Articles by John Martin

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The Genealogy Of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Feb 1955)

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As an introduction to our study, I think it is important to consider the usage of the word, “Generation” as it occurs in Scripture. The ordinary use conveys the thought of origin, an account of one’s ancestors, but it does not mean this in every instance.

It occurs first in Genesis 2:4, “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth.” (See also chapters 6:9, 10:1, 11:27; 25:12, 36:1, 36:9, 37:2.) In many cases the thought intended is not so much that of “origin,” as it is that of “development,” not a retracing, but an introduction, and I am inclined to believe it is in this manner used of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As God, He has no origin, but as King of Israel it was necessary to establish for Him a link with the lineage of David; that is why Matthew’s Gospel was written. In this Gospel, His genealogy is not only traced to reveal His unchallenged right to the throne of David, but also to emphasize the subsequent development of all that such a relationship means.

In this unique relationship, Christ is presented as the Son of David, and heir to David’s throne; for so it was necessary that Israel’s King be born. Yet we must never forget that He was also the Son of Abraham, and so in Him a Saviour was born. There converges in this remarkable Person, the Davidic covenant of Kingship and the Abrahamic covenant of Promise. See Gal. 3:8-14.

Before we trace this further, may I draw your attention to a rather significant phrase, which occurs only twice in the Bible. In Genesis 5:1, “This is the book of the generations of Adam,” while in Matthew, the similar one appears, “The book of the generations of Jesus Christ.” All other references commence differently; as for example, “These are the generations of.” Now what is the meaning of this significant phrase? Both in the Book of Genesis and in the Gospel according to Matthew, we have the record of the headship of the human race; the former contains the record of Adam’s fallen posterity; the latter that of all who are linked to Christ through sovereign grace. It is interesting to note that Paul in His Corinthian letter speaks of “The First Adam,” and “The Last Adam,” (1 Cor. 15:45). He does not mention the Second Adam as is sometimes incorrectly stated. There never will be another federal head; Christ is “The Last Adam,” and we all stand related either to the “First Adam” in sin, or to the “Last Adam” in grace.

Now to trace this subject may I direct your attention to some Old Testament Scriptures. In 1Chron. 17:11-13, David the king had communicated to Nathan the prophet his desire to build a house for the ark of the covenant, but the word of the Lord came to Nathan telling him to go and to instruct David that he was not to build such a house for the ark of the covenant to dwell in, “And it shall come to pass that when thy days shall be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers that I will raise up thy seed after thee … he shall build Me an house and I will establish his throne for ever.” It is clear, therefore, that David was not to be the actual builder, but instead the builder was to be one of David’s posterity. David accepted all this with humility; listen to

his language in 1Chron. 17:16-17, “And David the king came and sat before the Lord and said, who am I and what is mine house that Thou hast brought me hitherto? and yet this was a small thing in Thine eyes, O God, for Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast regarded Me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God.” This prophecy was not to have it’s fulfillment in David, nor his son Solomon, but rather in “A man of High Degree,” or as Horsley translates it, “The Man From Above.”

Let us now look at 2 Sam. 7:14, “I will be his Father and He shall be My son… if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men.” Surely as it appears, such language could not be applied to God’s beloved Son! Horsley, however, translates this passage, “I will be His Father and He shall be My Son, and when iniquity is laid upon Him, I will chastise Him.” Here is the identification of God’s true King, He was to be related to God as Son, and He was to have iniquity laid upon Him, for which He was to be chastened by God.

The genealogies in Matthew and Luke are recorded for the purpose of proving, that legally, Jesus, and not Solomon, was David’s Son and Heir to his throne. Matthew traces the relationship from Abraham through David (Note, David the king, Vs. 6), and proves that Joseph, who was the husband of Mary, of whom Christ was born, was a descendant of David through the house of Solomon. The Gospel of Luke proves that Mary is also a descendant of David, but not through the house of Solomon, but through the house of Nathan, Solomon’s older brother. Solomon’s line produced Joseph, and Nathan’s line produced Mary.

Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, (Isa. 7:14). Yet as the Son of a Virgin alone He could have no legal right to the throne; it was, therefore, necessary that Mary be linked to one who had a perfect unchallenged right to the throne of David. Thus, Christ at His birth became the legal descendant and Heir of David through Joseph, but never Joseph's son. Had He been the Son of Joseph, according to the flesh, He could never have been the Saviour of the world. Conversely, had He been the Son of Mary, without he being legally the wife of a son of David, the Jews would have been just in rejecting His claims to Kingship.

Matthew's account does not suggest that Joseph begat Jesus, but states only that he was the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus; consequently, the child born to Mary is the legal Heir to the throne of David. Christ, in legal relationship was the Son of Joseph; in human relationship, the Son of Mary; in divine relationship, the Son of God.

In Matthew 1:11, we are introduced to Jechonias whose history shows him to be under the curse of God. None of his sons ever possessed the throne. (See Jer. 22:30; 36:27-32.). If Jesus had been merely the son of Joseph, He would have inherited this curse. On the other hand the line of Nathan was not the royal line. There was a curse upon the line through Jechonias, but a lack of royalty in the line of Nathan; hence, in the purposes of grace, Mary became legally the wife of Joseph, and before they came together, she was with child by the Holy Spirit. Finally, because Mary was married to this one who had a perfect unchallenged right to the throne of Israel, the child born to her was the legal descendant

and Heir of David through Joseph; but, never, never Joseph’s Son. Behold, the wisdom of God!

Guilt and Pardon (Nov 1956)

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“‘Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

—Luke 23:34

These words spoken by our Lord when He was crucified demonstrate the magnanimous grace of God to a guilty world then. When? The previous verse tells us that it was, “When they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him.” It was then, precisely at the moment when man was executing his most fiendish act, driving nails into His hands and feet, that Jesus cried, “Father, forgive them.” The wanton and relentless hatred of man to God is met by the boundless and causeless love of God to man. Stupendous thought! Our Lord’s prayer for His enemies was for their forgiveness.

What is forgiveness? The Bible reveals two aspects of this truth, judicial and experimental.

From the God-ward side, sin has been dealt with according to the Divine estimate of what it is. However, it is not only a matter for Divine judgment; it is also a matter for self-judgment that the believer is to exercise in relation to his life and testimony. Observe how man looks at sin. From a moral standpoint, a man is innocent until he is proved guilty, but God reverses that, and in His reckoning, a man is guilty until he is proved innocent. He is not a thief because he steals, but he steals because he is a thief.

In judicial circles, if a man steals three dollars, he is charged with petty larceny. Again the religious world classifies sin as original, venial, mortal, etc. In God's sight however, sin is not so much a condition as it is an attitude, and it is one of rebellion against the throne of God.

Of course, while this is all true that all men are alike sinners; it is equally true that all men are not sinners alike. Comparitively speaking, some are fifty pence debtors while others are five hundred pence debtors, but our absolute amount of debt is like the one who owed his master ten thousand talents.

Sin raised a problem to which God alone had the answer. How could God justify the sinner without justifying his sin? How could He save him from the legal penalty of his sin and yet save Himself from complicity and compromise with his guilt? Only the wisdom and love of God were equal to give the answer. The wisdom and love of God provided it. A vicarious death was necessary to enable (not induce) Him to forgive sin without injustice to Himself or the sinner.

The pardon that God provides for the sinner must at the same time be full, free, and forever.

It Must Be Full

To be full it must embrace all sin; not one sin can remain unforgiven. The recipient of a Divine pardon must be able to sing truthfully:

"My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought;

My sin, not in part, but the whole

Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more.

Blessed hope! Blessed rest of my soul!”

Nehemiah spoke of God as One “ready to pardon” (Chap. 9:17). Jeremiah spoke of a day when God would pardon all the iniquities of Judah and Israel; adding, “And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the earth which shall hear all the good that I do unto them” (Chap. 33:9). The pardon must not only be full, but

It Must Be Free

The Bible opposes any idea of payment being offered to God for His mercy, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4-5). This is a mortal blow to all human merit. Salvation comes to each one not on the ground of creature merit, but on the basis of sovereign grace alone.

It Must Be Forever

The pardon is not only full and free, but it is, glorious truth, forever. With God it could not be otherwise. Jeremiah describes a search that was made for the sins of Judah and for the iniquities of Israel, but the result given was they could not be found (Jer. 50:20-21). The same prophet says, “Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back” (38:17). The act of turning one’s back upon a person indicates a desire to have nothing more to do with such an one, and so God wants no more to do with the believing sinner’s sin. The prophet Micah describes them as being “cast into the depths of the sea” (Chap. 7:19). Again, an apostle writes of them quoting a saying

of the Lord, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17). Does that mean that God has forgotten our sins? No. To forget indicates a lapse of memory, but to remember no more is a judicial act of obliteration. What security! “Behind His back,” suggests that they are out of sight; “In the depth of the sea,” that they are out of reach; “Remember no more,” that they are out of mind. Samuel Davies expressed this truth in his immortal hymn:

“Such dire offences to forgive,

Such guilty, daring, worms to spare;

This is Thy grand prerogative,

And in this glory none shall share.

Who is a pardoning God like Thee,

Or Who has grace so rich, so free ?”

“In wonder lost with trembling joy,

We take the pardon of our God,

Pardon for sins of deepest dye,

Pardon that’s sealed with Jesus’ blood.

Who is a pardoning God like Thee,

Or Who has grace so rich and free ?”

Two thousand years ago a storm of unmitigated judgment broke upon the head of Christ, but He is beyond that now. Yes, two thousand years beyond it, and because of this we read, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

The Virgin Birth of Jesus (Part 1) (Nov 1958)

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Part One

John Martin

John Martin, although a busy man in the American Steel Industry, conducts a weekly Bible Class in Pittsburgh. He has forwarded the studies in the Virgin Birth of Christ used in that class, to the readers of Food for the Flock. We believe that they will be both profitable and thought provoking. —Ed.

There are interpretations of Scripture about which we may legitimately disagree without affecting in any way the basic truths of the Christian faith. However, if fundamental truths are the issues, there MUST not be any disagreement. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps. 11:3).

The importance of a truth is evidenced by the zeal with which it is attacked; usually, men do not fight strenuously about doctrines which have no strategic value. I have observed that most writers who deny the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus, do so because of its supernatural element. It is not surprising to learn that they also refuse to recognize the supernatural element throughout the life of Christ; with bold effrontery, they preach a Saviour who is no more supernatural than they.

Was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of a virgin supernaturally, or was He born by the same human agency as we? The question will be considered under

three headings: the prophecies of His birth; the narratives of His birth; and the doctrine of His birth. The latter two will be covered in a subsequent article.

Prophecies of His Birth

The first reference is found in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” Here is a statement that clearly reveals the supernatural element in the conception of our Lord.

Note those two important words, “her seed”, an expression which is consistent with the view that although Messiah was to be born of a woman in a natural way, His conception was to be supernatural; that is, without the agency of a human father.

This view is further confirmed by the Apostle Paul in his Galatian letter: “when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman” (Gal.4:4), thus proving that even before He was “made of a woman”, Jesus could be described as the Son of God; an indication that His birth was not the origin of His personality, but only its entrance into human life.

Other Scriptures suggest the same view; for example, “the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man” (Jer. 31:22). Here is a striking prophecy that in a new and extraordinary way never known before, a woman was to enclose in her body a man-child. Since Scripture records the virgin birth of no child other than Jesus, it is quite likely that Jeremiah was foretelling the virgin birth of our Lord.

Isaiah uttered a similar prophecy when he related an incident full of significance. The house of David was discouraged, and king Ahaz continued in unbelief. The Lord suggested that he ask a sign, but Ahaz refused, saying, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord (Isa. 7:12), and so the Lord told him that He would give him a sign: “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

Matthew interpreted this prophecy as a reference not only to a sign for Ahaz in his day, but also to the virgin birth of Jesus several centuries after the death of Ahaz (Matt. 1:23).

Luke recorded the virgin birth of Jesus as a sign unto the shepherds, “this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Lk. 2:12), but with reference to God’s word to Ahaz, this great event was also a historic sign that nationally the house of David would never perish. Thus the birth of Christ was both a miracle necessary for the redemption of mankind, and also a sign indicative of the preservation of Israel.

The Virgin Birth of Jesus (Part 2) (Dec 1958)

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Part Two

John Martin

Only Matthew and Luke recorded the historical facts of the virgin birth of Jesus. One might wonder why Mark and John did not record this miracle since it is so important to the Christian faith.

On the one hand, Matthew portrayed Christ as a King, the Son of David; and Luke portrayed Him as the Son of Man. In both of these Gospels, it was necessary to mention His birth as a detail essential to a proper understanding of these respective presentations of His person.

Mark wrote, on the other hand, of Christ as the Servant, and John wrote of Him as the Son of God. In neither case was it necessary to mention His virgin birth.

Some of the Epistles contain veiled references to the virgin birth, leading one to believe that the writers had this thought in mind as they wrote.

Certainly, there are ample grounds for believing that Mark and John accepted the doctrine of the virgin birth of our Holy Lord.

Let us examine two of their statements. The first one from Mark, “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?” (Mark 6:3). Why did Mark not say, “The son of Joseph”? Surely the omission of Joseph’s name is not

accidental; the Holy Spirit guided the writer, and thus Mark affirmed his faith in the virgin birth of Christ. What an intimation of the verbal inspiration of the Bible!

In the prologue to the Gospel that bears his name, John asserts, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). In his book, “The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” Dr. Burney argues that the passage in verse 13 should read, “Who was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” A simple paraphrasing of this passage might help us to understand its import, “But as many as received Him, to all these God gave the right to become sons of His, even to them who believed in the name of Him Who was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” If this is the correct rendering (and it may well be), then John also bore testimony to the fact that Jesus was born of the virgin.

The Narrative

In his account of the event, Matthew wrote that “Jacob begat Joseph,” but he did not add that Joseph begat Jesus (Matt. 1:16), as we might have expected. The birth of this wonderful child was linked with His virgin mother, and not at all with Joseph. “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” (Matt. 1:18).

Surely, words could not be plainer; Joseph had nothing to do with the conception of our Lord.

The birth of John the Baptist can be contrasted with that of the Lord Jesus. “But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son” (Luke 1:13). The pronoun “thee” is significantly omitted in the reference to the birth of Jesus: “A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son” (Matt. 1:23).

At the birth of John, Zacharias the father praised God (Luke 1:64), but when Jesus was born, it was Mary the mother who praised God (Luke 1:46).

Both of these births were supernatural. In the case of John this is seen in the age of the mother; in the case of Jesus this is seen in the absence of a father, surely a much greater miracle.

Matthew records another very interesting fact in his Gospel. “The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt” (2:13).

Why did the angel not say, “Arise take your wife and child, and flee into Egypt.” Note the accuracy of Holy Scripture, “The young child and His mother.” Unique circumstances call for unique phraseology!

According to the course of nature, neither the birth of John nor that of Jesus was humanly possible; human reason would say, “How can these things be?” However, when we take God into account, we realize that with Him, all things are possible. He is not restricted by His own laws; He possesses the power and the right to operate in a manner different from that with which we are naturally acquainted; it is perfectly congruous with His character to give life contrary to the usually

observed course of nature, when it is His pleasure so to do.

The Doctrine

The doctrine of the virgin birth is the scriptural statement that our Lord was conceived and born of the virgin Mary without the agency of a human father, and that His birth was not the origin of His personality, but only the means by which it entered into the conditions of human life.

The Holy Scriptures reveal that there are four different ways through which men have entered into this world. First, by the agency of neither man nor woman, as in the case of Adam who was created directly by God. Second, by the agency of a man without a woman, as in the case of Eve who was taken out of the side of Adam. Third, by the agency of both a man and a woman, as in the natural method of procreation. Finally, by the agency of a woman without a man, as in the case of the Lord Jesus.

What is essential is revealed, but what is not revealed is not essential. The conception of Jesus took place in Nazareth, before the time that Joseph and Mary were married, but the birth took place in Bethlehem after they had been married; consequently, the Lord Jesus was born in wedlock. Now, since Joseph was of the lineage of David, Mary's child became the legal descendant and heir of David through Joseph, but never was He Joseph's son. Christ in His human relationship was the Son of Mary; in His legal relationship, the Son of David, and in His divine relationship, the Son of God.

Let it also be understood that the conception of Jesus by Mary was not only supernatural and miraculous, but it

was also immaculate. Now, in speaking of the "immaculate conception," it should be understood that the word "immaculate" appertains to Christ, and not to Mary. There was neither trace nor taint of sin in the perfect nature of our Saviour.

The atoning death of Christ for sin could not have taken place apart from His incarnation, and His incarnation is made possible through the virgin birth; that miracle brings it nearer to the compass of our understanding. By His incarnation the Lord brought God to man in order that through His vicarious death, He might bring man to God.

The cross of Christ is the centre of all the purposes of God, but the incarnation of Christ is the dividing point of time. That wonderful event changed the whole course of the ages from "Anno-Mundi" (the year of the earth) to "Anno-Domini" (the year of our Lord). Well might we cry as the Apostle Paul wrote, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16).

Why is this doctrine emphasized? If Jesus was born of human parents in the natural manner, it is difficult, if not impossible, to see how His nature and life could have been perfectly virtuous; His death, vicarious; and His resurrection, real and therefore victorious.

Let us hold inviolate at all times the glorious truth that Jesus was born of a virgin, without sin, the immaculate Son of God. To deny this doctrine is to deny the plain statements of Scripture; to do neither is to play into the hands of those who would deny all of the fundamental truths concerning the person and work of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be glory throughout all ages, for ever and ever. Amen.

Thou Art Worthy (July 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 7, July 1961.

In the burnt offering, there were two details of great importance; first, it was to be willingly offered; second, it was to be accepted (Lev. 1:3-4). From the human side, whatever was given to God had to be by the offerer's own voluntary will; from the divine side, it had to be accepted. The offerer, therefore, had to be willing, and the offering had to be worthy to be accepted by God. As an illustration of this, let us briefly observe the lives of, perhaps, two of the greatest men who ever lived, Moses and Paul. The first of these was the greatest prophet; and the second, the greatest apostle. Both of these men were Hebrews (Ex. 2:11. Phil. 3:5); both were well educated (Ex. 2:11. Acts 22:3); both were great sinners in their own estimation (Ex. 2:13. 2 Cor. 11:23); both had a revelation of God (Ex. 19:20. 2 Cor. 12:2-4); both received a great message (Ex. 33:11. 1 Cor. 11:23); both had a great desire, Moses desired to know God (Ex. 33:13), and Paul desired to know Christ (Phil. 3:10).

It is interesting to notice that our Lord Jesus blended both these desires in His high-priestly prayer (John 17:3): "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God (the desire of Moses), and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent (the desire of Paul.

Each of these two men had a passion for the blessing of others, and this passion led them to utter memorable words of warm devotion. Even, although under much provocation, Moses pled for Israel, saying, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin —;

and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Ex. 32:32). This was the language of a man of high distinction, not of high distinction because God buried him and Satan contended with the arch-angel over his body, but of high distinction because of his place in the purposes of God. So great was this man, that of all the many human names only that of Moses will remain throughout Eternity. Of the redeemed we read, "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3). What a high honour for the meekest man of all the earth to have his name associated with that of the Lamb forever!

What gracious self-denial was seen in Moses! He was willing to be blotted out of God's book if the Lord would not forgive Israel's sin. He was willing to die for the nation that it perish not.

With no less passion did Paul the servant of Christ write, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2-3). Both of these men were willing to die for their own people, but great as they were, they were not worthy.

In the burnt offering the victim had to be worthy; it had to be accepted, and its physical worthiness determined whether or not the Lord would receive it. Moses and Paul were willing, but neither was worthy, and that is the reason why Christ had to become incarnate. Our Lord Jesus was willing (John 10:17-18), and, bless His Name, He was worthy. It was who He was, in all the intrinsic value and worth of His glorious person, that gave virtue to what He did on Calvary.

After the triumph of His cross, the gates of Heaven were lifted up, and the everlasting doors swung wide open to let the King of Glory enter. The Apostle John saw in vision the glorious future. “The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:10-11).

Later, John adds another description which states that there were “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:11-12).

Ah! Christ was willing to die for the people, but of all the great ones of earth, He alone was the only One worthy. That is why we ought to love Him.

“Come let us sing the song of songs;

The saints in Heaven began the strain.

The worship which to Christ belongs,

Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain.

To Him, enthroned by filial right,

All power in Heaven and Earth proclaim:

Honour and majesty and might,

Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain.”