

The Virgin Birth

(For sermon on 19th December- 2021)

Before we begin: How have you been preparing for Christmas? How have you gone with the challenge of reading a chapter of Luke each day of December? Share some highlights?

The challenge of reading each chapter of Luke has highlighted to me, how we put so many things before spending time in God's Word.

As we have studied the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's Gospel this year; I've seen these same teachings from Jesus repeated in Luke's account, not word for word and not altogether. This is consistent with someone, like Luke, writing an orderly account (Luke 1:3)

Some highlights: Obviously Jesus' birth; Simeon holding "salvation" in his arms; the genealogy right back to Adam; Jesus answering Satan's temptations with God's Word; the faith of the centurion (Luke 7); and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10)

Before we read from Isaiah: What is the context of the book of Isaiah?

The book of Isaiah was written between 739 and 681 B.C.

The Prophet Isaiah was primarily called to prophesy to the Kingdom of Judah [Southern Kingdom]. Judah was going through times of revival and times of rebellion. Judah was threatened with destruction by Assyria and Egypt, but was spared because of God's mercy. Isaiah proclaimed a message of repentance from sin and hopeful expectation of God's deliverance in the future.

Why is Isaiah so important? The book of Isaiah provides us with the most comprehensive prophetic picture of Jesus Christ in the entire Old Testament. It includes the full scope of His life: the announcement of His coming (Isaiah 4:3-5); His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), His proclamation of the good news (Isaiah 61:1); His sacrificial death (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), and His return to claim His own (Isaiah 60:2-3). Because of these and numerous other Christological texts in Isaiah, the book stands as a testament of hope in the Lord, the One who saves His people from themselves.

Read Isaiah 7:14

1. What unusual thing does Isaiah prophesy?

*It's worth noting this prophecy has a **near fulfilment** and a **far fulfilment***

Near fulfilment is: a young woman in the royal household shortly married, conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him "Immanuel". Before this boy came to eat solid food (v15), Israel and Syria (v16) would be defeated. This was a sign to King Ahaz of Judah that he would be delivered from his two arch enemies Israel and Syria.

Far fulfilment: A virgin {a woman not having had sexual intercourse} will become pregnant and give birth to a baby boy and he will be called Immanuel. This suggests a supernatural event. We know this refers to Jesus' birth because Matthew 1:23 says: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"

2. What's so important about the name Immanuel?

Immanuel means "God is with us" – and so it means the baby born – Jesus – is actually God living with His people. It means the baby IS fully man and IS fully God!

Read Luke 1:26-28

3. Who is Elizabeth? What do we discover about her?

Elizabeth is Zechariah's wife and John the Baptist's mother; and cousin to Mary. Elizabeth is six months' pregnant, carrying John the Baptist,

4. What do we find out about Mary and how does that relate to Isaiah 7:14?

Mary is a virgin; pledged to be married to Joseph, a descendant of David.

This relates to Isaiah 7:14 because Mary is a virgin and is the virgin referred to in Isaiah 7:14

5. Who comes to Mary and what does his words mean?

The angel Gabriel comes and tells Mary, she is highly favoured by God and that the Lord is with her.

Read Luke 1:29-33

6. Why would Mary be greatly troubled?

Troubled by:

- a. The sight of an angel speaking to her*
- b. But more troubled by the angel's words and wondered about his words. How was she highly favoured by God?*
- c. Also puzzled by the greeting and how "the Lord was near her"*

7. What does the angel say will happen?

She will conceive and give birth to a son and will call Him Jesus

8. What does the name Jesus mean?

Jesus means "Saviour or He/God saves"

9. How is Jesus described in verse 32?

*He will be **great** (Greek word is **mega**). Jesus is great in perfection; great in office; great in teaching; great in miracles; great in saving many people.*

10. What Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled by verses 32 and 33?

Verses 32 and 33 speak of Jesus being on the throne of His father, David (one of Jesus' ancestors) and ruler of a forever kingdom. This fulfils a prophecy from 2 Samuel 7:12-16, where God promised someone from David's line would be on the throne forever.

Read Luke 1:34-38

11. What question does Mary have in verse 34 and how does that relate to Isaiah 7:14?

Mary asks "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

This question relates to Isaiah 7:14 because the prophecy in Isaiah speaks of a virgin and that is precisely what Mary is, at this time.

12. By what means does the angel say it is possible for Mary as a virgin to have a child?

By the means of the Holy Spirit coming on Mary and God's power overshadowing her; she will give birth to a "holy one" called the "Son of God". Holy one (means one of a kind, unique)

Note: "overshadow" literally means covered with a cloud. We saw that in Solomon's temple when God's presence entered the temple It is Shekinah glory. Also, cloud experienced in the transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7 and Luke 9:34).

Note: there is no suggestion here of intercourse – this is a God event – a supernatural event – a virginal conception!

13. What do we find out about Mary's relative, Elizabeth? How does last week's study and Malachi 3:1 relate to this week's passage?

Elizabeth (who has been barren for some time) is also expecting a child, in her old age! And is in fact, 6 months pregnant. The angel is telling Mary about Elizabeth to show God has already been working miracles, as Elizabeth (who was barren) is having a child also.

14. What wonderful promise is given in verse 37? Does this bring you comfort?

V37 says “no word from God will ever fail” – in other words, ‘nothing is impossible for God’ (Matthew 19:26). Remember how Sarah became pregnant in her old age too – and in Genesis 18:14, the Lord says “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

15. How does Mary respond to the angel’s message?

Mary responds with acceptance and faith.

She acknowledges that she is the Lord’s servant and at His service and she trusts that everything will be fulfilled just as the Lord says it will.

Read Luke 1:39-45

16. Who does Mary visit?

Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

17. What amazing thing happens in verse 41 (and explained in verse 44)?

The unborn John in Elizabeth’s womb jumped and acknowledged the unborn Jesus in Mary’s womb. According to verse 44, John is jumping for joy at the appearance of Mary, the mother of the Lord (v43).

18. What does Elizabeth say about Mary in verses 42 to 45?

- *That Mary is blessed among women – as she has been chosen by God to give birth to His Son*
- *Blessed will be Mary’s child.*
- *That Mary is blessed for believing the Lord would fulfil His promises to her; i.e., blessed because of her faith!*

Read Luke 1:46-56

19. This passage is often referred to as **Mary’s Magnificat**? What does that mean?

Magnificat comes from the first few words of the Latin translation and means “[my soul] magnifies [the Lord]” Mary’s song is very similar to Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10

20. What does Mary say about herself?

- *She acknowledges she needs a Saviour (and that is God Himself) – v47*
- *She realizes she is in a humble state compared to the mighty God and that she is the Lord’s servant – v48*
- *She realizes future generations will call her blessed – v48*

21. Summarize what Mary says about God.

- *God is her Saviour*
- *God, the Mighty One has done great things – and for her – v49*
- *His Name is Holy – v49*
- *His mercy extends throughout generations – v50 – see Exodus 20:6; Psalm 103:17*
- *He has performed mighty deeds with His arm – v51 – see Psalm 98:1; Isaiah 40:10*
- *He scatters the proud – v51 – see Gen 11:8; Exodus 18:11; 2 Sam 22:28*
- *He brings down rulers and lifts up the humble – v52*
- *He feeds the hungry and sends the rich away emptyhanded – v53 – see Psalm 107:9*
- *He has been loving and faithful and merciful to Israel – v54 – see Psalm 98:3*
- *He keeps His promises, just like He did for Abraham*

- *All this shows us that Mary knew God's Word and His Word was in her heart!*

22. **Discuss:** Why is the virgin birth so important?

The virgin birth is crucial for the following reasons:

- *It fulfils prophecy (Isaiah 7:14)*
- *It shows that nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37)*
- *God is in the miracle business – the immaterial (Holy Spirit) and the material (Mary's body) both involved. Mary, could not impregnate herself, and in that sense she was simply a vessel. Only God could perform the miracle of the incarnation.*
- *It shows Jesus is both fully human (born as a baby) and fully God – i.e. He is eternal and sinless (John 1:14 – God's Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us; 1 Tim 3:16 - Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory; and Hebrews 2:14-17 - ¹⁴Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*
- *And crucially Jesus has to be sinless so that He can be the perfect once and for all sacrifice for sin – otherwise He would be just like all other sinful human beings and His sacrifice would be just like the Old Testament sacrifices made by priests, who themselves were sinful. Instead, Jesus was born sinless. See Hebrews 7:26-27 - ²⁶Such a high priest [Jesus] truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*
- *It seems that sin nature is passed down from the father (see Romans 5:12, 17,19); the virgin birth circumvented the transmission of sin nature to Jesus and allowed the eternal God to become the perfect man*
- *Furthermore, without the Virgin Birth, there is no forgiveness of our sins!*

23. What can we learn from Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 1:26-56?

- *God always keeps His promises/prophecies – even if it takes 100s of years to take place*
- *Nothing is impossible for God – He is in the supernatural/miracle business*
- *God can choose the least likely people [a humble poor young virgin] to accomplish His purposes*
- *We should be humble unquestioning undoubting servants of the Lord – accepting His word, however strange or unlikely it might be humanly speaking, and live by faith – not by sight!*
- *We need to recognize, like Mary, that we need a Saviour*
- *It is good for us to recall God's mighty acts from history, as Mary does in her Magnificat, to remind ourselves how truly awesome He is. God deserves our constant thanks and praise.*
- *Our response to all of God's promises and His Word should be as Mary said "I am the Lord's servant; May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38)*
- *Without God sending Jesus to be born of a virgin, Mary; there is no forgiveness of sins and no eternal life*

Finish in prayer: Thanking God for keeping His promises; acknowledging that nothing is impossible for Him. Thanking God for sending His Son, Jesus, the Saviour of the World, born of the virgin, Mary, on that first Christmas Day.