

Mary's Humble Response

Scripture: Luke 1

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Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:34–38)

History has recorded some amazing births. Born near a small town in Ontario, Canada, on May 28, 1934, the Dionne sisters became the first known set of quintuplets to survive infancy. For the first decade of their lives they were Canada's biggest tourist attraction—bigger even than Niagara Falls—generating several hundred million dollars in tourist revenue. January 11, 1974, saw the birth of the Rosenkowitz sextuplets, the first recorded set of sextuplets to have survived to adulthood, in Cape Town, South Africa. The seven children born to Bobbi and Kenny McCaughey of Des Moines, Iowa, on November 19, 1997, are the first set of septuplets to survive infancy. Another notable birth involved only one child. On July 25, 1978, Louise Brown was born in Oldham, England. What was noteworthy about her, however, was not her birth, but the manner of her conception: she was the world's first “test-tube baby,” conceived by means of in vitro fertilization. And in 2008 a single woman gave birth to octuplets by means of in vitro fertilization. All are currently alive.

The Bible also records some amazing births. Isaac's birth was nothing short of miraculous, since his father (Abraham) was one hundred years old and his mother (Sarah) was ninety years old and barren (Rom. 4:19). The Lord also miraculously opened the womb of Manoah's wife (Judg. 13:2), and she gave birth to Samson. Similarly, God allowed Hannah, who had also been barren (1 Sam. 1:2, 5) to become pregnant with Samuel. Only a few months before Gabriel's appearance to Mary, the Lord enabled an elderly, barren couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth, to conceive a child (Luke 1:7, 24). That child, John the Baptist, was called by God to be the forerunner of the Messiah, and was the greatest man who had ever lived up to his time (Matt. 11:11).

But the most remarkable birth of all was that of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, incarnate; the eternal “Word [who] became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14); supernaturally conceived in a virgin without a human father. Jesus' virgin conception cannot be explained away as an example of parthenogenesis (lit., “virgin creation” or “generation”),

which is found in some lower forms of life. Parthenogenesis in humans, even if it were biologically possible, could only result genetically in a female child, since women do not have the Y chromosome necessary to produce a male child.

The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is foundational to Christianity, since it is the only way to explain how He could be the God-man. To deny the virgin birth, then, is to deny the biblical truth that Jesus Christ is both God (cf. John 1:1; 10:30; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:20) and man (cf. John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:7–8; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7), and to affirm another, false Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4). For if Jesus had a human father, He was just a man. And if He was just a man, He could not be the Savior. And if Jesus is not the Savior, there is no gospel, no salvation, no resurrection, no hope beyond this life. As Paul notes, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. . . . If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:17, 19). We may as well “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (v. 32). The serious implications of viewing Jesus as a mere man led Paul to pronounce a curse on those who propagate that satanic lie (Gal. 1:8–9).

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