

The Exaltation of Mary

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By Frank Zimmerman

Someone shared with me a Catholic video that exalted Mary, the mother of Jesus' humanity. In that video, she was painted as sinless, holy, not subject to either disease or death, because of her holiness. Mainly the emphasis was not so much on her character, as on the special nature of her flesh. I wrote this article in response.

LET us look at what the gospel of *Luke* tells us about Mary. First, we encounter...

The Annunciation

Luke 1

³⁰ And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God.

Now let's start there. Is "favor with God" something that only Mary can have? No. We all can have it:

Proverbs 3

¹ My son, forget not my law; but let your heart keep my commandments:

⁴ So shall you find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

But we continue with *Luke*:

Luke 1

³¹ And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call His name JESUS.

³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David:

³³ And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Here we see Jesus, the promised Saviour, being proclaimed, and His exaltation. There is no word (yet) about Mary being the “queen of heaven” or any such thing.

Luke 1

³⁴ Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

³⁵ And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.

³⁶ And, behold, your cousin Elisabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

³⁷ For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Here we see credit being given to “the Holy Ghost,” the “power of the Highest” and the Son of God that is to be born of her is called “holy.” Mary is not called “holy”; there is no mention here of “holy Mary,”—Jesus is called holy.

And it is stated that “with God nothing shall be impossible.” We are encouraged to believe that the power of God can do wonderful things to bring salvation to man. It reminds us of other stories of women who, by a miracle of God’s power, were able to have children: Sarah (Abraham’s wife) and Hannah (the mother of Samuel). In fact, Hannah’s song of praise has much similarity to Mary’s song of praise, which is soon to come...

Luke 1

³⁸ And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

Here Mary sees herself as just a servant, “the handmaid of the Lord,” and looks to God’s word to perform what it has promised. This is what faith is: believing that God’s word will do what it has promised to do. Mary believed, and therefore she was justified by her faith, not by her flesh. It was faith that allowed God to work through her, just as it is faith in each one of us that allows God to work. If we don’t believe the word, or if we believe something that is not the word of God, or if we adopt an interpretation of the word of God which is false, then God cannot work for us, because the door by which He enters has been shut by us.

The Visitation

Next we find Mary visiting Elisabeth, her “cousin” (according to verse 36).

Luke 1

³⁹ And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

⁴⁰ And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

⁴¹ And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

⁴² And she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

⁴³ And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

⁴⁴ For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

⁴⁵ And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

God blesses people by giving them of His life:

Psalm 133

³ ...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Mary bore the life of Jesus in her, and therefore, the pres-

ence of that life was a blessing to her. She had the honored privilege of being the woman through whom the Saviour would come into the world. She was “blessed” among women for having this task, because it brought her in contact with the divine life.

This was the one child that every pious woman looked for, since the fall: the one who would “crush the serpent’s head,” the one who would “bless all nations.” But note, it was not Mary who would “crush the serpent’s head” and “bless all nations;” it was Jesus.

Now note that Elisabeth calls Mary, “the mother of my Lord.” Was Mary the mother of Christ’s humanity? or of His divinity? or both? Obviously she was just the mother of His humanity. Divinity has no mother. It is eternal, infinite, without end. This is confirmed in the description of the priesthood of Melchizedek, the ones who serve God in the temple in heaven:

Hebrews 7

³ Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.

This is a description of Jesus, and also of those of His children that are made priests in heaven; “without mother”: this indicates that the divine life has no mother, no beginning; it always was, and it always will be. So Mary can never be “the mother of God.” God has no mother. She was the mother of Jesus’ human nature. But that nature was discarded when Jesus rose from the dead in His new resurrection body.

1 Corinthians 15

⁴⁰ There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs

from another star in glory.

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

The “natural body” that Jesus received from Mary, was left behind. He was raised “a spiritual body,” made of a different kind of substance than the sinful dust of this Earth.

Lastly, let us note Elisabeth’s final word:

Luke 1

⁴⁵ And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Yes, “blessed is she that believed”. This is always how the blessing of God comes: by faith, and not by flesh. Elisabeth has no testimony to give to Mary’s supposed “sinless flesh” but she has strong testimony to support Mary’s simple and unwavering faith.

The Song of Mary

Now we come to Mary’s song of praise, traditionally called “The Magnificat”:

Luke 1

⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Right here, Mary identifies God as her Saviour: “God my Saviour.” Well then, she needed a Saviour, so she had something to be saved from. She was a sinner like every other person born into this world. That doesn’t mean that her life was full of sinful acts; but the very fact that she was “born of the flesh” meant that she would inherit a sinful spiritual nature from the flesh. She may have been saved from it in the womb, as Jeremiah was, and probably some other saints were, but

nevertheless she needed to have that work of salvation performed for her, by the blood of the Lamb washing away that evil nature. She needed a Saviour, and here she clearly proclaims it.

Luke 1

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Yes, all generations will indeed call her blessed. But not because of her flesh, but because of her faith. All generations will also call Abraham blessed. God said to Abraham,

Genesis 12

² I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

This promise was to come through Abraham's seed:

Genesis 17

⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you.

Genesis 22

¹⁸ In your seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.

There was much in this promise. First, God would give Abraham and Sarah the possibility to have a son. He would give them life, because both their bodies were beyond being able to have children. So God blessed them, He gave them life: and they had a son. Abraham believed the word of the Lord, and it was...

Genesis 15

⁶ ...counted to him for righteousness.

That is, his faith opened the door for God to work in him and his wife, making the birth possible. This was a picture of the new birth within us: we are dead in sins; we cannot produce good works, at least nothing that will bear the searching

of God's Spirit, who searches into the innermost being. But God blesses us by removing our sins and planting His life there. Now the promised Son (Jesus) is born within us. All generations can call us blessed also, for God has blessed us with His life.

Matthew 25

³⁴ Come, *you blessed of my Father*, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Mary and the Sabbath

By the way, in *Luke* 1:48, Mary spoke of the "low estate of His handmaiden," and yet how God had blessed her. It was God's blessing that established her; without it, she was in a "low estate."

Now consider the Sabbath day. This was a day which also had a "low estate." It was the one day of the week where nothing was created. It was barren, like the womb of Sarah, Hannah, or Mary. But because of its "low estate" God blessed it especially with His presence, and made it the greatest day of all the week.

Therefore, the Sabbath has on it the same signature of God that was put on Sarah, or Hannah, or Mary. It is not the things that God does on a particular day, or with a particular object; neither is it what we do, that makes something great: it is the presence of the meek and lowly God, which makes true greatness.

No other day of the week can teach this lesson like the Sabbath can, because every other day has some act of God (or act of man) associated with it; and people tend to idolize the act (or the man), rather than seeing the character of the invisible God in the act.

The Source of Holiness

Now back to Mary's song:

Luke 1

⁴⁹ For He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name.

Notice: “Holy is *His name*.” Mary never says, “holy is my name.” Neither should we exalt the holiness of men. God can make men and women holy, of course, and that is a good thing. But the fall of Lucifer happened because he looked too much on his goodness, and began to think it was inherent to himself, instead of a gift of God. He began to see himself as independent.

Through the fall, we have partaken largely of this spirit of self-exaltation, and if we are to be restored, we need to see our utter dependence on God for every good thing. The 144,000, those who are victorious in the last spiritual battle before Christ returns, have learned this lesson and express it clearly in their song of victory:

Revelation 15

³ And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, You King of saints.

⁴ Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name? for **You only are holy**: for all nations shall come and worship before You; for your judgments are made manifest.

The Secret of an Eternal Kingdom

Luke 1

⁵⁰ And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away.

⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His

mercy;

⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

Mary's inspired praise sweeps across the scope of history, taking in the rise and fall of nations, and the reasons for the failure of mankind to build an eternal kingdom. And she praises God for overcoming human pride, human greatness, human might, by one simple act: putting spiritual life back into humanity.

The great men of this world may laugh at such a thing, and call it weak and ineffective. But it is this implanting of life and righteousness back into man, that restores the image of God, and makes man able to inherit the kingdom he once occupied before the fall. The weakness of God is greater than men, and...

Matthew 5 [Psalm 37:11]

⁵ ...the meek...shall inherit the earth.

Comparison to Hannah's Song

Now let's compare Mary's inspired prayer from the New Testament with Hannah's inspired prayer in the Old Testament, after she had received a son (Samuel) by a miracle of the Lord:

1 Samuel 2

¹ And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies; because I rejoice in your salvation.

² There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside You: neither is there any rock like our God.

³ Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.

⁴ The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

⁵ They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has

born seven; and she that has many children is waxed feeble.

⁶ The Lord kills, and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up.

⁷ The Lord makes poor, and makes rich: He brings low, and lifts up.

⁸ He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them.

⁹ He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

¹⁰ The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.

This prayer is very, very similar to Mary's. They both start by rejoicing in the salvation of the Lord, magnifying Him, and thanking Him for the ability to do great things with weak human vessels. Human pride, human strength, human wisdom, are all nothing in His sight. These things that men depend on, only make them weak, because they look away from God to their own strength.

Both Hannah and Mary proclaim God's holiness. Hannah says,

1 Samuel 2

² There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside You.

Mary says,

Luke 1

⁴⁹ ...holy is His name.

Both of them proclaim that God is able to take weak, poor, lowly people,—weak human flesh,—and fill it with mighty strength and goodness. Hannah says,

1 Samuel 2

⁸ He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beg-

gar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory...

Mary says,

Luke 1

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden...

⁵² He has...exalted them of low degree.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things...

Both of these songs of praise are very similar, because they were inspired by the same Spirit of God. And they both teach the same lesson:

*God saves by His power,
and not by the power of human greatness.*

It is faith, and not flesh, that brings the victory.

Mary was not a Pharisee

Now let us think a bit about this video of Mary, that you shared. It attempts to honor Mary by exalting her flesh. But this is just opposite to what Mary said in her song of praise. She looked to God's power, not the beauty of her flesh. If she had thought so highly of her sinless flesh, then her prayer would have been more like the Pharisee in the temple, who said,

Luke 18

¹¹ God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are.

So shall we make Mary into a Pharisee? Would Mary say,

“God, I thank you, that I have this sinless flesh, that I've never sinned, that you made me the queen of heaven because of my greatness...”

Is that what Mary would say? Well, not the Mary of the Bible. She never said such self-exalting things. And those who think to honor her by exalting her flesh, do not understand

the very foundation of her prayer to God.

Now look at a few other contradictions in this video. Supposedly, she was too holy to die, so she just closed her eyes as in sleep. And then they buried her body. But why would she close her eyes in death, since her body was not able to die anyway, so there was no need to close her eyes?! She could have been taken straight to heaven while alive.

Furthermore, why did they bury her body? If it was so holy, and unaffected by sin, there was no need to bury it; she could have been taken straight to heaven like Elijah or Enoch, or like Jesus when He ascended. Her death makes no sense at all, if she was too holy to die.

And why would they all mourn her death? Since she couldn't die anyway, and even if she left the earth, she would be in a much better place, so why mourn? Elisha did not mourn when Elijah was taken to heaven. The apostles did not mourn when Christ ascended.

Denying the Saviour

And lastly, if this was so true about her human nature: that it was so different from ours, then this would mean Jesus was entirely removed and separate from us.

He could not be the “nearest of kin” to us, which was a law of the redeemer from the Old Testament (*Numbers 27:11, Ruth 2:20*).

He could not be “of one” with the sanctified; nor could He call us “brethren” (*Hebrews 2:11*).

He could not “partake of flesh and blood...like the children” (*Hebrews 2:14*), nor could He “take upon Him the seed of Abraham,” (*Hebrews 2:16*) or be “made in the likeness of sinful flesh” (*Romans 8:3*).

He could not “succor them that are tempted” for He could not “suffer being tempted” in the same way (*Hebrews 2:18*).

He could not be the ladder which Jacob saw, which was to reach all the way to heaven (identification with divinity) and all the way to the earth (identification with fallen humanity).

Every single comfort of the gospel is destroyed by making Christ entirely different from us. Every single promise is rendered null and void, for if Jesus did not live out His holy life in our flesh, in order to form a holy seed that He could plant in our flesh, and reproduce the same life, then there is no hope for us. It would be a mockery for Him to say, "Follow me," when He is a superman, and we are just weak beings.

But we are assured that:

Romans 1

¹⁶ The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

That power was demonstrated in the flesh of humanity when Jesus took it upon himself. And it is to be demonstrated in our flesh when He plants His seed in us today. His seed in us is to live out the same life as He lived on earth, when He took our flesh upon himself.

The Good Shepherd...

John 10

⁴ ...goes before them, and the sheep follow Him.