

Despite her condition being great with child, Jennie was determined to go to the ball on that evening of November 29, 1874. For this just wasn't any party. This was the gala event at Blenheim Palace. Everybody who was anybody was going to be at this event.

It might have been alright if Jennie could have just attended the event and sat quietly, conversing with other guests. But not Jennie. No, Jennie wanted to dance. She would later say that it was during a pirouette that she went into labor. The contractions came suddenly and strongly. Jennie soon realized that she wouldn't have time to make it to the hospital.

The most comfortable place that was close was the cloakroom. So that is where Jennie went. Into the cloakroom of Blenheim Palace. And it was there, cushioned by coats and shawls that Jennie had her baby son, at 1:30 in the morning on November 30. She named him Winston. Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill. He remains the only prime minister in the history of England who was ever born in a cloakroom.

A child's birth is always a great event. It is a great event for the mother - something that she looks forward to for 9 months or more. It is a great event for the father who now has a new son or daughter. It is a great event for siblings in the family. It is a great event for grandparents and other relatives. And certainly, it is a great event for the baby himself - even though no baby has ever remembered it. But I think we would all agree that while any birth is a great event, some births are greater events than others. Some births, like Winston Churchill's, are surrounded by drama and are destined to change the world.

It shouldn't really surprise us then that one of the world's greatest events involves the birth of a baby. But this birth was the most significant and unique birth that has ever occurred. People would eventually recognize this birth to be so crucial to the history of the human race that they would change the recording of time to make this birth the central event in all of human history. Events occurring before this birth would be dated B.C. - before Christ. Events occurring after this birth would be dated A.D. - Anno Domini (a Latin phrase which means in the year of our Lord). So this unique birth must be placed in the list of the top ten of the world's greatest events.

We have been looking at the top ten World's Greatest Events during these past Sunday mornings. These are events that have changed the course of the world. These are events that we must have a proper understanding of if we are to have a realistic view of the world in which we are living. We have already seen:

\*creation - when all of the material universe came into existence

\*Adam and Eve's fall into sin - when wickedness and all of its consequences distorted the perfect world that God had created.

\*the Flood - when every air-breathing being was drowned except for 8 humans and 2 of every kind of animal kept alive in the ark.

\*the Tower of Babel - when national identities and languages were formed.

\*the formation of the nation of Israel that occurred at the event that we remember simply as the exodus – when a few million Hebrew slaves walked out of Egypt protected by the almighty hand of God who was advancing His redemptive program.

Now this morning we move some 1,500 years from the exodus to the birth of the one whom God had promised to send to this earth as his Messiah. We must remember that it wasn't just the supernatural events surrounding this birth that made it so unique - it certainly is true that there were many supernatural events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ.

\*prophets had predicted this birth for hundreds of years. But prophets had also predicted other significant births (e.g. Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist, others)

\*an angel had appeared to announce this birth to the parents. But on special occasions, angels had appeared to announce other births as well (e.g. Isaac, Samson, and John the Baptist)

\*No, what made the birth of Jesus unique was the fact that Jesus was born unlike any other child who has ever existed. The Bible says that Jesus was born of a virgin. Now we must realize what the Bible means when it says that Christ was born of a virgin. It means more than the fact that Mary was a virgin before Jesus was conceived in her womb - although that, of course, is true. The fact that Jesus was born of a virgin means that Mary remained a virgin until after Jesus was born. So there was no possibility that the Lord Jesus Christ had an earthly father. Christ's birth was unique in that God himself was the father. Listen to this clear statement given by the angel to Mary before Christ's birth found in Luke 1:30-35:

But the angel said to her, *Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end. How will this be, Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin?* The angel answered, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*

\*Now it is very clear from this angelic announcement that God himself would plant the seed in the womb of Mary so that Jesus could be conceived. Mary would remain a virgin until after Jesus was born. This is confirmed also by a statement made by Matthew - *But Joseph had no union with Mary until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matt. 1:25)*

\*It is this single fact - the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ – and the fact that because of this unique birth Jesus Christ could be both divine and human that makes this birth one of the top ten greatest events in human history.

\*Now some have argued against the virgin birth saying it is incomprehensible how this conception could have ever occurred. I agree that nobody can explain how the virgin birth occurred. It was a miracle pure and simple. But, at the same time, we cannot really explain how any physical conception occurs. We cannot explain totally how a sperm cell can unite with an egg to produce an eternal, living person. I read an article this past week predicting that scientists are going to be able to produce artificial life within 3 – 10 years. We don't know if this prophecy will actually happen or not. There are still some major hurdles that need to be overcome. A membrane has to be developed to house the living cell. A way has to be developed for the cell to sustain itself by digesting food. And even if these and many other riddles are solved, all that would be achieved would be a living cell that might last for up to a week we are told. To this point, even our most brilliant scientists have not been able to produce life. Life itself remains a mystery to us. We cannot explain how a complete person with all of his or her characteristics can be in the union of 2 microscopic cells. Life is a miracle of God. That is why we should regard all life as sacred. But I readily admit that it is impossible for us to understand fully how God could father a human being. And that question is not answered in the Bible - for we couldn't understand the answer even if it were given. The virgin birth remains a mystery, a miracle of God.

But we are given some insights as to why the virgin birth is so important. And I want to discuss 3 reasons for this with you - these are reasons why this event must be listed among the world's greatest events. And it is important for us to see these reasons. For some in recent years who have claimed to be Christians have downplayed the virgin birth even to the point of denying it in an attempt to make Christianity more acceptable to sceptics. Let me say very clearly that the virgin birth is one of the non-negotiable doctrines in the Bible. If we fail to accept this clearly taught truth, the heart of Christianity is ripped out. These 3 reasons for the necessity of the virgin birth will show why I make that statement.

1. The virgin birth was the only way that the promise of God made to David could be actually fulfilled. So the virgin birth was necessary to maintain the character and faithfulness of God himself.

\*Now this is an area that is often overlooked because it involves a rather obscure curse that was made in the O.T. Turn to 2 O.T. passages with me:

READ 2 SAM. 7:11b-13 & 16: Davidic Covenant given by the Lord through Nathan in response to David's desire to build a temple for the Lord.

*The Lord himself declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.*

NOW READ JEREMIAH 36:30: Curse given by the Lord through Jeremiah to Jehoiakim because of his arrogance in cutting up the word of God and burning it.

*Therefore, this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night.*

\*Explain apparent contradiction - promise of eternal kingdom to David; cutting off of David's line at Jehoiakim. Historic fulfillment: Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, deposed quickly (3 months) by the Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah who was Jehoiakim's half-brother was made king in his place. After Zedekiah, there were no more kings of Judah. What about the eternal kingdom?

\*The virgin birth was one of the few ways that this apparent problem could have been solved.

\*Mary of David's line through Nathan is the genealogy found in Luke; Joseph of David's line through Solomon is the genealogy found in Matthew. Joseph had the legal right to rule; but Jehoiakim's curse prohibited him from having a son who would be king. But Joseph could give that right to rule to Christ by adopting him. So, Christ as the legal though not physical son of Joseph would have the right to rule on David's throne. And Christ will rule for all eternity, fulfilling God's promise to David.

\*Importance: God always keeps his word. If one of God's promises were to go unfulfilled, none of his promises could be trusted. God, through the virgin birth, found a way to keep his promises to David.

2. The virgin birth was the only way for a person to be born who could be both God and man. This is brought out in the angelic announcement. *So the holy one to be born will be called the son of God. Lu. 1:35.*

\*We all know that we receive our nature from our parents. Each of God's creation produces after its own kind. Horses have colts; cows have calves; dogs have puppies; cats have kittens; and people have children. Babies receive their human natures from their parents.

\*Now if Christ were to be both God and man at the same time, he would have to have both a human parent and a divine parent. This was the only way that he could have both natures passed to him. We cannot fully comprehend this process, but we can see its absolute necessity.

\*Why was it necessary for Christ to be both God and man? Why was this so crucial? Christ had to

be both God and man in order to meet the qualification of being our kinsman-redeemer.

\*Christ had to be man in order to fulfill one of the requirements of the kinsmen-redeemer - the right to redeem the family member. Man was the one who had sinned against God. Man was the one who owed the debt of sin to God. Christ had to be man in order to represent man in paying that sin, in order to pay for the sin on behalf of man. God could not accept the death of an angel - because man had sinned. God ultimately could not accept the blood of bulls and goats according to Hebrews - because man had sinned. Human debt had to be paid for by a human sacrifice - that was one of the requirements of the kinsmen-redeemer - he had to be a close relative.

\*But Christ also had to be God in order to fulfill another requirement of the kinsman-redeemer - the ability to redeem the family member. You see, when Adam and Eve sinned against God, they incurred a debt that they could never repay. For they were finite beings. God is an infinite being. And the magnitude of the debt is determined by the one who is offended.

e.g. killing a mouse and killing a person ; threatening me and threatening the president.

\*When we sin against an infinite God, we incur a debt that is beyond our ability to pay. As a finite being, we can never repay an infinite debt. The closest that we can come to it is to suffer the torments of hell for all eternity. So if the debt were to be paid, God himself would have to pay it. That is the reason why it was absolutely necessary for Jesus to be the God-man.

\*And there was only one way that Christ could be the God-man - and that was to have both God and a human being as parents. The virgin birth was the means which God used to place the second person of the triune Godhead on earth in human form.

3. The virgin birth was absolutely necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to be the sinless lamb of God who would be qualified to pay for the sins of the world. This is another point brought out in the angelic announcement that we read earlier. *So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. vs. 35.*

\*God is perfect in his holiness. Just any old sacrifice wouldn't do to satisfy God's demands for perfection.

\*This is illustrated even in the imperfect sacrificial system of the O.T.

\*We know that the blood of bulls and goats were never sufficient to atone for the sins of man. They were just pictures of that perfect sacrifice that was going to be offered by the Son of God himself. But even in these insufficient animal sacrifices, careful instructions were given concerning the animals themselves that were offered. The animals were to be without blemish. They were to be the best animals of the flock. The reason for that is obvious. God who is perfect in holiness could only accept a perfectly holy sacrifice.

In the final analysis, a perfectly holy sacrifice was one that God would have to provide himself.

Now we mentioned earlier that each of God's creation produces after its own kind. When Adam, the first man created, willfully and deliberately sinned against the creator, he became a sinful creature. So his children received the sinful nature of their father. The Bible says, *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Rom. 5:12.*

Now we might question why God passes the sin nature through the seed of the man, the father. The answer in the Bible seems to be 2-fold. Man was the first being created - therefore God held him ultimately responsible for the disobedience in the Garden of Eden. And, secondly, Adam sinned willfully and deliberately against God. The serpent tricked and deceived Eve. But Adam chose to eat the fruit in disobedience by a deliberate and willful act. Listen to these words found in 1 Timothy 2:13,14: *For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

\*Now the indication from the Scriptures is that the sin nature, that propensity towards sin that every human being has, is passed naturally through the seed of the man. So then, every person who has an earthly father has a sinful nature. So the Bible can say, *For all have sinned*, because we all have earthly fathers.

\*It would not be enough for Jesus to live a life free from personal sin if he were to be a satisfactory sin sacrifice to appease God's wrath - he would also have to be born without a sinful nature. Christ had to be born as the second Adam to undo what the first Adam did. So Christ had to be born in the same state that the first Adam was created. Adam was created perfect and sinless. So Christ would need to be born perfect and sinless. There was only one way for this to be accomplished. Jesus had to be born of a virgin. He had to be born without an earthly father. This was the only way that he could be totally sinless. And this was accomplished in the virgin birth.

Now some of these are pretty heavy truths, aren't they? But I trust that you have been able to see the critical significance of the virgin birth in a new way. \*This event must be listed among the greatest events known to the history of mankind. For this is the only truly unique birth in the history of the human race. This was the entrance of God himself into human history. This event rightfully deserves the place of preeminence - being the central event of all human history - the center of time. And it is this event that made the next event possible that we will consider next week, the Lord willing.