

Chapter 7: Luke's Gospel

Believe it or not, I have read and heard several non-virgin birth proponents also dance around Luke's narrative of the virgin birth. They do not go so far as to discredit the authenticity of the text (as many do with Matthew 1 and 2), they instead attempt to manipulate and distort the actual, intended meaning of the passage. Let's take a look at this text verse by verse, from Luke 1:26-38, briefly commenting on each passage before examining the non-virgin birth contentions given concerning the text.

Commentary on Luke 1:26-38

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from (the) Almighty unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.

This verse shows that Yahweh sent an angel to the city of Nazareth. The sixth month refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's (Mary's cousin) pregnancy.

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, who in this verse is referred to by the Greek word *parthenos* (virgin) twice. Notice that Mary was only espoused or engaged to Joseph, the marriage had not yet been consummated. Hebrew engagements were legally binding and taken more serious than today. To distinguish between the cultures the word would probably be better translated as *betrothed*. The word betrothed carries with it the meaning of "to be pledged to" and here refers to the fact that the girl's father has authorized the giving of his daughter's hand in marriage to a particular man (here, Joseph). The man has paid the girl's father the dowry, and according to the Aramaic text of the New Covenant Scriptures, this reads "to a virgin acquired for a price" (see George Lamsa's translation). What would take place in betrothal was not an absolute equivalent to marriage, for we read of the two as separate in the Old Covenant Scripture texts of Deuteronomy 20:7 and 22:23. After betrothal the future husband would make sure he made the necessary arrangements to provide sufficiently for his wife (usually around the a 1 year period) and then come back and take his virgin bride's hand in marriage. Keep in mind that the Greek word *parthenos* (used here in verse 27) is used in Deuteronomy 22:23 in the Septuagint to refer to a sexually pure virgin betrothed or espoused to a husband.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Master is with thee; blessed art thou among women.

We find here that Mary had been elected by Yahweh for a specific purpose, and she was considered blessed among the women of her time.

29 And when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

She was likely perplexed as to why she had been chosen for an angelic visitation.

30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with [the] Almighty.

This is a repeat of what was proclaimed in verse 28. The angel comforts her fear, and tells her that she should not be troubled because his visit is a positive one. She's found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.

31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in they womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Yeshua.

The angel tells Mary that she will conceive and then birth a male child. Remember, Mary has been called a virgin (*parthenos*) twice already, and it has also been said she was betrothed to Joseph. Mary knows that she has not consummated the marriage yet with her betrothed Joseph. Miriam had never had sex, yet the angel tells her she will conceive and give birth. Now, naturally a betrothed woman who was told this by an angel may think, "Okay, this is great. I will be married to the man I'm betrothed to and we will come together intimately, and pro-create a son." However, as we will see, this is not what went through Miriam's mind, and there must be a reason for this. At the end of verse 31 the angel tells her the name to call the child, Yeshua.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and Yahweh Almighty shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

This son will be one out of the ordinary, he will be referred to as the Son of the Highest, obviously differently than others that were referred to as sons of Yahweh. Yahweh would also grant him David, his father's (ancestor's) throne.

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

This Son will rule over the house of Jacob/Israel for all time in an endless kingdom.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

This is the *death blow* to the non-virgin birth proponents. We see here that Mary had not had sexual relations and thus wondered how she was going to conceive; she had not *known* (a euphemism for having sexual relations) a man.¹

¹ **Genesis 4:1** And Adam **knew** Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from Yahweh.

Genesis 19:5, 8 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, **that we may know them**. Behold now, I have two daughters which **have not known man**; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. (*Note: Verse 5 here is a sexual reference to sodomy or homosexuality. The men of Sodom wanted to commit sexual sin with the angels (in the form of men) who had visited the city.*)

Numbers 31:17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath **known man** by lying with him.

Why does Mary respond to the angel with wonder and amazement if she was already betrothed and would soon be married and able to be intimate in sex with her husband Joseph? The best way to understand this is that Mary took Gabriel's words with *immediacy*. In other words, as Gabriel talked to her (Luke 1:30-33) Miriam realized that the word Gabriel gave to her about conceiving a son would happen right after he said it. This makes sense. It explains why she asked the question, "How is this possible seeing I know not (never had sex with) a man?" Miriam realized that Gabriel was telling her she would conceive while only being betrothed to Joseph, before the consummation.

Notice also that her response was not just one towards the greatness of her son, but also towards the *conception* of her son. The response that Gabriel gives her in replying to her question further validates this point.

35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of [the] Almighty.

Gabriel does not say here, "You will be married to Joseph and then after you will naturally have this child." Gabriel told her that her conception would be a *miraculous* conception. Yahweh's Spirit would come upon her and overshadow her, and she would produce a child.

We are not told exactly how the virgin conception of Mary took place. We do know that many of the false, pagan religions of antiquity had stories of "virgin conceptions," but these stories all included some sort of sexual act between one of their gods and a virgin woman, producing some sort of demi-god upon the earth (half man/half god). Satan tries his best to mimic the truth (and deceive people), seeing that he was once a beautiful angelic creature before the Almighty in heaven, but brought down low because of his pride. A great difference between the pagan religions and what happened with Mary is that in the accounts of the virgin conception in Matthew and Luke, there is nothing ever said about any sexual activity between Yahweh and Mary. The child produced in Mary would not be half god and half man, but 100% man, with the fulness of the Spirit of Yahweh dwelling inside of him (seeing he was begotten by the Spirit). Mary's conception would be miraculous.²

36. And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

This verse proves that while Gabriel was speaking to Mary she must have conceived, seeing that He said that her cousin Elizabeth had *also* conceived. This is not meant to be taken as though Mary was also elderly³ and barren in her womb, but rather that Elizabeth

Matthew 1:24-25 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And **knew her not** till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Yeshua.

²There are other miraculous births recorded in Scripture as well (consider Sarah conceiving Isaac at 90 years old [Genesis 17-18]). When (the) Mighty One steps in to miraculously make conception happen he is not tampering with the woman in any way. He is performing a miracle for the woman.

³Mike Gascoigne writes in his article *Virgin Birth, Jewish Adoption and Genealogy of Yeshua*, pg. 8-9 the following (taken from www.write-on.co.uk/vbirth.htm): "There are good reasons to believe that Mary was young: (1) She was espoused to Joseph (Matt. 1:18, Luke 1:27). As far as we know, she became the first

had also conceived. Notice carefully that Gabriel brings up Elizabeth's conception because Mary knew Elizabeth, and thus knew that Elizabeth was past the normal age of child-bearing for women. Gabriel brings up Elizabeth's miraculous conception to help Mary's faith in her miraculous conception, as Gabriel's next statement further shows:

37. For with [the] Almighty nothing shall be impossible.

This verse is showing that Yahweh is capable of allowing a virgin to conceive and is also capable of allowing an elderly woman to conceive. These are two actions which do not generally happen. It would make absolutely no sense for Yahweh to say this in reference to Mary's birth, if it was to be a birth consisting of relations with her and Joseph. Mary, and everyone else in Israel, would already know that this was possible. There is nothing out of the realm of human possibility when it comes to a young man and woman getting married and making a baby.

38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Master; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Mary accepts the word Yahweh has given through His angel, and Gabriel then departs.

For those reading the text from Luke I've just commented on, who have never encountered non-virgin birth material, you're probably asking the question, "*What is the problem? I don't see anything suggesting a non-virgin birth in the text.*" This kind of question comes from a person who is seeking to accept what the Bible plainly says, means, and teaches. Nevertheless, we shall endeavor to answer the objection that has been given to Luke's narrative (by the non-virgin birth proponents), and see if the objection given stands the test of close examination.

The Word Shall

The most common objection given to the passage in Luke is the use of the word shall.⁴ They reason that those things promised to Mary by Yahweh (through the angel Gabriel) were things that *shall* happen, that is, future tense. The things were not said to have happened immediately, but at a future time. One author put it like this:

and only wife of Joseph. If Joseph had already been married and had children from other wives, they would have accompanied him to Bethlehem. It is very unlikely that a man with no children would marry a woman who was past childbearing age. (Talmud Mas. Yevamoth 61b) **(2)** Yeshua was Mary's firstborn son (Luke 2:7) and she had other children, both sons and daughters. (Matt. 12:46, Matt. 13:55-56) **(3)** Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem every year at Passover and continued to do so until Yeshua was at least twelve years old. (Luke 2:41-42) If Mary was old, she would not have undertaken the arduous journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem, probably having to travel on a donkey. **(4)** Mary is mentioned in the writings of Ignatius, who was Bishop of Antioch from AD 69 until he was taken to Rome and fed to the lions in 115. At some time during his ministry, he wrote to John the Apostle: "There are also many of our women here, who are desirous to see Mary [the mother] of Jesus, and wish day by day to run off from us to you, that they may meet with her..." (Epistle of Ignatius to St. John the Apostle). If Mary was still alive in AD 69 or after wards, she must have been very young when she gave birth to Yeshua...

⁴It is my understanding that the Greek text (from which the King James Version was translated from) does not literally contain an underlying Greek word for the English word shall in these particular Lukan cases, but is used because of implication. Nevertheless, I will use the term shall in answering their objection seeing that they have used it for the objection to begin with.

Please notice Luke Chapter 1 when the angel appeared to Miriam. Please notice that the angel, in every single case, spoke in the FUTURE tense.

Notice what he DID NOT say to Miriam:

- The angel did not say: "you have just conceived..."
- The angel did not say: "Yahweh Elohim has just given to him the throne of his father David..."
- The angel did not say: "and He is now beginning to reign over the house of Jacob forever..."

No, the angel told Miriam these were things to happen in the future.⁵

I agree completely that each of the uses of the word *shall* by Gabriel, in reference to Mary and her child, were definitely references that applied to the future. However, what this author has failed to do, is ask him self the question, "Just *how far* into the future?" The word *shall* can be used in a sentence to imply a future happening, but we must understand that even *one minute afterward* is recognized as the future, rather than the present or the past. An example of this is seen just a few verses back in the first chapter of Luke.

In the beginning verses of Luke chapter one, we find the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. They were a couple who were earnest in their service to Yahweh's commandments, not to mention Zechariah was a Levite priest who offered incense for a specific course in Yahweh's temple.⁶ We will examine Elizabeth's miraculous birth a little later in this chapter, but for now let's look to the response of Zechariah when he was told by the angel of Yahweh that his elderly, barren wife would conceive and bear him a son. As the angel spoke these words to Zechariah, showing him the greatness his son would bring, Zechariah replied immediately in the following manner:

And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of [the] Almighty; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.
[Luke 1:18-20]

Please notice the underlined sentence. Because of Zechariah's unbelief of what Gabriel had spoken, the angel proclaimed to him, "thou *shalt* be dumb." This is strikingly similar to what Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1:31 when he stated, "And behold, thou *shalt* conceive in thy womb." No one can deny that when Gabriel spoke the above words to Zechariah they were used to refer to something in the future because of the use of the future tense word *shall* or *shalt*. Nevertheless, how far in the future did this occur? Reading gives us the answer.

And the people waited for Zechariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they

⁵ *The Virgin Birth – 21 Points*, by Jon Francis.

⁶ Luke 1:5-10

perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. [Luke 1:21-22]

Zechariah was speechless at his coming out of the temple which was for the sake of his service in the priestly course of Abiah.⁷ We must now ask the question as to how long Zechariah was serving in this course.

COURSE OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES. Because of the great increase in the number of priests, David divided them into twenty-four relays (1 Chron 24:1-19). The priests were expected to serve from twenty years of age (1 Chron 23:6, 27). Sixteen courses were allotted the descendants of Eleazar and eight to those of Ithamar, his brother. Apart from the main festivals, when all the courses were active, each course ministered for a week, changes being made on the Sabbath before the evening sacrifice (2 Kings 11:5, 9). Courses were determined by casting lots.⁸

We see here that the longest Zechariah could have been serving was for the space of one week.⁹ Therefore the angel's proclamation that he would be dumb and unable to speak came to pass, yes, in the future, but at the most part, one week into the future. I'd like to add here that I believe, according to the context, Zechariah may have been struck with dumbness immediately after Gabriel spoke his words in Luke 1:20. This is seen by the use of the phrase, "until the day that these things shall be performed." This sentence implies that from the point immediately after Gabriel spoke, until the day of the naming of the child,¹⁰ Zechariah would suffer as a mute. Therefore, the word *shall*, could simply have been a reference to seconds in the future, but still a reference to a time *in the future*. This sheds a completely different light on the use of the word *shall* by Gabriel in reference to those things which happened to Mary.

At this point, it is fitting for us to consider other passages in Scripture of the English word shall to see that the future can be immediately following the declaration.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. [Genesis 2:23]

I [Samuel] will call unto Yahweh, and he shall send thunder and rain... So Samuel called unto Yahweh; and Yahweh sent thunder and rain that day... [I Samuel 11:17-18]

Then Peter said to her... behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then she fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. [Acts 5:9-10]

Each use of the word *shall* here is a reference to something that happened no later than the day the statement was made. Thus the use of the word shall in Luke 1:31-35 does *nothing* to disprove the virgin conception of Yeshua.

⁷ Luke 1:5

⁸ *The Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1975 by Zondervan, Volume 1, p994.

⁹ Luke 1:21-22 does imply that the people were waiting in one day's time, not for over one day or the space of a week. Therefore it is most likely that they waited no longer than a portion of one day for Zechariah.

¹⁰ Luke 1:57-64

Comparing Elizabeth and Mary

We will now compare Elizabeth's account with Mary's account and show unequivocally that Mary must needs have been a sexual virgin according to the context of Luke chapter one.

Elizabeth was barren and well stricken in years – Lk. 1:7	Mary was described as a virgin (Greek <i>parthenos</i>) – Lk. 1:27
The angel told Zechariah his wife would bear him a son – Lk. 1:13	The angel told Mary she would conceive in her womb – Lk. 1:31
Zechariah responded to the angel by stating his wife's old age – Lk. 1:18	Mary responded by saying she had never had sexual relations – Lk. 1:34
Elizabeth's child would be in the spirit/power of Elijah – Lk. 1:17	Mary's child would be called the Son of the Almighty – Lk. 1:35
We thus see that the miracle of Elizabeth's birth was that she (and her husband) was passed the age of child-bearing.	We thus see that the miracle of Mary's birth was that she would not be intimate with a man before conceiving and birthing Yeshua.

Though some people have claimed that certain phrases in Luke chapter one are not authentic, (in reference to Mary's words) there arguments need not be rebutted for they have no textual variants here to go by, they are only holding on to a hypothesis.

Conclusion

Luke's narrative greatly compliments Matthew's and further proves the precious doctrine of the virgin conception and birth of Yeshua; going verse by verse in Luke 1:26-38 shows this. The rebuttal of the word *shall* in these verses is a premature argument when based on other uses of the word shall in Scripture. Finally, a comparison between Elizabeth's miraculous conception and Mary's miraculous conception shows that Mary could not have been in her old age, but rather (as the text says) a virgin who would conceive without the aid of a man. Men may try their best to get around the plain teaching of Scripture, but Scripture will stand for those who accept what it states. One pro-virgin birth proponent stated the following in answering a rebuttal to a non-virgin birth proponent's interpretation of Luke.

Yes, the angel told her that it would be future, but still Miriam's response was, "How shall this be, Seeing I know not a man?" Her response was to reveal that the conception was to take place without the aid of her betrothed Joseph. Otherwise, she would not have wondered. She would have just accepted that she and Joseph were going to have relations after marriage, and she would have a child out of the marriage. This is not imputed here at all. It is imputed that she, being a virgin, was going to conceive and have a child.¹¹

I should now say that with the evidence from both Matthew and Luke, I personally do not see why anyone would deny the doctrine of the virgin conception and birth of Yeshua.

All alleged ambiguity vanishes when the passages are read in full. Specifically, it was "before they came together" that Mary "was found to be with child of the Holy

¹¹ Elder Evangelist Jerry Healen COMMENTS in response to the following article which denies the virgin birth of YAHshua our Messiah, pp36-37.

Spirit" (Matt 1:18). The assertion is repeated that Joseph "knew her not until she had borne a son" (Matt. 1:25). Luke is no less specific. Mary's response to the annunciation was one of bewilderment. She said, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" (Luke 1:34). The answer was, in effect, "No husband is necessary. God will cause you to conceive" (v. 35). These are the clear affirmations of the virgin birth. They cannot be explained away by textual evidence. They can only be accepted or denied. The reporting is modest but clear. It is history or the boldest fiction.¹²

¹² *The Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1975 by Zondervan, Volume 5, p888.