

# The New Testament and Virgin Birth

Below are several New Testament texts that give some insight into how Jesus was thought of by his contemporaries. For those who claim the New Testament records a virgin birth, these texts provide immense difficulties. Following these texts are comments about what the New Testament says or, more to the point, doesn't say about a virgin birth.

Quotations in this article are from the New King James Version.

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## Luke 3: Joseph was thought to be the father of Jesus

23 Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being **(as was supposed) the son of Joseph...**

## John 1: the disciples thought Jesus was the Messiah and the son of Joseph

40 One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, **"We have found the Messiah"** (which is translated, the Christ).

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the **son of Joseph.**"

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the **Son of God!** You are the King of Israel!"

## Luke 2: Mary did not understand when Jesus spoke about his "Father's business"

42 And when He was twelve years old...

43 ...Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*;

46 Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that **I must be about My Father's business?**"

50 But **they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.**

## John 7: the brothers of Jesus did not believe in him

1 After these things **Jesus** walked in Galilee; for He **did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.**

2 Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

3 **His brothers therefore said to Him,** "Depart from here and **go into Judea,** that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing.

4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

5 For even **His brothers did not believe in Him.**

### Mark 3: Jesus' family said "he is out of his mind"

- 20 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.
- 21 But when **His own people** heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they **said, "He is out of His mind."**
- 31 Then **His brothers and His mother** came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.
- 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."
- 33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"
- 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!
- 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

### Mark 6: what Jesus said about his family

- 1 Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him.
- 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, "Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!
- 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him.
- 4 But Jesus said to them, "**A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.**"

## Some points about the above New Testament passages

- It was **commonly supposed** that Jesus was the **son of Joseph**.
- When the **disciples first identified Jesus as the *messiah* and the *Son of God***, they believed he was the son of Joseph.
- **Mary and Joseph did not understand** when Jesus was in the temple and said to them that he must be about his "*Father's business*".
- **The brothers of Jesus did not believe in him**, and in fact were contemptuous of him. John leaves no doubt about their attitude when he says that Jesus would not go into Judea because "the Jews sought to kill him", and then immediately tells us that his brothers were taunting him to go into Judea.
- **Jesus' own people**, identified as his mother and brothers in subsequent verses, set out to take hold of Jesus for they **said, "He is out of his mind"**.
- While Jesus' family did not believe in him, he had some sharp remarks to make about them, not least when he said **a prophet is without honour among his own relatives and in his own house**.

## Where is the Virgin Birth mentioned in the New Testament?

The Jews had no expectation whatsoever that the messiah would be other than a normal born, mortal man. If the result was opposite to the expectation, that the messiah was in fact a virgin-born divine being, one would think that those in New Testament times would have been informed of this. So when did Jesus tell those close to him about his supposedly miraculous birth, and when did those outside of this circle learn of it? What is the evidence in the New Testament for the alleged virgin birth of Jesus?

If Jesus had been born of a virgin, one would expect such a unique and defining revelation to be mentioned frequently throughout the New Testament. This is not the case. In fact his birth is mentioned in only two of the 27 books that make up the New Testament.

Those who were to become the disciples of Jesus shared the common belief of Jews of the time that the messiah would be a mortal man. When the first disciples identified Jesus as the messiah written of in the Old Testament, like everyone else they believed he was the biological son of Joseph.

There is no evidence that Jesus sought to change the understanding of his disciples, or anyone else, that Joseph was his father. In fact the New Testament does not record Jesus mentioning his birth.

The apostles had the function of taking the message about Jesus to the Jews and the Gentiles. There is not one instance in *Acts of the Apostles* or Paul's writings of any one of them preaching about the birth of Jesus, yet alone correcting the common belief that Joseph was his biological father.

In similar vein, the gospel of Mark does not consider the birth relevant to the story of Jesus, or warrants a mention. Mark commenced "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" with the preaching of John the Baptist, at which time Jesus was about 30 years of age.

Had there been a claim that Jesus was born of a virgin, it is inconceivable that antagonistic family members or his enemies would not have thrown the claim in his face. The New Testament does not record one instance of this happening.

In addition, Mary's part in two incidents mentioned earlier in this article is inexplicable if she was the Virgin Mother of a divine Jesus, as the churches claim.

All the above is evidence against the disciples believing a virgin birth had occurred, or for that matter anyone in New Testament times being aware of such a claim.

The churches prefer to point their congregations towards certain passages in two of the gospels, which they say tell of the virgin birth of Jesus. But do these passages actually say what the churches claim, or have they been read with a mindset that conceals what is before their eyes?

The virgin birth story is founded on the verse in Matthew's gospel which quotes Isaiah's prophecy. The churches claim Matthew did not quote from the original Hebrew Old Testament, but rather from a Greek translation of the Hebrew (which mistranslated the "young woman" in Isaiah's prophecy as "virgin"). If this claim is correct, it would mean Matthew saw the birth of Jesus as the fulfilment of a prophecy that does not exist in the Old Testament!

Further, it is claimed that Luke's gospel describes the virginal conception of Jesus. This claim relies on giving selective interpretations to certain words when they are applied to Jesus. However where these same or similar words are applied to others in the Bible, no one suggests there is a virginal conception in those instances.

Matthew and Luke had a good reason to record the circumstances relating to Jesus' birth, but it had nothing to do with a so-called virgin birth.

This article is the first in a set of six relating to the Doctrine of Virgin Birth. The first five look at what the New Testament actually says and examines the various claims of the churches. The sixth analyses the expression *Jesus Christ*.