

Born of the Virgin Mary

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to Matthew chapter 1, the gospel according to Matthew and chapter 1, and if we read again at verse 18.

Matthew chapter 1 at verse 18. Now, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. In his classic book called Knowing God, which is a book that everyone should read and also reread, it was the late J.I.

Packer. He wrote this in his chapter on God incarnate, chapter 5. The supreme mystery with which the gospel confronts us lies not in the Good Friday message of the atonement, nor in the Easter message of the resurrection, but in the Christmas message of the incarnation.

[1 : 53] I'll read that again. And it's that supreme mystery and message of the incarnation which we're considering this evening as we continue studying the Apostles' Creed.

Now, as we said before, the Apostles' Creed, it has been read, recited, and reaffirmed by Christians throughout the world for centuries, because the Apostles' Creed, it's a statement and summary of faith.

It's a belief statement. It's a mission statement which asserts and affirms the who, the what, and the why of the Church of Jesus Christ. But like all creeds, confessions, and catechisms, the Apostles' Creed is not exhaustive, but it is encouraging.

It's an encouraging statement of faith which we are called to believe in our heart and also to confess with our mouth. And that's why, as we said before, that's why it's called a creed.

Because the word creed, it comes from the Latin credo, meaning I believe. Therefore, the Apostles' Creed, as we've said before, it is to be believed in our heart and also confessed with our mouth.

[3 : 17] Now, I hope you all took your sheet of paper with you this evening, because as I said before, that's what I'd like us to do each week as we study the Apostles' Creed together. I'd like us to believe in our heart and confess with our mouths the words of the Apostles' Creed, either silently or audibly.

I'm not going to force you either way. But please say it with me. I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen. Now, as I said before, you are not saved by simply reading, reciting, and reaffirming the Apostles' Creed. You are saved by believing, receiving, and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

[4 : 41] But this evening we're considering the statement in the Apostles' Creed where it says that Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. And I'd like us to consider this statement under three headings. Three headings.

The vision, the virgin, and the victory. The vision, the virgin, and the victory. So, first of all, the vision. The vision.

Look again with me at verse 18 of Matthew 1. Now, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 53] Now, as you can see from the Apostles' Creed, and as we've said before, the Apostles' Creed is a distinctly Trinitarian creed. Because, as you can see, it has been divided into three parts, and in these three parts, we are encouraged and exhorted to confess, I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. And then thirdly, I believe in the Holy Ghost. So, the Apostles' Creed is a distinctly Trinitarian creed, which expresses and explains that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

And these three, as our Catechism teaches us, they are one God. They are the same in substance, but they're also equal. There's not a hierarchy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

They are equal in power and glory. But as we continue looking at this middle section, which is the longest section of the Apostles' Creed, we know that last time we considered the opening statement, I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

And as we said, that opening statement of the middle section, it is an exclusive statement. It's an exclusive statement which explains and emphasizes to us and to every other religion, cult, sect, and faith belief that this is the truth.

[7 : 20] Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and our Lord, he is the only Savior of sinners. And by confessing, I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, we are asserting and affirming that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.

There is no other name, as Paul said, there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Therefore, as sinners, we must all believe in and believe on and believe upon this Savior, Jesus Christ.

We must rest in him and we must receive Jesus Christ by faith alone for salvation. Because as we see from this next statement, Jesus Christ, we're told, he's not only the Son of God, he's not only Lord, he's not only Christ, but the wonder is he also became man.

And he became man by being conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. And you know, what's remarkable about the incarnation, and when we use the word incarnation, it literally means the enfleshment of God.

That's what the word incarnate means, the enfleshment of God, where the Son of God became man. He took to himself our nature. It was the incarnation, the enfleshment of God.

[8 : 50] But you know, what's remarkable about the incarnation is that the Holy Spirit was not only involved in the conception of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

And you know, it doesn't matter how many times you say it, it's baffling. And we'll see that as we go on. How the Holy Spirit was involved in the conception of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

But he was also involved in the inspiration of the prophetic visions in the Old Testament. And this is what we see in verse 22, where we're told in verse 22 of Matthew 1, All this took place.

So all about being conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

All this took place, being conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, all this took place according to an 800-year-old promise of the Lord and prophecy in Isaiah.

[10:01] And you know, we often hear those promising and prophetic verses being read at a Christmas carol service. Like this one from Isaiah 7, but also the one from Isaiah chapter 9, where unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

And you know, my friend, the incarnation, the enfleshment of God, it was promised and even prophesied hundreds of years before it took place. And this is the wonder, this was the work of the Holy Spirit, promising and prophesying through the Lord's servants.

But when the incarnation did take place, when Christ appeared, there was not only visions in the Old Testament. Mary, as we read in Luke chapter 1, Mary received a vision from the angel Gabriel. And Joseph, as we read here in Matthew 1, he received a vision of the angel of the Lord. And now the angel of the Lord told him, Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son and children. You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Now I want to say to you this evening, I'm not going to try and attempt to explain to you how the eternal Son of God was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

[11:47] I cannot explain it to you. Because as G.I. Packer said, It is one of the great mysteries of the gospel. It is one of the great mysteries of the gospel.

In fact, Packer, when you read that chapter in his book, he went on to say, Here are two great mysteries for the price of one. Here are two mysteries for the price of one.

You look at Jesus, The plurality of the persons within the unity of the Godhead, which is the Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit as one God, but also the union of the Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus Christ.

That Jesus Christ, he is both God and man. He is divine and human. He is two distinct natures in one person forever. And as Packer says, The mystery of the incarnation is unfathomable.

It is unfathomable. I remember being in college with Professor John Angus MacLeod, and we asked him about the incarnation, and he said, I have been studying the Bible for 40 years, and I cannot explain it, and I cannot fully understand it.

[13:05] And you know, that's what Packer says as well. The mystery of the incarnation is unfathomable. We cannot explain it. We can only formulate it, he says.

And perhaps it has never been formulated better than in the words of the Athanasian Creed. Now, I mentioned to you before that there are three fundamental creeds which we confess as a Reformed church.

There's this creed, the Apostles' Creed. There's also the Nicene Creed, and there's the Athanasian Creed. And the Athanasian Creed, it's a creed which was produced and published in the 6th century following a discussion and a debate about the Trinity.

And the Athanasian Creed, it states, when you read it, it's very interesting to read, it says, it is necessary for salvation to believe about the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God and both God and man.

He is perfect God and perfect man, who although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ.

[14:17] One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. Now, you try and understand that.

One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. You know, G.I. Packer was right.

The Christmas message of the incarnation is an unfathomable mystery. But, you know, the thing is, we don't need to understand it in all its fullness, in all its detail.

We are called to believe it. We don't need to understand all the little details of the doctrine. We are called to believe it. We don't need to understand the mystery of the incarnation and the enfleshment of God.

We don't need to understand how the Word became flesh and how God became man and how Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

[15:19] My friend, we don't need to understand the mystery of the incarnation. We are just called to believe it and to trust that God knew what He was doing in the mystery of the incarnation.

It's just like you don't need to know how a car works in order to drive it. You don't need to know how all the pistons move and how injectors work and how spark plugs move all these things.

You don't need to understand all these things in order to move a car. And just like this, we don't need to understand the mystery of the incarnation. We just have to believe it. We're called to believe it.

Just like we don't need to understand the mystery of salvation and how the Holy Spirit begins to work in our heart, convincing us of our sin and misery and enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ.

We just need to believe as Jesus is freely offered to us in the gospel. You know, salvation, it's not about what you know.

[16:18] It's all about who you know. Salvation is not about what you know. It's all about who you know. And what the gospel calls us is to know Jesus because to know Jesus is life eternal.

The gospel calls us to know Jesus and to confess Jesus as our Lord and as our Savior. And so we don't need to understand the mystery of the incarnation.

We just need to believe it. And so as we see, as we consider this statement in the Apostles' Creed, we see first of all the vision. But then secondly, the virgin. So the vision and the virgin.

Look again at verse 22. It says, All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

You know, the more we read and reflect upon the incarnation, the more amazing it actually becomes. Because in order for the eternal Son of God to be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, this is the amazing thing.

[17:29] He didn't lay aside His divinity or His glory. He veiled it in human flesh. You know, it's mind-blowing.

In order to be, in order for the eternal Son of God to be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, He didn't lay aside His divinity or His glory. He veiled it in human flesh.

And when He became flesh, He didn't become two Persians. No, He added to His divine person our nature. You know, I'm always thankful that there are those who have gone before us who can explain it much better than I can.

There was an early church father called Hillary of Potier, and he said about the incarnation, he said, remaining what He was, the Son of God, remaining what He was, He became what He was not. He became man. Remaining what He was, He became what He was not. He was God and man. Or as Peter's good friend, the English Puritan, John Owen, he once said the reverse of it.

[18:41] He came to be what He was not without ceasing to be what He was. And you have to really think about it, don't you? He came to be what He was not.

He wasn't human. But He came to be human. And He came to be what He was not before without ceasing to be what He was. God became man.

You know, my friend, when the Son of God was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, He didn't cease to be God. No, He added to Himself our nature. He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

He was born in a cradle in Bethlehem. And, you know, you look at it and you see it was the greatest act of humiliation.

God became man. And yet, sadly, through the humiliation of Jesus Christ, Roman Catholicism has sponsored the exaltation of the Virgin Mary.

[19:50] Now, just because it's Reformation Day, don't ever think I'm just having a go at the Roman Catholic Church. I'm not. But, you know, in order to emphasize truth, you must highlight error.

In order to know true doctrine, you must point out false doctrine. And as you know, in the Roman Catholic Church and in Roman Catholic theology, the Virgin Mary is venerated over all the saints. She's above all the saints. She's actually in a position equal to Christ himself. Now, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, it stems from scriptural statements, statements that we've actually read this evening, where Mary was described as the favored one and blessed among women and also the blessed virgin.

And we should always see Mary as one who was special. She was the favored one. She was the blessed one. She was special because she bore in her womb the Savior of the world.

And she gave birth to him. She was the mother of Jesus. But, you know, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, it actually began in the early church when the early church depicted and described Mary as,

children listening, the Theotokos, the God-bearer.

[21 : 09] They described and depicted Mary as the Theotokos, the God-bearer. And it was then, as time progressed into the medieval period of church history, that Roman Catholicism began to twist that teaching and then actually take it too far.

Because they introduced Maryology, which is the study of Mary, and which ultimately led to Maryolatry, which is the worship of Mary. But Maryology and Maryolatry, it's not based upon sola scriptura, scripture alone.

Rather, Maryology and Maryolatry, it's based upon what Roman Catholics hold in high esteem, the tradition of the church and the teaching of the Pope. Because the Roman Catholic Church, they have promoted and they've published erroneous doctrines such as, and you've heard them all before, the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

And the interesting thing about the Immaculate Conception of Mary, it's at the teaching that Mary was sinless and that she was preserved and protected from original sin.

And she was preserved and protected from original sin not when she conceived from the Holy Ghost, but when she herself was conceived in her mother's womb.

[22 : 33] And that's how they say she was immaculately conceived. There's also the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, that Mary continued to be a virgin after she had given birth to Jesus and also throughout her whole life.

There's also the doctrine of the assumption of Mary, which insists that when Mary died, she wasn't buried, but like Enoch and Elijah before her, she was just assumed into heaven, both body and soul.

But you know, the most dangerous doctrine of Maryology is that the Virgin Mary is depicted and described as the mother of God and the mother of the church, to the point that Mary is said to participate in our redemption with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Mary is known as the Redemptrix, which is a female Redeemer, and a Mediatrix, which is a female Mediator. Because Roman Catholicism, it wrongly teaches that grace is granted by Jesus through the intercession of the Redemptrix, the Virgin Mary.

She is this Mediator, the Mediatrix. She is a female Mediator between Christ and His people. She is the Mediator between the Mediator.

[23 : 55] It, it, you just can't get your head around it. And it's even the fact that the prayers from the faithful, they must flow from us, is what they say, to Mary, to Christ, to God.

And you know, when you read and reflect upon Maryology and Maryolatry, you can see actually how far it has moved away from sola scriptura and sola Christos.

Scripture alone and Christ alone. And you know, my friend, it's frightening to see how misguided and how misleading the Roman Catholic Church really is.

Because even though it presents and portrays itself as good and glorious and it has all the glitter and the glamour and the gold, all it is, all it is, is a facade of falsehood.

and it is leading millions and millions of people to a lost eternity in hell. And I don't say that lightly.

[25 : 04] And you know that. Our longing is for people to be saved. But these doctrines, they are leading people to hell. And you know, it's no wonder that the Reformers and even the Puritans after them, they regarded the Pope as the Antichrist and the man of sin.

Because anything that moves away from Scripture and anything that moves away from Christ is leading people astray. It's leading them onto the broad road that leads down to destruction.

But you know, the Virgin Mary that we find in Scripture, the one whom is portrayed to us and presented to us in the Gospel, is a young woman. A young woman who saw herself as a sinner.

A sinner saved by grace. And as we can read in Luke chapter 1, she's someone who rejoiced in God, her Savior. And you know, I always find it amazing to think that while Mary was pregnant with Jesus, now think about this one, while Mary was pregnant with Jesus, someone once said, his life was in her womb while her life was in his hands.

His life was in her womb while her life was in his hands. You know, as the eternal Son of God, He is from everlasting to everlasting.

[26 : 30] He's Alpha and Omega. He has no beginning. He has no end. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He was the Word who was in the beginning with God.

He was God and He still is God. And as Creator, all things were made through Him and without Him there was nothing made that was made. And yet, the mystery of the Incarnation, as Hilary of Pottier said, remaining what He was, He became what He was not.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. He added to Himself our nature. He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It was the greatest act of humiliation. And yet, when you look at the womb of Mary, His life was in her womb while her life was in His hands.

He was upholding her while she was carrying Him. It's mind-blowing. The Incarnation is unfathomable.

[27 : 38] It's the greatest mystery. His life was in her womb while her life was in His hands. And you know, my friend, this is the glory of the Gospel. That the Son of God humbled Himself from the crown of glory all the way down to the cradle in Bethlehem.

But why? Because His life was all about the cross of Calvary. He humbled Himself from the crown to the cradle to the cross.

It was the greatest act of humiliation. The crown, the cradle to the cross. In other words, the vision and the virgin was all about the victory.

The vision and the virgin was all about the victory. That's what I'd like us to consider lastly. The victory. So the vision, the virgin, and the victory.

The victory. Children, verse 21, she will bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.

[28 : 44] You know, when both Mary and Joseph, when they received visions about the birth of Christ, they were told from the outset that they were to call His name Jesus because He was to save His people from their sins.

But Jesus was going to save His people from their sins not by being the sovereign over Israel, but by being a sacrifice at Calvary. And you know, we have all these Christmas carols, don't we?

We have all these Christmas carols that we sing at Christmas about the incarnation. There's Isaac Watts, his rendition of Psalm 98, Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King.

Let every heart prepare Him room. And heaven and nature sing. There's also the words of John Francis Wade, O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphal, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.

Or there's Charles Wesley's hymn, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Glory to the Newborn King, Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.

[29 : 47] And they're all great Christmas carols that express and emphasize the importance of the incarnation. But I want to say to you tonight that none of them, none of them are a patch on Psalm 40.

None of them are a patch on Psalm 40 because children, in Psalm 40, you have the Psalm of the incarnation. Because in Psalm 40, Jesus is speaking.

And Jesus is speaking to His Father where He says, in verse 6, no sacrifice, nor offering, didst thou at all desire, mine ears thou bored sin offering thou, and burnt didst not require.

Now, we know that Jesus is speaking to His Father in Psalm 40 because it's actually affirmed and applied to Jesus in the New Testament in Hebrews chapter 10.

Where the writer to the Hebrews, he's talking about Jesus being a better sacrifice than all the other sacrifices in the Old Testament. He's better than all the sacrifices that were ever offered at the tabernacle and at the temple.

[30 : 57] And He's pointing at them and He's saying, well, it was impossible for them. It was impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin because they didn't deal with the problem of sin.

They didn't cover and expiate and propitiate the heinousness and the ugliness and the awfulness of sin in the sight of a holy God. But the writer to the Hebrews then says, when Christ came, you know, I love those words, when Christ came, when Christ came into the world, He said, quoting the Psalm of the Incarnation, Psalm 40, sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body, a body you have prepared for me.

Now, of course, the words, a body you have prepared for me, they're not quoted in the book of Psalms in Psalm 40. They're quoted in Hebrews 10 for information and application.

The information and application that God, in the fullness of time, He sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law.

God sent forth His Son. A body was prepared for Him, where He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. This is the great mystery of the Incarnation.

[32 : 20] A body was prepared for Jesus so that He would be the sacrifice for our sin. A body was prepared for Jesus so that He would bear our sin in His body on the tree.

A body was prepared for Jesus so that He could be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. A body was prepared for Jesus so that He who knew no sin could become sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

He became man in order to redeem us. My friend, when He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, a body was prepared for Him.

They called His name Jesus because He would save His people from their sin. And you know, the glory of the Gospel is that the Son of God, equal in power and glory with the God of heaven, He humbled Himself down from the crown to the cradle all the way down to the cross.

His life was all about the cross, a body you have prepared for me. You know, my friend, the vision and the Virgin was all about the victory.

[33 : 47] It was all about the victory. But you know, just in conclusion, and this is what should make Jesus even more personal and precious to you.

As you know, the mystery of the incarnation is that the Son of God became man. But the mastery of the incarnation is that the Son of God can now sympathize with all your weaknesses.

The Son of God can sympathize with all your weaknesses. because as one who was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, as you know, He had a real physical body.

And that's what the Gospels remind and reaffirm to us time and time again, that Jesus was real. He had a real physical body. A body was prepared for Him because Jesus, as we read in the Gospels, He knew what it was to hunger and to thirst.

He knew what it was to slumber and to sleep. He knew what it was to have friendship and fellowship. Jesus knew what it was to express care and compassion, anger and annoyance, love and even loss.

[35 : 02] Jesus knew what it was to encounter trial and temptation, persecution and pain, desertion and disappointment. He knew what it was to experience ridicule and rejection, suffering and sorrow, danger and even death.

My friend, this is the wonder of who Jesus is. He became like us not only to redeem us, but also to relate to us.

And tonight, as our great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, you know, the writer to the Hebrews says to us about Him, He is able to sympathize with all our feelings of weakness and infirmity.

He knows how you feel tonight. That's the wonder of who He is. He knows how you feel. He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Therefore, says the writer to the Hebrews, therefore, we have victory through His sacrifice, and we have victory through His sympathy. And as our Redeemer, He can relate to us in all that we're going through.

[36 : 18] That's why, you know, that's why He compels us and even commands us to come to Him. Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, says the writer to the Hebrews.

Why? So that we may obtain mercy. And come to Jesus and find grace to help in our time of need. Because if anyone understands what we're going through, it's Him.

You know, people around you might not understand what you're going through. People in your own family might not understand what you're going through. You might try and explain it to them, what you're going through. But they won't understand.

But He understands. He understands what you're going through. He remembers our feeble frame. He remembers that we are dust. This is the wonder.

He compels us and He commands us to come to Him that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. My friend, through the vision and the virgin, there is the victory.

[37 : 22] There is the victory. And that's why Jesus compels us and commands us to come to Him that's why He says to us in the Gospel, Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you. Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

