

LUKE

YOU CAN BE CERTAIN...

Connect group questions

Luke 1:26-38 Certain... that Jesus was miraculously conceived

1. What is it about the account of the virgin birth, that some not-yet-Christians simply find one step too far in what Christians believe? Among all the amazing things we believe, why does *this* issue seem to particularly annoy the atheist?

The virgin birth Read Luke 1:30-35

2. How will Mary conceive and give birth to a son when still a virgin? See also Matthew 1:18-20.
3. How does Gabriel assure Mary that this is not a problem for God? (see vv36-37)
4. How do you respond to someone who you understand to be a Christian, who says to you, "well, I don't think you can believe everything in the Bible and I have real trouble with the virgin birth"?
5. BONUS THEOLOGICAL QUESTION: What other aspects of Christian teaching are dependent on the doctrine of the virgin birth? (*Leaders, refer to the sermon and please check with Mark if you need some guidance her.*)

Mary Read Luke 1:34-38

6. The impact regarding this news on a young teenager must have been significant. What lessons/encouragements are there from Mary's response to Gabriel's announcement?
7. Share a time in your life or an experience where you were called on to trust the Lord and surrender to his plans for you though the way was hard? How did you learn to do that?
8. BONUS CHURCH HISTORY QUESTION: Some parts of the church teach that Mary remained a virgin; that we can and should pray to her, and that she is to be worshipped and adored as an 'immaculate' (i.e. sinless) 'co-redeemer' with Jesus. We don't find these things in the Bible. In fact, in the next passage, Mary calls God her 'saviour'. Review what Mark said in the message about the key difference between the Anglican and Roman Catholic church and check that everyone is clear about what was being said.

Jesus Read again vv30-35

9. What is the significance of the name Mary is to give to Jesus? See also Matthew 1:21.
 10. What is God actually doing in the birth of this child?
 11. BONUS BIBLICAL QUESTION: What is the significance of this baby to be born being promised the throne of his father David, and that his kingdom will never end? (See eg 2 Samuel 7:12 in context and Isaiah 9:1-7 - or just 6-7.)
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12. What has been new for you in this study: perhaps something new you've learnt, something new you want to learn more about, perhaps something new you want to implement in your life?

Please pray that we'll increasingly feel able to defend the doctrine of the virgin birth (or miraculous conception), understanding its significance historically, theologically and Biblically. Pray that we will have Mary's humility, trusting in God's plans and surrendering to his will. And pray we'll love Jesus all the more as we understand the significance of his coming into our world.

Date: 17th February 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin (via video) and Peregian
Series: Luke: you can be certain
Title: ... that Jesus was miraculously conceived
Passage: Luke 1:26-38
Outline: **What do we do with the virgin birth?**
What do we do with Mary?
What do we do with Jesus?

INTRODUCTION

- So... you will recall that Luke has interviewed **eye-witnesses** to the **entire Jesus' story**... he has carefully investigated **everything** ...he has written up an **orderly account**...
 - ... **so that** we can be **certain** of the things we have been taught...!
 - **Brilliant!**
 - So we can be **certain** regarding **John** fulfilling the **promise** that someone would **prepare** the way of the **Lord**...
 - And this **morning** – you can be **certain** that **Jesus** was **miraculously conceived**... //
 - But **hang on** / - isn't this is why some of your friends and family will think you're **really mad** – you're **nuts** – for believing in the **virgin birth**?
 - Some of the **other** crazy things you believe they can **cope** with or **overlook**...
 - like turning **water** into **wine**? – that's kind of **cute**
enabling the lame to walk? – that's a **nice** thing to do...
hanging out with **sinners** and **tax collectors**? – that's **cool**...
dying then rising from **death** – well – that seems kind of **central** to what you believe... so we'll let **give you that one**...
 - But the **VIRGIN BIRTH**....? Come **on!** – that's **one step TOO FAR!** ...please don't tell me you believe *that* nonsense...? //
 - So – we have to deal with **that** issue this morning as we **explore** this passage... but to **only** focus on that issue would be to miss some of the **other** amazing things we **see** here...
 - So **here** is where we are heading this morning...
1. **What do we do with the virgin birth?**
 2. **What do we do with Mary?**
 3. **What do we do with Jesus?**
- So...

1. WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE VIRGIN BIRTH?

- Let's pick the text up at v30...
- ³⁰ *But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.*
- Now v 34 – ³⁴ *'How will this be,'* Mary asked the angel, *'since I am a virgin?'* ³⁵ *The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on 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.*
- Mary is pledged to be married – but **not-yet** married... which means in that time and culture she be assumed to be a virgin... but in case we're in any **doubt** – we're told **three** times... **twice** by **Luke** in **v27** and once from Mary's **own lips** in **v34**.
- So that's the starting point... and we're clear on that – Mary has not slept with anyone.

- We learn from the angel or messenger that she is *highly favoured*... v28 – that she had *found favour with God* – v30...
- ...and when told that she would conceive and have a child, Mary figures he's talking about this happening *before* marrying Joseph, because she asks 'how will this be since I am a virgin'?
- Gabriel says "The Holy Spirit will come on 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*".
- It's almost **understated** isn't it?
- There's no **fanfare**... no **trumpets**... almost matter of **fact**...
- ...and as if to second-guess that Mary might think that this is impossible, Gabriel informs Mary that her relative **Elizabeth** who is (a) **old** and (b) supposedly **infertile**, is now **6 months pregnant** - for *no word from God will ever fail!*
- ...**inference?** – if no word from God will **ever** fail, Mary having a child by the **Holy Spirit** – **before** she has slept with **Joseph** – is **NO PROBLEM** //
- Now we're concentrating on **Luke's** Gospel in this series... but Matthew is entirely **consistent** on this point of the **virgin birth** – or more **accurately** – the **miraculous conception** of a **virgin!**
- Matthew tells us in ch 1 v18 – that *before* [Mary and Joseph] *came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit...*
- Joseph thought to just go quietly... but an angel then appears to **him** and says – v20 - *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...*
- That could hardly be **more clear!** /
- What will be conceived in **Mary** is from the **Holy Spirit** – therefore – from **God!**
- Back to our question – what do we **do** with this?
- Is it **true?** /
- **TOTALLY!**
- We saw in week 1, that the short space of time between the events **themselves** and Luke's writing up an **orderly account**, gives us confidence in the historical **reliability** of the **accounts**...
- ...**BUT of course**, if you decided to put yourself **OVER** the word and decide which bits are **true** and which bits **aren't**... then how do you decide if **any** of the account of Jesus is **true?**
- Inevitably if **that's** the way you decide to go, then the bits you **like** are the bits you think are **true** and the bits you **don't like** or can't **accept** are the bits you **don't** think are true... // and where does **that** leave or lead you in the **end?** // That puts **you** in charge of **everything!**
- And of course, if you *were* making this up... what would be the motive for including something like a virgin birth which people are going to find so hard to **believe?**
- Besides... don't **WE** believe that God's word will **never fail** – that is, that nothing is **too hard** for **him?** - that the God who brought the **whole creation** into being can then, by his **power** and **authority**, be at work in the **womb** of a **virgin** so that she bears the **eternal son** to **save the world**... !
- And **theologically**...? – we understand that only by means a **miraculous conception**, could God take on **human flesh** and step into our **world**...
- And that only a **perfect sacrifice** – such as Jesus – Son of God **was** – could be made for the **sin** of the **world**...!
- **So - historically** – we conclude the text is **reliable**...
- And **theologically** – we conclude that the miraculous conception is **consistent** with **Scripture** and a **necessity!** //
- What do we do with the **virgin birth?**
- We **embrace** it... we **trust** the **account**... we take to be **true**... and when **called** on – we **defend** it!!

- Second:

2. WHAT DO WE DO WITH MARY?

- Have you considered what this announcement must have meant for **Mary**? – the **impact** it must have had on her?
- Can you imagine what it was like to tell **Joseph**... “Joseph – guess what – I’m **pregnant**...!”
- Adultery was punishable by **stoning**...
- to end a betrothal required **divorce!** //
- but note the way Mary **responds** to this staggering news... she simply says – 38 – *I am the Lord’s servant... may it be to me as you have said.*
- Simple but profound **surrender** and **obedience**...
- *I am the Lord’s servant... may your word to me be fulfilled...*
- That’s a **staggering** response!
- Mary is **young**... many think in her **mid-teens**
- An **angel** has **appeared** to her...
- **Declared** that she is **highly favoured**
- Told that though a **virgin**, she’s to bear a **son**
- told that this son will **save from sin** and **rule the world forever**...
- And she says – *I am the Lord’s servant... may your word to me be fulfilled....*
- That is **mind-blowing**...!
- **Unlike** Zechariah... she doesn’t **question** God... she is **curious** to know how it’s going to happen – but her **attitude** is entirely **different**...
- She is full of **trust** and **submission** and **surrender**...
- *I am the Lord’s servant... may your word to me be fulfilled... may it be to be as you have said* as the older NIV put it...
- that **has** to be a model for **our** surrender to God!! //
- now the Lord has not and is not about to ask you to bear the **Saviour** of the **world**...
- ...but he **has** asked you and **will** ask you to **trust** him on **so many things**....
- A **thorn** in your **side** of some description – like the Apostle Paul...
- A health **issue** of some description...
- People who **ridicule** you... perhaps even **hate** you because of your trust in Jesus...
- Yes – maybe you’ll face **persecution**...
- OR – perhaps he will call you to some high **calling**... to **public office**... or to an important role in his **church**...
- Perhaps he is laying on your heart some particular way of **servicing** here – or **leading** or **teaching**...
- **How** will you **react** to what the Lord puts before you?
- Will you respond like Mary who said ‘*I am the Lord’s servant – may your word to be me be fulfilled... ’??//*
- What do we make of **Mary**..?
- A **beautiful picture** – a wonderful model of **trust** – of **submission** – of **surrender**...
- What do we make of Mary as **perpetual virgin**...? or **mother of God**... or **co-redeemer** – or one who we plead to, to **intercede** for us to the Lord Jesus?

- There is **nothing** in the **text** here... or in other parts of the New Testament to suggest we ought to **worship Mary, pray to Mary or depend on Mary** for our **salvation**.
- I know there are many here who once **worshipped** in a **Roman Catholic church**... and I trust you won't take **any** offense here... but it is worth pointing out that here we see one of the key **differences** between the **Anglican** and **Roman Catholic understanding and approach**.
- **Anglican** – the **Bible** is the **final authority** – **the Bible is over the church** – **church sits under the Bible**
- **RC** – the **church** and church **tradition** is the **final authority**...the church has the **authority** as to *how* the Bible is **interpreted**....
- So if over time and by tradition, Mary is **prayed** to and **worshipped** and understood to be **perfect** and a **perpetual virgin**... the **RC church** says – **yes** – that's **authoritative** as it **arises** from our **tradition**...
//
- Anglican church – says – if it can't be **proved** from the **Bible** – we **cannot** base our **teaching** on it... as we **DON'T** see in the Bible anyone **praying** to Mary, **worshipping** Mary as **co-redeemer**... and we **DO** see that Mary went on to have other children with Joseph... than we call into question the **adoration** of **Mary** seen in the **RC church**... /
- However – we **DO** want to **honour** Mary – and hold her up as a **beautiful example** of one who **trusted** and **surrendered** to her **Lord!!** //
- What do we make of Mary? – a wonderful **inspiration** of **beautiful surrender** to the **will of God**...
- May our approach to all that the Lord lays before **US**, be *“I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled”*.
- What do we do with the **virgin birth**? what do we do with **Mary**? and finally, as we look at this passage:

3. WHAT DO WE DO WITH JESUS?

- We mustn't miss what Luke is telling us about the **child** to be **born** here...
- Easy to get distracted by the **virgin birth** and by **Mary**... but Luke's '**orderly account**' you'll recall is about **Jesus**...
- So what do we see about **him**? – what are we to begin getting our head around here about **Jesus**?
- Remember - what is conceived in Mary is **from** the Holy Spirit... **by** the Holy Spirit... from **God!!**
- Let's see how he is therefore **described**... Have a look with me at v31 – *you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.*
- His **name** tells us something significant from the outset... it means **“the Lord saves”**
- Matthew adds that this will be his name, *for he will save his people from their sin...!* (Matt 1:21)
- Here is God acting on his **promise** and providing for the **rescue** of the **world!!** This little child will grow up to save his people from sin!
- A significant turning point in history – in God's dealing with humanity!
- Now to v32 – *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.*
- **Son of the Most High** = Son of **God**... **God** on earth... God **turned up**... God in **skin!**
- Throne of his **father David**? – The Messiah was **always** going to be in the line of David – 2 Samuel 7:12 – and his kingdom **never-ending**...
- Again – we saw this on **Christmas Day** – *unto us a child is born – a son given – and the government will be on his shoulders... and his Kingdom will never end* – Isaiah 9!!
- That one the **OT promised** and looked **forward** to – who would make a difference to this world and bring final **judgement** and **peace** at the **end** – **THIS** is who Mary will carry in her **womb** and feed at her **breast** and **nurture** by her **side!**

- Then in v35 - *"The Holy Spirit will come on 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.*
- No **sex** is involved - this is important to understand... there are other myths around whereby the "gods" mate with humans...
- This is **not** what is being taught here.
- It's a **miraculous work of God's Holy Spirit within Mary** - Mary's conception will be the result of God's work **within** her... and so the child to be born will be **Holy** and the **Son of God**.
- We'll see more of this in the weeks to come... but see here - God in his great mercy and in accord with his great power is actually entering into human **life**...
- The person of the **eternal Son** - always has been - always will be - the **Son of the Most High** - **through** him and **for** whom the world was made..., is now taking on **human flesh** via the **womb** of a **virgin**... to **rescue** the **world**... to rescue **YOU!** //
- Does this blow your **mind**??
- ...that God would love us **so much**...? be **so committed** to the world... which had turned its back on him...?
- That he should **condescend** to us in this **way**?
- Jesus - our **salvation**.
- Jesus - **son of the Most High**
- Jesus - taking the throne of **David**
- Jesus - whose **Kingdom** will never **end**....

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- Where does all this leave us this morning?
 - You're not one of those who believe in the **virgin birth** are you? /
 - Yes you **are**... you're as **mad** as **that**...
 - **Because**
- the **Bible says!** - and we trust the **Bible** as being **reliable** and Luke **specifically** as giving us an **orderly account** so that we can be **certain**... !
 - **Because** the logic is that if we throw out the **virgin birth** - because we reckon 'we **know better**' - than we throw it **all** out... - it's **ALL** up for **grabs!**
 - **So what do we do with it?**
- **we claim it**
- **we name it**
- **we embrace** it as the means by which our loving God stepped into our world... and as the means by which a **perfect, spotless sacrifice** was made for the sins of the **whole world!!** //
 - And **Mary** - what do you with **her**?
 - Well - we don't **pray** to her or **worship** her nor do we claim she **remained** a **virgin** - for the very same reason we **believe** the **virgin birth**... because we trust the **Bible** to tell us what is **true** and **real**... and if it's not **here** - in the orderly account - we don't **claim** it or **teach** it or **embrace** it!
 - But we **ARE** moved by her beautiful **submission** and **surrender**... and we endeavour to live with **her** kind of trust - *I am the Lord's servant, may your word to be me fulfilled...* **reminiscent isn't it**, of 'not **my** will, but **yours** be done'. //
 - And what do we do with **Jesus** - the Lord stepping into our world to save us.. the Lord whose kingdom will never end...
 - We **worship** him, we **adore** him, we **serve** him, we **honour** him... we bring our lives under his **rule**... we **depend** on him as our only **Saviour**... and we love him **more** and **more each day**... !