

San Juan church of Christ

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What God's Word Says About...

The virgin Mary

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was described by God as “favored one” (Luke 1:28). The phrase “favored one” comes from a single Greek word which means “much grace.” Mary received God’s grace, which defined, is “unmerited favor,” which we all received in spite the fact that we do not deserve it. Mary understood this fact as she declared in Luke 1:47, “And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Mary recognized she needed a Savior. The Bible never says that Mary was anyone but an ordinary human who God chose to use in an extraordinary way. Mary was a righteous woman and favored (graced) by God.

Mary did not have an “immaculate conception.” There is not any scripture to suggest that Mary’s birth was anything other than a normal human birth. Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus (Luke 1:34-38), but the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary is unbiblical. In Matthew 1:24-25, scripture declares, “Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin, UNTIL she gave birth to a Son, and he called His name Jesus.” The word “until” indicates that Joseph and Mary did have sexual union after Jesus was born.

Joseph and Mary had several children together after Jesus was born. Jesus had four half-brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (Matt. 13:55). Jesus also had half-sisters, although they are not named or numbered (Matt. 13:56). God blessed and graced Mary by giving her several children, which in that culture was an indication of God’s blessing on a woman.

Nowhere in scripture does Jesus, or anyone else, direct any praise, glory, or adoration towards Mary. One time when Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd proclaimed, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed” (Luke 11:27). This would have been an opportune time for Jesus to declare that Mary was indeed worthy of praise and adoration. What was Jesus’ response? “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it” (Luke 11:28). Obedience to God’s word was more important than being the woman who gave birth to the Savior.

Mary was present at the cross (John 19:25) and was with the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14), but was never mentioned again after Acts chapter one. The apostles did not give Mary a prominent role and her death is not recorded in the Bible. The Bible nowhere indicates that Mary can hear our prayers. There is “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).