

Text: Luke 1:26-38

Title: Mary and Gabriel

Truth: Gabriel announces the miracle conception and birth of Jesus.

Date/Location: Sunday August 6, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

Last time we learned about the announcement of John the Baptist's birth to Zacharias and Elizabeth. Gabriel was the announcer of that momentous event.

I. A Virgin Visited

- A. The Biblical text says that six months later Gabriel came to speak to a virgin named Mary, the one betrothed to Joseph. The six months is connected to the five months of 1:24, meaning that John the Baptist was six months along and would be born in three more. Mary was in Nazareth of Galilee at this time prior to Jesus's birth, as was Joseph. They moved back there after the Lord's birth, exile to Egypt, and then return.
- B. The Greek word for *virgin* is *parthenos*. Of minor historical interest is that the hill of the Acropolis in Athens had on it an imposing structure which was the temple of Athena Parthenos, "Athena the Virgin" and the structure is known as the Parthenon, the same word for virgin that we read here in Luke.
- C. Because the unbelieving world is always looking for an excuse to dismiss the Bible, I thought I should address the whole matter of *parthenogenesis*, which means a virgin birth or virgin creation. This is also sometimes called asexual reproduction and it is seen in some lower plant and animal life forms, but reported cases among humans are extremely low. Somewhere around 2,000 species are thought to reproduce this way.¹ Without a father involved, usually parthenogenesis results in inoperative or non-viable life forms, or a tumor such as an ovarian teratoma. There have been reports of a single individual with some cells that have no paternal genetic information; such a case is a *chimera*, a being with two different

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/science/parthenogenesis>

cell lineages in one body. As far as I know, there are no known individuals who are fully parthenogenic except One—Jesus. Another branch of the issue has to do with the production of stem cells, which is not at all a parthenogenic person. With a father involved, i.e., a sperm, pregnancy can occur even in a virgin.

- D. The situation in Luke 1 did not involve a father and was not an ovarian tumor that just happened to turn into a viable person. This was a one-time miraculous event in which God did something inside of Mary using her egg and a work of the Holy Spirit to cause a conception inside of her. More on that later. This is the foundation of one of the essential doctrines of Christianity, namely the virgin conception and birth of Jesus to implement the incarnation of God into humanity.

II. A Woman Blessed

- A. Gabriel greeted Mary with a famous sentence: “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women.” This phrase has wrongly been used to elevate Mary above other women, even to god-like status. To the contrary, Mary later says that she is a maidservant of the Lord, not a super-special human being. Also to the contrary, the emphasis is on God favoring her and blessing her, not on her innate status as a special person or even a supposed investiture of favor that changes her into a co-mediatrix with Christ. Such elevations of Mary are blasphemous. Mary received grace, as do all people who experience God’s grace. God is the giver of grace; Mary is not.
- B. She is blessed to be able to serve; she is favored by God for a special task of service. Mary’s primary service of which we know was her mothering the Messiah. She may have had other ministries about which we do not know, but this one is hard to surpass! Just imagine—Mary got to teach the baby and boy Jesus about the Law of God!
- C. Theologians have pointed out that the verb *to bestow favor* occurs in another place—Ephesians 1:6. “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which he bestowed favor on us in the Beloved.” Every

Christian receives heavenly favor from God and is enabled to serve Him in various capacities. Mary is not the only highly favored one.

III. An Angelic Explanation

- A. Mary's expression undoubtedly gave away that she was troubled about this and was in deep thought about what this was about. This was highly unusual—in fact, unique in her life up to this point. The angel told her not to be afraid (similar to 1:13).

Can you imagine the relief that both Mary and Joseph felt toward one another when they spoke after their respective encounters with the angel? Joseph: "You won't believe what happened to me!" Mary: "Oh yeah, well you *really* won't believe what happened to me!"

- B. You have found favor or grace with God. God is the originator, giver, creator, provider of grace and favor toward us. We do not create it, earn it, trade for it, or produce it. The best we can say is that we "found" favor with God. We "began to experience" God's grace. So did Mary.
- C. The angel then gives a bunch of details:
1. You will conceive in your womb. I cannot accept the strange view that God implanted an "alien" zygote and thus makes Mary a surrogate for a non-human being—or a human entirely disconnected genetically from the human race. Instead, God does something whereby one of her eggs is activated and begins a new human life so that the baby is truly human.
 2. You will bring forth a son. People today need to have that kind of clarity when it comes to gender!
 3. You will name Him Jesus. His name means "Yahweh saves" because He will save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). But this is explained to Joseph in Matthew's gospel, not to Mary here. The focus here is going to be not on his role as redeemer, but on his role as a powerful king.

4. He will be great. That is almost an understatement. He will be the greatest human ever. John was great too (1:15) but not that great! John was also the prophet of the Highest (1:76), but...
 5. Jesus will be the Son of the highest, meaning the Son of God. Son does not refer to birth or origin, but to rank or office. This refers to his role as king under God the Father, just as the term is used in Psalm 89:26-27. It also means that He shares the same qualities as His Father.
 6. God will give him the Davidic throne. He will reign over Israel forever. His kingdom will never end.
- D. Now, Mary asks the obvious question: how can I conceive if I do not have relations with a man? Good question! As a young woman, not an older priest like Zacharias, she gets a little more room for her questioning. Furthermore, this might be a question of amazement, not a question of faithlessness.
- E. Gabriel responded with a bit more explanation of the miracle that would occur: The Holy Spirit and the power of God will “overshadow” her. This will result in the child being the Son of God. In the process, the Spirit of God protected any stain of sin from being transmitted to the child by virtue of his connection to the human race. I reject the theory that since there was no father, the “sin seed” was not transmitted to Jesus. Mary and every woman are just as much sinners as Joseph and every man. Jesus had to be protected from Mary’s sin just as much as Joseph’s sin, as well as that of their forefathers.
- F. As proof that this all is possible, the angel told her that her relative Elizabeth had conceived a son in her old age. The conception was not as miraculous as this one would be, but she was 6 months pregnant despite being well advanced in years. Nothing is impossible with God.

Of course, the objection to this comes: “Can God create a rock so big that it is impossible to lift?” No, that is nonsense. Also, God cannot sin. He cannot do things that are contrary to His nature.

IV. A Sanctified Response

- A. Mary was a remarkable young woman. First, she acknowledges that she is the servant of the Lord. 'Tis a strange way to be a servant of God, and an even stranger way to be pregnant. But she was willing. I must therefore ask you the question...
- B. She reiterated that she would have it to be just like the word of the angel explained. Do you want things just like the word of God explains them? If you do not like that, then there is something amiss in your thinking.
- C. At this, Gabriel departs. His job was complete. He does not appear by name any further in Scripture, but a mighty angel appears during the end times in Rev. 10:1 and 18:21 and a group of them in 2 Thess. 1:7. Perhaps one or more of those are Gabriel again, for his name means "mighty one of God."

Conclusion

What was the question I was going to ask above? Here it is: are you willing to serve God however He wants you to? Are you willing to declare that how the Word of God says it, that is how you want it to be? Are you willing to say, "Look, I am a servant of the Lord. Whatever He wants."

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