

**MOTHER'S DAY 2008**  
Hebrews 11:11

When the first English colonists settled in America, they didn't really have time for many celebrations. The English tradition of mothering Sunday was discontinued until 1872 when Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), the author of the lyrics to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, organized a day for mothers dedicated to peace. In 1907, Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948), a Philadelphia schoolteacher, began a campaign to establish a national mother's day in honor of her mother, Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis. She wrote hundreds of letters to legislators and prominent businessmen on both state and national levels asking them to create a special day to honor mothers. On May 10, 1908, the third anniversary of the death of Anna's mother, the minister of the Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton, West Virginia (the church her mother had attended) gave a special mother's day sermon honoring Mrs. Jarvis' memory. Anna handed out her mother's favorite flower, the white carnation. In 1914, Anna's hard work finally paid off when President Woodrow Wilson made the official announcement proclaiming the second Sunday in May as a national holiday in honor of mothers.

Mary, the mother of Jesus

Introduction: There was no greater event in the history of the world than the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God, as John 1:1-4 tells us: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." What also is so marvelous is the way the Lord became a man and entered this world. God, the Son, came to this earth "born of a woman." In Luke 1:35, Gabriel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. God's power would overshadow her and she would conceive a child. Christ's birth was a miracle in every respect. A young Jewish maid who was a virgin would conceive by the power of God and would bear a child. There are many aspects of the miracle birth of Christ we could look at, but I want to look at who Mary was, the maiden chosen by God to be the earthly mother of Jesus Christ.

- A. Who was Mary? The name Mary was a very popular name in New Testament times. There are seven different Mary's mentioned in the New Testament. The Bible presents her as a godly, chaste young Jewish girl who was betrothed to a devout Jewish carpenter named Joseph. I think that in most ways she was an ordinary young woman. Biblically, we can say she was given no more or less potential than any other young girl or woman living then or today.
1. What made the difference in her life was her attitude towards God. What made her available to be used of God was her commitment to Him. The proof of that is that when she heard God's plan she immediately accepted it. That showed her heart. Mary suffered great embarrassment being with child and not having a husband.
    - a) It was a crisis. She was betrothed to Joseph. Outwardly, it would be impossible for her to explain her situation to Joseph, her parents, and their family and friends. God intervened in a dream and told him that the child Mary was carrying was of the Holy Spirit.
      - 1) Joseph too was a godly young man and apparently loved her very much even before God spoke to him in a dream through an angel.
      - 2) Matthew 1:19 says he did not want to publicly expose her and sought to privately put her away. Matthew 1:24 says Joseph obeyed God and married her. Under the Old Testament law it was a capital offense to have a child out of wedlock. Yet, she accepted God's will.
    - b) Apart from giving birth to Jesus, Mary is not a prominent figure in the New Testament.
      - 1) That she was a faithful Jew can be seen in that she and Joseph carried out the rituals of presenting herself at the temple at the proper times, such as after child birth and at the Passover.

- 2) After Jesus was born, the Bible tells us that Joseph and Mary had other children, at least four boys and two girls. This too shows her to be a normal woman and mother.
- 3) It appears that Joseph died and left her a widow with a large family. We do not know when he died, but I believe it would have to be after Jesus was old enough to work and provide for her. It may be that Jesus left home when He was thirty and began His public ministry, because at that time His brothers were old enough to work and provide for the family.
- c) Some of the accounts in the New Testament present Mary as being a devout young mother with very human traits who knew suffering, heartache, and victory.
  - 1) At the marriage feast at Cana, where Jesus performed His first miracle, she appeared anxious and bossy.
  - 2) Early in Jesus' ministry, she and others in the family tried to get Jesus to return home. It seems as if she did not understand truly who He was.
- d) Mary was a loving mother.
  - 1) Although it seems she did not fully understand her Son, she went to Jerusalem when they crucified Him and she stood beneath the cross. Jesus spoke to her and John and entrusted each of them to the other.
  - 2) After the resurrection, we find the last mention of her in the Bible as she continued in prayer (Acts 1:14) with the other faithful who waited for the coming of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and God beginning the institution of the local church. Then, she is mentioned no more.

#### B. Mary's testimony, faithfulness and message

1. Mary had shortcomings, as do all men and women, yet she was a godly woman who loved the Lord and was faithful to God. The Lord did not hide her weaknesses, just as with all the men and women God used in the Bible; yet, these men and women were greatly used of the Lord. The reason was that it was God working in them that caused them to do great things for God. It was not their ability, but their willingness for God to use them.
2. Luke 1:38 expresses her heart. *Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*
  - a) The course that the Lord had for her life was a difficult one. She would bare a child without being intimate with a man.
  - b) Clearly she understood what she was being asked to do. In verse 34, she replied, "... how can this be, since I do not know a man?"
  - c) Yet, fully understanding the difficulties she faced, she replied and said, "Let it be to me according to your word."
3. Mary immediately left Nazareth and traveled south to her cousin Elizabeth's home near Jerusalem. Elizabeth also was going to have a miracle birth. She was barren, yet God performed a miracle. She, like Abraham's wife Sarah, was also given a child. When Mary entered and saw Elizabeth, her child, John the Baptist, leaped inside her. She was filled with the Holy Spirit and said: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." Luke 1:42-45.
4. Mary's reply is found in Luke 1:46-55. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever."