

Viewer Guide

The Case for Christmas Session 2: Beneath the Fake News

Video Teaching:

Notes

Critics say there were stories of an earlier mythological god named Mithras long before Jesus was born- who was born of a virgin, in a cave, on December 25, had twelve disciples, sacrificed himself for world peace, was buried in a tomb, and rose again three days later. Sound familiar?

Mithras actually wasn't born of a virgin. Instead, the myth says he emerged fully grown out of a rock- and he was wearing a hat!

Is it true Mithras might have been born on December 25. But so what? The Gospels don't tell us when Jesus was born.

There is no clear evidence that pagan sources used the word *virgin* as referring to the mothers of heroes, mythical or historical, who were represented as being begotten by the gods.

Many of the supposed virgin-birth stories don't occur until *after* Christianity- so if there was any borrowing, it would be in the other direction. Even if some stories did come before Jesus, it doesn't mean they influenced Christianity.

The myths and legends bear no resemblance to the incarnation of Jesus. They are generally mythological tales about gods desiring mortal women, who give birth to half-human, half-divine heroes who have the same weakness and sins as we do.

No search for parallels has given a truly satisfactory explanation of how early Christians happened upon the idea of a virginal conception- unless, of course, it really took place.

The reports of Jesus' birth, teachings, death and resurrection appear in a historical context, are based in eyewitness accounts, and are recorded virtually immediately after his life.

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1. How much did you know about Mithras or the other legends mentioned prior to the teachings you just saw? What do you think about the similarities between the virgin birth of Jesus and some of the mythological concepts that seem similar?
2. Read aloud Hebrews 4:15. Most of the mythological tales on which critics say Jesus' birth story is based involved a hero who is half god/ half man, but he struggles with sin and weakness. How does this differ from what the Bible teaches about Jesus?
3. Why is it advantageous to know that the reports of the virgin birth were recorded virtually immediately after Jesus' resurrection and ascension? How does that lend credibility to the claim that Jesus was born a virgin?
4. What questions have you had in the past about the truth of the virgin birth? How has this week's teaching helped to illuminate these questions? What other questions do you still have at this point that you want to discuss with the group?