

How Could a Virgin Be a Mother?

- VOICE: Two people who found it hard to believe in the virgin birth, *found it happening in their family!*
- PROF.: Mary herself asked how it could be done. Let's find out what she learned.
- FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT
- VOICE: I've been reading what the Bible says about the birth of Jesus Christ. And I'm puzzled. How could the mother of Jesus have been a virgin?
- PROF.: One birth was going to be so unusual, that God sent an angel to announce and explain it. It's reported in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, verses 26 through 31.
- VOICE: "... God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendent of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'
- "Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus'."
- "How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'
- "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ...For nothing is impossible with God.'
- "I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said.' Then the angel left her."¹
- PROF.: Mary found it hard to believe that a virgin could be a mother. So she asked the angelic messenger to explain how something so far outside her biological knowledge could happen.
- The angel didn't answer with a lecture about gynecology and embryology. Instead he answered that Almighty God would do it, and she believed and consented.
- VOICE: God was asking Mary to give birth to a child before she had a husband. Wouldn't her neighbors be skeptical about things like this? Wouldn't Mary have worried about losing her reputation?
- PROF.: Yes. Human nature hasn't changed in the centuries since this event.

¹ Luke 1:34, 35 & 37.

- VOICE: And she must have wondered about her fiancé, her beloved future husband. Would Joseph understand that her pregnancy didn't mean what it *seemed* to mean?
- PROF.: She could have lost more than her reputation and her fiancé. The law in those days said the penalty for sexual immorality was *death*.
- VOICE: And, knowing all these things, she still consented to be the virgin mother of Jesus Christ?
- PROF.: Yes. The Gospel of Matthew reports Joseph's reaction when he discovered Mary was expecting a baby. Quote, "Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in his mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins'."
- VOICE: I don't understand that last part: "...and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Does the *name* of Jesus have something to do with the act of saving?
- PROF.: Yes. In the language in which this was originally spoken, "Jesus" was the word for "savior." So this verse could be translated, "... you are to give him the name Savior, because he will save his people from their sins."
Matthew concludes the chapter by saying, "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus."²
- VOICE: In other words, Mary was a virgin when she *conceived* Jesus. When the record says, "...he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son," that says she remained a virgin *until she had given birth*.
- PROF.: Yes.
- VOICE: No wonder Mary asked, "How can this be?" How could a virgin be a mother?

2 Matthew 1:24-25.

- PROF.: Scholars have devised several possible explanations. Let's look at the one that makes the most sense to me.
Almighty God created men with the ability to become fathers. They produce multitudes of sperm during their lifetimes. It seems logical that God could construct one special “seed” with customized characteristics. Then God could personally implant it directly into Mary's womb, without the intervention of a human male.
- VOICE: That makes sense. Human doctors know how to implant sperm in the process of artificial insemination. God certainly could have done that, after *making* a special one.
- PROF.: Or God could have used some other technique that we don't understand. By definition, a miracle is something humanly impossible, but within God's ability to do.
God could have chosen all the characteristics he wanted “his only begotten Son” to have. For example, he could tell Mary with certainty that the child she would bear, would be a son. And he could include the perfect heredity of heaven – untarnished by Adam's disobedience.
- VOICE: Two people who found it hard to believe in the virgin birth, *found it happening in their family!*
- PROF.: That's a good summary.
Mary asked, “How can this be?” An angel answered, “The power of the Most High shall come upon you.” God recorded details of the conversation, to answer any doubts we might have centuries later.
- VOICE: Why did God bring his son into the world by a different method than he used for you and me? Why did Jesus Christ have a unique birth, via a virgin mother?
- PROF.: So that he could be a unique person – like no one else who ever lived on Earth.
People who listened to Jesus noticed his uniqueness, and remarked, “Man never spoke like this man.”³ People whose lives were in danger aboard a ship in a storm, watched Jesus stop the tempest. They exclaimed, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!”⁴
- VOICE: The Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus had watched many people die. Even in the agonizing moments of crucifixion, Jesus spoke kind words to his mother and other observers. Instead of cursing his executioners, he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.”

3 John 7:46.

4 Matthew 8:27.

PROF.: Seeing and hearing all this, the leader of the soldiers said, “Truly this man was the son of God.”⁵

VOICE: Only a unique birth could produce a person that extraordinary.

PROF.: Now that we understand that, we find it easier to believe that God could do miraculous events like giving a virgin the ability to be a mother.

VOICE: We went over this very fast. I'm not sure I understood everything about the conversations in which Mary and then Joseph learned that Mary had been chosen to have the privilege of giving birth to Jesus Christ. I want to read it again after the program is over.

PROF.: Good idea! Both conversations are in the New Testament part of the Bible. The one *with Mary* is in the in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 38.

VOICE: Chapter 1 of the Gospel of Luke, verses 26 through 38?

PROF.: Yes. And the conversation that the angel had with *Joseph* is in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 1, verses 18 through 25.

VOICE: Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 through 25.

PROF.: That's right. The first chapter of Luke, and the first chapter of Matthew.

VOICE: We sometimes get the impression that, if *we* can't do something, *no one* can do it. But when we realize that God had the power and wisdom to create the heavens and the Earth, we understand that He can do anything. He doesn't have human limitations.

PROF.: You and I do things every day that baboons and butterflies can't do, because we're a higher species than they are.

VOICE: Are you implying that God is a higher species than man, so He can do things that are impossible for humans?

PROF.: Exactly! Just as you can do things that are impossible for animals, God can do things that are humanly impossible. The humanly impossible is divinely possible. That includes enabling a virgin to become a mother, plus many other actions that the Bible reports that God did.

VOICE: Thank you, Professor. I have sometimes wondered whether some parts of the Bible could be true. But you've helped me to understand that the Bible is accurate in every detail.

⁵ Matthew 27:34.

PROF.: Whenever I read something in the Bible that seems hard to believe, I think of the verse that reminds us, “With men this is impossible; but **with God all things are possible.**”⁶

VOICE: For nothing is impossible with God!

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⁶ Matthew 19:26.