

The Virgin Birth

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Well, the name Rob Bell is probably not familiar to most of you, but Rob Bell is the controversial founder and former pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Granville, Michigan.

He has written several controversial books that question biblical doctrines that have been long held by the church. One of the controversial books he has written is a book by the name of the title Velvet Elvis.

Here's an excerpt of Velvet Elvis from that book, and it helps to show why Bell was such a controversial and some would say heretical pastor.

Bell writes, Bell writes,
Bell writes,

[4 : 17] What do you believe? What do you believe about the virgin birth? Do you believe the teaching of Scripture and the confession of the Apostles' Creed that Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary? Do you believe that?

And if you believe that, do you believe that the virgin birth of Jesus was necessary and is essential to the Christian faith? Or do you, like Rob Bell, believe that it is an optional spring, the removal of which changes nothing?

Now, as it relates to the virgin birth of Jesus was necessary and is essential to the virgin birth? Now, as it relates to the virgin birth, I recognize that there are probably three categories of people present this morning.

There are three possibilities for categories of people present this morning.

And I would suspect that every single one of us would find ourselves in one of these categories.

First, there could be those who do not believe the virgin birth.

[5 : 39] It is an impossible myth that didn't happen. And they believe that if Jesus of Nazareth is indeed a historical person, then he had a human father just like every other human being.

And perhaps there could be some who take that view of the virgin birth. And I'm also aware that there could be the possibility that some present this morning, they believe that Jesus was indeed conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, because they accept what the Bible teaches.

But they do not know that it is an important doctrine. They don't see it as one or believe that it is one. Or if they do, they don't know exactly why they believe that it is an important doctrine.

And then perhaps the third group is those who believe that Jesus is indeed the Christ, that he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, as taught by Scripture, and they firmly believe it, because they believe the Word of God.

Unlike Rob Bell and others, they believe that this truth is more than just an optional spring in the Christian faith. They believe that it is the very foundation of the Christian faith.

[7 : 10] They believe that it is what the Christian faith is founded on and what it is grounded in. And my prayer for us this morning is that when we leave, that all of us, by God's grace, will be in this last category, where we are persuaded that the virgin birth is indeed true, but not just true, that it is essential.

And we would leave this place understanding why it was necessary for Jesus not just to be born, but to be born of a virgin, as he indeed was, and that this is the plain teaching of Scripture.

So let's now consider Luke's account of the announcement of the birth of Jesus. So if you have not yet done so, please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 1. And we will pick up this morning in verse 26.

Last week we left off at verse 25. We considered the announcement of John's birth and what it means to wait for God.

This morning, Luke chapter 1, starting in verse 26. And I'm reading from the English Standard Version. If you have another translation, yours will read slightly differently.

[8 : 30] Luke chapter 1, verse 26. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at this saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

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.

And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am a virgin?

[9 : 54] 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.

And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son. And this is the sixth month with her who is called barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God. Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you this morning for the privilege we have to gather. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of being able to come to the Lord's table and to be reminded of truths that we can easily forget, of Christ's substitutionary death on behalf of sinners.

And all that comes to us because of that. Lord, we thank you this morning for the gift of your word.

[11 : 21] Thank you that you breathed out your word and you caused men of old, holy men, to write your word as the Spirit moved them to do so.

And Lord, we have come to a passage of Scripture this morning that perhaps is among the most attacked doctrines of the Christian faith.

And Lord, while we always need your help to hear your word and to believe your word, we especially need your help to hear and to believe this word about the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Lord, you know where we are. You know which category we all find ourselves in this morning. And we pray that you, by your Spirit, would speak to our hearts based on where we are. Lord, do the work that only you can do.

Would you grant us illumination and would you, by the power of your Spirit, convince our hearts about the truth of your word. We ask for grace, grace to proclaim and grace to hear.

[12 : 33] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, let me begin by stating up front the foundational belief that I have about this passage and what I hope, by God's grace, to communicate to you from it.

Here's what I hope to communicate from this passage this morning. The virgin birth of Christ entitled him to be, sorry, enables him to be, enables him to be who he needed to be in order to do what he came to do to save his people from their sins.

It's kind of a long statement, but I'll read it again. The virgin birth of Christ enabled him to be who he needed to be in order to do what he came to do to save his people from their sins.

Or to put it another way, what I want us to see from this passage this morning is that unless this account of the virgin birth that we just read is true, the life of Jesus, the life he lived, and the death he died are absolutely meaningless.

If the account of the virgin birth is not true, and Jesus was fathered by a man, just as every other human being who has ever lived, he was therefore a sinner just like us, who lived just like us, and who died just like we humans all die.

[14 : 21] And as a result of that, the world is still lost, sinners are still in their hopeless condition, and everything that we're doing this morning, and everything that we do every time we gather in Jesus' name has no eternal value.

It will all end when this life ends. If the virgin birth is not true, then that's really what is true, that none of this matters.

But friends, this morning, the biblical account is true. And because it is true, it is good news. And so we who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, we who have trusted him for the forgiveness of our sins,

and have been reconciled to God, are among the most hopeful people on the planet. And that's what I hope we will see from this passage this morning. I want to point out as we approach this passage that the crucial issue in the passage is not the physical birth of Jesus. It is the actual conception of Jesus. That's the issue in this passage. Not so much the physical birth of Jesus, but the actual conception of Jesus.

[15:49] Jesus physically exited the womb in exactly the same way all babies do. And so if you've ever seen natural childbirth, whether you've seen a film or whether you were present at the birth of a child, you have seen exactly the way Jesus Christ exited Mary's womb.

His physical birth was no different. Mary had labor pains and her physical delivery was no different from that of any other mother.

So the actual birth of Jesus is not unique. It is the same as every other human birth. But instead the issue in the passage that we're looking at this morning is the conception of Jesus.

What Scripture teaches and what the church over many centuries affirmed is that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and it is in this way that He is unique.

That He was conceived in a way that was different from all other human beings. He was not conceived through a human father.

[17:06] Jesus was not conceived by Joseph nor was He conceived by some other human father. You're going to see how Luke goes to great lengths to establish this fact.

Jesus was conceived as the Scripture says of the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches us that He was born of the Virgin Mary but He was conceived of the Holy Spirit.

And herein lies the uniqueness and I would add the necessary uniqueness of Jesus Christ. And this is where the controversy lies.

This is where we are called to express our belief or our unbelief. This is the issue. So, in a strict sense, a more accurate title for this morning's message would be the virgin conception as opposed to the virgin birth.

But I'm using the virgin birth this morning because that is the term that we all use to refer to the virgin conception. So, when I refer to the virgin birth, I'm not talking about the physical birth of Jesus out of Mary's womb, but the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb.

[18:23] That's what we're talking about this morning. Let's get to the heart of the message. For those of you who are taking notes, to help you follow along, I've organized my thoughts under three simple headings.

They are number one, the virgin birth announced, number two, the virgin birth questioned, and then number three, the virgin birth explained.

So, let's consider the first, the virgin birth announced. First, in a strict sense, the announcement of the virgin birth begins in verse 28.

But what I want us to see this morning, as we begin to look at the announcement proper, is that Luke, from the very outset of his gospel, is laboring, or he is setting up this announcement, announcement, and he is going to great lengths to help us to understand a particular point.

So, Luke begins, and he writes to Theophilus, and I want us to look at the first four verses and see what he says. He writes, in as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, have delivered them to us.

[19:46] It seemed good to me, also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you might have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Notice Luke's purpose for writing his gospel in verse 4. Luke writes that Theophilus might have certainty about what he had been taught and what he believed.

So what we see is from the very outset of his gospel, Luke recognized the reality of the possibility of uncertainty, which would end in unbelief, no doubt.

And he saw this necessity to help Theophilus to become certain about the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ. And so he set out to write this orderly account of the gospel of Jesus to give Theophilus certainty about what he had been taught.

And in serving Theophilus, what Luke has done is Luke has served all of us by extension so that we may be able to humbly and honestly consider the person and the work of Jesus Christ and that we too can have certainty about what we believe.

[21 : 13] Now again, I want to alert you to what Luke is doing. Luke is not just rambling. He is not just writing things. Luke is starting at a particular point and Luke knows that he is going to end his gospel at a certain point.

He is going to end his gospel with the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He knows he is going to do this and he knows that it is essential for Theophilus and other readers of his gospel to be able to be certain about the one who was crucified and the one who was resurrected.

Luke warns us to know that this one who was crucified and this one who was resurrected was a unique person. That he was different. There was something unique and earth-shakingly different about him.

And so Luke is setting up this announcement about the birth of Jesus Christ. He is crafting this in such an incredible way.

He is setting up this miracle. Now our text begins in verse 26 and what we notice immediately is that we have a change of location. We have moved from the pomp and pageantry of the temple in Jerusalem, the place where John's birth was announced, and we have now come to the humility and the lowliness of a home in Nazareth.

[22 : 45] And on the face of it, it is easy to miss this drastic change. The city of Jerusalem and the temple of God were the pride and joy of the Jewish people. Jerusalem was the place where God had placed his name.

It was the place where he had chosen for his people to worship him. The city of Nazareth and the region of Galilee was a town of no significance and poor reputation.

Nazareth was of such poor reputation that we read in John chapter 3 that when Philip told Nathanael that they had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael said, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

I mean, you can think about on our island what you would consider to be one of the worst areas or worst neighborhoods and the way it is stigmatized and Nazareth was like that.

It had that kind of a reputation. So we make this significant change from Jerusalem to Nazareth.

And it is to this city of no significance and poor reputation that God sends the angel Gabriel to this virgin named Mary, who would have been between 12 and about 13 years old, whom he had chosen to be the mother of the Messiah.

[24 : 11] And see, this is by divine design. God could have chosen a much older virgin. I am sure there were many in Jerusalem, in Nazareth, and elsewhere in Israel.

But he chose this young virgin, this girl who would have typically been understood to be a virgin at that time. And this is God's divine initiative to help us to see that this is indeed a virgin birth.

Let's look at it starting in verse 26. First thing I want us to notice is notice how Luke in verse 27 gives us the introduction to the announcement.

Notice that even before he mentions Mary's name that two times he tells us Mary was a virgin. Before he even tells us her name, two times he says she was a virgin.

And what Luke is doing is he is trying to establish this point. He is laboring to say she was indeed a virgin. No question about it. She and Joseph were legally engaged, but Mary had kept herself sexually pure.

[25 : 31] She was a virgin. And Luke was a medical doctor. And this would have been of interest to him. But he was not only a medical doctor. What we see is that Luke was a careful historian.

And he wants to make this point very clear before he comes to the announcement of the virgin birth. In verse 28, we see that when Gabriel greets Mary, he does not initially even address her by her name.

Instead, he calls her favorite one and tells her that God is with her. And then we see in verse 30, he tells Mary that she had found favor with God.

Now, it's easy to misread what Gabriel is saying to Mary. Gabriel was not telling Mary that there was something special about her and that's why she was chosen above other virgins in Nazareth or elsewhere in Israel to be the mother of Messiah.

That's not why he called her favorite. That's not why he said that she found favor with God. It wasn't because there was something special about her. Gabriel was simply telling Mary that she had received God's favor in being chosen to bear the Messiah.

[26 : 51] she was not special and therefore received God's favor to bear the Messiah. Instead, God demonstrated favor and grace to Mary and chose her to be the mother of the Messiah and

therefore in that sense of God's choice, Mary became special.

And Mary recognizes this. We'll look at this next week when we consider the Magnificat, when we consider the Song of Mary. Mary's reaction doesn't have the air about oh, I'm special and therefore that's why God has chosen me.

She doesn't boast in any way concerning that. Now, Mary's reaction is easy to miss though when we consider what she says and we consider the encounter that she has compared to the encounter that Zechariah had.

Notice her reaction in verse 29. Her reaction is interesting. We notice that Zechariah in verse 19, he was troubled when he saw Gabriel and scripture says that great fear fell upon him.

But Luke tells us in verse 29 that Mary was greatly troubled at Gabriel's saying that she was a favored one and that God was with her.

[28 : 23] It doesn't record that Mary was troubled by the sight of Gabriel as Zechariah was. It says that she was troubled at the saying that he greeted her with.

You are a favored one and God is with you. And here we see Mary's humility. She was troubled at this gracious greeting. Just imagine Mary from Nazareth just saying to Gabriel, well I'm glad somebody noticed.

She doesn't do that. She doesn't boast. When we look at the Magnificat, she says God has shown me mercy. God has looked at my humble estate and he has shown me mercy.

So consider this. I saw in it just a vivid picture of God's choice of sinners to be the recipients of salvation.

Very much the way he chose Mary. Not because she was special, but because he chose her for his own sovereign reasons and by his sovereign grace.

[29 : 39] And he does the same with us. When he chooses us for salvation, he does so not because we are special or because we have done something special. He chooses us because of his divine mercy and his sovereign grace.

And when we realize this, like Mary, we too will have our own Magnificat. We too will sing of God's amazing grace. Look at verse 31, where Gabriel goes on to tell Mary something that is more shocking than telling her that she was favored by God.

In verse 31, he says to her, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will call his name Jesus. And then in verses 32 and 33, Gabriel goes on to help Mary to understand that the son that she is going to conceive in her womb was going to be no ordinary child.

He says in verse 32, he is going to be great, he will be great. Now theologians who are much smarter than I am, say that in the Old Testament when the word great was used without qualification, it almost always refers to God himself.

And so Gabriel was pointing to the deity of Jesus by saying he will be great. And notice that there's a distinction between how he says this about John over in verse 15.

[31 : 13] Notice in verse 15 about John it simply says he will be great before the Lord. He will be great before the Lord but Jesus will be great. He will be great.

And so we see that there's this differentiation between Jesus and John.

He goes on to say that the Lord God was going to give him the throne of his father David and in verse 33 that he would reign over the house of Jacob forever and Gabriel's words echo from 2 Samuel chapter 7 where David wanted to build a house for the Lord.

He wanted to build a place of worship for God and he told the prophet Nathan that he wanted to do this and Nathan said whatever is in your heart to do go ahead and do it but that night the Lord spoke to Nathan and told Nathan you go and tell David he is not him a house and then starting in verse 12 of 2 Samuel 7 the Lord gives David a promise about the house that he was going to build for him and here's what the Lord told Nathan to tell David when your days are fulfilled you will lie down with your fathers and I will raise up your offspring after you who will come from your body and I will establish his kingdom he will build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son when he commits iniquity I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men but my steadfast love will not depart from him as I took it from Saul whom your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me your throne shall be established forever that when we read these words from the Lord to Nathan for David it becomes clear that he's talking about two kingdoms and he's talking about two sons he's talking about a natural kingdom with a human son and then he's also talking about a

supernatural kingdom with a divine son as its king and we know that we can see this because he's talking about a son who is going to come and he says when he commits iniquity I'm going to discipline him clearly can't be talking about

[34 : 07] Jesus what we know historically that he obviously was talking about Solomon but then he goes on and he begins! to speak about this son and speak about this kingdom and this throne in eternal terms that is going to be established forever it's going to be made sure forever before me and it is in that language that we're able to see that he's talking about another son and he's talking about another kingdom and the people of Israel understood this to be a messianic prophecy it was one of the greatest messianic prophecies and Mary would have heard this this was what they looked forward to they looked forward to the coming of the messiah so as as Gabriel brought in this language and interpreted for Mary what was happening Mary understood that she was being told that she was going to have this divine son she was going to have the messiah that was the language that was being used as this announcement was coming to

Mary Gabriel was telling her you were going to bear the messiah Mary was puzzled by this and in her response to Gabriel we find in verse 32 brings me to my second point the virgin birth questioned Mary's response is in the form of a question and she asked Gabriel how can this be since I am a virgin now clearly Mary understood what Gabriel had announced to her she knew that Gabriel was not telling her that she was going to have a child by Joseph if Mary had a hint that he was saying that she knew that she and Joseph were legally engaged to be married they were soon to be married and she would not have she understood he is talking about the Messiah can be Joseph's son as a matter of fact Gabriel told her whose son it would be Gabriel said he would be the son of God and then he also said he is going to get the throne of his father David meaning he is going to be David's son as well so he is God's son he is David's son so she understood that this was a conception without human means that was being announced to her and she needed an explanation she knew what the angel told her was a biological impossibility and so she questions this announcement of the virgin birth how will this be since I am a virgin notice this is the third time that Luke tells us Mary was a virgin and let us remember that because Luke is trying to give us certainty about the things that we have been taught he's trying to give us certainty of the fact that Mary was indeed a virgin now you might be here this morning and you might be wondering about the virgin birth questioning the virgin birth and that's not bad or wrong in and of itself Mary questioned!

But for her it was not a questioning of unbelief it was unmotivated by unbelief hers is very different from Zechariah we see in Zechariah's case Gabriel said to him because you didn't believe the word you are going to be mute you won't be able to talk until this child is born that wasn't the case with Mary Mary's question was not based on unbelief it was based on a lack of understanding she did not understand how this was going to happen how could this possibly be happen how can I become pregnant other than through human means and really it's at this point that we come face to face with the necessity for the virgin birth if Mary was going to give birth to a son a son described using the divine adjective great who was going to be the son of the most high and who was going to be given the throne of his father

[38 : 48] David this one who would be the Messiah of his people he could not be the product of natural human conception he couldn't be conceived of a man again if Jesus was conceived of a man he would be like every other man fallen and sinful so Mary's question how will this be since I'm a virgin it's a legitimate question and starting in verse 35 Gabriel explains to Mary how she a virgin will give birth to God's son and this brings to my third and final point the virgin birth explained the virgin birth explained look at what Luke writes in verse 35 of chapter 1 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 God that's the explanation for the virgin birth really in one word it is God that's how the virgin birth is possible the virgin birth is possible through God again notice what it says it is referenced and really involved in saving us father son and holy spirit right there involved in our salvation so what we have here is a unique race we have a new race that is coming forth in human history this is a unique moment in human history because a human is going to be born into the world who is not of direct descendant from

Adam as all other human beings were he is fully human but he didn't inherit legal guilt and moral corruption through Adam since all fathers earthy fathers are descended from Adam and what we

read in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 45 is that Jesus is the last Adam he is the last Adam who overcame where the first Adam failed and he is the father of a new race of people those who are born again by the Holy Spirit and who have put their faith in him and all of us this morning who have put our faith in Jesus Christ are part of this new race he is our last Adam who came to redeem us and so we are related to the first Adam physically and we are related to the last Adam redemptively and those of you who are here this morning if you have not yet put your faith in Christ then you are related to the first

Adam both physically and spiritually but that can change by putting your faith in the last Adam now one of the questions that comes up is why was Jesus born without original sin or moral corruption how would that be possible how was he born without original sin or moral corruption some would say well that's because he didn't have a human father so sin was not transmitted to him but then the question really has to be raised about how sin is transmitted because nowhere in scripture is it taught that sin is only transmitted through a father and the Roman Catholic Church understood this and so the Roman Catholic Church tried to get around the reality of Mary's sinfulness by developing a doctrine and they developed the doctrine of the

Immaculate Conception and I remember a number of years ago when Danielle was in college she was at a Roman Catholic school and they were having a holiday and I said what holiday are you having she said Immaculate Conception holiday and so I laughed I said do you know what that holiday is and she said celebrating the birth of Jesus and I said no and she asked her friends who happened to be in the room at the time and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church teaches what it teaches is that from the moment of her conception of Mary's conception in her mother's womb Mary was preserved free from all the stain of original sin so Mary was sinless is what the Roman Catholic Church teaches and it is why they say you can pray to Mary ask Mary for grace and and she sits she's the third person sitting up there with

[44 : 24] God and God the Father and God the Son but this is a novel doctrine and it actually is not that old the Roman Catholic adopted it on the 8th of December like tomorrow would be an anniversary for it the 8th of December 1854 when Pope Pius IX declared it for the first time that Mary was free from sin and that was how Jesus could be free from sin but no Mary was a sinner just like the rest of us so I think the question then is how was Jesus really preserved from sin well the answer is in verse 35 look at what it says in verse 35 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 that's the reason that Jesus was born without original sin without the taint and stain of sin because the Holy Spirit brought about the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary and therefore the child was to be called Holy that this is not referring to anything sexual or crude between Mary and the Holy Spirit the language used here overshadow is used elsewhere in scripture it refers in the Old Testament to the powerful presence of God in the also refers in the New Testament to the cloud that engulfed the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration so it's the power and the work of the Holy Spirit that prevented the transmission of sin and moral corruption from Mary to

Jesus it's also important for us to understand this morning that Jesus did not become God's son in Mary's womb he didn't become God's son in Mary's womb he was and is the eternal son of God who came down from heaven and became incarnate in human flesh and this is what we refer to as the incarnation God coming down from heaven to earth and taking on human flesh he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and thus fully God born of the Virgin Mary and thus fully man and what we see is the necessity of the virgin birth of Jesus this conception of Jesus in the way that he was conceived because what is happening is we're seeing the uniting of full deity the activity of the Holy Spirit and full humanity the conception in

Mary's womb! Jesus is going to do that he is going to stand between God and man and he's going to represent God because he is God and he's going to represent man because he is man he is fully God and fully man he's one person with these two natures the divine and the human they're not mixed together they're separate but they are in one person now Wayne Grudem is very helpful in enabling us to think through this dense biblical doctrine of the nature of Jesus Christ and why he came the way that he came he helps us articulate this and here's what he says he says

God could have sent Jesus as a complete human from heaven but if God did that we would have a hard time seeing Jesus as fully human as we are because he would have no father he would have no mother as we do and he really wouldn't be a part of the human race that descended from Adam

so sending him that way as a complete human from heaven would be hard for us to identify with him and second he points out that God could have seen fit to send Jesus into the world with two parents and at some point miraculously at some point in his life miraculously!

[49 : 16] unite him his divine nature to his human life God but if he did that we have a hard time saying that Jesus was fully God because of his origin which would have been like ours in every way and therefore God did neither of these Dr.

Gruden points out he says instead God in his wisdom ordained a combination of human and divine! influence so that in Christ's birth we see his full humanity which will be evident to us by his ordinary human birth from a human mother and his full deity which will be evident from the fact of his conception in Mary's womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit so that's the way that God chose to do it now I be the first to say this that we are!

of the theological pool as we consider the virgin birth we do not fully understand the incarnation in all of its length and breadth and height finite creatures like us aren't able to fully comprehend all that pertains to it but may I say to you this morning that the issue before us in this passage is not about understanding instead it is about believing there's a big difference the issue is not do you understand the doctrine of the virgin birth that is not the issue the issue is do you believe the doctrine of the virgin birth notice again in verse 34 when

Mary asked Gabriel how the birth that he announced to her could possibly happen Gabriel goes on to tell her two things in verses 35 and 37 he tells her two things first in verse 35 he tells her exactly how the virgin birth was going to happen how she was going to conceive and bear a child 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 then the second thing he says to her is in verse 36 he tells her that her relative Elizabeth who was called barren had also conceived!

the child in her old age and was six months pregnant and then he concludes in verse 37 by saying for nothing will be impossible with God and then in verse 38 Mary responds behold I am the servant of the Lord let it be to me according to your word let me ask you a question as we consider this what do you think moved Mary from questioning the virgin birth to believing the virgin birth or accepting the virgin birth so that she could say let it be to me according to your word what do you think from the response of Gabriel those two things that he told her just basically how this is going to happen from a spiritual point of view what God is going to do!

[53 : 08] I don't think that Mary understood the explanation that Gabriel gave her in verse 35 I don't think that Mary really understood I don't think she understood exactly how that was going to happen that she was now going to conceive because the Holy Spirit was going to come upon her and the power of the Most High was going to overshadow her I don't think that's how Mary came to accept it I believe that Mary came to accept the virgin birth after being told by Gabriel that God had done an impossible thing with her relative Elizabeth that her relative Elizabeth who was barren and who was now old was six and he reminded her

Mary nothing will be impossible with God and Mary believed the virgin birth because she believed God because she believed that nothing was impossible for God and so friends that's the relevant question for us this morning that is the relevant issue for us this morning do you believe the virgin birth not do you understand it but do you believe it instead it is do I believe that with God nothing including the virgin birth is impossible not understanding it but do I believe that the God of the universe is able to cause a woman to conceive!

a child without human aid and without human means God's power is unlimited and so nothing is impossible for God I don't know how it is for you this morning but as I as I spent time in this text as I labored over this I was provoked I was affected by these words of Gabriel that are plain speaking nothing will be impossible with God even in the face of that even though we may say okay yeah I believe that even in this moment I am persuaded that there can be doubts and worries and concerns filling our hearts this morning worries about today worries about tomorrow and beyond but the question in the face of all those worries and concerns and doubts do you believe God do you believe that nothing is impossible with him see that was the bottom line issue for Mary and it's the bottom line issue for us when we face our seemingly impossible issues and circumstances in life it's not do we understand how God is able to do this how God is going to do this it is do we believe!

it is do we believe that God is able to preserve three boys who were thrown into a fiery furnace and when they came out their hair their clothing was not touched not even the smell of smoke was on

them do we believe that that's possible with God do we believe that a man can be thrown into a lion's den and God is able to shut the mouths of lions so that he is not harmed see we don't need to understand the virgin birth this morning we need to believe it because God has said it in this word that he's preserved for us and we are told nothing will be impossible with God think about it if something is impossible for God he's not God he can't be!

[57 : 24] if the virgin birth is impossible for God then God is not God that is one thing that we can say well it's outside of his ability to do and therefore God is not God you see this is why we can believe that God can take lost sinners who are enslaved to sin and he can deliver them and set them free and transform their lives make them instruments of righteousness and cause love him and no longer love sin I don't know what may preoccupy your heart this morning I don't know what you may be worried about wondering about about God's ability to do I remind you of Gabriel's words to Mary nothing will be impossible for

God he referenced Elizabeth's miraculous situation to build her faith brothers and sisters let us consider the full breath of God's word that tells us of a God who is sovereign and who is powerful over nature and over all things and let us believe God and let us respond as Mary responded I'm the Lord's servant let it be to me according to his word if we labor for understanding this morning if we are going to wait for understanding to believe then many things we'll never believe but instead what we need to do is we need to believe because God has said it and we can stake our lives on it so how are we going to respond to the teaching of the virgin birth in a world that is increasingly becoming filled with raw bells

I want to say to you this morning that the virgin birth is not an optional spring under which which is under the springboard of Christianity it is a foundational truth and when we lose it we lose the entire faith again if the virgin birth is impossible for God then God is not truly God the name of Jesus means God saves and it points us to where salvation comes from and indeed where salvation must come from the virgin birth reminds us we can't save ourselves it reminds us that it is outside of the realm of human activity it takes divine initiative and divine power to bring about the virgin birth Mary was told through a divine act you will conceive!

divine son and you will call his name Jesus which means God saves! and so we are told and reminded that salvation comes apart from us it comes outside of us and it's not enough to believe that Jesus lived and was a good man and was a great moral example and a great teacher that that were the case and John the Baptist could have died for us because he was all of those things but no John couldn't die for us we needed the Messiah to die for us because it was his virgin birth that enabled his sinful his sinless life and his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross for sinners that's why Jesus had to be conceived the way that he was conceived so that he can do this for us so my prayer for us this

Christmas season is that we will take the many opportunities that we have to meditate on these grand truths and understand that this is of necessity that Jesus would be conceived of the Virgin Mary not an optional spring not something we can discard and say well I can still be a Christian no if that is removed the whole thing falls apart I want us to pray and ask the Lord to help us to believe this foundational truth about Jesus Christ his person and his work because his person enabled the work that he came to do to be possible that he would save and reconcile sinners to God and to have to have to to!

[62 : 47]