

MOTHER MARY AND JESUS

Pastor Paul Penno

December 22, 2007

After a few years into our marriage we were ready to start a family. We prayed that the Lord might bless us with a baby. It was not to be for quite a long time. In our estimation ten years was a long time, but with God that is a wink of the eyelash. When God chooses to give life it is a joyous miracle to be recognized. We were so excited and thrilled after ten years together that God would grant His favor to us of all His many children. We remember every little detail along the way of this pregnancy and the beautiful experience of childbirth. Such a happy time of bonding as a family was ours that we shall ever be grateful to the Lord. Of ourselves we are barren, but He brings life to those who are weak.

When the angel said to Mary that she should bring forth a son, even Jesus, she asked, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" It was not a question of unbelief; she did not doubt but that it would be done, but she wished to know how it was to be brought about, so that she might know what was expected of her in the matter. The angel replied, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35.

Here again we find ourselves on common ground with Mary. Jesus said to His disciples, including us, "Behold I send the promise of My Father upon you." Luke 24:49. This was the promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The Spirit is the power of the Highest, and Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for it, or until they were endued with power from on high. He tells us also that God will give the Holy Spirit to as many as ask Him. Luke 11:13.

The Holy Ghost came on Mary with power, in order that she might bring forth Jesus. The Spirit comes upon us in order that its fruit may be seen in us, namely, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. 5:22, 23. The power by which all these graces are to be developed, and their opposites repressed, is the power by which Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.

But what could she do to bring the event about, or to help it along?—Just nothing, but submit. She could not do anything to bring it about, but she could have stopped it altogether, by not being willing to submit. Her part was willingly to yield to the power.

Notice that this power by which Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, and by which Christ is to be formed in us the hope of glory, is the same power by which the work of creation was wrought. "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." Gen. 1:1-3.

The creation was effected by the Spirit and word of God. By that same power was Christ begotten of the virgin. Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." Luke 1:38. All she had to do was to be willing for the word of the Lord to accomplish its purpose, and to be fulfilled. So with us; yielding to the word of God, will result in its truths being brought forth in our lives. Whoever yields without reserve to every word that he finds in the Bible, being perfectly willing that every precept and requirement shall be fulfilled in him, will have wrought in him a work equal to that of creating the heavens and the earth.

Roaring Camp was the meanest, toughest Mining Town in all the West. There were more murders and thefts than any other place around. Roaring Camp was inhabited entirely by men ... except for one woman who made her living in the only way she knew how. Her name was Cherokee Sal.

Eventually, Cherokee Sal became pregnant and gave birth to baby. She died in childbirth, and no one knew who the father might be. The men put the baby girl in a box with some old rags under her. Somehow that just didn't seem right, so one of the men rode 80 miles to buy a Rosewood Cradle. When they put the rags and the baby in the beautiful new cradle, the rags just didn't look right. So another man rode to Sacramento and purchased some silk and lacy blankets. They men lined the Rosewood Cradle with silk and tucked the new blanket around the little baby girl. But then someone noticed that the floor under the cradle looked dirty.

The next thing you knew, a few of those big, tough men got down on their hands and knees and scrubbed the floor until it was spotless. Of course, then the walls and the ceiling ... and the dirty windows looked awful. So they washed down the walls and the ceiling, and they even hung some clean white curtains on the windows.

Things were beginning to look a lot better. But they soon realized they had to give up their carousing and fighting. After all, the baby needed a lot of sleep, and babies can't sleep during a brawl. Besides all that, the baby didn't like angry voices or frowning faces. So the men started smiling and talking in pleasant, cheerful tones. And,

since babies shouldn't be left alone, they set the cradle by the entrance of the Mine and one of the men stayed next to her while the others worked.

Then somebody noticed how ugly the mine entrance was. So they planted some flowers and made a small garden near the cradle. And as they worked, the men looked for shiny little stones that they could show to the baby and watch her gurgle and coo. But when they held the stones down near her, they saw that their hands looked black and dirty. And they didn't want to scare the little baby with their scraggly hair and wild beards. Pretty soon the general store sold out of soap and shaving gear.

The baby changed everything. And that story gives a small picture of the way the Son of God can transform our lives. Has the Bethlehem Baby changed your life?

The story of the Virgin Mary is of intense interest to all who are longing for Jesus to come again, as He promised (John 14:1-3).

She had something in common with that special group, the "144,000" mentioned in Revelation 14:1-5. They "follow the Lamb [the crucified Christ] wherever He goes." They do not resist or seek to evade the call. She said "yes" to the angel sent from the Father to announce to her the decision to choose her to be the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:28-37).

She offered no resistance or unbelief. Here was a call from heaven that totally would change the course of her life from now on; she readily agreed, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (vs. 38).

We search long to find a definition of what it means to "believe." Well, here it is. The old lady Elizabeth used Mary's ready submission as a definition of faith. She said of Mary, "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (vs. 45; the word "blessed" means to be happy).

The "144,000" (obviously a symbolic number), have in the last days replicated Mary's happy consecration of herself to the Lord; they have done what the angel of great power says to do, "Come out of [Babylon], My people" (Rev. 18:1-4). These people are convicted of truth from God's word, truth that their family may not believe, nor their church, nor society in general. They are willing to step out for the sake of Christ and be considered "different" (cf. 1 Peter 2:9 for the word "peculiar").

The “144,000” maybe for a long lifetime have endured opposition and even persecution from their family, their parents, or even their children. But just as the Virgin Mary was “blessed” (made happy), so this special group enjoy the gift of happiness in their submission of self to “the Lamb.”

When the Holy Spirit speaks to you through the Word, don’t hesitate to respond with an enthusiastic “Yes.” Here I am, the child of God!

The Bible reveals considerable about the Virgin Mary:

(1) She confesses her need of a Savior, and only people who are in what the Bible says “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) can dare to say that. Therefore they have to include the Virgin Mary. She was a member of the human race, a descendant not only of Abraham but of our fallen father, Adam. The idea that she was an extra-terrestrial import with a sinless heredity is profound error. She was human!

(2) Mary’s husband-to-be had at least six motherless children after his first wife either died or disappeared. We have the names of four: “James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas [not Iscariot]” (Matt. 13:55). Then there are “sisters,” at least two. So ...

(3) Joseph was therefore looking for some woman to be the stepmother to those at least six children of his. If any woman wants a stormy life, that’s where she’ll find it—be stepmother to such a brood. God doesn’t call a teen girl to such a task.

(4) It seems obvious that if Joseph were in his right mind he would not want to be betrothed to a teenager, no matter how Hollywood-like beautiful she was. The artists who have painted their ideas of the Virgin Mary needed some biblical research first. Joseph desperately needs a mature woman.

(5) Mary is more than that—she is a woman who in her way is like her divine Son: “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3). No village swain had sought her hand; there must have been a reason why they passed her by.

(7) Mary tells us the reason in Luke 1:46-54: She had a self-humiliating handicap, rendered “low estate” in the KJV. Mary was mature enough to know the bitterness of humiliating rejection. In becoming the Mother of “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” she knew something of the painful experience.

In Jesus we have a Savior who is rooted and grounded in our human experience. The Father sent Him “in the likeness of sinful flesh” with the job description: condemn sin in that “sinful flesh,” outlaw it, conquer it, trample on it, and deliver from it every human

soul who will choose to exercise His faith (Rom. 8:3, 4). You are included.

He will have a final generation who like us all have been born in sin, and have that same “sinful flesh,” but who “overcome even as I overcame” (says Jesus, in Rev. 3:21). They are symbolized as “144,000” who “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev. 14:1-5). It’s a symbolic number—plenty of room for you. Say “Yes” to the call of the Holy Spirit, as Mary “believed” what the angel said to her. It’s the same faith!

Now what was Jesus like in His incarnation? He could have come in the form of Caesar, the emperor of Rome. Or He could have come in the form of Jerusalem’s high priest with his glittering robes and living in his palace. But now, He chose to come as a humble peasant born in a manger where the cattle, the sheep and the goats are.

I have sometimes asked congregations in talking about Jesus, How many of you were born in a barn or in a stable with the animals? I’ve had only one person to raise his hand. No, we’re born in much better places than that.

There is a dogma that has become very popular and is believed by many millions of people who say that they are Christians. It’s called the immaculate conception. The idea has been taught for many centuries that the virgin Mary when she was a fetus in the womb of her mother, God worked a miracle in that little embryo and wiped the virgin Mary clean of any original sin. That is the Augustinian concept.

What really happened according to this dogma of the immaculate conception is that the DNA which is inherited by every human being from our fallen father Adam was broken in the case of the virgin Mary. The flesh that she had was a different kind of flesh than we human beings, all of us have. It was a sinless flesh. She had a sinless nature that DNA was broken, that connection with the fallen Adam. She was different than anybody else in the human race. Therefore, she was not tempted like we are tempted. In fact, this dogma of the immaculate conception requires the idea that the virgin Mary was never tempted sexually. She was just a different type of person than we human beings are.

But the Bible doesn’t teach that dogma of the immaculate conception. We read in Romans what kind of a nature Jesus took when He came to be among us. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.” Rom. 8:3. This is the apostle Paul speaking in one of his clearest statements. “What the law” the ten

commandment law, “could not do.” In other words, the law cannot make anybody righteous. It has no power to save. It was “weak through the flesh.” Not that the law itself was weak. The law is holy, just and good. But we, our flesh, is weak.

So to solve the problem this is what we read. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4.

Now the key thought there that is so different from the immaculate conception is: God sent His Son in the likeness. And the Greek word *ομοιωματι* means identical to fallen, sinful flesh. That same word occurs in Philippians 2:5-7. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who being in the form of God counted not equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men.” That word “likeness” is the very same Greek word *ομοιωματι* that occurs in Romans 8:3, 4. So if someone tries to tell us that the likeness of sinful flesh is only the mere resemblance but not the reality, then he’s got to explain Philippians 2:7 which tells us Christ took upon Himself the likeness of men. And it was not mere likeness of men that Christ took upon Himself. He became a man.

It is a heresy to teach that Christ was not truly a man that He only looked like a man. That was one of the early church heresies long, long ago. No, the Bible is explicitly clear. Christ became one of us taking upon Himself not a sinless nature, but the same sinful nature that everybody has by inheritance.

Now how could that be? Well, the Gospel of John helps us to understand. John 5:30 we read the words of Jesus when He says, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” Yes, as a man He was helpless. He had to depend upon His Father. “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” John 5:30. Now there is a world of truth opened up just like Jesus opens up a window and let’s us look in a see His heart as it really was. He had a will of His own like we have a will of our own. But He denied that will of His own. He sought not His own will but the will of His Father.

Then in John 6:38 He repeats the thought. He says, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that

sent me.” So Jesus had a constant battle within His own heart. As a human being who took upon Himself the likeness of our sinful flesh, our sinful nature, He had to deny that will. In other words, Jesus bore the cross all His life, not merely on Calvary’s hill. The cross necessitated a constant denial of self.

Take a look at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26. He has come to the time when the sins of the whole world will be laid upon Him consciously. The burden of guilt that He takes on Himself is going to kill Him with the second death. The burden is coming on Him. He has asked the disciples, Peter, James and John, Please stay awake and pray with me because I’m in deep heaviness. He went a little further and He fell on His face saying, Oh my Father (vs. 39) if it be possible let this cup pass from me. I don’t want to go to the cross. My human nature cries against it. I don’t want to die the second death. Then he surrenders. He denies self. He says, Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Three times He repeated this surrender of self to the Father. Yes, Father, it is your will. I will deny self. I will take upon myself the guilt of the entire human race and I will die for them on the cross. I will die every man’s second death.

And that’s what we read in Hebrews 2:9 where Paul says, “We see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death that He should taste death for every man.” Now the death that Jesus tasted could not be what we call death. What we call death was just what the Bible calls sleep. And Jesus didn’t go to sleep for a weekend. He would have loved to do it, yes. But He refused to drink that narcotic that the ladies of Jerusalem tried to give Him. No, He would keep Himself awake and He would bear this burden right down to the bitter end and die as a sacrifice for our sins.

Hebrews 4 tells us that Jesus in His incarnation was tempted in all points just like we are. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities [weaknesses].” Now there’s a double negative there. A double negative means a positive. So what Paul says is, We do have a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our weakness because He “was in all points tempted like [not unlike] as we are [tempted], yet without sin.” Vs. 14-16.

Think of the ten commandments. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are to break those ten commandments. Yes, He took our nature, our flesh. And you, as a sinner, when you are wrestling with

temptation, remember, Jesus was tempted just like you are, but He overcame. And He has promised to those who overcome even as I overcome will I grant to sit with me in my throne. Rev. 3:21.

Is it really true He was tempted in all points like as we are tempted? Was He tempted to use drugs? Well, the answer has to be, yes. Because when He hung on the cross they tried to tempt Him with that narcotic that He might just go to sleep on the cross like the two thieves crucified with Him did go to sleep. No, He rejected that temptation to use drugs.

Was He tempted to drink liquor? Well, He was tempted in all points like as we are. And the alcoholic who wants to get free of his addiction must be taught to understand how Jesus was tempted like He was tempted and let him join his humble unworthy soul to the soul of Jesus by faith and thus gain the victory.

The drug addict likewise, the person who is addicted to pornography and sometimes even pastors on the quite, even the wife doesn't know, they are addicted to pornography. Was Jesus tempted like we are? The Bible says, Yes, He was tempted to break the seventh commandment and the tenth commandment. He had to be in order to be tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Jesus was totally pure because He rejected every temptation to watch pornography or to cherish any adulterous thought.

Not only is He our example, He is our Saviour from every possible sin. Yes, we have a Saviour who is real, who can save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. That's what we are told in Hebrews 4 to do. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:16. Please note, what we need is the grace of God. We don't need the old covenant idea of fear that unless we overcome God is going to beat us mercilessly and so fear is our driving motivation. No. That's old covenant thinking. We are motivated by the love of Christ, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." It motivates us. It pushes us. It us up out of our skin as it were. It motivates us to do things that we never dreamed that we could do. That's what *agape* does for us. It works miracles in us. Delivers us from ourselves.

"Because [there's a reason why the *agape* of Christ motivates us] we thus judge [now this is like a mathematical equation. If you don't like emotion and you do like engineering and mathematics, well listen to this], that if One died for all then were all dead."

That is equivalent to saying all died. And that's the idea. If Christ has not died for us, we would have died the second death. He has truly redeemed the entire race. Every human being who breathes at this moment is breathing because the Son of God has died that person's second death. But the vast majority of people despise that truth and they prefer to go on living unto themselves.

And that He died for all, that they which live [that's you and I] should not henceforth find it impossible to go on living for self, but now they are constrained to live unto the one who died for them and rose again. Beautiful passage of what the gospel really means.

Paul Harvey tells the story about a family on Christmas Eve. This family had a tradition where the Mother and children would go to the Christmas Eve service, and the Father would stay home and read the paper. When the family returns home from church, they would all gather to open up their presents.

The Father was not an evil man, but he just couldn't believe in the childhood stories anymore of God coming as a baby in a manger. As the family left for church, he opened up the evening paper and began to read by the fireplace.

Suddenly, he heard tapping on the window. It was a bird flying against the glass of his window trying to get out of the snow into the warmth of his home. The man had compassion on the bird, and he went outside, hoping to bring it in.

As he approached the bird, the bird just flew against the window even harder. Pretty soon, the bird flew into the bushes below the window, half frozen, yet too afraid to be caught by this huge man. The more the man tried to reach for the bird, the more the bird flew frantically into the snow and thorns of the bushes.

After a few minutes in the cold and seeing the bird continue to injure itself, the man yelled out in frustration, "Stupid bird, can't you understand that I'm trying to help?" The man paused and thought, "If only you understood you wouldn't fly away ... if only ... if only I could become a bird, and get you to understand."

Just then, the church bells rang, as they always have on the hour. But when the man heard the bells this time, he fell to his knees and began to cry, saying, "Oh, God, I didn't understand. I didn't understand."

Jesus has come all the way from heaven to where we are so that we might have a Saviour near to us and not afar off. He has come to

reconcile us to God. He gives us the atonement from the Father. Be ye reconciled to God.