

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

by
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A long, long time ago (about 2000 years ago!) in a little town in the land of Israel, there lived a godly girl. She was probably a teenager, since she was old enough to be engaged to be married. And she was engaged to be married. Yes, she was engaged to a godly carpenter named Joseph, and they were planning on getting married. This girl's name was Mary.

Now, lots of girls were named Mary in Israel. You see, "Mary" (and "Maria" and "Marie") are all forms of the name "Miriam". But do you remember who Miriam was that so many girls were named after her? Yes, Miriam was the sister of Moses way back in Egypt in the Old Testament. And Miriam was a prophetess and an important woman then, so lots of girls were named after her. But I've talked to you about Miriam another time, so now let's get back to Mary.

Okay, Mary and Joseph were engaged, and their families lived in the land of Israel. At that time the land of Israel was divided into 3 big parts. Galilee was the top part, Samaria was in the middle, and Judea was the bottom part. Mary lived up in the top part in Galilee in a little town called Nazareth. And Mary had a very old cousin who lived in the bottom part, in Judea. This cousin's name was Elizabeth. Elizabeth was married to an old priest named Zacharias, and they both loved and worshipped the Lord God. But Elizabeth and Zacharias had no children, which was a sad thing for them. But let's get back to Mary again!

Well, one day Mary had a very startling thing happen. What was that starting thing? Why, suddenly an angel came to Mary! The angel's name was Gabriel, and he said to Mary, "Be glad! The Lord is with you! You are going to be greatly blessed."

This seems to have made Mary afraid, because the next thing this angel said to Mary was, "Don't be afraid! You have found favor with God!"

Then the angel said, "You're going to have a baby boy and you'll name Him Jesus. He will be great, and He'll be called the Son of the Highest, and God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He shall be King over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end." ("The house of Jacob" meant the Jews.)

Wow!!! Can't you just imagine how very startled Mary must have been?! But Mary was puzzled, too. So she said to Gabriel, "How can this happen? After all, I'm not married and don't have a husband."

And Gabriel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will make this happen. And this baby will be called the Son of God."

Then Gabriel told Mary something else that was startling. He said, "And look here, your old

cousin Elizabeth is going to have a baby too, in just 6 more months."

Now, how do you think Mary took all of this news from the angel? Do you think she argued with Gabriel? No! Why, Mary just said, "See, I am a servant of the Lord, and it will be to me just as you said it would." Mary really trusted God, didn't she?

And then the angel Gabriel left Mary.

So, God was going to make it so that Mary would have a baby now, even before she was married to Joseph! And her old cousin Elizabeth was going to have a baby, too! Two miracles! How exciting! So Mary got up and hurried and went all the way down to Judea to visit Elizabeth.

When Mary got there, she went into Elizabeth and Zacharias' house and greeted Elizabeth. But before Mary had a chance to say anything more, why, the baby inside of Elizabeth jumped! And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she began shouting out, "You are blessed, and your baby is blessed! Just think, the mother of my Lord has come to me! And look, as soon as I heard your voice, my baby jumped inside of me because he was so happy!" And Elizabeth said to Mary, "You are blessed because you believed, and the Lord will do what He said!"

Now what did Elizabeth mean when she said the mother of her Lord had come? Well, some way God had let Elizabeth know that Mary was going to have a baby and that this baby was also God.

Now, does this story sound familiar to you?! Yes, this is part of what we call the Christmas story, isn't it? We read this story in the New Testament part of the Bible, and it's all true. But today I thought I'd tell you not just about Mary and the Christmas story, but also about what other things we can find in the Bible about Mary, the mother of Jesus. There isn't a lot, but I think you will find it interesting.

Okay, Mary had gotten to Elizabeth's house, and Elizabeth had gotten through talking. And then Mary began praising the Lord. What she said was sort of like a long song. (You can read this song in the book of Luke in the Bible.)

Well, Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zacharias a while. The Bible doesn't say how long she stayed, but I wonder if Mary stayed until Elizabeth's baby was born? I don't know. By the way, do you remember who Elizabeth's baby was? Yes, he was John the Baptist! (I've told you about John the Baptist before, haven't I?)

Anyway, after visiting with Elizabeth, Mary went back to her home in Nazareth. Well, after a while Joseph knew that Mary was going to have a baby, and, of course, he was very upset. After all, they weren't married yet! Joseph didn't know what to think, but he was a kind man and didn't want to cause a lot of trouble for Mary, so he just decided to quietly break their engagement.

But while Joseph was thinking of doing this, one night when Joseph was sleeping, the angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. Some way Joseph knew this wasn't just a regular dream, but that it was really that the Lord wanted him to know something. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph,

"Joseph, don't be afraid to get married to Mary. God the Holy Spirit made it so that she is going to have a baby." (This would fulfill a prophecy that the prophet Isaiah had made 700 years earlier!)

Then the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "Mary is going to have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Jesus is a form of the name Joshua and means "The Lord Saves".)

Then Joseph woke up. And Joseph believed and trusted the Lord, so he married Mary, and they lived there in Nazareth.

Well, at that time the land of Israel didn't have its own king. Instead, the Romans ruled Israel and lots of other places in the world as well. The big leader of the Romans, the emperor, was called "Caesar". (We get the title "Czar" from "Caesar".) Julius Caesar had been the first Caesar, but at the time that Joseph and Mary were married, Julius Caesar was dead, and his nephew Caesar Augustus was the emperor.

Well, about that time Caesar Augustus sent out an order that he wanted to take a census, that is, he wanted to count the people in his empire. At the same time everyone would have to pay a tax, But Caesar Augustus said that the people were to take part in this census in the town or city that they were from. That would be a lot of bother for some people, because not everyone could do that where they were living right then. They would have to travel back to where they had come from. And Joseph was one of those people. You see, Joseph was from way down in Judea in a little town named Bethlehem. Oh dear! That would be a long way to travel, and Mary was going to have her baby soon!

But they had to obey the emperor, didn't they? So they started out. The Bible doesn't tell us if they walked or rode donkeys or if Mary rode in a cart. We just don't know how they traveled. But finally they got down to Bethlehem. When they got to Bethlehem, all of the inns (like hotels) were full. After all, lots of people were traveling.

But it was now time for Mary's baby to be born. So Joseph took Mary to a place where the animals were kept. We don't know if this were a stable or a cave or just what, but at least it wasn't outside! And there Mary's little baby was born. And Mary wrapped her baby up nicely. She didn't have a crib, of course, but there was a manger there, a box that food could be put in for the animals. I imagine it had some nice, soft hay in it, but I don't really know; the Bible doesn't say. Anyway, Mary put her little newborn baby in the manger.

Now, it was night time, and out in the fields near Bethlehem there were shepherds with their flocks of sheep. It was dark and everything was all quiet. But then what do you think happened? Why, suddenly a bright light shone around the shepherds and there was an angel there! This really scared the shepherds!

But the angel spoke to the shepherds, "Don't be afraid!" he told them. Then the angel said, "I've come to tell you some very happy news, good news for everyone!"

The angel said, "Today in Bethlehem the Saviour has been born. He is Christ the Lord!"

(Christ means Messiah in another language.) And the angel said, "And this is how you will know He is Christ the Lord. You'll find the baby all wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Well, as if that one angel weren't startling enough, suddenly there was a whole army of angels with him! And these angels were all praising God. "Glory to God in the Highest", they said, " and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And then just as suddenly as they had come -- why, all of the angels and the bright light were gone! And it was all quiet and dark again. And the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that the Lord has told us about!!" And they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph. And, sure enough, there was the baby all wrapped up lying there in the manger, just as the angel had said. After that the shepherds left, and they told everyone all about what had happened, and everyone who heard it was amazed.

Now, the Bible doesn't say, but I imagine that the shepherds had told Mary about the angel and what the angel had said and that they had told Mary about the big army of angels who had praised God. Anyway, the Bible does say that Mary didn't forget what had happened. She remembered these things and thought about them a lot.

Now Mary and Joseph were Jews, and many years before that, the Lord had said that all Jewish baby boys were to have a special ceremony when they were 8 days old. So, of course, Mary and Joseph did this. And at the same time they also named the baby. What did they name Him? Yes, of course -- they named Him Jesus! But how did they choose that name, do you remember? Yes, way before He was born, first Gabriel, the angel of the Lord, had told Mary that her baby's name would be Jesus, and then again an angel had told Joseph the same thing in a dream when he told Joseph to go ahead and get married to Mary. So, of course, they obeyed the Lord and named Mary's little baby boy Jesus.

And there was also something else the Lord had told the Jews to do whenever the first baby a woman had was a boy, and that was when he was 40 days old they were to take him to the temple and offer a sacrifice to the Lord. So when little baby Jesus was 40 days old, Joseph and Mary took Him to the temple in Jerusalem. (Jerusalem is just a few miles away from Bethlehem.) They only had a small sacrifice, because they were poor, but the Law said that was all right.

Now, there was an old man named Simeon, and some time before this the Lord had told Simeon that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Christ, the Messiah, the One Who would save people. And the same day that Joseph and Mary were going to the temple to offer their little sacrifice, God the Holy Spirit had Simeon go to the temple, too. When Mary and Joseph got there with baby Jesus, Simeon went up to them and took baby Jesus into his arms and praised God. And Simeon said, "Lord, let me die now in peace, as I have seen Your salvation which you have prepared." (He meant that Jesus would save us from our sins.)

Imagine how surprised Mary must have been! Mary and Joseph didn't know what to think!

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "This baby will be a sign for many. He will be a

light to the nations. But you will someday have something very sad happen to you." (He was talking about when Mary's baby, Jesus, would grow up and she would see Jesus be put on the cross and die there for our sins.)

But that wasn't all that happened that day. Something else very strange happened then, too. There was an old widow woman who stayed there at the temple serving God by fasting and praying all the time. Her name was Anna, and she was a prophetess. And right then Anna came up to them. She also thanked the Lord, and she told the people who were looking for the Saviour about Jesus.

Mary had a lot to think about, didn't she?!

Then something else happened a while later when Jesus was probably about a year old, and this gave Mary even more to think about!

You see, way far away from the land of Israel there were some very wise men. These men studied many things, including the stars. One day they had seen a special star in the sky. And some way seeing this star had made them know that a king of the Jews had been born, so they set out to find this king and bring him presents and worship him.

First they went to Jerusalem, the capital city of the land of Israel, and they asked where this new king of the Jews who had been born was. Well, the Romans had made a man named Herod to be king of the Jews, and when Herod heard about this, he didn't like this at all! After all, he figured, he was king of the Jews! He didn't want some baby to become king of the Jews instead of him! In fact, the whole city of Jerusalem was upset. But Herod didn't tell the wise men that he didn't like this. Instead, King Herod called the leaders of the Jews together and asked them where the Messiah was to be born. Of course, they knew the answer to this, since it had been prophesied hundreds of years before. So the Jewish leaders told Herod that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Then Herod told the wise men.

Then the wise men left King Herod, and guess what they saw? Why, the same star that they had seen back in their home in the east was there, and this star led them until it came to a certain house, and then the star stood over that house. That sounds like a special kind of star, doesn't it?! But whose house was this? Why it was the house where Mary and Joseph were living! (Of course, they hadn't been living in with the animals all of this time! They had moved into a house in Bethlehem.)

Yes, one day these traveling wise men showed up at Mary and Joseph's house. They went in, and when they saw little Jesus with his mother Mary, they fell down and worshipped Jesus. Then they opened the treasures they had brought for Jesus and gave them to Him.

Well, King Herod had told the wise men that after they found this new king of the Jews, that they were to come back and tell him where he was. Herod said he wanted to go worship this new king, also. But Herod was lying! What he really wanted to do was to kill Him so he couldn't be the king of the Jews! But God warned the wise men about this in a dream, so when they left Jesus and Mary, the wise men didn't go back home through Jerusalem. Instead, they went home a different way.

When Herod realized this, he was very angry, and he decided to find Jesus anyway and kill Him. But again the angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and warned him and told Joseph to get up and go right away to Egypt. So Joseph got right up that night, and he took Mary and little Jesus in the dark and went to Egypt. So wicked King Herod couldn't find little Jesus, because He was already gone.

Joseph and Mary and Jesus stayed there in Egypt until King Herod was dead. Then an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph again in a dream, telling him that Herod was dead, and that they could go back to the land of Israel now.

Well, Herod was dead, but Herod's son was now king in Jerusalem, and this made Joseph afraid to go near there. You see, Herod's son wasn't a good man, either. So once again God spoke to Joseph in a dream, and Joseph took Mary and little Jesus back up to Nazareth in Galilee, where they had lived when they were first married. So Jesus grew up in Nazareth, and the Bible tells us that then Mary and Joseph had children; we know there were 4 boys and at least 2 girls.

Now, hundreds of years before this, the Lord had said that at certain times of every year, that the Jews were to go to Jerusalem to the temple there for special celebrations and to worship the Lord. One of these times was at Passover time.

Well, when Jesus was 12 years old, Joseph took the family to Jerusalem for Passover, and it sounds as if they traveled with a big group of people. So they celebrated Passover there in Jerusalem, and when Passover time was over, they all got together and left Jerusalem to go all of the way back to Nazareth again. -- That is, they all got together except Jesus. Mary and Joseph didn't realize it, but Jesus had stayed back in Jerusalem.

At first they didn't know Jesus wasn't with them. I guess the children all played together and walked with other relatives and friends as they traveled. Anyway, the group traveled a whole day, and then Mary and Joseph began looking for Jesus among their friends and relatives. But he wasn't there!! Oh, dear! Of course, they were really worried!

So they went back to Jerusalem and looked and looked for Jesus. For 3 days they looked for Him. Imagine how worried Mary and Joseph must have been! Finally, after 3 days of looking, they found Jesus in the temple area. He was sitting there in a group of the teachers. He was listening to them and asking them questions. And the men were all amazed at how much the boy Jesus understood and the answers he gave.

Of course, Mary and Joseph were relieved to find him, and they were surprised, too. And Mary said to him, "Son, why did you do this? We have been looking for you and have been very unhappy!"

Jesus said to them, "Why did you look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?"

What did Jesus mean by that? Well, we know that the temple was sort of like the earthly

house of God and it sounds as if Jesus figured that they should have known that he (the Son of God) would be there in the temple, the house of God. And we know Jesus wasn't being disrespectful or disobedient in this, as the Bible clearly tells us that Jesus never sinned.

Well, Mary and Joseph didn't understand what Jesus meant by this. But they all went back to Nazareth, Jesus with them this time. But Mary remembered all of these things and thought about them. She really had a lot to think about, didn't she?!

And Jesus grew up there in Nazareth and was obedient to Mary and Joseph, and people realized what a good man he was growing up to be.

Well, the next time we hear about Mary is about 18 years later) at a wedding. The weddings there didn't just last for a few hours as they usually do here. Instead, weddings lasted several days! Well, there was this wedding in Galilee. By that time Jesus was grown up. He was about 30 years old and had been baptized by his cousin John the Baptist, and he had some followers, whom we call disciples. Anyway, Mary, Jesus, some of his disciples, and a lot of other people went to this wedding. They were feasting and having a good time celebrating the marriage. But then something happened -- they ran out of wine!

Now, we aren't told why, but evidently Mary figured that Jesus could do something about this. At any rate, Mary said to him, "Jesus, they're out of wine."

Jesus said to Mary, "Dear woman, why are you involving me? My time hasn't come yet."

But Mary just said to the servants, "Do what he tells you to do."

Well, there were 6 great big empty stone pots for water standing by there. And Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them with water. And the water turned into the best of good wine! So there was plenty more wine for the wedding celebration, very good wine! This was the beginning of the many miracles that Jesus would do.

Well, Jesus with his mother Mary and his brothers and his disciples went and stayed in another city in Galilee. One time Jesus was talking to the people and teaching them. While He was talking, Mary and Jesus' brothers came and were standing outside. So someone said to Jesus, "Look here, your mother and brothers are standing outside, and they want to talk to you."

Jesus said, "Who are my mother and brothers?" Then he pointed to his followers and said, "Look, here are my mother and brothers! Because whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Now that sounds strange to us, doesn't it? But Jesus wasn't saying this to be disrespectful to his mother Mary. No. He was simply saying that those who follow the Lord are like relatives to Him and that He needed to be with them and teach them.

Then the next time we hear of Mary again is when Jesus is on the cross. Remember, God the

Father and Jesus, God the Son, love us so very much that God the Father had Jesus come to earth for a particular reason. And why did Jesus come to earth? Yes, to die for us, to die for our sins. Remember, Jesus never did any sins, but all of us have sinned, haven't we? And there can't be sin in heaven. So the sinless Jesus died to pay for our sins. And if we believe this and ask Jesus to forgive our sins, trust in Him, then God forgives our sins. Then we become a child of God the Father and a brother or sister of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God! Then someday we can be with God. God is so good to us!!

Anyway, back to Mary. Mary was standing there on Calvary and saw Jesus, who had been put on the cross by wicked men. Of course, Mary was very, very unhappy. She and his disciples didn't understand yet that Jesus was dying for their sins (and our sins). And Mary was there by the cross. Mary's sister and also John (one of His disciples) were there with her. There were other people, too.

Jesus looked down from the cross at Mary and John. Then Jesus spoke to his mother and said, "Dear woman, look at your son." Then he said to John, "Look at your mother." They realized that Jesus meant for John to be like a son to Mary and to take care of Mary. And John did. After that John took Mary home with him to take care of her. Jesus loved his mother, didn't he? He wanted her to be taken care of.

Now, Jesus' disciples and Mary didn't understand yet that Jesus wouldn't stay dead. But 3 days after this Jesus rose from the dead! We say that Jesus was resurrected, that is, He was alive again. (That's what we celebrate at Easter, isn't it?!) How happy Mary must have been after that happened!! Then Jesus' disciples and Mary understood that Jesus had died for our sins. Well, Jesus was on earth after he rose from the dead for 40 days, and he taught people and was seen by hundreds of people. One day Jesus said to His disciples, "You stay in Jerusalem, and the Father is going to send the Holy Spirit on you and give you special power."

Then one day Jesus and His disciples were outside of Jerusalem, and suddenly Jesus just started going up into the sky! Yes, Jesus went back up to heaven while his disciples watched him go up into the clouds! And suddenly 2 angels were there with them and spoke to them saying, "Why are you looking up at the sky like this? Someday Jesus will come back the same way!" Yes, Jesus is still alive in heaven, but someday the Lord Jesus will come back to earth and be King of everything and everyone!

Then the disciples went back into Jerusalem, as Jesus had told them to do. And now comes the last time that the Bible tells us anything about Mary, the mother of Jesus. You see, after the disciples were back in Jerusalem they went into an upper room where it sounds as if the apostles were living at the time. Mary and some other women and Jesus' brothers were there, too, and they were all praying together. Then after 10 days, God the Holy Spirit came on at least the apostles, and they were given special power.

And that is the last we hear of Mary, the godly girl who became the mother of Jesus. Yes, the last we hear of her is after the Resurrection as she's praying in the upper room with Jesus' disciples, her other sons, and other women.

Mary had a lot of things to remember and think about, didn't she? She was truly blessed by the Lord.

I hope you enjoyed hearing what the Bible tells us about Mary, the godly girl who became the mother of Jesus.