

Giving Birth to the Impossible

To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known

Luke 1:34-38; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; October 6, 2013

1. A Common Question (34)

A common question is, 'How can this be, since....!' (34) There are two ways to ask this question: (1) from a standpoint of faith and (2) from a standpoint of unbelief. Mary is asking from a standpoint of faith, whereas Zechariah asks for a standpoint of unbelief (Luke 1:18) and God disciplines him for his unbelief. We see this same unbelieving response and the consequences of it in a story in 2 Kings 7. Mary did not ask this question out of ignorance about how babies were conceived. Mary asked this question because she knew that she was not living with her husband and that there was no way this could happen naturally. So the angel explains the supernatural way this would happen. Are you wrestling with questions about 'how' God can keep His word to you under these circumstances?

2. The Only Answer (35)

The only answer to the question 'how' is, 'the power of the Most High!' (35) We only have to wonder why anyone would question the virgin birth if they truly believe that God is God and that the Bible records what God has done. If God could ... why couldn't He cause His Son to be born of a virgin? (for example, Call the universe into existence out of nothing; Form man out of the dust of the earth; Form woman out of the 'rib' of man; Cause women beyond the age of childbearing to have children; Divide the Red Sea; Control the flip of the coin; Raise men from the dead) In fact the Bible promised that this would happen. (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) Do we have to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus to be saved? Yes, we must believe in the 'impossible' virgin birth in order to be among the 'impossible to be saved' race of sinners who are saved. Why? (If not, Jesus is a liar. If not, Jesus was not sinless. If not, Jesus was not God, there was no 'incarnation'. If not, Jesus could not die for anyone but himself. If not, Jesus could not be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. If not, the Bible is unreliable. If not, I have no reason to believe whatever else the Bible says about Jesus. So, under these circumstances, why be a Christian, indeed, suffer as a Christian? Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die!) The incarnation (God taking on a human nature) with the virgin birth is necessary for Jesus to be the Mediator between God and man. (1 Timothy 2:5) Yet, God must do the 'impossible' in order for people to believe in the 'impossible virgin birth' with all of its rich implications. We see this in the story of the 'rich young ruler' (Luke 18:26-27). Do you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus?

3. Existing Encouragements to Believe (36)

All around us, there are existing encouragements to believe in the power of God in the most difficult and bewildering situations, 'behold, even (36) The way God already works in the world is meant to be an encouragement to us to believe His Word, whatever He says He will do.

That's why the Lord Jesus points to how God takes care of the birds and the flowers because it is meant to be an encouragement to us to trust His word to take care of us. (Luke 12:24, 27-28) The practice of giving thanks reminds of what we have received in the past which we didn't deserve and which was not in our power to accomplish so that we might trust God to keep His Word to us in the future and do for us what we don't deserve and what we can't do on our own. Do you evidence all around you that God is able to keep His word to you as you thank Him for all that He has already done?

4. One Antidote for Disillusionment (37)

Here we see one strong antidote for disillusionment, 'nothing (no 'thing' that God 'says' He will do) will be impossible with God!' (37) God is able to do whatever 'impossible thing' God says He will do. We have to be careful of assuming that God is obligated to do things He never said He would do while failing to trust Him to do what He said He would do! We can see this in the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:17, 21, 25-27) Are you expecting God to do things He never said He would do? Are you trusting Him to do what He said He would do?

5. One Antidote for Fear

Here we also see one strong anti-dote for fear, 'may it be done to me according to Your word!' (38) Mary was quick to submit herself to the will of God. We can know God's will by looking back and by looking at His Word. We worship God as we submit our will to His will and as needed, live against our wills. To submit to God's will is, in a sense, to die. Jesus said that this kind of death was necessary for true life. We can see this in the picture the Lord Jesus paints for us regarding the nature of the life of a seed (John 12:24, 27-28) How do you need to die today?

What is the Truth?

God does the 'impossible' things He says He can do and will do. God rescues us from impossible people and circumstances. God rescues us from our impossible unbelief. God brings something out of nothing. (Genesis 1:1)

How do I need to turn?

I need to repent of my unbelief in how God can and does keep His promises. (Luke 1:18)

How do I need to trust?

I need to trust God to keep His word/promises in any and all circumstances. (Exodus 17:1, 6)

How do I need to love?

In order to love, I must submit to God's will. (Matthew 26:39; Romans 5:8) Naturally, we want to do things 'our way' and this keeps us from loving like Jesus. I cannot be free to give to others in love unless I let go of having my will done. Will you? Are you?

Giving Birth to the Impossible

To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known

Luke 1:34-38; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; October 6, 2013

The Text: Luke 1:34-38

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ 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 Child shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

1. A Common Question (34)

A common question is, ‘How can this be, since....!’ (34)

There are two ways to ask this question:

- (1) from a standpoint of faith and
- (2) from a standpoint of unbelief.

Mary is asking from a standpoint of faith, whereas Zechariah asks for a standpoint of unbelief (Luke 1:18) and God disciplines him for his unbelief.

We see this same unbelieving response and the consequences of it in a story in 2 Kings 7.

Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.” - **Luke 1:18**

Then Elisha said, “Listen to the word of the LORD; thus says the LORD, ‘Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.’” ² The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, “Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?” Then he said, “Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it.” - **2 Kings 7:1-2.**

Mary did not ask this question out of ignorance about how babies were conceived.

“How can this be, since I do not know a man?” (NKJV)

“How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?” (HCSB)

“But how can this happen? I am a virgin.” (NLT)

‘How shall this be, seeing a husband I do not know?’ (YLT)

First-century folk knew every bit as well as we do that babies are produced by sexual intercourse. When, in Matthew’s version of the story, Joseph heard about Mary’s pregnancy, his problem arose not because he didn’t know the facts of life, but because he did. (N.T. Wright, Who Was Jesus?, page 78).

Mary asked this question because she knew that she was not living with her husband and that there was no way this could happen naturally.

So the angel explains the supernatural way this would happen.

Are you wrestling with questions about ‘how’ God can keep His word to you under these circumstances?

How do I need to turn?

I need to repent of my unbelief in how He can and does keep His promises. (Luke 1:18)

2. The Only Answer (35)

The only answer to the question ‘how’ is, ‘the power of the Most High!’ (35)

We only have to wonder why anyone would question the virgin birth if they truly believe that God is God and that the Bible records what God has done.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. - **Genesis 1:1**

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. - **Genesis 2:7**

The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. - **Exodus 14:22**

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. - **Exodus 16:4**

In fact the Bible promised that this would happen.

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.” - **Genesis 3:15**

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, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” - **Matthew 1:23**

Do we have to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus to be saved?

Yes, we must believe in the ‘impossible’ virgin birth in order to be among the ‘impossible to be saved’ race of sinners who are saved. Why?

If not, the Bible is not true and cannot be trusted!

If not, Jesus was not God and was not sinless and cannot save!

For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, - **1 Timothy 2:5**

The virgin birth is posted on guard at the door of the mystery of Christmas; and none of us must think of hurrying past it. It stands on the threshold of the New Testament, blatantly supernatural, defying our rationalism, informing us that all that follows belongs to the same order as itself and that if we find it offensive there is no point in proceeding further. (Donald Macleod, Scottish theologian, *The Person of Christ*, page 37)

God, in his wisdom, ordained a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Christ, so that his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of his ordinary human birth from a human mother, and his full deity would be evident from the fact of his conception in Mary’s womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 530)

If the virgin birth of Jesus is untrue, then the story of Jesus changes greatly; we would have a sexually promiscuous young woman lying about God's miraculous hand in the birth of her son, raising that son to declare he was God, and then joining his religion. But if Mary is nothing more than a sinful con artist then neither she nor her son Jesus should be trusted. Because both the clear teachings of Scripture about the beginning of Jesus's earthly life and the character of his mother are at stake, we must contend for the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. (Mark Driscoll, The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World, page 136)

Must one believe in the Virgin Birth to be a Christian? This is not a hard question to answer. It is conceivable that someone might come to Christ and trust Christ as Savior without yet learning that the Bible teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin. A new believer is not yet aware of the full structure of Christian truth. The real question is this: Can a Christian, once aware of the Bible's teaching, reject the Virgin Birth? The answer must be no. (Al Mohler, *Must We Believe in the Virgin Birth?*)

Yet, God must do the 'impossible' in order for people to believe in the 'impossible virgin birth' with all of its rich implications.

²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." - **Luke 18:25-27**

Do you believe in the 'impossible' virgin birth of Jesus?

What is the Truth?

- God does the 'impossible' things He says He can do and will do.
- God rescues us from impossible people and circumstances.
- God rescues us from our impossible unbelief.
- God brings something out of nothing. (Genesis 1:1)

3. Existing Encouragements to Believe (36)

All around us, there are existing encouragements to believe in the power of God in the most difficult and bewildering situations, 'behold, even (36)

And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. (HCSB)

She who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. (NIV)

The way God already works in the world is meant to be an encouragement to us to believe His Word, whatever He says He will do.

That's why the Lord Jesus points to how God takes care of the birds and the flowers because it is meant to be an encouragement to us to trust His word to take care of us. (Luke 12:24, 27-28)

Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and *yet* God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! - **Luke 12:24**

²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith! - **Luke 12:27-28**

The practice of giving thanks reminds of what we have received in the past which we didn't deserve and which was not in our power to accomplish so that we might trust God to keep His Word to us in the future and do for us what we don't deserve and what we can't do on our own.

Do you evidence all around you that God is able to keep His word to you as you thank Him for all that He has already done?

4. One Antidote for Disillusionment (37)

Here we see one strong antidote for disillusionment, 'nothing (no 'thing' that God 'says' He will do) will be impossible with God!' (37)

For no word from God will ever fail. (NIV)

God is able to do whatever 'impossible thing' God says He will do.

We have to be careful of assuming that God is obligated to do things He never said He would do while failing to trust Him to do what He said He would do!

We can see this in the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:17, 21, 25-27)

But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. - **Luke 24:21**

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! – **Luke 24:25**

Are you expecting God to do things He never said He would do? Are you trusting Him to do what He said He would do?

How do I need to trust?

I need to trust God to keep His word/promises in any and all circumstances.
(Exodus 17:1, 6)

Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. – **Exodus 17:1**

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. – **Exodus 17:6**

I beg your pardon I never promised you a rose garden
Along with the sunshine there's gotta be a little rain sometime
I beg your pardon I never promised you a rose garden (Rose Garden song)

Are you expecting God to do things He never said He would do? Are you trusting Him to do what He said He would do?

5. One Antidote for Fear

Here we also see one strong anti-dote for fear, ‘may it be done to me according to Your word!’ (38)

“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”
(NKJV)

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”
(NIV)

“I am the Lord’s slave,” said Mary. “May it be done to me according to your word.” (HCSB)

“I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” (NLT)

Mary was quick to submit herself to the will of God.

We can know God’s will by looking back and by looking at His Word.

We worship God as we submit our will to His will and as needed, live against our wills.

To submit to God’s will is, in a sense, to die. Jesus said that this kind of death was necessary for true life.

We can see this in the picture the Lord Jesus paints for us regarding the nature of the life of a seed (John 12:24, 27-28)

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. - **John 12:24-25**

“By this scripture I was made to see that if ever I would suffer rightly, I must first pass a sentence of death upon every thing that can be properly called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyment, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them. The second was, to live upon God that is invisible, as Paul said in another place; the way not to faint, is to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (John Piper’s biography on John Bunyan)

How do you need to die today?

How do I need to love?

In order to love, I must submit to God’s will. (Matthew 26:39; Romans 5:8)

And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” – **Matthew 26:39**

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. – **Romans 5:8**

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. – **1 John 3:16**

I cannot be free to give to others in love unless I let go of having my will done.

For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself, then he has naught.
To say the things he truly feels;
And not the words of one who kneels.
The record shows I took the blows -
And did it my way! (I Did It My Way, Paul Anka and others)

Where do you start to live this way?

- Turn to God for LIFE.
- Trust in Jesus for His righteousness.
- Love by obeying His commands in submission to His will.

Let's pray.