

Getting to Know Your Bible

Did the virgin birth actually happen?

Like most of the supernatural elements in the Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus has received much scrutiny and doubt as to its possibility.

Arguments against the virgin birth tend to come from two angles:

1. A virgin birth is biologically impossible and so it did not happen.
2. The virgin birth is not mentioned in the rest of the New Testament, and so it was a later addition to the texts of Matthew and Luke most likely from outside of Judaism as people reflected on the life of Jesus. In short, the virgin birth was not a part of the initial, original oral tradition of Jesus.

A number of different issues, however, can be brought up against these arguments that would point one to a reasonable acceptance of the virgin birth. First, it can be noted that the New Testament is silent in general about much of Christ's life, and so an absence of the virgin birth elsewhere would not be too surprising. Second, there would be little reason for the church to create a virgin birth story, especially at the early stages of the movement- why make the Gospel of Jesus harder to accept? This would also explain why the virgin birth was not emphasized in early preaching (i.e.- Acts) - it would be a non-essential to the message of Jesus. The birth's absence in the Epistles is easily understood once the situational, specific contexts of the writings are accepted.

While there are other arguments that could be brought up (see below for resources), it must be noted that the argument boils down to an issue of worldview- does an open universe exist where a Supreme Being can alter natural law and produce the miraculous? It is clear that the text points clearly to a virgin birth, and that the text is reliable. What is left is the challenge of changing one's worldview.

Source used:

Bock, Darrell L. *Luke 1.1-9.50*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.
Erickson, Millard J. *Systematic Theology*, 2 ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.

Best Sources:

Marshall, I.H. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
Machen, J.G. *The Virgin Birth*. New York: Harper, 1930. Reprinted by Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965.

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