**Jesus: Uniquely…conceived** December 18, 16

One of the Christmas songs asks this question about the baby who was born in Bethlehem: ***What child is this?***

Have you ever wondered why the songwriter asked the question that way?

When I’ve seen, or held a newborn child, I’ve wondered what they will become.

But I’ve never asked “what” they are.

Why do you think the songwriter choose the word “WHAT?”

Norman Geisler writes: *“Jesus’ uniqueness is the centerpiece of Christianity…*

*Jesus is unique in that he alone, of all who ever lived, is both God and man.”*

I think this is **WHY** the songwriter asked, “What child is this?”

What kind of child is both God and man?

It is important to ask the question **“HOW”** this happened.

But it is equally important to ask the question **“WHY.”**

Canon Dyson Hague wrote:

*“Who could draw a picture of a man not yet born? Nobody knew more than 550 years ago that Shakespeare was going to be born; or almost 250 years ago that Napoleon was to be born. Yet in the Bible, in the Old Testament prophets, we have the most striking and unmistakable likeness of a man portrayed, not by one, but by more than 20 artists, none of whom had ever seen the Man they were painting.”* Cited by Fred John Meldau in “Messiah in Both Testaments,” p.3.

Centuries before JESUS was born, we are told about his family.

Sketch of a man’s face

>He would be from the **family of Abraham.**

**Genesis 12:3***: “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

>He would be from the **tribe of Judah.**

**Genesis 49:10**: *“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.”*

>He would be **a son of David** and reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom

**Isaiah 9:7:** *“Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.*

*He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”*

Sketch of a man’s face

We are told the name of the town **where he would be born.**

**Micah 5:2**: *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”*

We are told **when he would be born.**

**Daniel 9:25-26**: *“Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.”*

Sketch of a man’s face

We are told that **he would die for our sins.**

Psalm 22; Isaiah 53.

**Zechariah 12:10**: *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”*

We are told that **he would rise from the dead**

**Psalm 16:10:** *“…because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”*

Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection were all uniquely foretold.

But do you realize…. **Jesus’ uniqueness even extended to his conception.**

This is what we still study today.

Christmas Eve we will look at his birth.

And New Year’s Day his childhood.

**Luke 1:26-37.**

*…a virgin pledged to be married*

*…”You will conceive and give birth to a son…”*

*...”He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God.”*

*...”The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David...”*

*...”he will reign...forever; his kingdom will never end.”*

*…”How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*

*…”the Holy Spirit will come on you”*

*…”the power of the Most High will overshadow you”*

*…”the holy one to be born to you will be called the Son of God”*

*…”no word from God will ever fail.”*

Two times in this passage it is stated that… Mary was a virgin:

once by Luke who wrote the gospel and the other time, by Mary herself.

When Gabriel told Mary, she would become pregnant and give birth to a son,

she struggled to understand, because….she knew she was not sexually active.

When she asked, “HOW will this happen?” Gabriel’s answer was simple, yet profound:

*”The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”*

Mary’ child would be “great” – v.32.

But not in the way we typically understand greatness.

Her child would be great because… he is the Son of the Most High God.

Through Mary Jesus received his humanness.

And by the working of God’s power, Jesus, who had existed from all eternity, had his divine being, completely and inseparably merged with a human body and nature – so that he was both fully human and fully divine.

The “how” is challenging to understand!

But in order to understand we have to start with who God is!

If God has the power to speak into existence things that are not, then Mary becoming pregnant, by the power of the “Most High God,” while it is surprising, is not impossible.

That’s why Gabriel emphasized to Mary, **v.37**, *“no word from God will ever fail.”*

In other words, nothing is impossible with God.

Mary responded to this news from Gabriel, by saying, *“I am the Lord’s servant, may your word to me be fulfilled.”*

Thinking of Mary’s response of faith, Tim Keller writes:

*“You and I have been trained by our culture to not believe in the supernatural….*

*Mary had been trained by her culture to not believe that God could ever become a human being. So, though they are different, the barriers she faced against belief in the Christmas message were every bit as big as the barriers you and I may be facing.*

*And yet a combination of evidence and experience shattered those barriers and she came to faith. That is exactly the way it works now.*

*She doubted, she questioned, she used her reason, and then she trusted —just as we must today if we are going to have faith.”*  p.82. Hidden Christmas, Tim Keller

Now, when it came to Joseph, that’s a whole other story.

*“God did it”* – just didn’t cut it for him.

Joseph wanted to believe Mary, but he couldn’t.

Let’s read the passage that tells his side of the story.

**Matthew 1:18-25.**

*…Mary was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit*

*…Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace*

*…Joseph had in mind to divorce Mary quietly*

*…an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream*

*…”do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife”*

*…”what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit”*

*…”give him the name Jesus”*

*…”he will save his people from their sin”*

*…this fulfilled what the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, 7:14*

*…Joseph did what the angel had commanded (he took Mary home)*

*…Joseph did not consummate their marriage until after Jesus was born*

As we’ve already noted, Jesus was a unique, one-of-a-kind child.

Matthew as he reflected on the miraculous conception of Jesus, was led by the Holy Spirit to see the connection with Isaiah’s prophecy: *The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him, Immanuel (which means, ‘God is with us’).*

Let’s now look at the why. **WHY** was Jesus miraculously conceived?

Two things I want to share with you.

When Adam and Eve sinned their very nature as human beings was changed.

And through procreation, this flawed nature was passed on to each succeeding generation.

Remember Genesis 5:3?

“*When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image...”*

Adam had been created in God’s likeness.

But his son Seth, was born in Adam’s likeness.

This is why no child has to be taught to do what is wrong.

But because Jesus was miraculously conceived…he was not born with a human nature that is flawed, like our nature is.

This is why, as the angel told Joseph, Jesus would save us from our sins.

But there is another important WHY.

And it is here we see the incredible **wisdom of God.**

The prophecies said the Messiah would belong to the royal line of King David.

Look at Matthew 1:1.

Genealogies can seem like a room of skeletons.

In this list of names found in Matthew 1, is a man, in the line of David, who is identified in verse 11 as Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiachin.

Who was he?

Look at Jeremiah 22:24-30.

A curse was placed on Jeconiah by God.

(see the footnote – he is also known as Jehoiachin).

“…for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David

or rule anymore in Judah.”

God did not say that Jeconiah/Jehoiachin would never have any children.

What God said is that none of his children; or his descendants would ever “sit on” the throne of David.

Because Joseph was a direct descendant of King David, he inherited a legal right to the throne of David through David’s son Solomon.

But… because Joseph was also a direct descendant of Jeconiah, he and his sons, were under Jeconiah’s curse.

**How did this impact Jesus?**

1. To occupy the throne of David, Jesus had to be a lineal descendant of David.
2. But to occupy the throne of David, Jesus could not be the physical son of Joseph.

Humanly speaking the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 presents us with an impossible dilemma. But this dilemma was not a dilemma for God!

Matthew 1:16.

God solved the dilemma of Joseph’s lineage by the miraculous conception of Jesus. Jesus was born of Mary; not of Mary and Joseph.

This is also why Matthew added the important footnote of verse 25: *“Joseph did not consummate their marriage…until…she gave birth to a son.”*

But the prophecies said Messiah would be a lineal descendant of David.

How did God solve that issue?

Let’s compare Luke 3:23-31 with Matthew 1:6-16.

Back to the skeletons.

Gospel of Matthew Gospel of Luke

Joseph Joseph

Jacob Heli

Matthan Matthat

Eleazar Levi

……… ………

……… ………

Asa Melea

Abijah Menna

Rehoboam Mattatha

Solomon Nathan

David David

None of the names match up. Why is that?

Luke gives to us the family tree of Mary.

Mary’s name is not included, because all inheritances among the Jewish people had to pass through the male line.

According to Israel’s law, when a daughter is the only heir, she can inherit her father’s possessions and rights, if she marries a husband within her own tribe.

Look at Numbers 27:1-11; **36:1-12.**

When Joseph and Mary married, Joseph was counted as Heli’s son and heir - which restored to him the right to rule on David’s throne; a right that was then legally passed on to Jesus.

How Jesus was conceived showcases the power and the wisdom of God.

**Think about God’s creative power.**

We need to hear again and again, what Gabriel told Mary:

No word from God will ever fail. Nothing is impossible with God.

While you and I live with limits, God doesn’t.

While we occasionally face challenging, even impossible situations; this never ever happens to God.

This is the One we trust in.

This is the One who holds our lives in his hands.

This is the One who has a plan for our lives; who knows our beginning, and our end, and all the days in between.

Nothing is impossible for him.

**Think about God’s wisdom.**

Look at Isaiah 55: 8-11.

*…my ways and my thoughts are higher than yours*

*…my word will accomplish what I desire*

*…my purposes will be achieved*

In the case of Mary’s conception, the Lord only told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her.

But that was enough for her.

The miraculous conception of Jesus reveals the magnificence of God’s mind.

>The Lord found a way for God the Son to become human… and yet not have a sinful nature.

>He found a way for Jesus to be both fully God and fully man in the same person.

>He found the way to bring together two individuals, Mary and Joseph, both of whom were descendants of King David.

>The Lord found a way for Jesus to bypass Jeconiah’s curse and still be a descendant of David.

>And he directed them to have no sexual union until after Jesus was born, so that there would be no doubt, that the child born to Mary was the Son of the Most High God.

The wisdom of God is so clearly seen in who Jesus is.

We trust God not only because he is all powerful; but because he is also wise and all-knowing. He truly is the God of miracles.

**The Blessing**

**Romans 11:33-36** New Living Translation (NLT)

**33**Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

**34**For who can know the Lord’s thoughts?
    Who knows enough to give him advice?
**35**Or who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back?

**36**For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

In the time of the early church, there were some who said Jesus just appeared to be human; but really wasn’t.

John spoke to this issue in his first epistle, 4:1-3.

*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

*This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

John tells his readers “to test the spirits;” and to “not believe” every claim made.

John says there are “many false prophets” active in the world.

John writes that essentially the claims made about who Jesus is will fall in one of two camps.

The camp of the Spirit of God.

The camp of the spirit of the antichrist.

What is the distinguishing feature emphasized by the Spirit of God?

Jesus came in the flesh.

What is the distinguishing feature emphasized by the spirit of the antichrist?

Jesus wasn’t truly human.

Why does it matter whether Jesus was simply divine, simply human, or both human and divine?

*“Christmas is not simply about a birth but about a coming.” p.20. Tim Keller*

*“When you come to Christ, you must drop your conditions. You have to give up the right to say, ‘I will obey you if . . . I will do this if . . .’ As soon as you say, ‘I will obey you if,’ that is not obedience at all. You are saying: ‘You are my adviser, not my Lord. I will be happy to take your recommendations. And I might even do some of them.’ No. If you want Jesus with you, you have to give up the right to self‐determination. Self‐denial is an act of rebellion against our late‐modern culture of self‐assertion. But that is what we are called to. Nothing less.” p.58. Tim Keller*

*“Christian faith is not a negotiation but a surrender. . . . [And] our greatest motive for surrendering to him cannot be for what he will do in us. It must be to love him for what he did for us.” p.93–94, 98. Tim Keller*

*King David was thirty years old when he became king – 2 Samuel 5:4.*

*Jesus was thirty years old when he began his public ministry*