

Christ

The Holy Spirit and The Lord's Conception

Introduction

Thoughts on Mary, the mother of our Lord

In deciding on a woman to give birth to our Lord, why did the Lord choose Mary? What sort of a woman was she? What qualifications did she have that set her apart? In the knowledge that God formed every human being and in sovereignty waited until the appointed “fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4), I cannot accept that Mary was just a random choice. It was not a random choice, Mary was a chosen vessel for the angel said: “Thou that art highly favored, the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Lk. 1:28). Why was Mary chosen? I can only give a few suggestions. First I submit she was not chosen solely because:

- a) She was a virgin, for there would have been hundreds of such young women in Israel!
- b) She was espoused to a man from the line of David, for many would have fitted that role!
- c) It was only a matter of time before she would have been married because she was Joseph's espoused wife (Matt. 1:18; Lk. 2:5)
- d) She was an offspring of David, again many could have fitted that role!

It is my thought that which set Mary apart was the sovereign grace of God making choice of a young lady who was strong in her faith and character, and totally yielded to God in spirit and body. The contrasts between she and Zacharias is the more profound when it is remembered that, in all probably, she was in her late teens!

Consider:

- a) The contrast between Mary and Zacharias:
 - i) Zacharias was troubled (tarasso) before the angel ever spoke (Lk. 1:12). Mary was troubled (diatarasso) after he had spoken (Lk. 1:29).
 - ii) Zacharias did not believe the angel (Lk. 1:20), but Mary believed (Lk. 1:34).
 - iii) Zacharias wanted further confirmation so asked: “Whereby shall I know this?”, and gave reasons for its impossibility (Lk. 1:18). Mary asked: “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Lk. 1:34).
- b) Her appreciation of God:
 - i) In reading her song, what a rich contemplation she had of God and His grace (Lk. 1:47-48); His holiness and Name (Lk. 1:49); His mercy (Lk. 1:51), and His abilities (Lk. 1:52-55).
- c) Her attitude:
 - i) Mary had just been told she was going to have a baby out of wedlock, but she utterly fails to rebel because of how it would affect her reputation! Instead, her response is: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”. (Lk. 1:38)
- d) Her strength of character:
 - i) For her to be having a baby out of wedlock was, from the human standpoint, a dreadful disgrace, not only at the time but for the years to follow. One would be very conscious of the whisperings, the looks, and gossiping. What “disgrace” would have been brought on the family for who would have believed such a thing, a peasant girl from Nazareth giving birth to the Messiah! God had to solidify Mary the reality that she was special. The endorsement was not to quiet the rumor mongers, but for Mary's strengthening so that in days, weeks, months, and years to come, these words from the angel would be a stabilizing force.

When considering her attitude and song there is presented to us a young lady of amazing spirituality and suitability for the Lord to use. Of course there had to be a “father” figure who also was as spiritual as Mary to provide a safe and spiritual environment for the baby to be born into and grow up in.

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Mariology

Roman Catholicism teaches that it was Mary who was immaculately conceived, and as such, was able to give birth to the Lord. In accepting the truth that death passed upon all men (humanity), I have no question about the fact that she died. However, this is a matter of debate between the various Eastern Orthodox churches and Roman Catholicism. The earliest reference to this is not the scriptures but from a document in the fourth century called, "The Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God." Roman Catholicism teaches that the Virgin Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." This was defined by Pope Pious XII November 1st 1950 in the Apostolic Constitution "Munificentissimus Deus". There is no scripture to support either this or any of the following, and therefore are erroneous:

- a) Mary was immaculately conceived, that is the Spirit of God protected her from the sin nature transferred naturally from the parents.
- b) Mary retained perpetual virginity and never had any other children. It must be understood, the overshadowing did not change her physical being, she was still a virgin. All other children were born of the God ordained way of parenting.
- c) There is the teaching that Joseph had been married before and the Lord's "brothers and sisters" were children from Joseph's previous marriage. This also is without biblical authority.
- d) The spiritual state of Mary was not changed, she was still a sinner.
- e) Nothing of the Baby's holiness was transferred to Mary.

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There is often much writing and speaking about the virgin birth of the Lord and it is a glorious truth, however, that which the Holy Spirit is directly connected with is not the virgin birth but the virgin conception!

The coming into the world by our Lord was an activity of the Godhead for, the Father prepared the body (Heb. 10:5); the Lord took part of flesh and blood, being made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Heb. 2:14; Rom. 8:3); and it was by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18; Lk. 1:35). It simply would not have been possible for the Holy one to be conceived naturally for several reasons:

- a) Had the Lord been conceived naturally, could the Holy Spirit not have stopped inherited sin from entering the body of the Lord? Of course He could but why not? In years past God had made a decree that a son of David would sit on His throne (Jer. 33:17), and Joseph was of the lineage of David, so by birth the Lord had the legal right to sit on the throne. There was however a very major snare. David had two sons of interest in this consideration, Solomon and Nathan (Matt. 1:6; Lk. 3:31). One of the sons of Solomon was called Coniah and God had put a judgment on him and his prosperity: "Write ye this man childless . . . for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David" (Jer. 22:30). Therefore, because of the judgment of God on Coniah's family, and had the Lord been Joseph's natural conceived and born son, He could never have sat on the throne of Israel. Yet because of the lineage and Joseph being His "father", the Lord does have the legal right to sit on the throne.
- b) Furthermore, the conception of the Lord had to have a supernatural explanation because not only was there never another individual like the Lord, but because He was born holy. Reverently we see the truth of the Psalmist when he declared God to be the one who took the Lord from the womb of Mary. He wrote: "Thou art He that took me out of the womb" (Psa. 22:9).

In the world of skeptics blinded by Satan there is the constant denial of the virgin conception of the Lord. While we are not making this paper a defense of the doctrine, yet it is beneficial to know some of the denials and beliefs of the early church fathers.

- a) The denials:
 - i) The doctrine came from pagan myths.
 - ii) The doctrine originated from the early christian Jews.

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- iii) No one else was ever conceived like this.
 - iv) It is unsupported by, Mark, John, Paul, Peter, James.
 - v) It only began to be taught in later history.
- b) The early church fathers believed and taught the virgin conception and birth of the Lord:
- i) Ignatius (35-117AD) "He was truly born of a virgin" (from his "Letter to the Smyrnaeans", written around 103AD)
 - ii) Irenaeus (115-202AD) "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, because of His surpassing love towards his creation, humbled himself to be born of the virgin. Thereby, He united man through Himself to God." (from his "Against Heresies", written around 180AD)
 - iii) Tertullian (160-220AD) "This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient time, descended into a certain virgin, And He was made flesh in her womb. So, in His birth, God and man were united." (from his "Apology", written around 195AD)
 - iv) Origen (185-254AD) "A sign has been given to the house of David. For the virgin conceived, was pregnant, and brought forth a son." (from his "Contra Celsus, Book I", written around 225AD).
- c) It is scientifically impossible:
- i) It never ceases to amaze me that men can deny that which God can do and accept chance as the alternative. Chance cannot create a moral being, will, a synchronized system nor an emotional, and intellectual being. The factualness of the second law of thermodynamics which is an absolute, and is demonstrated daily. In brief, it argues that everything if left without outside influence, will decay and go into chaos. Yet man believes that from disorder came order, etc. When there is brought into the equation an intelligent designer of power and life, then it is easy to accept that:
 - 1. From the amoral dust God created a moral being.
 - 2. From the passive lifeless dust God created a living being with a will, emotions, and intellect.
 - 3. From the randomness of dust God created a multi organized synchronizing system called a body. Therefore, we can easily accept that:
 - (a) God created a man without using a woman. (Gen. 2:7)
 - (b) God created a woman by using part of a man, although passively, but the life came not from the man but God. (Gen. 2:22)
 - (c) God created a baby in a barren woman. (Gen. 25:21; Jud. 13:2-3)
 - (d) God created a baby from dead parentage. (Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:11-12)
 - (e) God created a baby from the woman, only without any passive or otherwise activity of man. (Matt. 1:18, 20)

"For with God all things are possible" (Mk. 10:27)
and
"For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Lk. 1:37)

In the consideration of the Holy Spirit and the conception of Mary, it required a double work.

- a) First, that of effecting the conception of the Baby (Matt. 1:18, 20)
- b) Second, the preventing of the sin nature of Mary being passed on to the baby (Lk. 1:35)

Job asked two questions relevant: "How can a man be clean that is born of a woman" (Job 25:4), and "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean"? (Job 14:4). It was not only that Mary was a sinner but the family history had questionable characters. There was a prostitute called Rahab (Josh. 2:1; Matt. 1:5); a non Israelite called Ruth (Matt. 1:5); a forced adulterous called Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:3-4); and a woman who behaved like a prostitute (Gen. 38:14-15). Humanly speaking, not a good family tree! And Mary, she was no different from all other human beings, Adam excepted, for we were all born in sin. Therefore, how could this unclean woman of unclean

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stock conceive in herself and give birth to a "Holy child" (Acts 4:27, 30). It took a miracle of power, not only as a physical miracle, but also a spiritual miracle. In creation the Spirit brooded (overshadowed) over the creation, ready to respond to the timing of God's word, so He brooded over Mary. On the Mount of Transfiguration there was the overshadowing cloud (Matt. 17:5). With the power of the highest overshadowing Mary, not only could sin and the sin nature ever be transferred to the baby, but no power of satanic forces could destroy her physically. There could be no natural abortion for this child, neither could there be any genetic deformity.

I suggest there is another reason for the overshadowing of Mary. It also seems to me that the overshadowing of Mary, similar to as with the cloud overshadowing the Tabernacle by which it was set apart for a particular work. So Mary was overshadowed and set aside for the particular work of being the channel for the birth of the baby.

It is evident we are contemplating truths so high that the human mind is grappling with the unfathomable, and when the wonder of it dawns on the heart, the automatic response is wonder and worship.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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