

"The Odds of the Impossible" - Luke 1:26-56

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Luke 1:26-56 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, (27) to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. (28) And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" (29) But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. (30) Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. (31) "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. (32) "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. (33) "And He

will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (34) Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (35) And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (36) "Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. (37) "For with God nothing will be impossible." (38) Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (39) Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, (40) and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. (41) And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (42) Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! (43) "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44) "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. (45) "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." (46) And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, (47) And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. (48) For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. (49) For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. (50) And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. (51) He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. (52) He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. (53) He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. (54) He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, (55) As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever." (56)) And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

**“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
and shall call His name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14**

While we have all heard the story of the birth of Jesus, it has frankly become now for many of us nothing more than a tired Christmas story, replayed over and over come December every year. When in fact, it should represent not only the incredible coming of God in flesh...the incarnation of deity on earth, and thus the salvation of mankind, but also the accurate manifestation of hundreds of prophecies given for that event, over a period of hundreds of years. Right down to the last detail, we can read the Old Testament prophecies, and then turn and read their fulfillment on the pages of the New Testament. Prophecies that were written between 1450 BC and 430 BC. Manuscripts have been found to prove they were written at least 400 - 1000 years before Christ was born.

One would generally find it incredible to make accurate predictions on something that was 5 years away let alone 4-15 centuries, especially with that degree of detail and 100% accuracy. Conspiracy theories abound, but how would someone manipulate the fulfillment of such prophecies? It would also be impossible for someone to actually *plan* to fulfill these prophecies, not to mention the sheer number of them! They speak of timing, location and circumstances of birth. Who but God alone could plan such things? How could someone decide in what family to be born? How could they plan to be born in Bethlehem even though the family they chose lived in Galilee?

Dr. John Stoner, author of *Science Speaks*, looked at the probability that one man, Jesus Christ, could have fulfilled even 8 of the 300 prophecies that pertain to Him in the Bible. Remember that the time span between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the New Testament fulfillment is hundreds, even thousands of years.

Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment	Probability
Christ to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)	And Herod asked where Christ had been born ... they answered Bethlehem (Matt 2:4-6)	2.8×10^5 or 1 in 280,000
Forerunner of Christ (Malachi 3:1)	John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ (Mark 1:2-8)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
Christ to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zech 9:9)	Christ enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matt 21:4-11)	1×10^2 or 1 in 100
Christ to be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9)	Judas betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:21)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
Christ to be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12)	Judas sold out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matt 26:15)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
30 pieces of silver casted down and used to buy a potter's field (Zech 11:13)	30 pieces of silver used to buy a potter's field (Matt 27:3-10)	1×10^5 or 1 in 100,000
Although innocent, Christ kept silent when on trial (Isaiah 53:7)	Jesus kept silent when questioned (Mark 14:60-61)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
Christ crucified (Psalm 22:16)	Jesus was crucified (John 19:17, 18)	1×10^4 or 1 in 10,000

The question naturally arises... bearing all this in mind, what is the probability of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies, called the “principal of compound probability?” Stoner says in his book that the odds of *any* man in history fulfilling *eight* of the sixty most prominent prophecies fulfilled by Christ was 1 in 100 *quadrillion* (one hundred *quadrillion* looks like this: 100,000,000,000,000,000). Putting this into terms we can understand, Stoner revealed that 100 quadrillion silver dollar coins would be enough to cover the face of the *entire* state of Texas...the second largest state in the US, two feet deep . Thus the odds of any man fulfilling just eight of those prophecies is equal to a blindfolded man wandering through those silver dollars and happening to choose a specially marked silver dollar on the first try. If you think that is amazing, remember that Christ fulfilled *all* the prophecies, 300 plus, not just eight of them!

Noting again the time span between those Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment by Christ in the New Testament, they were either given to the prophets by God, or the prophets just took a lucky...a really. *really*, lucky ‘shot in the dark.’

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 that His name was to be Immanuel – “*God with us.*” Due to the fall in the garden, man could no longer get to Him, so God came to us. I wonder what the odds are of that happening?

Verse 37 of our text says "For with God nothing will be impossible." Can there be a greater verse? A greater promise? If this is true...then does such not dramatically change our lives...change our world? Is it not the individual who believes that...who is willing to bet the farm on that, despite the odds, that moves the world? When the world exercises force and strength, it brings in tanks and planes and armies. Such no doubt has in it the clarity that those bearing such weaponry means business. And yet the greatest coup in the history of man was executed by sending in a child. A *baby*. The truly original “Trojan Horse.” The angel told Mary “not to be afraid,” to which most of us would answer “*ya...sure...*” But again, if the story begins not with “once upon a time” but instead opens on the premise that “with God, nothing will be impossible,” then life is lived without fear, and without "impossible."

Often, even those who might tend to claim the standing of a ‘reborn christian’, will cast doubt on one scriptural element or another. They will say “*I am a believer, but I don’t think I believe in a 6 day creation...I mean, that’s not really possible, right? I think I believe that the bible was just speaking simplistically or in an allegory.*” Or “*come on...how could the Noah get all those animals together?*” Or, “*parting the sea? Literally? Come on...*” But if you start discounting those scriptural accounts...ones that Jesus Himself acknowledged as factual, then you best get out a fat sharp and black out Luke 1:37 too. But prepare yourself for the fall out. Because at that point one must consider therefore that God is *not* all powerful, and therefore we are all in trouble. That ‘slippery slope’ cascades into spiritual chaos personally and corporately! Because if he is *not* all powerful, then can we and He really call him God?

See, once a person crosses that line into this truth that “nothing is impossible for God”, then the horizon of life opens up before us and the possibilities are therefore endless. There is nothing that can’t happen at His hand. There is nothing that is hindered. For Mary, I have no doubt she stood in the category of the true believer. Though she did not understand...(how could she?) as often we do not either, *nothing was impossible*. But, like Mary, we need to be reminded once in awhile of that fact don’t we?

Perhaps that was one of the great reasons why God ‘sent ahead’ his prophecies, and then systemically fulfilled them one after another...so that the one who was really looking, would clearly see that “With God, nothing was

impossible.” And in that light, we become indestructible, undefeatable, and nothing is insurmountable. This is not a matter of “just believe!” Or “just have faith.” Or some other ‘mind-over-matter’ mantra that we tend to evoke within the greater Christian church today. It’s rather a matter of acknowledging *by evidence* that, against all odds, God has always done whatever he wanted and is not limited by anyone or anything, therefore I have nothing to fear, and can trust in Him implicitly.

That does not mean He will do what *YOU* want Him to do...that’s not faith either! FAITH is not whipping up an emotional frenzy of “God-will-do-what-I want-cuz-I-have-faith.” Faith is born on the wings of TRUST. I trust God is and always has been all powerful and limited by nothing because that is His history and proven character. Therefore I trust God loves me. Therefore I trust God has my back. Despite all the odds, He said He would, and He did, so I trust He WILL.

Jeremiah 32:17 “*Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.*”

So right out of the box we get Genesis 1:1 “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” (the word “**created**” in the original means created 'out of nothing'.) Either He did, or He didn’t. So effectively, verse one of all scripture brings us to our knees and it is there we essentially decide whether Jesus is Lord and Savior, if He is God incarnate, before we ever venture on through the pages, and books and letters that follow.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle believed that all things are moved by something. This is their “moving cause,” or the force that initiated motion in the first place. But if you chase that premise back, to the one who pushed the previous, and then the one who pushed that one, and then the one who pushed the one before that...we must sooner or later come face to face with the ultimate question. **Who pushed the first one?** To answer this, Aristotle proposed what is known as the “unmoved mover.” This entity or force would be the end of the line, so to speak. “*Since motion must be everlasting and must never fail, there must be some everlasting first mover, one or more than one.*” -*Aristotle’s Physics*. Aristotle did not view this as a leap of faith, but rather as a logical consistency. All things are moved by something. At the same time, it is impossible to have an infinite regress when considering the motion of finite things. The logical conclusion is that there must have been something to start the ball rolling. So while the world out there believes in the Big Bang, I would ask then, **who made the bang?**

If this is all an empirical fact, than the angel was not asking such an impossible thing as he said to Mary “don’t be afraid...” And God is not asking you the impossible either, when you hear His voice whisper those words to you. I mean, it looks crazy...it sounds crazy, and it smells crazy, and God is telling you “I got it.” How will it end? Like you want it to? Not necessarily. Rather like **He** wants it. “But that doesn’t seem fair!” If you are thinking that, doubt therefore your very standing in Christ, because that relinquishing all control and destiny to God IS Christianity! The realm where God decided your today and your tomorrow and your forever because when you said “I surrender” you turned your life over to Him and His control!

Mary's response to all of this was “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior...*” We can put on the religious cloak and parade through life, but the individual who truly *lives* in the light of “there is nothing impossible for God” naturally and supernaturally shines forth the magnitude of the Lord, and the joy of their spirit overflows. For these, the “sky's the limit...”