

Divine Revelation: Going Where Naturalism and Science Cannot (Matthew 1:18-25)

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

I said in my sermon last Sunday titled "The Virgin Birth: Answering Questions About the Inconceivable" from Luke 1:26-38 that there are some things naturalism and science are unable to answer. While science can say "that" something works, and science can show "how" something works, science cannot explain why something works one way and not another. For example, science is unable to explain why gravity exists on earth but not in space. Science is unable to explain love, marriage, a lifelong commitment between husband and wife, why a wronged party would do good for the offender, and so on. There are a number of things that science cannot explain, and bringing this up with the skeptic while showing tangible examples is a great starting point in which to engage the skeptic and atheist (who doesn't believe in God at all).

The Virgin Birth, what I preached on last Sunday, is an example of something that science cannot explain. The Lord prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 that a Virgin would bear a Son. About 700 years before Christ's birth, the Lord had prophesied that He would perform a feat so amazing that it would defy human understanding. A virgin, a woman who's never been sexually intimate with a man, a woman who'd never had sexual intercourse, would give birth to a child, and the Child (not just an ordinary human child) would be called "Immanuel," a word that in the Hebrew means "God With Us." So, this Virgin would give birth to a male Child who would be God in the flesh. A human woman would give birth to a Child that would be both human and divine. How could the human give birth to the divine? It seems unreal, unbelievable, not in accordance with human understanding, biology, science, and naturalism that a human would give birth to divine deity who would take on flesh as a male Child.

Well, in Luke 1, our text for last Sunday, I preached on the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary to tell her that she'd carry Jesus in her womb and give birth to Him. In today's text, we get to view the account of the birth of Christ from the male perspective: that is, we get to see what Joseph thought about all that was happening. How did Joseph react to Mary's pregnancy? I mean, she couldn't hide that she was pregnant. Even if she didn't say anything right away, at some point she'd start to show -- so she had to say something. Joseph had to say something in response to Mary's growing size because, as any woman knows, a pregnancy makes a woman start to show. It doesn't matter how many weeks it takes, at some point the woman will physically display her pregnancy. So what would Mary say to Joseph? And how would Joseph react to the news or the physical signs of pregnancy?

We find that out in today's text of Matthew 1:18-25. Verse 1 prepares us for the account of the "birth of Jesus Christ," reminding us that the account is about Jesus' birth more than anything else. And yet, we know that the Lord uses all the little things going on, the secondary things that surround Jesus' birth, to teach us about His ways, His workings, our human understanding, and just how transcendental God's plan was. As I said last Sunday, there are believable elements to the account of the birth of Jesus: for one, Mary had to carry Jesus for nine months, and Mary asked a question about how she would bear Jesus since she'd never had sexual intimacy with a man in Luke 1:34, and when Gabriel appeared, she didn't know quite how to take his appearance to her. And yet, there are elements of the story that don't fit the human understanding. How does a virgin conceive a child without sexual intimacy or even in-vitro fertilization (IVF), a procedure that didn't exist in Mary and Joseph's situation? And how would a human understanding what the Lord said about the supernatural conception of Jesus when humans could only conceive natural conception and natural procreative laws, biological processes?

The atheist and the skeptics question Mary's Virgin Birth, but as I've pointed out, there are elements of the story that are natural, that the atheist or skeptic can understand. And then, there are elements that God has placed into the birth of Jesus to challenge the skeptic and atheist. One of those is the idea of the Virgin Birth. Another is included in today's text in the story of Joseph.

The end of Matthew 1:18 says that "after His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." The word "betrothed" tells us that Mary and Joseph were engaged, not married. Keep that in mind: today, we make the distinction between "engaged" and "married." The words "married" and "engaged" in the New Testament are different, but the context tells us just how similar these words were seen in the eyes of the Lord in Scripture. Now, the text says "His mother Mary," but notice that Joseph is not referred to as "His father." Why? Because Joseph was not the father of Jesus; God the Father was. Remember that, as John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The pronoun "His" in John 3:16 tells us that Jesus is the Son of God, God the Father's Son. Yes, Joseph is Jesus' earthly father, but the Scriptures themselves focus on Jesus' divine father, God the Father, not His earthly father. And yet, God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly human parents to raise His Son. So, there's honor in the Virgin Birth for both Mary and Joseph. We focus on Mary, but let's not leave out the gentleman, the godly man, Joseph, in all our discussion and contemplations about the birth of Christ.

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married, not husband and wife, and the text tells us that "before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." "Before they came together" is a phrase that refers to the fact that Mary was pregnant before they had sexual intercourse. Again, as the angel Gabriel told Mary in our Luke 1 passage from last Sunday, that which was conceived in her would be the result of

the Holy Spirit, as the words "of the Holy Spirit" demonstrated in Matthew 1:18 says. There was no sexual intercourse involved in the conception of Jesus because God's Son was sent into the world by God Himself. The plan was of God, not of man, and the Lord wouldn't have man taint His divine plan with human resources or means. So, what we see here is that Matthew gives us something of a reminder of the events of Luke 1: Mary is pregnant with Jesus, conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit overshadows her, the word "overshadowing" being something of itself a mystery, as I preached last week, and she is showing.

In verse 19, Joseph is aware of Mary's pregnancy. Mary is starting to show physically, and Joseph is pondering what to do about it. Keep in mind that both Mary and Joseph are virgins, and I think this is an acceptable claim to make (though the text doesn't tell us explicitly that Joseph is) because he was a godly man. In verse 19 we read that "Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." Joseph is labeled "a just man," the word "just" meaning "righteous." He was a man of moral character, of integrity, a man of discipline, a man that would make any mother-in-law and father-in-law proud. He was the kind of man that a woman's mother and father would want to meet and welcome into their family. In fact, he did not want "to make her a public example," we're told --- which means that he, being a righteous, godly man, didn't want to publicly shame her.

There were men in Joseph's day (and in our day now) that wouldn't have been as gracious as Joseph: if a woman had slept with another man, cheated on them, and gotten pregnant, they would've taken them on a talk show to prove the baby wasn't theirs, taken them to Couple's Court or Paternity Court to uncover that the baby was someone else's, and then belittled them and mocked them for all the television world to see. They wouldn't have been so kind as to end the engagement quietly, secretly, away from the public eye. And yet, Joseph "did not want to make her a public example." He didn't want to embarrass her, didn't want to shame her, didn't want to humiliate her. Even though he believed she had shamed him publicly by showing a child he believed she'd conceived with someone else (after all, babies don't magically grow in the womb without sexual intercourse or surgical procedures), he didn't want to make a public example of her. He believed he was wronged (though he wasn't, as he finds out in today's text), but even believing he was, he didn't seek revenge. He didn't want to get revenge on Mary, didn't want to punish her because of the pain he felt. Instead, as Matthew 1:19 says, he "was minded to put her away secretly."

We see here an example of just why Joseph was labeled a just man, a righteous man. Despite his public humiliation (his perceived public humiliation, mind you), he doesn't seek revenge for his hurt. And this is an example to us, whether male or female, that godliness is not about seeking revenge on someone, "getting them back," or "evening the score," as we'd say.

The Word tells us that we're to leave vengeance to the Lord. Leviticus 19:18 says, "18 **You shall not take vengeance**, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." Psalm 94:1-2 says, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—

O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!
2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth;
Render punishment to the proud." (Psalm 94:1-2)

The writer of Psalm 99 says in Psalm 99:8 about the Israelites, "You answered them, O Lord our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, Though You took vengeance on their deeds." Even though God forgave the Israelites, He still took vengeance on them. Their wrong and immorality didn't escape the punishment of the Almighty God, and the wrongs done to you and me will not go forgotten. Forgiveness does not entail blindness; God doesn't forgive because He doesn't see it or doesn't know it. He doesn't forgive as though He is powerless. No, He forgives, but He still gets vengeance. He is, after all, not only gracious and merciful but also just. Many believers view our God so gracious that He never demonstrates His justice or vengeance. The same God that forgave David is the same God who punished David by killing his child and let the sword devour his household because he murdered Uriah, an innocent man.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote the following words in his letter to the Romans (Romans 12:17-21):

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."
21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)

And we cannot forget the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One this season is all about. Luke 23:34-37 tells us what our Lord did when He was wronged:

34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

And they divided His garments and cast lots. 35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

Peter says it best regarding Jesus as our example in 1 Peter 2:19-24:

19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 **"Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth";**

23 **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;** 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:19-24)

Someone out there needs to hear this and read this: You've been wronged by a date, stood up before, you've been engaged and your fiancé (or fiancée) stood you up at the altar (I personally know a friend this happened to). You've been wrongfully fired from a job and want to make the company owner pay for his wrongful termination. You've been lied on by family members and want to make them pay. We've all been wronged, and we've all wanted vengeance on those who've done us wrong. Joseph believed, though wrongly, that he'd been wronged by Mary --- that he'd been subjected to public ridicule because he was engaged to a woman who was pregnant (and he wasn't responsible for her pregnancy; he didn't impregnate her). And yet, even in those times when we want to inflict pain on those who've hurt us, let us remember the events surrounding our Lord's time on earth: He was misunderstood, ridiculed, plotted against, betrayed by a disciple He chose, falsely accused by lying witnesses, convicted, and sentenced to death while criminal Barabbas went free. He suffered while a criminal got off scot-free. Think about that: we think there's injustice in the criminal system today, but it didn't just start in the present day. It's always been there, even in Jesus' day.

Joseph was humiliated by Mary, so he thought, but he wanted to respond in a way that wouldn't humiliate her. He still cared about her, even if he did believe she'd done him wrong, even if he believed she'd been unfaithful in her engagement to him. Though he was wounded, he didn't want to strike back. Now some have said that Joseph was a beyond-godly man in how he responded to Mary; well, not exactly: after all, he wanted to end the engagement, as the text says that he "was minded to put her away secretly" in Matthew 1:19. So, he was upset about it all, but he wouldn't humiliate her and stab her in back, figuratively speaking. He wouldn't seek vengeance for the betrayal; he'd end the engagement with little fanfare.

And yet, what he didn't know is that something would happen that would affect his thinking, that would put an end to his decision: it was divine revelation from the Lord, a dream. Verse 20 says "But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.'" "While he thought about these things," the text says, showing us that it was in the process of

Joseph discovering what to do that the Lord appeared to him. Joseph hadn't made up his mind yet, but his desire was to end the engagement with little publicity.

During his thinking process, the text says that an angel of the Lord told him what to do: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." We don't read the Lord directly appearing to Joseph, but we read that an angel appears to Joseph. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, so we can also believe an angel would appear to Joseph (though the text doesn't say it was Gabriel). The angel tells Joseph that Mary is pregnant because of the Holy Spirit, that her pregnancy is from God, that she would give birth to the Son of God, God's own Son, deity, the Lord Jesus. The child within her was not just any normal child, conceived by Mary and another human man. She wasn't pregnant because of her own unfaithfulness. Rather, she was pregnant because of God's plan to bring His own Son, Jesus, into the world to redeem mankind and reconcile the broken relationship between God and man.

We should also notice in verse 20 that the angel refers to Mary as "your wife," she being engaged to Joseph. In verse 19, we read that Joseph is described as "her husband," referring to Mary, so these two references signal how important engagements were in those days. Though they're both engaged (which is not technically the same as married), engagements were implicit marriages in those days: if two people were engaged, then it was assumed they were married and "taken." If a person was engaged, they were already off the market --- long before the wedding date. Today, some who are engaged choose to go behind their fiancée's (or fiancée's) back and "date on the side," saying to themselves, "I'm only engaged," but engagement wasn't "only engagement" in those days; it was a public sign of commitment, an end to the "spouse searching" stage. We make a difference today, but then and again, we're not talking about what's merely new-age but what's godly, what's biblical, what's morally right, what's pleasing in the sight of God. And in the eyesight of God, engagement should bring a commitment before the marriage is pronounced and begins. If you can't practice faithfulness to your fiancée(e) during the engagement, how will you practice holiness, faithfulness, and spousal devotion after you two "tie the knot"?

In verse 20, The angel refers to Joseph as "son of David," revealing that Joseph is a descendant of David. We see this earlier in Matthew 1 when it comes to the genealogy of Jesus. In it, we read about "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" in Matthew 1:16. Jesus is also called the Son of David, but He is the only descendant who is Divine and God's Son.

In verse 21, the angel gives Joseph instructions on what to do with this news. The news in question is that Mary's pregnancy is due to God, is God's own doing, not her own, not hers with another man but rather, the Lord Himself. Mary's pregnancy takes on a divine nature because the Child within her own womb was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is God's Son, He is God, He is the Lord. "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." Mary, "she," the virgin prophesied 700 years before in Isaiah 7:14, would be the one to bring forth a Son, to bear a Son, and Joseph was to call His name "Jesus." The name "Jesus," according to the angel, means "Savior," and the name designated the role that the Son of God would fulfill: He would be the Savior of the world.

As Paul would go on to say about Jesus in 1 Timothy 4:10, "the living God...is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe." Jesus came to be the Savior for all men, including "His people," the Jews. If you've read Matthew's Gospel, you know that Matthew focused on the Jewishness of Jesus, His Jewish roots, His proper interpretation of the Mosaic Law in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' first mission to the Jews and not the Gentiles, and so on. And yet, we know that Jesus sends the disciples out to all the world in what we call The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

Now, **there are two points worth noting about the account of Joseph and his dream:** first, he received divine revelation that challenged his view of the nature of Mary's pregnancy: he believed that Mary had conceived a human child with another man, that she had been unfaithful to him and sexually impure, which is what the human mind would naturally believe about Mary's pregnancy if he or she didn't know differently. If we were in Joseph's shoes, we would've all believed what he did. We would never have believed Mary conceived supernaturally, but would rather have believed she did something sinful that resulted in her getting pregnant. This tells us that there were children conceived out of wedlock in the days of Joseph as well --- no, out-of-wedlock pregnancies aren't a new occurrence, either. And Joseph was angry enough to want to divorce Mary and put an end to the engagement. Divorces were also a common occurrence in Jesus' day, too, and before (as we see here with Joseph's decision). And yet, in the midst of all these believable things about the birth of Jesus (which you and I should discuss with atheists and skeptics), there is the divine, the supernatural, in that Joseph was supernaturally informed about the nature of Mary's pregnancy. Outside of the dream from the Lord, Joseph would've thought what humans normally believe in such cases (and he would've ended the engagement in ignorance). And yet, the Lord wanted His Son raised in a home with two parents, a mother and father, so the Lord takes it upon Himself to reveal to Joseph why Mary is pregnant. We sense here from the text that Mary never told Joseph why she was pregnant, and that, despite his very own misgivings about it all, he never approached her about it. This seems weird, but even in the silence, we see the Lord working here to inform him by way of a dream when he is sleeping.

Skeptics and atheists would say that, like the Virgin Birth, all of this is unbelievable, but it isn't. If Matthew wanted to forge an event, do you think he would've gone and added something like this in the Bible? Do

you think he would've added Joseph's feelings if he wanted to paint Mary's pregnancy as a virgin as a good thing and "clean up the plot" so to speak, leaving no room for embarrassment or shame, or scandal? As we contemplate the text here, let's remember that a virgin being pregnant didn't look good or appear good to the human mind no matter how one sees it. In fact, it only leaved room for scandal. To many on earth at that time, Mary was likely seen as a woman who had been unfaithful to her fiance and was covering it up by not talking about it or disclosing the information about who the father was. There was no "Paternity Court" in those days, so if Mary didn't reveal who it was, or disclose that her person violated it in any way, and the man didn't come forward and admit he was guilty, then Joseph would have to accept Mary and the child without question. He wasn't willing to do that, which is why he thought he'd end the engagement. And yet, in the midst of his decision, the choice in front of him, the Lord doesn't overpower his will and make him take Mary to be his wife. Rather, the angel sent by the Lord encourages him to take Mary as his wife because she was pregnant by the will of God and not the will of man. Had the Lord not informed Joseph, the events of the birth of Christ would have taken a different plot, perhaps.

Through Joseph's dream, we see the Lord intervene in what is expected to be nothing more than a normal engagement, infidelity, and divorce and makes it more glorious than one could've ever dreamed. He informs Joseph of what is going on, helping give Joseph information regarding his decision to proceed with the marriage or abandon Mary. How can naturalism, the idea that everything can be explained via science or natural means, do full justice to this divine revelation? Scientists and skeptics could say that this is nothing more than the processes of the subconscious at play; that can explain what happens when Joseph sleeps neurologically in terms of brain signals, but it doesn't explain the nature of the information Joseph is given by the angel during his sleep. And how did Joseph know it was an angel? And how does Matthew get ahold of this dream? Does he talk to Joseph in real life to report this information?

Joseph dies by the time Jesus is crucified on the cross, and he doesn't seem to have still been alive when Jesus starts His ministry at around 30 years old. So, with that said, how does Matthew discover the dream? Perhaps Mary tells him, or Jesus reports what He was told. We don't know for sure, but we do know that it's likely Matthew talked to Jesus' mother, Mary, about the account because she's still alive when Jesus is crucified. Science and naturalism cannot explain how Joseph saw an angel (after all, how does a human know an angel when they don't see them as regular occurrences?), that Joseph believed the angel was really an angel, or how it is that Joseph would take Mary as his wife despite her pregnancy apart from him. Science cannot explain why humans change their minds about anything or take a different course of action than planned. Science cannot explain how Joseph, once planning to ditch Mary, turns away from his original plan and marries her anyway. Science cannot explain how Joseph gets the knowledge about the divine nature of Mary's pregnancy. So, if atheists and skeptics want to criticize the birth of Jesus Christ, then they'll be forced to admit that these elements of the story cannot be verified by way of test tubes, microscopes, chemicals, hormones, incubators, petri dishes, mathematical formulas, and scientific experiment. How does one scientifically prove how a dream as vivid as Joseph's comes about?

Naturalism and science can explain why Joseph assumed Mary was pregnant with another man's child: after all, the "birds and the bees" conversation is still passed down from parents to children today. Science tells us that when a man and a woman come together and have sexual intercourse, egg and sperm can combine to create a zygote --- a child who, once surviving to term, is born and exits the womb. Science can tell us how the human conception occurs, how men and women have sex and biologically create a child, but science cannot explain how Mary, a virgin, conceives Jesus in her womb. In science and naturalism, a virgin can't get pregnant because she's never had sexual intercourse. Science can't explain how a virgin can turn pregnant (of course, science tells us that one can't get pregnant from kissing, either).

Divine revelation, Joseph's dream, is the believer's answer to skepticism here in Matthew 1 in the account of Joseph. I said last week that Mary carries Jesus for 9 months, Mary questions how she, a virgin, will conceive a child because she too believed sexual intercourse between a man and a woman had to occur before a child was conceived; Joseph believes she's had sexual intercourse with another man and wants to divorce her. These facts are undisputed, and these facts make the account credible. We all can identify with Mary's question and Joseph's initial thinking about divorcing Mary. There's not one human on the face of the earth who'd disagree with these facts. And yet, if atheists and skeptics believe these things, then it's not too hard to believe that Jesus was born of supernatural means. After all, the scandal of Mary "possibly" having had sex with another man outside of her fiancé, Joseph, would've been scandalous in Mary's day. And yet, Jesus came to show us that He is for the scandalous, those declared as societal outcasts, those who are judged harshly because of normal, natural, human understanding. It was scandalous for Mary to be pregnant while engaged (and Joseph, her fiancé, wasn't the father), but God would accomplish something greater with Mary: He would use her to bring His Son into the world, the One that angels worshipped and adored in heaven, the One that all of Heaven and earth is to bow before and adore. Yes, we see the scandal turning marvelous here with Joseph's dream, as the Lord of Heaven and earth steps in to alert Joseph of His plan. God doesn't have to do this, but He does this gracious act because He honors the decisions of human beings. He didn't make Joseph take Mary to be his wife, but instead reveals the plan of God so that Joseph, a God-fearing man, would decide with knowledge. As we read here in Matthew 1, Joseph was "a just man."

Science and naturalism tell us that nothing occurs outside of natural, biological processes. But is this true? Well, there's the neurological signals and processes that occur, and then there's a dream --- the human account of information passed during one's subconscious rest. The content of the dream, what Joseph knows and has experienced within, isn't something science and naturalism can explain. And if science and naturalism can't explain it, then, contrary to what atheists and skeptics believe, it isn't "untrue," but rather, something that science and naturalism can't explain. And that would make science and naturalism inadequate when it comes to explaining life, as we know it, in the universe. Science is useful, but there's an end to science. There's a limit to science: science can be described as the band of settlers who push as far out West in the US as possible...only to stop because they can't settle any further out or they'll land in the ocean. The ocean puts the settlers in check in colonialism --- and the supernatural and divine put science and naturalism in check when it comes to theories regarding the Virgin Birth.

Apart from the divine revelation of Joseph's dream, we get another divine revelation: that is, that the Lord prophesied the birth of Jesus by a virgin back some 700 years before it happened. Matthew 1:22-23 says,

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:
23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

"This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" is a statement that Matthew uses to tell us that an event fulfilled a verse or passage of Scripture. In this case, the prophet is Isaiah, and the event fulfilled is that of Isaiah 7:14--- that the virgin, Mary, brought forth a male Child whose name is "Immanuel." In the Hebrew, the word means "God with us," and it refers to God (Jesus, being Deity) who comes down to earth and takes on flesh (takes on humanity). As John says in the Prologue to his Gospel in John 1:14, "14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The Word became flesh, the same Word that was in the beginning with God. Who was in the beginning with God? Jesus. Paul references Jesus in Hebrews 10 when He quotes from Psalm 40:

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.

7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.'"

8 Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:5-10)

"A body you have prepared for Me." These are the words from Hebrews 10:5 of Jesus when He agrees with the will of God the Father to offer Himself up for the sins of the world. He agrees to take on human flesh, being born of the virgin Mary.

The virgin Mary conceiving Jesus was prophesied 700 years before, a testimony to the fact that the Lord fulfills His promises. He is a "man of His Word," as we'd say, He's one who predicts events before they happen because He can also bring them to pass. He is the cause behind Mary's pregnancy, the reason why Mary brings forth Jesus, the reason why Jesus would come into the world, and here we see a God who is able to conceive of something in the natural and bring it to pass. This is not just the "god" of a Christian's imagination; no, this is the God of the universe, the Lord of Heaven and earth, the One who owns everything, the One who created time and space when they didn't exist, said "let there be light" when darkness moved upon the face of the deep. This is the God who speaks things that don't exist into

existence, the God that has all power, all knowledge, and is present everywhere. This is the God that sees humanity no matter where it is located, the God who has no equal on earth or in Heaven. This is the Almighty God, the One with all power in His hand.

The Bible told us 700 years ago through the prophet Isaiah that a miracle that would supercede the natural biological processes of conception would come to pass. And in Matthew 1, it does. Mary and Joseph didn't have sexual intercourse so that it would not be said that man had anything to do with Mary's conception of Jesus. The Lord wanted everyone to know that He brought it about. If He can bring about the birth of a male Child (Jesus) in the womb of a Virgin (Mary), and the birth of a male child (John the Baptist) from the womb of a barren woman (Elizabeth), I'd like to ask the atheist and skeptic: "Is there anything too hard for God?" In a word, "No."

In Matthew 1:24-25, we read the conclusion of Joseph's dream:

24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Here, we read that Joseph awakes from his sleep, and takes Mary as his wife. Verse 25 says that he "did not know her" until Jesus had been born. Remember when the angel Gabriel visits Mary and announces the news that she'd bear Jesus? He tells her that Elizabeth was already six months pregnant at the time. Well, this means that John the Baptist was born 6 months before Jesus (his cousin). In other words, John the Baptist was 6 months old at the time of Jesus' birth. We don't know exactly when Mary and Joseph were married in holy matrimony, but we can imagine that, if Joseph and Mary tied the knot in a matter of days or weeks following Joseph's dream, then he had to wait a few months before having sexual intercourse with his wife. His refusal to have sexual intercourse with her until she bore Jesus shows that Joseph was indeed an honorable man.

