

The Fruit of The Womb
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Luke chapter 1 reports the divine promises, delivered by the angel Gabriel, of the impending births of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Both births were for God's purposes, fulfilling prophecies at a time chosen by God. Both depended on God's power. John's birth would be an answer to previous prayers (1:13) at a time when both his father, Zechariah, and his mother, Elizabeth, were old enough to have given up any expectation of natural conception (1:18). Jesus' birth would be even more remarkable, his mother being a virgin and the promised son being conceived by the power of God through the Holy Spirit (1:27, 34-35). The births were ordained by God to be six months apart, John's being the first (1:26, 36).

When Elizabeth became pregnant as promised, she stayed in seclusion for five months (1:24), pondering God's purposes, so there was no widespread knowledge of her pregnancy. Nevertheless, Mary learned of it because Gabriel told her. Luke reports that after Gabriel spoke to her, Mary got up and went "*with haste*" to visit her relative, Elizabeth (1:39), in the hill country of Judea. We don't know how many days it took for Mary to travel and greet Elizabeth, but it must have been only a matter of days, not weeks or months. We read that Mary stayed with Elizabeth "*about three months*" before returning home (1:56), and then "*the time came for Elizabeth to give birth*" (1:57), so Mary must have arrived while Elizabeth was still, as Gabriel observed, in her sixth month of pregnancy.

When Mary did arrive to spend the first three months of her pregnancy with her older (also pregnant) relative, Luke reports that Mary greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth "*heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb*" (1:41). Elizabeth at that moment was "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" (1:41). Her exclamation in verse 44 that upon hearing Mary's greeting, "*the baby in my womb leaped for joy*" is inspired not only by her perceptions but also by the Holy Spirit. Twice in this encounter (verses 41 and 44), we're told, matter-of-factly, that Elizabeth had a baby in her womb. We discern, too, that the baby was influenced by God's Holy Spirit (1:15) and was excitedly moving, indeed leaping with joy.

Three months before he was born, John the Baptist was a baby filled with the Holy Spirit and leaped for joy in the presence of the Lord. And by "*the Lord,*" Elizabeth clearly meant Jesus, in Mary's womb, referred to in verse 42 as "*the fruit of her womb.*" We have a six-month-old "fetus," that is, a baby, in his mother Elizabeth's womb, leaping for joy because of the presence of an "embryo" a few days old in Mary's womb. An "embryo" was a person, identified by Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, as "*my Lord*" (1:43). Mary was already, though only a few days pregnant, "*the mother of my Lord.*"

Elizabeth loudly exclaimed, "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*" (1:42). Scattered through the Bible are numerous references to children, singularly and plural, as "*the fruit of the womb*" (see Genesis 30:1-2 or Psalm 127:3-4). When Elizabeth blessed Mary and "*the fruit of your womb,*" she blessed both mother and child. The child was the days-old developing embryo that was a living human being, Jesus "*my Lord,*" who had been conceived in Mary by the power of the Most High through the Holy Spirit.

Like all of us who began in the womb and lived to be born, being ourselves "*the fruit of the womb,*" Jesus' human life began when his mother's egg cell was fertilized with male DNA, creating a new unique cell (a zygote) with "all of the genetic information of a new individual organism" (quotation from Wikipedia article, "Zygote"). The fruit of Mary's womb, just a tiny cluster of cells, already was and always will be

the individual named “Jesus” when he was born. He was already a unique human, made in the image of God, formed in his mother’s womb as we were in ours (see **Psalm 139:13-16**, **Jeremiah 1:5**, **Isaiah 44:24**, for example).

When Mary was about three months pregnant, she went back home, and shortly thereafter, Elizabeth gave birth to John. Soon afterward, John’s father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied (**Luke 1:67**). In that prophecy, Zechariah glorified God because he had “*visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David...*” (**1:68-69**). Zechariah wasn’t speaking of his infant son, John. This “*horn of salvation*” God raised up was “*in the house of ... David.*” John, like his father Zechariah, was of the house of Levi, not that of David. It was Jesus, the not yet born child of Mary, in his third month of development in his mother’s womb, who was described as the divinely upraised “*horn of salvation,*” glorified by Zechariah in inspired prophecy. The statement isn’t in the future tense. Rather, the not-yet-born child at that moment growing in Mary’s womb is that powerful fulfillment of prophetic promises, the Redeemer already sent by God.

In a world that largely ignores the unique individuality and intrinsic value of children in their mothers’ wombs, it is extremely important that Christians nurture a Biblical, godly world-view of life. We need to perceive that the fruit of the womb, beginning with the initial formation of a new individual at conception, is a person given life and purpose by God. We are meant to cherish the fruit of the womb, honoring God’s gift of life through procreation. Whether the world accepts it or not, Solomon rightly asserted that “*children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward*” (**Psalm 127:3**).