



## **A Contemplative, Biblical Analysis of Mary, Mother of Christ**

### **What did Mary really know?**

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## **A Contemplative, Biblical Analysis of Mary, Mother of Christ**

### **Lesson 3: What did Mary know through Holy Ghost exaltations?**

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This lesson we will examine the deep Scripture revelations captured in the Holy Ghost exaltations through Elisabeth, Mary, and Zacharias during the time of Elisabeth's and Mary's pregnancies. These vivid accounts of intense praise and revelation form a solid foundation in the belief of people that hears these words because it is spoken through them by God's Holy Spirit. It is God's truth fully expressed by three people that are fully enveloped in the supernatural events that have come into their lives through the power of God.

#### **Gabriel's Blessings**

Mary hears the blessings given to her by God first from Angel Gabriel in his initial greeting: "Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." (Luke 1:28) This greeting contains three specific ideas that are confusing to Mary, and she is "troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." (Luke 1:29). Think for a moment of what it would mean to you to be told that you are a favorite of God's, so much so, that He is with you as you live your daily life; remember, the Holy Spirit has not yet been sent to dwell in replacement for the Lord's ascension.

In Mary's world, the Jews had knowledge that the powerful and mighty LORD God's presence came to the first Temple through the Ark of the Covenant, in the presence of one purified priest and detailed sacrificial offerings being placed upon the altar. They were fully aware that the Holy of Holies within the Second Temple was without the presence of God,

because the Ark of the Covenant that contained His presence was lost in the destruction of the First Temple.

When Mary hears that she is favored by God, and He is with her, it must have shaken her understanding to great depths of confusion. The history of the Jews, and the construction, destruction, and reconstruction of the Temple of God must have rushed through her mind, as she tries to make sense of how God can be with her, and how He can think she is worthy of His attention. She is not a priest, as her cousin's husband, and completely unqualified to offer gifts to God in the Temple system. While the supernatural presence of Angel Gabriel most certainly confirms to her that this is an extraordinary event, the greeting he speaks troubles her historical knowledge of God. And when Gabriel tells Mary that she is "blessed" (Genesis 1:28) among women, and she does not laugh at the apparent ridiculousness of a young maiden gaining the powerful LORD God's attention, it is a credit to her pondering nature that doesn't express emotion to others until she thinks upon things. That pondering nature must be one of the endearing and unique traits that God notices in Mary; it certainly allows us to know her more intimately through this record of this special nature as we witness it throughout the accounts of her life in Scripture.

### **Cousin Elisabeth's Blessings**

Angel Gabriel announces that the Holy Ghost will come upon her and JESUS will be conceived, and she humbly accepts her unique role in history by declaring to be the "handmaid of the Lord" as she offers her body to be used as a vessel by Him. When she goes to her Cousin Elisabeth's house following the conception of Jesus in her womb, she is greeted by Elisabeth,

who at first hearing Mary's voice, felt her babe leap, and the Holy Ghost fill her. With a loud voice Elisabeth shouts, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." The word of her cousin duplicate the words of Gabriel in her status among women and the blessing to Jesus in her womb a new blessing that can only be bestowed after the babe is placed there. How loud her cousin's voice must have seemed to both Mary and the baby John that leaped in Elisabeth's womb, as she recognized the blessed state that Mary was given by God.<sup>1</sup>

Then Elisabeth adds another blessing that confirms to Mary that her vision and conversation with Angel Gabriel is the truth of God: "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." That is all it took; Mary felt the surge of the Holy Ghost move from Elisabeth to her, and she sings the most magnificent, beautiful praise song that emanates from deep within her, moved by her special and unique connection to God. God is with her, the Lord is in her belly, and the Holy Ghost is surging her emotions past the place of pondering, to the uncontrollable rejoicing of recognizing and experiencing the presence of God.

### **The Magnificat Song of Mary**

"My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47). This Song (Canticle) of Mary is often called the Magnificat because of the word (my soul) "magnifies" at the beginning of the song; the word Magnificat is the Latin version of the song's text. This song parallels Psalms 112 and 117 with clear Messianic reflections and begins the revelations of Holy Ghost expression of the nature of the Messiah that will be fully shared at

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<sup>1</sup> Nolland, 75.

the birth of John, through the testimony of the Holy Ghost through Zacharias, as Christ's path is prepared.<sup>2</sup> Some mistakenly claim that Mary's song of praise is a derivative of Hannah's recorded in 1 Samuel 1.<sup>3</sup> However, an examination of the revelations contained within Mary's song shows it to be original, purposeful, and moving, with the words formed perfectly by the Holy Ghost.

Mary immediately exclaims that her soul feels the connection with the Lord, and it is increased with His presence. Her spirit soars in uncontrollable rejoicing in "God my Saviour." This significant declaration shows that Mary is beginning to understand the purpose of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, son of Mary growing inside her womb. It is her Saviour, and the Saviour to all those that will call Him their Lord.

Mary makes effort to reconcile her status as a handmaiden with the surety of knowledge that all generations will call her blessed (Luke 1:47). It is easily discerned that her confidence in that blessing by all generations is sure, though, she can hardly balance that faith with the knowledge of who she is in the important works of God (Luke 1:48). She states her understanding of the great things God has done with His Power, and proclaims His holiness with passion (Luke 1:49).

Mary speaks in her passionate song of praise of God's mercy towards those that fear Him, throughout the generations past and to come (Luke 1:50). She knows God's omnipotent powerful arm is used to scatter the proud and have them follow after their imaginations that

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvester Joseph Hunter, *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1896), 579.

<sup>3</sup> Lange, 292.

fester deep inside them because of their haughty ways (Luke 1:51). She understands that God unseats the powerful leaders, and raises up those of poor spirit; her personal experience confirms this concept fully (Luke 1:52).

One day in the future, her son will teach the things of God to those who are able to hear

His Words:

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.  
Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.  
Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.  
Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.  
Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.  
Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.  
Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.  
Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:3-12)

The full development of blessings that Christ teaches begins with the simple blessings expressed by Mary while He is still in her womb. As the Holy Ghost surges through his mother, you can't help but wonder if God is teaching His Son the beginning principles of his ministry thirty years later. Mary sings of the food of God satisfying the hungry, while the worldly rich starve. She remembers Israel, and the mercy of God given to His Chosen People when they did not deserve even His notice (Luke 1:54). She concludes with remembrance of Father Abraham and the connection she and her son and all the people who come to God through Him (Luke 1:55). It is the beginning of new blessings, the beginning of new connections, and the beginning

of a new ministry growing within her womb, stirs with the Spirit of God and surges with the words of praise for the Almighty.

Mary has come quite far in her understanding of God's movement from the time of Gabriel's salutation causing her to be troubled, to this time, when she is overflowing with the advanced knowledge given to her by God. Mary knows more and more of her son's destiny, because she stands in the path of the delivery of new teachings to her babe in the womb and when they come, she cannot help but sing praises to God.

### **Zacharias SPEAKS!**

Zacharias is mute until the moment his son was circumcised, and the name John was given to his miraculous baby that was born to make the path straight for the Lord. And then God loosens his tongue, the Holy Ghost surges through Him, and the words he sings are so moving, so powerful, that they spread throughout Judea. The Christ child is not yet born, when John's ministry is revealed to all with an ear to hear. It is the full revelation of the coming works of John preparing for the coming works of Christ.

The song of Zacharias stirs these revelations of God into a depth of teaching that is unequalled in powerful poetic expression; it cannot be doubted that the origin of these words come from the Holy Ghost moving in Zacharias, guiding his speech, and then surging through the receivers of these blessed teachings of God. It most certainly is a Pentecostal-like moment of amazing revelation that whooshes through the crowd of onlookers long before the Church in Acts witnesses the flame and wind of the Holy Spirit.

Zacharias announces the redemption and salvation of the people is at hand; the Messiah prophesized by holy prophets of old is entering their world (Luke 1:67). He announces that it is his son John that will be called the prophet of the Highest, and go in front of the Lord to prepare his ways (Luke 1:76). And he sings typological wonders of hidden mysteries of the coming of the Lord with a spiritual depth that might go unseen initially, but be confirmed as the presence of Christ becomes more known. It is these spiritual depths that reveal the details of Christ's ministry of salvation and remission of sins (Luke 1:77), and gives Mary, the onlookers, and those hearing of Zacharias' song later a solid foundation of the basic roles and goals of God that the Messiah will reflect. It adds to the declaration of blessing earlier sung by Mary, as his words reveal the salvation of the Lord has arrived in their lifetime, as promised by the fathers of old that originates from the holy covenant of God shared with Abraham.

Recall the Messianic expectations reflected in the titles of Jesus Christ that we studied in the first lesson. At the conclusion of the blessings and announcements of the coming Lord through Elisabeth, Mary, and Zacharias, knowledge of the roles and goals of the Messiah is narrowed down considerably. The Holy Ghost begins to prepare a path for Christ through baby John, before John can even speak. It is at John's baptism that the knowledge of the nature of the Messiah is imparted to God's people and begins to pave the path that adult John will one day lay straight for the Lord.

### **Bonus Lesson: Evangelical and Catholic beliefs contrasted**

We will take a step away from our biblical study of the character of Mary to examine the ideas concerning Mary that Evangelicals and Catholics agree upon, with a brief discussion also



on the disagreements. This lesson will equip you with good solid answers to the difficult questions about Mary as they come to you to explain your Protestant belief.

### Agreement

1. Historicity of virginal conception of Jesus – Orthodox Christians of all times has understood that the virginity of Mary is connected with the belief that Jesus is both the Son of God and the son of Mary.<sup>4</sup> Without belief in her virginity, the father of Christ can be challenged; thankfully, it is not an often contested belief, because of the apostolic witness through Scripture. Some Jews and a few extremely liberal Protestants sometimes try to make a case for a “young maiden” rather than “virgin” interpretation. But, mainstream Protestants and devout Catholics agree on the virginity of Mary before the birth of Christ.

2. Mary is blessed mother of Jesus Christ – The Catholic concept of “Mother of God” is not shared by Protestants.<sup>5</sup> It is a critical matter of faith, especially to counter the heresy of Nestorius and others who attempt to divide human and divine natures of Christ, to firmly state the connection of human Mary faithfully containing the Son of God within her womb for a time.<sup>6</sup> However, Protestants believe that Mary is to be known as the mother that gives human nature to Jesus, the LORD God the father that reflects the Divine nature in His only begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost as the person effecting conception. While Christ’s human and divine

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<sup>4</sup> "Do Whatever He Tells You: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian Faith and Life: A Statement of Evangelicals and Catholics Together," *First Things*, no. 197 (2009): 50.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

nature cannot be separated, and the title given to Mary as Mother of God appropriate because of the nature of Christ, care must be taken in these times to succinctly state the relationship.<sup>7</sup> Catholics falsely claim that Mary IS the mother of GOD with emphasis on Mary, while Protestants declare Mary the mother of Jesus with emphasis on Christ; Catholics seem to take this belief one step too far. Regardless, both Catholics and Protestants agree that Mary is blessed by God to be chosen as His faithful handmaiden.

3. There is a place for a biblical honor of Mary – The handmaid of the Lord is blessed by God to be chosen as mother to Christ, and must be honored for the unique position of faith that gives birth to our Savior. Honor towards her, in the sense of gratefulness toward her faithful accomplishment of her motherhood, should result in blessings attached to Mary, a position often neglected but obligated by God that all Christians should hold. However, if that honor extends to a devotion to Mary that encourages a cult-like status, or replaces some of the worship of the Lord with worship toward her, then it is a Catholic practice gone awry, and not shared by Protestants.

### Disagreement

1. Perpetual Virginity – It is biblically sound to declare Mary a virgin before the conception and birth of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). However, many Catholics maintain that Mary remains perpetually a virgin, and that this belief is neither required nor forbidden by Scripture alone.<sup>8</sup> The existence of the four brothers of Christ, James, Joseph,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 56.

Simon, and Judas (Matthew 13:55-56), and sisters originating from the union of Mary and Joseph, and in natural speech, the half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus, prohibits the declaration that Mary is a virgin forever.

2. Immaculate Conception – This term often confuses Protestants; they think it is speaking of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ to his mother Mary. However, immaculate conception speaks of the doctrine that many Catholics hold that Mary is preserved from original sin from the moment she was conceived in her mother's womb by natural copulation between her parents. This idea is based upon Mary being "full of grace" (Luke 1:28), a indication, they think, to her favored status by God initiated in her conception.

This is an unbiblical notion and an unnecessary teaching about Mary. Through our own study, we have seen that God overshadows Mary with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35), which sanctifies and prepares her to receive the Lord's presence. God did not make Mary exempt from original sin at her conception; His Holy Ghost is quite capable of cleansing the insides of whomever He chooses to occupy. With the supernatural overshadow of the LORD God upon Mary, there would have been an immediate cleansing of her sins, and she would have been in the most holy state to receive the Lord's presence in her womb.

3. Bodily Assumption - The false belief in the Immaculate Conception leads to the unproven belief that Mary was assumed in Heaven and did not die, in a manner that resembles Enoch and Elijah.<sup>9</sup> This is based upon Romans 6:23, which states "the wages of sin is death;" thus, the reasoning becomes that since Mary was without sin, she had no reason to die. But,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

since it is only Christ alone who rises again after death, an explanation had to be formed for Mary's entrance into Heaven. Tradition of Bodily Assumption is born, and propagated by Pope Pius XII through this unnecessary dogma.

#### 4. Invocation of Mary as an intercessory role in salvation and answered prayers –

Catholics believe that the Lord has given Mary special powers of invocation, intercession, or mediation, that plays an important redemptive role as a mediator between a sinner and her son.<sup>10</sup> This is unbiblical belief that replaces the doctrine of the salvation through Jesus Christ with an alternate focus upon His mother with adoration and veneration.

The Bible does not say whether departed believers in the Lord can hear or answer words prayed to them. Further, Protestants believe that the cross finishes the work of Christ, and that believers can boldly approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). Protestants do not pray to Mary or saints, in their worship or personal devotions to avoid assuming an idolatrous posture that is often seen in Catholic worship.<sup>11</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The revelation of Mary through God's Word magnifies her special nature that pleases God so much, that He chooses her to be the mother of the Son of God. There is no need to make Mary a co-god with the false teachings of perpetual virginity, Immaculate Conception, bodily assumption, invocation of Mary, adoration and veneration, or tasking her with an intercessory role. God did not choose a goddess to bear the Son of God. He chose a young virgin girl who

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

ponders when facing spiritual things she does not fully understand, and trusts that whether she understands or not, God is good and faithful, and she has nothing to fear; the Son of God comes to redeem her and us from original sin. We should think of her with honor and blessings for her faithful carrying of our Lord in our womb that brings salvation to sinners and grants them eternal life through belief in the Son of God.

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