

What do we really know about Mary?

**An Examination of Scripture in
contrast to Popular Beliefs**

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Preface

If you were to ask people what they knew about Mary, I wonder what responses you would get? Some would say she is the mother of God while others would tell you she is Jesus' mother. Some people might tell you she was always a virgin while others will say she had many children. Some will say that she never died but went straight into heaven to rule as Queen and that God has given her power to save sinners. Some people will tell you that she is appearing all over the world today delivering messages. While some answers might be based on Scripture, others will be on traditions, religious teachings, myths or supernatural occurrences. This book will examine some popular beliefs people have about Mary in contrast to what is written in the Holy Bible. My hope is that after reading this book you will discover the true Mary as portrayed in the Scriptures.

Chapter 1: Who is Mary?

Mary grew up in a Jewish family and lived in a town called Nazareth, in the north of Israel. Her father was a descendant of Nathan who was a son of King David. While Mary was still living with her parents, she became engaged to a man named Joseph who was a descendant of Solomon, also a son of King David. Since both Mary and Joseph were from the royal lineage of King David, their future son would have the right to ascend the Jewish throne. The genealogy of Mary is found in Luke's gospel (Luke 3:23-38) and the genealogy of Joseph is found in Matthew's gospel (Matthew 1:1-16). Before Mary married Joseph, an angel named Gabriel came to bring her an awesome prophetic message from God. The Scripture reads:

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God” (Luke 1:26-35).

When the angel Gabriel revealed God's plan to her, she submitted humbly saying “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). The angel Gabriel also told Mary that her older cousin Elizabeth, who had been barren all her life, was

now six months pregnant. Elizabeth would become the mother of John the Baptist who was to prepare the people for the Messiah by calling them to be baptised and repent of their sins. Mary then visited Elizabeth to support her in her late pregnancy. As soon as Mary arrived, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:42). How did Mary respond? She sang a song of praise to God saying, he "has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name (Luke 1:48-49). "He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" (Luke 1:52). These words in Mary's song of praise are known as the Magnificat. They are full of quotations and allusions to the Old Testament, such as Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, indicating that Mary was well versed and familiar with the Tanakh (Jewish name for the Christian Old Testament). Her words of praise towards her mighty and merciful God demonstrate that she was a humble God fearing woman. She knew she was not worthy of this great blessing and therefore she exalted and magnified God.

When the time came near for Jesus to be born, the Roman Emperor Augustus decreed that those who lived in the Roman Empire should be registered for tax purposes. This meant that Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, which was their ancestral town, to register their names. The prophecy of Micah, foretold 700 years earlier, was then fulfilled when Jesus the Messiah was born in Bethlehem. "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2). This event fulfilled many prophecies stated in the Old Testament. The prophecy of Isaiah foretold that God's son would come from the righteous branch of David's family of which she and Joseph descended. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). It was foretold that the mother of God's son the Messiah, had to be a virgin. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph did everything the Law of the Lord required in keeping with the Jewish traditions (Luke 2:39). On the eighth day after the birth of Jesus, "the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses" (Luke 2:22). This refers to the words spoken by the Lord to Moses: "if a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days...and on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" (Leviticus 12:2-4). These purifying rituals included an offering of either a lamb or pigeon or turtledove. One for a burnt offering and one for a sin offering. The priest then made atonement for her so she would be clean (Leviticus 12:6-8). Atonement for Mary was made by offering "a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord," (Luke 2:24).

After the circumcision of Jesus was completed, Mary waited "thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying" (Leviticus 12:4) before she presented Jesus at the Temple and made an offering to God as prescribed by the Law of Moses. "They brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord" (Luke 2:22-23). Jesus then fulfilled this Mosaic Law by becoming a Rabbi and teacher of Judaism. In the Scriptures we see many people calling Jesus 'Rabbi'. In Jericho, a blind man said to him "Rabbi, let me recover my

sight” (Mark 10:51). When crowds who were looking for Jesus in Capernaum finally found him they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” (John 6:25).

Chapter 2: Was Mary sinless?

In acknowledgement of her inherited sinful nature, Mary went through the purification rituals just as all Jewish women did. In contrast, the Catholic Catechism says that Mary “by special grace of God, committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life” (CCC, para.411). It also states that the “Immaculate Virgin” was “preserved free from all stain of original sin,” (CCC, para.966). In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception as an infallible doctrine. In the alleged apparition at Lourdes, France, in 1858, Mary herself declared that she was the Immaculate Conception, claiming to be born without sin as well as never sinning in all her life. If this doctrine of the Catholic church is true, then going through purification rituals would have been deceiving and a hypocritical act by Mary. Would Mary do such a thing? In fact, these claims of the Catholic church cannot be verified. The evidence found in the Scriptures is that only God is sinless and everyone born after Adam and Eve inherited a sinful nature.

When Jesus was dying on the cross, he entrusted his beloved apostle John to take care of Mary. We don’t know exactly how long John looked after Mary, however, in later years John wrote in one of his letters: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Surely John, who was close to Mary, would have stated somewhere in his letters that everyone had inherited a sin nature except for Mary, if this was the case. Mary, herself, acknowledged her own sin nature when she said, “my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,” (Luke 1:47). Why would Mary call God her Saviour if she did not need saving? If she was preserved from sin, then she did not need to be saved. It is reasonable to conclude that since Mary was born of ordinary human parents with a sinful nature, and she addressed God as her Saviour, she had inherited the sinful nature just like every other human being.

Paul the apostle preached to the Romans that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one,” (Romans 3:10). Everyone born after Adam and Eve inherited the corrupt sinful human nature which was cursed by God to die. “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). You could think of sin like a deadly disease that every human being is born with and can only be remedied by God. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ was born without sin but became sin for us. Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God who was sacrificed for everyone’s sins. “You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). Jesus bore the punishment of our sins on the cross but was never a sinner personally. He was never a sinner or guilty of sin, otherwise he would have ceased to be God, who is Holy and sinless. So the fact that he became sin for us means that our sins were attributed to him. Jesus Christ was treated as a sinner even though he remained sinless. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2

Corinthians 5:21). “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). In Jesus Christ our sins are put to death and we inherit eternal life. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2). Jesus Christ, who is God, is the only sinless Saviour, not Mary.

Chapter 3: Mary’s children

The Scriptures indicate that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, (Luke 1:34; Matthew 1:23), however after Jesus was born she had normal marital relations with her husband Joseph. How can we know this? It is clearly written in the Scriptures: “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus” (Matthew 1:24-25). The meaning of the word ‘until’ in the dictionary means ‘up to that time’. So this verse plainly says that Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary up until the time of the birth of Jesus, but nothing suggests he never had sexual relations with her after Jesus’ birth. It would have been very strange and contrary to Jewish tradition which believed that one of the greatest blessings from God for a married woman was to have many children. The apostle Paul taught that husbands and wives should not deprive one another and deny each other sexually:

“The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

Insisting on Mary’s perpetual virginity is peculiar because it could imply that sexuality within marriage is defiling or vulgar or unspiritual. There is no biblical or logical reason why Mary would have needed to remain a virgin following the birth of Jesus. When God created man and woman he blessed them and said to them, “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it,” (Genesis 1:28). Sex within marriage is a good gift from God, “therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). The Catholic church argues that Mary was forever a virgin, since being a virgin meant she could be totally dedicated to God. If this was true, then was Moses who was married with children not completely dedicated to God? Was the apostle Peter who was married not totally devoted to God? (Galea, 2007). If the perpetual virginity of Mary was indeed such an important fact, why was it never mentioned in the Scriptures after the birth of Jesus? Instead, many passages in the Scriptures indicate that Mary and Joseph were blessed with a large family and that Jesus had brothers and sisters. While teaching in a synagogue in his hometown the crowds “were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not

all his sisters with us?” (Matthew 13:54-56). From this passage we know that he had four brothers and at least two sisters indicated by the plural ‘sisters’. Some Catholic scholars theorize that the word used in the original Greek text of the New Testament for brothers ‘adelphos’ meant ‘spiritual brothers’ or ‘step-brothers’ from children that Joseph had from a previous marriage, but there is no biblical support for these two theories. After the Wedding at Cana, Jesus “went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers (and sisters) and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days” (John 2:12). The fact that the words ‘brothers’ and ‘disciples’ are used separately shows that ‘brothers’ did not refer to ‘spiritual brothers/disciples’. If Joseph had, in this case, at least six children from a previous marriage, where were they when Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem or when they fled to Egypt? Surely if Joseph had other children, they would be with them. There is no logical reason to disprove that Jesus’ brothers and sisters were really the biological children of both Mary and Joseph.

In John’s gospel it is stated that at the Feast of the Booths (Jewish holiday known as Sukkot), that “not even his brothers believed in him” (John 7:5). It is hard to imagine that the biological brothers of Jesus did not believe in him during his ministry after growing up together as a family for so many years. This changed after Jesus ascended into heaven. The apostles “together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers,” (Acts 1:14), were praying together in the upper room choosing an apostle to replace Judas who was the traitor. Again the words of Scripture here emphasise the difference between the apostles, the women, his mother and brothers. This verse in Scripture also demonstrates how Mary and Jesus’ brothers became followers of Jesus Christ and after receiving the Holy Spirit, shared in the mission of the early church with all believers.

Chapter 4: Veneration of Mary

There is nothing mentioned in all of Scripture about venerating or exalting Mary. In fact Jesus often downplayed his relationship with Mary and distanced himself from her by calling her “woman” instead of “mother”. At the wedding in Cana, “When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:3-4). When Jesus was dying on the cross he “saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” (John 19:26). Jesus emphasised that a person was more blessed if they did the will of God and kept his Word rather than being part of his biological family, (Mark 3:31-35). If Jesus wanted his mother to be venerated or exalted above others, he had plenty of opportunities to teach this, but he never did. A perfect opportunity arose on one occasion when “a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” Instead of agreeing with this woman, his reply was, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:27-28). This response demonstrates that everyone who keeps God’s Word is blessed. While Mary is blessed among women for carrying Jesus in her womb (Luke 1:42), she should not be venerated above all humanity, (Rhodes, 2000). She was an ordinary human being. The Catholic church, however, exalts Mary stating that she is

“exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things” (CCC, para.966). By exalting Mary in this way, God is robbed of the glory that he alone deserves. God alone should be exalted above heaven and earth and receive all honour and praise. God alone is holy by nature (Rhodes, 2000). As is written in the Scriptures:

“Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!”
(Psalm 150:1)

“Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” (Matthew 4:10)

“And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)

When the apostle John wanted to worship the angel that had appeared to him, the angel told John, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God” (Revelation 22:9). Mary also clearly told the angel that she is “the servant of the Lord,” (Luke 1:38). Servants of God are not worshipped, exalted or venerated. Worship is reserved to God alone. “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). Mary, the mother of Jesus, would never invite people to worship her and consequently draw people away from worshipping God since she herself worshipped God alone. As is written in the book of Revelation, God alone should be worshipped with fear and given all the glory: “And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Revelation 14:7).

It was in the 4th Century AD, that Emperor Constantine began to Christianise the pagan Roman Empire. During this time, Roman households commonly had shrines with statuettes of protective deities such as Isis which were worshipped (Bodel, 2008). Once people were made ‘Christian’ by Roman decree, they substituted these pagan statuettes with images of Christian saints and martyrs and Mary. Do you think that a person can be made a Christian simply through a command or decree? Only through faith in Jesus Christ, which is a gift from God, can a person become truly Christian. So who was Isis? She was an ancient sky goddess whose worship spread from ancient Egypt to the Greco-Roman world. Powers attributed to Isis are very similar to those attributed to Mary. Isis helped the dead enter the afterlife, just as Mary is supposed to save sinners from hell and lead them to heaven. Isis governed the skies and natural world and had power over fate. This is reflected in the many prayers to Mary to protect and save them from the calamities of this world. While the worship of Isis may have officially ended by the 6th century AD, the veneration of Mary has not. Identical titles of Isis have been attributed to Mary such as ‘Mother of God’ and ‘Queen of Heaven’ (Witt, 1997) which are used today by Catholics. One popular image of Isis with her baby god Horus in her lap are very much like the images of Mary nursing the baby Jesus (Heyob, 1975; Anderson & Edwards, 2018) and many Marian icons show

resemblance to antique panel paintings of Isis (Mathews & Muller, 2005). In the 4th century AD the Catholic Bishop Epiphanius, who was a strong defender of orthodoxy and considered a saint and Church Father by both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, warned that some were worshipping Mary with excess awe (Gendron, 2011).

Isis wasn't the only goddess worshipped by pagans. Around 2350-2140 BC, the virgin goddess Ishtar was worshipped by the Mesopotamians. Ishtar was also worshipped in later years in equivalent forms such as the Canaanite 'Astarte', the Greek goddesses 'Athena' and 'Aphrodite' and the Roman goddesses 'Venus' and 'Minerva' (Penglase, 1994). Worship of these pagan goddesses were then replaced by Mary during the time when the Roman Christian empire began to flourish. In Athens, Greece, a temple dedicated to the perpetual virgin goddess Athena, known as the Parthenon, was converted to a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the 5th century A.D. (Anderson & Edwards, 2018).

Even though there is no biblical evidence to support the veneration of Mary, the Catholic Church venerates Mary as the Queen of Heaven and has a feast day on its liturgical calendar to celebrate this title. Pope Pius XII expressed in his papal encyclical issued in 1954, that since Jesus Christ is the King of the Universe, Mary should be called Queen since the Davidic tradition of Israel gave the mother of a king the title Queen (Pope Pius XII, 1954). Can this reasoning apply since we are not talking exclusively about an earthly king? Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." (John 18:36). Mary was the mother of Jesus' humanity since he took on flesh in her womb, but she was not the mother of Jesus' divinity since Jesus existed as divine God before Mary even existed.

Chapter 5: Praying to Mary

The Catholic church encourages its members to pray to Mary and the saints, however, through all biblical history prayer is directed to God alone (Gendron, 2011). The Catholic Catechism states that souls will be delivered from death by Mary's prayers (CCC, para.966). Many Catholics bow down and kiss statues of Mary and pray the rosary kneeling in front of it. In the Old Testament, God clearly gave this commandment to Moses, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God," (Exodus 20:4-5).

When Jesus' disciples asked him how they should pray, Jesus taught them to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). He never taught them to pray to Moses, or any of the prophets or even to angels. He taught them to pray to God the living Father in heaven. Mary and Jesus' disciples always directed their prayers to God alone. "All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (Acts 1:14).

God forbids people to consult the dead calling this practice abominable. The word abominable means loathsome, detestable and odious. These are strong words used by the Lord God who said that "anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets

omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead... is an abomination to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Communication with the dead is forbidden by God. "Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:13). Saul sought a medium to bring the spirit of Samuel before him (1 Samuel 28:8-15). By doing this Saul "broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse" (1 Chronicles 10:13-14). This passage demonstrates that while it is possible to communicate with the spirit of a dead person, God detests this practice. God wants us to direct our prayers directly to him alone.

Only God is omnipresent which means he can be everywhere at the same time and therefore can hear the prayers of every single person in the world. Psalm 139:7-12 illustrates this fact. God alone has the power to answer prayer and he knows our needs before we even ask him. God the Father has given us his Son, Jesus Christ to be the sole mediator between mankind and God. The apostle Paul made it very clear that there is only one mediator. "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all," (1 Timothy 2:5-6). In John's Gospel Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus Christ made it very clear when he used the word 'except' that he is the only mediator we have and need. We should not pray to any dead individuals which includes Mary and all the saints. Just like Saul, we do not want to bring the wrath of God upon ourselves for praying to the spirits of the dead.

It is the pagans who practice divination, sorcery, witchcraft, and spiritism. These are all occult practices which God warns his people not to be a part of. He warned his people in Deuteronomy 18:9-14. God also warned the Israelites in Leviticus 20:6, "If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people." In the New Testament it is written that in the end times, "some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). The Catholic church officially teaches that its members should pray to Mary and the saints. This is demonstrated in prayers such as the 'Memorare', 'Hail Holy Queen' and 'Hail Mary.' It is clear from the words of these prayers that people are praying directly to Mary and petitioning her. Here are some words from these prayers:

The Memorare

Remember, most loving Virgin Mary, never was it heard that anyone who turned to you for help was left unaided...

Hail Holy Queen

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To you we cry...

Hail Mary

...Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

In the Middle Ages a form of prayer called the 'rosary' became popular in the Catholic church. The rosary consists of repeating the 'Hail Mary' prayer over 50 times while using beads. Rosary beads first came into existence within the Catholic church around the same time that a string of prayer beads was being used in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. People used these beads to recite, chant or repeat a mantra or the name of a deity. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he told them, "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:7-9). God does not want us to pray to Mary or to pray repetitiously. Can you imagine a person talking to you reciting the same sentence ten times repeatedly?

While the first part of the 'Hail Mary' is found in Scripture, (Luke 1:28; Luke 1:42), the second half is not: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." These words have been added and they give Mary the role of Jesus Christ by making her a mediator and saviour. There is no evidence in the Scriptures for believers in Jesus Christ to pray or petition to anyone but God. Instead believers are instructed to approach God through Jesus the Son of God and Great High Priest. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace," (Hebrews 4:16). Since Jesus, the Great High Priest, has suffered and died on the cross as the sacrifice that takes away all sins, we no longer need mediators to approach the throne of God. "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:12-14). Jesus is the only mediator between God and mankind. Mary and the saints have not been assigned by God to have the role of mediators. The Scriptures say that Jesus Christ Himself is continuously interceding for us before the Father. The living Son of God, Jesus Christ is "able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). When Jesus died on the cross, the temple veil was torn, (Matthew 27:50-51) so that every individual could now approach God's throne of grace without the need of mediators. Through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we could now enter the holy place of God, (Hebrews 10:19-22). Jesus Christ removed the barriers between God and man by his death. We can approach him with confidence and boldness, (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Even though the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is the sole mediator, the Catholic church assigns Mary the title 'Mediatrice' which means 'mediator'. She is also given the role of 'Co-redeemer'. Catholics state that Mary had an intercessory role at the wedding feast at Cana when she asked Jesus to perform the first miracle of his public life which was turning water into wine. So when Mary told Jesus that the wine had run out he answered, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:1-5). Jesus then changed the water into wine. Note that when Mary informed Jesus that the wine ran out, his response revealed

that he let Mary know in a loving way that it was not her place to request miraculous interventions. He came to do the will of his Father not her will. Jesus performed this first miracle due to his graciousness and mercy and not because Mary told him to, since Jesus only ever obeyed his Father in heaven. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). Mary is a redeemed sinner in heaven but she has no power over God Almighty than any of us do. She cannot save anyone on earth. God has given each person the free choice of coming to Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Nobody can force anyone to repent and believe in God, it is a gift of God. When God wills something, it will be done and no one can change his mind. If at times our prayers are answered, it is not because we had any power over God but because God already willed it to be. If Mary had any mediatrix role or power over God, she would be like God. “Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high” (Psalm 113:5).

Chapter 6: Marian Apparitions

While the Scriptures reveal that angels have appeared to people, Catholic church tradition reports the appearance of Mary. In the last century there have been countless alleged apparitions of Mary. It is reported that Mary, the mother of Jesus, appears supernaturally and gives messages that need to be passed on to all people, especially in the Catholic church. The following table gives details of some alleged apparitions.

| Marian title | Year | Location | Seers |
|--|------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Our Lady of Guadalupe | 1531 | Mexico City, Mexico | Juan Diego |
| Mary appeared to an Aztec man named Juan who had recently converted to the Catholic faith. Her message was to build a church on the spot of the apparition. Her image was imprinted on Juan’s cloak to convince the local bishop. This image is still on display in Mexico and is a symbol of the Catholic faith in Mexico. | | | |
| Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (Our Lady of Graces) | 1830 | Paris, France | Catherine Laboure |
| Catherine was a novice at the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. She reported that Mary appeared to her one night and asked her to make a medal called the Miraculous Medal and that whoever wore it would receive great graces. | | | |
| Our Lady of La Salette | 1846 | La Salette-Fallavaux, France | Melanie Calvat, Maximin Giraud |
| Two shepherd children saw Mary weeping because of the disrespect people showed to Sundays and they got a secret message which they gave to Pope Pius IX. This Pope proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Papal infallibility and introduced Peter’s Pence which was money donated (sometimes as a tax) by Catholics for financial support to the Bishop of Rome (the Pope). | | | |
| Our Lady of Lourdes (The Immaculate Conception) | 1858 | Lourdes, France | Bernadette Soubirous |
| A 14 year old shepherd girl said Mary appeared to her identifying herself as the Immaculate Conception and revealed the location of a miraculous spring of water which would heal many people. | | | |

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| Our Lady of Fatima (Our Lady of the Rosary, The Immaculate Heart of Mary) | 1917 | Fatima, Portugal | Lucia Santos, Jacinta Marto, Francisco Marto |
| Three shepherd children said they saw an angel and then Lucia saw Mary. They were told to make personal sacrifices to save people from hell, that the Immaculate Heart of Mary would triumph and there was a sun miracle. All popes who have reigned since this apparition have believed in its authenticity. Pope John Paul II credited Our Lady of Fatima for saving his life when he was shot in Rome on her feast day. | | | |
| Our Lady of Akita | 1973 | Akita, Japan | Sister Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa |
| A statue of Mary became illuminated and wept and told Sister Agnes messages which she heard even though she was deaf. The messages were about God who would punish humanity like never before, and wipe out most of the world unless people pray the Rosary. | | | |
| Our Lady of Medjugorje (Queen of Peace) | 1981 - present | Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina | Jakov Colo, Ivan Dragicevic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic, Ivanka Ivankovic, Vicka Ivankovic |
| Since this date, there are reports of rosary beads turning gold, conversions to the Catholic faith and personal visions. The main requests of the apparitions are: pray the whole rosary daily; fast on Wednesdays and Fridays; attend Mass frequently; go to Confession at least monthly; read the Bible daily. | | | |
| Our Lady of Warraq | 2009 | Giza, Egypt | 3000 people |
| About 3000 people of the Coptic Orthodox church say they saw Mary appear in luminous white robes above the middle dome of a church in Giza. The apparition lasted from 1am to 4am in the middle of the night. | | | |

Sourced from List of Marian apparitions, Wikipedia. Retrieved 23 January, 2021.

This table lists just some of the alleged apparitions of Mary. There are countless more all over the world. Interesting to note is that most of her titles start with 'Our Lady' and that her appearance is distinctly representative of the cultural heritage of the person who sees her. For example, in Japan, Mary appears to look Japanese. In Portugal, she looks Portuguese. In the Mexican image, she looks like a native Mexican. Don't you think that this is strange, since the Mary of the Bible was of Jewish heritage and would have most likely looked Hebrew? The apostle Paul warned that "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians, 11:14). Either these visionaries are making this all up or they are really witnessing something supernatural. If these visions are real, how can we know if they are a deceiving wonder or a genuine message from God? There is only one way – read what is written in the Scriptures. What does the Word of God teach? If the messages from these apparitions are contrary to God's Word then they are undoubtedly satanic in nature. The real mother of Jesus would never speak contrary to God's Word. No matter how convincing these apparitions or accompanying miracles may be, we need to test them against what is said in the Scriptures, since demons have the power to delude people with supernatural wonders.

What are these messages about anyway? Most messages from this Mary request believers to pray and make sacrifices to save sinners from hell. They are instructed to pray the rosary and to be devoted to Mary honouring her with exalted titles. They are told to take part in more Catholic church practices like going to confession and Mass. None of these messages agree with what is written in the Scriptures. They are more focussed on keeping people loyal to the Catholic church and all its teachings and doctrines. In the alleged apparitions at Fatima, Portugal, which are supported by several popes to be true, Mary is referred to as the "Most Holy Mother" and having an "Immaculate Heart." The Scriptures never mention anywhere that Mary is sinless, instead it teaches that everyone except God is a sinner. The apparitions at Fatima proclaim the rosary as the remedy for sin and evil in the world. Seers are told that if they pray the rosary to Mary, they will save souls from hell and stop disasters happening upon earth. This is not biblical. There is only one mediator and saviour for sinners, it is Jesus Christ. "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5).

In Scripture we are always told to pray only to the living God, (Romans 15:30; Acts 8:24; Acts 12:5). God teaches us in the Scriptures that we should not be in contact with the dead in any form. It is forbidden. Would God allow Mary to do something that he has forbidden? "There shall not be found among you anyone who... inquires of the dead..." (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). A repeated message of Fatima is the call for reparation and penance. This is a Catholic church teaching that states every human being must make amends with God and Mary for sins committed against them. In contrast, the Scriptures teach that when a person repents and believes in Jesus Christ their Saviour, they are forgiven of all their sins and the punishment they deserve has been paid in full by Jesus Christ who "was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). The apostle Paul taught "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and repent of your sinfulness before him, then he will forgive every past, present and future sin you may commit. He has paid the price of all your sins for you. All God wants of his believers is to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

Another message from the Lady of Fatima is she wants people to bow down and venerate images associated with the apparition. One of the ten commandments God gave Moses was: "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below" (Exodus 20:4). When Cornelius met the apostle Peter and got on his knees to worship him, Peter told him to "stand up; I too am a man" (Acts 10:25-26). All worship is to be directed to God alone. Praying to Mary is contrary to the scriptural admonition to pray to God alone. To pray to Mary on a worldwide basis is to ascribe her with attributes which only God possesses, such as omnipresence and omniscience. She does not have God's powers otherwise she would be like God. No one is like God. It is idolatry to worship anyone but God alone. How does God want us to worship

him? "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

While Satan's power is limited, he can perform miracles to deceive people and draw them away from God. These apparitions of Mary direct people away from Jesus Christ their only true Saviour and tell them to venerate and pray to Mary. Paul the apostle warned that the Antichrist would come with "power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception," (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Matthew warns in his Gospel that "false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24). Apparitions of Mary are believed by millions of Catholics all over the world today, even though most of the messages contradict the Word of God. The messages encourage devotion to Mary and salvation to be earned by works. They never teach that Jesus is the only mediator and intercessor between God and man (Hebrews 7:25). Only by reading and believing the Word of God, can we know the truth.

Here are some apparition statements allegedly given by Mary to the seers taken from the documentary called 'Messages from Heaven' (Tetlow, 2004). These quotes are from Marian apparitions with either full Catholic church approval or with an imprimatur of a bishop or affirmed by the Pope and many cardinals. These messages are then contrasted to what is written in the Scriptures.

| Apparition Messages | What is written in the Scriptures |
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| <p><u>Our Lady of Medjugorje</u>: "Dear children, today I invite you to ask yourself why I am with you this long. I am the Mediatrix between you and God."</p> <p><u>Message to Father Gobbi</u>: "Do not let yourselves be seized by fear of discouragement. Have great confidence in the powerful work of intercession and mediation of your heavenly mother."</p> | <p>"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25).</p> <p>"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)</p> |
| <p><u>Our Lady of Betania, Venezuela</u>: "Little children, I am the mother of good counsel, mediator, who is trying to persuade you to listen to the call. My messages are faith, love and hope. More than anything it brings reconciliation between people and nations. It is the only thing that can save this century from war and eternal death."</p> <p><u>The Lady of all Nations</u>: "The world is degenerating so much so that it was necessary for the Father and the Son to send me into the world among all the peoples in order to be their advocate and to save them."</p> <p><u>Our Lady of Medjugorje</u>: "I call upon you to open yourself completely to me so that through each of you I may be able to convert and save</p> | <p>The Scriptures teach that God sent Jesus Christ to save people and the Holy Spirit to be their advocate.</p> <p>"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).</p> <p>"Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).</p> |

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| <p>the world.”</p> <p><u>Our Lady of Akita, Japan:</u> “I alone am able still to save you from the calamities which approach. Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.”</p> <p><u>Message from Our Lady of San Nicolas:</u> “My daughter, in this time I am the ark for all your brethren. I am the ark of peace. I am the ark of salvation. The ark where my children must enter if they wish to live in the kingdom of God.”</p> | |
| <p><u>Our Lady of Fatima:</u> “You will never be alone. My Immaculate heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God.”</p> | <p>The Mary of the Scriptures was a humble obedient handmaid of God. She is not omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent. These are qualities God alone possesses otherwise he would fail to be God and the person with these qualities would be God. “The Lord is exalted over all the nations, His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the One enthroned on high?” (Psalm 113:4-5) The only way to God the Father is through Jesus Christ his Son as written in the Scriptures: “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).</p> |
| <p><u>Message to Father Gobbi:</u> “At every moment you must be just as I would have you be. At every moment you must do just what I would have you to do. Do not be afraid. I will always be near you.”</p> <p><u>Message to Bernardo Martinez of Cuapa, Nicaragua:</u> “Do not be grieved. I am with all of you even though you do not see me. I am mother of all you sinners.”</p> | <p>Before Jesus ascended into heaven he gave the great commission to his disciples saying: “therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).</p> |
| <p><u>Lady of all Nations, Amsterdam:</u> “I stand here as the Co-redemptrix and Advocate. Everything should be concentrated on that. Repeat this after me: The new dogma will be the dogma of the Co-redemptrix.”</p> <p><u>Message to Father Gobbi:</u> “Until I am acknowledged there, where the most Holy Trinity has willed me to be I will not be able to exercise my power fully in the maternal work of</p> | <p>The throne of God is for God alone! Who else wants to sit there in place of the most Holy Trinity? None other than Lucifer and all who want to be like God themselves! “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;” (Isaiah 14:12-13). Do you think Mary,</p> |

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| <p>co-redemption and of the universal mediation of graces.”</p> | <p>the humble servant of the Lord, would ever want to be like God and sit on his throne to rule the world?</p> |
| <p><u>Our Lady of Medjugorje:</u> “I love you even when you are far away from me and my son. I ask you not to allow my heart to shed tears of blood because of the souls who are being lost through sin.”</p> <p><u>Our Lady of La Salette, France:</u> “For a long time I have suffered for you. If I do want my son to abandon you I am forced to pray to him myself without ceasing. You pay no heed. However much you would do, you could never recompense the pain I have taken for you.”</p> | <p>“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, (Rev 5:9).</p> <p>“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,” (1Pet3:18).</p> <p>“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified... Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb 10:12-14,18).</p> <p>Over 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ suffered a bloody death on the cross which was the offering of himself as the perfect sacrifice and ransom for all the sins of humanity. Since that time, there is no longer any offering or sacrifice anyone can make for the forgiveness or reparation of sin! The price has been paid by God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Nothing you or I or anyone else can do, can add to that perfect sacrifice.</p> |
| <p><u>Message to Father Gobbi:</u> “As mother I want to tell you that I am here with you represented by the statue you have here. Each of my statues is a sign of a presence of mine and reminds you of your heavenly mother therefore it must be honoured and put in places of greater veneration. You should look with love at every image of your heavenly mother.</p> <p><u>Our Lady of Guadalupe:</u> “I ardently desire a temple built for me here where I can show and offer all my love, compassion, help and protection. For I am your merciful mother.”</p> | <p>“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters beneath. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,” (Exodus 20:4-5).</p> <p>“So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, (Deut 4:15-16).</p> |
| <p><u>To St Brigid, Sweden:</u> I am Mary the Queen of Heaven and the Queen of angels.</p> | <p>“The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make</p> |

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| | <p>cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger... Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched.” (Jer 7:18,20).</p> |
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People are only saved through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; 16:30-31). God did not change his plan of salvation to go through Mary! “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” (1Timothy 2:5). False apparitions claiming to be Mary are leading people to accepting Antichrist. A visionary at Medjugorje said that Mary has come for all her children, whether they are Catholic, Muslim, Protestant and other religions (Weible, 1989). This Mary speaks of religion as divisive and wants people of all faiths to unite under her, which essentially means to unite all religions under the Roman Catholic church. In fact, many non-Catholics have converted to the Roman Catholic faith after an apparition experience.

Satan is a master deceiver and can appear as an angel of light. The Word of God is light – so Satan can manifest himself in the form of truth and appear to be true and yet be deceptive (Oakland, 2004). The apostle Paul stated that Satan is the god of this world and plans to deceive the whole world. He blinds minds so that they cannot see the light of the true glorious gospel of grace that leads to salvation. After the amazing experience of witnessing the transfiguration of Christ on Mt Tabor, Peter the apostle made it clear in his teachings that it was important to make judgments based on the Word of God and not on personal experiences. We must be careful to always examine everything we read, see, or hear against the Scriptures, whether it be traditions, religious doctrines, supernatural occurrences, myths or individual opinions. “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

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