

People of God, The virgin Mary is the most blessed woman who has ever lived. As Protestants we tend to not think too much about her because of the over emphasis of the importance Mary has in Roman Catholicism. But we should not allow our Romaphobia to keep us from affirming what the Bible says about Mary – That She found favor, or grace in the sight of God. That she is blessed among women, and that from the time when God chose her to be the mother of the Lord, all generations would call her blessed.

We don't have to be Roman Catholics to affirm these things. It is right there in Luke 1 for us all to read. And I think we would do well to acknowledge how blessed she truly was. God chose her to be the woman that would give birth to the promised seed who was coming into the world to crush the serpents head and deliver all of God's people from sin, death, Satan. She truly occupies a unique place among the saints of God. But her unique and blessed place is not to be found independently of the Lord Jesus. She is blessed because of her faith in God, and that she bore in her womb the Son of God, her Savior. As she says in her song the Magnificat, *"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked upon the humble estate of his maidservant. For behold, all generations will call me blessed."* And for her humble faith and trust in God her Savior, we thank God.

But we are not just going to look at Mary's faith today, we will also briefly examine the faith of Elizabeth and John the Baptist as well. And what we will see is great examples of faith because they all believed that Christ was their own personal Lord and Savior. And we are therefore encouraged to believe in Jesus with them.

<sup>39</sup>*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, <sup>40</sup>and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.*

The text says Mary went with haste to the Hill Country of Judah. I believe this to be the town of Hebron. We are told in Luke 1:5 that Elizabeth was a daughter of Aaron, and that her husband was a Priest. And in Josh. 21

the descendants of Aaron the Priest were given the town of Hebron, in the hill country of Judah for their territory. Thus it seems likely that this is where Mary made haste to go. This is where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived. But why is that significant?

Because when we examine the OT we can see significant events in the history of Redemption that took place in Hebron, which gives us fresh understanding about the significance of why Mary made haste to Hebron.

For example, Hebron was also the place where God came to Abraham and told him that his wife Sarai was going to have a child in her old age. The first type of miraculous birth of the promised chosen child, the seed of Abraham, was given at Hebron. Sarai was 90 years old and her womb was barren being beyond the age of child birth. And There at Hebron God promised to Abraham saying, *“I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings and peoples shall come from her.”* (Ge. 17:16)

And we hear echoes of this promise made to Sarah in the words given to Mary by Gabriel the Angel concerning our Lord, saying – *“Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor 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 him the throne of His father David, and will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”*

But Hebron is also the place where, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah, were all buried after they died. And according to Jewish traditions, Hebron is also the burial site of Adam and Eve. They were all buried in Hebron in the Cave of Machpelah, which Jewish sources also say is the entrance to the Garden of Eden. Now that bit about Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden is not in the Bible. But it is interesting to contemplate.

How perfect is it then that Mary should make haste to the very place where the Patriarchs had experienced the blessing of God in giving them the first fruits of the promise that he made to redeem the world in the seed of the

woman? How glorious is it that the seed of the woman, who comes to bring resurrection and life, comes to the very place that our forefathers and mothers in the faith were buried, while in the womb of his mother. The fact that the Son of God was present in the womb in the very place of the Patriarch's death is no small matter to be overlooked. God is in the business of bringing life out of death, and this is why the Son of God appeared, to defeat death and the grave, and to bring eternal life for all of God's people, and to confirm God's promises to the Patriarchs.

Hebron also is the place where King David was crowned king, in 2 Sam. 2. How magnificent that the long awaited Son of David should arrive in the very place where King David was *crowned* king, seeing that the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David! Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which is the city of David, and is the place where he was first *anointed* King in 1 Sam. 16. But he wasn't *crowned and enthroned* as king until Saul died, and that was in Hebron. Jesus Christ in the womb of his mother while in Hebron therefore proclaims a greater kingship than David, being crowned and enthroned as King while still in the womb.

<sup>41</sup> *And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,*

<sup>42</sup> *and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb"*

When Elizabeth says Blessed are you among women, she is riffing off of Judges 5:24, which is Deborah's praise for Jael after she killed Sisera with a tent peg through the head.

*"Most blessed of women be Jael,  
the wife of Heber the Kenite,  
of tent-dwelling women most blessed.*

<sup>25</sup> *He asked for water and she gave him milk;  
she brought him curds in a noble's bowl.*

<sup>26</sup>She sent her hand to the tent peg  
 and her right hand to the workmen's mallet;  
 she struck Sisera;  
 she crushed his head;  
 she shattered and pierced his temple.  
<sup>27</sup>Between her feet  
 he sank, he fell, he lay still;  
 between her feet  
 he sank, he fell;  
 where he sank,  
 there he fell—dead.

Jael, crushing the head of Sisera, is a picture and a type of the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent according to Genesis 3:15. *"Most blessed are you of women"* Deborah says to Jael. And *"Blessed are you among women"* she says to Mary. And *blessed is fruit of your womb."*

All the pieces are coming together. The promises made to Adam and Eve, the Abraham and Sarah, and even to King David are all being fulfilled in this child that is just newly conceived in his mothers womb by the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth knew full well who this child was. Thus she asks,

<sup>43</sup>*And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Elizabeth acknowledges that the one born in Mary is the Lord. But here is where true faith is found. The child in Mary is not just the Lord, he is my Lord, Elizabeth says. *Why is it granted to me that the mother of My Lord should come to me?* True faith believes that the promises and prophecies of God concerning Christ are not just true in general, but true saving faith takes these promises and makes them personal. True faith applies the promises of God to oneself, because faith is personal. And why wouldn't it be, for we believe in a person. We may recite a creed. But the creed is about

a person. We can believe that all these things are true in the creed, and yet not have saving faith, because we never apply them to ourselves.

True faith says Jesus is *My Lord*, not just the Lord. True faith also is humble and acknowledges that we are unworthy of God's grace. In fact, that is precisely why it is called grace. Elizabeth demonstrated her humble faith in that she not only considered herself unworthy to receive her Lord, but even the mother of her Lord.

Mary also demonstrated humble faith. She was shocked when the angel Gabriel told her that she was favored by God. Luke says she was greatly troubled and tried to discern what kind of greeting this was. Mary had a humble faith who didn't think of herself much at all, that she was deserving of grace and favor. But when it came, she believed what God spoke concerning her.

I know many of you might not think too much of yourselves. And you beat yourselves up because you are sinners, because you mess up, because you don't think you are all that great. And then you carry that over to the Gospel, and falsely believe that God's grace is not for you because you don't believe yourself to be worthy. Well, it is true that you are not worthy, which is why salvation is by God's grace, it is a gift given to undeserving sinners. But if you continue to refuse to believe the promises of God for you precisely because you aren't worthy, then you are not embracing the Gospel. You are not believing. At that point, your humility actually becomes spiritual pride because you think that you are too bad that even God himself can't save you. If God save the chiefest of sinners, the Apostle Paul, then he can and is willing to save you. Humble faith does not continue to reject God's advances of love towards you, true humble faith receives that gift of God's love in Jesus and is thankful. O hold on to Christ your Lord, and do not let go.

We also see another example of true faith in the person of John the Baptist who is also still in his mother's womb.

<sup>44</sup> *For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*

That John leapt in His mother's womb at the hearing of Mary's greeting about the message of the Son of God being conceived, and the fulfillment of the promises in Him, illustrates for us that faith is personal, and that even an unborn child still in the womb can have faith. John leapt for joy at the presence of his Lord. Many think of faith as being a mixture of knowledge, assent, and trust.

Now Elizabeth being aged had knowledge and assent and trust to her faith. But John though only six months in his mother's womb, is still portrayed as having faith, though he had no knowledge or assent. At this point then I think we ought to reconsider what we consider to be true faith. Rich Lusk in his book *Paedofaith* defines faith as “a relational posture of trust toward another person.”

Another person describes faith as a “confident personal relatedness of the heart to Jesus, which can exist without detailed and articulated understanding of what is and must be explained in the gospel.” Faith is trust in a person. And this then makes sense of our Lord's words when he declared that nobody can enter the kingdom of Heaven lest they have faith like a little child. Which is to say, they have a relational trust toward Jesus. John the Baptist had that. And we know that our children have that relational trust toward their parents from the time they are very young, even still in the womb. We should absolutely believe that our children can and do have this same relational trust in Jesus and can be saved at a very young age. Now of course as they grow and mature, their faith will mature and grow also to include propositional knowledge and mental and volitional assent to God. Therefore let us not strip faith from our children but encourage them to trust in Jesus from the earliest days, and see them jump for joy even in their mother's womb at the person of Christ.

Now the passage concludes with another blessing from Elizabeth, who says, *"Blessed is she who believed that here would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."* Mary was indeed blessed, that she was to give birth to the Son of God. In fact blessed are all those who have seen him and touched him, and held him. But again, true saving faith, the truly blessed person is one who believes that these things are true for them. *"Blessed is she who believed that here would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."*

Do you believe there is a fulfillment of what God has spoken to you in this Gospel today? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your Savior? Do you believe that He was born to crush Satan's head for you? Do you believe that He is reigning on the throne of His Father David, right now, for you? Do you believe that he is the promised seed of Abraham and he is restoring the world to himself, for you? Do you believe that Jesus Christ was born of Mary to take upon Himself your humanity, so that your humanity could be glorified in Him, so that in eternity you will be raised to life immortal as true human? Do you believe these things to be true for you? If so, then you are blessed by God, because all of God's promises are true for you in Christ Jesus your Lord. Believe in Him, and rejoice. Amen.

Therefore, let all the earth know for certain that a flesh and blood human being who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary, in Hebron, in the Hill Country of Judah, in the direct lineage of King David, and all the way back to Adam the first man. He was manifested in the flesh for the express purpose of restoring our total and complete humanity that has been corrupted by the sin of Adam. And that includes our humanity as we exist at the moment of conception, and the whole term of pregnancy from the moment of conception, to birth, and all the way to a natural death, and beyond into glory.

"Jesus came in the flesh, to be a true man, as Adam was a true man. Like Adam and Adam's descendants, Jesus lived in a body that was made of dust, part of the creation. In that body he (was conceived, born) lived, ate, drank, suffered, died, and was buried. In that body he was raised from the dead."<sup>1</sup> And in that body he has made holy the whole nature of man, and the whole realm of God Ordained human activities.

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<sup>1</sup> John Frame, Systematic Theology, chp. 37, The Person of Christ: The Humanity of Christ, pg. 883.