

The Incarnation
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In the Garden of Eden, God prophesied the following to the serpent at Genesis 3: 15:

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

This prophecy is known as the “Seed Prophecy” and there is general consensus among Christian scholars that this prophecy refers to the coming Messiah. At the time this prophecy was made both woman and man had disobeyed God and eaten of the Fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After God delivers judgment upon the serpent, Eve is told at Genesis 3:16:

I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.

From Eve would come a seed or descendant who would triumph over the Ancient Serpent of Old.

Today, most of us do not live in an agrarian society. We think of seeds as the progenitors of plants. However, seeds are also the fruits of plants in the past. For instance in Romans 1:3 Paul describes Jesus as being “born of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

In short, Jesus is the Seed of David. He is that “branch of righteousness” and is a descendant from the House of David who will be known as “The Lord our righteousness.” He also fulfills the prophecy in Jeremiah 33 that David would never lack a man to sit on the throne of the House of Israel. Jer. 33:15-18.

Likewise Paul in Galatians 3:16 writes:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say “And to seeds,”
as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.

In short, Jesus fulfills all of the Seed prophecies. He is the Seed of Eve. He is the Seed of Abraham. He is the Seed of David.

A number of Christian writers including Irenaeus and Martin Luther have agreed that Jesus is to be identified with the promised Seed which shall bruise the head of Satan in Genesis 3. Interestingly some traditions including early eastern Christian sources comment that the serpent’s head was crushed when Jesus was crucified on Golgotha. They note that the place of crucifixion is called “Place of a Skull” (Matt. 27:33). In short Satan’s head is crushed at the Place of the Skull.”

Not only is Satan's head crushed by the feet of Jesus; but Satan's head is further crushed by the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. Rom. 6:20 says, "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."

The bruising of the heel of the Seed of Woman is generally considered to be the crucifixion of Christ. The bite is severe and scars are left but the bite is not fatal. In fact within three days the bite is cured and Jesus is resurrected.

The fact that Christ is called the "Seed of Woman" generally is taken by theologians to mean that Christ was born without the seed of Man. In short, orthodox Christians believe that Mary was a virgin and God was the Father of Christ. The Apostles Creed says Jesus is the one "Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary." In the Council of Chalcedon more specifics were given as follows:

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance (homoousios) with the Father as regards the Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer (Theotokos).....

As Eve succumbed to temptation and took the Fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, sin and death entered into the world. Adam quickly followed his wife into sin and took the fruit next. As God prophesied to the Serpent, the Seed of Woman would bruise the head of the Serpent of Old. Through the disobedience of Eve, sin and death reigned until the Seed came.

In Mary we have a second Eve. However she was not disobedient like the first Eve. Instead she was obedient and through her obedience, the Seed would come who would save the world and bring judgment upon the Ancient Serpent of Old, Satan. Because of her obedience, Mary would be called "blessed among women." It is Mary who is blessed among women not Eve who was disobedient to God.

Let's look more closely about some of the things that Gabriel, the Angel of the Lord said to Mary. In Luke 1 it states that Gabriel came to "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice highly favored one the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women." Mary is described by Gabriel as being "highly favored" and "blessed among women." Mary is the second Eve and she will give birth to Jesus, the Seed promised in Genesis 3:15.

Gabriel delivers this message to Mary at Luke 1:30-33:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall Call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest, And the Lord will give him the throne of His father David. And He will reign Over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there will be no end.

Gabriel is making reference to the promise made by God to David that he would have an heir who would rule on David's throne forever. This promise is mentioned at Jeremiah 33:17 which says "For thus says the Lord: "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel..."

Mary queries the Gabriel about how this can ever happen because she has not been with a man. (Luke 1:24). Gabriel responded to Mary's question by saying at Luke 1:35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

Mary does not become just an unwilling participant in the process but she makes a positive choice. Just as Eve made a clear choice to disobey God, Mary makes a positive choice to obey God. This choice is recorded in Luke 1:38 which states the following: "Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."" In other words, Mary responds to the word of God by saying "Yes."

It is interesting that God would pick Mary of all women to be the mother of the Christ. He could have chosen someone great but instead God chose one who was obscure, young, humble and one who saw herself as the "hand-maiden of the Lord." Similarly when Christ comes into our hearts, he seeks not the great but those who have humble and submissive hearts that are open to God and where a wonderful and miraculous work takes place. Those of us who are so visited by God, like Mary, are "blessed among women and men."

The incarnation is one of the great mysteries of the church. However to women and men of faith it is not such a leap as one might think. We believe that God created man out of dust. Eve was created from man to be a help and an equal to him. If God can make an entire man by speaking the word and make an entire woman from man, it is not much that God can create a sperm which can eventually develop into a fetus. It is a small thing in light of the larger powers of creation mentioned in the Bible.

In addition, the incarnation should be near to the heart of every Christian. Mary responded to God's invitation by saying "Yes" and God did a divine work in her, making Christ to live within her. Likewise when we who believe say "Yes" the Holy Spirit does a divine work in us and causes Christ to be born in us through faith. The incarnation miracle occurs over and over as we who are corruptible flesh have born with in us the incorruptible Jesus Christ who brings us eternal life.

God does the impossible. He causes women who are infertile to give birth. He causes a 90 year old woman to give birth to Isaac who then has a 90 year old mother and a 100 year old father. God laughs and the child is called Isaac meaning "laughter". Sarah laughs in disobedience and later in joy. Isaac become a "type" or shadow of Christ but then that is another teaching.

In the nativity story, God is in the birth process once again. God causes Elizabeth and Zacharias to give birth when they are advanced in age. This is miraculous and in one sense it is just as miraculous as every other instance when God causes the infertile and those well past the age of child-bearing to have babies. After Mary becomes pregnant, she goes to visit and stay with Elizabeth. In the same house, you have a woman too old to give birth (Elizabeth) and a young virgin who is with child (Mary). No one is laughing at the other, because nothing is too hard for God. He has done the miraculous both with the old and the young.

The old woman is pregnant with John the Baptist. The young woman is pregnant with Jesus. God is at work. The efforts of a man are not required in Mary's case.

When Mary comes to the home of Elizabeth several interesting things happen. First the baby in the womb of Elizabeth jumps and Elizabeth being "filled with the Holy Spirit" says in a "loud voice" "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." (Luke 1:42). Notice several things. Gabriel had said to Mary "blessed are you among women." (Luke 1:28) Elizabeth says "Blessed are you among women." (Luke 1:42). Mary is hearing the same words from Elizabeth that she has heard from Gabriel.

Elizabeth also says "blessed is the fruit of your womb." (Luke 1:42). When we think of fruit we think of seed for indeed the fruit of the womb of Mary is Jesus, the Seed promised in the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible made in Genesis 3. Keep in mind that the one making the first messianic prophecy at Genesis 3:15 was not a man but was God Himself.

The refrain "blessed are you Mary" and "blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus" is a refrain echoed throughout Christian history, especially among Catholic Christianity.

Next, Elizabeth asks why is it that "the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). Elizabeth knows that inside of Mary is the one who will be the Lord of Elizabeth and the Lord of her son John the Baptist.

Finally Mary speaks praises to God which are known today as "The Magnificat." This hymn of praise includes this statement at Luke 1:48: "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." And indeed this is true. Mary is called by all Catholics as "The Blessed Virgin Mary."

Mary ends the Magnificat by saying at Luke 1:54-55:

He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy.
As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever.

Truly God has come to help Israel but not just the old Israel but to all those who would choose to become the people of God, the new Israel. He comes to fulfill all the promises made to Abraham and to the children of Abraham. The New Testament makes clear that Abraham is the father of all of those who have faith both the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

In Christ through the incarnation, the Seed is born. The Seed will grow, will die on the cross and will grow again in resurrection life. The Seed will give birth to a nation. That nation will have hearts made not of stone but of flesh. They will have hearts which are circumcised and which identify themselves as the Children of God.

Satan will bite the heel of the Seed by causing Christ to be nailed to the cross and to die there; however, through the resurrection, the Seed will generate many other seeds which will have life and which will become the Children of God and follow Christ into glory.

The Tree of Life forbidden to Adam and Eve because of their sin, will now become available to those who follow Christ. A way is made back into the garden. When the veil in the Temple is rent at the crucifixion, a way back into the presence of God is made. The people of God will have access to the Tree of Life. This is the same Tree described in the Book of Revelation which has fruit (and seeds) for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:2).