

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH
WEEK 4 - THE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT OF JESUS

Matt. 11:6 – “*Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*”

Gabriel is sent to a young virgin named, Mary (in Hebrew – Miriam; name coming from a root word which means bitterness or rebellion!). This young virgin was already betrothed to Joseph who was of the house of David, of the tribe of Judah. Sometime during that betrothal period, life became very complicated for the young couple. Matt. 11:6!

Luke 1:26-28 – “²⁶ *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by 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. The virgin’s name was Mary.*”

An angel was sent by God to a teenage girl? WHY? Teenage girls occupied a very low status in those times. AND, Mary lived in Galilee, which was NOT the center of Jewish culture. It was not the home of Rabbinism. Galileans were known for their generous spirits, warm & impulsive hearts, intense nationalism, simple manners (in religious observances), and earnest piety. They cared for honor over money. Therefore, Galileans were looked down upon by the religious leadership in Jerusalem. There was a general contempt in Rabbinic circles for all that was Galilean. The people of Galilee were blamed for neglecting the study of their language, neglecting traditionalism, charged with errors in grammar and esp. charged with what Rabbinic circles labeled as absurd malpronunciation. “Galilean – Fool!” was a common expression.

And, Nazareth was an obscure town where roughly two hundred people farmed land and tended animals. Nazareth sat in a slight depression high in the mountains overlooking the Jezreel Valley. This made it a perfect place for a garrison of Roman soldiers to keep watch over the region. They had their own observation tower. A group of soldiers in a tiny town – can lead to trouble. Consequently, the Jews of Nazareth gained a nasty reputation for immorality. When the disciple Nathaniel heard that Jesus grew up in Nazareth, he said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) That was how Nazareth was known! In fact, some connected “Nazareth” with a word which meant *germ* – something despised! Despised!

Nazareth – *nazara* – “the guarded one”

Branch – *nezer* (root of *nazara*) – to guard to watch.

Branch – Messianic title (Jer. 23:5-6; Isa. 4:2; Isa. 6:12-13; Isa. 11:1; Zech. 3:8; Zech. 6:12-13). And He was called “Jesus of Nazareth”! Translation into the Hebrew “Yeshua (God is salvation) the Branch!

Luke 1:29-33 ²⁹ *But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.* ³⁰ *Then 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 bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.* ³² *He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give 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.”

The Prophets had foretold the coming of a conquering King Who would claim the throne, destroy Israel’s enemies (salvation in terms of physical deliverance), inaugurate an unprecedented time of peace and prosperity and ultimately rule over the whole world from His David’s throne in Jerusalem. The Jewish people knew this. (Messianic fervor was heightened) Would they have known that the King would be the Son of the Highest – the Son of God?

Peter knew. When questioned by Jesus, “Who do you think that I am, Peter?” Peter’s response: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!

Martha knew. When Lazarus, her brother, died and was buried in the tomb. . .

John 11:25-27 – *“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’”*

Psalm 2 teaches that the Messiah is the Anointed One, He’s the Son of God, He is GOD!

After 430 years of what felt like God’s silence, Mary learned that she would carry the Messiah in her womb and give birth to the Messiah! Mary had good reason to ponder. What was God doing? The Mosaic Law demanded stoning for what the people would perceive as adultery – Deut. 22:13-21.

How did Mary respond to this message from Gabriel? Luke 1:34 – “Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’” Mary wasn’t questioning Gabriel’s announcement re: Who her Son would be. Her question was – how is this going to happen since I have not been intimate or will be intimate in the very near future with a man!!

Luke 1:35-37 – *“And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’”*

Gabriel used the word “overshadow” in explaining this divine conception to Mary. Why the word, “overshadow”? After Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord directed him to construct a tabernacle – a portable house of worship. When it was complete, God OVERSHADOWED the tent (Ex. 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-16). The glory of God in the pillar of cloud covered the tent. The glory cloud (“Shekinah” – shachan – to dwell) in the OT symbolized God’s presence. A Jewish person would be familiar with the word “overshadowed.”

Gabriel, in telling Mary that “the power of the Most High will overshadow you,” was explaining that God’s spiritual presence would miraculously bring about conception in her womb. While the child would be human in every respect, He would not have a human father.

And Mary responded with, “Behold the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” We see a humble, submissive heart! Matthew 11:6! The term “bonds slave” refers to someone who voluntarily sells himself or herself into slavery. Mary expressed her complete submission to the will of God!

Mary needs time to process all she has been told and to prepare for the months ahead.

Gabriel had told Mary of Elizabeth’s conception in her old age – to prove that with God nothing shall be impossible. Elizabeth would understand. Mary journeys to visit her relative.

Luke 1:39-45 – “Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.’”

The Holy Spirit gave Elizabeth the exact words that Mary needed to hear, reassuring her that what was happening to her was a result of God’s grace and blessing. Elizabeth acknowledged that Mary’s unborn child was of divine origin – that He was her Lord!

Luke 1:46 – “And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant. . . .”

My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. . . . Mary knew she was a sinner in need of salvation! Then she states “For he has regarded the lowly state of his handmaiden. . . .” Mary had an accurate view of God and of herself.

Luke 1:49-55 – “For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.”

The “arm” of the Lord is an OT reference to the promised Messiah (Isa. 53:1)

Matthew 1:18-19 – *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”*

According to Jewish law, Joseph had the right to demand a public stoning which would clear his name in the community. But Joseph was too honorable for that. He did not wish to disgrace her. Therefore, he planned to put her away secretly. (Perhaps he could give her a private, quiet divorce). Rabbinic law - Joseph could only divorce Mary if her child was not his own. The law strictly forbade his ending the marriage merely because he had fathered her child before the home-taking. Therefore, under any other circumstance, to bring her home was to admit that the child was his. Joseph voluntarily subjected himself to any misunderstanding the community would have had about Mary's pregnancy. Matt. 11:6!

CONSIDER: If Jesus is not born of a virgin, then He is not God. If He is not God, His claims are lies. If His claims are lies, His salvation is a hoax. If the salvation promised by God through Jesus is a hoax, then we are damned!

NOTE: Matthew offered no lavish explanations re: the virgin birth. A miracle of the magnitude of the virgin birth could not be explained. Matthew did not need to prove the virgin birth. The virgin birth proved itself in Jesus' life!

Consider this, tho', creation of a seed (Gen. 3:15) in the womb of a virgin is nothing new for the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is God. In Gen. 1 we see Him in a work of creation as He hovers over the face of the deep. God creates from nothing! (Heb. word "bara" means creating out of nothing). Ber'shet bara Elohim

Gen. 3:15 – God said He would put hatred between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. Here God is speaking of a supernatural birth – a woman doesn't have a seed. He is prophesying of the virgin birth.

Gal. 4:4 – “In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a WOMAN. . . .”

It appears that Joseph was a righteous man because Matthew 1:19 tells us - “Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man.” He was a godly man.

Matthew 1:18 tells us that it was during this betrothal period that Mary came to be with child by the Holy Spirit. In that culture during the betrothal period, the bridegroom and bride did not spend much time together. The bridegroom was busy readying his father's home for the bride and their future family. During the betrothal, the bride completed several purification rituals to demonstrate that she was sexually pure.

How old were Mary and Joseph? The Talmudists (Rabbis who wrote the Talmud – Rabbinic commentary) forbade marriage for a man under thirteen years and a day, and

forbade marriage for a woman under twelve years and a day. The “typical” age appears to have been eighteen.

At the heart of the concept of marriage for the Jewish people was the concept of covenant. God’s covenant relationship with Israel is viewed as a marriage contract. Israel is represented in the OT as the wife of Jehovah – Isa. 54:5, Jer. 31:32, Jer. 3:14, Isa. 62:4-5, Eze. 16:8

Two aspects of marriage within the Jewish culture:

KJV – for “betrothed” – uses *espoused*. *Spouse* comes from espoused! Couples who were betrothed were considered married – without the “benefits” – no physical relationship. Deut. 22:24 – a betrothed woman is called a wife. Luke 2:5 – his “betrothed wife”; “espoused wife”

In Jesus’ day, the Jewish people saw marriage as a joining of two families. Marriages were arranged.

Within a Hebrew marriage, there are two stages:

- Kiddushin – the betrothal (Deut. 20:7) - likened to marriage – “And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her?”
 - Two families drew up a contract that was binding! If that contract was violated, the marriage vows were violated and a divorce in an official sense was what followed.
 - The couple was considered legally married during the betrothal; however, there was no physical relationships.
 - The betrothal time – typically 12 months. It was a period of protection for the couple. It was a time to prove fidelity. If the girl was pregnant, during that time period, it would become manifested/known.

JEWISH WEDDING FEAST

- The Father of the bridegroom negotiates a price for the bride.
- The bridegroom travels to the bride’s house.
- Betrothal symbol – drink from a cup of wine.
- From that moment the bride was declared sanctified or set apart
- Bridegroom would leave the bride’s home and return to his father’s home. The Bridegroom would speak these words to the bride before his departure: “Let not your heart be troubled. . . I go to prepare a place for you. . .and. . .I will come again”. We note two comings on the part of the bridegroom.
- The bride did not know the exact day or hour the bridegroom would return. She needed to be prepared at all times.
- Bridegroom would add onto his father’s home – bridal chamber.

- At the father's command, the Bridegroom and the groomsmen (Judges 14; John 3) would travel to the bride's home. The Bridegroom himself didn't know the exact time. Note Matt. 24:36.
- The bride would be beckoned from the street by a shout.
- The entire bridal party traveled to the father's home for a marriage feast (Mat. 25:1-6).
- The Bridegroom and bride went into the bridal chamber to consummate the marriage (Judges 14:12).
- When the marriage was consummated, there was a seven day marriage celebration during which time the bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber
- At the end of the seven days, the Bridegroom brought his bride out for all to see
 - Chuppa – the second stage of marriage which was the actual wedding ceremony which lasted seven days.

Dowry – bridal price - when you gave your daughter away to be married, you wanted something in payment for her. *Mohar* - that was the price. The bridal price had several purposes:

- To compensate the father, because the father would have to expend a great amount of money in order to marry off his daughter.
- It was also to act as life insurance for the wife, and normally the Jewish father would hold it in trust and if the husband died he would give it to the daughter.
- It also functioned as divorce insurance. Upon divorcing, the husband was expected to give up the dowry. And, because the dowry typically was rather valuable, this prompted the husband to remain married to the girl. The bridal price tended to keep the marriage together.

In the midst of all these thoughts swirling around his mind, Joseph had a supernatural encounter. . . .

Matthew 1:20-21 – *“But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*

This Child would be the long-awaited Messiah. God had promised and He was about to deliver! Gabriel revealed that the child was conceived by God's Holy Spirit, the Child is the Messiah, and confirmed Mary's innocence. Joseph woke up convinced. Fear that Mary had been unfaithful vanished. Joseph took Mary as his wife (Matt. 1:24).

All this was done that it might be fulfilled – that the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 might be fulfilled – to show that God is faithful – “Behold, the virgin shall be with child. . . .”

Matthew 1:23 verifies that Isaiah 7:14 is a Messianic prophecy!

Matthew 1:25 tells us more about Joseph - "He knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son." What an example of selflessness! Matt. 11:6!

And the baby's name was to be Jesus (Greek for Joshua) – Yeshua (Hebrew) – “Yahweh is salvation”. Strong's concordance – *salvation* – Yeshua.

Why is the virgin birth of Jesus crucial? If Jesus had a human father then the Bible is untrustworthy, because the Bible claims He did not. The Bible promises that He would be born of a virgin. And if Jesus was born simply of human parents, there is no way to explain His supernatural life! His virgin birth, His substitutionary death, His bodily resurrection and His second coming ALL speak to His deity! You cannot accept one aspect of Jesus' life and death without the other truths!

Virgin – Isa. 7:14 – “almah” – pure chaste woman ready for marriage! In the Greek Septuagint/LXX – Rabbis translated the word in Isa. 7:14 as “parthenos” in the Greek which means – VIRGIN!

God excels in creating out of nothing: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth – “bara” – create out of nothing.

Sarah's womb was dead – she was beyond childbearing – Gen. 18:11. Rebekah couldn't conceive – Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife was barren - Gen. 25:21. Hannah's womb was closed – I Sam. 1:5

John MacArthur – “The virgin birth is an underlying assumption of everything the Bible says about Jesus. To throw out the virgin birth is to reject Jesus' deity, the accuracy and authority of Scripture, and a host of other related doctrines that are at the heart of the Christian faith. No issue is more important than the virgin birth to our understanding of Who Jesus is. If we deny Jesus is God, we have denied the very essence of Christianity.” We have denied the message of the Messianic prophecies that proclaimed that the Messiah would be God (Isa. 9:6; Micah 5:2; Jer. 23:5-6. . .).

If Jesus wasn't born of a virgin what does that say? He's not **sinless**; He's not **deity**; He can't remove our **sin**

Jesus – sinless – Jn. 8:46; II Cor. 5:21;

I Peter 1:19 – precious blood of Messiah, as of a lamb w/out blemish and w/out spot.

I Peter 2:22 – Who did no sin

I John 3:5 – in Him is no sin

Pilate's testimony – Luke 23:22 – what evil has this Man done?

The centurion at the cross – Luke 23:47 – surely this Man was innocent.

High priest in the Hebrew Scriptures – needed to sacrifice for his sins (Lev. 16:11; Hebrews 9:7)

Jesus, our High Priest, offered Himself without spot – Hebrews 9:14
 Jesus' blood was different. Peter describes it as "precious blood" in I Peter 1:19.
 If there was no virgin birth - our redemption would not be guaranteed – we would not be assured of eternal life.

What does the virgin birth assure? It assures that the child born would be sinless. How would the child of a virgin birth be born sinless? The issue is the blood.

How is sin imputed? Through the blood.

Blood connects mankind – Acts 17:26 – “. . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” If sin is imputed through the blood – based on Acts 17:26, sin taints all mankind since we're connected by blood.

Lev. 17:11 – the life of the flesh is in the blood.

When man died spiritually, the blood was tainted. The very fact that sin affected the blood of man necessitated the virgin birth of the Messiah.

The female egg has no blood; the male sperm has no blood. Blood is formed when there is conception. Think of it this way – have you ever gotten an egg w/ a pinch of blood in the yolk? That proves conception happened. The egg had been fertilized. Without male fertilization – no blood. And, it's been medically determined that after fertilization/conception – the placenta protects the fetus from any flow of the mother's blood into the fetus.

If Mary's blood had flowed into Jesus – He would have been tainted with original sin.

- The blood is formed in the embryo itself.
- From the time of conception to the time of birth, not one single drop of blood ever passes from the mother to the child.

Who is this Man? He is GOD!

Homework

Prior to opening your Bible, write down what you know about the Christmas account from Scripture

Read Luke 2

After reading Luke 2, jot down observations re: the passage and questions

Did you discover anything you hadn't discovered in the past?

So what? How does this chapter impact your life?