

The “Genesis” of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:18 & Luke 1:35)

I. Matthew 1:1,18 (NRSV) *1 An account of the **GENEALOGY** [γένεσις] of **Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.** ... 18 Now the **BIRTH** [γένεσις] of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child **FROM** the Holy Spirit.*

A. **GENEALOGY & BIRTH** = γένεσις (genesis – origin, birth, genealogy)

1. The ORIGIN, BIRTH, GENEALOGY is limited to “Jesus” as “the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” This passage says nothing about His being the Son of God!

B. **FROM** = ἐκ (ek – out from)

1. Mary “was discovered holding in [the] belly **out from** Spirit holy.”

a. The preposition ἐκ (out from) literally means “out from within,” or metaphorically can mean “source” or “primary cause.”

2. The early Christians understood this to mean “out from within,” that the human child was formerly “holy Spirit.”

II. Luke 1:35 (LGV) *35 And the messenger answering said to her, “A holy Breath will come to you, and a Power of the Highest will envelop you, by which even the already begotten holy Thing will be called ‘Son of God’.”*

A. τὸ **γεννώμενον** ἅγιον, “holy thing which is begotten” (present, passive, neuter participle of γεννάω). This is a unique expression appearing only here in the NT. The present tense and passive voice of the participle indicates that the Son of God already existed as the “holy Thing which is [already] begotten” when Gabriel made the announcement to Mary prior to her conception. Compare the present, passive, participle of γεννάω in the LXX: Jer. 16:3; 4 Macc. 13:19; 4 Macc. 14:14; Wis. 4:6. **In all cases** this present, passive, participle refers to those already begotten, never to someone yet to be begotten.

B. The “Power” and “Spirit” said to come and envelop Mary was understood by the earliest Christians as the pre-human Son of God, “Word/Wisdom.”

1. Justin Martyr (AD 100-165): “It is wrong, therefore, to understand **the Spirit** and **the Power** of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God.”¹

2. Theophilus of Antioch (AD ?-185): “but His Word, through whom He made all things, being His **Power** and His Wisdom, ...”²

3. Tertullian of Carthage (AD 155-220): “Pray, tell me, why **the Spirit of God** descended into a woman’s womb at all, if He did not do so for the purpose of partaking of flesh from the womb.”³

¹ Justin Martyr, First Apology, ch. xxxiii

² Theophilus of Antioch, To Autolytus, Bk. II, ch. xxii

³ Tertullian, On the Flesh of Christ, XIX

4. Hippolytus of Rome (AD 170-235): *“Who, then, was in heaven but the Word unincarnate [lit. without flesh], who was dispatched to show that He was upon earth and was also in heaven? For He was Word, **He was Spirit, He was Power.** ... Rightly, then, did he say that He who was in heaven was called from the beginning by this name, the Word of God, as being that from the beginning.”*⁴

5. Lactantius (AD 250-325): *“Therefore **the Holy Spirit of God,** descending from heaven, chose the holy Virgin, that He might enter into her womb. But she, being filled by the possession of **the Divine Spirit,** conceived; and without any intercourse with a man, her virgin womb was suddenly impregnated.”*⁵

⁴ Hippolytus, *Against Noetus*, ch. iv

⁵ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, Bk. IV, ch. xii