

# Lesson 12 | November 17, 2024

## Mary: Humble Mother of Jesus

**Study Text:** Genesis 3:14–15; Isaiah 7:10–14; Luke 1:26–38, 46–55; 2:1–21

**Central Truth:** Christians respond in awe and thanksgiving to God's wondrous plan of salvation.

### Key Verse: Luke 1:28

The angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women (KJV).

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" (NLT)

### Learning Objectives

- Students will reflect on the wonder of Mary's experience and rejoice in God's plan of salvation.
- Students will recognize how God fulfilled every prophecy concerning Jesus and then choose to believe His promises.
- Students will rejoice in God's plan of salvation and embrace their role in the Great Commission.

## Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** As we look at the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we can learn a great deal about submission to God's will. Today, we'll consider God's salvation plan throughout history—from the Fall, through the prophets, to Gabriel's birth announcement to a humble Jewish teenager in Nazareth. Her response of surrender to God, no matter the cost, inspires us to surrender to Him as well.

### Discussion Starter—Christmas Traditions

**Say:** In a few weeks, families all over the world will celebrate Jesus' birth with gatherings, meals, gifts, decorating, giving, serving, and remembering. Tell us about one of your family traditions or favorite Christmas memories.

**Say:** Christmas marks a pivotal event in history—and it's worth every celebration! The Christmas story is all about the goodness of God and His redemptive purposes, but today we'll focus on the role God chose for Mary. As we notice Mary's responses to God in this story, we'll be encouraged to trust God's leading in our own lives.

The thread of God's redemption plan can be seen throughout all of Scripture. In this lesson, we'll begin in Genesis, just after the Fall, with the first mention of a coming Savior. We'll consider the prophetic words of Isaiah to King Ahaz. Then, we'll read Gabriel's announcement of Jesus' birth and consider Mary's response. God handpicked

Mary to be Jesus' mother—a specific, significant role in His plan of salvation. Just as God chose Mary for this task, He has chosen each of us to be born in a specific moment in history to fulfill specific roles. We are all unique. And God has plans for each of us. God was pleased when Mary surrendered to His will; He is pleased when we do the same.

## **Part 1—The Incarnation of Christ Foretold**

### **He Shall Bruise Your Head**

Genesis 3:14–15

**Say:** Even before Adam and Eve chose to sin, God had a plan for making things right. One act of rebellious disobedience had destroyed fellowship with God, but Mary's humble obedience would make way for the Savior who would restore it.

The first mention of the coming Savior is found in Genesis 3, just after sin entered the hearts of humanity. Adam and Eve had been created in God's image (1:27) and placed in a garden He planted for them (2:8). They were innocent—entirely without sin—and enjoyed intimate, unbroken fellowship with each other (2:25). God told Adam, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die” (verses 16–17).

The serpent tempted Eve to question God's commands and doubt His goodness (3:1–5). Tragically, they believed the lies of the enemy and ate from the forbidden tree (verse 6). Their rebellious sin separated them from God, causing shame and blame between the two of them (verses 7–13). Because He is utterly holy, God doesn't just overlook or tolerate sin, so Adam and Eve's sin had to be punished. Verses 14–15 describe God's curse on the serpent, while verses 16–19 explain the impact the curse of sin would have on women and men from that point on. At first glance, the latter verses may seem more applicable to twenty-first century readers. But if we look closer at Genesis 3:15, we see a powerful promise: One day the woman's offspring would struggle with, and ultimately defeat, the serpent's offspring.

Jesus is, of course, the woman's victorious offspring—the Son of Man, who battled and overcame Satan (described as “the ancient serpent” in Revelation 12:9) and his evil subordinates (Colossians 2:14–15). But who are these offspring of the serpent? Jesus bluntly told a group of Jewish people, “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. . . . You are children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does” (John 8:42, 44). Satan and his offspring would do their worst, leading to the Savior's crucifixion, but Jesus overcame death and would destroy the works of His enemy once and for all (1 John 3:8).

Just as Satan worked strategically to deceive Adam and Eve, he is still looking for any opportunity to separate us from God (1 Peter 5:8–9). And he continues to use the same tactics. Satan wants us to doubt God's Word and question His goodness. But Jesus told us the truth about Satan: “He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated

the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). We will continue to battle the enemy as long as we live on this earth (Ephesians 6:11–12), but his ultimate defeat is guaranteed (Revelation 20:10).

### ***Discuss***

- How are you encouraged by the fact that God planned from the beginning that Jesus would defeat our enemy, Satan?
- Describe how Eve responded to God’s command not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Describe how she responded to the serpent’s temptation. (Later in the lesson, we’ll compare Eve’s responses with Mary’s.)

## **The Virgin Will Give Birth**

Isaiah 7:10–14

**Say:** After the first glimpse of the promised Savior in Genesis 3:15, the rest of the Old Testament is filled with prophecies of the salvation God would bring. God established His covenant with Abraham, promising that he would “certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him” (Genesis 18:18; see Acts 3:25–26). From that time until Jesus was born, God sent prophets to warn His people against sin and encourage their hope in the coming salvation.

In Isaiah 7, Ahaz, the king of Judah, was under threat of attack from Israel and Aram (*AY-ram*) because he had refused to join them in battle against Assyria. God had assured Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah that he only needed to wait for the danger to pass, but Ahaz had put his faith in human effort and no longer followed or trusted God. The Lord warned Ahaz, “Unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm” (verse 9) and told the king to ask God himself for a sign. “Make it as difficult as you want,” God said, “as high as the heaven or as deep as the place of the dead” (verse 11). But Ahaz refused to “test the Lord like that,” apparently showing false piety. The fact he had already closed the temple proved he was not actually concerned with obeying God (2 Chronicles 28:22–25). Instead, the king had already decided to disobey God and form a military alliance with Assyria.

Fed up with Ahaz’s pride, Isaiah spoke on God’s behalf: “All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’)” (Isaiah 7:14). God would give a sign—but not just to Ahaz. Isaiah’s switch from the singular to plural “you” in verses 13–14 indicated that this promise was for the entire dynasty of David.

What sign would God give? A virgin of marrying age would supernaturally conceive and give birth to a Son named Immanuel. He would be the wonderful Child described in Isaiah 9:2–7 and the Branch from Jesse’s stump described in Isaiah 11. Seven hundred years after Isaiah’s prophecy, an angel’s message to Joseph would finally establish that Mary and her divine Son Jesus would bring ultimate fulfillment to this prophecy (Matthew 1:20–23)..

### **Discuss**

- Have you ever rejected God's direction because, like King Ahaz, you wanted to go with your own plan instead? What were the results?
- What do we learn about God's character as we consider the prophecies Jesus fulfilled?

## **Part 2—Gabriel's Announcement, Mary's Response**

### **Name Him Jesus**

Luke 1:26–38

**Say:** As we take a closer look at Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel, try to experience the story from Mary's point of view. What might she have been thinking and feeling as she listened to the angel's message?

Luke connects the miraculous birth of Jesus with that of John the Baptist in 1:26 by referring to John's mother Elizabeth (verse 24) and Gabriel, the same angel who had spoken with John's father Zechariah in the temple (verse 19). Then, Luke includes three important details in verse 27:

1. *Mary was a virgin.* This term in the original language describes a young, unmarried girl, but verse 34 clarifies that, in this case, Mary was indeed a virgin.
2. *Mary was engaged to Joseph.* Although the two had not yet lived together or consummated their union, their engagement meant they were considered legally married in their culture and time. Betrothal in that culture often took place when a girl was about twelve years old and lasted for one year, at which time she would begin living in her husband's house.
3. *Joseph was a descendant of King David.* Luke was establishing Jesus' claim to the throne of David by way of his "legal" father Joseph (verses 32–33). He and Matthew also note the connection to David in Jesus' genealogy (Luke 3:23–38; Matthew 1:1–17).

Knowing his presence would be unsettling, Gabriel began his announcement to Mary with, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28). However, she was "confused and disturbed" (verse 29). The original language indicates great distress, mental anguish, and possibly even fear—a common reaction when people are visited by angels throughout the Bible. However, Gabriel told her not to be afraid. God's grace was upon her. Whatever came next, He would be with her.

Then Gabriel got to the heart of the matter: Mary would conceive and give birth to the Son of God. She was to name Him Jesus. Imagine the shock this young teenager must have been feeling as the angel went on to describe how her Son would reign over Israel and establish an everlasting Kingdom. Unable to get past the practical matters, she asked, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin" (verse 34). Gabriel explained that her child would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (verse 35).

How could Mary have fathomed becoming a mother in such a way? Beyond that, how could she have imagined she would be raising a child who was both human and divine? Yet God chose this young woman and gave her the grace to complete the task before her.

Here, at the beginning of her lifelong journey, Gabriel gave her an assurance of God's faithfulness: "The word of God will never fail" (verse 37). Mary's response? "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true" (verse 38). Her words indicated more than simple resignation; instead, she wanted to participate in God's plan. She humbly trusted Him to care for her, despite the uncertainty that lay ahead.

### **Resource Packet Item 1: Nazareth in Jesus' Time**

Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth when Jesus was conceived, and He lived there himself from childhood until age thirty. Students can use this information sheet to better understand the geography, archaeology, and significance of Nazareth.

#### ***Discuss***

- What do we learn about Mary's character in Luke 1:26–38? What do we learn about God's character?

## **I Am the Lord's Servant**

Luke 1:46–55

**Say:** It would have been all too easy for Mary to become overwhelmed with questions: Would Joseph believe her story? Would he still want to marry her? What would her friends and family think? Would she be accused of adultery and punished? Yet Mary's response was one of complete surrender and trust.

Shortly after receiving the message from Gabriel, Mary hurried off to be with Elizabeth. She likely knew her cousin—also expecting a promised son—would understand the miracle that had taken place in her life. Elizabeth encouraged Mary, immediately recognizing God's purposes and praising Mary's faith: "You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said" (Luke 1:45).

Luke 1:46–55 records Mary's response to Elizabeth—a beautiful song of praise. Mary's words reveal a great deal about:

- *Her knowledge of Scripture.* As we learned in last week's lesson, much of the imagery and background for Mary's song comes from Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1–10). Her use of parallelism, warrior imagery, the theme of reversal, and the idea of Israel as God's servant all strongly echo the Old Testament.
- *Her personal relationship with God.* Mary celebrates God's goodness, overwhelmed that He would notice her, let alone bless her this way. Not only has God done great things, but "he has done great things for me" (Luke 1:49).

- *Her trust in God’s redemptive plan.* After rejoicing in “God my Savior” (verse 47), Mary recalls God’s covenant promise to Abraham (verse 55). After centuries of waiting, “He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful” (verse 54).

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Your Salvation Story**

Mary rejoiced in God’s faithfulness and salvation, and so should we! Students will use the prompts on the handout to record their story of salvation and think about ways they can share it with others.

#### **Discuss**

- How does Mary’s response to God compare with Eve’s response to God?
- How is your praise influenced by your knowledge of Scripture? By your personal relationship with God? By your trust in God’s plan?

## **Part 3—Mary Gives Birth to Messiah Jesus Is Born**

Luke 2:1–7

**Say:** Mary and Joseph had both received angelic proclamations about the birth of Jesus. They had been trusted with important roles in God’s redemptive plan. But their journey of obedience would not be easy.

Joseph and Mary, still betrothed, journeyed nearly one hundred miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for taxation, despite the physical difficulties this must have created for Mary. Luke clarifies that Bethlehem was King David’s hometown as well, reminding readers that the Child about to be born was the promised One who would reign on David’s throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

Amazingly, the birth took place in an area that included space for animals (Luke 2:6–7). Can you imagine a humbler place for Jesus, the King of kings, to be born? It is hard to picture Immanuel being placed in a feeding trough. How could these be the first smells, the first sights, the first sounds that the Son of God would experience as a human? But this is exactly what God had planned. The details of Jesus’ birth show His accessibility and willingness to identify with us—no matter our status.

#### **Discuss**

- What thoughts and emotions do you think Mary experienced at Jesus’ birth?
- Why does it matter that Jesus was born in such humble circumstances?

## **Mary Kept All These Things in Her Heart**

Luke 2:8–19



**Say:** The end of this passage tells us, “All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often” (Luke 2:18–19). What exactly were the “things” Mary was thinking about as she watched her Son grow over the months and years to follow? Let’s go back and take a fresh look at the shepherds’ story from her point of view.

Jesus would one day tell the Pharisees, “I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners” (Matthew 9:12–13). Jesus’ earthly mission to reach even outsiders was evident from the first day of His life, when an angelic announcement of His birth was given not to priests or kings—but to shepherds.

Luke paints a vivid picture of the angelic visitation in the fields outside Bethlehem that night (Luke 2:8–14). With no warning, an angel of the Lord appeared, and “the radiance of the Lord’s glory”—the manifest presence of God—surrounded them. The shepherds were filled with terror (verse 9). However, the angel was not bringing a message of judgment, but “good news that will bring great joy to all people” (verse 10). The Savior had been born just over the hills in Bethlehem (verse 11)!

In celebration of this long-awaited news, a host of angels filled the sky, praising God (verses 13–14). Imagine the shepherds’ reaction when the angels disappeared, the sound of heavenly rejoicing faded, and the fields were once again dark and silent. Imagine them looking at each other, dumbfounded, and then gathering their belongings and racing toward Bethlehem. Imagine Mary and Joseph resting near the manger, surprised to see shepherds stop in their tracks at the sight of Jesus lying there. Imagine Mary’s amazement as they tried to find the words to describe what had happened in the fields that night. And as the shepherds raced away to tell everyone they could find about the angels and the newborn Baby, imagine Mary looking at Him in astonishment, pondering everything she had seen and heard. She had indeed found favor with God.

### **Resource Packet Item 3: Through Mary’s Eyes**

Mary was the only person who witnessed Jesus’ entire earthly life and ministry—from His birth announcement to His ascension. Students will explore the Scriptures and note what they can learn about Jesus from Mary’s point of view. This handout would work best as a group project or a take-home page for personal devotions.

#### ***Discuss***

- When you consider the main characters in this story—a teenage girl, a carpenter, a group of shepherds, and a newborn baby—what do you notice about the qualifications God values most?

### **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** Mary’s humble, submissive response to God teaches us how to participate in His redemptive purposes. No matter how difficult or strange our individual assignments may be, we can trust His Word, His guidance, and His provision.

### **Living It Out**

## **Ministry in Action**

- How might God be asking you to be part of His redemptive plan in your community? Respond in obedience.
- Listen for the Holy Spirit directing you to share God's wonderful plan of salvation with someone this week. Respond to His prompting. Remember, you are not responsible for the outcome.
- Intentionally incorporate more praise into your daily life this week. Meditate on God's goodness and mercy, thanking Him for the priceless gift of salvation and eternal life.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

Monday:

Abraham Laughs in Wonder.

Genesis 17:15–19

Tuesday:

God Grants Solomon's Humble

Request. 1 Kings 3:5–15

Wednesday:

Job Silenced by God's Majesty.

Job 40:1–5

Thursday:

Disciples Marvel at Jesus' Power.

Matthew 8:23–27

Friday:

Gentiles Gladly Receive

Salvation. Acts 13:44–48

Saturday:

The Song of Redemption.

Revelation 5:6–14