

Abide in Me

John 15:4
*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 7 - Number 7

The week of December 12, 2021

Unbelievable
An Unbelievable Birth
Luke 1:26-38

THE BIG PICTURE

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God Himself took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and He chose an incredibly miraculous, unique, and perfect way to enter humanity's story in history. He chose a girl from Nazareth, Mary, to be the mother of the Son of God. This week we will read a portion of the Christmas account as Mary discovers from the angel Gabriel that she has found favor with God and will have this honor. This week we will examine the virgin birth as one of the foundational truths and doctrines of Christianity.

The doctrine of the virgin birth has been debated by skeptics and critics of Christianity for centuries, and there are a few ancient legends and myths that resemble parts of the biblical account. Critics will occasionally use these other stories as an attempt to discredit the biblical narrative. As we learn of some of these criticisms, our hope is that our faith will be deepened as we stand in the truth of the miracle of Christmas, the love of God given in His only Son, and the promise given to Mary by the angel.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Let's begin by reading a passage from Luke 1:26-38. As you read:

- Circle each title or name of Jesus mentioned in this passage.
- Highlight verse 37.
- Underline Mary's responses to the angel in verses 34 and 38.

²⁶ 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?"

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. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Isaiah 7:14. This is the prophecy that Luke 1 fulfills and also the reason why Luke went into such detail in describing the message from Gabriel. The root Hebrew word (almah) in Isaiah that we translate “virgin” means “young woman” in its original context. How does our passage today help us to reconcile this and how does Matthew’s account in 1:18-25 help shed light on proper usage of the word “virgin”?
2. Some skeptics of Christianity will use other ancient mythological accounts of gods in polytheism impregnating women and having children (demigods) as offspring. Given the gravity of testimony and the historicity of the gospel accounts, how can we defend the doctrine of the virgin birth in light of some of those criticisms?
3. The Egyptian myth of Horus is often used to show how ancient religions had versions of a virgin birth in their traditions long before the time of Christ. As you listen to the sermon and research a bit about the myth of Horus, what are noticeable similarities or differences between the Horus myth and the gospel accounts of the virgin birth?

The doctrine of the virgin birth is central to the truth of the gospel, the person of Jesus Christ, and the atonement for our sins that was accomplished on the cross. As we examine the importance of this miraculous truth, let’s dive a bit into implications of the virgin birth.

1. The term “hypostatic union” in Christian theology refers to the perfect union of Jesus’ divinity and humanity in one hypostasis - in one individual. Jesus was fully God and fully human. If Jesus were born of natural descent from Joseph and Mary instead of the way our passage from Luke 1 describes, what would the implications be for his identity, his authority, and his ability to save humanity from the power of sin?
2. Why did God choose this method for His entrance into humanity? Why the virgin birth instead of other means?

3. What does the reality of the virgin birth reveal to us about the character of God and His care for humanity?
4. Why Mary? Why did God choose someone who had no political or financial connections of influence? Why didn't God choose a noble in Jerusalem or someone who had political influence to help usher in the Kingdom of God through more dramatic means?
5. One of the names that Gabriel told Mary that her son would be referred to is the name "Immanuel," meaning *God with us*. As you think on the meaning of that name, how has the reality of Immanuel changed your life?
6. Personal reflection: Why is the virgin birth so important to not only the truth of Christmas, but to our very salvation?

PRAYER

Lord, we worship you because of the love that you have shown us in the miracle of Advent. Thank you for entering into our reality and saving us from the power of sin. We commit ourselves to you this Advent season as we focus intently on Jesus, leaving behind the many distractions that try to pull our attention away from your truth. May we live each day in that blessed anticipation of celebration of your first Advent into our world and also that glorious second Advent that we wait for even now. Thank you Lord Jesus.

