

A VIRGIN CONCEIVED AND HAD A SON

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Luke 1:26-38

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INTRO.

-- About 10 miles west of the Sea of Galilee is a hillside village named Nazareth. There were headlines earlier this year that Jesus' boyhood home may have been discovered underneath the remains of a large Byzantine cathedral there. Not far away, near the center of the village is another church that has been built above a well that dates back to biblical times. Visitors who drink from that well are drinking from the same well where Jesus drank.

The church that encompasses that well is named the Church of the Annunciation, because according to tradition it was at that well that the angel Gabriel appeared to a young teen named Mary to announce that she would give birth to the Messiah.

-- The story of Jesus' birth contains several accounts of angels appearing to different people to announce that phenomenal event. We looked at the first of those appearances last week in the first part of Luke 1, where Luke tells the story of Gabriel's appearance to an elderly priest named Zechariah to tell him that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would finally have a son who prepare the way for the arrival of the Messiah - that son was, of course, the great preacher John the Baptist.

-- Today we come to the second announcement by an angel, which Luke records immediately following the story of Zechariah. This second announcement will involve an even greater, more significant miracle.

Luke 1:26-34 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

I. The Miracle of Jesus' Birth

A. Born of a Virgin

1. Gabriel's second birth announcement is different from the first in 2 obvious ways: the place and the person to whom he is sent.

a. Place

-- Gabriel went this time not to Jerusalem, the religious center of the nation, but to the northern hill country of Galilee, to the hillside village of Nazareth. As far as most of Israel was concerned, nothing important ever happened there, and no one important lived there or had ever come from there. Being from Nazareth was like being from Iowa or North Dakota (just kidding).

b. Person

-- Even more significant is the difference between the two persons to whom Gabriel was sent in this chapter. Zechariah and Mary had very little in common. Zechariah was an elderly priest; Mary was a young teenage girl.

2. Something that Luke emphasizes about Mary is the fact that she is a virgin.

a. **v. 27**, "to a virgin betrothed to a man"

-- Betrothal was a very serious form of engagement. Betrothal was legally binding and could be broken only by divorce or death. The betrothed couple was legally bound to one another but had not yet started to live together as husband and wife. The betrothal lasted about a year, long enough to demonstrate that the woman wasn't pregnant.

b. Luke repeats and underscores the fact that Mary was a virgin in verse 34.

v. 34, And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

-- 2,000 years ago in vitro fertilization didn't exist; you had to have sex to have a baby. Mary had never been sexually active, and she and Joseph were not yet husband and wife. The idea of a virgin birth had never occurred to her - or to anyone else.

So, when Gabriel made his announcement to Mary, she responded with a question. Unlike Zechariah's response from last week, Mary's question didn't express doubt. Mary's question expressed puzzlement. It was a very practical question about "how" the announcement would be accomplished.

B. Gabriel's Answer (v. 35)

v. 35, 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.

-- The son that Mary would bear and give birth to would be conceived as a result of the supernatural, miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

The image of the Holy Spirit "overshadowing" Mary recalls the creation account when the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the deep and brought life from the waters. It recalls the cloud of God's presence that descended on the Tabernacle and on the Temple.

II. The Implications of Jesus' Virgin Birth

-- Gabriel's announcement contains some important truths that are implications of the virgin birth.

A. Jesus' Humanity (v. 31)

v. 31, And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

-- Jesus entered the world the way we all do - born of a woman, born as a baby that developed in a mother's womb. Jesus was a real flesh-and-blood baby. He was fully human.

-- As theologian Wayne Grudem points out, it's conceivable that God could have sent Jesus as a complete human being without any parents, but if Jesus had entered the world that way, He wouldn't have descended from Adam, and it wouldn't be so clear that He was, in fact, fully human. So, God chose to send Jesus in the same way that all humans enter this world, as a baby born of a mother.

B. Jesus' Deity (v. 32a)

v. 32a, He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

1. His Greatness

-- There are many great natural wonders: the magnificence of the Grand Canyon, the grandeur of Mt. Everest, the powerful beauty of Niagara and Victoria Falls, the enormous scale of the sun's size and energy, the incomprehensible vastness of the universe filled with countless millions of galaxies. But the greatness of Jesus surpasses all of these, for He created them all.

-- There are many great human wonders: the astounding intelligence of an Einstein, the artistic brilliance of a Michelangelo, the creative genius of a Mozart. But all of these are mere flickering candle-like reflections of Christ's greatness for they are all beings made in His image, like Him but far from equal to Him.

2. His Sonship (vv. 32, 35)

vv. 32a, 35b, He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God.

-- The Bible often refers to believers as "sons of God," but Jesus is the Son of God in unique ways, in ways that no one else ever could be.

John 1:1, 14 (NASV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God… 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

-- John says that Jesus is "the only begotten of the Father." All others who are called "sons of God" are part of God's creation, were made by God. But not Jesus. Jesus was not created by the Father; Jesus was "begotten" by the Father. As C.S. Lewis explained, "When you beget, you beget something of the same nature as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds."

Likewise, when God begets, He begets one who is also God, who possesses the same divine nature.

Colossians 2:9 In him [Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

-- Mary's son would be not only fully human but also fully God, a mysterious truth that we will explore more next Sunday.

C. Jesus' Sinlessness (v. 35)

-- The virgin birth assures us of Jesus' humanity and deity and also of His sinlessness.

v. 35, 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.

v. 35 (HCSB) … Therefore the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.

-- Gabriel said that the baby to be born of Mary will be "the holy One." That could not be said of any other descendants of Adam. Paul states clearly and forcefully in Romans that we human descendants of Adam are born with fallen natures, separated from God and in rebellion against Him. But Jesus was born "holy." He was born without any contamination of sin, with a nature that was in harmony with the Father.

Like all humans, Jesus was a descendant of a woman who could trace her ancestry back to Adam. But unlike all other descendants of Adam, Jesus was not conceived by a human father but by the Holy Spirit, and it was the supernatural working of the third person of the Trinity that kept Jesus free from the pollution and guilt of sin.

It was Jesus' sinlessness and complete obedience to the Father that enabled Him to take our place on the Cross, to die as our substitute, to take the judgment and punishment for our sins.

D. Jesus' Lordship (vv. 32-33)

-- Finally, Gabriel's announcement declares Jesus' lordship.

vv. 32-33, He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

-- The son born to Mary came to die for us. His body was laid in a tomb, but it didn't stay there. Three days later He arose in victory over sin and death and hell. He declared to His disciples that all authority belongs to Him, and He ascended to be enthroned at the right hand of the Father to receive the adoration and worship of all of heaven. One day He will return to put an end to all sin and evil and to establish His eternal Kingdom, and as Handel's famous chorus proclaims, "He will reign forever and ever."

CONCLUSION

Bill and Ashley Larson were newlyweds who were preparing for a mission assignment in Africa. Ashley was pregnant with their first child and was experiencing some problems with her back. Just 2 days before Christmas, the doctor gave her the devastating diagnosis - Ashley had scoliosis, a disease that causes the spine to curve. In children the disease can be treated with braces as the spine grows and develops, but there is no such treatment that is effective for adults. The prognosis was grim - Ashley's spine would progressively curve, causing her increasing pain and to be more and more hunched. That meant that they would never be able to go to do missions work in Africa.

When they went to bed that night, Bill felt an urging within himself to pray for Ashley to be healed of her scoliosis. Ashley was lying beside him on her side to relieve the pain she already was experiencing. Bill asked her if it was all right for him to pray for her. Half asleep, Ashley replied that it was all right as long as she didn't have to move. Bill said she was fine. He placed his hand above her back, careful not to touch it and cause any discomfort. Then he prayed silently for thirty minutes for God to heal his wife. Bill prayed that way every night that Christmas week.

On the seventh night Bill was praying with his hand over but not touching Ashley's back when he suddenly felt a strange warmth.

"Ashley," Bill asked, "did you feel something?"

"Just your hand moving up and down my spine," Ashley replied.

"But I never touched your back," Bill said.

Surprised, Ashley sat up and asked Bill what he was talking about.

"I never touched you," Bill said. "The only reason I asked is because I felt something really warm and wondered if you felt it too. I'm going to keep on praying."

"That's fine," Ashley replied as she lay back down. "I know God can heal people if He wants. I just don't know if that's His plan for me."

Ashley paused and then sat up again and said, "You know, it's really strange, but I don't feel any pain right now."

Two weeks later, Bill and Ashley flew to visit Ashley's parents, and she took the opportunity to go to the family doctor that had treated her as she grew up. She had brought her medical records and showed them to her doctor because she trusted his abilities and opinions. He looked at the records and agreed that the diagnosis of scoliosis was correct. At Ashley's request the doctor agreed to do another set of X-rays.

When the doctor came back into the examination room with the new X-rays, he had a strange look on his face. "I don't know how to explain this," he said, "but there's no sign of scoliosis. Your back is perfectly normal."

"Could scoliosis just go away on its own?" Ashley asked.

"No," her doctor replied. "Besides, even if it did, as bad as the first X-rays showed it was, you'd have some scar tissue, and you don't have anything."

"How can you explain that?" Ashley asked, as she thought about the night when Bill was praying and felt something warm and she felt a hand moving up and down her back.

Her doctor laid down the X-rays and looked at her and said, "I've learned over the years that there are some medical healings we can't explain. I like to call them miracles."

A few months later Bill and Ashley left for their mission work in Africa, both of them healthy and completely confident that nothing is impossible with God.