

# Mary, Mother of Jesus

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2021-09-05

This is our nineteenth sermon in our series on Women of Faith. And today we will look at Mary, the mother of Jesus. I will be reading Matthew 12:46-50.

## Introduction

The passage that we just read corrects three of the numerous errors about Mary that Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches believe in. One error is to think that Mary has closer access to Jesus than believers do, and that it is therefore a good idea to pray to Mary. Their idea is that she will help us get our foot in the door with Christ. We will see later that this reason was why the brothers brought Mary along. They may have had a different agenda than Mary did, but they were using her to get access to Christ. Well, in this passage Jesus says that anyone who does the will of God is equal to His mother and His brothers - they have just as much access to Jesus as Mary did.

A related error is the belief that Jesus always answers the prayers of Mary and He cannot deny her. So if she prays for you, your prayers will always be answered. But both here and in the water-into-wine miracle in John 2, Jesus actually gives a soft reproof to Mary. He is helping her to move past her flesh and blood relationship and He is helping her to recognize that her place in the kingdom is the same as other mothers and brothers and sisters in the kingdom.

A third error that Roman Catholics have about Mary is that all grace from Jesus has to be channeled through Mary to us, yet here it is clear that believers have direct access to Jesus without going through Mary.

So yes, Mary was highly favored by God. There could be no higher favor than to bear Jesus in the womb. What an awesome privilege! And yes, Mary was honored by God and we should honor her too. But making up false theology about Mary actually dishonors her. And before we start looking at how Mary is a wonderful role model for us in many areas of life, I think it will be good to spend a bit of time looking at what Mary was not. She would be horrified at the false assertions that Rome and/or the Eastern Orthodox Church have made about her.

## Falsehoods and myths propagated about Mary

### Falsehood #1 - immaculate conception - no original sin (but cf. Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12)

The first falsehood propagated by Rome is their doctrine of the immaculate conception. This doctrine teaches that Mary was not conceived in sin, did not inherit a sin nature, and

from the time of conception was blessed with holiness more than any other person - even at the time of conception. Quoting from the official Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the moment of her conception... preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

The "Splendor of an entirely unique holiness" by which Mary is "enriched from the first instant of her conception" comes wholly from Christ... The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love."

[She is] the All-Holy (Panagia) and [is]... "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature."<sup>1</sup>

The sad thing is, that the two verses they cite to prove she was immaculately conceived (Ephesians 1:3-4) are actually addressed to the whole church - and it doesn't prove that the church was born without sin. The other verse they sometimes cite is Luke 1:28, where (in their Latin version) the angel says that she was full of grace. They claim that if she was full of grace, there couldn't be any more grace, which means that she is perfect. Besides being a lousy translation (*χαριτώω* does not mean full of grace, it means highly blessed - but besides being a lousy translation) the exact same word is used in Ephesians 1:6 of all Christians being blessed or accepted in Christ. So there is not a shred of Biblical evidence for this doctrine.

Nor is it the faith of the Ancient Church. Indeed, Augustine argued that believing that anyone other than Jesus could be conceived without original sin is part of the heresy of Pelagius.<sup>2</sup> I don't have time to quote him; I'll put it in the footnotes. He is accusing modern Romanists of being Pelagian heretics. And many other respected church fathers explicitly said that Mary was a sinner.

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 124.

<sup>2</sup> He said, "It is therefore an observed and settled fact, that no man born of a man and a woman, that is, by means of their bodily union, is seen to be free from sin. Whosoever, indeed, is free from sin, is free also from a conception and birth of this kind." Moreover, when expounding the Gospel according to Luke, he says: "It was no cohabitation with a husband which opened the secrets of the Virgin's womb; rather was it the Holy Ghost which infused immaculate seed into her unviolated womb. For the Lord Jesus alone of those who are born of woman is holy, inasmuch as He experienced not the contact of earthly corruption, by reason of the novelty of His immaculate birth; nay, He repelled it by His heavenly majesty." Augustine of Hippo, "A Treatise on the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin," in Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Peter Holmes, vol. 5, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 255. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origin, Hillary of Potiers, Marius Victorinus, Abroasiaster, Basil the Great, and Chrysostom all explicitly said that Mary was a sinner.

Certainly Scripture does. Paul said, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... There is none righteous, not even one...” (Rom. 3:23, 10). The phrase “not even one” excludes Mary.

What makes Mary great is not a sinless conception, but the fact that she appropriated God’s grace and lived by His grace throughout her life. She is a model of faith to children because she had to face a sin nature like all of our children do - and yet succeeded at a young age of having favor with God. So the positive reversal of this point is that Mary is a model to you children that it is possible to overcome the impulses of your sin nature. Mary had grown to a great degree when the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God.” And it was by God’s grace that she could believe God for difficult things. Elizabeth said, “Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things, which were told her from the Lord.”

### **Falsehood #2 - sinless throughout life (but cf. Rom. 3:23; 5:12; Lk. 1:30,46,47; 18:19; Rev. 15:4)**

The second falsehood is stated in the Catholic Catechism this way: “By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.”<sup>3</sup> We have already read Scriptures that deny this, but many others do too. Romans 5:12 says, “death spread to all men, because all sinned.” That’s why Luke 1:30 says that Mary needed God’s grace. Grace is undeserved favor - undeserved because she was a sinner. That’s why Mary says in verse 47, “my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” She too needed a Savior. Jesus Himself said, “No one is good but One, that is, God.” He was of course God, so He was good, but that sentence completely rules out Mary being good. In Revelation 15:4 the saints in heaven do not worship Mary. They worship God and say, “For You alone are holy.” To call Mary perfect throughout life contradicts the Bible - and contradicts the early church fathers who were governed by the Bible, and it puts Mary on a pedestal where no woman feels any need to follow in her footsteps. Who *can* follow in those kinds of footsteps. In contrast, the *true* Mary can be a model to all of us - that despite our sin nature, we can grow in holiness.

### **Falsehood #3 - she didn’t go into labor or give birth naturally since Jesus miraculously passed through the walls of her stomach leaving her virginity tokens intact.**

A third falsehood about Mary is that she did not go into labor pains or deliver Jesus via natural birth. Instead, I have quotes here from the Catholic Catechism, from popes, and from the Council of Trent, all of whom say that Jesus moved through the walls of her stomach miraculously (just like in His resurrection body He was able to pass through

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 124.

walls)<sup>4</sup> and in this way her hymen was left intact and she could still be a virgin after the birth of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> And in my notes I will give plenty of quotes and documentation that this is what they teach.

OK. Sounds like a cool story. But is it true? No. Absolutely not. Micah 5:2-3 prophesies the birth of Jesus in these words:

Mic. 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” [So it is clearly a prophecy of Christ’s birth. And the very next word, “therefore” connects this birth of Jesus with what is going to be said. It says,] 3 Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth...

The word for “labor” is the ordinary word for painful labor and the word for “given birth” is the ordinary word for natural birth. Roman Catholics are trying to protect Mary, but in the process they actually fail to make Mary a model for women. Point by point Rome is robbing you of the various ways in which you can imitate and follow Mary’s faith. Aubrey Smith says,

As a Christian who went through childbirth three times, it never occurred to me to think of Mary as an example. Perhaps if my babies had been due around Christmas, the connection might have crossed my mind. But Mary’s experience of pregnancy and labor—especially her body’s role in the incarnation—was the subject of many early theologians’ wonderings... [And then she goes on to talk about later theologians’ denial of a labor or natural birth, and says,]

While these... [Roman Catholic] theologies seek to protect Jesus’ divinity from taking on human defilement within Mary’s womb, they miss the point. The incarnation was the moment that Jesus fully entered into the human reality—he did not shun it or protect himself from it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “But as the Conception itself utterly transcends the order of nature, so also, in the birth [of our Lord] nothing but what is divine is presented to our contemplation. Besides, a circumstance wonderful beyond expression or conception, he is born of his mother without any diminution of her maternal virginity; and as he afterwards went forth from the sepulchre whilst it was closed and sealed, and entered the room in which his disciples were assembled with closed doors; or, not to depart even from natural things, which we witness every day, as the rays of the sun penetrate, without breaking, or injuring in the least, the solid substance of glass; after a similar, I say, but more exalted manner, did Jesus Christ come forth from his mother’s womb, without any injury to her maternal virginity, which, immaculate and perpetual, we celebrate with most just praises.” Ibid., 44–45.

<sup>5</sup> At the Council of Trent, Rome said, “To Eve it was said, ‘In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.’ Mary was exempt from this law, for, preserving her virgin integrity inviolate, she brought forth Jesus the Son of God, without experiencing, as we have already said, any sense of pain.” Catholic Church, *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Theodore Alois Buckley (London: George Routledge and Co., 1852), 46.

<sup>6</sup> Aubrey G. Smith, *Holy Labor: How Childbirth Shapes a Woman’s Soul* (Bellingham, WA: Kirkdale Press, 2016), 77-78.

Mary did not shun the mess and hard work of labor and birth. She went through enormous discomfort when she rode on that donkey to Bethlehem - you can be sure of that. She faced the inconveniences of many women in India and third world countries face when she gave birth in a shed rather than at home. She was a woman's woman, and she went through it with faith - marveling at what God had done, and pondering these things in her heart. I will try to demonstrate that Mary was a real woman of faith that you *can* imitate.

**Falsehood #4 - Perpetual virginity - that she was a virgin before, during, and after birth of Jesus and therefore she didn't have any other sons and daughters (but see Ex. 21:10-11; Heb. 13:4; Matt. 1:25; 13:55,56; Luke 2:7; Col. 2:20-23; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Matt. 12:46-47; Mark 3:31-32; 6:3; Luke 8:19-20; John 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; Ps. 69:8).**

The next falsehood is that she was perpetually a virgin *after* the birth of Jesus. We can say absolutely yes to her being a virgin *before* the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:25 affirms that. But the same verse affirms that she had sexual relations with Joseph *after* the birth. And if that seems wrong to you, then you too have unbiblical views of sex. It says,

and [Joseph] did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

The two words translated as "till" implies that Joseph had sexual relations with her afterwards.

But Roman Catholics are appalled at any such thought because they have been infected with the false idea that marital relations inevitably involve one in sin. They have taught that it would be blasphemy to affirm any defilement of the womb that had held Jesus. And we say, "What defilement? God honors the marriage bed." Hebrews 13:4 denies that sexual relations defile anything. Indeed, it says, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the marriage bed undefiled..." And the word for marriage bed is κοίτη, from which we get coitus or sexual relations. They are not defiling.

Third, Mary would have actually been in sin if the two of them had abstained forever from intimacy since God commanded married couples to be fruitful and multiply. It's a command of God.

Fourth, it wouldn't be a proper marriage if there wasn't eventual consummation. Indeed, Exodus 21 says that deliberate failure to have sexual relations is such a serious sin, it can be grounds for divorce. Verses 10-11 say, "he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her sexual rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she may go out free..." She can divorce him. Why? Because it is a breaking of the marriage covenant.

Fifth, Jesus is spoken of as Mary's *firstborn* Son in both Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7. The latter verse says, "And she brought forth her firstborn Son..." That implies other born sons for Mary. If He is the first, then there was obviously a second.

Sixth, Paul condemns the asceticism of this sort of thinking in Colossians 2 and 1 Timothy 4. I won't read those touch not, taste not, handle not passages, but they castigate the idea that these things are sinful.

Seventh, in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul commands,

3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Eighth, the Scripture explicitly says that Jesus did indeed have brothers and sisters. He had four brothers, and at least two sisters. In Matthew 12:46 it says, "His mother and brothers stood outside." Mark 3:31 says, "His brothers and His mother came..." Luke 8:19 says, "Then His mother and brothers came to Him..." John 2:12 says, "After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days." In John 7:3 it says, "His brothers therefore said to Him." John 7:5 says, "For even His brothers did not believe in Him." John 7:10 says, "But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret." Acts 1:14 says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." Psalm 69:8 is a prophecy of Jesus saying, "I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children." Yes, His mother had children (plural). And there are other references to His sisters.

It is inconceivable that Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Psalm 69 would all use the normal terms for brothers and sisters if they really meant cousins (as Eastern Orthodox say). There was a perfectly good word for a cousin. Roman Catholics have a different theory - they say that Joseph was married to someone else before he was married to Mary and that these were children from that previous marriage. But Psalm 69 speaks of His *mother's* children. D. A. Carson explains why this and a similar theory are a real stretch. He says,

yet it is very doubtful whether such a meaning is valid here, for it raises insuperable problems. For instance, if "brothers" refers to Joseph's sons by an earlier marriage, not Jesus but Joseph's firstborn would have been legal heir to David's throne. The second theory—that "brothers" refers to sons of a sister of Mary also named "Mary"—faces the unlikelihood of two sisters having the same name. All things considered, the attempts to extend the meaning of "brothers" in this pericope, despite McHugh's best efforts, are nothing less than far-fetched exegesis in support of a dogma that originated much later than the NT.<sup>7</sup>

If these eight points are true, then it means that Mary is a wonderful example in yet another area of life - marriage. She is a godly example of self-control (because they *did* have to exercise a great deal of self-control before Jesus was born - something that couples can

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<sup>7</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew–Mark* (Revised Edition), ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 345.

learn to do today). There are times when you should abstain. So she is a godly example of self-control.

But she is also a model of how to embrace intimacy, labor, birth, having multiple children, and of being a faithful wife to her faithful husband. She is a wonderful model of faith. She knew what it meant to miss sleep because of sick and crying babies. She was a real mom to real children - not some unrealistic figment of our imagination that no one can relate to.

### **Falsehood #5 - Assumption of Mary; that her body did not decay, but was taken into heaven (but see Gen. 3:19; Job 34:15; Eccl. 3:20; 12:7; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22)**

But there is a fifth falsehood that robs Mary of reality and in the process robs us of a wonderful role model. We are clearing away the rubbish so that we can see what a great role model Mary was. While there are some Roman Catholics who believe Mary died and was immediately resurrected and caught up to heaven before her body could decay, the *official* teaching of Rome denies that Mary died. For example, in 1950, Pope Pius XII stated dogmatically that Mary did not die. This is one area where the Eastern Orthodox part company with Romanists. They admit that she did die and say that her body is not yet raised. In contrast, Pope Pius XII said that Romanists must believe that she was taken body and soul into heaven without dying. The Roman Catholic Catechism says,

“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.”<sup>8</sup>

Let me read some Scriptures that say the exact opposite: “All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.” (Job 34:15 KJV). “All go to one place... all return to dust” (Ecc. 3:20). “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). “as in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:21). I think it is pretty clear that even after the time of Mary, the apostles said that all die because all are sinners.

Roman Catholics are trying to elevate Mary by giving her all of these Christ-like characteristics, but in the process they paint an unrealistic woman whom no one can relate to. No, Mary faced the death of Jesus with pain and faith and she faced her own death with faith. She was a real woman whom we can relate to.

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<sup>8</sup> Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 252.

**Falsehood #6 - Mary suffered for sin as co-redeemer (pp. 209-210,211; but see Mark 10:45; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1:18-19; Rom. 3:24; 5:10; Col. 1:13,14; Heb. 9:14-15; Rev. 1:5)**

Falsehood #6 is absolute blasphemy. Roman Catholic popes and councils have declared that Mary is a co-redeemer with Jesus, using her merits to help to redeem mankind. In 1935 Pope Pius XI called her co-redemptrix. Pope John Paul II did the same in a 1985 speech. Bernard stated the false doctrine this way: “[Mary is called] the gate of heaven, because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her.” They say you can’t be saved without *her* provision of redemption. In 1997 Pope John Paul II said,

“Mary ... co-operated during the event [of the cross] itself and in the role of mother; thus her co-operation *embraces the whole of Christ’s saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind.* In union with Christ and in submission to him, *she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity...* Trusting in this maternal cooperation, let us turn to Mary, imploring her help in all our needs.”<sup>9</sup>

But more official statements have said the same thing. The second Vatican council stated,

“Rightly, therefore, the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating *in the work of man’s salvation* through faith and obedience.”<sup>10</sup>

“Taken up to heaven *she did not lay aside this saving office* ...”<sup>11</sup>

They said she was co-redeemer in two aspects. First, she offered up Jesus as a sacrifice on the cross and secondly, she offered herself up as a sacrifice (or what they call a holocaust). They say,

“She it was who, immune from all sin, personal or inherited, and ever more closely united with her Son, offered him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father together with the holocaust of her maternal rights and motherly love...”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, Audiences of Pope John Paul II (English) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Vatican Council II : The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, electronic ed. of the new revised ed., vol. 1, Vatican Collection (Northport NY: Costello Publishing, 1992), 416.

<sup>11</sup> Vatican Council II : The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, electronic ed. of the new revised ed., vol. 1, Vatican Collection (Northport NY: Costello Publishing, 1992), 418–419.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*. For another translation see Henry Denzinger and Karl Rahner, eds., *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 619.

Mary suffered and as it were nearly died with her suffering Son, for the salvation of mankind she renounced her mother's rights and as far as it depended on her, offered her Son to placate divine justice so we may well say that she with Christ redeemed mankind.<sup>13</sup>

*She* with Christ redeemed mankind. Based on all these official pronouncements of the church. Pope Pius XII said that Mary, in a subordinate role, had a "part with him in the redemption of the human race."<sup>14</sup>

Wow! The church of the first few centuries would have been aghast that such blasphemous statements would one day be said about Mary. They would have treated these popes and the Second Vatican Council as antichrist. Humble Mary herself would have wept that her name was being used to undermine the Gospel - a Gospel that she trusted.

Rather than Mary offering up Jesus as a sacrifice, Hebrews 9:14 says that Christ "*offered Himself* without blemish to God." Rather than Mary crushing the head of Satan at the cross (as Rome teaches), Genesis 3:15 says that the *seed* of the woman (that's Jesus) would crush the serpent's head. Rather than there being two redeemers, Scripture is quite clear that there is only one. It is in God's "Son" that "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). We are only justified "through the redemption which is Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). God says, "I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer" (Is. 49:26). And Mary put her trust in the only redeemer, speaking of Him in Luke 1:47 as "God my Savior." She is a woman of faith whom we can all imitate, not a super-human redeemer. She trusted in Christ alone.

### **Falsehood #7 - Mary is co-mediatrix of all grace (but see 1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:13-14; 1 Pet. 5:7)**

The seventh falsehood is the claim that Mary is a co-mediatrix of all God's grace. So where the previous point dealt with her supposedly suffering to redeem mankind, this means that all grace is mediated through her to us and all our prayers have to be mediated through Mary to Christ. The Catholic Catechism 969 says, "Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix." And if that's not bad enough, it gets worse. The official teaching of the church is that "nothing comes to us except through Mary's mediation."<sup>15</sup> If you listen to Our Lady of Fatima radio program you hear them repeatedly say that one could be saved without Mary's mediation. Rome calls her "the most powerful

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<sup>13</sup> Pope Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*. But similar language can be seen in Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," no. 58.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Ad Coeli Reginam*.

<sup>15</sup> Pope Leo XII, *Octobri Mense*.

mediatrix and advocate of the whole world..."<sup>16</sup> "Mary is all powerful with her divine Son."<sup>17</sup> And don't think that only the intellectuals in Rome know this. One of the traditional concluding prayers of the Rosary is "Hail, Holy Queen," which explicitly says that Mary is our hope and it is to her that we turn.<sup>18</sup>

This is all painful to hear, I know. So why am I inflicting these painful things on a congregation that doesn't believe in Mariolatry. Because at least some of you don't understand why we Presbyterians don't accept Romanist baptism. It is because they are not a true Church. The Westminster Confession of Faith rightly calls Rome a synagogue of Satan. Others of you have relatives and friends who are already Roman Catholic and/or becoming Roman Catholic, and it is critical that you see that they are playing with witchcraft and demonism. And I don't say that without massive evidence - Rome is full of witchcraft and demonism.

Let me read some Scripture that opposes this particular false teaching: 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Just one mediator, not two - one in the same sense that there is only one God. Jesus over and over invites us to come directly to Him. In John 14:13 He said,

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Some Roman Catholics claim that Mary is more caring since she is a mother. But Peter tells us, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

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<sup>16</sup> Pope Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, no. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Benedict XV, *Fausto Appetente Die*.

<sup>18</sup> "It says,  
Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this exile show to us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary." International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *The Liturgy of the Hours with Supplement*, vol. 1 (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1975-1992), 1188.

## **Falsehood #8 - Mary as the Queen of Heaven (but see Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19,25; 1 Tim. 6:15)**

The eighth falsehood is the claim that Mary is the Queen of Heaven, and that “Mary sitteth at the right hand of her Son”<sup>19</sup> and her dominion is the same as His, extending over all heaven and earth.<sup>20</sup>

Did you know that the Bible identifies the Queen of Heaven as a powerful demon that wanted to be worshiped in the Old Testament? The only time that the phrase “Queen of heaven” occurs, it is reference to Ishtar. And they worshiped Ishtar in a similar way to how Roman Catholics venerate Mary today. In Jeremiah 44:17 they burned incense to the queen of heaven just as Roman Catholics do today. I have five references to the Queen of heaven in the Old Testament, and they are all references to this same demonic ruler (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19,25). Rome is engaged in witchcraft in their rituals. Against any supposed other human ruler of heaven, 1 Timothy 6:15 declares that there is only *one* Potentate, not two, and He is Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In complete contrast to her supposedly having authority over all flesh, on the cross Jesus put her under the protection and authority of the apostle John. In Acts 1 she operates under the authority of the apostles. There is not the slightest hint that she is a queen. And if they want to appeal to Revelation 12 as being Mary giving birth to Jesus rather than the church, they will have to admit that they were wrong about Mary not having pain in childbirth because verse 2 says, “Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.” They can’t have their cake and eat it too. But in any case, Revelation 12 doesn’t speak of that woman as being the Queen of heaven.

## **Falsehood #9 - Mary as the Mother of the Church (but see Matt. 12:46-50; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 12:13,27)**

The ninth falsehood is that Mary is called the Mother of the Church.<sup>21</sup> But in Matthew 12:46-50 Jesus minimized even her role as mother in *His* life, let alone over the church. She was explicitly said to be *outside* the building, and Jesus did nothing to let her in. She obviously *is* in the church, but she comes in on His terms as a member equal with other members of the church who do His will. Jesus doesn’t do Mary’s will; Mary (like all other believers) comes to do His will. And so Acts 1:14 shows Mary to be just one among others who pray to God on equal terms. It shows her to be a member of the church, not the mother of the church. 1 Corinthians 12:13,27 do the the same thing.

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<sup>19</sup> Pope Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, no. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Pope Leo XII, *Magnae Dei Matris*.

<sup>21</sup> Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd Ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 251.

And in this too she is a model for women today. God did not ordain for women to rule the church. Mary was not a feminist. All feminism is a product of demonism. In stark contrast, Mary was a faithful servant of the church in the book of Acts.

### **Falsehood #10 - in death we must entrust ourselves wholly to Mary's care (but see Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Cor 15; Rom. 15:12; 1 Pet 1:21; 1 John 3:3)**

Falsehood #10 is stated this way in the Catholic Catechism (2677) - it calls us "to surrender 'the hour of our death' wholly to her care." Get that word "wholly." Why would they do that? Because (as Pope John Paul worded it) she is our "hope in death."<sup>22</sup>

But Philippians 1:21-23 shows that Christ was Paul's *only* hope in death. 1 Corinthians 15 ties the hope of the resurrection to Jesus alone. There is not a single Scripture that calls Christians to put their hope in Mary, but Romans 15:12 says about Jesus, "In Him the Gentiles shall hope." 1 Peter 1:21 commands us to put our hope in God. 1 John 3:3 describes true believers as those whose hope is in Christ. Even Mary's magnificat shows that she put her hope wholly in God (v. 47) and looked to God for mercy (v. 50) and threw off all self-trusting pride (in verses 48,51-52). And we will be singing that song later.

### **Falsehood #11 - We should venerate Mary (see their distinctions between latria, hyperdoulia, and doulia) and must pray to her because she has rich compassion and is our Advocate (but see Ps. 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; 1 John 2:1-2).**

Falsehood #11 is that we are commanded to venerate Mary and pray to her. They try to avoid the charge of worshiping a creature or deifying Mary by making artificial distinctions between three kinds of veneration- saying that latria worship can be given to God alone, while doulia veneration and prayer can be made to saints, and a greater hyperdoulia veneration and prayer can be made to Mary. Why do they pray to Mary? Because as a mother she supposedly has greater compassion than God.

But Psalm 111:4 says God is "full of compassion." That means you can't get any more compassionate. And to say that Mary has more compassion than Jesus is to deny that Jesus is full of compassion.

And far from relieving Protestant concerns about deifying Mary, for Mary to be able to hear billions of prayers around the world at every moment and to take those prayers to Jesus, she would have to be omniscient and omnipresent. Her ability to hear all prayers is indeed

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<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Homilies of Pope John Paul II (English) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014).

deifying her. It is making her into a goddess - actually, more than a goddess since goddesses aren't claimed to be omniscient or omnipresent.

There are many other false doctrines about Mary in Rome.<sup>23</sup> In James McCarthy's book, *The Gospel of Rome*, that I have pictured in your outline, he gives extensive documentation proving that the official declarations of Rome about Mary are identical to the descriptions of Jesus and God. For example, she is called "most holy," "most powerful," "the Seat of Wisdom," "the Morning Star," and as Pope Leo XIII worded it, the power "in her hands is all but unlimited." I believe that Mary would be deeply pained if she knew what Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy are doing in her name.

## Who she was

### A descendant of Judah (Luke 3:23-38 is her genealogy and Matt 1:1-16 is Joseph's; cf. Heb. 7:11-14; Rom. 1:3)

So let's move on to who she was. Mary was a descendant of Judah. There are some (like Bojidar) who claim that she was of the tribe of Levi, but Hebrews 7:11-14 is quite clear that "our Lord arose from Judah" and was from "a different tribe" than Levi. Romans 1:3 also contradicts that theory and says that Jesus was "the seed of David according to the flesh" and not just according to adoption. Jesus was according to the flesh from Mary and according to adoption from Joseph, so to be the seed of David according to the flesh, Mary had to be descended from David. I won't delve into it, but Luke 3:23-38 is Mary's genealogy. It starts "being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph," the idea being that it was wrongly supposed. So instead of mentioning Joseph's father (Jacob) like Matthew's genealogy does, the first male mentioned in Jesus' ancestry was Heli, the father of Mary. So some supposed Jesus to be of Joseph, but He was really of Heli.

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<sup>23</sup> And as to their assertion that she has more clout with Jesus than we do, John Phillips states, "In the Gospel record of the ministry of Jesus there are only two occasions (prior to the crucifixion) when Mary appears (here and in John 2:1-4). Both times she seeks to have a say in His affairs and both times she is reprov'd by Him. Thus there is no basis for prayer to her on the ground that since she is the Lord's mother, He will listen to her and do as she says. Such passages as these in Matthew 12 and John 2 anticipate and repudiate Roman Catholic dogmas that exalt Mary to the status of deity, teach the bodily assumption of Mary into Heaven, and make Mary coredemp'trix with Jesus." John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch, 2014), Mt 12:46-47.

## Mary as Theotokos - the miracle of the Incarnation (Luke 1:26-56; 2:26-56)

Now, I do want to deal with something that evangelicals sometimes get nervous about if they haven't studied it much. The Councils of Chalcedon and Ephesus both declared Mary to be *Theotokos* or the God-bearer. They were very careful not to call her Μητηρ Θεοῦ or Mother of God - which would be wrong. That's what modern Rome does. Literally *Theotokos* means God bearer. It means that the Person whom Mary bore in the womb was not just a human; He was already the God-man, and she didn't just bear an empty shell of a body. She bore a Person, and that Person was the God-man. Protestants at the Reformation had absolutely no problem affirming *Theotokos*, and neither should we. She bore the God-man as to His manhood (which the creed was careful to put in there). Even though His divinity could not hunger, thirst, or die, He as a Person experienced that, and it was the one Person with two natures that they were trying to defend. They were not worshiping Mary. That came much later.

Now let's look at her conception. Luke 2 affirms that there was no human father. God the Spirit supernaturally created a human body and soul from Mary. Yes - both body and soul were created from Mary. Not surprisingly, she was confused as to how all this would happen, but she showed faith by submitting to God's will. And in this she is a model to all of us. Let me read Luke 2:26-38.

Luke 1:26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

Luke 1:29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Luke 1:34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible."

Luke 1:38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Submission even without fully understanding. She knew enough to know how to submit, but she didn't know exactly how God would do this, or when, or the consequences. And we too must be ready to obey God rather than resisting His will. She is a model of sweet submission to God's will.

God then formed the new life within her, and she went immediately to her cousin, Elizabeth's house. Verses 39-45.

Luke 1:39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Blessings do flow from a submissive faith. But we will see shortly that pain can also flow from doing God's will. But Mary prophetically bursts into a song of trust and praise to God. Verses 46-56.

Luke 1:46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. 49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

Luke 1:56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

I can only imagine the three months of excitement, and conversations with Elizabeth, and discussions that went back and forth between these cousins. She would need this moral support for the time of pain that would follow. And Christian women today need godly friendships and the ability to process the things that God has laid on their hearts.

## She had troubles

### Troubles because of the pregnancy (Matt. 1:18-24)

But what about Mary's parents? Were they disappointed in her? Or did they believe her story? We aren't told. The true story certainly didn't seem to get to *Joseph* right away. Matthew 1:18-19 say,

Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

She was found with child. Her parents found out. The neighbors found out. And word got to Joseph. Talk about humiliation. Mary knows that she is in the right, but she is immediately being accused of fornication - of being in the wrong. How do I know that? First, Joseph is planning to divorce her for it. Second, there is evidence that the gossip chain continued during Christ's whole lifetime - gossip that He was born out of wedlock. Even the Pharisees twice accuse him of that in John 8. In verse 19 they say, "Where is your father," an idiom around the world that means, "You're a bastard. You are illegitimate."<sup>24</sup> In verse 41 they

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<sup>24</sup> While a minority view among commentators, it fits in with the majority view of verse 41, which definitely is questioning whether he was born out of wedlock. Guzik says, "Where is

say, “We were not born of fornication...” The emphatic “we” in the Greek means, “we in opposition to You.”<sup>25</sup> This is the first of multiple painful things that both Mary and Jesus will have to endure - the false charge of immorality. But there is no indication that she grew bitter over this. She trusted that if this was God’s will, she would handle it by God’s grace. We too need to learn how to handle gossip and slander without getting bent out of shape. It’s hard, but we can do it. We can cast our burdens on the Lord and thank Him for these ways of crucifying our pride and keeping us humble. Even slander can be a gift if it crucifies our pride.

But sadly, it wasn’t just the rabble in Nazareth who believed this false rumor. Joseph did too. Indeed, he planned to divorce her. Her loved one turned against her. He could have had her stoned for infidelity. Talk about a stressful moment for Mary. Matthew 1:19-25 gives that part of the story.

Matt. 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

The text emphasizes the fact that he was just - He believed in following the law of God. And the law of God allowed for divorce, or this would not be a just action. But he was also kind. He no doubt felt sorry for her and didn’t want to make a public scandal so he considered filing for divorce privately. But again, God allowed Mary to face false accusations. She might have tried to defend herself, but who is going to believe her story? So God Himself intervened on her behalf. Verse 20:

20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived

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Your father? The Pharisees intended this as a deeply cutting insult to Jesus. They refer to His virgin birth, and to the rumors that it was not a miraculous conception, but an illicit one.” David Guzik, John, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Jn 8:13–20. Kanagaraj agrees, saying, “Jesus’ address of God as “the Father who sent me” triggered the sarcastic question from his opponents, “Where is your Father?” (8:19), which may mean, “Who is your Father?,” implying that Jesus does not have a legitimate earthly father.” Jey J. Kanagaraj, John, ed. Michael F. Bird and Craig Keener, vol. 4, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 91.

<sup>25</sup> “They answer that they are “not illegitimate children,” which is a very curious response. They may be reviling Jesus. While they would not have given countenance to the Christian doctrine of the Virgin Birth, the Jews may well have known that there was something unusual about the birth of Jesus and have chosen to allude to it in this way.<sup>83</sup> Their emphatic “we” sets them over against someone else who they imply was born in this way. By contrast with the unfortunate manner of birth of which they speak they maintain that they themselves are children of God (they go on to accuse him of being a Samaritan [v. 48], and they may be thinking that the Samaritans were not legitimate Jews; cf. 2 Kings 17:24).” Leon Morris, The Gospel according to John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 409–410.

in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Matt. 1:22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Matt. 1:24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

If God Himself had revealed this message to you by His angel, you would be very motivated to keep your hot hands off of her till after the baby was born. Both Joseph and Mary showed great self-control - an example to all the young men and women in our midst. They had an excuse from the world’s perspective to be intimate - because they were married. But they feared God above all else. And in this both of them were models to us.

### Troubles in traveling during pregnancy

But Luke reveals that there were other troubles that Mary faced during the pregnancy. Caesar Augustus made one of the most disruptive decrees ever - that everyone had to be registered in the towns of their ancestry. Yikes. The timing for that would have been very inconvenient for Mary because she was almost ready to deliver. This would mean a 75 mile ride on a donkey. Riding a donkey was better than walking, but riding a donkey is not exactly comfortable for a full-term pregnancy either. It’s constant bouncing. And 75 miles is further away than Lincoln is from Omaha. Furthermore, Bethlehem was 2300 feet above sea level, and they had to travel through rugged mountainous terrain, so there was a fair bit of climbing uphill. But God was in this decree since it was imperative that Jesus be born in Bethlehem to fulfill prophecy.

The point is that it was God’s will for her to face this discomfort and inconvenience. And if it was God’s will for *her*, you cannot see any of your discomforts and pains and inconveniences as outside of God’s will. Yes, we can blame tyrants for their evil actions, but God is still in it. Galatians 4:4 says that this baby came into the world at God’s *perfect* timing. It was not bad timing; it was perfect timing - the fullness of time. And all *your* circumstances are perfectly ordered by God. That doesn’t mean you can’t pray against the tyranny of a Caesar who decrees such stupid things, but make sure that doesn’t carry over into complaining against God. God was over Caesar and over these troubles.

### Troubles in finding a place for the birth

Well, the troubles just kept compounding. Mary is starting to feel the baby coming and they go from inn to inn and from house to house and they cannot find a spare room for her to stay in. It appears that they will be homeless. It’s easy to think that God is not in control when you are in desperate situations, but God is in *your* less-than-ideal temporary solutions just like He was in *their* less-than-ideal stable. They had to improvise on the fly and laid Jesus in a feeding trough for animals.

Now, Joseph appears to have been a sharp guy, and he was skilled as a carpenter, so I doubt they were there in that stable for very long. By the time the wise men come to worship

Jesus in Matthew 2, verse 11 says they were living in a house. So trusting God and doing what you can to better your situation should not be seen as opposites. They did both, and as they trusted *and* were responsible, God supplied them with enough finances through the wise men that they had plenty to last them during their sojourn in Egypt.

### **The pain of circumcision was a commitment to God**

Of course, the pain of Christ's circumcision on day eight was a covenant sign of their commitment to God, come hell or high water. And Paul called Jesus' crucifixion a circumcision - so there is a sense in which it is a sign of the family's commitment to God unto death.

### **Simeon's prophecy of future pain (Luke 2:22-24,34)**

Luke 2:22-24 shows what happened thirty-three days after Christ's circumcision. It says,

Luke 2:22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

This is just one of several indications that Joseph and Mary sought to keep God's laws completely. And the fact that they offered two pigeons shows that they were extremely poor - yet another trouble. God's highly favored one was poor. Don't look down on poor people.

And Joseph and Mary dedicated Jesus to the Lord as we too must do with our children. Simeon blessed Jesus and prophesied that He would be the Messiah. And He blessed Joseph and Mary (which would have been cool), but also introduced a sombre note into that blessing, saying this in verses 34-35:

Luke 2:34 ... "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Mary would have a sword piercing through her soul as well. Some interpret that as the pain she would experience in seeing her Son mocked, persecuted, and crucified. Others (because of the context) see it as the pain she would experience as she was sidelined in Christ's ministry. Either way - a sword piercing your soul means inward pain. And Mary experienced both kinds of inward pain in the years to come. She was blessed, yes, but with blessing often comes great suffering. Don't think there is something wrong with you simply because you suffer. Mary, God's highly favored one had suffering.

### **Troubles with Herod and fleeing to Egypt & God's marvelous provision through it all (Matt. 2:7-18)**

And of course, the fleeing to Egypt was another trouble Mary had to endure. This story should probably be read in full. Matthew 2:7-18 tells what happened after the Wise men from the East found out that Jesus was in Bethlehem.

Matt. 2:7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

Matt. 2:9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I'll stop there for a bit. Notice that they venerate Jesus, not Mary. And they honor Jesus with their personal presence and with the sacrifice of their long inconvenient travel. That is one language of love. They honor Him with worship. That is another language of love. And they give three gifts, with gift giving being yet another language of love. Gold symbolized the divinity of Jesus. Frankincense symbolized His priestly intercession. And Myrrh symbolized his death. But all three were so costly that these gifts would help Joseph and Mary through the tough times of the next couple of years in Egypt. God was good in providing for them in their poverty. Verse 12:

Matt. 2:12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Matt. 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

Matt. 2:14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Matt. 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."

Trouble probably dogged them their whole life because Satan hated Jesus and wanted to devour Jesus. Revelation 12 says that as soon as Jesus was born, Satan tried to kill Jesus, and he used Herod as his tool. And don't think that Satan can't manipulate unbelieving civic officers to persecute you today; he can. 1 John 5:19 says "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." Don't be surprised when our civil government does Satanic things - they are under the sway of the wicked one. Jesus told the leaders of Israel,

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Satan, the arch murderer, can move civic officers to murder - and he has in America, with millions of babies having been murdered and many having been murdered in ungodly wars. Satan, the arch liar, can move unbelievers to lie - and he has in America, with lies permeating almost all the actions of Congress, various agencies, and the media.

But God can also protect those (like Mary and Joseph) who are faithful to him. He can protect with guidance, with finances, with jobs in new places, with housing, with places to flee to, and with protection during travel. Joseph and Mary are wonderful models of how we can trust God to provide for us during the toughest of times. Even finding sanctuary in other countries can be a good thing.

### **Troubles when they came back to Nazareth (Matt. 4:15; John 7:41; Luke 13:2; John 1:46)**

When God took out Herod, Joseph had the family come back to Israel - but God warned him not to go to Judea, so he moved to Nazareth where he set up his former business of carpentry. But let's consider why Galilee and Nazareth could be places of trouble as well.

Galilee was the most despised of the provinces by the religious leaders. Matthew 4:15 speaks of that province as Galilee of the Gentiles because there were so many Gentiles there. They thought of it as being defiled, and in many ways it was. In John 7:41 people were dubious about any good thing in Galilee and said, "Shall Messiah come out of Galilee?" Galilee was despised as a place of sinners. In Luke 13:2 Jesus builds on this reputation and says, "Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans." Even their speech and customs were considered uncouth and received the persecution of mocking. That's another kind of trouble. It was Peter's Galilean accent that got him into trouble at Christ's trial and made others say, "Surely you are a Galilean too, for your speech shows it." In Acts 2 the crowds are amazed that Galileans could preach the Gospel. Galilee did not have the best of reputations.

But you know, if Galilee was bad, Nazareth was the pits. Remember Nathaniel's doubtful statement when he was told about Jesus? He said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) Nazareth was the main Roman military garrison in Israel, and like other Garrison towns, it led to a great deal of prostitution and other sinful activities. And you may remember that some of the disciples were former zealots dedicated to killing as many Romans as they could. They carried a concealed knife in their sleeves and were very adept at quickly letting the knife slip into their hands and immediately knifing a Roman and then mixing with the crowd as if nothing had happened. Well, since Nazareth was the main Roman garrison, it became the main holdout for the zealots. So Nazareth was a hot bed of prostitution, theft, rowdiness and violence. And Christ came into the midst of all that. I can just imagine Joseph and Mary's relatives saying, "Hey, don't move into Nazareth. It's a dangerous place." But as Ron Dotzler used to say, "The safest place to be is in the center of God's will."

### **Jesus was different - at the temple (Luke 2:41-52)**

But Mary experienced trouble even when Jesus moved into His teens. Jesus was a different child, and they didn't always quite know what to do with Him. Luke 2, beginning to read at verse 41.

Luke 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. 43 When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His

mother did not know it; 44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. 46 Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. 48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

Some of you parents can relate to the anxiety that filled them. They may have been worried that He had been kidnapped. The longer it took to find Him, the more anxious they became. Verse 49.

Luke 2:49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

There were a lot of things about Jesus that they did not understand. This was part of the pain that Mary faced. They want Him to sympathize with his earthly father and mother's anxiety, and He is mystified that they would worry at all. If they wanted understanding, He didn't give it. And He points out that His primary concern in life is to be about His heavenly Father's business. It's not that Jesus was not in submission to His parents. He was. Verses 51-52 go on:

Luke 2:51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

And I'll just comment briefly on Mary's inward responses. Verse 51 says, "His mother kept all these things in her heart." Earlier, when the Shepherds came to their stable and worshiped Jesus and told them of what the angels had said and done, Luke 2:19 says, "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." She doesn't appear to be someone who verbalizes things a lot. She was a thinker. And she kept these revelations in her heart. She reviewed them and didn't let them go. Though you may have a different personality than Mary, you can imitate her in giving yourself to memorization of and meditation on God's Word. The Bible is filled with His revelations to you.

Let me help you notice one other inward response. Luke 2:33 says that Joseph and Mary marveled at the prophecies that Simeon and Anna brought. They already knew Jesus would be the Messiah, so it wasn't as if Simeon and Anna were telling them something they didn't know. But when a new revelation came through others, they marveled. And we should approach each new revelation of Scripture with the same wonder and awe - that God cares for us enough to reveal His Word to us. When there is a constant freshness about God's presence in our lives, it leads us to marvel over and over again.

### **The kids had issues with Jesus that they took with them into adulthood (John 7:5; Mark 3:20)**

Where the temple scene is one passage that gives us hints that Jesus was different, there are two other passages that hint at how his brothers had a hard time relating to Jesus. He was different. And different people are often persecuted and treated poorly. It's sad, but it is true to life. The first passage is John 7:5, which says, "For even His brothers did not

believe in Him.” If they didn’t believe in Him, then they must have thought His claims to deity and being the Messiah made Him a nutcase. And that’s what the second passage clearly says. Mark 3:20 shows his family being concerned about Him, and it says, “they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, ‘He is out of His mind.’” In fact, many commentators say that this was why Mary and His brothers later wanted to talk to Jesus in the passage that we read at the beginning of the sermon. These commentators believe that His family was concerned about His imbalanced life and wanted Him to take it easy and to not get Himself in trouble. In any case, at least the first two passages hint that His brothers, who didn’t believe in Jesus until after His resurrection, had a hard time relating with Him. He was a goody two shoes who could never do wrong. Why is *He* never disciplines? We are always getting the discipline. This too would have put stress on Mary. Mary could relate to your family squabbles and stress. But when Jesus corrected her in John 2 and Matthew 12, she responded with a good attitude. She didn’t push her agenda in John 2. Instead, she told her servants to follow Christ’s lead. He’s the boss.

### Joseph died

But we are getting ahead of our outline. The next trouble that she faced was Joseph dying. That’s always a stressful time. By the time Jesus had entered ministry, the dad was nowhere to be found, and it appears that Jesus had taken over the carpentry business. This means that Jesus was acting as the head of the home. That too might have created some stress for the siblings - but He was after all the oldest - contrary to Roman Catholic theology.

### Jesus grows as a plant out of dry ground (Is. 53:2)

All of this illustrates the truth of Isaiah 53:2, which says this.

2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. 3 He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

That too would have been painful for Mary - that Jesus was not good looking. Moms want a good looking son, right? He wasn’t good looking. He was despised by others, was not desired by others - though Mary herself loved Him dearly. Yes, there were men who saw Jesus with favor as He grew up. Luke affirms that. But there were others who rejected and despised Him. But I especially want to focus on Isaiah’s prophecy that Jesus would grow up as a root out of dry ground. That means His growth had nothing to do with His circumstances. There was no good reason why He should flourish. All around Him in Nazareth was dry ground. But if that was true of Jesus, it was also true of Joseph and Mary. The dry ground could explain why the *brothers* were not believers, but Joseph and Mary trusted in God and flourished in dry ground as well. You may have nothing good happening around you, but like Mary, I would urge you to drink of the living waters that flow from God’s throne on a daily basis rather than constantly looking for broken cisterns that can hold no water. Dry ground forces us to find our life in God.

## **She had children by Joseph - 4 brothers and at least 2 sisters (Matt. 1:25; 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 1:14)**

In the introduction I've already discussed the fact that Mary had four other sons and at least two sisters. Mary models having large families. Her ministry was first and foremost to her family, and secondarily a ministry to others. And we will see that she did minister outside the home. And by the way - don't judge parents who have unbelieving children. Mary's children were unbelieving. We don't always know the circumstances for these things, but for at least a period of time God allowed this most blessed woman, highly favored by God, to have unbelieving children. If you are a perfectionist, think about that. And don't give up hope on your unbelieving children. It was only after these brothers had been adults for some time that they came to faith. Don't allow your negative thinking to kill your faith in covenant succession.

## **Jesus helped Mary to transition from family relations to spiritual**

But let's look at how Jesus helped Mary to transition from family relations being primary to spiritual relations being primary as He grew up.

### **At the temple (Luke 2:41-51)**

We've already looked at how twelve year old Jesus was helping His mother to remember that He had come into this world to serve the heavenly Father's purpose, and she needed to be good with that.

### **It appears that Jesus took over the carpentry business**

It does appear that Jesus took over the carpentry business. In this he was being a provider for His mother.

### **He must have left the business in the care of one of his brothers**

He must have left the business in the care of one of his brothers. So Mary no doubt continued to do whatever things were needed to help that business to prosper. There is no reason to doubt that Mary helped with the family business.

### **Wedding at Cana**

Let's read the story of the wedding at Cana because that too shows Jesus transitioning her. This is John 2, verse 1.

John 2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

This shows to many commentators that *Mary* was hosting this wedding party. So she was a woman of many talents, but also shows that she was willing to work with her hands. Some have thought that this may have been a family member's wedding, but it could just as easily

been the case that this was a side business that Mary engaged in to supplement the family's income. The point is that when kids are grown, there is no reason why women cannot do more things outside the home. But she is a bit stressed out and wants to see if Jesus will help. He has helped out so many times in the past. But verse 4 shows a mild rebuke:

John 2:4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

He could have called her mother, but He calls her woman. Though she will always be His mother in one sense, her *role* as mother is going to disappear. He could have been solicitous of *her* concerns, but He wants her to realize that her concerns must now be subservient to *His* concerns. *His* Kingdom will now dictate all requests, not vice versa. One commentator worded it this way:

Thus family relationships were not to be the determining factors in Jesus' life. As his brothers later could not force Jesus' timing of his destiny (John 7:3–9), so his mother here was not to govern his activity... Although a Jewish mother might normally be able to exercise pressure on her children, it was not to be the case with Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

So this was not only a correction of Mary, but it is a correction of Roman Catholic theology. And Mary gets it. No longer does she even boss the servants around. She acknowledges *Jesus* to be Lord in verse 5:

John 2:5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

And the servants obey Jesus - even when it seems foolish to do so. And it is discovered that He turned water into wine. Verse 12 says,

John 2:12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

Notice that from now on, Mary and her family are called to follow Jesus. So it appears that they left their family business - at least for a time. This put additional pressures - especially since the brothers try to push Jesus around in John 7 even though that same chapter says that they don't believe in Him. But stresses didn't keep Mary from following Jesus.

## Who is my mother?

We've dealt with the "who is my mother" passage - another critical transition passage.

## Luke 11:27-28

But let me skip ahead to Luke 11:27-28.

Luke 11:27 And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"

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<sup>26</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 155.

Luke 11:28 But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

The New King James interprets the Greek grammar here properly. There are three ways of taking the grammar, and one way is that Mary is *not* blessed. That's an impossible interpretation. The second way is that both are blessed. The third way that is more consistent with Luke's ways of using this grammar is that Mary was indeed blessed for bearing Jesus, but there is a far greater blessing for simply hearing God's Words and keeping them.<sup>27</sup> Since Mary hears God's Words and keeps them, she obviously has both blessings (so she is in one sense most blessed), but Jesus is emphasizing that the blessing that any believer can have through obedience is a greater blessing than being the mother of Jesus. That's exactly what that text says. I don't know about you, but to me that is a tremendous encouragement to holiness. Holiness brings even greater blessing than being the mother of Jesus.

### Jesus gives Mary to the apostle John (John 19:26-27)

There is one last transition that Jesus made for His mother, and that is seen in John 19 while Jesus was dying on the cross. His mother was nearby, as was the apostle John. The passage says,

John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

Notice again that He doesn't call her His mother, though that is obviously true, and John says it is true. But Jesus is deliberately de-emphasizing her *role* of being His mother, and He is giving her to be *John's* mother. From now on, as far as role is concerned, she is John's mother. There is a transition here. This too is a rebuke to the Mariolatry of Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy that makes Mary the key to our relationship with Jesus. Jesus says "No."

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<sup>27</sup> Stein says, "11:28 Blessed rather. The meaning of the Greek term "rather" (menoun) is unclear. It is used only four times in the NT, but it has three possible meanings: (1) adversative—"on the contrary," or "no, but rather," as in Rom 9:20; 10:18. This would repudiate the blessing of Jesus' mother by the woman in the crowd. (2) Affirmative—"indeed," as in Phil 3:8. This would agree with the woman's blessing and identify Jesus' mother as an example of one who hears God's word and obeys it. (3) Corrective—"yes, but rather." This would show that although the blessing is correct, there is a greater blessing available to those who believe. Usually if Luke wanted to express the adversative meaning (1), he used *ouchi* and *legō hymin* (cf. Luke 12:51; 13:3, 5), and if he wanted to express the affirmative meaning (2), he used *nai* (cf. 7:26; 10:21; 11:51; 12:5). The third meaning is therefore more likely. An expanded translation of this sentence would read: "What you have said is true as far as it goes. But Mary's blessedness does not consist simply in her relationship with me, but in the fact that she heard the word of God and kept it, which is where true blessedness lies."<sup>74</sup> Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 333.

Her motherhood does not factor into your prayers being answered, your relationship with Jesus, or anything else in heaven.

But on the other hand, this passage shows that Jesus *loved* His mother and took care of her in her old age. After all, He is making sure that she will be physically provided for after He dies. He puts her under the protective care of His best friend, John. So that is a financial and protective transition. But calling her relationship to Himself as “woman” and calling her relationship to John as “mother” shows yet another transition. In heaven her motherhood of Jesus will have no spiritual role.

Yet even at the cross Mary is a model of courage to all of us. She did not run when other men did. She was not ashamed of Jesus, when others were. But she did not drink His blood at the cross like some Romanist mystics claim. And she did not have a super-saint relationship to the church. As we read earlier, she was a prayer warrior and a servant to the church in Acts - opening her home to other believers. But I hope I have demonstrated that Mary above all is a wonderful model that we can imitate, not a goddess to venerate. Let's pray.