

Mary

Scripture mentions several Mary's. However, there is but one whom we most frequently think of when we hear that name in a Scriptural context. She is the one whom God chose to nurture His seed in her body and thus become the Son of Man as well as the Son of God.

Of what benefit can it be for the Bible believing Christian to read a commentary about her, when Scripture, through a few snapshots seems to give us all of what we need to know, and perhaps all He choose to share with us? I don't know yet. Perhaps what follows may answer this question. All I do know is that I have been strongly persuaded to write this, and I believe at this moment, that it has to do with the fact that perhaps born-again Christians tend to diminish her importance as a person, while both Catholic and even Muslims have deified her, giving her preeminence over our Lord and Savior. Muslims too? Yes, surprising as it may seem too many, she holds a very prominent place in their religion. We don't hear much about this, yet the evidence is there in the Koran where in the third Sira she is presented as Mary Immaculate, and in chapter 66 she is given as an example for all Muslims to follow. However, let us hold that issue for a while and concentrate on what more we might learn about this woman whom her cousin, Elizabeth called "...*Blessed art thou among woman,...*" (Luke 1:42). Notice she said, "among" and not above." Scripture's Author is both accurate and precise!

The first mention of Mary and about her becoming God's chosen one to deliver from her womb the son of Man, our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus, appears in the Gospel of Luke. Starting with 1:26 where we learn that God had sent Gabriel to inform Mary that He had chosen her to provide that blessed service. One should read and study the ensuing verses in order to better appreciate the incredible nature of what was taking place, and how God Himself was about to enter His own creation and to actually live fully as, and in the manner of Man, albeit a very special Man! Notice Mary's response. Her question as to how this was to be was not laced with doubt as was Zachariah's when he was told he would have a son. It was merely one of concerned curiosity, not of doubt. As a young woman already possessing an unflinching faith, she was ready and willing to accept this

awesome task even though she may have recognized some of the severe difficulties that would result. It is doubtful at that point she could possibly have known just how heavy, painful and continuing would be the “cross” she herself would have to carry.

We can't either, unless we make a serious spirit-led effort to understand the times, the conditions, and the circumstances under which she lived out her life. We must go even beyond that to search out some of the extremely subtle clues about her life that Scripture hides from all but the most diligent seekers. And finally, with all of this gathered together as supportive evidence, we must seek to put ourselves in her shoes, or better still to the extent we can, into her mind and heart. Having established the method of our study, let us now proceed by examining each reference to Mary in the order in which they occur in Scripture.

We have already described Mary's encounter with Gabriel, and her response to him. Then he is gone, and she is left to ponder the significance of his message, how she can best respond, and how she will be impacted by its fulfillment. It must have been to her as was the little book that John was told to eat. (Revelation 10:9) It was sweet to her mouth as she reveled in having been chosen from among all women to bring forth out of her womb the Son of the living God, Christ Jesus. However, as she digested the message, there must also have been that same bitterness in her stomach that John experienced as she began to realize even some small portion of the long enduring painful ramifications of what suddenly was to become the principal purpose and pursuit of her life. Luke doesn't mention Joseph or his reaction to the news. It is in Matthew 1:19-25 that we find how Joseph learned of this most sensitive situation.

After the Lord spoke to him in a dream and explained things, Joseph did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. From the earthly perspective, which was the only one everyone else around there could understand, she had committed adultery, a sin to be punished by death. (Leviticus 20:10) It was considered adultery because she was already espoused before she became pregnant. Espousal was far different than what we today call being engaged. Espousal meant the contract has been executed, and that they were actually

married. The fact that the marriage had not yet been consummated did not affect the legality and permanence of the union. Had there been no espousal, her pregnancy would have been considered to be fornication, a crime for which there was a different consequence. (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29) It was only through Joseph's acquiescence, (orchestrated by the Holy Spirit) and his acceptance of her as his wife that prevented her from being stoned to death before Jesus was born. It goes without saying that she was always under the fulltime protection of the Holy Spirit as she fulfilled her sacred duties. However, He did not go so far as to alleviate the earthly pain and suffering for the Lord, that every true son or daughter of His must endure in this life. For her it would be amplified considerably above what most of God's children must endure.

Knowing that she was pregnant in this unbelievable way, what was she to do, who could she turn to? Could she tell her mother or her father? "Hi folks, I just became pregnant, and guess what, it was God who did it." We don't know. All that we do know, is that Scripture tells us that she left Nazareth and went to "a city in Judea" to visit her cousin Elizabeth, wife of Zachariah, the priest. Given that he was a temple priest, that city must have been Jerusalem. Gabriel had told her that Elizabeth, who was well beyond child-bearing years, was also pregnant by divine appointment. However, what caused this young girl, perhaps no more than 15 or 16 years old to make this 65 mile journey alone and on foot across dangerous mountainous terrain? Had her parents believed, or had they rejected her? As God chosen, she must have been an exceedingly sweet virtuous truthful and obedient child. However, this would have been a very "hard sell" even for such a child. Also her parents must have known that the social ramifications of this would be on them as well as her.

At any rate, she made the trip, and I believe that no small part of its purpose was so that the Holy Spirit could, for our benefit, relate what happened as she greeted Elizabeth. At that time the baby John was age minus three months. He was about nine inches long and weighed about a pound and half. He already had fingerprints and could open his eyes for brief periods and gaze into the darkness of the womb. He was already an emotional being, and had the capacity to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He could hear, or at least

sense the presence of other spirits. How wonderfully all of this is expressed in Luke 1:41 where we are told, “*And it came to pass, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:*” At that moment, the physical Jesus residing in Mary’s womb was probably no larger than a tomato seed, yet His spirit was already radiating and reaching out into the world. John recognized the presence of the One he would later call the “*....Lamb of God, which will taketh away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29).

Apart from what was the most unique of all recorded spiritual encounters, the message that is for us in those little verses, is extremely important and most relevant to our times. When did it become acceptable to call a human baby in the womb a fetus? It’s a long story and not appropriate to delve into here. However, by first creating this obnoxious denigrating “technical” word with which to identify what is a living human being, it provided the way for the ungodly to speak in dehumanizing technical terms about what grew in the womb. Today, what is in the womb of a woman is rarely called what God made, a baby, a human being that is yet joined to its mother. Instead it’s called a fetus. By accepting that as its name, its sacred humanness disappears, and all manner of perversion become possible even to the point where it should be removed if its presence is inconvenient or objectionable.

Over 60 million babies have been slaughtered in the womb in this country alone since the “fetus” was decreed by government edict to be legally removable at the whim of women who might choose to do so. Many a potential mother would have refrained from agreeing to the murdering of her baby, had it been indentified as such, but if it’s only a fetus, well that’s not murder; it’s just a medical correction. What incredible power of persuasion there is in a name! Word perversion is one of Satan’s most effective tools in disarming and diverting the human mind! It’s been said that the most dangerous place to live in America is in the womb. Those who live there have a 40% chance or less of not living long enough to take their first breath. .Dear God, if only people, even some who call themselves by Your name would learn from this and change their ways! How long will

Your patience and long suffering endure before You let loose your just wrath on this corrupt nation?

Because of baby John's leaping in her womb, Elizabeth quickly recognized the full truth of this situation as she spoke out with a loud voice to Mary and said, "*....Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*" Had she already heard the story regarding Gabriel's visitation to Mary? Perhaps so because this episode seems to have occurred just as Mary arrived there having been no previous oral conversation. John's leaping in the womb was that confirming evidence she may have needed in order to fully embrace the incredible truth, and that "Truth" was already in her womb.

The verses 46-56 in Luke 1 express Mary's faith with an eloquence and depth of Scriptural knowledge that would do credit to any of the Apostles or elder sages of the past. It's evident that deep Scriptural knowledge was taught her at an early age. We must conclude that she came from a family that was part of God's small remnant, just as was the teenager Daniel when he was carried off to Babylon. Verse 56 tells us she remained with Elizabeth three months and then returned to her own house. It's evident that she remained to see the birth of John. What incredible things must have gone in that house, and in those two wombs, while those unique souls communicated with each other as they grew spiritually as well as physically!

We next find Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem, their original place of birth, in order to be counted and taxed. Under the Roman law, every one had to "sign in" at their place of birth. We don't learn much about Mary at this time, other than that she did make this 65 mile, 5 or 6 day trip. It must have been grueling for this nine months pregnant girl, even if she may have ridden on a mule. Notice how verse 7 is worded, "she brought forth her first born." Doesn't that acknowledge that other births would follow? God gave His only Son. She delivered Him as her firstborn. If He would be her only son, why wasn't that same manner of expression applied here? God's messages are very carefully worded and precise. It is because she later had other children!

Then later, in 2:19 we are told that she “...*kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*” The things that she pondered were what the shepherds had told her and Joseph. It was that an angel of the Lord had come to the shepherds and told them the good tidings about Jesus’ birth and where they could find Him. How confirming and rewarding it must have been to her to hear and ponder the great wonders of the Truth she had carried in her womb those nine months, and how then, God, in the most powerful way had revealed it to these shepherds, and all others who may have heard their testimony. Perhaps she had wondered all those months just how fully convinced Joseph was regarding to whom the baby she was carrying belonged.

As far as we know, his whole faith in the matter resulted from a dream, and from her claim. It speaks strongly to his inherent faith and character, that he could sustain his love and confidence in Mary amid all of the vicious barbs and slander that surely was part of their daily burden, loaded on them by the people who believed the government’s lies. If he needed a powerful boost in faith, this surely must have given it to him. Her pondering must have included many thoughts, worries and fears relating to what would be next. How was she to care for and treat this most special of all who had ever been born? At that moment her Charge had received the glorious greeting that was due Him. But would God continue to “advertize” Him to the world, continue His deserved adoration, or would the truth of His personage be obscured and her role as His mother made uniquely even more difficult? If she didn’t perceive the answer, it would soon become most evident, when she finally got back to her own neighborhood.

On the eighth day after Jesus’ birth, He was circumcised according to the Law. (Luke 2: 21) Why did the Law, as given by God to Moses, require circumcision to be performed precisely on the eighth day? Because it’s the day that the infants blood clotting ability reaches its maximum. Before and after that day it is considerably less, and the baby is at risk of hemorrhaging from such an operation. This is a medical fact well known and applied where today circumcision is performed. According to the Mosaic Law, the mother of a boy needed thirty-three additional days of purification before she was deemed clean. During that “*3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be*

circumcised. 4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.” (Leviticus 12:3, 4) After that period of time Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem and to the temple to present Him to the Lord, and to offer sacrifice as was the law. Being poor, their offering consisted of “a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.” Then we are told of an old man called Simeon, to whom the Holy Spirit had revealed the Baby Jesus’ identity as the Savior. Verse 33 indicates that the parents marveled at his words. It is probably that here again they could see the Holy Spirit at work because of what Simeon revealed.

He said that Jesus would be the Messiah for the Gentiles as well as for Israel, an entirely new concept. He also predicted His fall (death) and His rise (resurrection). Did Mary fully understand what he meant by, “A sword shall pierce through thy own soul.” I believe that this is referring to the lifetime of painful sadness and strife as she was believed to have been an adulteress, and tried to raise what society called a “bastard” son, and later to her later witnessing His torture and crucifixion. Even later, her life was not one of earthly peace, even though she must have been fully in that spiritual “peace that passes all understanding.” With her evident knowledge of Scripture, even the crucifixion must have finally made sense as she realized that it was the fulfillment of the prediction God had provided through Daniel and Isaiah. Perhaps she even saw her Son again many times during the forty days, before His ascension, because it is likely that she was among “them that were with them” when Jesus first appeared to the apostles after His resurrection (24:33)

While they were still in the Temple, they were blessed with another testimony of wisdom and faith from a very old woman a prophetess named Anna, a woman probably over one hundred years old, given that she had been a widow for 84 years (verse 37). Anna also knew who Jesus was and gave thanks to the Lord as had Simeon. She spoke of this Infant as the Redeemer of Israel, again revealing the presence of the Holy Spirit at work.

Why did God bother to mention these two old folks who had little to offer that wasn't already known to Mary and Joseph, and to us? Remember all Scripture is for our learning. There is nothing in all of Scripture that is trivial or unimportant. If it was, it would not be there! We might consider the following as being at least part of the reason.

1. Their testimonies reaffirmed and reinforced for our benefit the truth that God had already given to Mary and Joseph.
2. That they were privileged to live so long so as to actually see and touch our blessed Lord and Savior at His arrival on earth speaks of God's love and willingness to reward His long faithful servants by answering their prayers.
3. They reveal the existence of a faithful remnant that actually understood and believed the words of the prophets. They put to shame the professional Bible scholars, and Pharisees, who remained completely ignorant of its main theme and principal message, which was all about Jesus. They were living proof that the Old Testament contained everything necessary for a genuinely seeking soul to have understood the prophecies and to recognize that Jesus' birth was their fulfillment.
4. Anna reminds us that God did not exclude women from being prophets. (Scripture mentions nine others)
5. The simple little remark that she was of the tribe of Aser, ever so subtly reminds us that there were no lost tribes as many have so erroneously concluded, because of the Assyrian destruction of the northern kingdom in 722 BC. It is commonly perceived that ten of the tribes had lived there, and because there is no evidence of any returning remnant, it has been assumed that they were lost. All twelve tribes could be found in Judea as well at that time, and so representatives of all of them survived.

The next mention of Mary is not in Luke but in Matthew Chapter 2. This has to do with the visit of the Magi and the family's flight to Egypt. There were not just three magi as the hymn and tradition claim. This was most likely a large and probably well armed contingent of Parthian "king maker" priests who had come to "check out" this king that they had reason to believe had been born in Judea. Parthia was the bordering nation to the east. It was the remainder of the ancient Persian/Mede Empire. It had occupied Israel

at the time when Herod had been appointed governance over the nation. It took two years before Rome could drive them out and thereby allow Herod to assume governance. At the time there was an uneasy peace between Rome and Parthia. The incursion, while disturbing to Herod, was not alarming because it did not express any hostile intent.

Some scholars believe that the magi (magistrates) were the continuance of the priestly advisors that Daniel saved from death in Babylon and then became their chief. It is suggested and I strongly believe it was, that through his teaching of certain prophecies which had been given him, they learned that someday a strange, relatively very close to the earth's atmosphere "star" would appear, directly over them. This was an event that Daniel told them about centuries earlier. It was a signal to them that the King of kings, had been born in Judea, and that they should journey, there immediately. The "star" at the time did not guide them anywhere, because they had already been told to go to Judea. When they got to Judea, they then needed guidance to where they could find the infant. They went to Jerusalem and sought this information from Herod. It was through Herod's priests, when they had referred to Malachi, that named Bethlehem as the place. When they got to Bethlehem, the "star" again appeared and guided them to the house where baby Jesus lay. They brought gold in respect of His kingship, frankincense having to do with His divinity, and myrrh in recognition of His sacrificial death. Among their duties within the then present kingdom of Parthia was the choosing of a king when the current one could no longer serve. That's why the title "king makers." At that time they were in fact searching for a new king because of the age and lack of effectiveness of their then current ruler.

At the time of the Magi's arrival, Mary and her family were yet living in Bethlehem and Jesus was probably little more than a year old. They didn't visit any manger, as had the shepherds. They found Him in a house (Matthew 2:11). This and the fact that Herod ordered all two year olds and younger killed, adds strength to the contention regarding His age. We read that God warned the Magi, not to return the way they came, so that they could avoid contact with Herod, and thus not have to deal with his demand to know where the "King" could be found. God also warned Joseph about Herod. This caused the

family to flee to Egypt. They probably had intended to return to Bethlehem, but as we learn in Matthew 22:22, 23, Joseph still feared. Therefore, they returned to Israel as ordered, but to the town of Nazareth instead of Bethlehem. Isn't it interesting, and obviously prophetic, that the word "Nazarene" comes from the Hebrew word "Netzer" which means "branch of or root" These terms are used in Scripture to identify Jesus with David. Given how poor they were, the long trip and stay in Egypt might have been far more than they could have afforded. Might we say that God provided, through the gifts of the Magi, for the prophetic trip? "...*Out of Egypt have I called my Son*" (Matthew 2:15 and Hosea 11:1)

We next hear of Mary ten or eleven years later as she and her family were returning home from Jerusalem, having attended the celebration of the Passover. Soon after the departure, as part of a caravan, they realized that Jesus was not with them anywhere within the traveling group. They returned to Jerusalem and searched for Him for 3 days. Finally they found Him in the Temple studying and teaching Scripture, and holding His own with some of the most learned teachers of that day. Notice Mary's exhortation when she saw Him. "...*thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*" (Luke 2:48). Mary's and Joseph's anguish after three days of desperate searching was to be expected even for the parents of a normal child. However, they both knew that He was no normal person. They knew that in 3 or 4 years, He would reach the age of manhood, officially become a member of the synagogue. Add this to the fact revealed in verse 50 where we are told that they didn't understand that which He spoke and we have some real food for thought. What they didn't seem to understand at first was the thing about doing the work of His Father (verse 49). Knowing who He was, they would have known that one day He would necessarily do what He here said He was doing. Perhaps their failure to understand which I doubt was more a lack of realizing just how cognizant He was of who He was, and how well advanced He had already become in His preparation for His ministry. It was quite easy for Him whose Spirit was the Son within the Triune Godhead, after all He wrote it!

After this episode in the Temple we are told that the Boy returned with his parents to Nazareth, “...*but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*” (Luke 2:51) His words rekindled those earliest memories, and the recognition that one day He would be called from her to fulfill God’s purpose, the whole of which she probably could not have imagined. Twice now we have been told that she carried these things in her heart. The first time was in 2:19 relating to the shepherds observations twelve years earlier in the stable. Why do we need to know this? I believe that it is the Holy Spirit’s way of revealing something more about her character and personality.

Keeping things in her heart, and pondering them suggests that she was a quiet, gentle, unassuming, highly intelligent and sensitive woman who thought long and deeply about many things, and who usually kept these thoughts to herself. She also appears to have had strong convictions about both spiritual and earthly matters. I suspect that much of her “musings” centered around the awesome fact this Son, of her womb, whom she had loved and nurtured these many years, was actually God incarnate. How could any human mind apprehend such an incredible fact? Isn’t it interesting that 18 years later Jesus opened His ministry by going again, this time into the synagogue in Nazareth to teach Scripture? This, however, was a much different delivery of Scriptural truth. This time, by quoting Isaiah 61:1 and not completing the sentence found in verse 2, He had declared Himself to be the Messiah! (Luke 4:18) Before we seek out the next snapshot of Mary, let us digress for a moment to hopefully clear up something that may seem confusing, at least it had been to me when I first encountered it.

We all know that both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David. Joseph’s genealogy from David came down the royal line through Solomon to a Jacob who was Joseph’s father. This is recorded in Matthew chapter one. In Luke chapter 3 we see that the genealogy passes through David to Nathan, another one of David’s sons, down a non-royal line through Heli and to Joseph. Obviously, Joseph had only one blood father and that was the Jacob recorded by Matthew. We can also reason that by Joseph’s marriage to Mary, he became Heli’s son-in-law and therefore was figuratively incorporated as part of that lineage. However, it’s more complicated than that. The law as given to Moses

provided the first-born son with a double portion of any inheritance as well as family authority, and the one through whom the genealogy would continue. Of course, we see exceptions to this in Scripture, but it is always for some serious deficiency in the first-born. However, simply marrying a female within a family did not qualify the man for any such inheritance.

If Mary had had any brothers the first-born son would have been listed as the son of Heli and the bloodline inheritance could in no way have passed through Mary. The law made no provision for such continuance where there was no blood son. In order to find the legitimate basis for a son-in-law to “save the day” regarding Jesus’ genealogy, we must go back to the days of the wilderness wanderings and to a man named Zelophehad who had five daughters and no sons. Thus, when he died there was no one legally qualified to receive his inheritance? So the daughters asked Moses to petition God on their behalf to amend the law. The result was that God “adjusted” the law so that where there was no son, a daughter could inherit, but only through her husband, as long as the husband was of the same Israelite tribe. (Numbers 17:1-8, 26, 33; Joshua 17:3, 1Chronicles 7:15) How convenient it was that Heli had no sons, and that this “special clause” had been inserted into law. Otherwise Jesus, could not have been a legal “blood-heir” to David. We should know that God didn’t “adjust” anything. At the creation, God had already made this exception.

What is the purpose of going into all of this? This over simplified explanation is probably more than enough for most of us, as far as Mary’s story is concerned. However, here is an opportunity to glorify God and reinforce our faith in the divine origin of Scripture through recognizing another of His incredible ways. That little “addendum” to the Mosaic Law was not a result of God’s failure to have anticipated the condition it corrected for the daughters of Zelophehad. It was all part of God’s plan to provide the way for Mary, as the “mother” of Jesus to convey the so-called “blood line” of David to Jesus. I believe that it is why God did not provide Heli with any sons. Joseph’s lineage was complete through the royal line, but the blood line along that route had been broken

when God put the blood curse on king Jeconiah (Jehocachin) as we learn from Jeremiah 22:30.

For the sake of brevity, this explanation may seem confusing, however, it should suffice for us to recognize that here is another example of how every detail in Scripture ultimately points to our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. If we always keep that in mind as we study the Bible, more and more of the Word will take on greater beauty, clarity, significance and understanding. You still may wonder about the necessity of this “blood line” business. How could this make any difference? Gabriel told Mary that God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. That is why Jesus had to be of the royal blood line of David. Only through the legitimacy of Mary’s blood that would effectually nourish Jesus, could He be qualified to succeed David on David’s throne. We are dealing here not with omnipotence, for of course He can do anything, but with the conditions of law that He chose, and therefore needed to be fulfilled.

The next specific reference to Mary in Scripture occurs in the Gospel of John Chapter 2, and is recorded as Jesus’ first miracle. Apparently, there was a marriage in the town of Cana in Galilee to which Jesus and His disciples had been invited. It doesn’t say that she was invited, but that “...and the mother of Jesus was there” 2:2 this seems to suggest that she had some role in the wedding because of a closeness with the family that placed her at least. It might even have been a wedding feast for one of her other sons! As the party ran out of wine she informed Jesus, obviously expecting that He could and would do something about it, which we know He did. It seems likely that this event took place after His water baptism by John and His temptation by Satan. Therefore, at that time He may not have been living at home with Mary, who now in her mid-forties was probably a widow. His response to her words regarding the wine was to say “....*Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*” Verse 4.

This seems like a calloused response to the one who had borne Him and jointly suffered all the many years with Him as His mother. In terms of the culture of that time however, calling her woman was not considered inappropriate or demeaning, even though we can’t

help feel that there seemed to be an air of dismissiveness in His response. A similar sense of dismissiveness seems to be expressed in the next contact with Mary as well. We'll discuss this matter from a different perspective later in this study. The strangeness of the rest of Jesus' statement warrants its own commentary and explanation. This was now the Man Jesus, the Son of God, fully grown and acutely aware of who He was, His purpose and mission, as well as how He was to fulfill it.

She had served her purpose, and without a doubt Jesus has a special place in His heart for her, but that one aspect of the special mother-Son relationship had drawn to a close. In one sense, she was now simply one of the entire human race of sinners that He came to die for. That "His time had not yet come" speaks of course of the final act of love that He would perform on the cross for her and all of sin-burdened mankind 3 ½ years from then. In the meantime, the "...*what have I to do with thee*...." response had to do with the vastness of work ahead of Him. He had to move on. His time was too short to continue that earlier close relationship. While He loved her for who she was, and who she had been to Him. His Father's call to the tasks assigned Him, did not permit this relationship to continue as it had been those past 30 years.

Her next recorded involvement in the wine issue was to tell the servants to do whatever Jesus said. This is interesting. As we can see, she knew her son very well. Regardless of His seemingly non-committal response, she knew that He would take care of the matter. She also knew that He would do so through His supernatural powers as the Son of God. How else could between a hundred and a hundred and sixty gallons of wine arrive in time? This was Jesus' first recorded miracle. Had she witnessed any earlier ones through which to develop such faith in His abilities? Probably so. At the very least, where Mary is concerned, this episode attests to her recognition that her Son was indeed the Son of God endowed with the powers given Him by His eternal Father.

John 2:12 tells us that after the wedding, Jesus, along with His mother, her other children and His disciples went to Capernaum where they stayed together for only a few days before Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover. Perhaps the wedding had also been

a sort of family reunion that carried over into the trip to Capernaum where He actually began His ministry. Matthew 4:13) Capernaum (Kafar-Naham, village of Naham) was a fairly large walled city having considerable activity because it was just off an important trade route between interior Asia and points along the Mediterranean. It was where Peter lived, and his home became Jesus', headquarters during a large part of His ministry.

The next mention of Mary is when Jesus was preaching to a huge very compact crowd. Mary and His brothers came to the outer perimeter and asked someone to wade through the crowd to inform Jesus that they were there and wanted to speak to Him. There are varying opinions regarding Jesus' response. Most seem to view it as a rebuff. However, let us examine this in the context of the situation. He was in the midst of a large crowd of disciples in the middle of a serious teaching session. Jesus was doing His Father's work! I believe that it was very poor judgment on their part, first to ask someone to interrupt Him, and also for that someone to do that interrupting. Jesus was, as Mary well knew, fulfilling a divine mission, something far more important than what they came for, something that surely could have waited until He finished. Notice that Jesus didn't rebuke anyone for this interruption, but instead used it to press home the truth of what He had been preaching.

He pointed to the disciples, calling those who believed and obeyed, as being His mother and His brethren in the higher spiritual calling of God. This situation served as an example of how true servants of God are to subordinate all of their earthly relationships to Him, even such precious ones as parents and brethren. It is not a matter of forsaking these, but of placing them in the proper order of priorities, with Jesus and His ministry always being far and away number one. It is more likely that it was His brethren who sought to interrupt, because I'm certain that Mary had too much "class," good judgment, and propriety to initiate such a thing. We don't know what they wanted, but I'm sure Jesus did, and He attended to it in His good time. All this took place on the hillside outside Capernaum, where the family was probably staying with Peter. This episode is recorded in Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, and Luke 8:19-21.

The next we read about Mary is in John 19:25. She is there standing by the cross on which her dying Son had been impaled. In the next two verses Jesus speaks to her and to the Apostle John. Jesus commends Mary into the care of John. Mary is now to be John's mother, and John is to be her son in all the ways of love, caring and responsibility that such a relationship requires. It's of interest to learn here that Mary had a sister named Mary, who was the wife of Cleophas. I believe that he and his wife were the disciples who walked with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Some scholars believe that this Mary was a half-sister of Mary, which would help explain why there might be two daughters in a family with the same name. It's also of interest, that Jesus didn't commend His mother to one of her sons. It is likely that none were believers at that time, and that John the "*Apostle whom Jesus loved*" would most assuredly provide for her in the very best manner, spiritually as well as physically.

It is most likely that Mary was there, wherever her Son was present in public. What anguish, what mental and physical pain this dear soul must have gone through as she watched Him carry the cross up the hill, being nailed to it, and then to witness His slow agonizing death. Did she know by then that this was in fact, deicide, that the Son of God by His own volition chose this death, and why He did so? Could she have fully appreciated the meaning and purpose of this, the most profound and momentous event ever to have occurred subsequent to creation? Even though Jesus may have given her a private briefing on the matter as He had the apostles, it's unlikely that it did much to alleviate this mother's grief for her Son. At any rate, we can be sure, given what we know about John, that he fulfilled her son's directive and made certain that she lived the rest of her life in dignity, safe, comfortable and without want. John took her to Ephesus where she lived out her life and where both she and John died and were buried.

The next and last direct mention of Mary is found in Acts 1:14 where we learn that right after Jesus' ascension to heaven, the apostles, along with Mary and her children went from the Mt. of Olives back into Jerusalem and into an upper room where Peter was living. There they prayed in supplication and expectation of the coming of the Holy

Spirit that Jesus has promised during His last moments on earth before His glorious ascension to heaven. (Acts 1:8)

Before we leave this generally believed to have been the last of Mary's appearances in Scripture, let us peek, if we can, into her heart and mind. What relief, what incredible joy, what fulfillment she must have now felt! That Son that God Himself had placed in her womb, that most precious of all life that she had so lovingly nurtured and watched in awe as He grew into the most special of all mankind, was indeed God! That day she saw with her own eyes His return to heaven to take His place on the throne of God. She heard with her own ears the angels proclaiming His return just as Gabriel had said when he told her that He would one day sit on the throne of David. We can no way imagine the ecstasy, the love, the joy, the relief, the fulfillment, and the gratitude that must have overflowed from her heart.

At that moment all of the memories of her lifetime of pain and sadness in the midst of hatred, ridicule, ostracism, and slander that were the consequence of her being His mother, must have left her as she witnessed the glorious vindication and fulfillment of her life's purpose. Over five hundred saw Him, and all on that first day as well as all at one time, on that 1st day of the forty days after His resurrection. To them and too many others who knew of this, she was no longer that death deserving adulteress, and the mother of the weird bastard son that finally got what he deserved on the cross for pretending to be God. She kneeled there in prayer and supplication, now praying to Him as her very Lord and Savior! There are no words or thoughts or feelings that that anyone else could possibly express compared to what she must have felt at that moment of His ascension, and for many years later.

Scripture does provide us with one more reference to Mary that seems to have escaped recognition by nearly all Bible commentators. It's in the second epistle of John. This epistle is the shortest one in the Bible, having only 13 verses. It's written to "the elect lady and her children." After searching through all the commentaries available, only Dr. Mislner seems to have concluded what seems so obvious. The elect lady is Mary, the

mother of Jesus. Most writers seem to believe that she is simply an idiom for the church, an assumption that seems to have prevailed as far back as Jerome. Others say that it is a letter to some prominent woman within the church. He writes as though he knows her and her family quite well. Of course if John wrote this is AD 90, as many seem to believe, it couldn't be Mary, because by then she would be well over one hundred years old. There is nothing in Scripture that I can find that requires that this letter was written that late. Just because it is evident that John wrote Revelation at that time, doesn't mean that this letter was also written then. The fact that he refers to himself as "the elder" doesn't necessarily mean that he is old. Most certainly as one of the apostles, he was considered to be one of the church elders, whatever his age, at least from Pentecost on.

Who was the most "elect lady" who ever lived? There can be none other than Mary the one God chose (elected) to deliver His Son into the world! That's not to preclude that there may have been other special women in the world to whom someone might assign such a title. However, in John's case, this is far less likely. He knew all the details about the virgin birth and about her unique selection by God for His purposes. John was Mary's son and Mary was his mother by divine decree straight from the cross. John most certainly took that responsibility most seriously. He probably knew her as a person more fully than anyone else. This letter is probably one of many that he wrote to her when he was away performing his life-long duties as an Apostle. We can be certain that he fulfilled every aspect of a dutiful, loving, caring, protecting son as Jesus had directed. It seems evident that God chose this one, of probably many such letters, to include in the sacred canon because of the special message He wanted us to learn from as well. There are other evidences in the letter that point to Mary and tend to discredit all of the arguments to the contrary.

To cite but a few, first, she had children. This cannot be the church to which this letter is addressed because the church has no children! They are all the children of God! To claim that John is referring to the children of the saved would be absurd, simply due to the numbers involved. This letter was plainly written to a woman and to her biological children! She also had a sister who had children whom John knew and to whom he must

have recently spoken. The church has no sister! She is loved by “...*all they that have known the truth.*” (Verse 1 of 2John) That would seem to place her in the category of one who was around from the beginning, when Truth walked the earth. How many ladies could there have been who were “elect” and who knew the Truth from the beginning? John uses the word truth five times in the first four verses. Read them again substituting Jesus for “truth.” It fits like a glove, because Jesus is truth. Reading that way does little to alter the greeting, except perhaps to better express his innermost thoughts. How many ladies in the category of “elect” could there have been who “were loved by all who had known the truth? Whether it is Jesus Himself, or the truth about Him, I believe the answer is only one, Mary!!

In this letter, John has several things to say regarding the proper conduct of redeemed souls. However, verses 7 through 11 provide us with a vital truth that we must all recognize as being more wide spread today than it was then. “*7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: 11 for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*”

While this message is for our learning, and application it was originally written to Mary for her learning and guidance. John first established the context of his message by reminding her of the many non-Christian deceivers the antichrists that wander around seeking to destroy gullible souls, and even diminishing the effectiveness of believers. Next he says that she must be very cautious, and to the extent possible avoid any contact with such people so that they cannot take away the rewards she has so painfully earned. What a mouthful of spiritual wisdom that little verse 8 contains! It must be chewed carefully and fully if it’s precious nutrients are to be assimilated. First, this is not about

salvation, there is no doubt that Mary is saved and could never lose her salvation any more than can any other saved soul.

But she, and anyone else who is saved, can lose the effectiveness of their ministries, and even their heavenly rewards through bad choices. Again, John realized that dear innocent Mary was no exception, or he would not have felt the need to mention these things to her in this letter. Mary would have been a very attractive victim to the then equivalent scam artist of today. Getting her endorsement for some seemingly worthy cause that Satan may have concocted, could have done her much harm when it was later exposed for what it was. This is evidenced in verse 8 where he says: *“Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”*

This is the same admonition Paul expounded on so often in his epistles. Crowns or rewards are what we take to heaven as a result of our meritorious service to our Lord while here on earth, and which determine our place within the hierarchy of eternity. Through various “slippages” along the way we can lose, that is cancel out some or all of these rewards, and thereby end up less productive in our eternal position than we could have been. Here John is setting an example of how, in her unique situation she was particularly vulnerable. After all those degrading years, with Jesus now having risen, and it finally being established as to who He was, Mary was not only fully vindicated among those who knew the story, but she enjoyed a highly exalted position among Christians. This made her a target of exploitation for many apostates, antichrists and false teachers that roamed everywhere doing harm wherever they could. In those days, there were no “Holiday Inns” or Super 8’s.” Travelers could seldom find accommodations anywhere except in private homes. John urges her to be extremely cautious about whom she allows into her home, because she would be a prime target for these destroyers. Of all the serious ramifications that could result from her lack of caution in this matter would be the enhancement of credibility and prestige that would be afforded anyone who could later, “name drop” and deceitfully exaggerate and exploit any such an association they might have had with her. John even cautioned her to not even say “goodbye” to such people.

Goodbye is a contraction of “God be with you”, or “Godspeed.” John says that to so salute a person would make her a partaker of his evil deeds. That goes for us as well!

The following may seem like a stretch, but it could be that in verse 6 where John is reminding her that we are to “walk after the commandments,” that perhaps he is reminding her of another spiritual problem she may have needed to fight. Given her then long exalted position, and the fact that as a human being with all the weakness that are part of all of our fallen natures, pride could be a major point of attack that Satan might find productive for his sinister purpose. His hatred of Mary for her part on God’s plan must have been intense, and his attacks particularly severe where ever he found a “chink” in her armor. Praise, adulation, awe and exaltation as the “elect lady”, as John himself called her, must have often been expressed to her wherever she went within Christian circles. In such an environment, maintaining genuine spiritual humility, absent of any pride, could have been a severe “thorn in her side.” This is a lesson for all of us, because no one should ever presume that they are above the need for exhortation and encouragement as well as critical self-examination.

This ends these musings about the real Mary, the Mary from whose womb God chose to bring to earth His Son Jesus, the Son of Man. However, I believe that it is important to look for a moment at what Satan has done to her memory, she is now represented by statues that bleed, or shed tears, and by those little idols that we see along the roads and on lawns standing within the shadow of half-buried white enamel bath tubs. She is also the Mary that continues to appear all over the world as a supernatural apparition. Why? Because it’s one aspect of Satan’s master plan to subordinate the preeminence of Jesus in the minds of those he can deceive by casting her as the preeminent one in heaven over Jesus.

What about all of those strange inexplicable signs, and especially the very convincing apparitions of Mary that have appeared so many times to millions of people during the last century, and continue to be reported all over the world in increasing numbers? Are they real or simply hoaxes? Are they natural phenomena or are they satanic in origin?

No doubt some are hoaxes or well orchestrated pagan contrivance, while others may be nothing more than natural phenomena exposed to the workings of strong imaginations. Most however, are without a doubt supernatural in origin and purpose. They are all orchestrations of Satan! Only the biblically ignorant, and the world is full of these, including both the saved and the unsaved, can fall victim to such deceptions.

This ploy by Satan in using images of Mary in order to further impose his will among the world's religions is not new. However, he has put this into high gear within the last century. There have been thousands of apparitions seen all over the world. Because they are very evidently supernatural. The almost universal belief is that they are communications from God. How logical it seems that Mary the mother of Jesus might be chosen for that purpose. It's commonly admitted in all of the great religions that Jesus was an exceptional prophet and teacher. The fact that Mary is also well known to have been His mother, why not then conclude that God would choose her as His messenger to the world? The only people on earth who have the ability to recognize and believe the truth as to the real source and purpose of these things are the redeemed biblically literate Christians. Only they, through the Holy Spirit, can know with certainty the existence, nature, purpose and strategies of Satan, because it's all expressed in the Bible. And only they can know that this is not the way God communicates.

Unfortunately, most of those who know, fail to recognize the full magnitude, extent, power and purpose of this "magnificent" deception. Most limit it to simply being one of the apostasies of the Roman Catholic Church. There's no doubt that it is there where Satan first focused his attention. However, now it is becoming apparent that his outreach has extended to many the world religions as he attempts to form, at the very least, a loose confederation of religions into a single world religious system, just as he is weaving a similar confederation of nations into a single world governmental and economic order. Satan saw the potential in a Marian image as a catalyst by means of which to help bring this about. There can be no doubt that Satan has the power to create these images, and give them a likeness to life, that is, give them ability to move, gesture, smile, speak, shed tears, or whatever else he may conclude will serve his cause. Revelation 13:15 offers that

proof. Here we read, *“And he had the power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”*

There is a common theme that is expressed in all of “her” messages which she has been sent to establish union among nations. Her maternal gaze seems to have an irresistible “ecumenical” appeal. Her mantra also includes visions of universal peace and tolerance. Who in this troubled world could resist her if they could be convinced that though her influence these utopian fantasies could become a collective reality? There should be no mistake about this false universal religious order as it is developing simultaneously with his planned new world economic political and social order. This “package” must be ready for delivery to Antichrist at some point soon after the Rapture, because Antichrist will not have much time after the Rapture to reveal himself and develop the stature necessary to make the peace treaty with Israel that will commence the “seventieth week of Daniel” (Daniel 9:27)

The Bible speaks more of this period of history in which we are now entering, than it does of any other period since creation. Those who fail to intensely study this portion of Scripture do themselves and their family a great disservice. Ignorance is not bliss except for the fool. While we can do nothing to alter the ensuing events, understanding them and recognizing their manifestations can go far toward alleviating fear and confusion. This can also alert us to whatever opportunities may exist to prepare ourselves and our families to better cope with some of the hardships of life and the merciless attacks to which Bible believing Christians are already being subjected. Satan’s final procedure regarding biblical Christians is to identify, then marginalize, then criminalize, and finally force them underground or face martyrdom... We are already in the early stages of the criminalization aspect of the plan. The Marian apparitions and their huge ecumenical success will greatly enhance the completion as world opinion is turned ever more vicious toward the remnant.

What is written hereinabove dealing with Satan's contrivance regarding Mary, I'm afraid is less than convincing and woefully inadequate as related to its importance as an end time's aspect of Satan's strategy. Reference to this was meant to be but a brief mention of the fact. What has resulted however is a deeper dipping into the issue, but not deep enough to convince those not already in possession of its truth and significance. For those who are open to the idea, but need more facts, and for those that dismiss the idea, completely, but are willing to consider the evidence, I suggest the following. Read "Queen of All" by Jim Teliow, Roger Oaklind and Brad Myers. There can be found qualities and details regarding most of the apparitions, and solid scriptural bases for complete rejection of the entire satanic charade.