

Mary The Physical Mother Of Jesus

This presentation is a study of the character of Mary the mother of Jesus the Christ.

Why is a study of Mary important?

1 Roman Catholics call Mary the “Mother of God” and even pray to her as an intermediate between them and God.

Quote from Lesson 18 Catholic Enquiry Centre Correspondence Course:-

“How to pray to Mary:- We pray to her because we know her prayers are most powerful with God.”

This assumption is based on the incident of the wedding in Cana and John’s account of the conversation between Jesus and His mother Mary.

John 2:1-8 [NIV] *“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so,”*

Quotation from Lesson 18:-

“This was the first miracle He [Jesus] performed. And He worked this miracle before its time, at the request of His mother. Everything our Lord did has significance, the significance of this miracle was surely to show us how powerful are the prayers of His mother with Him.”

Suggested prayers to Mary. Quotation from Lesson 18:-

“Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.”

“O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

2 We need to know how to respond to this teaching of Catholic Church.

We need to know why such teaching is wrong.

Some Protestants have overreacted and shown little or no respect for Mary at all.

Is this reaction justified?

3 We need to see exactly what is the correct Biblical, spiritual and theological understanding of Mary the mother of Jesus.

4 We must never forget the importance of the virgin birth of Christ but we need to see how the worship of Mary developed in church history.

5 We need to know what to believe and only a careful review of scriptures will tell us.

1 Peter 3:15 [NIV] *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”*

The prophesied birth of Jesus

Genesis 3:15 [NIV] *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

This statement [prophecy] was directed towards the serpent [Satan] and the reference to “hers” is to the woman Eve, who had sinned.

The atonement for sin which had been planned before creation was put in place by God directly after sin entered into society.

Isaiah 7:14 [NIV] *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”*

Three important things need to be noted in this prophecy.

- a) A virgin will become pregnant, the actual Hebrew translated “*virgin*” is “*almah*” literally meaning “*maiden*” or “*young woman*”, but a young woman was assumed to be a virgin in those days.
- b) The child would be a son, male.
- c) He would be named “*Immanuel*” which means “*God with us*”.

Isaiah 9:6 [NIV] *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

More details are given in this prophecy of the same event.

- a) Child would be born, a natural birth.
- b) The child was a gift to humanity.
- c) He would be a ruler.
- d) He would have supreme wisdom.
- e) He would be God, inspite of a natural physical birth. Therefore both man and God.
- f) He would be eternal “*everlasting Father*” – one who inhabits eternity. This underlines the paradox of the birth, by giving such a title to a child yet to be born!

“*Father*” signifies the paternal benevolence of the perfect Ruler over a people whom He loves as His own children.

- g) “*Peace*” in Hebrew implies prosperity as well as tranquility.

“*Prince*” an indication that He will be Davidinic as is assured in:

Isaiah 11:1-5 [NIV] *“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD, and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions*

for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”

The New Testament fulfilment of these prophecies.

From Joseph’s perspective

Matthew 1:18-25 [NIV] *“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”, which means, “God with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”*

- a) Mary was pledged to marry Joseph. This is much stronger bond than today’s engagement, for there was no turning back.
- b) Joseph and Mary had not slept together, so Mary was still a virgin, to have lost her virginity before the actual marriage would have been unthinkable in that day’s society.
- c) Mary became physically pregnant by the Holy Spirit and presumably Mary told Joseph what had happened.

Joseph was apparently not happy to hear this news, Joseph had a good reputation and respected Mary’s reputation and did not want to expose her to public disgrace.

Joseph considered breaking off the engagement and hiding the fact that Mary was pregnant, but decided against this after he was visited by God’s angel.

The message the angel brought vindicated Mary in Joseph’s eyes, he realised what had happened was totally God’s doing.

The unsung hero of Christ’s birth is Joseph

- a) He submitted to the stigma of being accused of fathering a child out of wedlock.
- b) Although married to Mary Joseph had no sexual relationships with her until after the birth of Jesus.
- c) Joseph then had his own children by his wife Mary.

Matthew 13:53-56 [NIV] *“When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”*

- d) Joseph’s life would never be the same again.

John 6 :42 [NIV] *“They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”*

Joseph was often set centre stage with Jesus even if he did not desire such exposure.

The birth of Jesus from Mary's perspective

Luke 1:26 [NIV] *“In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,”*

Gabriel was sent by God to visit Mary. Gabriel in the Bible appears to be the highest ranking messenger angel of God. This indicates the magnitude of this event.

Luke 1:27 [NIV] *“to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.”*

Mary was a virgin engaged to Joseph, a descendent of King David.

Luke 1:28 [NIV] *“The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.”*

Mary was highly favoured by God and the Holy Spirit was already guiding her life.

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

A similar relationship is offered to us, the Holy Spirit with us but can also be a special presence in us and such a union can give birth to a new [born again] life that is God-centred.

Luke 1:29-30 [NIV] *“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God.”*

Mary could not grasp what was happening and was frightened.

Luke 1:31-33 [NIV] *“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”*

Mary was then told the purpose of the visit.

Luke 1:34 [NIV] *“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”*

Mary was bewildered, what thoughts must have been racing through her mind. How, why, what about Joseph?

Luke 1:35 [NIV] *“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

The Holy Spirit would bring about this miracle.

Luke 1:37 [NIV] *“For nothing is impossible with God.”*

Mary was told the child would be male and called the Son of God. Nothing is impossible for God to do.

What relief and calm must have enfolded Mary with that promise of God being totally in charge of the events about to involve her personally.

Luke 1:38 [NIV] *“I am the Lord's servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.”*

The highest quality of Mary's character then came to the fore, her submissiveness to her Creator.

Immediately Mary consented to God's Will in her life she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. The special messenger of God then left her.

Luke 1:39-40 [NIV] *“At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.”*

The natural response of Mary was to share all this with her close friend.

Luke 1:41 [NIV] *“When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

John the Baptist yet unborn responded to the presence of the same Holy Spirit in Mary, Elizabeth and the unborn Jesus.

Luke 1:42-45 [NIV] *“In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”*

Joy, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, pervaded the whole meeting and Elizabeth marvelled at Mary's submission to the words of God's messenger. Don't overlook the fact about Mary that is revealed in this passage of scripture.

Mary had to believe God's Word before the Holy Spirit could bring about the pregnancy that would result in the birth of Jesus!

Just like the rest of us Mary had to be justified by faith in what God has promised.

Before the special presence of the Holy Spirit can enter into us and create in us a new being we have to be justified [made right with God – cleansed] by faith in God's Words of promise, and be clothed with God's righteousness to replace our own self-righteousness which is likened to filthy rags [**Isaiah 64:6**].

Luke 1:46-55 [NIV] *“And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”*

Mary then praised God and was inspired to prophecy. Mary saw that she would be honoured by people in future because she had been chosen by God to be the physical mother of Jesus. The word translated “blessed” means to be well spoken of, and to have an inner joy. This is a “fruit” of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **This scripture implies an anointing of the Holy Spirit and nothing more.**

The rise and development of the worship of Mary

The denial of virgin birth

Cerinthus [late first century]

Preached that Jesus was not born of a virgin but just the son of Joseph and Mary. Jesus was superior in wisdom, justice and prudence. “Christ” descended on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove then flew back at the end of Jesus’ preaching ministry to leave him to suffer alone.

Ebionites

They believe that Jesus fulfilled the Jewish law and God chose Him to be Messiah, but that He was only son of Joseph and Mary, denying the virgin birth.

Gnosticism

Denied the virgin birth, while stressing the deity of Christ denied that Jesus as a man in the flesh was the Christ.

The Theotokos Controversy

Cyril Bishop of Alexandria [412-444]

He called Mary Theotokos [God-bearer]

Cyril maintained that God the Word, who is eternally begotten or born of God the Father, was in time born of the Virgin Mary as a man.

Therefore Mary was Theotokos because the man Jesus born of her was God.

In spite of objection from others in the church Cyril’s idea prevailed.

Although Theotokos literally means “*God-bearer*” it became known in Latin and subsequently in English as Mother of God.

The immaculate conception

Duns Scotus [1265-1307] was the first major advocate of Mary’s immaculate conception.

The idea that Mary was conceived without any sin, that she was pure and sinless from the moment of her conception.

The basis for this belief is:

Luke 1:28 [Catholic Bible Translation] “*And the angel being come in, and said unto her [Mary]: hail, full of grace the Lord is with you...*”

The word translated “*full of grace*” is “*charitōō*” [khar-ee-to-o] from the root “*charis*” meaning grace – undeserved special honour or benefit received from on high.

To consider that Mary was without sin even before being born is to reject many scriptures that show all have sinned.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*”

1 John 1:8 [NIV] “*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*”

The Duns Scotus idea opened up to the concept that Mary did not need redemption.

This concept was defined as dogma in 1854 by Pope Pius IX and reaffirmed by Vatican II [1962-65].

The veneration of Mary

Irenaeus [died 200 A.D.] suggested that Mary was the Second Eve. *“The knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosened by the obedience of Mary.”*

Tertullian [c. 200 A.D.] asserted her perpetual virginity!

How is this possible with such scriptures as:

Matthew 13:55-56 [NIV] *“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”*

With the rise of monasticism the Virgin Mary became the ideal and she became foremost among all the saints.

At Vatican II some wanted Mary to be defined as *“co-redemptrix”* – the one who, together with Jesus Christ, redeemed the world. The argument was that her consent was needed for the incarnation to take place. So Mary co-operated actively in the work of human salvation. Mary gave life to the world. *“Death through Eve, life through Mary.”*

Mary was united with Jesus in suffering as He died on the cross.

Mary is the mediatrix, who mediates between us and God!

1 Timothy 2:5 [NIV] *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”*

The Assumption

Quotation C.E.C. Course No. 18

“It is Catholic teaching that when the term of her natural life was ended Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. We hold that this is true because she was entirely free from sin, and because Christ would not allow His mother to suffer the indignity of corruption when there is no reason for it. Death and corruption is the consequence of original sin.”

Romans 5:12 *“By one man sin entered into this world and by sin death.”*

[The last part of this verse is omitted]

“For that all have sinned.”

“As Mary was free from sin there was strictly speaking no reason why she should die. Some have thought she did not die but passed straight to God. Although the more general opinion is that she died in order to be the more like her divine Son who died for us on the cross.”

[The doctrine of the Assumption was made dogma on 1st November 1950]

“But no Christian teacher ever went so far as to say that her body corrupted in the tomb. It is Catholic teaching that she is now already as we hope we shall one day be, body and soul glorified in heaven. Those then in short are the great titles of Mary. She is the Mother of God, ever a virgin, conceived immaculate, free from all sin, assumed into heaven.”

Proper respect for Mary

To call Mary the Mother of God is unnecessarily inviting the worship of her that followed in the Roman Catholic church. Such a title implies Mary is eternal and gave birth to the God who made us all.

We are none the less required to give Mary due honour as we should other people whom God has chosen in the past to do great works through.

Luke 1:48 [NIV] *“From now on all generations will call be blessed.”*

Mary did in a sense truly restore dignity to womanhood. This is implied in:

1 Timothy 2:13-15 [NIV] *“For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”*

The word translated “saved” means “restored”. Mary did this in giving birth to the man Jesus the Son of God.

Mary’s suffering and self-denial were very deep and significant.

Luke 2:34-35 [NIV] *“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”*

This prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled when Jesus died.

John 19:25 [NIV] *“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”*

Mary was there to see her son suffer.

Luke 2:51 [NIV] *“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.”*

Mary humbly kept secret a thousand things most people would have boastfully revealed about Jesus.

Mary’s humble submission and loyalty to her Creator God will receive a wonderful reward in the future.

What I’m sure will grieve her will be the way some have venerated her and even prayed to her.