Click to prove you're human

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is unquestionably the senior saint within the Christian tradition. Yet we know remarkably little about her. In the New Testament, there is nothing about her birth, death, appearance or age. Outside of the accounts of the birth of Jesus that only occur in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, she is specifically mentioned at only three other events in the life of her son. She is present at a wedding where Jesus turns water into wine; she makes an attempt to see her son while he is teaching; and she is there at his crucifixion. Indeed, Mary is mentioned more often in the Qur'an than in the New Testament. Here, then, are five things we do know about her. Read more: In spite of their differences, Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God 1. She was an accidental virgin The gospel of Matthew is the only one to tell us Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph had sex. She was said to be with child from the Holy Spirit. In proof of this, Matthew quoted a prophecy from the Old Testament that a virgin will conceive and bear a son and he will be called Emmanuel. Matthew was using the Greek version of the Old Testament. In the Greek Old Testament, the original Hebrew word almah had been translated as parthenos, thence into the Latin Bible as virgo and into English as virgin. Whereas almah means only young woman, the Greek word parthenos means physically a virgin intacta. In short, Mary was said to be a virgin because of an accident of translation when young woman became virgin. Guido Reni, Education of the Virgin. Wikimedia Commons 2. She was a perpetual virgin Within early Christian doctrine, Mary remained a virgin during and after the birth of Jesus. This was perhaps only fitting for someone deemed the mother of God or God-bearer. Saint Ambrose of Milan (c.339-97 CE) enthusiastically defended the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary: Blessed Mary is the gate, whereof it is written that the Lord hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut after birth; for as a virgin she both conceived and brought forth. The Lateran Council of 649 CE, a council held in Rome by the Western Church, later declared it an article of faith that Jesus was conceived without seed and that Mary incorruptibly bore [him], her virginity remaining indestructible even after his birth . All this in spite of the Gospels declaration that Jesus had brothers and sisters (Mark 3.32, Matthew 12.46, Luke 8.19). Virgin and Child tempera on panel painting by Antonio Veneziano, circa 1380. Museum of Fine Arts Boston 3. She was immaculately conceived Within Western theology, it was generally recognised from the time of Saint Ambrose that Mary never committed a sin. But was her sinlessness in this life because she was born without original sin? After all, according to Western theology, every human being was born with original sin, the genetic consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The growing cult of devotion to the Virgin Mary in the medieval period led to fine-grained theological divisions on the issue. On the one hand, devotion to Mary led to the argument that God had ensured Mary did not have original sin. But then, if Mary had been conceived without sin, she had already been redeemed before the redemption brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus her son. The Catholic Church only resolved the issue in 1854. Pope Pius IX declared that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful. 4. She ascended into heaven The early centuries of the Christian tradition were silent on the death of Mary. But by the seventh and eighth centuries, the belief in the bodily ascension of Mary into heaven, had taken a firm hold in both the Western and Eastern Churches. Read more: Friday essay: what might heaven be like? The Eastern Orthodox Greek Church held to the dormition of Mary. According to this, Mary had a natural death, and her soul was then received by Christ. Her body arose on the third day after her death. She was then taken up bodily into heaven. For a long time, the Catholic Church was ambiguous on whether Mary rose from the dead after a brief period of repose in death and then ascended into heaven or was assumed bodily into heaven before she died. Belief in the ascension of Mary into heaven became Catholic doctrine in 1950. Pope Pius XII then declared that Mary was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body. The Assumption of the Virgin by Luca Giordano, circa 1698. Wikimedia Commons 5. She is a sky goddess The consequence of the bodily ascension of Mary was the absence of any bodily relics. Although there was breast milk, tears, hair and nail clippings, her relics were mostly second order garments, rings, veils and shoes. In the absence of her skeletal remains, her devotees made do with visions at Lourdes, Guadalupe, Fatima, Medjugorje, and so on. Like the other saints, her pilgrimage sites were places where she could be invoked to ask God to grant the prayers of her devotees. But she was more than just a saint. In popular devotion she was a sky goddess always dressed in blue. She was the goddess of the moon and the star of the sea (stella maris). She was the goddess of the moon and the star of the sea. Wikimedia Commons She was related to the star sign Virgo (not surprisingly) the Queen of Heaven and Queen of the angels. Ask someone to name a famous Mary, and he or she will almost certainly mention Mary, mother of Jesus. She is perhaps the most famous Mary in history, even an object of worship for some. Who was Mary, mother of Jesus?The Root of the Name Mother MaryMary was actually called Miriam, after the sister of Moses. Why do we call her Mary? Miriam is Hebrew, while Mary is a New Testament blend of two Greek names: Mariam and Maria. Both Miriam and Mary guarded Gods chosen leaders during infancy as worldly authorities sought to have them killed.After Pharaoh ordered that every Hebrew boy be throw[n] into the Nile (Exodus 1:22), Miriam watched over her brother where he was hidden among some reeds (Exodus 2:4) and went to fetch a nurse (their mother) for the Pharaohs daughter (Exodus 2:5-7).Mary, with Joseph, protected Jesus from another jealous king, Herod the Great. One meaning for Miriam/Mary is wished-for child and both women certainly cared for important children whose safety was under threat from murderous authorities.Miriams name belongs to a family of words [...] which suggest bitterness, because, as an older woman, she was bitter towards Moses. There is no hint of jealousy or bitterness in Mary, mother of Jesus: she was worshipful, faithful, and also courageous.Prophetic Roots of Mother MaryChristians see parallels between Mary and her namesake Miriam which, in retrospect, reveals the prophetic nature of Mosess birth and his life. The Christian sees that God selected two young women to look after the two men in Scripture who led Israel out of slavery to Egypt and sin, respectively.The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 foretold that a woman, such as Mary, would emerge one day to give birth to Israels wished-for child; their Savior: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.Mary, the mother of Jesus, loved God and wanted to serve Him with all her heart. Luke recounts how Mary was told by the angel that she would become the mother of Immanuel. I am the Lords servant, Mary answered. May your word to me be fulfilled (Luke 1:38).Where Was Mother Mary From?Jesus mother was probably born in Nazareth [] during the reign of Herod the Great. That reign lasted from 37-4 BC. She spoke Aramaic, with a Galilean accent (Matthew 26:73) and also had contact with a multilingual world where soldiers spoke Latin, Greek was the language of business and education, and Hebrew was the language of Jewish religious life.She was part of the peasantry, which included skilled tradespeople, but which faced a triple tax burden: to Rome, to Herod the Great and to the temple. Typical family homes consisted of three or four houses of one or two rooms each [...] built around an open courtyard, in which relatives shared an oven, a cistern and a millstone for grinding grain, and where domestic animals also lived. Mary would have spent most of her time doing household work including strenuous physical chores.Mother Mary and Life with a FamilyMary would have been married as early as 13 in order to maximize childbearing and to guarantee virginity. Mary lived with Joseph, Jesus, and also James and Joseph and Judas and Simon plus sisters who were not named in the Bible (Mark 6:3).She was a tough woman capable of walking the hill country of Judea while pregnant, of giving birth in a stable, of making a four or five-day journey on foot to Jerusalem once a year or so, of sleeping outside and of engaging in daily hard labor at home. She was probably illiterate since women rarely learned to read and write during this time, a period in which oral transmission of information was typical.She was taught to expect the promised Messiah. As a Jew, she had been learning about biblical prophecy her entire life. She became part of the fulfillment of Gods ultimate plan when the angel declared, You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be [...] Son of the Most High and will reign over Jacobs descendants forever (Luke 1:31-33).In Luke 1:54-55, Mary declared, He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors. Her song, said Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is the oldest Advent hymn.Mother Mary and Life with JesusWe dont know much about Mary because the gospel is Jesus story, not hers. We might surmise that before Jesus resurrection, she must have been confused. After all, Jesus began His ministry by offending the people in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4) and He continually upset the Pharisees.Mary believed her son was insane: When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, He is out of his mind (Mark 3:21). Jesus said, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law a mans enemies will be the members of his own household (Matthew 10:34-36).While this does not point to animosity between mother and son, we see that blood did not determine family for Jesus. Exodus 20:12 says, Honor your mother and father. Jesus said Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother (Matthew 12:48-50). One can imagine how hurt or even angry she might have been initially.Gods family was broadened by adoption beyond ethnic boundaries. Paul speaks frequently of adoption by faith. The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship (Romans 8:15).The Apostle John wrote it this way: To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husbands will, but born of God (John 1:12-13).For a mother, who might have believed she should hold a special place in her sons heart, the equality of Jesus love might have hurt deeply at first.Later, Luke records how she treasured up what the shepherds reported to them (Luke 2:19). She recalled how, after losing Jesus and finding him at the temple in Jerusalem, obediently learning about the Father, Jesus was likewise obedient to his earthly father. She treasured up this experience in her heart also.Death with JesusMary was the only person to be present with Jesus at his birth and his earthly death. His earthly father, Joseph, presumably died because he is not mentioned after Lukes accounts of Jesus childhood.When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, Woman, here is your son, and to the disciple, Here is your mother. From that time on, this disciple took her into his home (John 19:25-27).By these words, we know that Jesus cared deeply and personally for His mother, and we see that Mary witnessed the last hours of Jesus life. At that time she was probably close to 50 years old, well beyond the age at which most women in that era died. One can only wonder at the torture she experienced watching her eldest child die, and whether the angels words from three decades earlier haunted or comforted her.She might have been one of the women at the empty tomb, but these women have not been definitively identified. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them encountered angels at Jesus empty tomb and, told this to the apostles (Luke 24:10), but Mary mother of Jesus is not specified.Mary was still alive when the new church emerged; Luke tells us she was in the upper room in Jerusalem with the 11 remaining apostles and a group of over 100 people as recorded by Luke in Acts 1:14,15.After that time, history says no more about Mary the mother of Jesus. She lived through every gamut of emotions a mother can face and was even loyal to stay with her son as he died on the cross. Memories of young Jesus were of powerful comfort to her while she waited, as we wait, to be with Him again.iStock/Getty Images Plus/RedletterWCandice Luceyis a freelance writer from British Columbia, Canada, where she lives with her family. Find out more about herhere. Copyright 2025 Catholic Online. All materials contained on this site, whether written, audible or visual are the exclusive property of Catholic Online and are protected under U.S. and International copyright laws, Copyright 2025 Catholic Online. Any unauthorized use, without prior written consent of Catholic Online is strictly forbidden and prohibited.Catholic Online is a Project of Your Catholic Voice Foundation, a Not-for-Profit Corporation. Your Catholic Voice Foundation has been granted a recognition of tax exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Federal Tax Identification Number: 81-0596847. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.Page 2 Founder of the Franciscan Order, born at Assisi in Umbria, in 1181.In 1182, Pietro Bernardone returned from a trip to France to find out his wife had given birth to a son. Far from being excited or apologetic because he'd been gone, Pietro was furious because she'd had his new son baptized Giovanni after John the Baptist. The last thing Pietro wanted in his son was a man of God -- he wanted a man of business, a cloth merchant like he was, and he especially wanted a son who would reflect his infatuation with France. So he renamed his son Francesco -- which is the equivalent of calling him Frenchman.Francis enjoyed a very rich easy life growing up because of his father's wealth and the permissiveness of the times. From the beginning everyone -- and I mean everyone -- loved Francis. He was constantly happy, charming, and a born leader. If he was picky, people excused him. If he was ill, people took care of him. If he was so much of a dreamer he did poorly in school, no one minded. In many ways he was too easy to like for his own good. No one tried to control him or teach him. As he grew up, Francis became the leader of a crowd of young people who spent their nights in wild parties. Thomas of Celano, his biographer who knew him well, said, "In other respects an exquisite youth, he attracted to himself a whole retinue of young people addicted to evil and accustomed to vice." Francis himself said, "I lived in sin" during that time.Francis fulfilled every hope of Pietro's -- even falling in love with France. He loved the songs of France, the romance of France, and especially the free adventurous troubadours of France who wandered through Europe. And despite his dreaming, Francis was also good at business. But Francis wanted more..more than wealth. But not holiness! Francis wanted to be a noble, a knight. Battle was the best place to win the glory and prestige he longed for. He got his first chance when Assisi declared war on their longtime enemy, the nearby town of Perugia.Most of the troops from Assisi were butchered in the fight. Only those wealthy enough to expect to be ransomed were taken prisoner. At last Francis was among the nobility like he always wanted to be...but chained in a harsh, dark dungeon. All accounts say that he never lost his happy manner in that horrible place. Finally, after a year in the dungeon, he was ransomed. Strangely, the experience didn't seem to change him. He gave himself to partying with as much joy and abandon as he had before the battle.The experience didn't change what he wanted from life either: Glory. Finally a call for knights for the Fourth Crusade gave him a chance for his dream. But before he left Francis had to have a suit of armor and a horse -- no problem for the son of a wealthy father. And not just any suit of armor would do but one decorated with gold with a magnificent cloak. Any relief we feel in hearing that Francis gave the cloak to a poor knight will be destroyed by the boasts that Francis left behind that he would return a prince.But Francis never got farther than one day's ride from Assisi. There he had a dream in which God told him he had it all wrong and told him to return home. And return home he did. What must it have been like to return without ever making it to battle -- the boy who wanted nothing more than to be liked was humiliated, laughed at, called a coward by the village and raged at by his father for the money wasted on armor. Francis' conversion did not happen over night. God had waited for him for twenty-five years and now it was Francis' turn to wait. Francis started to spend more time in prayer. He went off to a cave and wept for his sins. Sometimes God's grace overwhelmed him with joy. But life couldn't just stop for God. There was a business to run, customers to wait on.One day while riding through the countryside, Francis, the man who loved beauty, who was so picky about food, who hated deformity, came face to face with a leper. Repelled by the appearance and the smell of the leper, Francis nevertheless jumped down from his horse and kissed the hand of the leper. When his kiss of peace was returned, Francis was filled with joy. As he rode off, he turned around for a last wave, and saw that the leper had disappeared. He always looked upon it as a test from God...that he had passed.His search for conversion led him to the ancient church at San Damiano. While he was praying there, he heard Christ on the crucifix speak to him, "Francis, repair my church." Francis assumed this meant church with a small c -- the crumbling building he was in. Acting again in his impetuous way, he took fabric from his father's shop and sold it to get money to repair the church. His father saw this as an act of theft -- and put together with Francis' cowardice, waste of money, and his growing disinterest in money made Francis seem more like a madman than his son. Pietro dragged Francis before the bishop and in front of the whole town demanded that Francis return the money and renounce all rights as his heir.The bishop was very kind to Francis; he told him to return the money and said God would provide. That was all Francis needed to hear. He not only gave back the money but stripped off all his clothes -- the clothes his father had given him -- until he was wearing only a hair shirt. In front of the crowd that had gathered he said, "Pietro Bernardone is no longer my father. From now on I can say with complete freedom, 'Our Father who art in heaven.'" Wearing nothing but castoff rags, he went off into the freezing woods -- singing. And when robbers beat him later and took his clothes, he climbed out of the ditch and went off singing again. From then on Francis had nothing...and everything. Francis went back to what he considered God's call. He begged for stones and rebuilt the San Damiano church with his own hands, not realizing that it was the Church with a capital C that God wanted repaired. Scandal and avarice were working on the Church from the inside while outside heresies flourished by appealing to those longing for something different or adventurous.Soon Francis started to preach. (He was never a priest, though he was later ordained a deacon under his protest.) Francis was not a reformer; he preached about returning to God and obedience to the Church. Francis must have known about the decay in the Church, but he always showed the Church and its people his utmost respect. When someone told him of a priest living openly with a woman and asked him if that meant the Mass was polluted, Francis went to the priest, knelt before him, and kissed his hands -- because those hands had held God.Slowly companions came to Francis, people who wanted to follow his life of sleeping in the open, begging for garbage to eat...and loving God. With companions, Francis knew he now had to have some kind of direction to this life so he opened the Bible in three places. He read the command to the rich young man to sell all his good and give to the poor, the order to the apostles to take nothing on their journey, and the demand to take up the cross daily. "Here is our rule," Francis said -- as simple, and as seemingly impossible, as that. He was going to do what no one thought possible any more -- live by the Gospel. Francis took these commands so literally that he made one brother run after the thief who stole his hood and offer him his robe!Francis never wanted to found a religious order -- this former knight thought that sounded too military. He thought of what he was doing as expressing God's brotherhood. His companions came from all walks of life, from fields and towns, nobility and common people, universities, the Church, and the merchant class. Francis practiced true equality by showing honor, respect, and love to every person whether they were beggar or pope.Francis' brotherhood included all of God's creation. Much has been written about Francis' love of nature but his relationship was deeper than that. We call someone a lover of nature if they spend their free time in the woods or admire its beauty. But Francis really felt that nature, all God's creations, were part of his brotherhood. The sparrow was as much his brother as the pope. In one famous story, Francis preached to hundreds of birds about being thankful to God for their wonderful clothes, for their independence, and for God's care. The story tells us the birds stood still as he walked among him, only flying off when he said they could leave.Another famous story involves a wolf that had been eating human beings. Francis intervened when the town wanted to kill the wolf and talked the wolf into never killing again. The wolf became a pet of the townspeople who made sure that he always had plenty to eat.Following the Gospel literally, Francis and his companions went out to preach two by two. At first, listeners were understandably hostile to these men in rags trying to talk about God's love. People even ran from them for fear they'd catch this strange madness! And they were right. Because soon these same people noticed that these barefoot beggars wearing sacks seemed filled with constant joy. They celebrated life. And people had to ask themselves: Could one own nothing and be happy? Soon those who had met them with mud and rocks, greeted them with bells and smiles.Francis did not try to abolish poverty, he tried to make it holy. When his friars met someone poorer than they, they would eagerly rip off the sleeve of their habit to give to the person. They worked for all necessities and only begged if they had to. But Francis would not let them accept any money. He told them to treat coins as if they were pebbles in the road. When the bishop showed horror at the friars' hard life, Francis said, "If we had any possessions we should need weapons and laws to defend them." Possessing something was the death of love for Francis. Also, Francis reasoned, what could you do to a man who owns nothing? You can't starve a fasting man, you can't steal from someone who has no money, you can't ruin someone who hates prestige. They were truly free.Francis was a man of action. His simplicity of life extended to ideas and deeds. If there was a simple way, no matter how impossible it seemed, Francis would take it. So when Francis wanted approval for his brotherhood, he went straight to Rome to see Pope Innocent III. You can imagine what the pope thought when this beggar approached him! As a matter of fact he threw Francis out. But when he had a dream that this tiny man in rags held up the tilting Lateran basilica, he quickly called Francis back and gave him permission to preach. Sometimes this direct approach led to mistakes that he corrected with the same spontaneity that he made them. Once he ordered a brother who hesitated to speak because he stuttered to go preach half-naked. When Francis realized how he had hurt someone he loved he ran to town, stopped the brother, took off his own clothes, and preached instead.Francis acted quickly because he acted from the heart; he didn't have time to put on a role. Once he was so sick and exhausted, his companions borrowed a mule for him to ride. When the man who owned the mule recognized Francis he said, "Try to be as virtuous as everyone thinks you are because many have a lot of confidence in you." Francis dropped off the mule and knelt before the man to thank him for his advice.Another example of his directness came when he decided to go to Syria to convert the Moslems while the Fifth Crusade was being fought. In the middle of a battle, Francis decided to do the simplest thing and go straight to the sultan to make peace. When he and his companion were captured, the real miracle was that they weren't killed. Instead Francis was taken to the sultan who was charmed by Francis and his preaching. He told Francis, "I would convert to your religion which is a beautiful one -- but both of us would be murdered."Francis did find persecution and martyrdom of a kind -- not among the Moslems, but among his own brothers. When he returned to Italy, he came back to a brotherhood that had grown to 5000 in ten years. Pressure came from outside to control this great movement, to make them conform to the standards of others. His dream of radical poverty was too harsh, people said. Francis responded, "Lord, didn't I tell you they wouldn't trust you?"He finally gave up authority in his order -- but he probably wasn't too upset about it. Now he was just another brother, like he'd always wanted.Francis' final years were filled with suffering as well as humiliation. Praying to share in Christ's passion he had a vision received the stigmata, the marks of the nails and the lance wound that Christ suffered, in his own body.Years of poverty and wandering had made Francis ill. When he began to go blind, the pope ordered that his eyes be operated on. This meant cauterizing his face with a hot iron. Francis spoke to "Brother Fire": "Brother Fire, the Most High has made you strong and beautiful and useful. Be courteous to me now in this hour, for I have always loved you, and temper your heat so that I can endure it." And Francis reported that Brother Fire had been so kind that he felt nothing at all. How did Francis respond to blindness and suffering? That was when he wrote his beautiful Canticle of the Sun that expresses his brotherhood with creation in praising God.Francis never recovered from this illness. He died on October 4, 1226 at the age of 45. Francis is considered the founder of all Franciscan orders and the patron saint of ecologists and merchants. Subscribe to topicSubscribe to author Print Article PDF Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus Christ, is one of the most venerated women from the ancient world. Her most common epithet is "the virgin Mary." She is celebrated by Eastern Orthodox Churches, Catholicism, and various Protestant denominations as "the mother of God." In Islam, Surah 19 of the Quran, the surah of Maryam, is devoted to her. Stories of Mary evolved over time. Our earliest source for Christianity are the letters of Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. Written before the canonical gospels, Paul did not name her. We have only: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4). Mary in the Gospels Ancient cultures shared a conviction that great people often had a miraculous birth, usually with the mating of a god with a human woman. The gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John (70-100 CE) are our sources for Mary. Confusing at times, there are many women named Mary in the gospels. Then (as now) people named their children after famous figures. The name Mary derived from the Aramaic Mariam, in koine Greek, Maria. Miriam was the sister of Moses. The earliest gospel, Mark (c. 70 CE), began in medias res, with the adult Jesus beginning his ministry in Nazareth: On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses [Joseph] and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. (Mark 6:2-3) Although not described as a follower in the earthly ministry, we know that his brother James was a historical figure because Paul visited with him twice, and he is referred to as "James, the Lord's brother" in Galatians 1:18. In Acts, James is one of the leaders of the new movement in Jerusalem. Early Christianity understood the siblings as other children of Mary after the birth of Christ. Ancient cultures shared a conviction that great people often had a miraculous birth. Matthew and Luke both began their gospels with a birth story, the nativity of Jesus. The motivation was most likely to convince people that Jesus was the messiah, predicted by the prophets of Israel. They did this through references to the books of the prophets in the Jewish scriptures. At the same time, ancient cultures shared a conviction that great people often had a miraculous birth, usually with the mating of a god with a human woman. Matthew's gospel describes the birth of Jesus as follows: Now the birth of Jesus the messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the holy spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the holy spirit." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus." (Matthew 1:18-23) The holy spirit at this point was not the third entity of what became the Trinity in 325 CE. It was a reference to the spirit of God, which animated Adam when he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). It was the spirit of God that possessed the prophets with the ability to speak in God's name and perform miracles. Readers are sometimes confused with a reference to divorce, as they were not married yet. Both betrothals and marriages were done through a legal contract, exchanging the property of the father to the new husband. To undo an original contract, another contract, that of divorce, was required. Mary, the Virgin The above passage is famous for translation issues between Hebrew and Greek, which established the virginity of Mary. Around 200 BCE, the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt, known as the Septuagint. This is the version that the gospel writers used. However, it contains several loose translations. Matthew turned to Isaiah 7. Isaiah was the prophet during the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE. Ahaz was an evil king of Judah (732-716 BCE). God told him to ask for a sign, but he refused: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The Hebrew almah, translated here as "young woman" was a girl who had passed puberty, ready to procreate. In translating this to Greek, almah became parthenos, a "virgin". "Virgin" did not necessarily relate to an intact hymen; it was a general term for an unmarried woman. "Virgin" was a common metaphor for innocence and purity, the state of the young before puberty and adulthood. The temple to Athena was named the Parthenon as "the virgin Goddess" because Athena chose to rule alone, without a consort or husband, and had no children. In Matthew, the birth of Jesus takes place off-stage, with few details. Joseph was told in a dream to take the family and flee to Egypt because King Herod intended to slaughter all two-year-old boys in fear of a new king that would usurp his rule. The Orthodox Coptic Church of Egypt venerates sacred sites where the family found shelter at oases and wells on this journey. The Nativity in Luke's Gospel Luke provided a more elaborate background and details to the story of Mary and the birth of Jesus. He began with the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, a barren couple. In his rotation as high priest in the Temple, Zechariah was visited by an angel who told him that they would become the parents of John, the Baptist. 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?" [Greek: "I do not know a man"]. 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." (Luke 1:26-38) The annunciation to Mary became iconic in later Renaissance art. The Feast Day of the Annunciation is celebrated on 25 March, nine months before December. Mary then visited Elizabeth, and in this passage, "relative" was later translated as "cousin": 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." (Luke 1:41-44) In other words, even in the womb, John recognized the superiority of Jesus. Between the 6th and 11th centuries, the announcement to Mary and this passage became incorporated into what became known as "the Hail Mary," a ritual prayer: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Pope Gregory the Great (served 590-604) was credited with using this prayer in the liturgy. Saint Dominic (1170-1221) was visited by an angel who told him to teach people to use beads to keep track of prayers, the rosary. The rosary remains a devotional ritual to Mary. While Matthew claimed that the family originally lived in Bethlehem and later moved to Nazareth, Luke used the device of registering for the Roman census to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. When there was no room in the upper story of the waystation for travelers (the inn), the birth in Luke took place on the lower floor where animals were kept, in the stable. Mary and Joseph circumcised Jesus, and Mary went to the Temple in Jerusalem to complete the required purification after the birth of a child, with her offering of "two turtledoves." In the Temple, she encountered Simeon who predicted: Sign up for our free weekly email newsletter! This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealedand a sword will pierce your own soul, too. (Luke 2:34-35) This became the tradition of the sufferings of Mary, ultimately placing her as among the highest of the martyrs, the Queen of Heaven. Mark and Matthew list several women named Mary who witnessed the trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. One of them, "Mary, the mother of James and Joseph," may be a reference to her. Luke only mentioned a group of women, mourning at the event. In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke mentioned Mary only once. She was present with the disciples when Mattathias was selected to replace Judas: "All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers" (Acts 1:14). Mary in John's Gospel The Gospel of John has no physical birth of Jesus; he was the manifestation of the word of God on earth (the logos). This became the Christian concept of the incarnation in which Jesus pre-existed in heaven and appeared in a human body on earth. At the same time, however, John also incorporated the mother of Jesus, although never named. In John 2:1-12, Jesus' mother convinced him to turn the water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Later, John also places her at the site of the crucifixion: Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19: 25-27) Later traditions identified "the disciple whom he loved" as John, the brother of James, one of the sons of Zebedee. There were stories that this John survived and worked in Ephesus where he took Mary. Modern Christians tour the excavations of the "house of John and Mary" in modern Ephesus. This scene also became a popular depiction in later Christian iconography, with Mary and John at the foot of the cross. Other Texts In the 2nd century CE, we have The Protoevangelium of James, explaining what happened before the good news of the gospels. We learn that Mary's parents were a barren couple, Joachim and Anna. Praying to God for a child, Anna promised to "dedicate the child to God" if he granted her prayer. After Mary was weaned, Anna took her to be raised by the priests in Temple. This provided Mary with the distinction of never having been exposed to the evils of the outside world. Beginning in the 2nd century CE, Christians granted Mary the title Theotokos ("God-bearer"). When she reached puberty, they had a contest for her marriage. Joseph won because his farmer's staff miraculously blossomed. This text claimed that Mary and Joseph never had sexual relations after the birth of Jesus. In this version, a midwife examined Mary and verified that the hymen was still intact, even after the birth. The excavated house of Anna and Joachim is open to tourists and pilgrims in the Old City of Jerusalem. Not recorded in the New Testament, the earliest evidence for the death of Mary dates from a 4th-century CE text, Treatise About the Passing of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The apostles were with Mary when she died. Angels then took her body to heaven. The New Testament always refers to believers who die as "falling asleep", and a Victorian edifice, the Church of the Dormition on Mt. Zion claims to be the site where Mary "fell asleep" and ascended to heaven. Mary in Islam In the Islamic Quran, Maryam is extolled by the faithful as the greatest woman, chosen, and purified by God. Her story is related in a surah devoted to her. Following the tradition, the angel Gabriel informed her that she would conceive a child through the divine spirit, who would be the promised messiah (Isa, Jesus). Maryam and Isa were the only two who could not be touched by the Devil (Iblis). The distinction in Islam, however, is that worship is solely for God, although Maryam and Isa can be venerated. Mary in Late Antiquity & the Middle Ages With the deification of Jesus with the attributes of God, the status of Mary had to change. Beginning in the 2nd century CE, Christians granted Mary the title Theotokos ("God-bearer") because she carried divinity in her womb. This made her a 'divine vessel,' untainted by sexual intercourse. This led to a readjustment concerning the list of brothers in the gospels. Two theories were proposed: the brothers in the gospels were actually cousins they were step-brothers from a previous marriage of Joseph, who had been a widower. Mary was granted the official status of 'perpetual virgin' at the Council of Constantinople in 553 CE. As her son had brought forgiveness for the sin of Adam, Mary undid the sin of Eve and became the ideal role model for women. Throughout the Middle Ages, there were feast days for Mary, special prayers and devotions in her name, and churches and shrines as pilgrimage sites for events in her life. Mary could intercede in the lives of believers and help alleviate those awaiting in purgatory. With an increased interest in the cult of Mary, paintings and statues proliferated as the Madonna ("my lady") during the period of the Renaissance. During the Roman Empire, Mary as mother was aligned with the Egyptian goddess Isis who also protected mothers and children. A seated Mary with the baby Jesus on her lap became iconic. Madonna di Piazza by Andrea del Verrocchio One of the most famous images of Mary is Michelangelo's (1475-1564), sculpture known as the Pieta, housed in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Pieta ("pity") recognizes the suffering of Mary when she held Jesus as he was taken down from the cross. Appearances by Mary Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) created the concept of original sin, that all humans inherited the sin of Adam and Eve. Jesus was conceived by "the spirit of God," but what about Mary? In Lourdes, France in 1858, a peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879), claimed to see "a great lady" when she was gathering firewood who told her to build a chapel near a cavern with a spring. She asked the lady her name, and Mary replied, "I am the immaculate conception" (conceived without original sin). An uneducated peasant would have no concept of this, and so it was declared a miracle. Bernadette was canonized as a saint in 1933, and Lourdes remains famous for miraculous cures. There have been several miraculous appearances by Mary, usually in the context of cultural upheaval or crises. She appeared to Juan Deigo, a Mexican peasant in the Spanish territories in 1531 (Our Lady of Guadalupe). In Fatima, Portugal in 1917, she appeared to three children, offering messages that predicted WWI and WWII. In 1981, six teenagers experienced visions of Mary in Medjugorje, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The visions included admonitions to the faithful, especially priests, to help people and believe even without visions. Thousands of pilgrims visit these sites. Did you like this definition? This human-authored article has been reviewed by our editorial team before publication to ensure accuracy, reliability and adherence to academic standards in accordance with our editorial policy. Brown, Raymond E. The Birth of the Messiah. Anchor Bible, 1993.Carroll, Michael P. The Cult of the Virgin Mary. Princeton University Press, 1992.Gambero, Luigi. Mary In The Middle Ages. Ignatius Press, 2005.Hesemann, Michael. Mary of Nazareth. Ignatius Press, 2016.Rubin, Miri. Mother of God. Yale University Press, 2009. World History Encyclopedia is an Amazon Associate and earns a commission on qualifying book purchases. Mary's death is not recorded in the New Testament. According to the 4th-century CE Treatise About the Passing of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles were with Mary when she died, and angels then took her body to heaven. The Virgin Mary is the most venerated woman in Christianity. She is celebrated by Eastern Orthodox Churches, Catholicism, and various Protestant denominations as "the mother of God", she ranks among the highest of the martyrs, the Queen of Heaven. World History Encyclopedia is a non-profit organization. Please support free history

education for millions of learners worldwide for only $5 per month by becoming a member. Thank you! World History Encyclopedia is a non-profit organization. Please support free history education for millions of learners worldwide for only $5 per month by becoming a member. Thank you! Become a Member Donate Submitted by Rebecca Denova, published on 04 October 2024. The copyright holder has published this content under the following license: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike. This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon this content non-commercially, as long as they credit the author and license their new creations under the identical terms. When republishing on the web a hyperlink back to the original content source URL must be included. Please note that content linked from this page may have different licensing terms. MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS (, from Heb. , bitter).I. Biblical information1. Lineage. In Luke 1:36 Mary is called a kinswoman of Elizabeth, a daughter of Aaron (Luke 1:5). This may be thought to suggest that Mary also belonged to the tribe of Levi, as indicated in Text XII Pat (Simeon vii), but other indications argue strongly that she, like Joseph, was of royal lineage. The phrase, of the house of David in Luke 1:27 may apply either to virgin or to man. The references to the house of David by Elizabeth and Zechariah (Luke 1:32, 69) and the frequent, and unchallenged, public address of Jesus by the title Son of David (Matt 9:27; 15:22; 20:30, 31; Mark 10:47, 48) imply that on His mothers side as well as Josephs, Jesus was of Davids line. The Sinaitic Syr. text of Luke 2:4 reads, because they were both of the house of David. It is unlikely, however, that Luke 3:23-38 gives the genealogy of Mary, as some have thought. The Protevangelium of James calls her parents Joachim of Nazareth and Anna of Bethlehem. The only member of her family mentioned in Scripture is her sister (John 19:25). Comparison with Mark 15:40 and Matthew 27:56 makes it almost certain that this was Salome, wife of Zebedee, in which case James and John were cousins of Jesus. The alternative suggestion which identifies his mothers sister with Mary the wife of Clopas involves the most unlikely requirement that two sisters bore the same name.2. The betrothal. Mary was brought up in Nazareth, and prob. was still in her teens when she was betrothed. In the 4th-cent. History of Joseph the Carpenter, she was said to be twelve when she was betrothed to Joseph, a widower of ninety with a grown-up family. The Biblical picture, however, suggests a young man entering marriage for the first time. Betrothal was in Jewish custom almost tantamount to marriage. A declaration was made to the prospective bride, and a small gift given her as a pledge, in the presence of witnesses; or else the declaration might be in writing. From this time the woman was called wife; if her betrothed should die before the marriage was consummated, she became a widow and the custom of levirate marriage might apply to her. She could not be dismissed from the betrothal relationship except through a writing of divorce, and any sexual relationship during the betrothal period was treated as adultery. In the case of a virgin, the betrothal lasted about a year.3. The annunciation (Luke 1:26-38). During this period of betrothal the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, and greeted her with the words, Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you! The address, , means that Mary has received grace; not that she has grace to bestow. The following clause may be interpreted as a wish, the Lord be with you or as a statement defining the grace which Mary had received. The additional words in the KJV, Blessed art thou among women have some MS support, but are most likely a gloss from Elizabeths words (Luke 1:42). Mary was puzzled by the greeting, and evidently frightened, for the angel continued, telling her not to be afraid, and that she would conceive and bear a son whom she would call Jesus. He would be called the Son of the Most High, and would, as Davids descendant, reign over Israel for ever. Mary made the natural inquiry, How can this be, since I have no husband? Her reply does not indicate doubt or disbelief of the message, as Zechariahs had done (Luke 1:18), but rather perplexity as to the method of fulfillment.Gabriel replied, 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 called holy, the Son of God, thus confirming the virginal conception. Belief in the Virgin Birth of Christ is dependent almost entirely on the records of Matthew and Luke. There is no reference to it in the remainder of the NT. In Galatians 4:4, Paul writes that Jesus was born of a woman (, G1222) instead of using the word virgin (, G4221). But his point is the real humanity of Christ, not the marital state of Christs mother. The variant reading of Matthew 1:16 given in a few MSS, Joseph, to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed, begat Jesus who is called Christ, is certainly a scribal error, repeating the formula of earlier vv. It would, in any case, be quite impossible to take the word begat in the normal biological sense in the same v. which describes Mary as virgin. The references to Joseph as Jesus father (Matt 13:55; Luke 2:33, 48) imply the family and social position which Joseph occupied, not physical paternity.The angel then told Mary that Elizabeth, in her old age, had conceived a son six months earlier, for with God nothing will be impossible. A great deal was implied by Marys words of meek acceptance, Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. It was the humble acceptance of the embarrassment, suspicion and misunderstanding which would undoubtedly follow, by this lowly, devout maiden.4. The visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56). Shortly after the angels departure Mary went to visit the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Luke states merely that this was in a city of Judah in the hill country. Tradition identifies the town as Ain Karim, a village five m. W of Jerusalem. If so, Mary traveled some eighty m. from Nazareth. On entering the house she was surprised by Elizabeths greeting, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! and reference to her, not as kinswoman, but as the mother of my Lord. Doubtless the promises she had received through Zechariah would have filled Elizabeth with hopes for the early appearance of the Messiah; now there was the physical sign of the movement of the babe in her womb, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (v. 41) to grant recognition of the one who was to be born, and to pronounce blessing on the mother who believed Gods message.The song that follows is attributed to Elizabeth by three OL MSS, and by Niceta of Remesiana; but all Gr. and most Lat. MSS, and almost all Patristic references, speak of it as Marys. The Magnificat is more calm and majestic than the ecstatic outburst of Elizabeth, and is modeled on the OT Psalms, and esp. the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10). It is a meditation in four strophes. The first two give Marys personal praise, and the reason for it; the third speaks of Gods larger purposes in the shaping of human history; the last returns to the immediate fulfillment of Gods mercy promised to Israel. The theme in general is of Gods gracious dealing with the humble and poor, while He shows His strong power against the rich and the mighty. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, in all probability up to the birth and circumcision of John (Luke 1:57-79).5. The birth and infancy narratives. It was prob. some time after Mary returned to Nazareth that she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18). Joseph, being a just but also kindly man, planned to divorce her quietly, rather than expose her to public disgrace, but was reassured by the message of an angel, given in a dream, that Marys child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was instructed, as Mary had already been (Luke 1:31) to call the babys name Jesus (Jehovah is salvation), for he will save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21). Immediately Joseph took Mary to his home as his wife, but had no sexual intercourse with her until after the birth of Jesus (Matt 1:25).If we had only Matthews account, we would have thought Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem, but Luke makes it clear that the birth of Jesus occurred in Bethlehem only because of the census, which brought his parents to their ancestral home town. Lukes accuracy has been challenged on the grounds that there is no record of a census at the time of Jesus birth; that no one would be required to journey eighty m. to fill out a census paper; that the census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria was in a.d. 6-7, long after Jesus birth. The conclusion drawn is that Matthew and Luke brought Bethlehem into the picture only to make the record fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2.Ramsay discusses the question carefully in his book, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? He produces evidence from Egyp. papyri that a census was taken in the Rom. world every fourteen years, so one would have occurred about 8-7 b.c., and it may have been somewhat delayed in Pal. In a census in a.d. 104 people in Egypt were required to return to their own town for enrollment. When Quirinius was appointed governor of Syria in a.d. 6, it was his second such appointment; he may well have been an additional legate to Sentius Saturninus at the time of the earlier census. There seems no valid reason, therefore, to reject the historicity of Lukes clear statement about the circumstances of Jesus birth.The census would account for the shortage of accommodation in Bethlehem. The inn (, G2906), prob. a simple lodging place, was full. Somewhere nearby, perhaps in a cave, as some apocryphal gospels say, Jesus was born and laid in a manger (, G5764)not a stall, but a feeding trough for animals.Out in the fields a group of shepherds stood guard over their flock that night. Such flocks were always needed for the sacrifices of the Temple at Jerusalem, a mere six m. away. Informed of the birth by an angel, the shepherds went to Bethlehem, found the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger, and excitedly repeated the message they had received. For others, the shepherds words were a passing wonder, but Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Luke 2:19).There is no indication in Matthews account how long after the birth it was when the wise men, or magi () came, following the lead of the star they had seen in the E, in search of the one born king of the Jews (Matt 2:1-12). Their inquiry in Jerusalem perturbed Herod, who verified from the chief priests and scribes the anticipated birthplace of the Messiah, then sent the wise men to Bethlehem. By this stage the holy family was in a house, where the wise men offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This may have occurred before or after the circumcision which took place on the eighth day, when the baby was given his angel-conferred name of Jesus. They stayed in the environs of Jerusalem until two further requirements of the Jewish law were fulfilled. For every first-born child, a redemption price of five silver shekels, about $3.65 in American money, or ten days wages for a working man, had to be paid to the Temple a month after the birth (Num 18:16). Then, forty-one days after the birth for a boy, the ceremony of the mothers purification took place (Lev 12:2-4). For convenience, these two ceremonies were commonly combined in one visit to the Temple, as was the case here. The offering for a mothers purification was a lamb and a turtle-dove or a young pigeon. Joseph and Mary offered the alternative permitted to a mother too poor to afford a lamb, of two turtle-doves or pigeons (Luke 2:24).During the course of the presentation in the Temple, two aged Heb. saints came in and praised God at the recognition of the infant Redeemer. Simeon held the babe in his arms and blessed God for the gift of salvation in the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-32). He then blessed the parents, and prophesied to Mary that the child would cause the downfall of many, and the rising of many others, in Israel. He would be spoken against as he revealed the thoughts of mens hearts. And for Mary herself, a sword would pierce through her own soul, as she saw her son so treated. The longwidowed prophetess Anna, aged eighty-four, likewise gave thanks to God and spoke to others about the child.Lukes account suggests that the family returned immediately to Nazareth (Luke 2:39), but Matthew tells how, after the departure of the wise men, Joseph, being warned by an angel in a dream, fled in haste, by night, with Mary and Jesus, to Egypt, staying there in safety until after Herods death, about the end of March, 4 b.c. No indication is given of the length of stay in Egypt or the exact location. Ancient legends say they spent two years at Matareeh, a few m. NE of Cairo, but others have argued for a sojourn as short as a month or two. After this, they returned to Israel, and avoiding Judea where Archelaus now reigned, made their home in Nazareth.6. Life in Nazareth. Jesus development is described as that of an entirely normal boy in Lukes restrained and dignified account (Luke 2:40-52). It was a godly Jewish home in which Jesus was taught the Scriptures, reverent obedience to parents, and the love of God. Every year the family journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. It was during one such annual visit, when Jesus at the age of twelve, entered the responsibilities of a son of the commandment, that He stayed behind, and was found in the Temple after three days, listening to the teachers, and asking intelligent and perceptive questions. Mary was astonished and indignant as she rebuked Him, Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been looking for you anxiously. His reply, Did you not know that I must be in my Fathers house? was in turn a gentle rebuke. Mary should have sensed the early call of His divine mission.The home in Nazareth was one full of boys and girls, for Joseph and Mary had at least six other children (Mark 6:3). Jesus, as the eldest, followed His fathers trade as a carpenter. From the total silence of the later gospel story, we conclude that Joseph died before Jesus entered upon His public ministry; legend says in His eighteenth year. If so, for many years Jesus stood by His widowed mother in the responsibility of bringing up the younger members of the family, which may well account for His not entering His public ministry until He was about thirty (Luke 3:23).7. Incidents during Christs ministry. Mary was present at the marriage in Cana to which Jesus and His disciples were invited. She evidently bore some responsibility in the arrangements, perhaps as a close relative. When the supply of wine was exhausted, she informed Jesus of the fact. Perhaps she thought to hasten His public manifestation; this would explain the gentle rebuff in Jesus words, which prob. mean, Woman, you have no right to determine my mission. This is not yet my hour for open manifestation. Our Lord thus asserted His independence and sole authority in fulfilling His God-given task. Mary accepted this, retiring from the scene after she instructed the servants to obey His every command (John 2:1-5). It would seem that after this Mary and Jesus brothers made their home in Capernaum with Jesus (John 2:12), while His sisters, prob. married, stayed on in Nazareth (Mark 6:3). They did not normally accompany Him on His preaching tours, but on one occasion, perhaps fearful for His safety, they came to the outskirts of the crowd, seeking Him (Matt 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). Almost certainly the phrase in Mark 3:21 means His family (thus Swete, Cranfield); if so, their reaction to Jesus at this stage was to say, He is beside Himself, and they came seeking to restrain Him. Jesus reply when told that His family was calling Him, indicates that He viewed them as not doing the will of God; those who do are truly mother and brothers to Him. The only other reference to Mary during His ministry is the cry of the unknown woman in the crowd, Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked! (Luke 11:27). Again on this occasion, Jesus emphasized that physical relationship to Him did not confer ble ssing, but obedience to Gods message.8. At the cross. Only John states that Mary was present at the crucifixion, and that Jesus gave her into the care of the beloved disciple with the words, Woman, behold your son!, Behold, your mother! (John 19:26, 27). Why did Jesus give Mary into the care of her nephew rather than one of her own sons? It may have been because they, as yet, did not believe in Him (John 7:5), or because they were married men (1 Cor 9:5), and John single. Or it may be that Jesus merely intended John to take her away from the harrowing scenes of the crucifixion, and he did so from that hour. However, traditions say that she lived the rest of her life with John, either in Jerusalem, or accompanying him to Ephesus.9. After the resurrection. The only further mention of Mary is after the ascension, when Mary and Jesus brothers, now in Jerusalem, joined the eleven apostles in prayer while they waited for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). It was perhaps the appearance of the resurrected Christ to James (1 Cor 15:7) that brought to His brothers the faith they notably lacked during His ministry, and brought full assurance to Mary. They were all doubtless in the full company of 120 persons (Acts 1:15) present at the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas as apostle and who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).II. Ecclesiastical traditions1. Worship of Mary. There is no hint anywhere in the NT of veneration offered to Mary. Jesus expressly warned against such (Luke 11:27, 28). Rather, the picture of Mary given in the NT is of a humble village maiden who typifies all that is finest and noblest in Jewish womanhood. Her purity, simplicity, deep spiritual sensitivity, and complete obedience to God stand out; her careful training of her son in His early years, her complete confidence in Him as shown in the incident at Cana, her utter loyalty as shown by her presence at the cross, even though it seems there were times when she did not fully understand Him, all prepared her for the position she took among the earliest disciples in acknowledging Him as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Nor is there any evidence of prayer made, or worship offered, to Mary during the first four centuries. The later cult of the worship of Mary has developed on the flimsy foundation of three passages in Lukethe greeting of Gabriel, Hail, O favored one (1:28); the greeting of Elizabeth, Blessed are you among women (v. 42); and the grateful words of Mary in the Magnificat, Behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed (v. 48). These passages emphasize the unique high privilege bestowed on this specially chosen maiden, but in no way suggest that worship should be offered her, which belongs only to God. Upon the brief Biblical details of her life has been woven an intricate web of legend, largely fictitious and quite unreliable, and upon this has been built a complex structure of dogma which has developed and increased through the centuries. There are four main tenets of this dogma.2. Mother of God. In the fourth and fifth cents. controversy raged around the propriety of applying the term , Godbearer, or mother of God to Mary. The title was intended to confirm the full deity of Christ. Nestorius proposed the less explicit , but this, along with his other teaching, was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in a.d. 431, where it was affirmed that in Christ there were not two persons but one; the perfect existing God made at the same time perfect man, made flesh of the Virgin. The expression, then, does not mean mother of the divine nature. On this understanding both Lutheran and Reformed confessions at the time of the Reformation allowed the term, but it has never been popular among Protestants. It is as mother of God that Mary is termed mediatrix, not, in the thought of the Rom. communion, to take the place of Christ as sole mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5), but to mediate between Christ and mankind as she did at Cana (John 2:3).3. Perpetual virginity. The phrase, born of the Virgin Mary used in the Apostles Creed, is held to imply not only that Mary was a virgin when she conceived, but also in birth and after birth. The apocryphal Protevangelium of James states that Jesus was born miraculously, leaving Marys virginity intact. It is held that Marys words to Gabriel, I know not a man (Luke 1:34) indicate that she was under a vow of perpetual virginity, in which case it is difficult to explain why she had earlier become betrothed to Joseph. As to the brothers and sisters of the Lord, these are regarded either as children of Joseph by an earlier marriage (the view of the apocryphal gospels, commonly called the Epiphanian view, after Epiphanius who argued it c. a.d. 382), or as cousins, children of Clopas and the Virgins sister, also called Mary (the Hieronymian view, after Jerome, c. a.d. 383).This doctrine has no explicit support in the NT, and the application of OT texts such as Song of Solomon 4:12 and Ezekiel 44:2 to Mary is quite unjustified. While the use of the words before (Matt 1:18), until (Matt 1:25) and first-born (Luke 2:7) may not in themselves be absolutely convincing, they agree with the frequent references in the NT to Jesus brothers, to indicate that after a perfectly normal birth (Luke 2:5), Mary lived with Joseph as man and wife, and enjoyed the blessing of a large family (the Helvidian view, after Helvidius, c. a.d. 380). Had it not been for the pressures of an asceticism which in these early centuries regarded celibacy as an ethically higher state than marriage, and all sexual relations as inherently part of sinful flesh, it is certain no other interpretation would ever have been thought of. See Virgin Birth.4. Immaculate conception. Augustine is the first notable theologian to declare that Mary was free from actual sin (Nature and Grace, ch. 36). Later theologians discussed whether she was free, not only from actual sin, but from original sin, like Eve in her innocence. Aquinas taught that though Mary contracted original sin, between conception and birth, by Gods miraculous power, the inflammation of sin was rendered harmless, and then completely removed at her conception of Christ. Duns Scotus opposed this view, and taught that she was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin at the first instant of her conception. This was promulgated as Roman Catholic dogma by Pope Pius IX in 1854.5. Bodily assumption. The earliest versions of this legend come from the later 4th cent., and show widely varying details, the one common feature being that Mary was miraculously transported, body and soul, to heaven by Jesus. The legend has no historical evidence, is foreign to Scripture, and contrary to all extant writings of the first three centuries. But the feast of the Assumption has long been observed as August 15 in the Christian calendar, and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin was proclaimed a part of official Roman Catholic dogma by Pope Pius XII in 1950.Bibliography T. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae III (1273) 27-30; A. Plummer, St. Luke, ICC (1896); W. M. Ramsay, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? (1898); M. R. James, The Apocryphal NT (1924), 38-49, 194-227; J. G. Machen, The Virgin Birth of Christ (1930); J. J. Lilly, Jesus and His Mother During the Public Life, CBQ (1946); V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (1952), 247-249; J. B. Carol, ed., Mariology, 3 vols. (1955, et seq.); C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to St. Mark, CGT (1966), 133-135; G. A. F. Knight, The Protestant World and Mariology, SJT 19, 1 (1966).Topical EncyclopediaMary, the mother of Jesus, holds a significant place in Christian theology and history as the chosen vessel through whom God brought His Son into the world. Her life and role are primarily documented in the New Testament, where she is depicted as a model of faith, obedience, and humility.Genealogy and Early LifeMary was a young Jewish woman from Nazareth in Galilee, engaged to Joseph, a descendant of King David. Her lineage is traced through the tribe of Judah, aligning with the Messianic prophecies concerning the lineage of the Savior. The Gospel of Luke provides a detailed account of her genealogy, emphasizing her connection to the house of David (Luke 3:23-38).The AnnunciationThe angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary, known as the Annunciation, is a pivotal moment in the biblical narrative. Gabriel greets her with the words, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). Despite her initial fear and confusion, Mary responds with faith and submission to God's will, saying, "I am the Lords servant. May it happen to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). This event marks the miraculous conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14.The VisitationFollowing the Annunciation, Mary visits her relative Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Upon Mary's arrival, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:42). In response, Mary offers a song of praise known as the Magnificat, expressing her gratitude and reverence for God's mighty works (Luke 1:46-55).The Birth of JesusMary travels with Joseph to Bethlehem for a census, where she gives birth to Jesus in humble circumstances, laying Him in a manger (Luke 2:1-7). The nativity account highlights her role as the mother of the Savior and the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Redeemer.Mary's Role in Jesus' MinistryMary is present at several key moments in Jesus' life and ministry. At the wedding in Cana, she informs Jesus of the lack of wine, prompting His first miracle of turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). Her presence at this event underscores her faith in Jesus' divine mission.Throughout Jesus' ministry, Mary remains a supportive figure, though she does not always fully understand His mission. In Mark 3:31-35, when Jesus' family seeks Him, He emphasizes the spiritual family of believers, indicating the broader scope of His ministry.The Crucifixion and ResurrectionMary's presence at the crucifixion of Jesus is a testament to her enduring faith and maternal devotion. As she stands near the cross, Jesus entrusts her care to the beloved disciple, John, saying, "Woman, here is your son," and to John, "Here is your mother" (John 19:26-27). This act highlights Jesus' concern for His mother's well-being even in His final moments.Following the resurrection, Mary is mentioned among the disciples in the upper room, praying and waiting for the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). Her inclusion in this gathering signifies her continued faith and involvement in the early Christian community.Theological SignificanceMary's role as the mother of Jesus is central to the Incarnation, the doctrine that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Her willingness to accept God's plan exemplifies the ideal response of faith and obedience to God's call. Throughout Christian history, Mary has been venerated for her unique role in salvation history, though interpretations of her significance vary among different Christian traditions.In summary, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a revered figure in Christianity, celebrated for her faith, humility, and pivotal role in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Her account continues to inspire believers to trust in God's promises and to live lives of faithful service. Philosophy & Religion Religious Personages & Scholars Saints & Popes Mary (flourished beginning of the Christian era) was the mother of Jesus, venerated in the Christian church since the apostolic age and a favorite subject in Western art, music, and literature. Mary is known from biblical references, which are, however, too sparse to construct a coherent biography. The development of the doctrine of Mary can be traced through titles that have been ascribed to her in the history of the Christian communionsguarantee of the Incarnation, virgin mother, second Eve, mother of God, ever virgin, immaculate, and assumed into heaven. She has a number of feast days in various Christian traditions, several of which are holy days of obligation for Roman Catholics. Shrines to her that have become internationally famous as pilgrimage sites, where assorted miracles have supposedly occurred, include Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Loreto, and Our Lady of Medjugorje.Virgin and ChildVirgin and Child, also called the Poligny Virgin, limestone, polychromy, and gilding, attributed to Claus de Werve, c. 1420; in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. The variant name of the sculpture reflects its former location in the convent of the Poor Clares order in Poligny, Burgundy, France.The New Testament account of her humility and obedience to the message of God have made her an exemplar for all ages of Christians. Out of the details supplied in the New Testament by the Gospels about the maid of Galilee, Christian piety and theology have constructed a picture of Mary that fulfills the prediction ascribed to her in the Magnificat (Luke 1:48): Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed. The first mention of Mary is the story of the Annunciation, which reports that she was living in Nazareth and was betrothed to Joseph (Luke 1:26 ff.), and the last mention of her (Acts of the Apostles 1:14) includes her in the company of those who devoted themselves to prayer after the ascension of Jesus into heaven. She appears in the following incidents in the Gospels: the Annunciation; the Visitation with Elizabeth, her kinswoman and the mother of John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus (Luke 1:39 ff.); the birth of Jesus and the presentation of him in the Temple (Luke 2:1 ff.); the coming of the Magi and the flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:1 ff.); the Passover visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was 12 years old (Luke 2:41 ff.); the marriage at Cana in Galilee, although her name is not used (John 2:1 ff.); the attempt to see Jesus while he was teaching (Mark 3:31 ff.); and the station at the cross, where, apparently widowed, she was entrusted to the disciple John (John 19:26 ff.). Even if one takes these scenes as literal historical accounts, they do not add up to an integrated portrait of Mary. Only in the narratives of the Nativity and the Passion of Christ is her place a significant one: her acceptance of the privilege conferred on her in the Annunciation is the solemn prologue to the Christmas story, and, not only does she stand at the foot of the cross, but in the Easter story the other Mary who came to the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28:1) is not sheaccording to traditional interpretations, because, having kept in her heart what he was to be, she knew that the body of Jesus would not be there. On the other hand, the three incidents that belong to the life of Jesus contain elements of a pronouncedly human character, perhaps even the suggestion that she did not fully understand Jesus true mission. The story behind Madonna with the Long NeckWith a name like Madonna with the Long Neck, it's no surprise that this painting isn't a typical depiction of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child.See all videos for this articleSince the early days of Christianity, however, the themes that these scenes symbolize have been the basis for thought and contemplation about Mary. Christian communions and theologians differ from one another in their interpretations of Mary principally on the basis of where they set the terminal point for such development and expansionthat is, where they maintain that the legitimate development of doctrine may be said to have ended. To a considerable degree, therefore, a historical survey of that development is also an introduction to the state of contemporary Christian thought about Mary. Pop Quiz: 19 Things to Know About Christianity Probably the earliest allusion to Mary in Christian literature is the phrase born of woman in Galatians 4:4, which was written before any of the Gospels. As parallels such as Job 14:1 and Matthew 11:11 suggest, the phrase is a Hebraic way of speaking about the essential humanity of a person. When applied to Jesus, therefore, born of woman was intended to assert that he was a real man, in opposition to the attemptlater seen in various systems of gnosticism, a 2nd-century dualistic religionto deny that he had had a completely human life; he was said by some gnostics to have passed through the body of Mary as light passes through a window. It seems unwarranted to read anything further into the phrase, as though born of woman necessarily implied but not of a man and a woman. Thus, the phrase made Mary the sign or the guarantee that the Son of God had truly been born as a man. For the ancient world, one human parent was necessary to assure that a person was genuinely human, and from the beginning the human mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been the one to provide this assurance. Some scholars have even maintained that the primary connotation of the phrase born of the Virgin Mary in the Apostles Creed was this same insistence by the church upon the authentic manhood of Jesus. That insistence has been the irreducible minimum in all the theories about Mary that have appeared in Christian history. Her role as mother takes precedence over any of the other roles assigned to her in devotion and in dogma. Those who deny the virgin birth usually claim to do so in the interest of true humanity, seeing a contradiction between the idea of Jesus as the human son of a human mother and the idea that he did not have a human father. Those who defend the virgin birth usually maintain that the true humanity was made possible when the Virgin Mary accepted her commission as the guarantee of the Incarnation (Luke 1:38): Let it be with me according to your word. This is the original source of the title co-redemptrixindicating some participation with Christ in the redemption of humankindassigned to Mary in Roman Catholic theology, though the term has come to connote a more active role by her; the precise nature of this participation is still a matter of controversy among Catholic theologians. By far the most voluminous narratives about Mary in the New Testament are the infancy stories in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In their present form, both accounts make a point of asserting that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary without any human agency (Matthew 1:18 ff.; Luke 1:34 ff.), yet the many textual variants in Matthew 1:16, some of them with the words Joseph begat Jesus, have caused some scholars to question whether such an assertion was part of Matthews original account. The passages in Matthew and in Luke seem to be the only references to the matter in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul nowhere mentions it; The Gospel According to Mark begins with Jesus as an adult, and The Gospel According to John, which begins with his prehistorical existence, does not allude to the virgin birth, unless a variant of John 1:13 that reads who was born rather than who were born is followed. Matthew does not attach any theological significance to the miracle, but it is possible that the words of the angel in Luke 1:35 are intended to connect the holiness of the child with the virginity of the mother. In postbiblical Christian literature the most voluminous discussions of Mary have been those dealing with her virginity. On the basis of the New Testament, it was the unanimous teaching of all the orthodox Fathers of the Church that Mary conceived Jesus with her virginity unimpaired, a teaching enshrined in the early Christian creeds and concurred in by the 16th-century reformers as well as by most Protestant churches and believers since the Reformation. One of the interpretations of the person and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is the formulation of parallels between him and Adam: for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22). Decisive in the parallel is the contrast between the disobedience of Adam, by which sin came into the world, and the obedience of Christ, by which salvation from sin was accomplished (Romans 5:1219). Whether or not the story of the Annunciation in the first chapter of the Gospel According to Luke is intended to suggest a similar parallel between Eve and Mary, this did soon become a theme of Christian reflection. Writing at about the end of the 2nd century, the Church Father St. Irenaeus elaborated the parallel between Eve, who, as a virgin, had disobeyed the word of God, and Mary, who, also as a virgin, had obeyed it: for Adam had necessarily to be restored in Christ, that mortality be absorbed in immortality, and Eve in Mary, that a virgin, become the advocate of a virgin, should undo and destroy virginal disobedience by virginal obedience. Irenaeus did not argue the point; he seems rather to have taken the parallel for granted, and this may indicate that it was not his own invention but belonged to tradition, for which he had a high respect. In any case, the parallel did ascribe to Mary and to her obedience an active share in the redemption of the human race: all had died in Adam, but Eve had participated in the sin that brought this on; all were saved in Christ, but Mary had participated in the life that made this possible. The first widespread theological controversy over Mary had to do with the propriety of applying to her the title of Theotokos, meaning God-bearer or mother of God. The title seems to have arisen in devotional usage, probably in Alexandria, sometime in the 3rd or 4th century; it was a logical deduction from the doctrine of the full deity of Christ, which was established as a dogma during the 4th century, and those who defended that dogma were also the ones who drew the inference. Perhaps, as the 19th-century English theologian John Henry Cardinal Newman supposed, the determination of the Council of Nicaea in 325 that Christ was not merely the highest of creatures but belonged on the divine side of the line between Creator and creature was even responsible for the rapid growth of devotion and speculation attached to Mary as the highest of creatures. By the end of the 4th century, the Theotokos had successfully established itself in various sections of the church. Because it seemed to him that the supporters of the title were blurring the distinction between the divine and the human in Christ, Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, objected to its use, preferring the less explicit title Christotokos, meaning Christ-bearer or mother of Christ. Along with other aspects of his teaching, Nestoriuss objections were condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Various corollaries could be deduced from the New Testaments assertion of Marys virginity in the conception of Jesus, including the doctrine that she had remained a virgin in the course of his birth (the virginitas in partu) and the doctrine that she had remained a virgin after his birth and until the end of her life (the virginitas post partum). The Apostles Creed appears to teach at least the virginitas in partu when it says born of the Virgin Mary. Although this teaching about how Mary gave birth to Jesus occurs for the first time in the 2nd-century apocryphal, or noncanonical, Protevangelium of James, its origins and evolution are not easy to trace, and Roman Catholic and Protestant historians have come to contradictory conclusions. The growth of the ascetic ideal in the church helped to give support to this view of Mary as the model of the ever virgin. The doctrine is neither asserted nor denied but is simply ignored in the New Testament, and Old Testament passages adduced in support of it by Church Fathers (such as Ezekiel 44:2 and Song of Solomon 4:12) were probably convincing only to those who had already accepted the doctrine. As the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary implied an integral purity of body and soul, so, in the opinion of many theologians, she was also free of other sins. Attempting to prove the universality of sin against Pelagius (whose teaching was condemned as heretical by the Christian church but who did maintain the sinlessness of Mary), St. Augustine, the great theologian and bishop from northern Africa, spoke for the Western church when he wrote: We must except the holy Virgin Mary. Out of respect for the Lord, I do not intend to raise a single question on the subject of sin. After all, how do we know what abundance of grace was granted to her who had the merit to conceive and bring forth him who was unquestionably without sin? It was, however, the distinction between original sin (i.e., the sin that all people are born with) and actual sin (i.e., the sins that people commit during their lives), firmly established in Western theology by the same Augustine, that eventually compelled a further clarification of what the sinlessness of Mary meant. Certain Eastern theologians in the 4th and 5th centuries were willing to attribute actual sins to her, but most theologians in both East and West came to accept the view that she never did anything sinful, a view that found expression even among the 16th-century reformers. But was she free from original sin as well? And if so, how? St. Thomas Aquinas, the most important medieval theologian in the West, took a representative position when he taught that her conception was tarnished, as was that of all humans, but that God suppressed and ultimately extinguished original sin in her, apparently before she was born. This position, however, was opposed by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, systematized by Duns Scotus, a 13th-century British Scholastic theologian, and finally defined as Roman Catholic dogma by Pope Pius IX in 1854. According to this dogma, Mary not only was pure in her life and in her birth but at the first instant of her conception was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, by the singular grace and privilege granted her by Almighty God, through the merits of Christ Jesus, Saviour of mankind. When the Immaculate Conception was promulgated, petitions began coming to the Vatican for a definition regarding the Assumption of the Virgin into heaven, as this was believed by Roman Catholics and celebrated in the Feast of the Assumption. During the century that followed, more than eight million persons signed such petitions, yet Rome hesitated because the doctrine was difficult to define on the basis of Scripture and early witnesses to the Christian tradition. No account of the place and circumstances of Marys death was universally accepted in the church (although paintings depicting her dormition, or falling asleep, in the ancient Ionian city of Ephesus were quite common); no burial place was acknowledged (although there was a grave in Jerusalem that was said to be hers); and no miracles were credited to relics of her body (although the physical remains of far lesser saints had performed many). Such arguments from silence, however, did not suffice to establish a dogma, and, on the positive side, even the earliest doctrinal and liturgical testimony in support of the idea had appeared relatively late in history. Finally, in 1950 Pope Pius XII made the dogma official, declaring that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was run, was assumed in body and soul to heavenly glory. 271Mary, the mother of Jesus, stands as one of the most venerated figures in Christian history. Her name echoes through the centuries as a symbol of obedience, humility, and unwavering faith. Though she appears relatively briefly in the canonical gospels, her role in salvation history is profound. Christian denominations across the worldCatholic, Orthodox, and Protestant alikerecognize Mary for her unique role as the mother of the Son of God. But beyond the titles and reverence, what do we actually know about Mary from the Bible, history, and Christian tradition?Marys Background and Early LifeA Young Jewish Woman of NazarethMary was a Jewish girl from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, a small and relatively insignificant village during her time. The Gospel of Luke identifies her as a virgin betrothed to Joseph, a man of the house of David (Luke 1:26-27). Scholars estimate that Mary was likely in her early teens when she was engaged, which was typical for Jewish girls in that era.While the Gospels do not provide detailed genealogical information about Mary herself, they do connect her family with the Davidic line through Joseph, her betrothed. The Gospel of Luke (Luke 3:2338) presents a genealogy that some scholars believe may represent Marys lineage, connecting Jesus to King David not only legally through Joseph but biologically through Mary.Her Humble StatusMarys social status was modest. She was neither wealthy nor prominent, which makes her selection as the mother of the Messiah all the more profound. This humble origin is key to understanding her character and the theological message of the Incarnationthat God chose to enter the world through a simple, faithful servant rather than a person of worldly power or influence.The Annunciation: A Divine CallingOne of the most pivotal events in Marys life is the Annunciation. According to Luke 1:26-38, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her that she has found favor with God and will conceive and bear a son, Jesus, who will be called the Son of the Most High.Marys response is one of the most powerful declarations of faith in the Bible:Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. (Luke 1:38, ESV)This moment reveals Marys deep trust in God. Though she certainly must have faced confusion, fear, and societal riskincluding possible shame and ostracization for being pregnant outside of marriageMary accepts her divine calling with grace and submission.The Visitation: A Moment of Joyful ConfirmationSoon after the Annunciation, Mary visits her relative Elizabeth, who is also miraculously pregnant with John the Baptist. This meeting, recorded in Luke 1:39-56, is known as the Visitation. When Mary greets Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeths womb leaps, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims that Mary is blessed among women.In response, Mary proclaims the Magnificat (Luke 1:4655), a hymn of praise to God that reveals her theological depth and knowledge of Scripture. The Magnificat reflects themes of social reversal, divine mercy, and Gods faithfulness to Israelcentral motifs in Lukes Gospel.The Birth of Jesus: Witness to a MiracleMarys most significant moment in salvation history is, of course, the birth of Jesus. According to both Matthew and Luke, Jesus was born in Bethlehem during a journey required by a Roman census. In humble surroundings, Mary gives birth and lays Jesus in a manger (Luke 2:7).She becomes not only a witness to the Incarnation of God but also the first person to physically interact with the newborn Messiah. In her arms, divinity and humanity convergea mystery that would be pondered by theologians for centuries to come.Marys Role During Jesus ChildhoodPresentation at the TempleIn Luke 2:2238, Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, as required by Jewish law. Here they encounter Simeon and Anna, two devout individuals who recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah. Simeon blesses them but also warns Mary with a haunting prophecy:A sword will pierce your own soul too. (Luke 2:35)This foreshadowing of Jesus suffering and Marys own emotional pain reveals her continued, though silent, role in the unfolding redemptive story.The Flight into Egypt and ReturnThe Gospel of Matthew recounts that Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt to escape Herods massacre of infant boys (Matthew 2:1315). This dangerous journey underscores Marys protective and sacrificial role as a mother, willing to uproot her life for the safety of her child.Upon returning to Nazareth, the Holy Family lives in relative obscurity. The only other episode from Jesus youth that includes Mary is the incident when the 12-year-old Jesus stays behind in the temple. Mary expresses both maternal concern and awe at her sons growing awareness of His divine mission (Luke 2:4151).Mary During Jesus Public MinistryA Quiet Yet Pivotal PresenceMary appears only a few times during Jesus public ministry, but her presence is often meaningful.The Wedding at Cana (John 2:111): At this event, Mary tells Jesus the wine has run out, prompting His first public miracleturning water into wine. Her words to the servants, Do whatever he tells you, reflect her confidence in His divine ability.A Supportive Observer: In other moments, Mary is mentioned as being with Jesus and His followers (Matthew 12:4650), though Jesus uses such opportunities to emphasize spiritual kinship over biological ties.At the CrossPerhaps the most poignant moment for Mary comes at the crucifixion. The Gospel of John places her at the foot of the cross alongside the disciple John. Jesus, even in His agony, ensures her care by saying:Woman, behold your son, and to John, Behold your mother. (John 19:2627)In this act, Jesus honors His mother and entrusts her to the beloved disciple. Mary, watching her son suffer and die, fulfills Simeons earlier prophecy that a sword would pierce her soul.Mary After the ResurrectionAfter Jesus resurrection, Mary is not prominently featured in the post-resurrection narratives. However, she appears in Acts 1:14, gathered with the apostles in prayer after Jesus ascension. This brief mention suggests that she remained part of the early Christian community, sharing in the anticipation of the coming Holy Spirit at Pentecost.Tradition holds that Mary continued to live under the care of the apostle John and eventually died a natural death, though details of her final years are not included in the biblical canon.Mary in Christian Theology and TraditionCatholic and Orthodox PerspectivesIn the centuries after the New Testament period, the role of Mary developed significantly in Christian theology, especially within Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions.Theotokos: One of the earliest and most important titles given to Mary is Theotokos, meaning God-bearer or Mother of God. This title, affirmed at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., emphasizes that Jesus is fully divine and fully human, and thus Mary gave birth to the divine Son of God.Perpetual Virginity: Many Christians, especially within Catholic and Orthodox circles, believe that Mary remained a virgin throughout her life. This belief is supported by early Church Fathers but is not universally accepted by all Christian denominations.Immaculate Conception: The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was conceived without original sin, preparing her to be a pure vessel for Christ. This doctrine was formally declared in 1854.Assumption of Mary: Another Catholic teaching, the Assumption, holds that Mary was taken body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthly life. The Eastern Orthodox Church holds a similar belief called the Dormition of the Theotokos.Protestant ViewpointsMost Protestant traditions honor Mary as the mother of Jesus and an exemplar of faith, though they generally reject doctrines like the Immaculate Conception and Assumption. For many Protestants, the focus remains on Marys faith and obedience rather than her veneration.The Legacy of Mary TodayMarys influence transcends time, geography, and denomination. She is the subject of countless hymns, prayers, artworks, and devotions. The Hail Mary, Ave Maria, and the Magnificat remain central to Christian spirituality for millions around the world.Moreover, Marys story continues to resonate with people from all walks of life. Her courage to say yes to God, her faith amid uncertainty, and her suffering as a mother make her both relatable and admirable.ConclusionMary, the mother of Jesus, emerges from the pages of Scripture as a young woman of deep faith, chosen for a task of immense spiritual significance. Though not much is recorded about her personal life, what is revealed speaks volumes: she was obedient, reflective, courageous, and faithful.Her story is not one of grandeur but of grace. She models the kind of quiet strength and spiritual depth that transcends titles and doctrines. Whether venerated as Theotokos or admired as a humble servant of God, Mary remains a central figure in the Christian storya woman whose yes to God forever changed the course of human history.You Might Be Interested In: AbrahamDavidJosephNew Testament Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was a young girl, probably only about 12 or 13 years old when the angel Gabriel came to her. She had recently become engaged to a carpenter named Joseph. Mary was an ordinary Jewish girl, looking forward to marriage. Suddenly her life changed forever.Known for: Mary was the mother of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. She was a willing servant, trusting in God and obeying his call.Bible References: Jesus' mother Mary is mentioned throughout the Gospels and in Acts 1:14.Hometown: Mary was from Nazareth in Galilee.Husband: JosephRelatives: Zechariah and ElizabethChildren: Jesus, James, Joses, Judas, Simon and daughtersOccupation: Wife, mother, and homemaker. Mary appears by name in the Synoptic Gospels and in the book of Acts. Luke contains the most references to Mary and places the greatest emphasis on her role in God's plan. Mary is mentioned by name in the genealogy of Jesus, in the annunciation, in Mary's visit with Elizabeth, in the birth of Jesus, in the visit of the wise men, in Jesus' presentation in the temple, and in the Nazarene's rejection of Jesus. In Acts, she is referred to as "Mary, the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14), where she participates in the community of believers and prays with the apostles. The Gospel of John never mentions Mary by name, but refers to the "mother of Jesus" in the account of the wedding at Cana (John 2:111) and standing near the cross at the crucifixion (John 19:2527). Fearful and troubled, Mary found herself in the presence of the angel Gabriel listening to his announcement. She could never have expected to hear the most incredible newsthat she would have a child, and her son would be the Messiah. Although she could not comprehend how she would conceive the Savior, she responded to God with humble belief and obedience. Although Mary's calling held great honor, it would demand great suffering too. There would be pain in childbirth and motherhood, as well as in the privilege of being the mother of the Messiah. The angel told Mary in Luke 1:28 that she was highly favored by God. This phrase simply meant that Mary had been given much grace or "unmerited favor" from God. Even with God's favor, Mary would still suffer much. Although she would be highly honored as the mother of the Savior, she would first know disgrace as an unwed mother. She nearly lost her fiance. Her beloved son was rejected and cruelly murdered. Mary's submission to God's plan would cost her dearly, yet she was willing to be God's servant. God knew that Mary was a woman of rare strength. She was the only human being to be with Jesus throughout his entire lifefrom birth until death. She gave birth to Jesus as her baby and watched him die as her Savior. Mary also knew the Scriptures. When the angel appeared and told her the baby would be God's Son, Mary replied, "I am the Lord's servant ... may it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:38). She knew of the Old Testament prophesies about the coming Messiah. Mary was young, poor, and female. These qualities made her unsuitable in the eyes of her people to be used mightily of God. But God saw Mary's trust and obedience. He knew she would willingly serve God in one of the most important callings ever given to a human being. God looks at our obedience and trusttypically not the qualifications that humans consider important. God will often use the most unlikely candidates to serve him. Mary was willing to submit her life to God's plan no matter what it would cost her. Obedience to the Lord's will meant Mary would be disgraced as an unwed mother. Surely she expected Joseph to divorce her, or worse yet, he might even have her put to death by stoning (as the law permitted). Mary may not have considered the full extent of her future suffering. She may not have imagined the pain of watching her beloved child bear the weight of sin and die a terrible death on the cross. But surely she knew that her life would hold many sacrifices as the mother of the Messiah. Being chosen by God for a high calling requires total commitment and a willingness to sacrifice everything out of love and devotion to one's Savior. Am I like Mary, willing to accept God's plan no matter the cost? Can I go a step further and rejoice in that plan as Mary did, knowing it will cost me dearly? Luke 1:38"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV) Luke 1:46-50(Excerpt From Mary's Song)And Mary said:"My soul glorifies the Lordand my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,for he has been mindfulof the humble state of his servant.From now on all generations will call me blessed,for the Mighty One has done great things for meholy is his name.His mercy extends to those who fear him,from generation to generation." Mary, Mother of Jesus. The Lexham Bible Dictionary.

**Mary berry cupcake recipe. Mary berry cupcakes. Mary berry egg muffins. Mary berry everyday cupcakes. Mary berry cupcakes chocolate.**