

Readings

Scripture

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." ¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷ The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!"

- Isaiah 7:10-17 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

Behind every spermatozoon lies the whole history of the universe: locked within it lies no inconsiderable part of the world's future...But once, and for a special purpose, He dispensed with that long line which is His instrument: once His life-giving finger touched a woman without passing through the ages of interlocked events. Once the great glove of nature was taken off His hand. His naked hand touched her. There was of course a unique reason for it. That time He was creating not simply a man but the Man who was to be Himself: was creating Man anew: was beginning, at this divine and human point, the New Creation of all things. The whole soiled and weary universe quivered at this direct injection of essential life – direct, uncontaminated, not drained through all the crowded history of Nature...As far as concerns the creation of Christ's human nature (the Grand Miracle whereby His divine begotten nature enters into it is another matter) the miraculous conception is one more witness that here is Nature's Lord. He is doing now, small and close, what He does in a different fashion for every woman who conceives. He does it this time without a line of human ancestors: but even where He uses human ancestors it is not the less He who gives life (Matthew 23:9). The bed is barren where that great third party, Genius, is not present.

- C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (p. 225-226)

Sermon Outline

Conceived by the Holy Spirit
Isaiah 7:10-17

What Child is This?
Brad Anderson

The virgin conception will always be a central teaching of the Christian faith.

Why is the historic fact of the virgin conception of Jesus so important?

Because it establishes God's human entrance into the creation as the living word... (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Because it establishes God's promises found in the Old Testament... (Isaiah 7:14)

Because it establishes God's qualification to deal with sin... (Romans 5:18-21)

Because it establishes God's commitment to make all things new again... (Revelation 21:1-7)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Over the course of a day or a week, what signs do you tend to pay attention to and which signs do you tend to ignore?
- Ahaz was known as an evil king, so what do you make of his response in Isaiah 7:12? Was this unbelief or humility? What was his alternative plan? (See 2 Kings 16:7-9)
- What is the sign that the Lord will give to Ahaz anyway? How does this sign fit the crisis? Can a comforting sign also warn? Instead of peace, what will happen once Israel and Aram are out of the picture?
- What situation are you facing that frightens you now? What forces are involved? On a scale of 1-10, how trusting of God are you in that situation?
- What makes it difficult for you to trust God in such fearful times? When have you found that following your solution to a problem, rather than God's, only made the problem worse?
- Ahaz masked his lack of trust in God with false humility. What examples have you seen of people covering up their sin with a veneer of virtue? When was the last time you did this?