


NAMPA BIBLE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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Mary Christmas – By Sharad Yadav

Of all the towering heroes in the hall of salvation history perhaps none is more misunderstood than Mary, the mother of Jesus. Protestants summarily dismiss her in the Gospel's birth narratives as nothing more than one of the flabbergasted onlookers hovering over the manger. Roman Catholics perpetuate the superstition recapitulated most recently by the sale of a Madonna stamped cheese-sandwich on E-Bay that went for 16,000 dollars. But the biblical text places Mary somewhere in between the status of irrelevant peasant and iconic priestess. She is the "favored one" in Luke 1:28 and verse 42 records Elizabeth's appropriate response to her conception – "Blessed are you among women!" Clearly Mary is no patron of grace – she is favored and blessed not in her ability to bestow grace, but because she has so undeservingly received it! Yet, christened with blessing by the angel of God, Mary isn't just part of the scenery in these narratives either. More than the mother of Jesus, she is His first disciple (her faithful response to the angel's call in Lk. 1:38 endured through his death and resurrection to Pentecost in Acts 1:14), and it was at her faith-filled voice the foretold forerunner of the Lord "leaped with joy" (Lk. 1:43-45). In Luke's telling of the story, the first example of humble faith is with the mother of Jesus.

And it's of no small significance that Jesus' first disciple was a woman – Mary's response of faith to the angel's scandalous announcement (God would take residence not only in human flesh, but in the body of this peasant woman!) reclaimed for womankind the dignity and honor of femininity in God's Created order. Mary's faith and blessing removed from all women the stigma incurred by Eve's deceit and cursing – this, I believe, is Paul's point in 1 Tim. 2:15. The translation is very difficult, but it should read, "But she (Eve, and thus women) will be preserved through the bearing of the Child (Mary's birthing of Christ), if they (women) continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint." No greater proof that women hold a place of honor in God's eyes can be given than the unique place given to a woman in God's eternal plan of salvation – to bring, in her body, the Savior of mankind into the world. More than just scenery, Mary was a paradigm of faith, a banner for believing women and an audacious but essential player in God's saving plan.

John Donne captures something of the magnificence Mary must have pondered as she "treasured all these things in her heart" (Lk. 2:19) in his sonnet, "Annunciation":

Salvation to all that will is nigh;
That All, which always is all everywhere,
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,
Lo, faithful virgin, yields Himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb; and though He there
Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet He will wear,
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.
Ere by the spheres time was created, thou
Wast in His mind, who is thy Son and Brother;
Whom thou conceivst, conceived; yea thou art now
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother;
Thou hast light in dark, and shutst in little room,
Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb.

The biblical view of Mary, though a great deal lower than that of our Catholic friends, is not one of total obscurity. In fact, it remains in sharp relief from the sentiments about women found among the early Gnostic heretics. The so-called "Gospel of Thomas" puts these words in Peter's mouth: "*Let [Mary Magdalene] leave us, for women are not worthy of life.* Jesus said, *'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'*" Ironically, this sentiment is similar to both modern sexists AND modern feminists who measure a woman's worth by comparing her to a man. Sexists patronize women because they're not men and many feminists insist that they might as well be. But rather than requiring women to be men in order to experience full restoration from the curse, Mary's role in the biblical Christmas story stands as a witness to the unique honor of women in the kingdom of God. As the ultimate Eve, through whom the serpent's head was crushed, women receive their proper esteem while at the same time we recognize that among us there is neither "male nor female, for you are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28).

Current Calendar Events....

AWANA - 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. at Lakeview Bible Church

Home Groups - The ideal place for families to get together, to grow closer as brothers and sisters in Christ, and to study God's Word and how it applies to our lives. The goal is to get everyone in the church involved in this exciting new ministry! Please call Josh Norris (463-4755) or see the Home Groups table in the foyer for details.

Quote to live by...

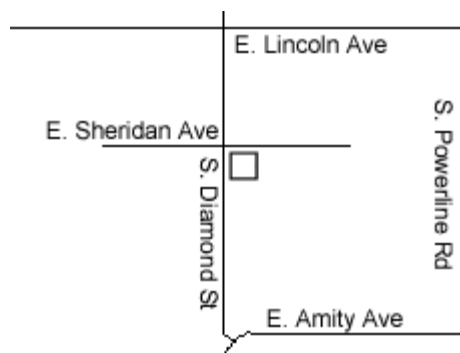
"How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, His precepts!" - Benjamin Franklin

Pray For...

- Wisdom for our leaders and our building committee as they seek direction with our current and future building plans.
- Personal insight into how you will commit to our building plans.

Did You Know....

- We're moving again! Directions to the new location can be found at www.nampabible.org/moving



- Past and current newsletters can be found at www.nampabible.org/newsletr

- Do you have ideas for additional newsletter segments?
- Would you like to be involved in writing for, or assembling, the newsletter?
- Email webmaster@nampabible.org or talk to Josh Norris to get involved.

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Verse to Ponder....

Luke 1:26-55...

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."