



December 2012 - *St. Joseph, Jesus' Earthly Father, Believed in the Miracle of the Virgin Birth*

In examining the question of miracles, some argue that the “laws of Nature” demonstrate from experience that miracles are a scientific impossibility. C.S. Lewis argues that those who believe in miracles are not denying the norms that God has placed in nature. However, just because one hasn’t observed a miracle, doesn’t mean that it is not possible. For as St. Joseph knew, a miracle by very definition is an exception to the rule. Lewis writes:

The idea that the progress of science has somehow altered this question is closely bound up with the idea that people ‘in olden times’ believed in [miracles] ‘because they didn’t know the laws of Nature.’ Thus you will hear people say, ‘The early Christians believed that Christ was the son of a virgin, but we know that this is a scientific impossibility.’ Such people seem to have an idea that belief in miracles arose at a period when men were so ignorant of the cause of nature that they did not perceive a miracle to be contrary to it. A moment’s thought shows this to be nonsense: and the story of the Virgin Birth is a particularly striking example. When St. Joseph discovered that his fiancée was going to have a baby, he not unnaturally decided to repudiate her. Why? Because he knew just as well as any modern gynaecologist that in the ordinary course of nature women do not have babies unless they have lain with men. No doubt the modern gynaecologist knows several things about birth and begetting which St. Joseph did not know. But those things do not concern the main point— that a virgin birth is contrary to the course of nature. And St. Joseph obviously knew *that*. In any sense in which it is true to say now, ‘The thing is scientifically impossible,’ he would have said the same: the thing always was, and was always known to be, impossible *unless* the regular processes of nature were, in this particular case, being over-ruled or supplemented by something from beyond nature. When St. Joseph finally accepted the view that his fiancée’s pregnancy was due not to unchastity but to a miracle, he accepted the miracle as something contrary to the known order of nature... as evidence of supernatural power... Nothing can seem extraordinary until you have discovered what is ordinary. Belief in miracles, far from depending on an ignorance of the laws of nature, is only possible in so far as those laws are known...

...the grounds for belief and disbelief are the same to-day as they were two thousand – or ten thousand – years ago. If St. Joseph had lacked faith to trust God or humility to perceive the holiness of his spouse, he could have disbelieved in the miraculous origin of her Son as easily as any modern man; and any modern man who believes in God can accept the miracle as easily as St. Joseph did...¹

This Christmas season is a time not just to “Believe,” but to trust God as St. Joseph did when he took the angel at his word and believed in the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus, who was to become the Savior of the world.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

MATTHEW 1:22-25 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), pp. 64–66.