

The Forgotten Life of Mary - Mother of Jesus - *the Early Years*

Val Brinkerhoff, 5/22/2023

Source Text: *The Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, apocryphal book attributed to Matthew, in possession of Jerome (early Church father), 4th Century - 8 chapters / Has many things in it consistent with scripture and patterns of scripture – *Believable...*

Mary's Birth Place: Nazareth

Father: Joachim (from Galilee, Nazareth)

Mother: Anna (from Bethlehem)

Mary's Story

First Part of the Story: Joachim and Anna were faithful people. They go to Jerusalem at the feasts and offer up sacrifices at the Temple. They have no children, as she is barren for 20 years of marriage. They apparently make a “vow” with the LORD to get a child, promising it to the LORD if they get one (the mothers of Samuel the Prophet and Samson do the same thing, most likely a Nazarite Vow – see Num. 6). In this same 20th year the High Priest at temple will not accept Joachim's sacrificial offering at the Feast of Dedication, stating he is cursed because he has no children. They leave temple in sadness.

An angel comes to Joachim (angel visit #1 of 4 in story) telling him he is not cursed, but a tool of LORD and that the couple will have a very special daughter, named Mary. She will be raised in the Temple from age 3 on. She will be a blessed one, wholly devoted to the LORD, a virgin who will later give birth miraculously to the Son of the Most High. Anna's barrenness is comparable to Sarah (wife of Abraham, child Isaac) and Rachel (wife of Jacob, child Joseph). Both women were barren for a time that God's miraculous power might be evident in them! Anna will bear Mary, who will bear the Son of God! The angel gives Joachim a sign, stating that he will meet his wife at the Golden Gate (she is waiting for him), to make the announcement to her (this is sign #1).

The angel now appears to Anna, telling her the same thing, giving her a sign too, that she will meet her husband at the Golden Gate also, and give the good news to him there. Both parents get the same sign from the angel (these are signs 1 and 2 of 4), telling the other spouse the good news – that they are going to have a very special daughter, who will give birth later – as a virgin – to the Son of God. The child will be raised in the Temple as a Virgin (until age 12 to 14, then removed back to their homes, when they are “of age” for marriage).

Mary is later born in Nazareth: At 3 years old (weaned from mother) Mary is taken to the Temple in Jerusalem to be given to the LORD in fulfillment of the “vow” of the parents (she will be raised inside the Temple and prepared for her mission – the birth of Jesus, and will be wholly devoted to the LORD, a virgin). While at the Temple, the parents change clothes in preparation to make a traditional sacrificial offering with the priest at one of the “Feasts.” While doing so, 3-year old Mary ascends the 15 steps leading up to the Temple Altar (she danced on the 3rd step).

These 15 steps were often the place where the Levite Priests positioned themselves to sing praises to the LORD during Temple ceremonies. They sang the 15 “Psalms of Ascent,” in order, each called “A Song of Degrees” (each Psalm corresponded to one of the 15 steps). The words to each are found in Psalm 120 to 134 (15 total). Read them and note that they have connection to children, parents, the temple, gratefulness to the LORD, etc. They thus have ties to this story. Note, as one example, Psalm 132:17 which has a statement about “the horn (power) or “rod” of David “budding” (see Isa. 11, D&C 113). The budding or blossoming of David's Rod or Horn is tied to the prophecy of the coming of Jesus – He is “the Rod.”¹ In the Old Testament we see God choosing and marking two things in scripture via a blossoming Rod; (1) Aaron's Rod which blossomed in Numbers, chapters 16 and 17; And (2) Joseph's Rod “blossoming” or marking him as the future husband of Mary in this story - *The Gospel of the Birth of Mary*.

In the Numbers 16 and 17 story, each of the 12 Tribes were led by one leader (Judah, Joseph, Benjamin, etc.), whose name was on a rod or staff (scepter of a king). God told Moses to put all 12 rods inside the Tabernacle to reveal who should lead the House of Israel (Numbers 16 features jealous men who wanted to lead, like Moses and Aaron). Only Aaron's rod or branch (from an almond tree) blossomed (it sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds). This indicated that God had chosen the Tribe of Levi “to lead” (with their Levite Priesthood). Moses, Aaron, and

Miriam lead Israel, and all three were family *and* of the Tribe of Levi. Moses used this rod earlier during the Exodus to lead Israel out of Egypt miraculously (it was a symbol of Kingship and Priesthood, handed down through the fathers from father Adam). It had God's Name upon it (see endnote 2).

Joseph (husband of Mary) also had a Rod in this story of young Mary (I address it hereafter). It too "blossomed" but in a different way. A dove landed on the top of Joseph's rod (the dove is a symbol or sign of Mother, Wisdom, the Spirit, etc.). It marked Joseph as God's choice for the man who was to become the husband of Mary - to care for her and the baby Jesus. The name "Joseph" means "*preserver, guardian, protector,*" and "*restorer.*" All 7 "Joseph's" in scripture had these same 4 roles (Joseph of Egypt [he preserved the whole House of Israel], Joseph of Arimathea [he preserved the body of Jesus], Josephus [preserved Jewish history], Joseph Smith [preserved and translated the records of the Restoration], etc.)

Mary Grows Up Inside the Temple: Mary was visited frequently by angels while growing up in the Temple. Later she would receive the angel Gabriel who announced to her that as a virgin she would give birth miraculously to the Son of God. She and 6 or 7 attendants (depending on the source) to her in the Temple (they too were virgins of the same age) drew lots to determine what color yarn each was to spin for a new linen Temple Veil (blue, purple, scarlet, and white). Mary drew the lot for purple (the color of divinity, royalty, kingship, etc.). She was of the royal lineage of David (Judah), the kingship line (see Luke 3 for her genealogy, and Matthew 1 for Joseph's genealogy).

When Mary reached the age of 12 or 14 (depending on source consulted) along with her 6 or 7 virgin assistants (all the same age), the High Priest told them to leave the Temple for their homes and prepare for marriage. This was the time for their coming of age – the start of their period (blood was a symbol of sin, death, etc.) Mary refused, stating that she was under the vow of virginity to the LORD as part of her parents vow to the LORD. The High Priest prayed about this (with others). God's answer came from the Ark, all in the Temple hearing it. The High Priest was told to have eligible husbands for Mary appear at the temple with their rods (each had their names on them). All eligible men were to be from the lineage of King David. One rod and man would be chosen to be Mary's husband. It, of course, was Joseph (see Psalm 132:17 – he would be the step-father to Jesus (the Rod addressed in Isaiah 11 and D&C 113). The Spirit of the LORD addressed in Isaiah 11 would be upon this Son of God (and Mary). Like Jesus' Baptism, the sign of the dove came and lighted upon Joseph's rod (this was sign #3). Another apocryphal book states that the dove flew from Joseph's rod onto the top of Joseph's head.

Joseph then returned to Bethlehem to prepare a place for his new bride Mary. She returned to her parents home in Nazareth. There she was visited by the angel Gabriel, where she was told that her coming child would be the Son of God. She submitted willingly (this was angel visit #4 [Joachim 1, Anna 2, Mary 3, Joseph 4 & 5]). Joseph was away preparing their home for 3 months or so, and upon his return to get her, he noted her pregnancy. Concerned, knowing it wasn't his baby, he decided to stop the betrothal, "putting her away privately." The angel then came to Joseph, telling him not to do this, but to marry her, and that the child was of God, not man - through the Holy Spirit (the angel would come to him later - #5, after the child was born, telling him to take the child to Egypt to escape murder by Herod).

During Mary's pregnancy, she and Joseph were brought before a court, accusing them of breaking marriage laws, as Mary was obviously pregnant, the couple not yet married. They were both given "the bitter waters of wormwood" and told to drink. Wormwood is a bitter green herb which was mixed with living waters from the Gihon Spring and dust from off the floor of the temple. It made a drink that would reveal if a bride was faithful to her husband or not² (see Num. 5:11-31). The couple was found innocent after drinking the solution, and blessed instead.

Later, during travel, Mary started to have the pains of childbirth. Joseph found a midwife and a cave for the delivery. As Mary was bringing forth the child, a cloud of glory lit up the cave. This is the 4th sign of the story, the bright cloud being the official veiling "sign" of Jehovah-Jesus, the sign present at Mt. Sinai, also present whenever Moses spoke with the LORD face to face, and here again in this story, the sign at His birth into mortality in a cave. Jesus told His disciples that when He returns, it will be in clouds of Glory. They are "the sign of the coming of the Son of Man" (see Matthew 24:30).

End Notes

¹ The Rod of God Moses, as a shepherd, had a rod in his hand when tending sheep in the wilderness (Exodus 4:2). This rod, staff, or scepter later became known as “the rod of God” (Exodus 4:20). It was a symbol of the authority God gave to Moses (as a king and a priest over the people). He held “Melchizedek” priesthood (“Melch” is tied to a King, and “Zadok” to a Priest). According to the Book of Jasher and the Aramaic Targum, Moses’s rod was originally given to father Adam, then passed down through the patriarchs, including Jacob and Joseph of Egypt. It had a sapphire stone atop it (blue) where God’s Name was written. Moses got the rod from his father-in-law Jethro in Midian. Moses used this rod throughout the Exodus story. He did all the signs, wonders, and plagues with it and in God’s holy “Name.”

1. Moses’ rod miraculously became a serpent, and then became a rod again, a sign of power to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:9-10).
2. Moses used it to do the first sign or wonder in Egypt, turning the waters of the Nile into blood (Exodus 7:17).
3. God through Moses and the rod brought forth a plague of frogs (Exodus 8:5), of lice (Exodus 8:16-17), hail (Exodus 9:23), and then locusts (Exodus 10:13).
4. Moses raised it over the Red Sea when it was to be parted (Exodus 14:16).
5. Was raised again in prayer over Israel in victorious battle (Exodus 17:9).
6. He later struck the rock known as “Miriam’s Well” with this rod, and then it brought forth water (Numbers 20:11). For more on “Miriam’s Well” and women and priesthood, see my paper, *Governing within the Royal Court and Priesthood*.
7. Aaron’s rod Budded (later placed in the Ark), revealing that the House of Levi (Moses king, Aaron priest, and Miriam Prophetess) were to lead Israel, along via their Levite lineage and priesthood.
8. Joseph’s rod “blossomed” or “budded” by having a dove light atop it. This sign indicated that he was God’s choice to care for Mary and the baby Jesus. Both Joseph and Mary had the bloodline of Kings in Israel in them through David (see the genealogy of Joseph in Matthew 1 and of Mary in Luke 3).
9. According to D&C 6 and especially 8 (revelations given to Joseph Smith from God through “the Urim and Thummim), Oliver Cowdery was given two gifts, one of which was “the gift of the Rod.” The wording of Section 8 was later changed to “the gift of Aaron” (see D&C 6:2-15, 25-36 and all of D&C 8). With the first gift (D&C 6) Oliver could “enquire” and receive answers via revelation. With the rod or “gift of Aaron,” God said that “it has told you many things”(vs. 6) and that it would be used to do “marvelous works” (vs. 8).

² The Bitter Waters of Wormwood In the Hebrew Bible, the “ordeal of the bitter water” was a trial by ordeal, administered to a wife whose husband suspected her of adultery but who had no witnesses to make a formal case. It is described in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 5:11–31). We read in Numbers 5, “And the priest shall cause her to swear, and shall say unto the woman: 'If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness, being under thy husband, be thou free from this water of bitterness that causeth the curse; but if thou hast gone aside, being under thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee besides thy husband--then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman--the Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to fall away, and thy belly to swell; and this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, and make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to fall away'; and the woman shall say: 'Amen, Amen.' And the priest shall write these curses in a scroll, and he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness. And he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that causeth the curse; and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her and become bitter” (Num. 5:19-24).

In Revelation 8, John the Revelator addressed a falling comet in the last-days called “wormwood.” It will produce bitter waters on the earth for those who have been unfaithful “brides” to the LORD Jesus as Bridegroom (idolatry was tied to adultery or unfaithfulness in the Bible). “And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter” (Rev. 8:8-11).