

“By her faith Sarah herself also was given *the power to conceive seed* though she was too old, because she trusted God Who had made the promise.” Heb. 11.11

1. Seed of the woman [**Gen 3.15**; Mat 1.20; Luke 1.35; Gal 4.4].

“Jacob was the father of [**begat, egennesen**] Joseph, who was the husband of Mary, from whom Jesus was born [**begotten, egennethen**], the one who is called the Messiah...Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to marry Mary, because what has been *fathered* and *procreated* [*gennethen*] within her is derived from God’s creative holy spirit.” Mat. 1.16, 20b.

“The careful reader of Scripture will notice the string of verses which speak of the “begetting” = coming into existence of the Son of God. Thus in Isa. 7:14, the virginal begetting of the Messiah is predicted. In Isa. 9:6 the child/Son (in parallel) is said to be “begotten,” that is, by God, a divine passive. Here in the genealogy of the Son of God, he is “begotten” in and from Mary; the implied Father is God. In the list preceding, fathers begat their sons but in the case of Mary, the fathering, begetting was authored by GOD. 1 John 5:18 speaks of the Son of God, Jesus, as the one who was begotten (aorist pointing to a moment in time). The impossible idea of an “eternal generation,” a phrase with no intelligible meaning, is entirely foreign to the Bible.

- The verb is *gennao* which means “to cause to come into existence,” “to beget,” since this is the activity in Mary, not the later birth of the Son, and it describes the activity of the Father (that is, God, working through His creative operational power, the holy spirit, to effect a miracle).”<sup>1</sup>

“...in the biblical mentality a ‘begetting’ does not involve only the passing of physical life from parent to child. In the process of begetting [the command to multiply and rule, Gen 1.28], there is transmitted the likeness to God given to Adam [Gen 1.27]. A genealogy, then, reflects the working out of God’s plan of creation in a history of salvation.” F.F. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p 68.

The nativity narratives’ interest is focused solely on the human Jesus and not some “Divine”, preexistent “being” [angel/god/other]. Hence, the stress lay upon his Davidic descent/lineage = the Seed. They follow the OT prophecies of one brought onto the scene [“raised up”, Deut 18.18; Acts 13.33] to the House of David and the House of Joseph and Mary. Both narratives are rooted in history and not mythology. This is the purest Jewish Messianic language you can find. An extension of this same theme is the title “son of God” in connection to the first human being, Adam [Luke 3.38]. Both are unique figures in that they came into existence by a direct, creative, divine act of God. This miraculous, unprecedented *procreation* should not take away from the intent of the writers to show a truly human birth and subsequent *normal*, Jewish upbringing.

The importance of women:

- Both accounts attest to the fact that Mary was a virgin: Matthew by reference to **Isa 7.14**.
- The rare inclusion of women in the genealogical *tree* may point to the extended blessing of Gentiles through the Jewish Messiah:

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<sup>1</sup> A.F. Buzzard, *NT Commentary*, Mat. 1.20.

“Luther held that Matthew included the four OT women because they were foreigners so as to show that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, had ties to Gentiles as well. Tamar was an Aramean (Jub. 41:1), Rahab was a Canaanite (Josh 2:1-14), Ruth was a Moabite (Ruth 1:4) and Bathsheba—not directly called a foreigner (and perhaps for this reason not directly named)—was “the wife of Uriah” who was a Hittite (2 Sam 11:3)...Furthermore, it appears that early Judaism may well have accepted the four OT women as honored proselytes (Rahab and Ruth, Sipre Num 78; Rahab, y. Ber. 2.7, b. Meg. 14b, b. ZebahΩ. 116b; Tamar, b. Meg. 10b, b. SotVa 10a, cf. Gen. Rab. 85.11–12, b. {Abod. Zar. 36b; Bathsheba, cf. b. Sanh. 107a; but see Ruth Rab. 8.1).” “Genealogy” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*.

- They *foreshadow* Mary showing us that God often works in unusual and in Mary miraculous ways through *unlikely* persons.

“The Holy Spirit rested on Rahab before the Israelites arrived in the Promised Land.” *Midrash Rabbah II* on Ruth 1.1, c. 8<sup>th</sup> century AD.

“And this intervention through a woman was even more dramatic than the OT instances; there God had overcome the moral [prostitution, adultery] or biological irregularity of the human parents, while here He overcomes the total absence of the father’s begetting.” Brown, *Birth Messiah*, p 74.

## 2. Seed of Abraham [Gen 12.3; 22.18; Mat 1.1; Rom 9.5; Gal 3.9].

“My conscience and the holy spirit confirm how deeply distressed I am, how I have never-ending pain in my heart, for my own people, my physical brothers and sisters. I would rather be cursed myself, separated from Messiah, if that would help them. They are my fellow-Israelites, God’s originally chosen people. God revealed to them His glory and made covenants with them, giving them the law, true worship, and His promises. They are our forefathers — ancestors of Messiah, on his mother’s side as being of David’s line....It is not as if God’s promise has failed. For not every Israelite is now a true member of Israel, and all those who are descended from Abraham are not at present his true children. For Scripture says, “Your descendants will be reckoned through Isaac.” That is, it is not Abraham’s actual children who are counted as God’s children, but only the children of God’s promise who are considered Abraham’s true descendants.” **Rom 9.1-8**

- The *true* seed of Abraham is no longer “natural Israel” but “The International Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3, contrasted with the Israel of the flesh of 1 Cor. 10:18; Rom. 4:13; Gen. 28:4).
- It is important that Jesus is the son of Abraham for three major reasons:

(1) Jesus is a Jew, a *physical* descendant of Abraham;

(2) so Messiah can *transmit the blessings* and promises given to Abraham and by extension descendants.

(3) Abraham was the originator of Israelite history while Jesus appears to be its culminator (Mt 1:17).<sup>2</sup>

And although in Christ there is no longer supposed to be any cultural, racial lines, you still have to be a “descendant/child” of Abraham according to the Gospel message about the Land promise [Gal 3.29]. Hence, book your seat “at the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of God (Mt 8:11; Lk 13:29; see Ps 107:3; Is 49:12) and the exclusion of certain Jews (Mt 8:12; Lk 13:27-28).”<sup>3</sup>

This is reflected in the theme of Mary’ song and Zechariah’ *prophecy* [Luke 1:46-55, 67-79] “based on God’s faithfulness to the descendants (literally “seed”; see also Acts 3:25; 7:1-5) of Abraham because of his promises to him. Abraham himself was without land or descendants until he was blessed by God (Gen 17:7-8; 18:18; 22:17-18).”<sup>4</sup>

3. Seed of David [Deut. 18:18; Luke 1.69; Mat 1.1; John 7.42; 2 Tim 2.8; cp. root/shoot = descendant/offspring, Rev 5.5; 22.16<sup>5</sup>]

“The LORD God of Israel has given us a great Savior from the biological line of his servant David, as He promised through His holy prophets long ago...The Son of God *coming into existence by physical descent* from the *lineage* of David” Luke 1.69-70; Rom 1.3

“Paul used an unusual word to describe the origin of the Son of God and Son of David. He said that Jesus “*came into existence*” (*genomenon*) **from the seed of David**. He meant of course from the miracle God worked in Mary, who was of the seed of David. By this process Jesus was from his birth at the same time Son of God and son of Mary.”<sup>6</sup>

- “*according to the flesh* [*sarx*]” Paul uses the word for “the human body as a whole [1Cor 6.16; 2Cor 7.1; 12.7; Gal 4.13; Eph 5.31] but more often of the person generally [Rom 3.20; Gal 1.16—this usage arises from equivalence with the Heb. *basar*]”<sup>7</sup>.

“...the confusion caused by Paul’s use of *sarx* is the more practical question of how *sarx* should be translated. For the translation ‘flesh’ seems to be largely unacceptable to modern contemporary English

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<sup>2</sup> Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, *Abraham*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> “The term *riza*, lit., ‘root’, means ‘shoot’ (Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 152) or, less metaphorically ‘descendant’ (*Louw-Nida*, 10.33), similar to the use of *shoresh* (KB3, 1530-32)...The Greek phrase *e riza kai genos* is [synonymous], which has been translated here simply ‘descendant’ (see Bratcher-Hatton, *Revelation*, 332) since *riza* (lit., ‘root’) has the **figurative** meaning ‘descendant, offspring’ here (*Louw-Nida*, 10.33), and *genos* is very similar in meaning (*Louw-Nida*, 10.32). *kai* [is explanatory]: e.g., ‘the shoot, that is, the descendant’...The modified Messianic title *e riza* David is solemnly emphasized in Rev 5.5; 22.16. The par. *genos* ‘descendant’ in **22.16** shows plainly that the reference is again to **Is. 11.10** rather than 11.1. It must be translated ‘shoot (out) of David’.” *WBC*, Volume 52, Part 1.

<sup>6</sup> A.F. Buzzard, *NT Commentary*, Rom. 1.3.

<sup>7</sup> D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp 46-47.

language translators of the Pauline letters...it has an old fashioned ring [and] consciously or unconsciously, its negative usage seems to carry unacceptable dualistic overtones (materiality as evil).”<sup>8</sup>

“Paul **appropriately** describes the [‘beginning’] *arche* of Christ in terms of his birth...Paul does not elaborate which scriptures he has in mind [suggesting] that Paul condenses an actual nativity account...Paul’s assertion that Jesus fulfills the messianically interpreted oracles neither precludes nor requires a detailed nativity narrative...raising the possibility that Paul is compressing a genealogy similar to Mat 1.1-17 and Luke 3.23-28. The aim of a genealogy distributed among early Christians would presumably be apologetic, to ‘prove’ that Jesus meets the criterion of Davidic lineage. A potential source was available in the person of James, the brother of Jesus, who was evidently still active in Jerusalem at this time. Assessment of the probability of a nativity narrative underpinning [Rom 1.3] depends in part on a hint that Paul gives in Gal 4.4...

Moo (*Romans*, 46) has doubts, however: ‘This clause assumes the preexistence of the Son...Perhaps Paul uses the more general term [of ‘has come’, *genomenon*] to suggest that more than simple ‘birth’ was entailed in the ‘becoming’ of the Son; a change in existence also took place.’...In response, I dispute the assertion that [Rom 1.3] presupposes Christ’s pre-existence; no part of vv.3b-4 addresses this subject at all, and the ‘change in existence’ happens in v.4, not v.3. One does not need to import the doctrine of pre-existence in order to make sense of the text. Also, *ginomai* can mean ‘be born’, not ‘give birth to’, as Moo translates; and in light of its broad attestation with this meaning, one can confidently say it is in fact a ‘usual word’ for this.”<sup>9</sup>

**Addendum: When was Jesus born?**

(1) the date of Herod’s death [4-3BCE];

(2) the date Luke assigns to the beginning of the Baptist’s ministry (Lk 3:1) coupled with the reference to Jesus’ approximate age (Lk 3:23) means a 4-3BCE date<sup>10</sup>.

(3) the date of his death by counting backward from his 3.5 year ministry: from Passover, Nisan 14 spring of 33 C.E. (John 19:14-16) to early fall of 2 B.C.E.—Luke 3:23.

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<sup>8</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 3.3.

<sup>9</sup> R.M. Calhoun, *Paul’s Definitions of the Gospel in Romans 1*, pp 131-133.

<sup>10</sup> “Luke also tells us that John the Baptist began his ministry during the fifteenth year of Tiberius’ reign. Since Augustus died in the summer of A.D. 14 and Tiberius assumed the throne later that year, this would place John’s ministry about A.D. 29, though possibly it might be reckoned as early as A.D. 27 (Hoehner). It is uncertain how long it was after John began his ministry that Jesus began his, but both the Lukan narrative (Lk 3) as well as Mark 1:14 suggest that John’s ministry came first. Luke then tells us that Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. The Greek word *hoæsei* indicates an approximation or round number which would allow for a few years on either side.

If Jesus did begin his ministry by working with or at the same time as the Baptist, as the Johannine tradition suggests (cf. Jn 3:22-30), and if rabbinic tradition is correct in saying that Jesus was age 33–34 when he began his ministry (b. Sanh. 106b), Jesus’ ministry may have begun as early as A.D. 29, if not shortly before then. This would mean that Jesus was born about 4 B.C. or perhaps a bit earlier. Both Luke 1 and independently Matthew 2 are in agreement in placing the birth of Jesus during the reign of Herod, and Luke informs us John was also born under that reign.” Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, *Birth of Jesus*.

Season: Spring-Late Fall [late-March to November].

“It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts [wilderness], about the passover [sic], and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain: during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the passover [sic] occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could He have been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact, which casts considerable light on this disputed point.”  
(Clarke's Commentary, vol. V, p. 370)