

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.

Blessed By Faith.

As we have seen, Mary the mother of Jesus was “*blessed . . . among women*” because of the grace (unmerited favor) of God (Luke 1:28). The word “*favored*” used in reference to her in Luke 1:28 and 30 is translated from a Greek word that means grace. It was not because of good in Mary that she was chosen to bring the Savior into the world. It was by God’s grace. In Chapter 1 of the Book of Luke we also learn that Mary obtained the blessing of God, from her side, by her *faith*. It was not the merit of her deeds that brought her God’s blessing. It was her faith in the Word of God! Look at her response to Gabriel’s promise.

“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1:38)

The angel had just said, “*With God nothing shall be impossible*” (v. 37). In the context we see that he meant specifically the virgin birth of Christ (vs. 30-36). A virgin could conceive and bare a son, if God said she would. Mary could either believe this or not. As we see, she decided to believe it. Mary is contrasted in this chapter with Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. Read in verses 5 through 20 about his choice to *doubt* God’s promise.

“Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” (Luke 1:20)

The priest’s power of speech was taken away all the time his wife carried his son because he would not believe the promise that they were going to have a child in their old age

(See vs. 57-80). His speech was restored when John was born, and immediately Zacharias expressed his *faith* in the promises of God. Faith does make a difference in what happens to us. We have a choice. Either we can believe God or disbelieve Him. Mary decided to believe Him. Lets look at 3 things about Mary's faith that can help us obtain the blessing of God in our lives! Read Luke 1:38-56.

1. See what her faith was in verse 38. She just decided that whatever God said would happen. Can we not believe in the integrity of God? See how Mary's ancestor David reacted to God's promise to him. Look up II Samuel 7:25-29. Aren't these great words of faith? Don't they remind you of Mary's? Can't each of us say to God, "*Be it unto me according to thy word?*" As we read the Bible, we should believe all of it without reservation as it applies to our own lives. Notice also that personal surrender to the will of God is involved in personal faith in the Word of God. Do you see that?
1. See what her faith produced in verses 39 through 45. Elisabeth said, "*There shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*" Faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:1-6) and brings a response from Him. Notice that it is faith in His Word that produces results, and not faith in one's own dreams or desires.
2. See what "*great things*" are promised to those who believe God in verses 46 through 56. Mary composed and sang a song during her visit with Elisabeth. This beautiful poem expresses faith that God will do wonders for those who believe Him that will be withheld from those who do not believe Him. Among those blessings are strength (v. 51), exaltation (v. 52), supply of needs (v. 53), and help (v. 54). Faith makes a big difference. At this stage in your life, will you choose to believe God?

Saved By Faith.

We cannot emphasize too much that Mary was a sinner just as we are, and that she needed God's salvation. Salvation from sin and Hell is available by God's grace and through our faith!

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God . . ." (Ephesians 2:8)

Mary was not perfect, and did not merit Heaven by being sinless. She had sins and weaknesses and faults, but found forgiveness and eternal life by putting her faith in God's provision of salvation. God provided salvation for the world in His Son, Jesus Christ. See in verses 41-43 that Elisabeth claimed the unborn Savior as her Lord. See in verses 46-47 that Mary confessed God as her Savior. Confessing Christ as Lord and Savior is a matter of faith and not our own good works. If we could earn our way to Heaven, we would be our own saviors! To confess that God has provided our salvation in Christ is to acknowledge that only God can save us (Study Romans 10:9-13). Mary wasn't perfect. She needed Jesus to save her soul!

It is an odd thing that some people think of Mary as perfect. She made no such claim, and the Bible indicates no such thing! See again in verses 48-50 that God blessed her in spite of the fact that she was unworthy. It was a matter of "*mercy*" on a woman who had come

to “*fear him,*” not a matter of reward for a person who never failed. Some say that Jesus will never turn down a request made to Him by His mother. This is why some pray to Mary. However, *every time* the New Testament records an instance of Mary trying to use her motherly relationship to influence Jesus, He *always* turned her down! Look up Luke 2:48-49, Luke 8:19-21, and John 2:1-4. Mary had exactly the same access to Christ as we do—by faith (See Romans 5:1-2).

Jesus came to save us, and what He did to accomplish this mission was surrender to die. His death on the cross would be the sacrifice we needed to pay for our sins so that we wouldn’t have to pay for them in Hell. Look at Luke 1:68-79, 2:21-38, 18:31-33, 19:10, 22:19-20, and 24:46-48. What we must do to be saved is repent and trust Christ to save us. That trust is saving faith (See Luke 23:42-43).

Rejoicing By Faith.

Of course, we leave Mary in Luke 1 very, very happy!

“My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”
(Luke 1:46-47)

The reason for her joy was her faith in God and His Word. Everything changes in your mind when you truly believe God. Knowing by faith that you are saved will make you rejoice. Knowing by faith that God is going to take care of you (vs. 53-55) will make you rejoice. Knowing by faith that God is going to exalt you (vs. 48-52) will keep you happy all the time. In reality, the difference between joy and misery is often just the difference between faith and unbelief. Look up Romans 15:13. Find the joy that Mary had by believing the Word of God!