

## MARY IN THE GOSPELS

### **=Important sections of the Gospels:**

- Infancy Narratives: Mt 1-2, Lk 1-2
- Mary Comes with Jesus' Brothers in Search of Jesus:  
Mk 3:31-35, Mt 12:46-50, Lk 8:19-21
- People of Nazareth Speak About Jesus' Mother, Brothers and Sisters: Mk 6:1-3, Mt 13:53-55
- Mary Effectively Intercedes in Favor of Family at Cana:  
Jn 2:1-11
- Mother of Jesus Is Mentioned Along with Jesus' Brothers and Disciples, Who Went to Capernaum for a Stay of a Few Days: Jn 2:12
- Dying Jesus Gives His Mother to His Beloved Disciple:  
Jn 19:25-27

### **=Markan View of Mary**

- Mk 3:31-35 (Who are my mother and my brothers?)
- Biographical '**apophthegm**' (saying of Jesus set in a brief narrative context)
- Follows passage Mk 3:20-21 "He is beside himself!" and 'his own' set out to seize him (his own?)
- They sit around him. Jesus considers them his true eschatological family. (That does not exclude his natural family).
- Mk 6:1-6a (Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary...)
- Apophthegm, saying of Jesus set in the context of a brief narrative.
- Other passages: Mt - 'Son of the Carpenter'; Lk - 'Son of Joseph', Jn - Jesus, Son of Joseph.
- Only in Mark, Jesus is mentioned as a carpenter, humble origins of Jesus as contrast his current reputation as teach and wonder-worker.
- No mention of Jesus' Father as a possible slur?
- Mk 3:31; 6:3 (Brothers and Sister of Jesus)  
Brothers - 'adelphoi', Sisters - 'adelphai', can mean blood relatives, kinsmen, neighbors, co-religionists, or disciples.

### **=Matthean View on Mary**

- Mt 1:1-17 (Genealogy), follows pattern A begot B except for the birth of Jesus, "Mary of whom was begotten Jesus" (rather than "Joseph begot Jesus by Mary")
- Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Uriah's wife, besides the name of Mary. Tamar & Rahab are Canaanites, Ruth is Moabite, Uriah is Hittite. The gentiles or the foreigners have also been prepared for the birth of the Messiah.

The four were sinners, they seduced others to commit sin, and marked by irregular marital union.

-Mt 1:18-25 (Virginal Conception),

-a) "erusin", the betrothal in which a formal exchange of consent took place before witnesses. Gave the man legal rights over the girl. She continued to live in her own family without any sexual contact for about a year;

-b) "nisu'in", the formal taking of the wife by the husband into his own house. Matthew tells us that Mary's pregnancy took place between these two stages of Jewish marriage, and that it was through the Holy Spirit.

-Matthew also shows Jesus to be a true son of David through Joseph, and the son of God through the virginal conception by Mary.

-Other authors admit that Joseph was truly a Just and Honest man and new that this child was not his, and even if it was special through the Holy Spirit, he was still not the father and could not claim to be so, until instructed by the Angel.

-Joseph did not sexually know his wife until she gave birth to her first-born baby (Mt 1\_25). This until=clause in the original language does not have the implication that after the birth of Jesus, Joseph had sexual relations with Mary. The Matthean community shows the firm conviction that Jesus was virginally conceived and given birth to by Mary.

## =**Lucan View of Mary**

-Lucan view of Mary is clearly shown in the infancy narrative in Lk 1-2. Here the evangelist points out the important role of Mary in the annunciation, the visitation, the birth at Bethlehem, the presentation in the Temple, and the finding of Jesus in the Temple.

-Luke presents Jesus' conception, birth and infancy in parallelism with that of John the Baptist, in order to help his readers toward a better understanding of the mysteries of Jesus, and also to highlight the superiority in significance of Jesus over John the Baptist.

-One of the sources of the evangelist's infancy narrative may have been the memoirs of Mary.

-Lk 1:26-38 (Mary and the Conception of Jesus), Luke gives the same details as Matthew concerning the angel, the man of the house of David, and the virgin's name.

-Two Lucan annunciations concerning the birth of John and that of Jesus, resemble in detail other angelic annunciation, for example, those to the shepherds (Lk 2:9-12), and Joseph (Mt 1:20-23), to Abraham (Gn 17), to Samson's parents (Jdg 13), to Moses (Ex 3), and to Gideon (Jdg 6).

-Five steps can be distinguished: a) appearance of an angel or the Lord himself, b) reaction of fear, c) announcement of birth of a son, d) objection from the person, e) giving of a sign.

-The "How can this be...?" question can be understood against the background of the common pattern of all other annunciations in the Bible. It has to be understood as a literary device meant to advance the story and the dialogue. It provides the angel with the opportunity to explain that the conception will be virginal, and to offer the sign, that is Elizabeth's pregnancy.

-Mary's answer to the angel, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it happen to me according to your word" (1:38), highlights the fact that she is the perfect disciple and a true member of Jesus' eschatological family. Even though she has been granted a sign (1:36-37), she is a believer, for whom God's word was enough (1:38).

-Lk 1:39-56 (Mary's Visitation to Elizabeth)

-Mary's hymn--the Magnificat--could be either a Lucan original composition or a Lucan adaptation drawing from a collection of Jewish Christian hymns. In her hymn Mary proclaims the gospel in anticipation. (More on the Magnificat in a later presentation.)

-Lk 2:1-20 (Mary at the Birth at Bethlehem)

-A great majority of Greek manuscripts render the text as reading that Joseph went to Bethlehem to register "with Mary his betrothed", (2:5). It can be asked whether Mary was still only betrothed to Joseph or his wife. However, there is a

variant in the Synoptic Syriac and some Old Latin manuscripts which reads "with Mary his wife".

-Lk 2:21-40 (Mary and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple)

-Mary gave birth to her "first-born son". This does not imply that Mary had a second or third-born after Jesus. It only means that Jesus had all the rights and privileges which the Mosaic law accords to the first-born son.

-Quoting from Exodus, Luke describes Jesus as "a male who opens the womb" (Lk 2:23). The evangelist simply uses here the standard OT language; he does not say anything specific as to whether the birth of Jesus took place without rupture of the hymen (virginity in partu).

-According to Nm 18:15-16, five shekels had to be paid to buy back the child presented to God in the case of all non-Levites. Since there is no mention of such a payment by Jesus' parents, some would argue that Luke thought of Jesus as a Levite.

-The symbolic language of "a sword passing through" is also found in Ez 14:17. Here Luke seems to present Mary once again as the ideal Christian disciple who is also ready to share Christ's suffering.

-Lk 2:41-52 (Mary and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple)

-"Behold your father and I have looked for you anxiously". Mary's respect for her husband is very evident; thus she exhibits herself as an ideal wife.

-"Why is it that you were looking for me?..." The tone of Jesus can be understood more as grief that his parents have known him so little, than as a sharp rebuff. Jesus put his relationship with his Father above all family ties. Mary is now learning and rediscovering the meaning of Simeon's prophecy uttered some twelve years ago.

-Luke observes that the parents of Jesus "did not understand the word (rema) which he spoke to them" (2:50). This is similar to the lack of understanding by the disciples after the third prediction of Jesus' passion (18:34). But Mary was different from them insofar as she retained the word which she had not yet understood and she continued in her search for understanding (2:51). Thus in Luke, Mary appears as the perfect Christian disciple.

## =Johannine View of Mary

-Jn 1:12-13 (A reference in the Prologue) We may read in Jn 1:13 a possible reference to the virginal conception of Jesus by Mar. But to all those who accepted him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God – those who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”.

-This reading in the plural is supported by all the Greek manuscripts, and hence v.13 would then refer to the begetting of Christian believers. But one Old Latin manuscript reads it in the singular: “He who was begotten”. This reading is taken as the original by Tertullian, Ambrose and Augustine. If this reading in the singular is taken as the original, then Jn 1:13 becomes a possible reference to Jesus’ virginal conception. But since this reading is only attested to by a single manuscript, this reference remains dubious.

-Jn 2:1-11 (Mary at Cana)

-This address “woman” is to be seen in relation to Jn 19:25-27, where Mary is again addressed as “woman”. On both occasions, Mary is envisaged as the “woman”, foretold in Gn 3:15, who would stand along with her son to crush the head of the serpent, Satan.

-In the hearing of Jesus she said to the waiters: “Do whatever he tells you” (2:5). This shows Mary’s trust in Jesus, and the motherly influence on her Son, almost forcing him to intervene in the difficult situation the family was facing.

-Jn 2:12 (Transitional Clause)

-This verse does in fact show that they went all together down to Capernaum. The intention of the redactor is to stress their togetherness rather than their distinction from one another.

-Jn 6:42 (Son of Joseph)

-This pertains to the Johannine misunderstanding technique; it only exhibits the popular understanding of Jesus during his lifetime.

-**Jn 8:41 (Born of Fornication)**

-“We were not born of fornication. WE have one father, God himself” (8:41). This seems to contain a slander with regard to Jesus’ birth, which they considered as illegitimate in contrast to their own. From this point of view, it may contain an indirect reference to Jesus’ virginal conception.

-Jn 19:25-27 (Mary at the Foot of the Cross)

-John gives this episode in order to show the importance of Mary for the Johannine community and for the universal Church.

-In this light Jesus proclaims from the cross a new mother-son relationship in the new community of believers. In Mk 3:31-35 Mark does not include Jesus’ physical family in his eschatological family. In Lk 8:19-21, however, Luke considers Jesus’ physical family in the eschatological family, because Jesus said: “My mother and

my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it". In the Gospel of John, at the foot of the cross, Jesus gives his physical mother a spiritual role as mother of the beloved disciple, and John represents all the disciples of Jesus. This implies that Jesus willed that there should be a filial relationship between his mother and all his disciples, and that all his disciples should receive his mother as their own mother on the spiritual level.