

Christ in Prophecy

Christmas 7: Meredith on Mary

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: During this Christmas season, how should we deal with Mary, the mother of Jesus? Should she be worshipped or respected? Adored or ignored? Magnified or belittled? For a fresh, fascinating, and biblical viewpoint, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. I am delighted to have in the studio with me today a very special guest and a friend. He is Glenn Meredith, and he is my personal pastor. Glenn is the pastor of the Brookhaven Church in McKinney, Texas, and he has served as the pastor of that church for more than 35 years. I am a person who loves great preaching, and Glenn is one of the most anointed and gifted preachers I have ever encountered. Welcome to Christ in Prophecy, Glenn.

Glenn Meredith: Thank you, Brother Dave.

Dr. Reagan: Always a joy to have you on the program. Those of you who are regular viewers probably recognize Glenn because he has been the guest on this program several times before. And most recently we featured a part of the fascinating presentation he made at our annual Bible conference where he spoke on heavenly rewards. The reason I have him as my special guest today is because of a great sermon he preached a year ago at Christmas time at our church. It was sermon about Mary the mother of Jesus. And the reason that I am so excited about that sermon is because Mary has been so terribly ignored by those of us in the Protestant world of Christianity. This has always bugged me. So when he devoted a whole sermon to her, I just wanted to jump up out of my seat and yell, "At long last! Hallelujah?" Glenn, why do you think Mary has been so ignored in the preaching and teaching in the Protestant world?

Glenn Meredith: Well it seems to me that those of us who've grown up as evangelical Christians, and Protestants that we have seen what we would perceive as the probably the abuse of the over emphasis on Mary by others in Christian denominations. And so I think that too often times we who are Protestants have under emphasized the importance of her. And it is to our detriment because Mary is an incredible woman of God and is a person that should be honored as the Bible says, and give honor to whom honor is due. And I think we have failed in that.

Dr. Reagan: Well in fact she is one of the few people in the Word of God who is referred to as a righteous person. You know it refers to people like Noah, and Job, and people like that as being righteous. Cornelius is referred to as a righteous person even though he was lost and needed a Savior. But she is one of the very few referred to in that way.

Glenn Meredith: It is so interesting. I think it is because of our over reaction to what we think is the too high emphasis on her by others we miss out on what an incredible example she is; a person who is yielded to the Lord, a person who walks by faith, and what God can do with a person.

Dr. Reagan: And a person who really knew the Word of God.

Glenn Meredith: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: And that is interesting too because most people are not aware of the fact that at the time that she lived, the time of marriage was age 13 as soon as a girl went through puberty she was considered eligible for marriage. And in fact you are from Louisiana and I happen to know that among the Cajun French in Louisiana 50-60 years ago that was also an age of marriage. I know several who married at the age of 13.

Glenn Meredith: Wow.

Dr. Reagan: And so this is worldwide in fact. Most countries of the world you find people being married that early. We don't think of that today in the United States. But she was not some mature woman, she was a young girl at the time all of this took place, and yet such incredible faith that she demonstrated.

Glenn Meredith: Yeah, her amazing response to God, just an incredible example for us all.

Dr. Reagan: Yes. You mentioned that fact that one of the reasons that the Protestant world has ignored her is because of abuses, theological, doctrinal abuses concerning Mary that have characterized both the Catholic faith, and also some of the Protestant denominations. And so what I want to do is take a brief break here and come back and discuss some of those erroneous ideas about Mary.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to our discussion of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and what our attitude should be toward her. Again, my special guest is my personal pastor, Glenn Meredith, who is the pastor of the Brookhaven Church in McKinney, Texas. Glenn, what are some of the misconceptions, perhaps unbiblical conceptions of Mary that have kind of pushed Protestants away from her?

Glenn Meredith: Something I did not know was that there is a whole branch of theology within the Catholic denomination for example religion that is called Mariology.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Glenn Meredith: And Mariology is the study of Mary, and there are a number of doctrines that they believe. And so one of those is called the Immaculate Conception. And I'll be honest with you for most of my life in ministry I would hear that term Immaculate Conception and I thought, well, I agree with that, I don't have a problem with that, because I thought that term was referring to Jesus' miraculous conception.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Glenn Meredith: And I thought, well, we agree on that, Jesus was born of a virgin, He was miraculously conceived. So I thought, we agree. Well when I studied it a little bit I began to realize, no, it wasn't talking about Jesus' conception. The Immaculate Conception doctrine is talking about Mary, and when Mary was conceived in her mother's womb, and that she was conceived according to Catholic theology without original sin.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Glenn Meredith: Without a sin nature. So therefore they believe that she lived literally without the stain of sin is the terminology is used throughout her entire life. So they believe that she was born without a sin nature, conceived without a sin nature that she was born and lived a sinless life.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, and this of course you have to understand, our viewers need to understand in the Catholic faith doctrines are not necessarily based upon the Bible. There is no biblical evidence for this, absolutely none whatsoever. But even Catholics will tell you that their doctrines come from the Bible, they come from the grassroots. Like purgatory is a concept that came from the grassroots. They actually admit that over several hundred years people at the grassroots said well, there is just no way we can go to Heaven unless we suffer for our sins, so the church finally adopted that. Doctrine can come from church councils, it can come from declarations by the Pope, and they don't necessarily have to be biblically based.

Glenn Meredith: That's true.

Dr. Reagan: And this is one that developed over hundreds of years, and finally it was not until 1854 that Pope Pius IX made this an official doctrine of the Catholic Church. Now, this was the first step in trying to make Mary really a god; someone equal to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The first step she was born without any sin nature whatsoever, and remained sinless all of her life. Now, that sinless life is very interesting because over in Luke chapter 1 when Mary has conceived the Christ child she goes to visit I guess it was her cousin Elizabeth, and as she is there she sings a song, and the song is very interesting. In Luke chapter 1 in verse 46 Mary sings, "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

Glenn Meredith: She needed a Savior.

Dr. Reagan: She needed a Savior just like you needed one, and I need one and she was rejoicing that she was giving birth to the Savior.

Glenn Meredith: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: You know for many years, over 20 years I was on the radio all over the United States, but our basic station, the one we got the most response from was in Crowley, Louisiana of all places.

Glenn Meredith: Is that right.

Dr. Reagan: I mean there is a tremendous number of evangelical Christians who listen to that station. And every Christmas, Glenn, I would do a special program on Mary. And I would talk about how we've ignored her, and how important she should be. And how she should be a model to teenage girls. And then I'd get to the end and I'd say, "But you have to understand one thing, Mary was a sinner just like all of us, and she needed a Savior just like all of us." And I'll

tell you what I got mail knee deep threatening my life, sending me to the deepest, darkest part of Hell and so forth, because there were a lot of good Catholic people who were listening to this program also. And the very idea that Mary might have been just a normal human being was beyond anybody's conception because she has been built up to be almost a god. Well another of the ones that I know you are concerned about is the doctrine that she was a perpetual virgin. How about that?

Glenn Meredith: Well that one also surprised me, and the belief that Mary was a virgin, well we certainly believe the Bible teaches she was a virgin.

Dr. Reagan: Absolutely.

Glenn Meredith: When she conceived the Lord Jesus Christ, we believe that with all of our hearts. The Bible teaches that.

Dr. Reagan: But a perpetual virgin?

Glenn Meredith: But perpetual virgin, she was a virgin according to Catholic doctrine before the birth, the conception, during the birth and then after for the rest of her life. And so but you look at the scriptures and the scripture talks about in the last verse in Matthew chapter 1 it says, "Joseph took her to be his wife, but he did not know her," or he did not have sexual relations with her until after the birth, so it specifically says that. And of course brothers, and sisters of Jesus are mentioned in the scriptures.

Dr. Reagan: There are five places in the New Testament that say specifically that Jesus had brothers and sisters. And even names his brother James, Simon, Jude. In fact his brother James became a supreme believer after His resurrection and became the head of the Church in Jerusalem.

Glenn Meredith: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: And people argue, well these were nephews and nieces. Well, look in the Greek language there is a word for nephew, and there is a word for nieces, these are called brothers and sisters.

Glenn Meredith: Right.

Dr. Reagan: And so, to argue that she was a perpetual virgin is simply a denial of what the scriptures really teach about this.

Glenn Meredith: Once again I think just an effort to deify her.

Dr. Reagan: Absolutely. This is all an effort to deify Mary. And that leads us to the next step and that is the Assumption to Heaven, what is that all about?

Glenn Meredith: The Assumption of Heaven there is this belief, this doctrine that Mary was bodily, body and spirit was taken into Heaven. And some believe that she may of died, but then her body was resurrected and glorified, and she was taken to Heaven, others think maybe without dying.

Dr. Reagan: She didn't even die.

Glenn Meredith: Yeah, she didn't even die.

Dr. Reagan: And I think it's interesting that again this developed over hundreds of years but it was not until 1950 that Pope Pius the XII declared that this was to be an official doctrine of the Catholic Church, but he evaded the question of whether she died or not. He simply said that she was assumed into heaven, and I quote--and whether or not she died he just didn't say.

Glenn Meredith: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: He just said she was assumed into Heaven. And again that is very interesting, I have actually visited the tomb of Mary. The tomb of Mary is in a place that people would not suspect in Ephesus, in Turkey.

Glenn Meredith: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: Because when Jesus was hanging on the cross He committed the care of his mother to the Apostle John. And John according to Church tradition cared for her the rest of her life. John became the Bishop of Ephesus in Turkey, and that is where she died and her tomb is there.

Glenn Meredith: Right. It is amazing. So, once again you look and here there are these comparisons, she is born without sin, that she lived a sinless life, and that now she is just like Jesus--

Dr. Reagan: We are putting her at the same level as Jesus.

Glenn Meredith: Exactly correct.

Dr. Reagan: And another one is that she is the Queen of Heaven. What in the world is that all about?

Glenn Meredith: Yeah, Queen of Heaven. That she was assumed caught up into Heaven, and that when she arrived there that she was given a position, she was given a special place in Heaven called the Queen of Heaven. And that as the Queen of Heaven that she has special mercy and compassion that she pours out on all God's children and that she in fact intercedes for all of God's children.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, in fact at the church in Nazareth--

Glenn Meredith: The Church of the Annunciation.

Dr. Reagan: The Church of the Annunciation. They have this huge mural at the front of the church and the center point of the mural is Mary, and then Jesus is on one side, and God the Father is in a symbol on the other side.

Glenn Meredith: She is featured, right.

Dr. Reagan: The focus is Mary. Yeah. The Queen of Heaven. This again was something, now this developed early on the Council of Ephesus in the Fifth Century declared her to be the Queen of Heaven. But it was not a declared official doctrine of the Catholic Church until 1954, it is that recent when Pope Pius XII declared this to be an official doctrine of the church. Again trying to lift Mary up to the point of godhood. Now another one is co-redemptor, co-redemptrix what is that all about?

Glenn Meredith: Well, there is this belief that Mary is, that she is co-redeemer with Jesus. Maybe I think to be fair many of them don't believe she is necessarily equal to Him in redemption but that she plays a part in our salvation. So, there is that belief.

Dr. Reagan: Now that is not an official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, but many Catholics believe that and there has been tremendous pressure on the Pope to declare that as an official dogma. And I think that he has backed off of that because he knows that there would be no hope whatsoever of trying to bring Evangelicals back to the mother church as they are trying to do now if he were to declare that. And then finally that she is an intercessor for us, and I mean that is almost blasphemous because the Bible teaches clearly that Jesus is the one and only intercessor.

Glenn Meredith: Right. You know she is called the mother of God, which if they are referring obviously to she is the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ who Himself is of course the eternal God, then we wouldn't have a problem with that. But what Catholics mean by that in their doctrine is that she's not only the mother of Jesus, they don't think she created Jesus in a sense that way, but that she is the mother of Jesus, but because we are the body of Christ, therefore she is our mother too. And as our mother, the mother of God, the mother of God's children that therefore she is the one who protects us. And she provides for us. And so, therefore, so many people misunderstand this pray to her, and look to her to meet their needs and to protect them and their loved ones, and so forth.

Dr. Reagan: While the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the one and only intercessor.

Glenn Meredith: That is exactly correct.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to my discussion with Pastor Glenn Meredith about Mary the mother of Jesus. Glenn we've taken a look now at some of the improper, unbiblical images of Mary. And I want to shift gears now and turn to the positive because I know that is what you're just biting at the bit to talk about. And in doing so I want to get the discussion going by taking a look at a cover of Time Magazine that came out in March of 2005. And on this cover it says, "Hail Mary." And it says, "Catholics have long revered her, but now Protestants are finding their own reasons to celebrate the mother of Jesus." Well, let's take it from there and have you point out some reasons why we as Protestants should be putting some emphasis on Mary.

Glenn Meredith: Exactly right. Mary, is a wonderful example of a person who makes their life available to Jesus Christ, and who is willing to trust His plan for their life. You may have some of your listeners today who are struggling with whether or not they could trust God with their life. They may have a plan for their life, they've got their own dreams, their own direction they want to go. And yet they know God wants them to go in another direction, and yet they are struggling with that. Well, Mary is a phenomenal example of a person who entrusts themselves to the Lord, and then you see what God did through her life.

Dr. Reagan: I'd like to emphasize what tremendous trust that was because here's a girl who's probably 13, 14 years old. She is legally married under the Jewish system whereby she has been betrothed and that is considered to be legally although the marriage is consummated for some nine months, a waiting period before she actually has sexual relations with the husband.

But, here's a young girl and she is approached by an angel who tells her that she is going to become the mother of the Messiah, and she is going to become pregnant. And she knows immediately what that means in her society. Total disgrace. She could be stoned to death.

Glenn Meredith: Right.

Dr. Reagan: And yet, she says, "Here am I, do to me as you please."

Glenn Meredith: You know she had to be during this betrothal period she's preparing for that day she goes to live with Joseph, and she's making her plans as any young bride would do. And she is excited no doubt about her future. And so she's got this--she thinks her life is all mapped out. I'm going to live here in Nazareth, raise a family, all these things that she is no doubt thinking. And then all of a sudden just the angel shows up and everything changes for her. And the angel says you're going to have the Messiah, and as you said she is suddenly is faced with this decision that if I do this I'm going to lose perhaps Joseph. I'm going to lose my reputation, my security for the future. I mean my family may disown me. I could be killed. I mean all of these things are coming. She is young as you said, but her response is such an amazing response for anybody, much less someone who is 13, 14, years old.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, and Luke 1:38 she says, "Behold, the bond slave of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word."

Glenn Meredith: Yeah, wow. And what a contrast of her response then to what Zacharias had just a few months before that, six months or so before that when he responds almost in unbelief. And yet here is this young girl who responds in tremendous faith. And I think she's such an example because when she finally says, "Lord, be it unto me, Your will be done in my life." Then to see how beautifully God then begins to work thru her life. To me it is such an encouragement. Mary was a young teenage girl. Obviously after this encounter with Gabriel, then the Bible says it leaves out a lot of the details but it says she got ready and immediately then she goes to check with Elizabeth.

Dr. Reagan: And that is amazing too because Elizabeth was married to a priest.

Glenn Meredith: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: And if she had been pregnant as a result of adultery it would have been his responsibility to see to it that she'd be stoned to death.

Glenn Meredith: No, I think Mary, the Bible doesn't say this I guess I'm using my imagination maybe hopefully an educated guess here, but Mary is a teenage girl she goes what to her parents and says, "Look the angel appeared to me, and I'm going to have a baby, and it's going to be the Messiah; the long awaited Messiah." And then she says, "But the angel also says that our relative Elizabeth is expecting." Well they didn't know this. Elizabeth and Zechariah--

Dr. Reagan: She was an older woman.

Glenn Meredith: And she lived maybe 90 miles, 100 miles away. And so it says she got ready to go down there and visit them. Well Mary didn't most likely go by herself. Do you think her parents just said, "Well, fine, you're a teenage girl just head on down, walk on down 90 miles, 100 miles away?" No. Somehow she got down there, and I don't think she went alone. And so is it possible that her parents went with her? That they took her.

Dr. Reagan: Sure.

Glenn Meredith: Now can you imagine the confirmation; here's this girl who said, "God has spoken to me. And God is going to do this with my life." And she took a step of faith and believed God. And she goes down there, and you know her parents have to be going, "What's going on here?" And then they walk in the home of Elizabeth and Mary greets Elizabeth and the first words out of Elizabeth's mouth is, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord would come and visit me?" And you can imagine Mary, the confirmation.

Dr. Reagan: Confirmation, word of knowledge.

Glenn Meredith: Word of knowledge.

Dr. Reagan: And meanwhile John the Baptist is doing somersaults in her womb.

Glenn Meredith: Flipping, yeah for joy. Now who all is with her? I don't know. But let's just assume that her parents are there with her. And you know they've had some questions marks in their mind, is this really happening or whatever. And all of a sudden they hear Elizabeth. Number one she turns around and she is expecting. So the first thing the angel had said you know that Elizabeth was confirmed. And then she says, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord would come and visit me?" And so, so God confirmed, encouraged this young girl. Perhaps made it known then to her support system, of her family. So, then the Bible says that she stays there with them for three months. So now Elizabeth is six months pregnant at this point, so she stays I would assume to the birth of John the Baptist. Now, during that three months of course Zacharias is walking around the house he can't talk. This whole time he can't talk. He's motioning, he's doing whatever. So they are witnessing all of this. So, Mary, is probably there when John the Baptist is born, and when Zacharias says, "His name will be John," and his mouth is opened. And she witnesses all of this. And what an encouragement. What a confirmation.

Dr. Reagan: Meanwhile Joseph is trying to figure out what to do.

Glenn Meredith: What to do. And Mary doesn't know what is going to happen when she gets back. How's it you know she's--obviously he knows and he's pondering whether he's going to divorce her quietly, doesn't want to make a public example of her. And so, but she's thinking perhaps I've lost him, I've lost my future. Who knows what is going to? She gets back and while she's been gone the angel appears to Joseph and says, "Do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She'll bear a son and you will call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins."

Dr. Reagan: Everything in this attests to the virginity of this young woman. First of all when the angel announced she was going to become pregnant she said, "I haven't known a man." She knew how you had a baby. Said I don't know. Second thing she runs to relatives to share the news. How many un--you know in that day and time how many pregnant young girls out of marriage run to relatives to share the good news?

Glenn Meredith: Right. Right.

Dr. Reagan: They just don't do that. And then of course the thing that kind of seals it all for me is that the whole story is written by a medical doctor. It's not some shepherd who is caught up in myths or superstitions or whatever.

Glenn Meredith: He said he was going to research this.

Dr. Reagan: It is a medical doctor writing this who knows everything about how to have a baby.

Glenn Meredith: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: And he is saying this is all of a virgin.

Glenn Meredith: Yeah. Can you imagine what a beautiful--we don't often think about this kind of this love story. Here Mary is going back now and when she gets there then Joseph comes to see her. And now her life is hanging in the balance of what Joseph is going to do. And she is sitting there thinking, "What is he going to do? Is he going to have me stoned? Is he going to divorce me, or what's he going to do?" And then Joseph says to her, "The angel appeared to me, and said you're pregnant. I know what you've been telling me is true. And the angel called his name Jesus." And she goes, "That's what the angel told me to call Him."

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Glenn, the Bible tells us that all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. And all of us need to be reconciled to God our Creator. How about telling our viewers how they can do that?

Glenn Meredith: I'd be glad to. Just as the angel said to Joseph that you will call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins. The angels they appeared to the shepherds and they said, "We have great news, good news of great joy, unto you is born this day in the City of David the Savior, Christ the Lord. This Savior who will save His people from their sins." And so today if you would admit that you are a sinner, and that you need a Savior the Bible has declared to us that the only Savior is Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for your sins, was buried in the tomb, rose again from the dead that you might be saved from your sins. The Bible says that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So if you have enough faith today to cry out to Jesus Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, save me from my sin." He'll do it.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you Glenn. Thanks for being our guest. It's always a joy to have you. Folks, I hope this program has been a blessing to you, and I hope the Lord willing that you will be back with us again next week. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program