

The Virgin Mary

“Highly Favored”

(Luke 1:26-37)

Mary, the mother of Jesus, has great attraction for Baptists, and for Christians of every name, and not only for people who wrongfully worship and petition her. For a few weeks, we will study what the Bible says about her, and pray for the Lord to let her life affect ours. Mary’s story in chronological order can be followed by reading these scriptures in this order: Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-38; Matthew 2:1-23; Luke 2:39-52; John 2:1-12; Mark 3:31-35; John 19:25-27; Acts 1:10-14. We will confine our study this time primarily to the record given us by Luke.

The Second chapter of the Book of Luke is one of the best-known and best-loved portions of holy scripture. In it the “Christmas story,” the birth of Jesus Christ, is told. Many of us memorized part of it as children! Central in the story is Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. Actually, the virgin Mary figures prominently in the first two chapters of Luke, just as Joseph (the Lord’s “foster father”) is prominent in Matthew 1 and 2 (another version of the “Christmas story”). Luke 2:19 says,

“Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”

Many wonderful things happened in those days to young Mary, things with great significance. As she “pondered” these things, she came to understand more about three important matters. Read this chapter, and ponder these matters yourself.

God’s Providence.

The dictionary defines “providence” this way:

“The care, guardianship, and control exercised by a deity; divine direction.”

Providence is God taking care of us. It is God exercising His authority over all things for our good. It is Romans 8:28. It is the Lord at work for us behind the scenes. When Mary “pondered” the things that had happened in relation to the birth of her Son, she certainly was thinking about God’s providence. Notice how God worked events together.

A key player in the whole story of Christ’s birth at Bethlehem was “*Caesar Augustus*” (vs. 1-5). This pagan ruler did not volunteer to be used of God, and he didn’t pray about

the “*taxing*” that would bring Mary to Bethlehem, but the Lord did use his authority and decision-making to bring things about in just the right way. You see, the prophet Isaiah had written more than seven centuries earlier that a virgin girl of the “*house of David*” would conceive miraculously and “*bear a son*” Who would be God in the flesh (Isaiah 7:13-14, 9:6, 11:1-2). Not long after, the prophet Micah had predicted that this special child would be born in Bethlehem of Judah (Micah 5:2). Now the virgin Mary and her husband Joseph were from up in Nazareth of Galilee, at least 75 miles away. How was the prophecy going to be fulfilled through a girl at Nazareth (Luke 1:26-27)? The answer was in the emperor, Caesar Augustus. God is in control! He is indeed Lord. He uses heathen rulers to accomplish His will. Look at Proverbs 21:1.

“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

Look at Psalm 76. See that the Lord uses even people who hate Him to accomplish His purposes.

“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” (v.10)

Now look again at Luke 2, and see how God used Caesar to get Mary to Bethlehem, and how He provided a place for Jesus to be born (vs. 6-7).

God's Provision.

The first ones to hear about the birth of Christ (other than Mary and Joseph of course) were certain shepherds who were “*keeping watch over their flocks*” that night near Bethlehem. It is so interesting that the heavenly host were not sent to the capital of the world, Rome, to announce the birth to Caesar, and they were not sent to the holy city of Jerusalem to announce Christ's coming to the priests at the Temple. They were sent to make the announcement to a group of common men. In this announcement, we find that God has provided for the salvation of mankind in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. God's provision of salvation is “*good tidings*” (good news—the Gospel), according to Luke 2:8-10. And this good news is for “*all people*,” even the common people. The shepherds were told that the Savior had been born “*unto you*” (v. 11). “*A sign*” was given to them to help them find Christ (v. 12). Then the angels praised God in a wonderful display and proclaimed God's “*good will toward men*”(vs. 13-14). The story of Christmas is the story of Christ, and the coming of Christ is about God providing a way for all of us to be saved from our sins. We got ourselves into trouble by sinning against the Lord (Read Romans 5:12). But God provided in His Son the way to get us out of trouble by having Jesus die for our sins and rise again (Romans 5:6-11). Christ died for everybody, but only those who receive Him, as the shepherds did, will be saved (I John 2:2, John 1:12). Others who believed the good news and found salvation were Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:15-24), Simeon (Luke 2:25-35), and Anna (Luke 2:36-38). Before He came, people were saved because they “*looked for redemption*” from God, believing that a Savior was coming. We are saved by looking back in faith to what Jesus did for us, knowing that the Savior has come!

God's Plan.

Luke 2:39-52 records the only information we have about the childhood of Jesus. He went back with His mother and Joseph to Nazareth and grew up there. In some ways, He was like other boys, although He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). He developed and grew as all human children do (vs. 40 and 52), and yet He was the Son of God. It seems that Mary almost forgot Who He was until the incident at the Temple reminded her.

“And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.” (Luke 2:48-51)

It is a mystery even today how God became man, but He did. Jesus was truly human, and yet truly divine. It was God's plan that the Savior be both God and man. Luke 3:38 identifies Jesus as *“the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”* The Book of Luke emphasizes Christ's humanity. He *“hungered”* (4:2), He was *“brought up”* by parents (4:16), He *“prayed”* (5:16), He would *“eat and drink”* (5:30), He would *“lay his head”* down to sleep (9:58), He experienced *“agony”* (22:44), He died (23:40), and He was called *“a righteous man.”* When Mary saw Him developing and growing, but was reminded that He was none other than the eternal living God, she *“understood not,”* but *“kept all these sayings in her heart.”* God's plan was for a Man Who is also God to be the Mediator between God and men (I Timothy 2:5-6). Many was seeing this wondrous plan unfold!