

December 7, 2014  
Luke 1:26-38, 46-55  
“A Mary Christmas”  
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Mary filled a unique and significant role in the Christmas story as the mother of Jesus. But what do we really know about Mary? There are a number of questions we don't have answers for, as well as a great number of misunderstandings, doctrinal error, etc., concerning Mary. We're left to wonder, for example, why, among all the women in the world at that time, was she selected, and why was her virginity a necessity, not just a nicety regarding the birth of Jesus? Pastor Gary's message will help us come to a greater level of understanding concerning the ways our view of Mary differs from the views held by the Roman Catholic Church. In this study we'll learn also learn about what the Bible has to say about Mary depicted, selected, rejected, delivered, and remembered.

### Mary Depicted

1. [Luke 1:26-27](#) - *“In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.”*
2. At the time of Jesus' birth the Bible depicts Mary as being:
  - a. A descendant of David, of the tribe of Judah (Jewish)
  - b. About 15 years old and still living at home with her parents in Nazareth
  - c. A woman of character, both physically and spiritually
  - d. A virgin, who was pledged to be married to Joseph
3. There were four stages to a Jewish wedding:
  - a. Arrangement (dowry)
  - b. Vows (pledged or betrothed, which included a separation of one year)
  - c. Feast
  - d. Consummation

4. Mary was in the second stage with Joseph, in that she was pledged to be married, which was done in the presence of witnesses.
  - a. The vows she made solemnly committed her to Joseph, and even though there had been no marriage feast, etc., there was an insoluble link between them that could only be broken by divorce.
  - b. Joseph and Mary were saving themselves physically, and they were wholly committed to each other, which made it both awkward and awesome to think that God selected her as the vessel through which he would make an entrance into the world!
    - i. It was awkward because she was not supposed to become pregnant during this time.
    - ii. It was awesome because she was selected by God to be the “human incubator” for God to take on flesh and enter our world.

### Mary Selected

5. [Luke 1:28-33](#) - *“The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’ 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 favor with God. 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.’ ”*
6. Mary was not unlike every other young woman in Israel at this time, which longed for the privilege of giving birth to the Messiah, the long-awaited and anticipated Deliverer of Israel.
7. God’s Providential Selection
  - a. Of all of the women in Israel at this time, why Mary?
  - b. The Bible clearly portrays Mary as being devout, faithful, pure, humble, righteous, obedient, etc., but was she unmatched in every way?
  - c. Does the Bible tell the story of anyone used by God, other than Jesus, who was the most perfect person in the world at the time?
    - i. Was Abraham, Gideon, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, or Paul, the most perfect man on earth at the time they were used by God?
  - d. Mary was no different than these men, because she was not a perfect person, however, she was God’s perfect selection, which made her the perfect person.
  - e. God doesn’t choose the most perfect person; he chooses the person who is perfect for his plan!

- f. [1 Corinthians 1:27-30](#) - *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”*
  - g. God chose a 15-year old, unsuspecting girl from Nazareth that everyone would have looked upon and said, “Mary, who?”
  - h. Mary was unique, special, distinct, and blessed by the Lord.
  - i. We are to honor, respect, and even admire her, but we must be careful not to venerate her.
8. Mary and the Roman Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception.<sup>1</sup>
- a. Our theology is very different from the Roman Catholic Church when it comes to Mary.
  - b. The emphasis of their teaching is that Mary, by a singular grace and privilege of God, was preserved from stain or effects of original sin from the first moment of her conception by her parents, which means Catholic theologians believe she really was *perfect*, because she had been conceived without original sin. (Emphasis added)
  - c. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.
  - d. The Bible teaches that Mary was a sinner who confessed her need for a Savior.
    - i. [Luke 1:46-47](#) - *“And Mary said: ‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...’ ”*
  - e. Pastor Gary said he understood why the Roman Catholic Church wants to believe in the sinless nature of Mary, because they, like we, believe in the sinless nature of Christ.
    - i. [Hebrews 4:15](#) - *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.”*
9. How can a perfect Savior come from an imperfect mother, and wouldn't the sin nature in Mary be passed on to Jesus?
- a. This is the mystery of the Virgin Birth, which really should be called the Virgin Conception, because Jesus' birth was natural; it was the conception that was supernatural.
10. While we are primarily fascinated by the how of the virgin conception, God doesn't weigh us down with the details, because he's more concerned about the “what” than the “how.”
- a. We read in [Luke 1:34-35](#) that Mary wondered about the “What?”

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius IX, 1854

i. " 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin?' 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.'"

11. We can assume a few things about the virgin conception that would have preserved God's sinless nature, but the fact is that these are still nothing more than assumptions formed to try to piece together something the Bible doesn't explain.

a. If Mary was not without sin from conception, how was Jesus without sin, considering the fact that he was conceived in the womb of a sinful person?

i. The reason is that the body itself is not sinful.

ii. The body can be an instrument of sin, but the sin nature is found in the soul of human beings.

iii. [Romans 6:13](#) - "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

iv. [Ezekiel 18:20a](#) - "The soul who sins is the one who will die."

v. The Hebrew word for soul is nephesh, which is the unseen part of every person in the human race tainted by Adam's sin that was passed down through the seed/sperm of the father.

vi. Since Jesus' father was God, all Jesus got from Mary was her physical DNA.

vii. Jesus' soul was perfect because it was from God, not from man.

viii. Sin is a soul issue, which is why when a person is saved, God cleanses and changes their soul from death to life.

ix. The body doesn't change, but the soul changes.

x. The body will return to dust, but the soul will live forever.

12. The virgin conception was absolutely necessary because without it, Jesus would not have been a perfect sacrifice (one who was born without sin and who did not commit sin).

13. The virgin conception was a miracle in every sense of the word.

a. This miracle of God challenges the thinking of people who have a scientific mindset, because miracles fail the scientific test of empirical evidence.

b. Because miracles are unique, unprecedented, "one-off" events, they can't be tested in a laboratory or observed under repeatable conditions.

14. *The Times* of London published a letter written by Dr. R.J. Berry, a professor of genetics at University College of London, which said in part: “It is not logically valid to use science as an argument against miracles. To believe that miracles cannot happen is as much an act of faith as to believe that they can happen.”
  - a. Fourteen professors of science at a variety of British universities signed Dr. Berry’s letter, stating: “We gladly accept the virgin birth, the Gospel miracles, and the resurrection of Christ as historical events.”

### Mary Rejected

15. We may never fully understand the kinds of ridicule, shame, pointing fingers, and whispers Mary endured, because the Bible doesn’t focus on her personal distress during this time.
  - a. God probably didn’t want us to lose focus on Jesus by making the story about Mary.
16. Sex outside of marriage was grounds for divorce and in Old Testament times, was a capital offense punishable by death! <sup>2</sup>
17. Luke doesn’t comment on this aspect of the story, however, Matthew provides Joseph’s reaction.
  - a. [Matthew 1:18-21](#) - *“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 sin.’ ”*
18. If it took a dream and an angel to convince Joseph to stay with Mary, we can only imagine the grief she got from others, because she would have been a social outcast who was the talk of the town!
19. It was probably a blessing that they had to leave Nazareth and travel about 90 miles to Bethlehem to participate in the Roman census!

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<sup>2</sup> Sex outside of marriage was not a capital offense in New Testament times.

## Mary Delivered

20. [Luke 2:4-7](#) - *“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”*
21. [Matthew 1:23](#) - *“ ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ - which means, ‘God with us.’ ”*
22. [John 1:14](#) - *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

## Mary Remembered

23. The way in which we remember Mary is very different from the Roman Catholic Church, which believes:
- Mary was preserved from all stain of original sin from the first moment of her conception.<sup>3</sup>
  - Mary, the “All-Holy” lived a perfectly sinless life.<sup>4</sup>
  - Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ,<sup>5</sup> which contradicts what the Bible has to say, in [Mark 6:3](#), which says: *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?”*
  - Mary is co-redeemer with Christ, for she participated with Christ in the painful act of redemption.<sup>6</sup>
  - Mary is co-mediator with Christ to whom we can entrust all our cares and prayers.<sup>7</sup>
  - Mary was taken into heaven (body, soul, and spirit) when she came to the end of her life, and this is known as the Doctrine of Assumption.<sup>8</sup>
24. In short, the Roman Catholic Church has elevated Mary to a state of glorification that is clearly unscriptural.

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<sup>3</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 490-492

<sup>4</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 411, 493

<sup>5</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 496-511

<sup>6</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 618, 964, 968, 970

<sup>7</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 968-970

<sup>8</sup> Pope Pius XII, 1950

25. The only thing from the aforementioned doctrines of the Catholic Church that the Bible agrees with is that Mary was a virgin before the birth of Christ.
26. Mary should not be venerated or prayed to, because Jesus is the only mediator between God and man, according to [1 Timothy 2:5](#), which says: *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...”*
27. Even though God blessed Mary and we honor her, to enshrine her, as the “Blessed Mary” would be something Jesus would not allow.
  - a. [Luke 11:27-28](#) - *“As Jesus was [teaching], a woman in the crowd called out, ‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’ He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’ ”*
28. Mary served a unique, honorable, sacred, and miraculous role in the Christmas story, because God selected her from among every woman on earth, to be the womb through which God entered our world.
29. We should admire, honor, and respect Mary, and one day, when we see her in Heaven, we should even thank her; but we need to worship God and God alone, pray to God and God alone, and live for God and God alone!

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).