

"THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY AND SHOULD WE PRAY TO MARY?"

Good marning friends, we are happy to come your way again with Bible answers to important questions. Let me say to you our good friends that we are thankful for the way you have received each of these lessons. To the many of you that requested copies of these lessons if you have not received your copy you may expect it this week. Isn't it wonderful to live in a counrty where friends and neighbors of differing faiths may consider their differences with mutual respect?

The sermon this morning, like the one last week, is presented with the conviction that there are honest, sincere people in all churches. But just as Paul was completely sincere while he was completely in error and persecuting Christians, so today, good, honest people may be in religious error. We trust that each listner and reader of this sermon will examine the scripture to see wheather these things are so.....The BIBLE IS RIGHT!!!!

The sermon this morning contains the Bible answer to two important questions: "WHAT ABOUT THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY" AND "SHOULD WE PRAY TO MARY?"

One prominent church ### announced some time ago a new dogma, that Mary the mother of Jesus, arose from the dead on the third day and ascended to heaven. In considering this dogma, let us notice a few facts from the Bible.

When Jesus was on the cross, He spoke to His mother and to John saying, "Woman, behold thy Son," and to John, "Behold thy mother." "And from that hour the disciple (John) took

her unto his own home"(John 19:26-27).

As an apostle, John had the promise from His Master that the Holy Spirit "shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you"(John 14:26). In addition to remembering all things, he was inspired as an old man to write about things "which must shortly come to pass"(Revelation 1:1). John wrote five books, the gospel of John, and I,II, III John and the Revelation letter. We look, therefore with great interest to the inspired writings of John, the one who was entrusted with the care of Mary for the rest of her life.

What did John write about Mary?-----about her "perpetual virginity?"-----about her being called "the Mother of God?" ---about her miracles?"-----about anyone bowing down before her?' ---about anyone praying to or through her?" What did he write about the resurrection of Mary? What did he write about any of these things? John, who was inspired to "remember all things" friends, wrote nothing about these things that some today hold to be of such importance. Why were all the other inspired writers of the New Testament equally silent? The simple answer is, Christ and the Holy Spirit never taught any such doctrines. These doctrines were built up over the centuries by men until Mary has become in the minds of many, a divinity. Though both the Latin Vulgate and non-Catholic Bibles are silent upon Mary's birth and death, and the earliest Christian writers after the apostles as Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, etc. have no hint that reverence was paid to her, the device of attaching her name to the older deities "harmonized with Christianity." Under the Catholic apostacy, Mariolatry became a religious fiction approaching deification by the end

of the fourth century. Jerome (d 420), to ~~exalt~~ exalt her "perpetual virginity," taught that Christ's brothers and sisters (Matt. 12:50) were Joseph's children by a former wife, and twisted Genesis 3:15 in his translation of the Vulgate to read, ^{"she"} "Shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise ~~her~~ her heel" (as also appears in Rheims version).

In 431 the Council of Ephesus, called to settle a dispute over the proper title for Mary, proclaimed her "the Mother of God" in preference to the "Mother of Christ", and, for championing the latter title, condemned and excommunicated Archbishop Nestorius of Constantinople, whose Nestorian followers denounce Mariolatry to the present day. In celebration of this "orthodox" victory, the local cultists, marching in procession, beat drums and cymbals, swung smoking censers and flaming flares, and carried on the centuries old DIANA ceremonies. Coronations of Madonnas since have changed but little. As there was a DIANA of EPHESUS, a DIANA of ATHENS, etc., there are today OUR LADY of PARIS, OUR LADY of CHARTRES, OUR LADY of RHEIMS, OUR LADY of the SNOWS, OUR LADY of MONTE VERGINE, OUR LADY OF WASHINGTON, etc. August 13 was Diana's festival day, August 15 is the modern Feast of the Assumption.

Listen friends, the Bible teaches us that Jesus loved His mother but He did not regard her as superhuman. Jesus foretold His own resurrection on the third day, but He did not foretell Mary's resurrection. What is the scriptural attitude to take toward Mary? This is answered in Matthew 12:47-50 where Jesus said, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Let us honor Mary. Let us follow the teaching of Jesus and honor also as we would His mother, EVERY FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN WOMAN. Those who exalt Mary above and beyond the teachings of Jesus are not doing the Father's will. They are not honoring Mary in the way that would please her Son.

Paul warned (Galatians 1:6-9) against preaching anything different from the gospel he had preached to them-----and friends the apostle Paul did not preach the Assumption of Mary...Jesus said the teaching of men's doctrines made worship vain. (Matthew 15:9). Let us hold fast the teaching of Christ and refuse to accept new dogmas.

Now to our next question, "Should We Pray To Mary?" One came to Jesus and said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak to thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and Who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, is my brother, and sister, and mother" (^{Matthew} ~~Mark~~ 12:47-50 and Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21. This same great truth is taught also in Luke 11:27-28).

In this teaching Jesus did not fail to honor His mother, but He elevated to equal honor all those faithful Christians who do God's will. He stressed that flesh-and-blood relationship, even to His mother, was not more important to Him than the close relationship of obedient followers.

Since Jesus did not place His mother on a pedestal above other godly women, let us consider whether we should pray to Mary or through her name. We ~~are~~ are told that there is only one mediator between God and man, and that is Christ

(I Timothy 2:5).

Should we bow down to Mary? There is no account in the Bible of anyone ever bowing down before her. It was not considered pleasing to God for one to kneel in adoration before anyone but God. Peter would not allow others to bow down to him (Acts 10:25-26). When John bowed down before the angel, he was rebuked, "See thou do it not....worship God" (Rev. 19:10). Christians do not bow down to Peter, or angels, or Mary. They worship God. Christians pray to God through Christ not through Mary. If we will have the same attitude toward Mary that Jesus did, we will honor Mary and in the same way honor all godly women.

Friends, in closing please consider these facts with me. When the world came out of the "dark Ages" and the protest against the errors of the apostate Roman church grew to formidable proportions, great and good men tried to remodel existing form of religion in what historians have called the Protestant Reformation. The final result of all these efforts was the division and subdivision of religious bodies into ever smaller and more narrow sects and parties. We know the result today as the Denominational World.

Most everyone has accepted this denominationalized "Christendom" as desirable. Often some thoughtless soul will thank God that we have so many churches so that one can take his choice of which one to join. The idea is generally accepted that one who becomes a Christian must then separate himself from the fellowship of all the saints except those holding some narrow sectarian view. He must "join a denomination."

Walls and partitions by the hundreds divide Christendom today--divide Christendom into narrow denominational camps. God is not the author of these partitions. The only one that ever existed by divine authority was broken down when Jesus destroyed the one erected between Jew and Gentile.

My brethren have always plead for the abolition of these narrow lines which separate each little group into a private sphere all its own. Why should one be expected to join a denomination when the party he joins then segregates itself, from the fellowship of other groups, the numbers of which it then claims to be fully as acceptable to God as its own?

This is not a narrow view. It is the broadest religious view under heaven. We plead for the doing away with all creeds, catechisms, confessions of faith, disciplines, manuals and constitutions, and for a uniting of us all on the broad, undenominational, nonsectarian basis of the Word of God. Churches of Christ can never be successfully classified as a denomination because of the very broadness of their plea. They have no private doctrines to preach, nor pride in a purely human organization to uphold. They seek to be Christians only, and only Christians.

It is not contended by anyone that any religious sect or party has all the truth. Any part of the whole could not contain the whole. Any segment of Christendom could not contain Christendom. It is taught from almost every pulpit in the land that one may do everything contained in the Word of God, and be everything the Word of God teaches one to be without uniting with any denominational group. It is universally accepted by denominational teachers that the denomination has

nothing in the world to do with man's salvation. To this view I thoroughly agree. If one becomes a Christian, and on the basis of his pardon is everlastingly saved, then certainly the denomination has nothing to do with his salvation.

The church my Lord purchased with His blood is not on a level with a denomination. There is a single of divine origin. It had its beginning on the day of Pentecost. The record of its beginning can be found in the second chapter of Acts. Other religious bodies have been formed through the years, but no divinity has ever been claimed, or proven, for their authorship. Certainly a church that cost a man nothing to buy, could not be compared with one that cost my Lord His blood to buy.

In New Testament times there were thousands of Christians who belonged to no denomination. As Christians, they were all members only of that broad universal church for which Jesus died. This view of Christianity is not a narrow view. Any denominational view, regardless of how fraternalizing, is bound to be more restricting and narrow than this. To be a simple NEW TESTAMENT Christian, without denominational restrictions, is a glorious privilege. One enjoys the liberty that Christ allows and is free from the dictates of men and the ecclesiastic authority of religious overlords.

Since it is possible for the church of divine origin to exist today in any community, because the seed which produced it in the beginning is still intact, and can produce it again today, why should people be satisfied with membership in any less?