

The Origin of Human Life: the Neuter Genders, Future Tense, & Masculine Gender in Luke 1:35b; Elizabeth's Pregnancy of John the Baptist; Mary Commits to Become a Slave Woman for God, Luke 1:36-38

Luke 1:35b - "Therefore the Child [not found in the Greek text; best translated, "the One"] to be born¹ [present passive participle, **neuter** gender, of the verb γεννάω, *gennaō*] will be holy [the nominative **neuter** singular of the noun ἅγιος, *hagios*]; He will be called [**future** passive indicative of the verb καλέω, *kaleō*] the Son of God [nominative singular, **masculine** gender, of the nouns Υἱός, *Huios*: Son, & Θεός, *Theos*: God]."

The two concepts are best translated, "The **sanctified One** – set apart to the service of God – which is **to be born** ..." Here's why:

First of all, both the verb "to be born" and the noun "sanctified" are in the neuter gender, not masculine.

Second, the present tense of the verb is an aoristic present which denotes punctiliar action in present time, i.e., it sets forth an event as now occurring. As Gabriel is speaking these words to Mary, the impregnation of her ovum is under way. The passive voice means that the impregnation process receives the action of initiating the birthing process.

The neuter gender of the verb *gennaō*, "to be born," indicates that the twenty-three male chromosomes and their union with Mary's ovum creating the zygote of the Lord's true humanity are not yet considered human life but rather biological life.

The true humanity of the Lord occurs at the virgin birth, indicated next by the phrase "will be called the Son of God."

The verb here is the future passive indicative of **καλέω (*kaleō*)**, translated "will be called." This is a predictive future for an event which is expected to occur in future time.

During the gestation period of approximately 36 weeks, the original zygote goes through three stages of development – blastocyst, embryo, and fetus – before the fully developed child exits the womb.

During the periods of gestation, the life in the womb is biological life and in this passage Luke reports that the Holy Spirit refers to it with the neuter gender which we translate "One."

In this last phrase the Holy Spirit predicts that at physical birth the child will be imputed soul life. According to Isaiah 11:2, He will be indwelt by and filled with the Holy Spirit, and therefore sanctified before God for special service to Him.

At the point of selection the Child will be called the Son of God; this title is made up of two masculine gender nouns: (1) **Υἱός (*Huios*)**: Son, and (2) **Θεός (*Theos*)**: God. The masculine gender indicates a person with human life.

¹ See translator's note 21 at Luke 1:35 in the *NET Bible*, Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001, 1834.

The term Son of God is used in the Scriptures in various senses. In the New Testament it is employed in different applications. It is in one instance (Luke 1:35) applied to Christ on account of His miraculous conception.²

During gestation, the developing biological life does not receive soul life, nor is it imputed the human spirit, consequently, it cannot be considered human life, and in Mary's case it cannot be referred to as the Son of God. This can only occur at selection, the divine act at physical birth when God imputes soul life to the fetus thus creating human life.

On the occasion of the virgin birth, this human life belonged to Jesus of Nazareth who is also called the Son of God—the union of true humanity with undiminished deity: the hypostatic union.

Luke 1:35 - Seraph Gabriel replied, "The Holy Spirit will rest upon you, and the omnipotence of the Most High will envelop you. The sanctified One—set apart to the service of God—which is to be born will be called the Son of God."

Gabriel then went on to inform Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was in her third trimester. Her pregnancy would result in the birth of John the Baptist who would fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40:1-3³ as the forerunner of Jesus Christ. John's ministry began in A.D. 25, exactly 30 years after the virgin birth.

Luke 1:36 - "And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old age—although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month!"

Mary was aware of Elizabeth's barrenness and this second piece of miraculous information solicited disbelief. Gabriel anticipates this reaction and calms her doubts with his statement in:

Luke 1:37 - "For nothing will be impossible with God."

This verse has some nuances in the Greek that causes difficulty in translation. The key word, translated "nothing" in the NASB, is the noun **ῥῆμα (rhēma)**. Its definition needs a little research:

It is hardly possible to give a full history of the Greek words for "to say," "to speak," "to tell," "word," "speech" etc. ... and for the use of the terms λέγω (*legō*), λόγος (*logos*), ῥῆμα (*rhēma*), and λαλέω (*laleō*). (p. 71)

ῥῆμα: "to state specifically," "definitely stated," "expressly laid down," "a solemn announcement," "of military orders." (p. 75)

ῥῆμα thus denotes the word as expressed will.⁴ (pp. 79-80)

The idea here that nothing specifically stated or solemnly announced by God or His messengers is impossible. This conclusion is corroborated by Alexander Bruce:

² Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 1039.

³ Also see Malachi 3:1a and Matthew 3:3.

⁴ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 4:75, 79-80.

Commentators differ as to whether we should render: no word of God shall be inoperative, or no thing with God shall be impossible. ῥήμα may be rendered either *word* or *thing*. The reading *παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ (para tou theou: "with God")* seems to demand the former of the two translations.⁵

The final verse of the annunciation paragraph is Mary's expression of personal faith that she was divinely chosen to give birth to the biological life of the Messiah. In doing so she is made free from slavery to the sin nature and uses her freedom to place herself in slavery to the Lord.

Luke 1:38 - So Mary said, "Yes, I am a servant [**feminine singular of δούλη, *doulē*: slave woman**] of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

After Gabriel fully explains the divine assignment to Mary, she fully submits to it. Her first expression of submission is the exclamation **Ἰδοὺ (*Idou*): "Yes!"** She follows this with specifics, "I am a *doulē* of the Lord."

Doulē is the feminine form of *doulos* and likewise refers to a bondslave, in this case a bondwoman. Mary expresses her willingness to accept the divine assignment by placing herself into slavery to God and to carry out the duty of gestating the biological life of the Messiah.

There are some theologies that regard Mary as the "mother of God" because of her involvement in the virgin pregnancy that culminated in the physical birth of the impeccable Messiah. But the pregnancy was strictly biological life. No soul life was imputed in the womb therefore the true humanity of Jesus did not occur in the womb. Soul life is imputed immediately by God at physical birth. Therefore, the fetus of what became Jesus' biological life was imputed soul life at physical birth creating human life. Simultaneously with this the undiminished deity of the Second Person of the Trinity was inseparably united with the true humanity of Jesus to form the hypostatic union. The Son of God united with the Son of David resulting in the Messiah: **מָשִׁיחַ (*Mashiach*)** or Christ: **Χριστός (*Christos*)**.

⁵ Alexander Balman Bruce, "Luke" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of St. John*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 1:465.