# A Holy (Spirit) Christmas

Luke 1: (p. 1587) December 9, 2018

*The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you,*
*and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."*
Luke 1:35

**The Advent surprise continues**

*In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth . . . .*
Luke 1:26

**Creation and Christmas**

*"How can this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*
*The angel said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*
*So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*
Luke 1:34-35

**Prevenient or particular**

*"Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son,*
*and you are to give him the name Jesus."*
Luke 1:30-31

Doug's key: Grace knows my name

## The theology of Messiah

*"The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,*
*and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."*
Luke 1:31-32

Doug's key: Jesus us Priest, King and Son for everyone!

## How will this be?

*"For no word from God will ever fail."*
*"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."*
*Then the angel left her.*
Luke 1:37-38 [NIV, 2011 version]

1) SEEK OUT God's promises

2) God has a special place in his heart FOR SLAVES

## For further study of Luke 1

Deffinbaugh's introduction to Luke at *https://bible.org/seriespage/1-silence-shattered-luke-11-38*

Notes on prevenient grace at Monergism. *https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/prevenient.html*

Spurgeon's comments on prevenient grace at*http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/spurgeon_prayerfreewill.html*

Matthew Emerson and R. Lucas Stamps' article "The Seed of Woman: Mary Among the Evangelicals" at https://mereorthodoxy.com/mary-evangelicals/. This is where I was introduced to the "Mary and Eve" painting.

# Excerpt from Spurgeon's Sermon: Free Will- A Slave

## The Prayer of the Arminian

...Any one who believes that man's will is entirely free,
and that he can be saved by it, does not believe the fall...

But I tell you what will be the best proof of that; it is the great fact that you never did meet a Christian in your life who ever said he came to Christ without Christ coming to him. You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say; but you never heard an Arminian prayer - for the saints in prayer appear as one in word, and deed and mind. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free-will: there is no room for it. **Fancy him praying**,

*"Lord, I thank thee I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists Lord, I was born with a glorious free-will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee of myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, **but I do**. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Ghost given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us to differ; I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point; I made use of what was given me, and others did not-that is the difference between me and them."*

That is a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that. Ah! when they are preaching and talking very slowly, there may be wrong doctrine; but when they come to pray, the true thing slips out; they cannot help it. If a man talks very slowly, he may speak in a fine manner; but when he comes to talk fast, the old brogue of his country, where he was born, slips out. I ask you again, did you ever meet a Christian man who said, ***"I came to Christ without the power of the Spirit?"*** If you ever did meet such a man, you need have no hesitation in saying, "My dear sir, I quite believe it-and I believe you went away again without the power of the Spirit, and that you know nothing about the matter, and are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Do I hear one Christian man saying, "I sought Jesus before he sought me; I went to the Spirit, and the Spirit did not come to me"? No, beloved; we are obliged, each one of us, to put our hands to our hearts and say-

"Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes to o'erflow;
'Twas grace that kept me to this day,
And will not let me go."

# The Seed of Woman: Mary Among the Protestants

*https://mereorthodoxy.com/mary-evangelicals/*
December 6, 2018

*By Matthew Y. Emerson and R. Lucas Stamps*

One of our favorite images that circulates on social media during Advent depicts Eve and Mary both gazing at Mary's swollen abdomen, a belly pregnant with the Life of the World, Jesus. Eve, clearly still crestfallen over her and Adam's choice, holding the Forbidden Fruit, and entangled at her feet with the Serpent to whom she listened, is being directed in her gaze and in her touch away from her own choice and toward the Fruit of Mary's womb, toward the presence of the Most High who has come in flesh to save His people, Israel. Mary's feet are depicted not as entangled by the Serpent but as crushing his head.

This last bit is the most controversial aspect of the image – to some it communicates the common belief amongst many Catholics that views Mary as the Co-redemptrix, while for others it merely symbolizes the beginning of Christ's victory at the moment of his incarnation. Let's set aside for the moment the artist's intention or subsequent viewer interpretation of this particular image and instead move back a step to a biblical theological framework for understanding Mary's role in the history of redemption and in subsequent theological reflection.

In Protestant thought Mary has been neglected, ignored, and sometimes even disparaged, but given the biblical data about her we think this is unfortunate. There are at least six typological categories and one dogmatic category we need in order to understand the biblical portrait of Mary:

- Eve typology
- Israelite Matriarch typology
- Remnant of Israel typology
- Lady Wisdom typology
- The Skull-Crushing People of God typology
- Ark typology
- "The whole course of Christ's obedience."

## *The New Eve*

God made Adam and Eve his image bearers, those who were to represent his authority in his place by obeying his law, cultivating and keeping their land, and filling the earth with other image bearers through being fruitful and multiplying. But instead of obedience, Adam and Eve chose sin. Instead of ruling God's place, Adam and Eve chose to allow the Serpent into the Garden and listened to his word instead of God's Word. Because of their failure to rule and obey, they received punishments from the LORD that affected their ability to complete the other two tasks.

God says to Eve, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). Being fruitful and multiplying is no longer a given. And neither is cultivating and keeping, since he says to Adam, "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground . . ." (Gen. 3:17–19).

Ultimately, death enters the world, separating humans from their Creator. But there is also a promise in the midst of so much cosmically significant pain – God will crush the head of the Serpent through the Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15), thus defeating the source of sin and reversing its effects. The rest of Genesis, and the rest of the entire Old Testament, is a search for this Seed, the one who will reverse the curse of Adam and restore what was lost in the Fall.

The biblical writers trace out this narrative both by following the lineage of Adam and by demonstrating the effects and extent of sin. Bread is scarce, kings are absent, brother murders brother, the land vomits out its defiled inhabitants, and, most significantly for our purposes, women are barren. This last motif occurs throughout the Old Testament, not only as a sign of sin's effects but also as one of the primary symbols that God is at work to reverse Adam's curse.

Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Tamar, Manoah's wife, Ruth, Hannah, Elizabeth – all of these women, so significant in Israel's history, are also either barren or, when we meet them, without the hope of children. Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth all bear sons who bear witness to the Messiah in one way or another. And, most significantly, Sarah, Rebekah, Tamar, and Ruth are women who carry the line of the Messianic Seed. God creates life where there is only death. In this regard we could include other types like Aaron's blossoming staff or the burning bush. But the most important sign is the reversal of barrenness, because it represents not only death from life but specifically the coming Seed who will crush Death and the Serpent forever.

Penultimately, Elizabeth bears John the Baptist in her old age. Her son bears witness to the Christ. And so Mary is thus the culmination of this type. She is a virgin, an unmarried (although betrothed) young woman who, in a legal and cultural sense, should not have hope of pregnancy at the time she conceives. God once again in the miraculous conception creates life where there is no life. He plants the Seed in her womb which has received no human seed. And through this incarnation of God the Son in Mary's womb, our Triune God begins his great work of redemption that crushes the Serpent and restores what was lost in Adam's Fall.

In this manner Mary stands as the antitype to Eve. Where there was death and disobedience, there is now fruitfulness and faithfulness. Even more explicitly, Gabriel's announcement to Mary (Luke 1:26–38) reverses the Serpent's questioning of Eve. No longer do sin and death reign through Adam and Eve's choice; rather, God has brought Life to the world through opening Mary's untouched womb.

## *The Last Matriarch*

Another typology that also stems from the Eve typology is that of Israel's matriarch, and Mary stands as her last. These two types are intricately connected; in fact, the first Israelite matriarch, Sarah, is the first woman in God's redemptive story to be cast as a new Eve and also serves as the foundation for the matriarchal type in the history of Israel. Moses equates Abram's sin in sleeping with Hagar to Adam's choice to eat the fruit given to him by Eve by repeating the phrase, "[he] listened to the voice of [his wife]" (Gen. 3:17; 16:2). And as mentioned earlier, Sarai's former barrenness that turns to fruitfulness is a sign that God is reversing the curse of Adam, and specifically the punishments related to childbearing (Gen. 3:16). It is therefore also related to the hope of the coming Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15).

The matriarchal typology, and especially the barrenness-turned-to-fruitfulness motif, is picked up by Moses again with Rebekah (Gen. 25:21) and Tamar (Gen. 38:11–30), and by the author of Ruth (e.g. Ruth 1:5; 4:13, 22). Additionally, Sarah, Rachel (an Israelite matriarch, even if not a mother in the Seed line) and Ruth all travel through the Land using similar routes, thus, alongside their husbands, proleptically possessing Canaan. And the author of Ruth explicitly ties together this barren-but-now-fruitful matriarch motif in Ruth 4:11–15, where Ruth is compared to Rachel and Leah and Naomi's barrenness in her old age is reversed through her daughter-in-law conceiving. There are other pieces to this matriarchal typology, but the point here is that Mary

stands again at the end of this line. The Eve typology contains within it the Israelite matriarch typology, and Mary stands as the antitype of both.

## *Faithful Israel*

One of the other aspects of the matriarchal typology is the women's faithfulness, and this, too, is part of a larger typology of the faithful remnant of Israel. Mary is rare in her faithfulness to YHWH. Much of the nation of Israel, like Adam and Eve, choose disobedience and unfaithfulness instead of fidelity to God's Word. Because of this, God's people are once again exiled from God's place. But in the narrative and prophetic material of the OT, there remains a remnant, a faithful few who continue to trust that the LORD will send his Messiah and who pursue holiness and righteousness.

Along with Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, and, even though they are slow in coming, Zechariah and Joseph, Mary is one of the Israelites in any of the Gospels that meets the Christ with faith. As Isaiah prophesied (e.g. Isa. 6:8–13), much of Israel meets Jesus with rejection rather than reverence. But Mary exemplifies the response of YHWH's faithful remnant, as seen especially in her Song in Luke's Gospel. Here (Luke 1:46–55) Mary expresses joy that God is finally fulfilling his promises to his people. This faith in YHWH's covenant faithfulness, along with her evident personal holiness (as seen especially in her virginity) sums up the description of "faithful Israel" in the OT and in the Apocalypse.

## *Lady Wisdom*

Another prominent image in the OT related to faithfulness and to the matriarchal motif is that of the virtuous woman, idealized in Lady Wisdom (Proverbs 1–9). The coming King, the seed of Abraham and David, the wise ruler who suffers for his people, is also the one who pursues Lady Wisdom and not Lady Folly. This woman is exemplified in the Proverbs 31 Woman (Prov. 31:10–31), concretized in Ruth (see the connection in Hebrew between Ruth 3:11 and Prov. 31:10, 31), and eschatologically foreshadowed in Songs.

Ultimately this woman is the Church, the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22–31; Rev. 19:11ff.) who is redeemed by the Bridegroom through his victorious and vicarious death and resurrection. Mary, though, singularly exemplifies this woman. We should not get caught up here in the problems with a mother also being a wife, since we are shifting from an historical reality (motherhood) to a theological one (new covenant inclusion). And in fact we have at least one explicit passage of Scripture that makes just such a shift, Revelation 12.

Here John describes this image:

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

The scene begins with a woman "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." This is royal imagery, and royal imagery related to Israel given the number twelve. Whoever this woman is, she is a princess of God's people. We find out soon enough her historical identity – she is the mother of the Christ child, the one whom Satan tried to devour but who finally defeated our ancient foe in his life, death, resurrection, and (as mentioned here) ascension. This can only be Mary.

But at the end of the passage, in v. 6, the woman flees into the wilderness and is nourished by God. It is clear from the rest of Revelation 12 that "the woman in the wilderness" is a symbol for Christ's Church, exiled in this world until our Lord's return. Notice that John portrays the historical person of Mary as symbolizing both the culmination of Israel's princesses and also as the beginning of Christ's Church ("the woman and her offspring," Rev. 12:17). In this image Mary symbolizes Israel's hopes regarding their Wise and Virtuous Princess (e.g. the Lady Wisdom imagery of Proverbs) and also the Bride of Christ, his Church who is presented to him as holy and spotless in Revelation 19.

## *Skull Crushers*

Each of these previous images is connected to another OT motif, that of God's people crushing the skulls of their enemies. Sometimes these are men (e.g. David in 1 Samuel 17), but other times they are women (e.g. Jael in Judges 4). In the latter cases, it is particularly evocative that it is a woman who does the crushing, as Israel is waiting on the Seed of woman to do that for all of God's creatures. Of course, all of these are types, who only find the antitype in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Mary is not the antitype here, but she is participating in the type – and she knows it (Luke 1:51–52)!

## *The Ark of the Lord*

One final type in which Mary participates and, in this case, culminates, is the ark typology of the OT. This goes back as far back as Noah, where God's Seed is carried in the Ark through the flood waters. It includes Moses, who describes his own reed basket in Exodus 3 using the same terminology as Noah's Ark in Genesis 6–9. In the OT, it climaxes in David bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6) and Solomon bringing it into the Temple (1 Kings 8). In the former instance, David dances before the ark. This reminds us of when Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, and John the Baptist leaps in the latter because he recognizes who is the womb of the former. The lexical parallel of the passage is most immediately Mal. 4:2 LXX, which includes the verb for "leap" and also the phrase "sun of righteousness," repeated in Mary's Song in Luke 1:78. Luke is, in other words, weaving together the narrative typology provided by 1–2 Samuel and the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi (the beginning and end of the Prophets section) at the beginning of his Gospel, and this textual testimony to Jesus is exemplified narratively in the last Israelite prophet's recognition of the Messiah, a recognition noted in storied form by John leaping before the Ark that carries his Lord.

All of these typologies lead us to proclaim about Mary, following Elizabeth, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:42).

## *The One Act of Redemption*

In addition to these typological points, one last dogmatic point needs to be made, namely that the different aspects of Christ's work are inseparable in that they all comprise together the one act of redemption. Of course, we can make temporal and logical distinctions between Christ's virgin birth, his life, ministry, miracles, and teaching, the different elements of his Passion, and his exaltation.

But ultimately and theologically we need to recognize that Christ's life and work are one redemptive act of the one Triune God. To say it slightly differently, Christ didn't begin his saving work on the cross or even when he began his public ministry. The incarnation in the womb of the Virgin already signals Satan's defeat. As John Calvin emphasized, it was the whole course of Christ's obedience that brought about redemption. The very act of assumption—as God the Son takes to himself a complete human nature, body and soul—already begins Christ's atoning mission: reconciling God and man, and the crown of his creation, in his own person.

It is because redemption begins at the incarnation, and specifically because the hypostatic union begins at Jesus' miraculous conception in Mary's womb, that the Council of Ephesus declared it appropriate to refer to her as "Theotokos," or "God-bearer." The person born to Mary is none other than the Son of God himself.

## *Mary Comforting Eve*

This brings us back to the painting referred to at the beginning of the post. Certainly there may be some Roman Catholic error in the mind of the original artist, but must that full Roman Catholic Mariology be communicated by this particular image? If we think through the elements of the picture, we see affirmed many of the biblical theological points above.

Mary is comforting Eve, not by pointing to herself but my pointing with her eyes and hands to the baby Jesus gestating in her womb. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the painting, communicating that the Seed of woman is finally here. This is the Seed that will crush the Serpent's head; indeed, he already is through the very act of incarnation, a reality symbolized in the painting by the Serpent's head being crushed under Mary's feet. Mary's garments are white, symbolizing her purity and thus her summation of the "Lady Wisdom" and "Faithful Remnant" motifs of the OT. Her clothing is royal and trimmed in blue (another color associated with faithfulness and also with royalty), bringing to mind the Revelation 12 imagery in the NT and Daughter Zion imagery in the OT. And she and Eve are both surrounded by and holding fruit; Eve the fruit of her disobedience and Mary the fruit of her womb.

Seeing Mary as having a role in the crushing of Satan's head does not take away from the unique identity of Christ as the only Mediator between God and man. The *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 was a promise that the seed of the *woman* would finally defeat our serpentine enemy. Jesus doesn't drop down from heaven fully formed. He shares in Mary's humanity (and thus, our humanity) in order to undo the damage. So we should have no problem saying that Mary *is* participating in some way with Christ's Satan-crushing work. "Be it unto me according to thy word." Mary's willing participation no more entails a co-redemptrix doctrine than does Paul's "filling up what is lacking" in Christ's suffering, or the apostles' doing "greater works than these," or the Spirit-empowered church extending "all that Jesus began to do and to teach."

## *Mary and Christ's Church*

Under God's sovereignty, Mary's obedient response *was* a means by which God-in-Christ accomplished redemption. We could say the same about Abraham's faith, David's obedience, and so on. Only an overreaction to Rome's Mariology would lead us to deny this. But in a sense, the New Testament presents Mary as the first and paradigmatic Christian: one supremely blessed because she believed the heavenly announcement of Christ's coming and prepared him room by her obedient response. She experienced in a unique way the cruciform life to which every follower of Christ is called (Luke 2:35). Mary's witness to her divine Son continues to speak to the church in every era: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).

Could God have brought about the incarnation apart from Mary's "be it unto me according to thy word"? In the abstract, yes. As Martin Luther argued, "Had she not believed, she could not have conceived." But God chose to incorporate her grace-enabled "yes" into his saving plan. And by his grace, God does the same for our obedience, as we share in Christ's sufferings and take up his mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21). As we cooperate with God's saving plan, we too share in Christ's Satan-crushing work (Rom. 16:20).

These debates about Mary point up a deeper problem for much of evangelicalism: we too often have a diminished sense of the communion of the saints and the benefits of commemorating the faith of our spiritual mothers and fathers. Protestants would do well to utilize books on the lives of the saints and tools like the

Mission St. Clare app (which features James Keifer's succinct but stirring biographies of the saints) in order to incorporate this kind of commemoration both personally and with our families and churches.

This doesn't mean that Protestants should take up asking for intercession from departed saints or anything like that. But we should remember that the Church Militant & the Church Triumphant are one body in Christ (Heb. 12:23). Commemorating the lives of the saints, perhaps supremely the mother of our Lord, helps to concretize the faith and to inspire that same faith in us.

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