

# The myth of the “Virgin birth”

## Preface:

We of the Assembly of True Israel, Cascade, believe that only the Hebrew Bible contains the preserved record, the reliable history, the foundational and infallible authoritative instructions from [YHWH](#) (Yahweh) the Almighty Sovereign Creator Power Life-Force Essence of the Hebrew Bible. His message was then delivered through His inspired prophets to His elect and chosen people, the ancient Israelites. The Hebrew Bible has been preserved by Him through the ages to provide ancient Israel and all True Israelites today with the same knowledge of His attributes, understanding, wisdom, and truth, (Psalm 119:97-104; Deut. 6:4-9, 8:3). Those who choose to trust in Him; who will live in accordance with His will; who desire to demonstrate faithfulness, live righteously; keep His seventh day Sabbath and the 10 Commandments (the original Covenant with ancient Israel) receive His protection, and become part of His heavenly household. Upon death they will gain life everlasting, (II Sam. 22:31+; Prov. 30:5, Isa. 56).

A sound historical study will prove that most of the content in the current Greek New Testament (NT) was compiled by the Constantine Roman Catholic Church in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE. The Greek NT began from a collection of disjointed First Century letters gathered by a Greek tycoon by the name of Marcion who had a hatred toward First Century Talmudic Phariseism, that had become an exclusive religion of First Century Yahudi, controlled by traditions rather than The Hebrew Bible for the Israelites. Over time, the collection was acquired by the Roman Church and their Emperor Constantine, who saw it as a seed belief that could be beneficial to unify various religious groups throughout his Empire. Over time Constantine’s appointed priests modified the disjointed collection of letters into an acceptable Roman State Religion and Catholicism was born. Eventually Catholicism became known as Christianity.

The religion of Christianity was then forced upon the then entire Roman Empire (under threat of death to those rejecting it). Many portions of the newly acceptable Greek writings have been altered and additions have been added by transcribers to support strongly held pagan beliefs under the influence of the Emperor Constantine and his cohorts. During that time and even up to today, the collection has been re-written many times through translation from Aramaic, into Greek, then into Latin and into English, and by deliberate mistranslation. Many First Century documents were also been hidden or destroyed by the Roman Church and kept from the people if they did not support their canon. The Catholic Church that developed under Constantine has in effect personified many historical but ancient pagan gods and their religious concepts and blended them into the one acceptable god-man personage of the prophet Yahshua (Jesus) of the Greek NT. In the First Century, the original Yahwism (Israelism) of the Hebrew Bible developed into corrupted Talmudic Phariseism, a religion were traditions of men and their sages superceded what the Hebrew Bible taught through its inspired prophets, now known as Judaism.

Many Conservative Christians who study the Bible, do with the belief that the Bible is inerrant (free of original document errors), and whose authors were all inspired by Yahweh. Although this is what they have been told to believe, it is completely false. To blindly believe this claim without solid evidence is very naive, and has led to many false conclusions within Christianity, since there is a lot of evidence to prove the “without error claim to be completely false. However, some Hebrew Bible Prophets and authors of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts do make the claim they wrote as “inspired” by YHWH, but none of the authors of the Greek Bible make any such claim. Because of the many errors in the Greek NT, it should never be used to establish a foundation for any one’s religious belief.

## The myth of the virgin Birth

The virgin birth has become a central tenet of Christianity. For over two thousand years Christians have blindly accepted Jesus'<sup>1</sup> virgin birth without realizing that this comes from the Roman and Greek mythology of the existence of "demigods."<sup>2</sup> (The discussion of the "demigods" will follow under that title in this document.)

During the celebration of Christmas, familiar images are recalled in hymns about the birth of Jesus. In the popular mind, the appearance of herald angels, shepherds abiding in the fields, the star of Bethlehem, the Virgin Mary giving birth in a stable, and the adoration of the Magi, have all been melded into the one Christmas story. In reality, there are in the gospels, two distinct and at times contradictory stories of Jesus' birth. A careful reading of the Bible will reveal that much about this celebrated birth is pure myth.

Dating December 25 as the birthday of Jesus, is known to have gained popularity only by the mid-fourth century in order that Christians could have an alternative to a popular pagan festival at this time of year. December 25 was the winter solstice according to the old Julian calendar, and it was on that day that Mithraism, a chief rival religion to Christianity, celebrated the birth of their god, Mithra. It is unlikely that we will ever know exactly the year and month when Jesus was born (scholars estimate sometime between 12 and 4 BCE) or the real circumstances surrounding his nativity. We can, however with diligence, separate historical facts from literary fictions.

The doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus, so central to the traditional Christmas story, was not part of the teaching of the first Christians, whom it should be remembered, also remained within the "Israelite faith" (Luke 24:52-53). The apostle Paul makes no reference to the virgin conception by the mother of Jesus when speaking of Jesus' origins and divinity. Paul's epistles were written during the 50's CE, and predate all of the four gospels. Although Paul never met Jesus (who died about 30 CE) he did personally know James, the brother of Jesus. Yet despite this eye-witness link to Jesus, Paul apparently knows nothing of the virgin birth, for he states only that Jesus was "*born of a woman*" (Galatians 4:4) and was "*descended from David, according to the flesh*" (Romans 1:3), therefore he was obviously implying a normal birth.

The earliest written gospel is the one "called"<sup>3</sup> Mark, which was likely composed in the early 70's CE in southern Syria. Mark does not consider the birth of Jesus worth mentioning. The silence of the earliest Yahudi-Christian authors about the miraculous birth of Jesus seems strange, given that they were trying to convince their readers that Jesus was divine. This silence raises doubts about the authenticity of the later nativity stories from the gospels with which Christians are so familiar.

The gospel called John, likely written in northern Syria sometime in the first decade of the second century, asserts that Jesus existed from the beginning of creation. John (it is believed) presents Jesus as the pre-existing eternal Word, and that Jesus was begotten of the Father and made human at a particular point in time (John 1:1-14). This gospel also claims that Jesus was the son of Joseph (John 1:45) and chooses to ignore or reject the birth stories in the earlier writings of the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Only the gospels of Matthew and Luke refer to the biological miracle of a virgin woman being made pregnant by an act of Almighty, and giving birth to a baby boy. Matthew was likely written in the Galilee

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus is a common but manufactured name, substituted for the Hebrew name "Yahshua" meaning *Yahweh is Savior*.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Fogelman – <http://www.jdstone.org>

<sup>3</sup> We used the word "called" because no one really knows who wrote this gospel, or the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. Although recognized by these names, the Christian Gospels were all written by unknown authors.

-- now called northern Palestine -- sometime in the late 80's or early 90's, and Luke in Asia Minor sometime during the late 90's, both about a century after this birth.

## **Just how reliable are the Matthew and Luke birth narratives?**

For many Christians, to question the description of Jesus' birth as related in the Bible is unthinkable. They believe that the Bible is the "*word of Almighty*", an infallible record of the Almighty's influence on his creation, and therefore is to be taken at face value. However, a careful study of the nativity narratives of Matthew and Luke indicate that the supposedly unerring "word of Almighty" is full of contradictions, errors and invented passages. The most plausible conclusion is that the familiar Christmas stories in Matthew and Luke are religious myths, awkwardly grafted onto an earlier non-miraculous tradition.

They appear to be legends recorded by later Yahudi-Christian apologists who were attempting to explain the origins of a man whom they considered divine. In this sense, the authors employed the familiar Yahudi practice of the time known as "*midrash*" to illustrate and prove their points; that is to say, they liberally interpreted and expanded on texts and prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures. The miraculous birth stories also served other purposes, namely, to rebut the contemporary inferences about the illegitimate birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:18-19, Mark 6:3, John 8:41) and to counter charges that he was possessed by the devil, rather than the spirit.

One of the first examples of things not ringing true can be found in the attempts by the authors of Matthew and Luke to trace the ancestry of Jesus back to the Israelite King David. It was from the royal house of David that the messiah was expected. However, upon close examination, the tables of descent in these gospels become transparently artificial, with many errors and downright contradictions. For example, the two gospels cannot agree on the lineage of Joseph, the father of Jesus. Matthew has 28 generations between David and Jesus, while Luke has 41 for the same period of about 1,000 years. In Matthew's gospel, Joseph's father (i.e. Jesus' grandfather) is said to be Jacob, while in Luke it is claimed that he is Heli. They cannot both be right, so one or both must be wrong.

The claims in the early chapters of Matthew and Luke that Jesus was of royal lineage are further weakened by the fact that elsewhere in all four gospels, there is no indication during the ministry of Jesus that he and his father were of noble descent. Rather, he appears as a man of humble background from an obscure rural village in Galilee. Furthermore, according to Mark, Jesus himself appears to reject the belief that messiah-ship was dependent on Davidic descent (Mark 12:35-37).

Matthew claims that the birth of Jesus occurred during the reign of Herod the Great of Judea, a puppet king of the Romans, whom we know died in 4 BCE. Luke also tells us that Jesus' birth happened during Herod's reign. Luke even adds what appears to be detailed and historical evidence of the period. He writes that Jesus was born during a census or registration of the populace ordered by emperor Augustus at the time that Quirinius (Cyrenius) was Roman governor of Syria (Luke 2:1-3). In reality, this has to be a fabrication because Quirinius was not governor of Syria and Judea during Herod's kingship. Direct Roman rule over the province of Judea, where Bethlehem was located, was not established until 6 CE. In other words, ten years separated the rule of Quirinius from Herod.

If the census did take place, it was in the year 6 CE, long after Herod's death. Therefore, Matthew's stories of the Wise Men's visit to Herod and the Christ child, and Herod's massacre of the innocents which caused the holy family to flee to Egypt, are all historically impossible. Moreover, it should be noted that Luke also got his facts wrong about the census of Augustus. Such an imperial census would only apply to Roman citizens of the empire, not to Joseph, a Galilean who was not under direct Roman rule.

As for the hometown of Jesus' parents, neither gospel can agree where it was. Matthew has them residing in Bethlehem in Judea, while Luke says they lived in Nazareth in Galilee. Incredibly, Luke has Joseph take his wife Mary (in the last stages of her pregnancy), on an arduous four day journey by foot or animal to Bethlehem because of the census. This assumes that the "*census*" (i.e. a registration which was to assist in levying a poll or a property tax) was conducted in a most peculiar way. According to Luke, illiterate peasants had to somehow trace their tribal and family heritage back to their ancestral birthplace, and then to report there for registration. The confusion and mass movement of population this would entail was, in fact, contrary to the sensible Roman practice of registering men (women had no political or property rights) for the head tax at their current dwelling place or the chief town of the local taxation district.

It was important, however, for the authors of both these gospels, that Jesus be born in Bethlehem because it was the city of David from where, it was prophesied, Israel's ruler would come (Micah 5:2). Even so, John's gospel, contrary to Matthew and Luke, relates the common knowledge that Jesus was not born in Bethlehem, and that he was not a descendant of David (John 7:41-42).

The star of Bethlehem is also most likely a fabrication, consistent with legends of the ancient world that had heavenly events generally portend the births of great men. In first century Judea there was no concept of astronomy and natural law as we know it. In reality, as anyone who looks up in the nighttime sky can verify, no star high in the heavens can shine only on a particular town, let alone on a specific house as the Bible claims (Matt. 2:9-11). The Christmas star, rising in the east, moving west to Jerusalem, and then taking a jog south to Bethlehem and finally remaining stationary, would have defied the laws of celestial motion.

It is also hard to believe that the star was needed as a guide to direct the astrologers from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, a mere eight kilometers away. For his motif of the star and the visit of the wise men from the east, Matthew appears to have been inspired by Isaiah who wrote:

*"nations shall march toward your light and their kings to your sunrise ... they shall come from Sheba; they shall bring gold and frankincense ...."* (Isaiah 60:1-9).

This passage also refers to camels, giving rise in later years to further embellishment and the familiar Christmas scene of the magi arriving on camels. However, camels are nowhere mentioned in the Greek NT's birth stories.

Surprisingly, Luke knows nothing about the star, or the magi, or the birth taking place in a house. He has the baby being laid in a manger, but note that there is no reference to a stable and animals surrounding the Christ-child. This scene is a product of later Christian imagination based on a text from Isaiah:

*"the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib (manger), but Israel, does not know, my people do not understand"* (Isaiah 1:3).

Luke's reference to the baby being wrapped in swaddling clothes is copied from the birth of Israel's famous King Solomon, son of David (Wisdom 7:4-5). This sign of identification sends an important message to Luke's Yahudi-Christian readers that Jesus was to be even greater than Israel's wisest king. Luke's gospel describes the visitors to the baby Jesus as shepherds, not the wise men. They hear of the birth from an extraterrestrial, which the Bible calls an angel.

There are other differences in the nativity story which serve to lessen its credibility. For example -- in an attempt to parallel the importance of Jesus' birth with that of Moses -- Matthew describes the massacre of the children of Bethlehem by King Herod as he attempts to kill the infant messiah. This extraordinary

event is not attested to by any secular source from the period, nor even referred to by Luke. Indeed, Luke has the family return peacefully to Nazareth after Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (Luke 2:22, 39). If the massacre did take place, it does not make sense that Herod's son later recalls nothing about Jesus or his importance (Matt. 14:1-2). Moreover, if Herod and all the people of Jerusalem knew of the messiah's birth (Matt. 2:3), why is it that later in Jesus' career, the same author claims that people had not heard of his miraculous origin and still questioned his miracles and his teachings (Matt. 13:54-56)?

It is also impossible to reconcile Luke's account of the family of the newborn Jesus soon returning to Nazareth in Galilee, with Matthew's assertion that the family of Jesus immediately fled to Egypt for several years to escape Herod's wrath (Matt. 2:13-14). Luke has Joseph and Mary present Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem when he was forty days old, and then return straightaway to Nazareth (Luke 2:22, 39). Also, Luke records that each year the family went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover (Luke 2:41). This does not tally with Matthew's claim that they were hiding out in Egypt. Matthew, with his predilection that Old Testament prophecies be fulfilled in the life of Jesus, appears to have invented the massacre of the innocents to fulfill a prophecy of Jeremiah (31:15), and the consequential flight to Egypt to fulfill Hosea's prediction that:

"... out of Egypt I have called my son" (Hosea 11:1).

In ancient times it was often claimed that important people had miraculous births. Plato was said to have been born by the union of the god Apollo with his mother. Likewise, *Alexander the Great* was said to have been conceived when a thunderbolt fell from heaven and made his mother Olympias pregnant before her marriage to Philip of Macedon. In the book of Genesis we read that sons of gods had intercourse with women on Earth to produce heroes (Gen. 6:4). Even the recently discovered *Dead Sea Scrolls* tell of the miraculous birth of Noah and how his father Lamech was suspicious that his wife had been made pregnant by an angel. Also the writings of Philo of Alexandria, who was born about 20 BCE, contain evidence that some Yahudi of the period were speculating about miraculous births of religious heroes. Philo relates how Hebrew notables such as Isaac and Samuel were conceived by barren women by the intervention of the divine Spirit.<sup>4 5 6</sup>

It is likely that as the Christian movement spread beyond Judea and the Galilee into a Hellenistic (Greek) environment, and thence to the Gentile world, the birth story of Jesus was influenced by this ancient tradition of magnifying the births of great men. Such accounts were readily accepted in an age of superstition and belief in miracles. Indeed, Justin Martyr, one of the early Roman Catholic Church fathers (c. 100-168 CE), countered charges that Christianity copied earlier pagan virgin birth myths by instead claiming that these births were the work of the devil who anticipated this future Christian mystery by copying it in the past. He wrote:

"... when I hear that Perseus was begotten of a virgin, I understand that the deceiving serpent counterfeited this also."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Danielle Sainte-Marie, "She Muses" Page 169. Online at: <https://books.google.ca/> This book appears to be out of print.

<sup>5</sup> Art Koroma, "Holy Axion: Truth Exposed ... The Bible is a Myth," Page 130. AuthorHouseUK, (2014) **Read reviews or order this book safely from Amazon.com online book store** This appears to duplicate text in Reference 3. Online at: <https://books.google.ca/>

<sup>6</sup> "The Dead Sea Scrolls Book of Lamach gives an astonishing description on Noah as a Half breed alien, read more?," Yahoo! Answers, 2009, at: <https://answers.yahoo.com/>

<sup>7</sup> John M. Robertson, "Pagan Christs," Appendix C, "Replies to Criticism" (1911). Online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/>

In addition, the author of Matthew uses a mistranslation of an Old Testament prophecy to reinforce his belief in the virgin birth. He quotes from Isaiah:

"... therefore the Almighty himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14) KJV.

The original Hebrew text of Isaiah uses the word "*almah*" which refers to a young woman of marriageable age, not the word "*bethulah*" which means virgin. However, the author of Matthew used the Septuagint -- the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible -- and not the original Hebrew version as his source material. Matthew inaccurately used the Greek word "*parthenos*" for "*almah*", thereby implying virginity. The actual text of Isaiah, however, makes no reference to a virgin becoming pregnant other than by normal means. Some modern translations of the Bible, which are based on the original Hebrew text, replace the word "*virgin*" with the more accurate translation, "*young woman*".

## The Demigod

Demigod - *Mythology*. A male being, often the offspring of a god and a mortal, who has some but not all of the powers of a god. An inferior deity; a minor god; or a deified man.

In mythology – 900 or more years before anyone ever heard one word about Jesus –it was thought pagan gods would come down to earth to mate with “virgin women” producing a half man–half god. Does this sound familiar? It should, Christianity imitated it! Let us look at some verses from Christian Bibles: Now all this was done, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Almighty by the prophet**, saying, Behold, **a virgin shall be** with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:22-23; Kings James Version (KJV))

Therefore the Almighty himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 KJV)

This happened as the Almighty said it would happen through the early preacher. He said, **The young woman**, who has never had a man, will give birth to a Son. They will give Him the name Immanuel. This means God with us.’ (Matthew 1:22-23; New Life Version)

All of this had been told long before by the Almighty through his prophet. It came true. The prophet said, **‘A young woman** who has not slept with a man is going to have a baby son. His name will be \*Emmanuel. That means “with us is Power.” (Matthew 1:22-23; Worldwide English New Testament)

However, recent Christian bibles such as the Revised Standard Version<sup>8</sup> and the New English Bible<sup>9</sup> do not give any credence to the virgin birth story. Unfortunately, to give the appearance that Jesus fulfilled a biblical prophecy; other Christian bibles deliberately mistranslate the Hebrew word “*almah*” in Isaiah 7:14 as virgin.

Regarding the virgin birth, the Christian Abingdon Bible Commentary (page 643) does explain that it:

“must be said the Hebrew word *almah* may mean “virgin,” but does not necessarily mean anything more than a young woman of marriageable age. Had the prophet intended specially and precisely to say “virgin,” he must have used the word *bethulah*, though even then there would be a faint shade of uncertainty.”

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<sup>8</sup> The RSV was completed in 1952 as, in part, a revision of the King James Bible.

<sup>9</sup> The NEB was completed in 1971, after 25 years in the making. It was not a revision, but supposedly a new “phrase-for-phrase” translation.

Hebrew is referred to as *Leshon HaKodesh*, meaning THE HOLY TONGUE, since it was the language that the Almighty chose for mankind to record the Torah.

**So, let us see what Almighty told Isaiah in Hebrew:**

לכן יתן אדני הוא לכם אות הנה העלמה הרה וילדת בן וקראת שמו עמנו אל Isaiah 7:14

In English this translates from literal Hebrew (from left to right) as:

*“So the lord himself gives a sign – see, the pregnant young woman bears a son and will call his name Al.”* (Al = means “Power” in Hebrew).

But this is translated in many Bibles as: *“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*

Shmuel Golding, of the Jerusalem Biblical Polemics, wrote: “There are five points worth noting as we compare the original Hebrew with the English translation of the KJV:

1. In Hebrew, the verse reads in the present tense, **“the pregnant young woman”** *and not as according to the KJV, which says, “will conceive and bear a son,”* In Hebrew, it states that she is pregnant, not will be pregnant. In fact, in the Catholic Bible, Isaiah 7.14 reads as: *“The maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son.”* Jesus was not born until 700 years after this sign was given, which could not be described as “soon.” The text reads *“is pregnant;”* no woman could be kept pregnant for 700 years until Jesus arrive, so the statement cannot in any way pertain to Jesus of the Greek NT.
2. This is not a prophecy for some future date, like other places in the Hebrew Bible it means something which will come to pass immediately: *“This shall be a sign unto thee from the Almighty”* (Isaiah. 38.7-8) and *“If they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign.”* (Ex. 4.8-9) In each case, the sign came to pass immediately, not 700 years later.
3. The name of the child was to be **Al** (meaning Power). Nowhere in the Greek NT do we find that Jesus is called Emmanuel. The angel informs Joseph in a dream that Mary will give birth to a son and that he could call his name *“Jesus”* (Matthew 1.20-21). *“His name was called “Jesus”* (Luke 2.21). All the evidence indicates that Emmanuel was a different individual from Jesus.
4. The text in Isaiah. 7.14 specifically says **“the young woman”** (*a young working woman*) – **“alma;”** whereas the King James Version changes the translation to “a virgin.” The definite article is changed to the indefinite article; whereas the original text is evidently referring to **the young woman known to both Isaiah and Ahaz** and not to some unknown person in the future.

We do not want to over-emphasize “alma” as not meaning a virgin but to point out that alma only applies to a woman for a fixed period of time, regardless of whether or not she is a virgin, for when she is no longer young, she loses the right to be called “alma.”

An “alma” can be a young woman who is a virgin or a young woman who is no longer a virgin. The way “alma” is used in **Isaiah 7.14** simply says that she is a young woman, who, by the very fact that she is pregnant, cannot be a virgin.

If the prophet believed that the young woman in Isaiah 7.14 was also a virgin who conceived a child without the aid of a man and without losing her virginity – and if this incredible event was to be a sign – then surely he would have been more implicit and would have used the word **“betulah,”** which is the Hebrew word for virgin, so that no one would have misunderstood his words. All the prophet Isaiah says is that “a young woman is having a child.”

A fundamentalist may claim that “*betulah*” does not mean a virgin, but a married woman. This is because of a faulty understanding of two verses in the Hebrew Bible upon which they base their claims.

“*Lament like a betulah girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.*” (Joel 1.8).

“*And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.*” (Genesis 24:16)

In Genesis 24.16, the word “*betulah*” is used to describe Rebecca, but it is qualified with the statement following “*neither had any man known her.*” So the fundamentalists attempt to use this verse, saying that if the common understanding of “*betulah*” was virgin, the passage would not have needed the explanation “*neither had any man known her.*”

Both of these passages can be easily understood. The passage in Joel is simply saying that the virgin is weeping **for** a husband, **not that she has a husband**. She is weeping because she does not have one; in other words, she is weeping for a husband whom she will never have. It could refer to a young woman who is bereaved of the man to whom she had been betrothed and has not yet consummated the marriage before his death. Such would be a tragedy for lamentation as seen in Judges 11.37.

In the other passage, the latter part of Genesis 24:16, is there simply to amplify the fact that Rebecca was indeed a virgin. This kind of amplification can be seen by comparing it with II Sam. 14.5, which reads, “*I am indeed a widow woman and mine husband is dead.*” Here, we see that the latter part of these verses is there to amplify the first part.

Looking through a concordance under the heading “*betulah*,” shows at least 50 entries and, without exception, they refer to a virgin. More importantly they are translated in all Christian bibles as meaning “*virgin.*” For example, see Leviticus 21.3; Deuteronomy. 22.19; II Samuel 13.2; and Isaiah. 62.5, all of which employ the Hebrew word “*betulah*” and translated “*virgin*” in the KJV.

Then why is *betulah* not used to describe the woman mentioned in Isa. 7.14, if we are to believe her to be a virgin?

Fundamentalist Christians try to prove their point that “*alma*” means a virgin by pointing to the Septuagint. In this case, turn to the Greek and see how little they know of it, despite the fact that their New Testament is a Greek book. As in all cases, they quote only what their unlearned colleagues tell them, for if the Greek word “*parthenos*” only means a virgin, then there are problems in explaining Gen. 34.3, where the Greek Septuagint calls Dinah a ‘*parthenos.*’ Anyone reading the story knows well the physical state of Dinah; she was definitely not a virgin, for she had been defiled, yet the Greek word *parthenos* is used.

Again, the prophet Isaiah (in Isaiah 7:14) is simply relating to the fact that the young woman is having a child and that this child will be a sign to King Ahaz. Finally, it should be understood that the sign was given to King Ahaz and not to the people of Jesus’ day. It concerned the military situation of that time. The meaning is clear if the passage is read in context within its own historical setting (see 2 Kings 16.1-10) for the literal fulfillment of this prophecy.

Moreover, Isaiah's prophecy, when read in context, clearly refers only to the time surrounding a political and military crisis which faced ancient Judah, and not 700 years later during the time of Jesus. Nor does the appellation “Al” (Power) imply that the child so named is divine, but rather in the context of the Old Testament passage, it acknowledges Almighty's presence in delivering Judah from its enemies (Is. 7:14-17). Nor was Jesus ever called Immanuel. It is evident therefore, that Matthew takes liberties with the Isaiah text to justify his belief in Mary's virginal conception.

At first glance, it would seem that the virgin birth story of Jesus makes the descriptions of his ancestral lineage to David in both Matthew and Luke, superfluous. This has led some to argue that the virgin birth narratives were later additions and not part of the original texts. Note especially in Luke, if the verses containing the birth story are omitted, how the prologue in chapter 1, verses 1-4, flows more consistently into the beginning of chapter 3). Even so, since descent was not traced through the female line in the Israelite law and custom of that time, readers would know that Joseph, as a descendant of David, secured Davidic succession for Jesus by formally acknowledging him as his son, even though these gospels claim that he was not his biological father.

The two gospels reveal further discrepancies concerning the annunciation of Mary's virginal conception. Matthew describes the annunciation of Mary's pregnancy only to Joseph, by means of an angel in a dream, and only after she has conceived (Matt. 1:18-21); whereas in Luke, the angel Gabriel explains it all to Mary, but not Joseph, before she has conceived Jesus (Luke 1:26-34). Yet later on, both Mary and Joseph are strangely astonished by the shepherds' tale about the heavenly host (Luke 2:18), and inexplicably puzzled by Simeon's affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah (Luke 2:33).

According to the same Lucan narrative, John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus and even knew of Jesus' divine nature when John was in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41,44). Yet in a later chapter of Luke, the adult John did not know who Jesus was (Luke 7:19-23).

It is also interesting to note that Luke uses Old Testament motifs about the births of Isaac and Samson as models for the angelic annunciations to Elizabeth and Mary (Genesis 17:15-21; Judges 13:2-24). The description of Mary's divine vocation is in a format similar to Gideon's mission which is also announced by an angel (Judges 6:11-16). Likewise, the beautiful "*Magnificat*" or song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) in which Luke has Mary acknowledge her special role in history, is hardly original, but based on the prayer of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10), who also gave birth through divine intervention. It is improbable that the illiterate peasant girl called Mary could have been so poetic. These accounts suggest more of a reliance on Old Testament parallels than eyewitness memories.

There are other indications that the virgin birth story was a later addition, given that it does not mesh well with the original accounts of the life of Jesus. For example, in other gospel passages Mary shows little or no understanding of Jesus' special role. According to Luke, the message of the angel Gabriel made it clear to Mary that Jesus was ordained to be the messiah, the king and savior of Israel. This message was also reinforced by the prophecies of Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:34, 38). Surely, such predictions and the miracle of her virginal conception would have indicated to Mary that Jesus was someone special, if not divine. Yet Mary does not understand Jesus' reference to the temple as his father's house (Luke 2:48-50).

Also, Jesus does not venerate nor accord special status to his mother despite her supposedly divine role. When Mary is blessed by an admirer, he replies:

*"... no, blessed are they who hear the word of Almighty and keep it"* (Luke 11:28).

At other times Jesus shows impatience with her, as at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-4), and even disdain when he replies "*who is my mother?*" when told that she wanted to speak with him (Matt. 12:46-50). Neither Mary's understanding of Jesus, nor his attitude towards her make sense when juxtaposed against the assertion of the miraculous virgin birth.

It is also hard to believe that despite the supposedly extraordinary events surrounding Jesus' birth -- from annunciations by herald angels and the heavenly host, to shepherds and magi seeking out the messiah, to Herod's wrath -- that from the beginning, Jesus was not recognized by the rest of his family as Almighty's

anointed one (Mk. 6:4). Instead, there are times when they think him out of his mind (Mk. 3:21). Nor did any of his brothers become disciples during his lifetime (John 7:5).

Moreover, if both Joseph and Mary knew that Jesus had no human father, why would they have not told him so? And if they did, why did Jesus not claim from the beginning that his miraculous birth was proof that he was divine? Why, if this man was hailed by so many at his birth as the savior of Israel, did the people of his hometown place no credence in him (Matt. 13:53-58); and why was his true nature such a startling discovery by his disciples so late in his career (Matt. 16:15-17)?

The answer is that these seemingly illogical situations during his adult life in relation to the nativity stories are not illogical, if it is realized that the birth narratives were a later development in an evolving Christology. The Christmas story is an attempt through allegory, to explain Jesus' divinity from the moment of his conception, not just from:

- The time of his resurrection as claimed by Paul, the first Christian chronicler (Romans 1: 4), or from the moment of his adult baptism as claimed by the earliest gospel (Mk. 1:9-11).

It is as difficult to harmonize the Bible's accounts of the birth of Jesus with the record of his adult ministry, as it is to explain the inconsistencies in these birth accounts themselves. Instead of taking the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke literally, and thereby doing a disservice to historicity and rational thought, we should perhaps recognize them simply as religious myths. They are false legends attempting to embody faith in the supernatural and thereby add to the efficacy of prophecy. They are attempts by these unknown gospel authors to put into words their conception of a perceived event. And they did so in a manner consistent with what credulous naive people in ancient times expected.

The Christian English bible is only a version of the real SOURCE Bible, as the King James clearly says – “Version.” The KJV, for example, was taken from the Greek Septuagint that was altered in the Fourth Century by the Roman Catholic Church Fathers who wanted to put a Jesus “spin” on everything they saw.

However, there are two kinds of bibles; the Source (Hebrew) Bible and all others. One thing is for sure; one must come before the next. If you really want to understand what is written in the real BIBLE, one should one go to the real SOURCE — the Tan'akh, written in Hebrew — instead of reading one of the altered “versions” using corrupt English translations.

“Not knowing Hebrew does not make you stupid. The stupid people are the ones who do not know Hebrew, but think they know the Hebrew Bible better than the people who do know Hebrew.”<sup>10</sup>

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Note: Contributions to this article were made by R.C. Symes and Hugh Fogelman. Revisions, proper name notes, and updates added by Assembly of Yahweh, Cascade.

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<sup>10</sup> Hugh Fogelman <http://www.jdstone.org>