

To understand the coming Messiah, look at four important facets of His nature:

- His preexistence.
- His Deity, or Godhood.
- His Incarnation.
- His Virgin Birth.

1. The Preexistence of Messiah.

The Word reveals someone who was with the Father, who held honor, and yet was not the Father.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting [from the days of eternity].” (Micah 5:2)

Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son’s name, if you know? (Prov. 30:4)

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him. (Psalm 2:12)

- This Psalm speaks of the great end-times rebellion.
- It seems to indicate that people should put their confidence in this person as they would in God.

“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’” (Psalm 2:7)

2. The Son appeared before His incarnation.

An appearance of God to man is called a *theophany*. An appearance of Christ, especially before His incarnation, is a *christophany*.

We see Jesus in the Old Testament as the mysterious person known as the Angel of the Lord. This particular angel had unique characteristics, and people treated Him as though He were God.

With Abraham: Genesis 18

1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground...

9 Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.” 10 And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son....”

20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD....

33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place. 19:1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening...

With Jacob: Genesis 32

24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. 25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. 26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" 27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." 28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Peniel means "face of God."

Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke to us—that is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD is His memorable name. (Hos. 12:4-5)

Other appearances of the Angel of the LORD:

- He found Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness: Gen. 16.
- Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac: Gen. 22.
- Moses in the burning bush: Exodus 3.
- Captain of the Host: Judges 5.
- He appeared to Samson's father: Judges 13:18.
- Various places in Zechariah and in other stories in the Bible dealing with redemption and judgment.

3. The Hebrew Bible indicates that there is a plurality of persons in the Deity.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1) We believe that God is one essence, one God, eternally existing in three persons. The Son is not merely a manifestation of God, but He has always existed together with the Father. Jesus has always had the nature of God. Paul tells us that in Christ *dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Deity) bodily. (Col. 2:9)*

Hebrew teaches God's plural unity. Two words for oneness in biblical Hebrew:

- Yachid –a complete oneness
- Echad –a plural or composite oneness

What's the difference?

- God said that man and wife would be one (echad) flesh: Gen. 2:24
- The spies carried out of Canaan a single (echad) large cluster of grapes: Numb. 13:23
- Abraham was told to sacrifice his only (yachid) son, Isaac

The most famous Jewish prayer, the *Shema*, reveals God to be a composite unity in His being: *Shema, O Yisrael, Adonai Elohenu, Adonai echad* – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deut. 6:4-5)

- The Divine Name YHWH is used here.
- Notice the threefold recitation of the identity of God. The second name there is *Elohenu*, which means “our God,” which is in itself interesting.
- Most interesting is that Moses said God is *echad*, not *yachid*.
- Maimonides said Jews should confess the *yachid*, the absolute oneness of the God of Israel.

The word Elohim

The word Elohim is the plural of El, which means God.

- Let us make Man in our image – Gen. 1:26
- Let us go down and there confound their language – Gen. 11:7
- Whom shall I send and who will go for Us? – Isa. 6:8
- *Elohim* can be used as a *plural of majesty* or it can refer to God’s council of angels or even human judges. However, taking this to far would involve angels directly in the work of creating Man, who was made by a special act of God Himself. (Gen. 1:26) Man was made in God’s image.

4. The Old Testament shows different Persons of the Trinity acting or appearing together or being confused with one another.

Some passages show more than one Person existing or acting as God.

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” (Zech. 12:10)

In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them. (Isa. 63:9-10)

“Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me.” (Isa. 48:16)

5. The Incarnation of Christ.

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’” (Hebrews 10:5-7)

This quotation in Hebrews 10 is taken from Psalm 40. The writer quotes from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the OT, translated about 200 B.C. Here it shows the preincarnate Christ taking on a body when He came into the world.

The Incarnation is the doctrine that says that Jesus became man. Although he had always existed as God, Jesus took upon himself the nature of man, and so he became fully God and fully man. Theologians call this the **hypostatic union**.

- Jesus has not ceased to be man. He retains a human glorified body of the resurrection. *“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”* (Luke 24:39)
- Paul tells us in Philippians that Christ emptied himself and took the form of a servant. This does not mean that Christ emptied himself of his divine nature, but he laid aside the privileges of His divine nature.
- Jesus said things such as, *Before Abraham was I am.* (John 8:58) And He said, *I and my Father are one.* (John 10:30) However, we can still find Jesus saying that He was thirsty, and we can see him being weary.
- Jesus did not even minister or do his miracles using his Divine Power. See passages such as John 14:12 and Acts 10:38.

6. The Virgin Birth

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isa. 9:6-7)

A. What is the Virgin Birth?

The Virgin Birth is the doctrine that Jesus was born of a virgin. He had no human father; the Second Person of the Godhead took on flesh and was implanted within the womb of the Virgin Mary. *Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* (Isa. 7:14)

Virgin was translated in the Septuagint (200 BC) using a Greek word which can only mean one who has not had sexual relations: *parthenos*.

B. What was the mechanism of the Virgin Birth?

“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.” (Luke 1:35b)

C. False Ideas and Doctrines Related to the Virgin Birth

- The Supposedly Low State of Scientific Knowledge in Ancient Times
- The Immaculate Conception, 1854 AD (Luke 1:47; Rom. 3:23)
- The Perpetual Virginity of Mary (Matt. 1:25a, 13:55-56)
- Why do false Marian Doctrines develop?

D. Why did Christ have to come by a virgin birth?

1. A preincarnate Messiah (the Word of YHWH) must enter the world without the mechanism of human reproduction.
2. The Messiah must be a Second Adam for the human race. (1 Cor. 15:21-22)
3. Messiah needed to avoid the mortality that comes through human fatherhood.
4. Messiah needed to avoid the transmission of sin through human fatherhood.
5. God desired to glorify Christ and reduce the field of candidates for Messiah.

Any candidate for Messiah must avoid the Curse of Jeconiah. Jeconiah (also known as Coniah or Jehoiachin) was a wicked king whom God cursed.

24 “As I live,” says the LORD, “though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; 25 and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear—the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans. 26 So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die....

(30) “Thus says the LORD: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.’” (Jeremiah 22:24-26, 30)

- If Jesus draws His sonship literally from Joseph His claim to Messiahship would be invalidated by the Curse of Coniah.
- However, He is but a foster son to Joseph.
- Jesus is still a natural descendant of David through Mary.

E. Is the Virgin Birth really important?

If the Virgin Birth is not true, then:

- Mary was an adulteress and Jesus was illegitimate.
- Jesus was not God, but a mere man.
- Jesus was a sinner like us and so could never be a sacrifice for sins.

“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24)

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