

Foretelling the Messianic Conception in Luke

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My personal commentary as it relates to the physical conception of the Messiah.

- *Luke 1:5 "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth."*
 - Elisabeth is a daughter of Aaron, of the house of Levi.

- *Luke 1:7 "And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years."*
 - I can see the idea of Elisabeth becoming pregnant being considered "miraculous", but *not unheard of* given the example of Abraham and Sarah bringing forth Isaac in their old age.

- *Luke 1:13-15 "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with ~~the Holy Ghost~~ holy spirit, even from [or out of] his mother's womb."*
 - I think the phrase "the Holy Ghost" is misleading being capitalized like this with the article adjective "the", giving the impression that this is a reference to a person. In the Greek there is no capitalization or word for "the" used here.

So, this appears to me to just be saying that the child she will bear will be filled with holy spirit, even out of his mother's womb.
 - Keep in mind that it is God who gives each of us the breath of life, our spirit.

- *Luke 1:16-17 "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*
 - This child will go before the Lord, God of Israel, in the spirit and power of Elias (or Elijah). It appears that the "holy spirit" which will fill this child is that of Elijah.
 - *Matthew 11:12-14 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. (13) For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (14) And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*
 - *Matthew 17:10-13 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? (11) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias*

truly shall first come, and restore all things. (12) But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. (13) Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

- *Luke 1:18-20 “And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”*
 - Zacharias questions the word of the Lord coming to pass, particularly the notion of *conceiving and bringing forth* this child using old age as a hindrance. As a result he is made mute until the day the word is accomplished.

- *Luke 1:24-25 “And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.”*
 - There is no mention of Zacharias “knowing” Elisabeth, yet we understand that she conceived in the natural way. Of course, Elisabeth gives credit to the Lord for her pregnancy and some might see this as a miracle, however, a conception like this is not unheard of in the Bible (barren women conceiving in old age). And again, the Lord is instrumental in every life that is conceived.

- *Luke 1:26-27 “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.”*
 - This is the ONLY place Mary is ever referred to as a “virgin”.
 - The fact that Mary was *espoused* to a man tells us the arrangement was already made, and she now *belonged* to him.
 - She was his woman/wife.
 - He was her man/husband.
 - Joseph is clearly identified as being of the house of David, out of which the Messiah has been prophesied to come by the prophets of old.
 - We are not told at this point from which house is Mary.
 - There is no indication that Mary would have a physical inability or difficulty to conceive. Whereas with Elisabeth, we were told Zacharias and Elisabeth were childless due to Elisabeth’s barrenness and advanced age in Luke 1:7.

- *Luk 1:28-30 “And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.”*
 - Luke tells us Mary is told to have found favor with the Lord, just like he describes David in Acts 7:46. And like we see is said of Noah in Genesis 6:8. (To find favor in the sight of God is not a unique-to-Mary experience.)
 - *Act 7:46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.*
 - *Gen 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

- *Luke 1:31 “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.”*
 - This is an announcement of a conception that will take place **in the future**.
 - Given the fact that we were already told that Mary was espoused to a man, naturally the father of this child is understood to be that man.

- *Luke 1:32-33 “He shall be great, and shall be called ~~the~~ Son son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”*
 - The English translation “the Son” gives the impression that this is speaking of a particular person. However, there is no Greek article adjective translated as “the” before “son” here, and the Greek word translated as “son” is not capitalized.

This makes me think that the angel may not necessarily be referring to a particular son that Mary should recognize, but rather just indicating that this child will be called a son of the Highest.

 - Given the fact that we are told this child will be given the throne of his father David confirms the idea that the earthly father of this child is the man to whom Mary was espoused.
 - These descriptions (1: being called “son”; 2: being given a throne; 3: ruling over the whole house of Jacob; and 4: establishing a lasting kingdom) appear to all line up with what the prophet Nathan told King David concerning his seed in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.
 - *2Sa 7:12-16 LXX And it shall come to pass when thy days shall have been fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, even thine own issue, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build for me a house to my name, and I will set up his throne even for ever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. And when he happens to transgress, then will I chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men. (15) But my mercy I will not take from him, as I took it from*

those whom I removed from my presence. (16) And his house shall be made sure, and his kingdom for ever before me, and his throne shall be set up for ever.

- We're told this child will be *called* son of the Highest, which is what we see happens after he is baptized by John the Baptist in Luke 3:22 at nearly 30 years of age.
 - *Luke 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*

We have no record of him being identified by others as “son of God” prior to his baptism by John.

However, Jesus refers to God as his Father when he is found speaking at the temple at the age of 12. His parents did not understand his reference, but we're told Mary pondered what he said after he said it, probably because she was recalling what the angel told her as recorded here in Luke 1.

- *Luke 2:48-51 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. (49) And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? (50) And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. (51) And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*

Some understand this reference to “thy father and I” to be referring to Joseph as an adoptive parent, yet there is nothing to indicate that is the case. On the contrary, Mary clearly identifies him as Jesus’ father.

As for Jesus being called “son” of God when he was baptized as an adult, if you notice, he was immediately led into the wilderness after that event to be tempted by the devil. And two of those temptations according to Luke were conditional, saying “if thou be son of God”.

- *Luke 4:3 And the devil said unto him, **If thou be the Son son of God,** command this stone that it be made bread.*
- *Luke 4:9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, **If thou be the Son son of God,** cast thyself down from hence:*

Considering the apocryphal book, “Wisdom of Solomon”, which was written prior to Jesus’ birth, I believe chapter 2 sheds some interesting light on these temptations of the devil as they relate to being called a son of God.

- *Wisdom 2:1-24 For the ungodly said, reasoning with themselves, but not aright, Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no*

remedy: neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. (2) For we are born at all adventure: and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been: for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart: (3) Which being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air, (4) And our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof. (5) For our time is a very shadow that passeth away; and after our end there is no returning: for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. (6) Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present: and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. (7) Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments: and let no flower of the spring pass by us: (8) Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered: (9) Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this. (10) Let us oppress the poor righteous man, let us not spare the widow, nor reverence the ancient gray hairs of the aged. (11) Let our strength be the law of justice: for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. (12) Therefore let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education. (13) He professeth to have the knowledge of God: and he calleth himself the child of the Lord. (14) He was made to reprove our thoughts. (15) He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion. (16) We are esteemed of him as counterfeits: he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness: he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his father. (17) Let us see if his words be true: and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. (18) For **if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies.** (19) Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness, and prove his patience. (20) Let us condemn him with a shameful death: for by his own saying he shall be respected. (21) Such things they did imagine, and were deceived: for their own wickedness hath blinded them. (22) As for the mysteries of God, they knew them not: neither hoped they for the wages of righteousness, nor discerned a reward for blameless souls. (23) For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. (24) Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side do find it.

- At this time in history, there hasn't been a king sitting on David's throne since the Babylonian captivity, and there hasn't been a king to reign over the whole house of

Jacob since Solomon. Shortly after Solomon's son, Rehoboam, took the throne, the kingdom was ripped in two.

- *1 Kings 11:30-40 And Achia laid hold of his new garment that was upon him, and tore it into twelve pieces: (31) and he said to Jeroboam, Take to thyself ten pieces, for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give thee ten tribes. (32) Yet he shall have two tribes, for my servant David's sake, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. (33) Because he forsook me, and sacrificed to Astarte the abomination of the Sidonians, and to Chamos, and to the idols of Moab, and to their king the abomination of the children of Ammon, and he walked not in my ways, to do that which was right before me, as David his father did. (34) Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, (for I will certainly resist him all the days of his life,) for David my servant's sake, whom I have chosen. (35) But I will take the kingdom out of the hand of his son, and give thee ten tribes. (36) But to his son I will give the two remaining tribes, that my servant David may have an establishment continually before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for myself to put my name there. (37) And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign as thy soul desires, and thou shalt be king over Israel. (38) And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt keep all the commandments that I shall give thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right before me, to keep my ordinances and my commandments, as David my servant did, that I will be with thee, and will build thee a sure house, as I built to David. (40) And Solomon sought to slay Jeroboam: but he arose and fled into Egypt, to Susakim king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until Solomon died.*

- *Luke 1:34 "Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How can this be, seeing I know not a man?'"*

- Many understand this to be saying that Mary is asking how this conception can be referring to her virgin status of not knowing a man. But that doesn't make any sense.

If Mary was *espoused* to a man, and this was an announcement of a **future** conception, then there is no reason to question how this *pregnancy* can happen. Unlike the case with Zecharias and Elisabeth, we're not told that Joseph or Mary has any issue that would prevent her from conceiving.

- It makes more sense for Mary to ask how the bringing forth of the Messiah, who will reign as King over the house of Jacob can be since she does not know a man like that.

Typically those appointed to be king in David's line are those in direct succession after him. In Joseph and Mary's case there has not been a king on David's throne for many generations.

- *Luke 1:35 “And the angel answered and said unto her, ~~The Holy Ghost~~ holy spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called ~~the Son~~ son of God.*

- The angel explains how she is going to be able to bring forth *the kind of man that was being described to her* (aka the Messiah), one who is holy/set apart.
- Again, the phrase “The Holy Ghost” as a proper noun is misleading. The literal Greek says, “spirit holy” (pneuma hagion) without an article adjective “the” in this passage or any capitalization.

So, the angel answers her saying, “holy spirit shall come upon” her, similar to how we’re told John the Baptist will be filled with “holy spirit” even out of his mother’s womb in Luke 1:15. So “holy spirit” is not referring to a *person*; it is referring to a *kind* of spirit that will come upon Mary: a holy one.

Again, God knows each of us before we are conceived, our human flesh is formed by God in our mother’s womb out of the seed of our father, and God gives each of us the breath of life, our **spirit**.

- The answer to Mary’s question as to how what she was told *could* come to pass is that holy (set-apart) spirit would come upon her and that which will be born of her will be considered holy (set-apart).
 - And again, she is told the child, whom she will bear, will be “called” the son of God. And he was, after he was baptized at almost 30 years of age.
- *Luke 1:36-37 “And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.”*

- This reveals Elisabeth as being kin to Mary, which we saw earlier in verse 5 that she is a daughter of Aaron, who is of the house of Levi, thereby revealing Mary’s connection to the house of Levi.
- I believe the angel is using Elisabeth’s conception in her old age as *a sign* to Mary to *increase her faith* that what is being said to her will indeed come to pass.
- The reference to “with God nothing shall be impossible” seems to be a direct reference to what was told Abraham concerning the son Sarah would bear in Genesis 18:13-14, which is similar to what is happening with *Elisabeth* (not with Mary).
 - *Genesis 18:13-14 Brenton And the Lord said to Abraam, Why is it that Sarrha has laughed in herself, saying, Shall I then indeed bear? but I am grown old. (14) Shall anything be impossible with the Lord? At this time I will return to thee seasonably, and Sarrha shall have a son.*
- Some might think the reference to “with God nothing shall be impossible” is the angel’s way of letting Mary know that *she* is about to experience a miracle, *conceiving a child*

without the help of a man. However, there is nothing that directly states she will conceive outside of a natural union with her husband.

Again, it was Elisabeth's *conception and bringing forth a son* that was in question with Zechariah. But here with Mary, it seems the question isn't over her conceiving and bringing forth a son, it is more likely to be about the *holiness* of this child...*how he will be able to fulfill this role as King.*

- *Luke 1:38 "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."*
 - Unlike Zechariah and his visitation from the angel Gabriel, Mary *believed* the word of the Lord and *accepted* it. That word being that Mary would conceive and bring forth *the Messiah* through natural means.

She would be *known* by her husband, and with the help of the Lord, she would take hold together with one (aka conceive) and the Lord would fashion to be flesh from the seed of her man, giving breath and **holy** spirit to that which is in her.
- *Luke 1:39-40 "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste [diligence], into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth."*
 - There is nothing to indicate that Mary conceived between the time she received the word of the Lord and her arrival at the house of Zacharias and Elisabeth.
- *Luke 1:41-42 "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with ~~the Holy Ghost~~ holy spirit: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."*
 - The babe leaped in Elisabeth's womb at Elisabeth's hearing of Mary's salutation. Many assume that Mary is pregnant at this point, but again, there is nothing to indicate such.
 - We're told *Elisabeth* was filled with holy spirit, not *the child* within her. Again, "the Holy Ghost" is not a reference to a person; it is not capitalized in the Greek or preceded by an article adjective to mean "the" in this passage. It is simply referring to a *kind* of spirit – that which is holy.
 - Elisabeth spake out with a loud voice having been filled with that holy spirit, like how Zacharias is filled with holy spirit and prophesies later in verse 67.
 - *Luke 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with ~~the Holy Ghost~~ holy spirit, and prophesied, saying,...*
- *Luke 1:43-45 "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."*

- This confirms that it was *the sound of Mary's salutation* that caused the babe to leap in her womb, and she credits his leaping to *joy*, not to a filling of holy spirit in him.
 - Evidently Mary told Elizabeth about the word from the Lord regarding her future conception of the Messiah. And again, unlike Zechariah, her husband, Elisabeth believed the word of the Lord that was given to Mary would come to pass as seen by her declaration of her to be "the mother of my Lord". And then she called Mary blessed for believing the word would come to pass as well.
 - I think it's so important to recognize the belief being expressed is over something that will happen in the future...not just that she would *bring forth* the Messiah in the future, but that she would **conceive** in the future. It hasn't happened yet.
- *Luke 1:46-55 "And Mary said, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.'"*
 - Mary praises the Lord in response to the word that she has received, furthermore expressing her faith. No wonder she is considered highly favored of the Lord...she believes He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (Heb 11:6)
 - Mary refers to what was spoken to "our fathers", regarding remembrance of His mercy: to Abraham and to his seed for ever.

This whole chapter is all about God doing all that He said He would do...keeping His promises, which He made with mankind. And these promises are directly tied to physical seed.

- *Luke 1:56 "And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house."*

The remaining verses in this chapter that follow speak of the birth of John the Baptist. And when the time came for that child to be named, Zacharias confirmed the name of the child was to be John, and his tongue was loosed and he could speak again.

- *Luke 1:67-75 "And his father Zacharias was filled with ~~the Holy Ghost~~ holy spirit, and prophesied, saying, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he*

would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”

- Zacharias announces that God has “raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David”, obviously referring to the child that Mary would conceive in the future and bring forth.

Keep in mind Mary had spent three months with Zacharias and Elisabeth before she returned home...all the while she was not pregnant.

Mary believed the word of the Lord concerning the Messiah to come, and then Elisabeth believed that word of the Lord (perhaps because she herself was pregnant in her old age?). And now, Zacharias believed that word as well – all *before* it came to pass. They all exhibited genuine faith by this point.

- This “horn of salvation” is identified as being in the house of his servant David, clearly referring to Joseph, to whom Mary belonged, and who was identified as being of the house of David. Mary is never identified as being of the house of David.
- The references to: “the mercy promised to our fathers”, the remembrance of God’s “holy covenant”, and “the oath which he swore to our father Abraham” all testify of God’s promises that were made and are being kept through the bringing forth of this Messiah.

This chapter, while it does address Mary as a virgin and the messenger’s announcement of the Messiah to come, it does not indicate that Mary will conceive apart from her husband. Her husband is a necessary factor in the equation given the fact that he’s the man who carries the seed of David, let alone the seed of Abraham.