Luke 1:26-38

Announcing the Miraculous Conception and Birth of Jesus

Luke 1:1-26-27 - "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary."

This was the sixth month after Elisabeth had become pregnant with John the Baptist.

Galilee was a rural area of northern Judea. Its residents were looked down on by most Israelites. Nazareth, a village with one well to supply water, located about 11 miles from the Sea of Galilee, was even more obscure. It is not mentioned in any other writings in the scriptures, the apocryphal writings or in the writings of Josephus. It was totally nondescript - the last place one would expect the Messiah to grow up in.

Yet Jesus is repeatedly called "Jesus of Nazareth."

Espoused/Betrothed

There were three stages of a Jewish marriage. An engagement was made when there was an agreement between the fathers of two families that arranged for their children to marry in the future. Then at some later point there was a ceremony marking their betrothal.

Following courtship and the completion of the marriage contract (Tob 7:14), the marriage was considered established, and they were betrothed. The woman had passed from her father's authority to that of her husband. But about a year typically passed before the woman moved from her parents' house to her husband's house (m. Ketub. 5:2; m. Ned. 10:5; b. Ketub. 57b). During that time, although the marriage was not yet consummated, the woman was 'wife' or *ishah* (Deut 20:7; 28:30; Judg 14:15; 15:1; 2 Sam 3:14) and she could become a widow (m. Yeb. 4:10; 6:4; m. Ketub. 1:2) or be punished for adultery (Deut 22:23–4; 11QTemple 61). This is why in **Matthew 1:19,** even though Joseph and Mary were not yet married, he is referred to as Mary's "husband" and she in **Matthew 1:20** is referred to as Joseph's "wife."
- NET Bible

Usually a year after betrothal the couple would be married. The bridegroom would come for his bride, followed by a seven-day celebration.

The Name 'Mary'

"Mary" is Greek for the Hebrew "Miriam" or "*Miryam*" - the same name as the sister of Moses. The Septuagint uses the Greek form Mariam. The root is probably the Hebrew "*mr*" meaning "bitter" (as in "myrrh") or it can even mean "rebellious."

Miriam was rebellious. She argued with Moses and consequently was temporarily stricken with leprosy for her rebellion (**Numbers 12**).

If this etymology reflects anything about the mother of Jesus it would a story of redemption, because when we meet Mary in the gospels, she was chosen for her humility and submission to God. But later she would indeed experience bitterness at the crucifixion, as Simeon would prophecy: "a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (**Luke 2:35**).

Miriam led the women in singing the "Song of the Sea" after the crossing of the Red Sea (**Exodus 15:1-18**) and Mary is known for her "Magnificat" in **Luke 1:46-55**. The Exodus from Egypt was a type of the ultimate salvation brought by Jesus.

Luke 1:28-29 - "And the angel came in unto her, and said, 'Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be."

Mary's humility caused her to wonder why she received this kind of greeting from an angel.

Luke 1:30-31 - "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS."

"Fear not" is often first from the lips of angels. Gabriel repeats that she has found favor with God. Then he drops the bombshell. Many generations of Israelite women had hoped to be the mother of the coming Messiah. Mary now hears that she has been chosen.

"Jesus" was a common name, the Greek form of Joshua in Hebrew - or *Yeshua*. In the Old Testament, Joshua succeeded Moses as leader and led Israel into the Promise Land. Jesus would lead believers to salvation in His spiritual Kingdom.

Then Gabriel expressly describes Jesus as being the Messiah that everyone was expecting.

Luke 1:32-33 - "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Jesus would be her son, but not the son of Joseph her betrothed, as she was probably thinking. Instead He would be the Son of God.

Specifically Jesus would be given the throne of his father David. This identified him as the one described in God's promise to David in **2 Samuel 7:12-16**.

- 2 Samuel 7:12-16 - “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”

Also he would "reign over the house of Jacob." Jacob's name was changed to "Israel," and from his 12 sons came the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus would be "King of the Jews" but his kingdom would also include every race and nation of believers who had faith in Him.

Mary would have recognized the phrase "You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son" as almost a direct quote of **Isaiah 7:14** concerning the sign that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son."

Now she understood that the conception would happen while she was still a virgin - a shocking idea.

Luke 1:34 - "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

Unlike Zacharias, who was skeptical and wanted more proof than the angel's word, Mary believed the angel but is simply asking for an explanation.

Luke 1:35 - "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

"The Highest will overshadow you" Overshadow = *episkiazō* - to surround and envelope in a shining cloud, like the Shekinah Glory overshadowing the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

The Holy Spirit is associated in scripture with creating new life.

In **Genesis 1:2** the Spirit of God hovers over the waters at the beginning of creation. In **Job 33:4**, Job's friend Elihu declares, "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." In **Ezekiel 36 and 37** God promises to put a new spirit within His people, give them a new heart, and breathe life into dry bones.

Unlike stories in Greek myths of gods mating with humans, this would be a spiritual and miraculous event as the glory of God by the Holy Spirit created a new life in her womb, while she still remained a virgin.

Jesus would be "called" the Son of God - He did not *become* the Son of God at this

point, but had been God's Son from eternity.

A 'Virgin Birth'

The prophecy of **Isaiah 7:14** predicted a "virgin would conceive and bear a son." The Hebrew word used by Isaiah is "*almah*" which means "young woman" or "maiden" and can be used of a virgin. The Hebrew word that definitely specifies a virgin is "*betulah*."

But *almah* is never used in the Scriptures to describe a young, presently married woman.

The context of Isaiah's prophecy was that King Ahaz of Judah was being attacked by both Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel, with the Assyrians also threatening. The circumstances made Ahaz and his court question God's promise to continue the throne of David "for all generations."

Through Isaiah, God offered to give Ahaz a sign, either "as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven" (I**saiah 7:11**). But Ahaz refused, supposedly not wanting to "tempt God." Actually, he was planning to make an alliance with Assyria.

From Isaiah came the sharp rebuke, "Is it too little that you weary men, that you also weary my God?" The prophet continued, and then addressed the entire House of David:

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the *almah* (young woman or virgin) shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*" [meaning "God with us" (**Isaiah 7:14**)

A child would be born in Ahaz's court. This child would grow and develop under normal circumstances, but before he was old enough to choose right over wrong, the Assyrians would lay waste to Judah's other enemies Syria and Israel, as happened in 733-732 B.C. The sign of the child was an indication that God had the situation completely under control.

But it's reasonable to consider that the prophecy had an application beyond the time that it was given, since Ahaz refused the sign, and Isaiah was addressing the whole “House of David" in general. A sign drawn from "as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven" certainly seems to carry weighty meaning.

Jewish traditions connect this verse with King Hezekiah (Justin, Dial. 43; Exod. Rab. on 12:29; Num. Rab. on 7:48) who was regarded by some rabbinical texts as an almost Messiah because of his piety. Christians of course saw a prophecy of Jesus.

Matthew 1:23 quotes the **Isaiah 7:14** verse and sees it being fulfilled in Jesus.

Of course an *almah* / unmarried young woman in Israeli society would have been assumed to be a virgin.

But the most widely used scripture source in first-century Judea was the Septuagint, the Greek translation made in the late third-century B.C. Most of the quotations of scripture by New Testament writers are from the Septuagint.

The Septuagint translates **Isaiah 7:14** using the word *parthenos*, which specifically means "virgin" in Greek. That's also the word used by Luke and Matthew describing Mary.

But the word *parthenos* is also used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *na'arah*, which merely means "young girl."

The bottom line is that, while we can't positively say that Isaiah was speaking of a virgin technically on the basis of the word *almah*, it can't be dismissed as not referring to Jesus' miraculous conception.

See https://www.oneforisrael.org/isaiah-714-virgins-birth/

Mary Told About Elisabeth's Pregnancy

Luke 1:36-37 - "And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."

This echoes God's promise of a son to Sarah (**Genesis 18:14** - "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?")

Mary would have known that Zacharias and Elisabeth were childless and aged, and seen her conception as a sign to Mary of God's faithfulness.

Luke 1:38 - "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."

God's promises to us are many, but they must be affirmed in us as Mary did.

Can we say, “Be it unto me according to thy word”?