

Two Miraculous Births Two Opposite Reactions

Luke 1:13-20 and Luke 1:34-38

John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus both had miraculous births. John's parents were old and unable to have children. The mother of Jesus was a virgin, and no virgin, apart from a miracle, is able to give birth. Both Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, received a message from the angel Gabriel who appeared before each of them. "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John" (Luke 1:13). Mary was given a similar announcement, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God, and behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS" (Luke 1:30-31).

There were two opposite reactions to these announcements. Zacharias did not believe the angel's message, but Mary did. Zacharias said, "Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years" (Luke 1:18). To paraphrase, "How can I know this will really happen? Don't you know my wife and I are too old to have children?" God, who knows the heart, knew that his question was motivated by unbelief: "thou believest not my words" (Luke 1:20). Had not God done a similar miracle with Abraham and Sarah? Zacharias was struck dumb, unable to speak.

Mary, on the other hand, believed God but wanted to know how such a marvelous thing could happen: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). God, through Gabriel, did not rebuke her for unbelief, but simply explained how this miraculous conception would take place (Luke 1:35). Mary's response was beautiful: "Behold the handmaid (female servant) of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). May we imitate Mary's faith and attitude of servitude!

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