

“The Sign of the Son”

Special Presentation

Isaiah 7:1-14; Matthew 1:18-25

The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

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Don Maurer: Jeff, I would like to tell you something.

Jeff: Yes?

Don: Did you know that “The Little Drummer Boy” is an illustration of the Westminster Confession, chapter 16, section 5, on good works?

Jeff: No.

Don: Yeah, because let’s face it. The little drummer boy is regenerate. He loves Jesus; he wants to present something. But there’s nothing he can think of that’s fit to give Him. So he plays his drum and the Lord is pleased with him. And the Confession says that God *“is pleased to reward that which is sincere, although accompanied by many imperfections.”*

Bishop Rodgers: Oooh! All right! *(Laughter)*

Don: So there you go. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I know there was a hidden, subtle dig in there. *(Laughter)* I think I know what it was, but I’m gonna pretend that I didn’t hear it.

Don: Yeah. Well—

Jeff: He doesn’t deny it. *(Laughter)*

Don: A fellow elder I was telling this to at church said, “I don’t think so.” *(Laughter)*
All right.

Sig Tragard: Did you know that Santa Claus was at the Nicean Council?

Don: Yes.

Sig: Okay.

Jeff: Charlie, do you want to take Don and set him outside? *(Laughter)*

Don: I’m not gonna play? Am I not gonna play today?

Jeff: Oh!

Don: Oh, oh!

Jeff: Sorry.

Don: You don’t look sorry to me. *(Laughter)* All right; here we go. I hope this recorder is working. All right. *(Music)*

Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we thank You for the day that You’ve provided for us and for the love of Christ that has been shed abroad in our hearts. We’re thankful for the many blessings of salvation. We’re thankful for things like the regeneration of the Spirit, and the gifts of repentance and faith. We’re thankful for justification and adoption, for sanctification and certainly for our impending glorification. We’re thankful for all of these things and many more—the gifts and graces that You give us that sustain us day by day. We’re thankful for the Holy Spirit Himself who not only applies the work of Christ to us, but bears with us in our weaknesses, prays on our behalf when we know not what to speak, cries out on our behalf, and blesses us and strengthens us day by day, and is a deposit and a guarantee of better things yet to come. Father, You are immensely good and You are fully wise, and You are all-powerful.

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And so we commit ourselves to You. The days sometimes are a blessing; often they are difficult. And even when they are a blessing they are sprinkled with difficulty. And Lord, we know what it's like to walk in the humiliating path of the Lord Jesus Christ, and You didn't spare us from that, nor do You promise to. But in placing our feet upon that path You shape us and conform us more and more into the image of our Savior. And yet we know, Father, and have confidence that because we are in Christ the path will lead to its culmination in our Savior, and we thank You for that.

Father, today as we come before You we ask on behalf of those who are suffering, those who are ill, those who are in need. We certainly think of Mary and the pain she must be in as she waits for surgery. We ask, Lord, that You'll strengthen her body. We pray that You'll encourage her heart and mind. And Father, we pray that You'll preserve her strength.

Father, we thank You for the good report we heard from Bob. And Lord, we pray that the next three treatments would have a good effect, and that he would be able to put this behind him, and that there would be many years ahead full of goodness and fruit.

Father, we ask that Your hand would be upon Kirstin as she recovers from knee surgery. And we're thankful for Ted's recovery. And Lord, we pray that both would continue in good health.

Father, we pray for Craig and ask that Your hand would be upon Him in his search. And Lord, we ask that You would hear our praise in regard to Roger. And Lord, we're thankful that He's getting better.

Father, we continue to remember our brother Bruce and ask that Your hand would be upon him. And we pray, Father, and give You thanks for Mike and for his work here at the church. And Lord, we pray that as he looks at approaching retirement from this particular vocation that he would look forward to it so that he might have time to give in other areas of Your kingdom, and to his family. Father, we're thankful for His work.

Lord, we continue to be thankful for folks like the bishop who are among us. And Lord, they humbly sit and listen to the teaching when they could easily teach many seminary classes, and have. And so Father, we're thankful for men like him who have such a humble character and who have such a depth of learning. And Lord, we just pray that Your hand of blessing would continue to be upon him throughout this holiday season and in the days to come.

Lord, we ask now that You would bless us and strengthen us by Your grace, and that You will do this not only for our good but for the glory of Christ, and so we ask it in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well let me ask that you turn to Isaiah chapter 7 and that you look at Matthew chapter 1 for just a minute; Isaiah chapter 7 and Matthew chapter 1. (*Jeff clears his throat.*) I am three or four weeks out of a cold, and in the mornings and in the evenings I have that hangover. Oh, that's not a good thing to say. (*Laughter*)

Ted Wood: It's an Anglican hangover.

Jeff: What's that?

Ted: Anglicans have this hangover.

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Jeff: An Anglican hangover? OIs that what you said? *(Laughter)* No? Okay. All I want to say is that I was out with Ted last night. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: Uh-oh; there you go. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I couldn't believe some of the jokes you told. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay. Isaiah 7.

Transcriber's Note: Charlies' phone plays Romans 6:2.

Don Maurer: Boy, that's appropriate.

Jeff: If you don't want me to read it, Charlie, all you have to do is ask. *(Laughter)* I heard the electronic voice.

Don Maurer: You had a hangover, Jeff. And the voice said, *“How can you who are dead to sin still live in it?”* So there you go: a hangover.

Jeff: You know, you're taking that “straighten Jeff out” very seriously. *(Laughter)* Okay; Isaiah 7.

“In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah the king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. For the house of David was told, ‘Syria is in league with Ephraim.’ The heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

“And the LORD said to Isaiah: ‘Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the Upper Pool, the highway to the Washer's Field, and say to him: ‘Be careful; be quiet and do not fear. And do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands of the fierce anger of Rezin king of Syria, the son of Remaliah, because Syria, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have devised evil against you, saying, ‘Let us go up against Judah to terrify it. And let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it.’” Thus says the LORD God: ‘It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.’ For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within forty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.’

“Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ‘Ask a sign of the LORD your God. Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.’

“But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.’

“And he said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.’”

And then let's go to Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 1. And let me read 1:18 ff.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son and you will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’

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“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which means ‘God with us.’

“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. So he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a Son. And he called His name Jesus.”

Don Maurer: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Thank you, Don! *(Laughter)* Let me talk to you this morning; (this is morning, right?) *(Laughter)* Let me talk to you this morning about the Virgin Birth. I want to talk to you about the Incarnation.

Don Maurer: Amen.

Jeff: And this is a fine time of year to do that. And so I want us to take a minute and reflect on it. I want to reflect on its importance. And I want to reflect on not only its importance for us as believers, but I want to reflect on its importance for us personally as believers in Jesus Christ, personally known by Him and united to Him. So I want us to think about those kinds of things.

The first thing I want to do is that I want to just clear up a misconception that I think some people have. And it’s an inconsequential thing; if it doesn’t mean anything to you, then no big deal. But there is such a thing called the immaculate reception. *(Laughter)* Not the immaculate reception, Don; what am I thinking of?

Don Maurer: The Steelers. December 23, 1972, at about 4:00. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, you pull Don in and this really goes sideways quick. I was thinking about the Immaculate—

Don: Conception.

Jeff: Do you have the time figures on that too? Do you have the time stamped on that? *(Laughter)*

Don: Yeah; 1854.

Jeff: Ohhh! And who annunciated that declaration?

Don: It was one of the popes.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: I forget which one it was. Leo?

Jeff: No.

Don: No? Okay.

Jeff: Oh man, I can hardly believe it!

Don: I can’t either.

Jeff: I can’t believe it! *(Laughter)* He doesn’t know something. *(Laughter)* Anyway, it was Pope Pius IX in 1854, the declaration of the Immaculate Conception. And the Immaculate Conception really has nothing to do with the Incarnation directly. It really has something to do with Mary, because the issue was for the Roman Catholics just as it has been for the Protestants, how in the world can Jesus be preserved from sin just because there is no seed from the father Joseph?, because He’s still in Mary’s womb, and Mary herself is a sinner. And so the Roman Catholics said, “Well, we’ll take care of this.

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We'll issue a papal decree that says that Mary herself was immaculately conceived by Anne, and therefore—“

Don Maurer: Anne?

Jeff: Anne.

Don: Where does it say that in the Bible, that her mother's name was Anne?

(Laughter) Go ahead, Jeff; sorry.

Jeff: You know, it's amazing that you can see me shaking my head. *(Laughter)*

Bishop: He jumped out of the head of Anne. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: So that's the Roman Catholic answer as to how Mary was preserved. Protestants take that a little differently. Protestants believe that Jesus Himself by virtue of the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary and overshadowing her preserved Christ from sin. And we'll talk about that if we get time; I'd just like to say a word about that. This is just an aside, because it's at this time of year that we hear this kind of language. I don't want you to be confused by it. I want you to understand that when you hear the Immaculate Conception that this belongs to the Roman Catholic understanding of how it was that Jesus was kept from sin in Mary's womb. But I want to just—Yes?

Bishop: Some theologians have said that Jesus inherited fallen human nature but did not sin. Not that I buy that or am suggesting that, but it is a position that is taken.

Jeff: Yeah. What I want us to do is that I want us to think about the question why? Why the Virgin Birth? And then I want us to move to its meaning.

Now oftentimes we think about the abstract in terms of why theologically. But I want us to think this morning a little more Biblically than theologically. I want us to think about why in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan there is the Virgin Birth. And in order for that to take place and in order for us to answer that question, we need to go back to Isaiah chapter 7.

There's a sense in which we can go back to the Garden of Eden after the Fall and kind of trace our way up. But I want us to settle on Isaiah chapter 7 because it's a most prominent passage that the New Testament says is being fulfilled. And it's the teaching about the Virgin Birth. And that happens in Isaiah chapter 7.

Now what's the setting of Isaiah chapter 7? Well just to take a lot of history and sort of boil it down into a very manageable chunk, you need to remember that what we have here is that we have a king sitting on the throne in the south in Judah. And this is after the divide of the empire. You remember how Solomon was the last king of the united empire before it reunites under David. And his son Rehoboam is really the one under whom the empire is divided. And so ten tribes go in the north with Jeroboam the son of Nebat. And then two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, are left in the south. And those divisions remain for a long time. And in fact the northern tribes are carried away by Assyria in 722. and then in 586 the southern tribes are carried away into captivity by Babylon.

Now in between that time when they are divided under Rehoboam and they're carried away by the Assyrians and the Babylonians we have this story taking place. And this story is really about three nations. It's really about Damascus—it's up here; it's sort of the northern area. It's about Israel here and it's about Judah in the south. I think it might be good for us to put that up here.

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So we have Damascus, and Damascus is always a thorn in the flesh of Israel. And then we have Judah in the south.

Now one of the things that we realize is that Assyria is on the rise and exerting a lot of power. And what you have to understand—and I think you guys do—is that the land of Israel is something like a land bridge. Here’s Egypt down here; here’s Babylon over here. And one of the ways in which Israel is very valuable because it is this land bridge that connects along the sea. It connects with those larger areas in the south and those areas in the north. And so Israel in some ways is a very valuable piece of land.

Assyria is threatening Damascus. And so Damascus goes to Israel and says, “Hey, look!” It’s kind of funny because they’re always a thorn in the side of Israel. They come and say, “Look, we have to unite together on this one, because if we don’t we’re going to be under the Assyrians’ rule.”

And so Damascus and Israel get together and they say, “Okay, we’re going to resist Assyria. What do we need to do? We need to get Judah involved in this resistance.”

And so these two kings say, “All right. What we need to do is that we need to unseat Ahaz and put Tabeel in his place. And in so doing we’ll stand as one against encroaching Assyria.” And so these two kings go to Ahaz and they say, “Look! We want your help.” And they probably don’t tell them that “if you don’t give us your help we’re going to unseat you and put Tabeel in your place. But we need your help to stand against the Assyrians.”

And in the midst of all of this you get Isaiah. And he goes to Ahaz and he talks to him.

Now here’s the thing that you have to take on board. The thing that you have to take on board is that Ahaz doesn’t know what to do. If you read the book of Isaiah, he has options. For instance he could seek help down here in the south with the Egyptians. But he doesn’t do that because the Egyptians are weak. So what he does is that he says, “The only option that I have is to go to the biggest player on the block—and that’s Assyria—and ask them for help.” And so that’s what’s happening.

What’s happening is that Judah has asked Assyria for help. These guys that are coming against him, they’re going to teach him a lesson and seat Tabeel in his place, and they’re going to resist Assyria. And in the midst of all this Isaiah the prophet goes to him.

Ahaz knows that these guys are coming for him. They’re camped about twenty miles away from him; he knows they’re coming. So Ahaz is out checking the water ducts. Isaiah meets him with his son Shear-Jashub. And that’s when this great exchange happens.

And that exchange is “Look, the LORD God is going to preserve you. And all you have to do is ask Him for a sign that He’s going to preserve you.” And Ahaz says, “no, no, no. I’m not going to ask the LORD. I’m too pious for that; I don’t want to put Him to the test”—that sort of thing.

And Ahaz is rebuked by Isaiah. Isaiah says to him, “You know, you try my patience. But you’re going to try God’s patience now in all this”—that kind of thing, right? And it’s in that exchange that God says, “I’ll give you a sign; I’ll give you my own sign. And the sign will be a virgin-born Son.”

And if you read further into Isaiah you get the sense that He’ll be born into the poverty of His people. So that’s the historic background of what we see as a reason.

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Now can we narrow that down a little bit? I think we can. Why would God do this? Why would He provide this as a sign? Well, I want you to go to a passage that is quite striking, actually. It’s in 2 Kings 16. And in 2 Kings 16 we actually find something of the letter that Ahaz writes to Tiglath-Pileser in Assyria. And this is what he says. Now I want you to listen to what he says; it’s really striking.

Bishop: What verse are you in?

Jeff: This is verse 7; 2 Kings 16:7. *“So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, ‘I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.’”*

So this is Damascus and Assyria who are attacking. And Ahaz writes a letter to Tiglath-Pileser in Syria and he says, “Come up and help me.”

Now notice what he says. He says, *“I am your servant and your son.”*

Now who is Ahaz? Ahaz is a son. He is the son of David. And did you notice what God says to him? He addresses him as the house of David.

And then what he says is essentially this. He says, “Fine! You don’t want to be the son of David, the son of God? Then I’ll send My own Son.” And that’s the idea, right? “I can’t get David’s posterity to be faithful. And so I’ll send My own Son to sit on the Davidic throne.” That’s the idea.

Now go to Matthew’s Gospel and what do you find? In Matthew’s Gospel you find something really interesting. Matthew’s Gospel begins with this. You can tell that Matthew is not taking creative writing courses. *(Laughter)* Because he begins with a genealogy, right? He says, “Let me just get everybody engaged right up at the front.” *(Laughter)* “Let me pull them in with a really great story. Here’s my genealogy.”

And you read this genealogy. And it’s really fascinating because it’s divided up into three sections. It’s built on a structure. What you have is that you have Christ, David and Abraham mentioned at the beginning of it. And then that series is inverted at the end by Abraham, David and Christ at the end of it. And so it’s like a chiasmic inclusio. It’s ABC, and at the end it’s CBA. So there’s a structure to it.

Like I said there are three sections to the genealogy. And each section has fourteen generations. What’s interesting is that David’s name in Hebrew has three consonants, and its numerical value is 14. And so one of the things that scholars think that Matthew is doing by introducing the genealogy of Jesus in this way is he’s saying that this is a genealogy of David.

But the problem is that Jesus isn’t a Son of David in the way that we might think He’s the Son of David. And in fact who is the Davidic lineage at this point in Matthew’s Gospel? It’s Joseph. We’re told that Joseph is the son of David. And so when Joseph names Jesus what is he doing? He is adopting Him as his own Son.

And so here is this beautiful picture of God saying, “I’m going to send My own Son to sit on the throne of David.” And how is it going to be that He is going to sit on the throne of David? He’s going to be Davided by the son of David, Joseph. You see how that works out.

Now look at this just for a minute. It’s actually in verses 21 and 25. *“She will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus.”* This is what he’s saying to Joseph. And then look at verse 25. *“She gave birth to a Son, and he called His name Jesus.”* In Greek those are

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almost identical statements. Because of the tenses they have to be a little different, but they're almost identical statements. But right in the center of that look at what it says.

This is still the prophet Isaiah. *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, .. God with us.”*

And we find that this is Jesus. And it's not surprising to reach to the end of Matthew's Gospel in chapter 28, and what does Jesus say to the disciples as it says in this text? *“Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* So Immanuel, God with us, is Jesus. And Jesus says at the end of the Gospel, *“I am with you always.”* “I'm always with you.” And so Jesus is the Son of God. And He's brought into the line and the lineage of David through Joseph, according to Matthew.

And one of the things then that we see is, we see that this is the historical reason for the question we asked—why the Virgin Birth? God sent a Son, His own Son, his own faithful Son, to supplant those unfaithful sons of David. Yes?

Bryan Whittington: Isn't the Virgin Birth also important because of original sin passing from father to father to father? So for Him to be able to live a perfect life wouldn't He have to be born of a virgin so He doesn't have original sin imputed to Him?

Jeff: Yeah. And that's actually the next point. The next point is—

Bishop: He has to be an innocent Lamb.

Jeff: Say that again.

Jeff: He has to be an innocent Lamb.

Jeff: Yes; He has to be an innocent Lamb. And the question is, how is that going to take place? And it's at this point that Luke leads us into thinking about the Virgin Birth.

Now I want you to go with me to Luke's Gospel for just a minute in Luke chapter 2. And in Luke chapter 2 we find something really interesting. But before I read what's there let me say something to you.

One of the things that you have to realize is that in this time it's a Roman setting, but it's also a Greek setting. And it's interesting. One of the things about the Romans is that they adopt a lot of Greek culture. And they adopt a lot of Greek culture early on. But it's really in the fourth century B.C. with Alexander the Great and Cush by this Macedon, who takes Greek culture across the face of the earth all the way to India. You see the real Hellenization or the real spread of Greek culture.

And it's not that everybody becomes Greek. Hellenization is more like this. It's more like the Hellenization and Greek culture comes in and adapts to the existing culture, and so it changes a little bit. It doesn't stay the same. It doesn't become Greek. But it becomes a third thing. It becomes basically a mixture of two cultures. That's what Hellenization is.

And the Romans brought a lot of Hellenization in. And so for instance, you find a lot of the Greek gods being brought into Rome. And so for instance you have Zeus in Greece and you have Jupiter in Rome. And they are the same god.

And one of the things that you find is that you find that there is always this push to Hellenize the culture. And Judaism is not able to resist that. And in fact that's the reason why the Maccabean revolt starts. That's the start that ignites the Maccabean revolt.

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But here’s the point. The point is that Greek and Roman gods are just bigger humans. And Zeus or Jupiter is always, always, always cheating on his wife—his goddess wife, right? I can’t remember; who is that? I can’t remember who it is.

Ted: Hera?

Jeff: Hera; that’s right. He’s always messing around on her. She’s always mad about it, so she’s always punishing humans because Zeus is always messing around. And in fact the interesting thing is that when you think about Julius Caesar, he’s at the end of the Old Roman empire.

Ted: The Roman republic.

Jeff: The Roman empire; yes, that’s right. And you get Augustus being the very first emperor. And here’s the interesting thing. Julius Caesar claimed that in his lineage was Apollo—the god of war, right? And so there was this idea that the gods can be part of my lineage.

Now the interesting thing is that the way Luke puts the Holy Spirit interfacing with Mary in the conception of Jesus is unlike language that you would find in Greek or Roman gods. And so what you find is, you find things like this. I guess this is in chapter 1, verse 35. *“And the angel answered her.”* Because you know, here’s the question. The question is in verse 34. *“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*

Don’t you just love how I just have to point out that liberal scholars think that people in the ancient times were so stupid? Mary just happened to get pregnant and she wouldn’t have known how. *(Laughter)* Mary certainly knew how. She’s saying to God, “Okay, God; there’s a big problem here. I don’t have a husband right now, so how am I going to get pregnant? I’m a virgin.”

And this is what is said to her. *“And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the Child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.’”*

And the idea is that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that takes her under His wing and does something. And it remains inexplicable. And yet one of the things that Luke is doing is, he’s keeping us from thinking about it as being that God comes down and has sex with Mary, because that’s what the Romans thought. And so this is not what’s going to happen. “But the Holy Spirit is going to overshadow you.”

Bishop: Because of the Protestant Immaculate Conception.

Jeff: Because of the Protestant Immaculate Conception. *(Laughter)* Because it’s the Holy Spirit who is going to keep Jesus from sin.

Now this is as good a time as any to bring this up. How is it that we receive sin from our parents? There are two ideas that are main ideas about how we receive sin from our parents. The first one is—

Don Maurer: Creationism and traducianism.

Jeff: What’s that?

Don: Creationism and traducianism.

Jeff: Oh man; listen to Don! Traducianism and creationism.

Bishop: I’m a traducianist.

Jeff: Are you really?

Bishop: Yes.

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Jeff: Oh man! Look out! (*Laughter*) So tell us then what traducianism is as to your understanding, because—

Bishop: It says that as we inherit genetically from our parents, we also inherit our fallen human nature.

Jeff: Okay. So traducianism is that we inherit our fallen human nature genetically. The fallenness is passed down through human genetics.

Now the creationist believes that the Fall or the sinfulness of the Fall in Adam is imputed to the person himself or herself, imputed typically at conception. That’s the idea. So there is an imputation of judgment, an imputation of guilt upon the person at conception. Those are typically the two ways in which people think about it.

Ted: What do you mean by *imputed*?

Jeff: Yes. So there is an accounting or a reckoning.

Ted: It’s kind of like the accounting that a CPA would do; I’m quite serious.

Jeff: That’s right, because that’s the way we explain the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us.

Bishop: Right.

Jeff: So one of the ways in which we explain how it is that Christ took our sins upon Himself on the cross is that we say that our sins were imputed to the Substitute.

Ted: I’m trying to understand this as an accounting thing.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: I’ve always been unhappy with that description. I’ll just say it and I’ll shut up. It just seems to me that when we’re put into union with Christ that it’s more than an accounting; it’s a reality. It’s actually an essential reality. Now I understand that this understanding is a Roman Catholic understanding. I’ve been told that, but I didn’t come to it—

Jeff: Well, I don’t think that is the case. I think that the reality of union with Christ—

Ted: It’s an essential.

Jeff: I think it’s three things. First of all, it’s *decretive*, so it’s predestinarian. I think it’s *spiritual*; it’s a union of the Spirit with us to Christ, so it’s a real union. And then thirdly it’s an *existential* union. We actually experience that spiritual union that was decreed long ago.

Ted: When we are put into union with Christ, are you saying that our essence has changed?

Jeff: No. But here is what we are. As you think about the benefits of salvation in Christ, one of the benefits of Christ’s salvation, for instance, is that we’re adopted. But that’s a forensic aspect. One of the things is that we’re justified. That’s where the accounting thing comes in.

But one of the things is that we’re sanctified. And that is sanctification. That’s where you get into the different aspects. That’s where I’m removed from one sphere and placed into another. That’s where in a progressive sense of sanctification I continually grow. And so there are all sorts of different aspects. I think the reckoning is one aspect.

So this is where I would say that I would come down probably a little bit in the middle of both of these, and here’s why. I think that Adam’s sin is imputed to us as humans at the beginning. For instance, think about the very beginning in Genesis. How long did humans

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live after the Fall? Quite a while. But what happened? As they sinned, sin worked itself into the very fabric of their being. And as they sinned, and as they lived under the curse, life got shorter until God says, “I’m going to cut it down to 120.”

But look what happens. By the time you get to Psalm 90, if we live eighty years that’s pretty strong. And so you see that living life under the curse has its effect. And that’s where I think the traducianist aspect of sin sort of moving from one person or from one generation to the next is manifest. Yes?

Don Bishop: Would the Flood have anything to do with this?

Jeff: Do you mean the atmospheric kind of thing?

Don: How else would you explain the life spans all of a sudden—

Jeff: I understand that those guys argue that there was a change in the atmosphere. I just don’t know enough even to sound like I know something about that. But I’ve read Henry Morris on that. To me it sounds good, but he’s writing to a non-scientist, so I don’t put too much stock in my own scientific ability. Just ask my high school science teacher. *(Laughter)*

Bishop: In justification I’m being reckoned righteous. It does not transform us; that’s sanctification.

Jeff: That’s right.

Bishop: So it seems to me that the weakness in the creationist position is that I’m not just imputed to be a sinner. I’m actually a sinner. So it seems to me that traducianism is at least a model to understand how it’s passed on.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: Because if it’s only reckoned to me, I’m still not as yet a functional sinner. Creationism’s weak point is how it is that we end up being actual sinners. We’re not just reckoned sinners but actual sinners.

Don Maurer: Wait till we get to Romans 5.

Jeff: I was just thinking that. I was thinking about being in union with Adam and our sin in Adam.

We’re nearing the end. So let me just say a quick word of application as to why this is important. Why is the Incarnation important to us? When we think about ourselves as Christians oftentimes we think that we have this idea, depending on our traditions. I think the Anglican tradition puts more value on the Incarnation than on some other aspects of Christendom. But--

Ted: That’s prominent in the Eastern Orthodox view.

Jeff: Oh, is that right?

Ted: Oh, absolutely.

Jeff: I said Christianity.

Don Maurer: Oohh! *(Laughter)*

Ted: Your Reformer predecessors were very keen on Eastern Orthodoxy and they studied it quite thoroughly.

Jeff: Well, they studied the Medievalists quite a bit.

Ted: Well, the Incarnation is a big deal in Eastern Orthodoxy, and it is a fairly big deal in Anglicanism.

Don Maurer: It should be a big deal to all of us.

“The Sign of the Son”

Ted: Yes, it should be a big deal to all of us.

Jeff: And why should it be a big deal to all of us? Well, it should be a big deal to all of us because—and here’s an Eastern theologian—“*what was not assumed—*”

Bishop: “*Was not redeemed.*”

Ted: Athanasius.

Jeff: And so the idea is that if Christ didn’t take upon Himself a human nature, that human nature is not redeemed. And He took it upon Himself in Christ. And that raises the question of how do the divine and the human relate to one another in the Person of Christ? But that’s for another time.

But why is the Incarnation important? It’s important because if Christ did not have a human nature then human nature is not redeemed.

So I’ll tell you what. I’ve got to run, and you guys do too, I’m sure. So I guess we’ll see you next year. *(Applause)*

Don Maurer: Jeff, one more thing. Sinclair Ferguson wrote a book called *The Child in the Manger*. And the first chapter begins with the genealogy in Matthew. I highly recommend it. Secondly, is the immaculate reception related to the Hail Mary pass?

Jeff: I think so. *(Laughter)* I would say this to you, too. I would echo this, Don. We’re actually reading the Ferguson book in our family devotion time.

Don: Oh, great!

Jeff: It’s really very good.

Sig: Before Jeff prays let me tell you that we won’t be here next week or the week after. So January 7 is the next Friday, right? And the Brave Men would like to say thank you. *(Applause)*

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff is given a gift.

Sig: I understand that there is enough money in there to get out of Dodge and relax.

Jeff: Oh yeah?

Sig: Absolutely!

Jeff: All right.

Sig: *(Unclear; Sig teases Jeff)* But really, thank you very, very much; thank you.

Jeff: All right; let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day. Thank You for our time together. Lord, bless us as we spend time with friends and family this holiday season. Keep us safe; keep our families safe. Father, we ask that You would do this for our good and for the glory of Christ Jesus. And certainly, Father, we pray that You’ll bless our nation in the coming year. And Lord, we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.