

**Apologetic Aspects of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ**  
John Wilkinson  
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**A Brief Book Summary from TGC**  
By Benjamin Montoya

### Summary

The doctrine of the incarnation of the person of Jesus is one of the central affirmations of the Christian faith. Part of what has been traditionally understood of the doctrine of incarnation is the doctrine of the virgin birth. But, what are we to make of the virgin birth? It is something that is also central to the faith? This short article will consider what is favorable to this doctrine, difficulties posed to this doctrine, consequence of denying it, and consequences of accepting it.

There are at least six conditions that would give reason to accept this doctrine.

1. The very fact that the doctrine *exists* at all gives reason for accepting it. That there was something abnormal about his birth is a strong *a posteriori* argument for its basis; if he had been born naturally by two parents, then nothing would be mentioned about it.
2. The *character* of the nativity narratives provides cause for believing in the doctrine because of the Jewish atmosphere of the narratives themselves. There are two accounts in the Gospels. Each of these accounts arose independently of the other; they are also written with a level of sobriety and restraint that would give the readers every reason to trust them.
3. The rest of the NT is *silent* about the doctrine. Had this teaching been invented, there might be more reason for other writers to touch on it further to argue for it. Instead, they take it for granted.
4. The early Church *universally accepted* this doctrine. There is complete acceptance without any hints of any other kind of explanation of the birth of Jesus. Even Christians who were put to death still maintained this doctrine in their writings.
5. Alternative explanations of the origins of the Virgin birth have *failed* to explain its presence in the Bible. Some have appealed to pagan mythology as a way to make sense of it, but the parallels simply cannot account for it.
6. This doctrine has *congruity* with other doctrines. “Strong grounds can be adduced for accepting the belief as in complete harmony with the Christian thought of Jesus, as dovetailing into the rest of our conviction naturally and simply.”

That said, this article would probably not exist nor include the reference to “Apologetic Aspects” if no one questioned this doctrine or if it did not pose difficulties. There are at least seven difficulties:

1. Some doubt the *integrity* of the nativity narratives arguing that someone added the narrative of the Virgin birth. There is no textual-critical support of this position, but some scholars have still tried to advance this argument.

2. The *abnormal character* of the event has posed problems for the modern mind with its emphasis on what is natural to the exclusion of the supernatural. This point does not pose a serious problem for the narrative itself. The Bible makes plenty of room for the supernatural even if it poses problems for naturalistic mindset.
3. The *silence* of the rest of the NT has been used as an argument against it. Certainly, other writers mention the incarnation, but if the doctrine of the Virgin birth actually happened, then one might expect more references. But, the previous section already addressed this point.
4. The NT usage of terms of *family relationship* to relation to Jesus seems to pose a problem for a Virgin birth. If Jesus had brothers and sisters, then it would seem natural for him to have had a normal birth. Furthermore, the NT refers to Jesus as the son of Joseph. When understood in connection with the Virgin birth, we see that Joseph was the foster-father to Jesus.
5. The *alleged ignorance* of Joseph and Mary about the Virgin birth is put forward as a point against the doctrine. Some have maintained that Joseph and Mary showed ignorance of the Virgin birth when they met with the aged Simeon and then marveled at what he had to say. This reading, however, does not take into account when Jesus says he must be about his Father's business.
6. The *genealogies* of Jesus show Joseph to be the father of Jesus. But, given the Jewish view of the adoption, Jesus would have been considered a full and legitimate son of Joseph.
7. The *perfect* humanity of Jesus has led some people to question the Virgin birth because it seems to make him less human. But, this point is not so much a questioning of the Virgin birth as much as it is of the incarnation itself.

If we deny this position, there are several consequences:

1. It brings an easy resolution to the scientific difficulty of this doctrine. There is no need to argue for the supernatural nature any longer.
2. The humanity of Jesus is safeguarded. He would indeed be fully human with a natural birth.

But, part of the consequences involves real loss:

1. We lose trust in the primitive gospel tradition.
2. We deny the historicity of the Virgin birth as an explanation of the abnormality of the conception of Jesus.
3. It becomes difficult to preserve the deity and sinlessness of Jesus if we deny this doctrine.
4. We lose a clear definition of the doctrine of the incarnation. The Virgin birth is essential to Jesus, already being fully God, becoming also fully man.

There are consequences of accepting this doctrine:

1. We underline the trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts.
2. We have a reasonable explanation of the birth of Christ.
3. We can make sense of the Incarnation. Now, this doctrine certainly still has mystery. But, the Virgin birth makes it more readily understandable.
4. We notice the supernatural element in the Gospel record and in the Christian faith. Without the supernatural, the Christian faith cannot exist.

Finally, “we conclude that a belief in the historicity of the Virgin birth while it may not be part of what the Church demands of a man as saving faith, is nevertheless a part of the whole sum of Christian doctrine and an integral part of the theology of the New Testament.” To do away with this doctrine has serious consequences. But, to maintain it means to keep the Christian faith that is tied to the supernatural Virgin birth of Jesus.