

Luke 1:26-38 (Luke part 3) “Virgin Birth: Mission Impossible?”  
June 12, 2011

Main Idea: God’s power is most greatly demonstrated through what you don’t have.

AGI: June 6, 1944 D-Day... (this past week was the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day). I was looking at Justin and Jamie Costa’s pictures on facebook from their Charleston, SC trip to the beach (Justin’s text about Isaiah Stratton jumping off an 80 foot cliff and Justin jumped at 40... Mom definitely didn’t get that text). With all the suffering that I have read about and see in history and the news, here are a group of guys in their early twenties, totally sold out for Jesus being able to take a few days off and have fun. Yet there was a generation of young men who were called off the farm and out of their mother’s homes to be transported, many of them, to certain death, to face and defeat the greatest threat to Freedom and Liberty in modern times. Thank you veterans for what you did and the example that you set. I know that many of us of the younger generations have different hairstyles, listen to different music, and wear clothes that make some of you shake your head like, “What are they thinking?” Yet despite the surface differences, please know that I can speak for myself and the overwhelming majority of American guys of the younger generations that you are our heroes and we aspire to exhibit the same kind of moral courage you showed in the face of Nazi MG-42 machine gun nests, Japanese pillboxes and the brutal cold of a European winter or the sweltering heat of the Pacific jungles, if called upon to do the same.

Luke 1:26-38

*“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” <sup>29</sup> But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a*

*son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”*

*<sup>34</sup> And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*

*<sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup> 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.”*

Main Idea: God’s power is most greatly demonstrated through what you don’t have.

One theme we will see repeated in the Gospel of Luke is God honoring those who humble themselves and humiliating those who honor themselves. What is the key to the Christian life? = Humility  
Q# How do you get Humility? = See a picture of Jesus as the best, the only, the Creator, the one who can save me and then turning to look in the mirror and respond “Who am I?” Who am I that you would allow me to live? Who am I that you would offer me the chance to be forgiven? Who am I that you would give me a place in Your plan? = It is only through God’s grace that we receive anything other than wrath.

\*Then Christ comes to you when you are on your face, broken and humble, willing to accept whatever His sentence is, you’re there willing to change the direction of your life (a Sunday “decision” means nothing if your Monday-Saturday stays the same), and He reaches down and gives you a heart transplant, complete with new desires, then lifts you up on to your feet and arms you with Himself so that you can stand against temptation and not only stand firm

against the onslaught of the enemy but so that you can be bold enough to tell people the Truth that Jesus saves!

\*Surprising news contrasted with the vastness of the universe and God noticed her and sent an angel as a messenger to her.

-What Mary knew about the vastness of the cosmos:

Psalm 19:1-6

*“The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
2 Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.  
3 There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.  
4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.  
In them he has set a tent for the sun,  
5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.  
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them,  
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.”*

Imagine what she would have concluded from looking at the stars at night.

-What we now know about the vastness of the cosmos...we could go on about this for days.<sup>1</sup>

**Scene 1 – Humble region, insignificant town, unknown woman, obscure guy manual laborer – 1:26-27**

- Region of Galilee – not known for being Park Place on the Monopoly board of Palestine

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/swift/bursts/monster-black-holes.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/swift/bursts/monster-black-holes.html)

- “City” of Nazareth – where Jesus would be raised although He was born in Bethlehem. \*Because Luke had to specify that Nazareth was in Galilee, it is reasonable to conclude that Luke’s intended audience was probably located outside of Palestine. Had the readers been from Palestine he would not have needed to provide this depth of detail.

IVP Background Commentary, “Nazareth in this period was an insignificant village of an estimated sixteen hundred to two thousand inhabitants.”<sup>2</sup>

Date of Luke<sup>3</sup> = Q# What happened between the years Jesus ascended to heaven and the composition of the NT?

= The Gospel had gone out into the far corners of the Roman Empire. The Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be suppressed.

- Mary, Virgin betrothed – “In Judaism, “virgins” were young maidens, usually fourteen or younger.<sup>4</sup>

Point = very young by our standards but it is not without historical precedent. Girls have historically been married very young.

**BETROTH** — to promise “by one’s truth.” Men and women were betrothed when they were engaged to be married. This usually took place a year or more before marriage. From the time of betrothal the woman was regarded as the lawful wife of the man to whom she was betrothed (Deut. 28:30; Judg. 14:2, 8; Matt. 1:18–21). The term is figuratively employed of the spiritual connection between God and his people (Hos. 2:19, 20).<sup>5</sup>

- Joseph, carpenter, of the line of David –

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Lk 1:26). (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

<sup>3</sup> Conservative scholars normally place Luke sometime in the early 60’s A.D./C.E., whereas liberal scholars favor somewhere around 85 A.D./C.E.

<sup>4</sup> C.S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 1996), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

Q# Why is the line of David significant? = prophecies about how the Messiah would come through the line of David.

\*David sounds great but it really wasn't in the beginning.

1) Rahab – Joshua 2

2) Ruth – Book of Ruth (Moabitess)

- Eglon, king of Moab (Judges 3)

- David's mighty men killed "lion-like" heroes of Moab

= God chooses, in His grace, to lift up those of humble family backgrounds

### Scene 2 – Unexpected Announcement – 1:28-33

- Gabriel's greeting: v.28 *And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"*  
- *Favored one* =

Χαρις [*Charis*] is a very ancient and common word with a variety of applied meanings. They all come from the notion of sweetness, charm, loveliness, joy, delight, like words of grace, Luke 4:22, growing grace, Eph. 4:29, with grace, Col. 4:6. The notion of kindness is in it also, especially of God towards men as here.<sup>6</sup>

Shocking greeting! "*The Lord is with you!*"

Judges 6:12 – the same words used when the angel spoke to Gideon and called Gideon to raise an army.

Q# Her thought: ***With me for what?***

- v.29 Reaction: *greatly troubled* -- ***confuse, perplex*** (greatly) *διεταράχθη*

\*Because she was humble and didn't presume on God's favor She didn't have the "I'm Here Syndrome" = the kind of person

- Reaction: *and tried to discern what short of greeting this might be – to think or reason carefully, esp. about the implications*<sup>7</sup> *διελογίζετο*-imperfect

<sup>6</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Lk 1:30) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

<sup>7</sup> W. Arndt, F.W. Danker, & W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 232, in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

Imperfect—continual action

= When the mind goes into overdrive

Q# What does this mean?

- Gabriel's response
  1. Do not be afraid, Mary
  2. For you have found favor with God

Mary is the recipient of grace not the giver of it.

Luke 11:27-28 "*As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!"*"<sup>28</sup> *But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*

3. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,

\*Pregnancy news can be exhilarating but pregnant...out of wedlock...1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine = not ok.

\*Telling the family...horribly difficult.

- A. And you shall call his name Jesus

It is worth noting that among some famous biblical names that were not used at all by Palestinian Jews in this period were Moses, David, and Elijah."<sup>8</sup>

- B. He will be great

Q# How great will He be?

- C. And will be called the Son of the Most High

\*"*Most High*" = reserved for God alone

- D. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,

Honor and being honored – 1<sup>st</sup> century honor was military victory marches vs. humble, Jewish teenager to give birth to an infant, the Son of God, the King, born as an infant...it goes against the grain of honor and power.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 77-78.

E. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever,  
\*Jesus is the rightful heir to all the promises of the Bible

F. and of his kingdom there will be no end  
Revelation 6:12-17

<sup>12</sup> *When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. <sup>14</sup> The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. <sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”*

\*You can't re-invent Jesus. Re-inventing Jesus is like a plumber trying to re-invent pipes  
Point = Jesus is the victorious Savior of the world who cannot be redefined but can be received through faith.

### Scene 3 – Honest Question – 1:34

- *How will this be, since I am a virgin?*

\*Not doubting God's ability but wondering exactly HOW God is going to accomplish it.  
Mary is not doubting God's ability but genuinely inquiring *how* God is going to accomplish His Word.

OBJECTION: Miracles do not happen!

FALLACY: *a priori* commitment to Naturalism.

Gary Habermas writes, “As former Oxford lecturer William Wand remarks, there is no scholarly reason for rejecting possibilities before an investigation. An *a priori* dismissal cannot be allowed, even if we

do not like the conclusion that is indicated by the facts. One must decide on the basis of the known evidence.”<sup>9</sup>

\*David Hume on miracles: “a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agents.”<sup>10</sup>

REBUTTAL: Paul Rhodes Eddy & Gregory Boyd: “One problem with Hume's line of reasoning is that he seems to associate rational thinking with *adding up* evidence rather than *weighing* evidence . . . Second, if carried through consistently, Hume's methodology would render it unreasonable to conclude that *anything* unusual *ever* happens, since, by definition, there are far more unusual events than unusual ones. A historian would thus be justified in denying, for example, the mind-boggling exploits of Alexander the Great or Napoleon Bonaparte—despite the fact that there is overwhelming evidence most of the activities attributed to these men are generally accurate.”<sup>11</sup>

Point = Just because an even is UNUSUAL does not automatically mean that it is IMPOSSIBLE. The vast majority of situations where things seem out of the ordinary have ordinary explanations.

Big IF – IF AND ONLY IF God exists then He can still interact and intervene in the Natural Order that He Created to work a miracle that is a megaphone to us to look up to Him in faith that HE is God and submit our lives to Him.

Significance of the Virginal Conception

- 1) Provides the grounds for a sinless Savior
- 2) Provides the fulfilled answer to prophecy

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<sup>9</sup> William Wand, *Christianity: A Historical Religion?* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), pp. 29-30, 70-71. Cited in, Gary Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 59.

<sup>10</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (1748; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), 115. Cited in, Paul Rhodes Eddy & Gregory A. Boyd, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 41.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Rhodes Eddy & Gregory A. Boyd, *The Jesus Legend*, 61-62.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

3) Provides a decisive illustration of the absolute power of God to interact in world events

(4-7, Millard J. Erickson)

4) A reminder that our salvation is supernatural . . . so also the virgin birth points to the helplessness of humans to initiate even the first step in the process. Not only are humans unable to secure their own salvation, but they could not even introduce the Savior into their society.

5) A reminder that God’s salvation is fully a gift of grace

6) Evidence of the uniqueness of Jesus the Savior

7) Evidence of the power and sovereignty of God over nature<sup>12</sup>

Q# Did Mary remain a virgin?

Matthew 1:25 “but knew her not **until** she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”

- Matthew 1:24-25 - "And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."
- Matthew 12:46-47 - "While He was still speaking to the

<sup>12</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, L. Arnold Hustad, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 221.

multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."

- Matthew 13:55 - "Is not this the carpenters son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"
- Mark 6:2-3 - "And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"
- John 2:12 - "After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brothers, and His disciples; and there they stayed a few days."
- Acts 1:14 - "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."
- 1 Cor. 9:4-5 - "Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?"
- Gal. 1:19 - But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lords brother."<sup>13</sup>

Q# Do Evangelical Christians honor Mary? = YES!!!! In fact, Bible-believing Christians honor the words of Mary. In fact, the last words

<sup>13</sup> <http://carm.org/did-mary-have-other-children>

of Mary recorded in the Bible is in John 2:5 at Cana where the wedding hosts had run out of wine and, “His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

#### **Scene 4 – Truthful Answer – 1:35-37 (to the “How” Question)**

- *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;*

1. Come upon you – the power of the HS to produce something supernatural.

2. Overshadow you – like a cloud

Luke 9:34 “*As he was saying these things, a cloud came and **overshadowed** them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.*”

\*Mormons – HS had sex with Mary

1) Spirit is a non-corporeal being

2) No hint of intercourse in the text

- *Therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God*

- *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*

- *V.37 For nothing will be impossible with God.*

Q# How big is your God/god?

#### **Scene 5 – Humble Availability – 1:38**

- *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.*

1) *Doulos* – “bondservant”

\*Commitment

The question is not “Are we committed?” but “*to what extent are we committed to Christ?*”

\*We’re all a slave to something – most, to our desires, but those desires will fade.

Slow fade and degeneration of desires – from when you’re in elementary school, you want to be a pro athlete, then by the time you’re in a nursing home you just want an extra blanket to stay warm and your life will slowly ebb away. = Live for what lasts. Live for Christ.

2) Let it be – a servant takes orders, an advisor takes suggestions under advisement

Point = Some of you know exactly what God wants of you. You know *exactly* what it is that needs to be out of your life.

\*Isaiah 6:8 “*And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”*”

Mary’s response – its not what happens to us but how we respond.

“she was willing to risk disgrace and divorce to comply with God’s command.”<sup>14</sup>

Point = “The reason why some of you will not obey God is because you fear the cost of making a difference” – Dr. Johnny Hunt<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> C.F. Pfeiffer, & E.F. Harrison, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Lk 1:34). Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

<sup>15</sup> Sermon, “Making a Difference: Part 1, 05.15.11, Podcast—First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia.