



A Contemplative, Biblical Analysis of Mary, Mother of Christ

What did Mary really know?

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Lesson 5: What did Mary really know from her family relationships, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord, His Ascension, and the Holy Ghost?

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By the time that Jesus Christ's ministry begins, Mary has a pretty good idea that her son had some very specific duties to accomplish for God, and his effort is going to bring salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles. She has been warned by Simeon that there will one day come to her soul a deep sorrow; she senses this is not going to be an easy journey with her son. But it is a journey that she bravely makes, and we catch glances of her throughout Christ's ministry, crucifixion, and after His Resurrection. This lesson will examine the things we are able to know about Mary that will reveal what she knows during the time Christ is actively doing His Father's business.

Mary's Discipleship

In fact, it is Mary that initiates Jesus' miracle ministry at the marriage feast of Cana; it seems righteous and planned that the blessed mother of Jesus Christ gets to be the one that starts the journey that will one day save Believers. It is well-earned; she is obedient fully to God's will.

Mary learns that a wedding celebration that she was attending in Cana of Galilee had run out of wine. She goes to her son, and informs him that the wine is out, and He replies "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." (John 2:4) Apparently, his mother disagreed, and instructed the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." (John 2:5) Mother Mary has been moved by God through His Holy Spirit and Angel Gabriel many times

in her life and has received numerous prophecies that indicate it is her son that is the Messiah. There should be no doubt that God gave Mary the singular honor of initiating the first miracle accomplished by Christ at the start of His ministry. There should also be no doubt that God wanted to begin Christ's ministry with the typological significance of supernatural change of water to wine. The water of God's grace surges through Christ, as the blood of the grapes changes to wine through His power, and creating shadows of the last Passover celebrated by Jesus, and his connection of the wine to his shed blood (Matthew 26:27-29).

And so His ministry begins (John 2:1-11). He instructs the servants to fill the waterpots with water, and then draw out of them the wine, and take it to the governor of the feast for tasting. They do as Christ instructs, and watch as the governor samples the wine changed from water. Not only is the wine fully developed, but it is the best that wine can be. This act of changing water into wine manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him (John 2:11). Mary's pride that her son has reached the place God intends and maybe a bit of relief that she has done her duty of raising Jesus well must have stirred her emotions, as she watches her Son's miracles unfold.

Capernaum

Mary goes with Christ, his disciples and his brethren to Capernaum during the Passover celebration (John 2:12). When they arrive, they find that there are money-making opportunities that are being exploited in the temple. Christ carefully makes a scourge of small cords, and drives them all out of the temple with his whip; "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

Then, the Jews ask Christ a question of his actions; His answer reveals a future event that will play the utmost importance in every Believer's life from here to eternity: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:18) Once again, Mary hears future prophesy, this time from her Son's own lips; Scripture does not have to add the bit about her pondering, because we know Mary well enough by now to know that is exactly what she does. The second ministry act of the Son of God is not a miracle ministry but a judgment ministry. The unfolding character of Christ's ministry, with its numerous natures required by God, shows those who are with Him that their future journey with Him will be dramatic and unpredictable, as the New Testament of Christ delivers salvation to sinners.

A witness from afar

Mary is not in the inner circle of Christ's ministry. Often, we see her standing on the outskirts watching from afar, as the Son of God ministers the Word. But, she is not a constant presence, as evidenced by the questioning about being the carpenter's son and his mother Mary in Matthew 13:53-58. Jesus replies, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house;" and he did not many works there because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6). This exchange not only explains why Mary does not participate fully in Christ's ministry because He often is away in other locations, but also captures the common reputation that Mary holds in her community; they certainly did not think her to be a goddess, but just Mary, wife of carpenter Joseph, and mother to Jesus, James, Joses, Simon, and Judas, and her girls.

One time, while Jesus is talking to the people, Mary and his brothers stand on the outskirts of the crowd, and desire to speak with him. Jesus tells them, "Who is my mother?"

And who are my brethren?" Then he stretches his hands towards his disciples and says, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:46-50). This exchange is often noted among Bible scholars to reflect different ideas, according to the point they are making. Some mention his harsh rejection of his mother, and other say the harshness is projected toward the people and meant to be a lesson in how to follow Christ. But for our purposes in the examination of the character of Mary, it reveals a deep message from the Son of God to her. He reminds Mary through these words that He is no longer her son, but rather, her Lord, and that transition must be made if she is to do the will of God in heaven. Mary is a "disciple of Christ first, before she was even his mother, for had she not believed, she would not have conceived."¹

Mary's Heartbreak and Joy

Christ's Crucifixion

How do we examine the character through the sorrowful eyes of Mary as she watches her naked son hanging in the deepest agony upon the cross? Even contemplating that heartbreaking moment from the perspective of Mary seems as if we are looking upon her own nakedness, and we want to look away.

Followers of Jesus Christ feel experience His passion and often have bipolar responses to His crucifixion. On one hand, our Lord suffers terribly, feeling every pain of original sin as He offers His life to redeem ours. This complicates our emotions, with gratefulness mixed with sadness; then as we celebrate His Resurrection which promises us eternal life, we jump for joy

¹ Timothy George, "The Blessed Evangelical Mary: Why We Shouldn't Ignore Her Any Longer," *Christianity Today* 47, no. 12 (2003): 37.

and praise God for His eternal blessings and graces, that have given us salvation through His Son.

But, Mary is not experiencing the end of the story. The baby she held to her breast, the supernatural teachings that both she and he receive from God, his childhood focus on doing God's will, his compassion and obedience shared with his mother; when she is in his presence, she feels the presence of God. Moments away from His death, Jesus speaks his first words from the cross to the woman who first committed unconditional love to him: "Behold your Mother!" In his last moments of life, Jesus remembers to care for His mother that remains obedient to God, even in her sorrow (John 19:25-27). How profane it is that these memories of supernatural power that have been in her presence for thirty-two years, now finds him hanging upon a cross naked and bleeding and crying out to God, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). She sees and hears and feels the passion of her Lord; she must have surely collapsed in grief and pain and doubt, as her baby boy and her promised Savior dies exposed and seemingly without God.

Christ's Resurrection

Mary ponders her entire life; every bit of information that God has given her directly, through the Holy Spirit, the Angel Gabriel, her husband and kin, and through her Lord Jesus Christ, is filed away in her mind and heart. She remembers the conversation they have together at the wedding in Cana, when He spoke of His "hour," which is yet His future; is this the time of God fully expressed, or the wickedness of man that hung her baby upon the cross?² So many

² John M. Howard, "The Significance of Minor Characters in the Gospel of John," *Bibliotheca sacra* 163, no. 649 (2006): 66.

comparisons to that first ministry of Christ and then His crucifixion give her thought in those three darkened days that she is without Him. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus alters His relationship with His mother and transfers His obedience to God, and while at His crucifixion, He alters His relationship to her by transferring her motherhood reliance to His beloved disciple.³ Jesus referred to the future as His “hour” at Cana, and He fulfills His “hour” at Golgotha.⁴ Jesus’ glory is first manifested at the wedding, and the Father’s glory will soon be manifested in three days.

PRAISE GOD HE IS RISEN!

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. (Luke 24:1-53)

³ Ibid., 69.

⁴ Ibid.

The Lord Jesus Christ rises from the grave on the third day. He resurrects and He lives forever more. He dies for sinners and becomes their Redeemer through the promise of salvation given by God.

Though only a few names are listed that see Him in those forty days, it should be expected that every disciple of Christ hears the news when the supernatural event of such magnitude, that the Lord Jesus Christ, their Savior, rises from the grave into a glorified, resurrected body. Though His mother Mary is not mentioned in these accounts, we know in our hearts and minds that she is one of the first that is told He has risen. What uncontained joy she must have felt when she first heard the Word that her Lord and Savior has risen, and all of the ponderings she has filed away began to fully reveal the promises made to her by God.

Jesus taken up to Heaven after forty days

The Lord Jesus Christ gathers all of the people that have seen his infallible proof of eternal existence for forty days after He is risen and teaches them the things of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-9). He instructs them to not leave Jerusalem until the Holy Ghost comes to them. Jesus speaks His promise of the Holy Ghost, and in the presence of the gathered congregation of His followers, He is taken up and received into a cloud out of their sight. As they are looking to the sky, two men in white apparel appear and proclaim that the “same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts

1:10-11). Behold, eternal life through promised salvation is assured, with a promise of Christ's return in the future.

They return to Jerusalem as Jesus has instructed, and go to an upper room, where the disciples, Mary, the brethren, and the women are in one accord in prayer and supplication. The room is one they are accustomed to meeting within, and might be the same one that is used to celebrate the Passover, but it is not identified as such. The upstairs room shields the occupants from outside interference, making it the perfect place to pray.⁵

Mary hears Peter preach about the coming Holy Ghost, and the full revelation of her son's life and purpose explained as Peter instructed to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." We can be confident, because we know Mary so well by now, that she too is baptized in the Holy Ghost, because Mary is just that way. When God is in her presence, she clings to Him with great faith and does exactly what He says with a trust unequal to any other; that is why He chooses her as the blessed mother of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Mary ponders. She has a love for God, a faith in His Providence, and a conviction that the Son she bore for Him is Her Savior. She is the first disciple of Christ, and the witness to His continuing ministry through the Holy Spirit following His Resurrection and Crucifixion. In final analysis, it is not about her, but God. That is Mary's pondering focus always. Her commitment to God and trust in Him brings His favor to bear upon her, and as a result, she is

⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, and William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 17 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 59.

known by all faithful Christians as Mary, mother of Christ, and blessed above all women.

Thanks be to God for her faith.

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