

Testimony for Faith
The Virgin Birth of Jesus
Luke 1:26-38

Intro: All of the gospel writers have one essential goal in their presentations of the life of Jesus. They want the reader to believe in His claim to be the Son of God and become His disciple. To that end they, with the help of the Holy Spirit, choose from Jesus' life those events that achieve this end and underscore the particular emphasis of their gospel. Luke begins his gospel with the birth of John and prepares us for his testimony about Jesus by telling us of the revelations and miracles that attended his birth.

Luke also gives us evidence for faith by describing the virgin birth of Jesus as evidence of His claim to be the Son of God. Is it possible to believe that Jesus was actually born of a woman without a human father? What evidence supports the credibility of Luke's report that Jesus was born in this way?

The prophecy of Isaiah predicts it.

Centuries earlier God had sent to the prophet Isaiah to help the faith of Ahaz as his kingdom faced the threat of destruction by Syria and Israel. Through Isaiah God offered to help Ahaz to trust in Him by giving him the opportunity to ask for any sign to prove that Judah would be delivered of her enemies.

Ahaz already had his own solution (to depend upon diplomacy with the Assyrians) so he piously rejected God's offer. The Lord was not pleased with Ahaz's unbelief and gave Ahaz a sign of his own! It was a sign to display the great power of God to protect his people from all enemies.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)
"Behold"...Isaiah invites the house of David to see with prophetic insight. The word arouses attention to something significant.

A virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son.

Virgin translates the Heb. word "almah" means a young unmarried woman of marriageable age, who by implication is a virgin. There is a Hebrew word that unmistakably means "virgin", bethulah. This use of "almah" gives greater stress to the uniqueness of the birth. It would be a virgin birth! Almah is the more arresting word since it involves not only virginity, but also the unmarried condition, a condition in which no moral woman would be able to conceive and give birth.

The LXX translation uses "parthenos" (virgin) because it is the best Greek word to convey the idea. Matthew uses the LXX in showing the fulfillment (Mt. 1:).

So Is. 7:14 suggests a child born of a woman of a maiden who is still a virgin. What a remarkable sign. Nothing since the creation itself had ever happened in the history of the world that had demonstrated more power than the event of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ!

She shall name him Immanuel.

Usually the father named the child but in this case there is no human father. Only the mother can attest to his divine origin; for she alone knows that the child is conceived by miraculous power of God. Thus, "she" shall name him...

Immanuel is in Hebrew "God with us". In a very real sense, Isaiah sees a child who brings God into the world.

Isaiah, as it were, brings the future child into the present. He speaks of him as if he is already born. This has both a positive and negative message for Israel. v. 16 Positively it says the kings that Ahaz has dreaded will in short time be destroyed by the Assyrians. Before the child could know to choose good and evil, Syria and Israel will have been defeated by the Assyrians. And thus it was.

For those who trusted God the promise of the child to come was tantamount to a promise of deliverance from Israel's enemies. Later Isaiah would continue to speak of this child to come.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7

Thus, the promise of the Messiah would encourage the faith of the faithful.

For seven centuries God left this word as a witness of what He was about to do. We may believe this event because God promised that it would be a sign of His presence among His people!

The pronouncement of Gabriel explains it.

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.” (Luke 1:31-33)

Today people say they have difficulty with the idea of miracles. Did you ever think how hard it would have been for Mary to believe Gabriel's promise? It was her body that would receive this child; yet she was engaged to a man but they had not been together as husband and wife.

Gabriel gave her the following evidence for her faith:

He told her how it would take place.

It would be accomplished through the Holy Spirit.

And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

For Mary this would have been enough. For she knew of how God had by the Holy Spirit accomplished great and miraculous things through the prophets.
He told her why it could take place.

Nothing shall be impossible with God.

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)

Whatever difficulties people have today with the miracles of the Bible is really rooted in their presumptions about God.

If one is unwilling to entertain the possibility that God exists, then all such stories are rejected in a priori fashion as myth or fabrications. However, if one is willing to entertain the possibility that God exists, then what is too difficult for God? If God can create a world from nothing, if he can give life to lifeless matter, if he can establish laws of procreation that make childbirth possible, it is not a difficulty at all to accept the idea that he could create a body in Mary’s womb for the reception of His Son’s spirit!

The conduct of Mary confirms it.

Does Mary’s conduct confirm Luke’s report that her child was conceived by the Holy Spirit?

Consider her moral character

There is no doubt in my mind that God selected Mary to be the mother of His Son because of her godly character. She was trusting. She asked questions, but not to disbelieve but to obtain evidence to believe. She was submissive to God’s purpose.

And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

Consider her relationship with Jesus

After Jesus’ ministry on earth, his disciples gathered in part because of their faith in His claims that He was the Son of God. Notice that Mary is among them! If the account of the virgin birth was not true, why would Mary be there? She of all people would know that Jesus was not the Son of God!

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

Consider her silence at the crucifixion

Imagine this. Mary stands by and watches her son go on trial for saying He was the Son of God. She follows tearfully as she sees him stripped and laid back on the crossbeam to be nailed down. No mother alive would withhold information that would save her son from such cruel and torturous death. Did you think of this? If Jesus were not the Son of God, Mary had the power to save His life. All she had to do was name the father!! Her silence is deafening!

The response of the enemies of gospel cannot refute it.

R.C. Foster in his excellent book on the life of Christ shows how that the proof of the virgin birth was so established among Christians as the fulfillment of the OT that Jews of the second century attempted to destroy all copies of the Greek OT since they clearly prophesied of a virgin birth. Moreover, in their Talmudic writings the Jews sought to offset the doctrine by the blasphemous charge that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and a Roman soldier by the name of Panderas. These weak and inadequate counter-offenses show the inability of the opposition to deny the facts of the gospel.

Conclusion: How thankful we can be that our faith rests on such powerful evidence!