



## Mary the mother of Jesus

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**A**LL CHILDREN are products of their genetic make up, together with the environment in which they are reared. The nature/nurture debate as to which is the most important still goes on. For the Lord God of Israel to provide a mother for His Son, it was necessary for Him to raise up a very special person. Not only must her lineage be impeccable, but, furthermore, her knowledge of His Word must be exemplary. Most of all, she must be in tune with the Almighty—she must have a beautiful mind. In other words, she must be a real princess.

We are presented in the Gospels with two genealogies, seemingly of the Lord Jesus. The record in Luke is complete, giving every name, the one in Matthew is selective. There have been numerous articles written and discussions amongst us as to why there are two and which is which. They all tend to come to the same conclusion, that the record in Matthew is that of Joseph, and in Luke that of Mary. Perhaps we need to think again.

In Luke 3 we have a complete lineage showing the “supposed” (v. 23) line of Jesus. There are three more Josephs in this line, and we know names were passed down. This line is therefore that of Joseph. I think we would all agree that inheritance is by blood descent, and Jesus was not Joseph’s son. Indeed, if the inheritance was invested in Joseph then it would not have been necessary to have recorded Mary’s line, or even for her to have been descended from King David. Furthermore, James, Joseph’s first natural son, would have been the rightful heir.

The New Testament begins with the statement: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”. The genealogy recorded in Matthew 1 is therefore the royal line of inheritance through the blood of the everlasting covenant given to Abraham, which Jesus was to ratify. It is a selective line, for some kings are missing, and therefore to ‘beget’ can indicate a son, a grandson, etc., or even a son-in-

law, as usually only the male is recorded. It is the line of Mary.

We are told that Mary had a cousin called Elisabeth, who was of the daughters of Aaron (Lk. 1:5,36), that is, she was of the priestly line. The word translated ‘cousin’ means a blood relative, a kinswoman, usually a sister. Elisabeth cannot be Mary’s sister because of the age difference, but she could be her aunt, her mother’s sister. This would account for the amazing closeness of these two women.

Childless women often become second mothers to their sisters’ children. The intermarrying of the royal house of Judah with the priestly line of Aaron begins with Aaron himself, who married Elisheba (Elisabeth) the sister of Naashon, prince of the tribe of Judah (Ex. 6:23; Num. 1:7,16). It happened also with Jehoshabeath, daughter of King Joram, who was married to Jehoiada the priest, and hid her nephew so that the royal line could continue (2 Chron. 22:11). We should not be surprised to see this pattern continuing, as it was the duty of the priests to keep the Word of God, and the early years of any child are conditioned by its mother.

The name Mary is the Greek form of the Hebrew Miriam, meaning ‘exalted’. It is a Levitical name. Mary had a sister Salome (a royal name), who was married to Zebedee. Their sons, James and John, were Jesus’s first cousins. John was the disciple Jesus loved; to him, like Daniel, also of the royal line, were prophetic visions given. In the light of this, we can perhaps better understand Salome’s request to Jesus, when it was believed he was going up to Jerusalem to become King, for her two boys to be second and third in the Kingdom.

For the right to the throne to be given to the Lord Jesus through his mother it was necessary for her to marry a man of “the family of the tribe of [her] father” (Num. 36:6). This provision was given in relation to the incident of the daughters of Zelophehad, who were determined not to lose

their inheritance, and this incident is recorded three times. Their lineage was from Joseph, and it is rather lovely that Mary married another Joseph, who had all the necessary credentials, coming through David's son Nathan, a name which means 'to give'. All this comes together in Ezekiel's great prophecy of the overturning of the throne of Judah, which is to be given to the Lord Jesus, the one "whose right it is" (21:26,27). Mary picks this up in her song, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Lk. 1:52), where she uses a play on the meaning of her name, 'exalted', the

Lord having exalted her in place of the wicked prince of Judah.

Lastly, we come back to the lineage as recorded by Matthew. It has within it the names of four righteous women, who, because through faith and obedience they believed in the covenants of promise, were prepared to sacrifice their lives to gain a godly seed. There can be only one reason for their inclusion: that Mary is the fifth, that by grace she was to do the same. She was to be the Lord's handmaid so that all generations could call her blessed (Lk. 1:48).



Encounter

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the Publishing Editor

## The Law given through Moses

### 21. The curtains and veils\*

Islip Collyer

IN A FORMER article<sup>1</sup> we quoted the main features of Israel's camp, in imagination passing through the spacious outer court, through the first veil of the tabernacle and to the door of the most holy. Now we must again take note of these matters, raising the question as to their meaning.

If there had been nothing more than those walls of linen surrounding the outer court, men of sceptical tendency might have supposed that they were merely a screen to prevent prying eyes from observing the priestly ceremonial. When a student takes note of all the details, it becomes clear that there was something much more than this involved. Within the court stood the tabernacle, where only the priests might go. At the door stood the laver, where priests might wash and change their clothes. But there was increasing sanctity with respect to the most holy, which could only be entered by the high priest; and even he could enter only on one day in the year—the great Day of Atonement.

When we call to mind some of the recorded claims and commands of God, there emerges at least one idea too obvious to be resisted, even by

the rankest of unbelievers. It is the concept of righteousness, of separation, of cleansing and of holiness. The thought is expressed repeatedly in the books of Moses. We may take one injunction as an example of such language: "ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). The connection between this call to righteousness and the clothing of the priests in pure white linen is so evident as to need no argument. It can hardly be supposed that anyone would attempt to resist the conclusion that the fine linen, whether in garments or curtains, was emblematic of righteousness and separation.

This interpretation is not in any way affected by the fact that the Israelites quite failed to sustain the exalted standard to which they were called. The same scriptures tell us of their privileges and their failures. The prophets all insisted that Israel was a chosen nation, in a position incomparably higher than that of any other people, but withal they used language of sustained

\* First published September 1948.

1. Dec. 2002, p. 440.