say) 95% of the

time? Or do we evasively hunt around for the 5% or the 1% exceptions in order to avoid changing our minds? What does God expect?

**SO IN CONCLUSION**, we in the Church of God should believe in and proclaim the virgin birth of Jesus even during the world's Christmas season. The Jews are plainly wrong to insist that Isaiah 7:14 was only about a sign for King Ahaz when two foreign armies were attacking Jerusalem and that the word "almah" doesn't have to mean "virgin" here. Let's not be afraid to teach what's God's truth as God's truth, regardless of what time of the year it is.

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