

The Biology of Christmas

The

virgin birth contradicts the laws of science. But our faith rests on the miracle of the Incarnation.

My wife and I have four girls, and I was in the hospital room for each birth. There was a normal amount of blood, but no serious complications. Our oldest took forever to be born. Our second was in such a hurry that we thought she might end up on the floor of a hospital hallway. Our third tied her umbilical cord in knots in the womb. And our youngest calmly slipped out as if to say: "OK, I'm born. What's next?"

I had very little to do in the delivery room. My wife was the hero. She sweated, strained, pushed and gasped for hours. I stroked her arm a few times—and ate some doughnuts.

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Normal births are amazing, whether they occur in hospitals or homes or the back seats of taxis. But when I consider the birth of Jesus, I'm in total awe—not just because of Mary and Joseph's bumpy ride from Nazareth, Mary's lack of a doctor (and no anesthesia!) and the crudeness of the manger, but also because of how Jesus was conceived. Mary was a virgin. Joseph,

the “father,” had nothing to do but stand in the background.

Secularists and liberal theologians have mocked the virgin birth for centuries. Thomas Jefferson called it a fable, while Episcopal heretic John Shelby Spong called it an “entrance myth.” The concept of a woman giving birth to a baby without a man’s involvement is ludicrous to unbelievers. It contradicts all the laws of biology.

Yet Mary was not a scoffer. She asked the angel how she would bear this child, and he said: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35, NASB).

I would have asked for more scientific information. (“Um, thanks Gabe, but how does this process of miraculous impregnation work?”) But Mary didn’t quibble over details. She believed Gabriel’s announcement and submitted to God in childlike faith.

The Greek word for “overshadow,” *episkiazo*, is a reference to the cloud of God’s presence that materialized in Moses’ tabernacle. The Amplified Bible translates Luke 1:35 as: He “will overshadow you like a shining cloud.” This same cloud hovered over the ark of the covenant, led God’s people through the wilderness and filled Solomon’s temple with shimmering shekinah glory.

Think about it. The same cloud of glory that caused Moses’ face to shine hovered over a virgin and deposited a divine seed in her womb. The God who hid behind a veil in the Old Testament clothed Himself in

human flesh in the New Testament.

The Incarnation cannot be explained in purely biological terms. There was nothing sexual about it, yet Mary's ovum was fertilized without Joseph's sperm. Divinity merged with humanity. Jesus, fully God and fully man, began a nine-month gestation.

When the Savior was born, there was a normal amount of blood, sweat and tears—because Mary was human. But this birth was surrounded with wonder because Joseph was not the father. He came from a line of kings, but his pedigree was not enough to save the human race. He could not contribute to this miracle.

Doubters think Joseph got Mary pregnant out of wedlock. If that were true, Christianity itself would be a lie because (1) if Jesus were not born of a woman, He could not have identified with our sins fully; and (2) if God were not His biological father, He could not have redeemed us.

This is the most glorious revelation of the nativity. Bible teacher R.T. Kendall put it this way: "The virgin birth of Christ shows that salvation can never come through human effort." God performed this science-defying miracle without our help. All we can do is receive His amazing love and forgiveness.

We just stand there in awe. As you prepare for this holiday season, I pray you and your family will be overshadowed in a fresh way

by the presence of the Savior.

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