

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Bible - Science- Conception

(Jerry Fite)

The battle between the Bible and Science has been intense for decades. The conflict really arises over interpretations of the Bible’s statements and theories of Science. If God is the author of the Bible and Science, harmony should exist between them both.

Science is focused upon gaining knowledge of the way things are and how things truly work in nature. Creation is here for us to explore and know. Alexander Campbell said, *“There was no residuary matter at the creation. There is nothing, therefore left out of science; hence the world, in its entirety, becomes a perfect science. We have in all science fundamental and general arrangements.”* This is not to say that God’s Spirit was depleted in creation (*Malachi 2:15*) or, God has no secret things reserved just for Him (*Deuteronomy 29:29*; but it is a testimony to God’s wisdom and efficiency. Also, what we can know from science is all before us to explore.

Science has revealed the intricate details of human embryology. The basic beginning of fer-

tilization is really a process. The sperm’s head penetrating and being received in the ovum; the ovum now containing 46 chromosomes; the formation of the pronuclei so the 23 chromosomes of the male can unite with the 23 chromosomes of the female; and the pairing up of these chromosomes creating a new entity distinguishable from the male sperm and female egg are all distinctive and knowable steps achieving fertilization.

The Bible uses the word “conceive” to point to such a beginning. The Greek word “*sul-lambano*”, translated “conceive” literally means “to receive or take together”. If we interpret the word to denote a precise moment of fertilization, we contradict science which reveals a process of fertilization.

The word, by definition, is broad enough to include such a process. Has there not been a “receiving together” when the sperm penetrates into the ovum? Is there not also a “receiving together” when the “pronuclei” have formed and the 46 chromo-

somes line up together? If we narrowly define fertilization to a “one moment in time” event, we not only contradict science, but we also place an unwarranted construction on the Biblical word “conceive”.

The word “conceive” is used in the Bible in yet a more inclusive sense. Rebekah conceived twins (*Genesis 25:21-24*). Science reveals that “twinning” takes place some 3 to 12 days following fertilization. The text is scientifically accurate! There was a beginning of pregnancy: Rebekah “conceived.” Next, “children struggled within her” and “twins were in her womb”. If we interpret the word “conceive” as denoting only the moment of fertilization we unnecessarily limit the word’s use in this text. The text says, Rebekah “conceived. And the children struggled together within her.” Conception here is not only pointing to a beginning, but includes those few days following fertilization when twinning occurs. True science and accurate interpretation of Scripture harmonize. May we acquire knowledge of both!