



MARY: AT THE BIRTH OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Old Testament the Lord spoke to His people through the prophets. Malachi was used to communicate God's final prophecy¹ of the Old Testament. This prophecy was followed by four hundred years of silence, where there were no messages from God to direct His people. When these years were past, God began to move by His Spirit in the lives of chosen people.

Hundreds of prophecies had been given to Israel regarding the Messiah, Jesus, who would come to redeem His people from sin. The Messiah was likely to come at anytime, but the religious leaders of the day distracted them from recognizing Christ their King.

Yet, the faithful waited and hoped for their Redeemer. One such person was found in the region of Galilee; a humble young girl named Mary who had long been looking for the fulfillment of the prophecies. She found favor before the LORD and was chosen by God to give birth to the Savior. Though a virgin, she willingly accepted the gift bestowed upon her with great humility and gratitude. Although sorrow would pierce her heart, *Blessed* would be the crowning title she would wear; and her faithfulness would distinguish her from all other women.

Elisabeth, her cousin, and Anna the prophetess were godly women in the life of Mary. They served Him with a whole heart. They offered Mary spiritual support and spiritual encouragement.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37).

¹ prophecy: God's truth foretold by holy men of God who spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

Names Given to Mary

Virgin	<p>. . . <i>Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son . . .</i> (Matthew 1:23).</p> <p><i>Virgin</i> in Greek means - unknown or a maiden, an unmarried daughter. <i>Virgin</i> in Hebrew is <i>almah</i>, a lass (as veiled or private): damsel, maid; from the root word <i>elem</i>: something kept out of sight. Mary was the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the virgin whom God had promised would bring forth the Savior (Isaiah 7:14).</p>
Mary	<p>. . . <i>To a virgin espoused [engaged] to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary</i> (Luke 1:27).</p> <p><i>Mary's</i> name is of Hebrew origin, it comes from the root word <i>Marah</i> meaning - bitterness. We will learn that later in Mary's life she experienced deep suffering and sorrow.</p>
Highly Favored	<p><i>And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured...</i> (Luke 1:28a).</p> <p><i>Favoured</i> in Greek means - to grace, to endue with special honor. God showed His favor towards Mary by choosing her to be the mother of Christ the Savior.</p>
Blessed	<p>. . . <i>blessed art thou among women</i> (Luke 1:28b).</p> <p><i>Blessed</i> in Greek means - to speak well of (religiously); to bless (thank or to invoke a benediction upon), prosper, praise. Mary was blessed above all women.</p>
Handmaiden	<p><i>For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden . . .</i> (Luke 1:48).</p> <p><i>Handmaiden</i> in Greek means - female slave. Mary regarded herself as a handmaiden, servant of God.</p>

SECTION I - Prophecy Fulfilled

This study begins with Elisabeth, Mary's cousin. Elisabeth's name means *God is my oath*. She was a woman of great faith and a worshipper of God, chosen to bear a son under miraculous circumstances. In Isaiah 40:3, the prophecy described him as, *the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*. He was to herald the coming Savior. A *herald* always came into a city prior to the king, announcing his coming so that the people could prepare for his arrival. Elisabeth was also chosen by God to be a spiritual encouragement to Mary.

READ Luke 1:5-25.

1. Who was Elisabeth (v. 5)? _____²

2. What spiritual characteristics did Elisabeth possess (v. 6)? _____

² daughters of Aaron: descendant of Aaron the priest; Moses' brother Aaron was the beginning of a priestly line called to minister to the LORD (Exodus 28:1).

3. What physical characteristics are recorded of Elisabeth (v. 7)? _____

4. How was the birth of her son John foretold (vv. 8-13)? _____

Who was the angel of the LORD (v. 11 see v. 19)? _____ ³

5. What would happen at his birth (v. 14)? _____

6. What did the angel prophesy concerning John (vv. 15-17)? _____

PERSONAL

READ Luke 1:18-23 where Zacharias doubted the sovereignty of God⁴. Is there something you might be praying for that you feel is too difficult for God? WRITE out Luke 1:37 and apply this promise to your situation.

7. What was Elisabeth's reaction when she conceived the child (Luke 1:24, 25)? _____

In biblical days it was a reproach to be barren. Godly women in the Bible understood that children are a gift from the Lord. God had a purpose in keeping Elisabeth barren until the Scriptures would be fulfilled concerning John who would herald the coming of Christ.

³ Gabriel - Hebrew *Gabriel* man of God; hero of God, archangel, a heavenly messenger.

⁴ sovereignty of God: one of the perfections of God's being; the supreme rulership of God.

SECTION 2 - A Visit From an Angel

As we first encounter Mary the mother of our Savior, she is a young woman. In those days it was not unusual for women to become engaged and marry at a young age.

READ Luke 1:26-38.

1. Where did God send the angel Gabriel next (v. 26, 27)? _____

Nazareth⁵ is not mentioned in the Bible until the story of Mary. This reveals to us that even the city where the mother of the Savior came from was of little significance and certainly not where one would expect a king to live.

2. When the angel appeared to Mary, who was she espoused to (v. 27)? _____
_____ ⁶

3. What was the blessed salutation brought by the angel Gabriel to Mary (v. 28)? _____

4. Why was Mary troubled⁷ (v. 29)? _____

5. How did the angel calm her fears (v. 30)? _____
_____ ⁸

LOOK DEEPER

Prior to the angel visiting Mary, the prophet Isaiah prophesied between 740-680 BC concerning the virgin birth.

WRITE the prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). _____

⁵ Nazareth - Hebrew *cobek* thicket: branch, sprout, shoot, woods (see Isaiah 11:1); the people of Nazareth were said, by some, to be impure because of their intermarriages with foreigners. Those coming from Nazareth were often scorned and ridiculed (John 1:46). Jesus would one day be called the Nazarene (see Matthew 2:23).

⁶ house of David: Joseph was a descendant from the line of King David (Matthew 1:1-18).

⁷ troubled: disturbed wholly, to be greatly agitated; alarmed.

⁸ Fear - Greek *phobeo* to frighten: be alarmed.

WRITE the angel's declaration (Matthew 1:23). _____

6. What did the angel reveal to Mary (Luke 1:31-33)? _____

By what name would He be called? _____

What authority would He have? _____

7. What did Mary fear (v. 34)? _____

8. How would Mary conceive (v. 35)? _____

What would be birthed in her? _____

9. What miracle had her cousin Elisabeth experienced (vv. 36, 37)? _____

WRITE out verse 37. _____

10. Mary surrendered her will to God. WRITE her declaration (v. 38). _____

PERSONAL

Before the angel revealed the Lord's plan for Mary's life, he reassured her by saying, *Fear not*. Mary trusted God. Has the Lord revealed plans for your life that have caused you to fear? How does Psalm 27 build your faith and trust in God?

SECTION 3 - Elisabeth Proclaims the Coming Lord

READ Luke 1:39-45.

1. FOLLOW Mary's actions after the angel's departure (vv. 39, 40). _____

2. How did the baby in Elisabeth's womb respond when the mother of his Savior saluted his mother (vv. 41, 44)?

Who was Elisabeth filled with? _____

PERSONAL

LOOK around you. Is there someone that you can look to for spiritual guidance? PRAY about being an encouragement to someone around you.

3. What caused baby John to respond this way (Luke 1:15)? _____

4. How did Elisabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, bless Mary (Luke 1:42-45)? _____

Who was Elisabeth referring to when she said, *my Lord*? _____

What word of knowledge⁹ did Elisabeth give to Mary that prompted her to glorify the Lord? _____

When Elisabeth was six months pregnant, Mary, who had just conceived, visited her. Yet Elisabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was made aware of Mary's pregnancy, and was given knowledge of the things that the angel had revealed to Mary. By the Holy Spirit she acknowledged and confessed that Jesus had come in the flesh to be the Savior of the world.

⁹ word of knowledge: the Holy Spirit giving knowledge to man of a specific event, situation, circumstance, etc.

SECTION 4 - Mary's Prayer

Mary now knew she would be the mother of the Messiah. Her heart cried out in gratitude and awe knowing that she had been chosen to fulfill the ancient prophecy. As you read, bear in mind that you are hearing a young woman glorify God for the great things He has done. It will become obvious that her instruction in the Scriptures was thorough; she had been taught the Word from childhood.

READ Luke 1:46-56.

1. In the following verses we will see Mary's character revealed as she rejoices before the Lord. WRITE her *spiritual characteristics* as she responds to His goodness.

v. 46 Example: she magnifies the Lord

v. 47 _____

v. 48 _____

v. 49 _____

v. 50 _____

2. In the following verses Mary demonstrates her intimate relationship and knowledge of the Lord. MATCH each verse with the appropriate quality or characteristic of God.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| _____ v. 46 | a. He is the Provider |
| _____ v. 47 | b. He helps Israel |
| _____ v. 49a | c. He is Mighty |
| _____ v. 49b | d. His mercy is on all who fear Him |
| _____ v. 50 | e. His name is Holy |
| _____ v. 51 | f. He puts down the prideful and exalts the lowly |
| _____ v. 52 | g. His arm is strong |
| _____ v. 53 | h. He is her Lord |
| _____ v. 54 | i. He is God her Savior |

PERSONAL

What word or phrase draws you into intimate communion with the Lord? _____

3. Where did Mary go after visiting with Elisabeth (Luke 1:56)? _____

Mary conceived by the Spirit of God and Elisabeth was pregnant in her old age.

For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37).

SECTION 5 - The Savior Is Born

The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. He instructed Joseph not to fear but to take Mary as his wife, as the baby she had conceived was of the Holy Ghost. Joseph was a just man and believed God. Joseph took Mary as his wife and in accordance with the prophecy regarding the Child being holy, he abstained from consummating the marriage until the baby was born (Matthew 1:18-25). Because Mary was with child prior to marriage, she was in danger of facing ridicule, embarrassment, and according to the law, even death.

READ Luke 2:1-20.

1. Where were Joseph and Mary ordered to go to be taxed (vv. 1-5)? _____

Why Bethlehem? _____

2. What prophecy was in Micah 5:2 that would be fulfilled through Joseph and Mary? _____

3. How far along was Mary in her pregnancy (Luke 2:5b)? _____

If you have a map of Israel during the time of Christ, take note of the distance between Nazareth and Bethlehem. The journey was more than seventy miles over rough and hilly terrain. The trip had many great dangers, especially for a woman in Mary's condition.

PERSONAL

It is of great comfort to know that as the Lord maps out our path, He also promises to go with us and protect us! What verse out of Psalm 91 speaks to you the most right now?

What verse in Psalm 91 would you give to Mary for her journey? _____

4. There was no room in the town of Bethlehem for Mary to give birth to the Savior of the world. What did Mary do (Luke 2:6, 7)?

There was no room in the inn. Mary was forced to give birth to her Child in a cave used to house livestock. She laid the Savior in a manger¹⁰.

5. What *good tidings of great joy* did the angel of the Lord bring to the shepherds (vv. 8-12)? _____

6. How were the multitude of the heavenly hosts¹¹ praising God (vv. 13, 14)? _____

7. The shepherds announced the Good News to Bethlehem. What was the reaction of the people (vv. 15-18)?

8. What did Mary do (v. 19)? _____

9. What did the shepherds then do (v. 20)? _____

SECTION 6 - The Testimonies of the Faithful

READ Luke 2:21-40.

1. Why did Joseph and Mary take the Child to Jerusalem (vv. 21-24)? _____

¹⁰ manger: a feeding stall to be used as a crib.

¹¹ hosts - Greek *stratia* an army: camp likeness, an army of angels, the celestial luminaries.

According to the Law of Moses, a woman had to wait forty days after the birth of a child before she could enter the temple. This was a time when she would be cleansed physically and spiritually.

2. NAME and DESCRIBE the man that Joseph and Mary met there (vv. 25, 26). _____

What did the Holy Ghost reveal to him? _____

3. Who brought Simeon to the temple? Who brought Jesus (v. 27)? _____

4. What did Simeon do and say (vv. 28-32)? _____

5. What were Joseph and Mary's reaction (v. 33)? _____

6. WRITE Simeon's blessing for them (vv. 34, 35). _____

7. Who else was in the temple (v. 36, 37)? _____¹²

How long had she been married? _____

Anna had been a widow for about eighty four years. She would have been over one hundred years of age. What had she done throughout her years?

8. What did Anna do when Mary entered the temple (Luke 2:38)? _____

¹² prophetess: a female prophet, a messenger who speaks God's inspired Words.

PERSONAL

Have you accepted Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? If so, do you think you have a heart of thanks and a desire to tell others about Him? ASK the Lord to place on your heart several people you can share the Good News of Jesus Christ with.

MEMORY VERSE

(Luke 1:37).

Through the story of Mary and those around her, we learn that God has a divine purpose for each one of us as He brings about His eternal plan for the ages through them. Mary was to be the virgin mother of the Savior of the world, born in the flesh. It seems like an impossible situation for Mary but not for God. Through the empowering of the Holy Ghost, Mary and Joseph's obedience, the angel of the Lord, the multitude of heavenly hosts, encouragement from Elisabeth, the joy of the humble shepherds, and the temple worshipers, Simeon and Anna, God was able to bring about eternal salvation for all mankind.

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