

1. The God of crazy promises

- a. Coming up in October 2012 we will be taking a mission trip to Ethiopia. Most of you already know this, and hopefully some of you are planning on coming with us. It gives me great pride to be pastor of a church so motivated to doing such things.
- b. However, one of my greatest fears is flying. Ever since I was first approached about this trip I knew that I had to go. I can't challenge you guys to do things and then not be willing to do them myself. I just don't know how I am going to get myself on a plane for 15 hours.
- c. When I was at St. John's they knew of my great fear of flying. It affected how much I would go see my family 1300 miles to the east. One guy, Zeke, would always laugh and say, "Don't you have faith?" And my answer was always, "Yes. But faith in Jesus is not about safety on an airplane. It is about salvation from sins. Many people who have had faith in Jesus have died on airplanes."
- d. I do have faith that whatever I do for Christ he will use for his glory. But I don't always know how he intends to use my life for his glory. I don't really want my life to glorify God by being the next Todd Beamer.
- e. Why do I bring this up? Because I realize that even in my fears about doing some moderately crazy things for God- like flying around the world- I will never be asked by God to do anything as crazy as what he asked Mary to do.
- f. Here was a young girl, probably a teenager. She was betrothed but not married. She a virgin. Everything was normal. Then Gabriel showed up with a message from God that changed her life, and the world, forever.
- g. Gabriel told her that she would she would conceive a son who would be the Messiah. This is what is meant by saying that the son will sit on the throne of David.
 - i. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
 - ii. And Mary responded, "Whatchoo talkin' bout Willis?"
- h. This has to be among the craziest promises of God that someone has ever heard. Not the part about a virgin giving birth. The part that the person is being told that their son will be the Messiah. And that he will not only sit on the throne of David, but that he will reign over all of Israel- forever.
- i. And of all that craziness, Mary could only think to say, "How can this be, for I am a virgin?" It is like she couldn't even comprehend the parts about who her son would be, because she was so taken aback to hear that she would be pregnant. What on earth would that do to her life? She was unmarried and it would destroy

her reputation. And of course where is the science? Everyone knows that certain things have to happen for a baby to be made.

2. The God of evidence

- a. It has become very popular in Christianity today to tell people to simply take things on faith. Don't think too much about it. Don't look for evidence. Don't try to verify truth claims. After all, faith is what Christians have, and reason is what everyone else has. Isn't that what the bible teaches anyway?
- b. Not only is it in no way what the bible teaches, it isn't even the way God behaves. We serve a God of truth. And as such, he often offers testable evidence. In other words, he gives tangible justification to have faith- which is best understood as active trust.
- c. What did Gabriel say to Mary after she asked how this could happen?
 - i. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."
- d. The implications are pretty clear. Elizabeth, much like Abraham's wife Sarah, was past the age of standard child bearing. Yet Gabriel told her that Elizabeth was six months pregnant. Gabriel was telling her, "Look, nothing is impossible with God. Now if you don't believe me, go ahead and check with Elizabeth and see if I can be trusted."
- e. Mary responded, "'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'" And many would say, "See, she just accepted God's plan in faith." Let me read the very next two verses for you.
 - i. **Luke 1:39-40** In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
 - ii. In other words, she went and verified the evidentiary claim of Gabriel. And when she got there, she indeed found Elizabeth to be with child.

3. The God of kept promises

- a. When Mary got to Elizabeth's she learned that Elizabeth was indeed pregnant. In fact, Elizabeth already knew that Mary was as well, and even spoke of Mary's child as her Lord. God provided great evidence for his promises.
- b. But even more than providing evidence for the promises of God, he actually delivers on his promises as well. Mary did indeed conceive a child by the power of the Holy Spirit. He has indeed been placed on the throne of David to reign over all of Israel forever. And his kingdom is unending.
- c. These simple promises made to a scared and confused young girl 2000 years ago turn out to be the most profound truths in all of history. God acted in keeping his promises. Not just his promise to Mary, but his promises to all of Israel and his people dating all the way back to Adam and Eve when he promised that one of their offspring would ultimately overcome the serpent who led them into sin.
- d. The promise of a savior born of a virgin is the culmination of every promise made by God up to that point. Because he kept those promises, we have Jesus, who then fulfilled more promises by dying on the cross and rising on the third day.

This all to bring about the forgiveness of our sins and reconcile us to the Father whom we have rebelled against.

- e. All of this leaves us with good reason to trust in the remaining promises- that the Holy Spirit will be with those of us who believe, that the believer will have eternal life with the Father through the death and resurrection of the Son, and that he will come again one day, judge everyone, and establish his reign forever and ever.
- f. We serve a God of crazy promises. But he has given us substantial evidence that he speaks truth and we should trust him. He isn't just the God of crazy promises, but the God who keeps his crazy promises.