



Very early in Christian history she was called "*the first of the redeemed*." She has led the way for all of us personally to give our lives completely to Jesus Christ.

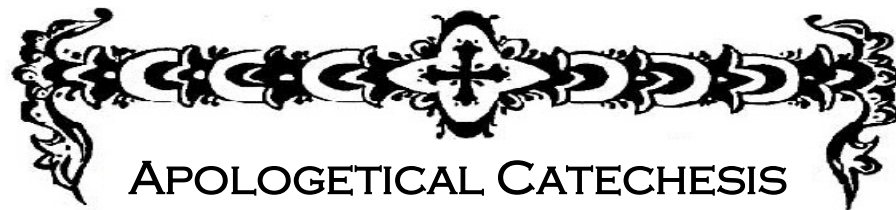
Mary is blessed also because she found favour in the sight of God.

Gabriel's words of encouragement to her were, "*Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you*" (Luke 1:28). Then he comforted her by saying, "*Do not be afraid, Mary. For you have **found favour** with God*" (Luke 1:30).

Mary gave everything she had to God, she gave her life to Him, which is why she is considered the greatest woman who has ever lived.

"Let us praise Mary, the Virgin! Glory to the whole world, which sprang from human seed and gave birth to the Sovereign. The Heavenly Gate, Canticle of the Incorporeals and Adornment of the Faithful. For She appeared as Heaven and Temple of the Divinity; he destroyed the oppressive barrier of enmity; he introduced peace in return and opened the Kingdom. Let us, then, submit ourselves to her who is an anchor of faith; and let us bring the Lord born of her for our help. Be bold now and trust, People of God! For He will fight our enemies by being Almighty. Virgin, when Gabriel exclaims to you, with Hail! together with the voice the Lord of all became incarnate in Thee, O sacred ark, as righteous David said; You were made wider than the heavens, holding your Creator. Glory to him who dwelt in Thee, glory to him who sprang from Thee, glory to him who by thy birth hath set us free."

"WHOEVER DOES NOT CONFESS MARY AS THE MOTHER OF GOD IS ALIEN TO GOD"
(ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, EPIST. 101).



APOLOGETICAL CATECHESIS

IS MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD? (II)

Although many do not like it, or do not wish to believe it because they have been taught otherwise, Mary is the Mother of God (from the Greek *Theotokos*).

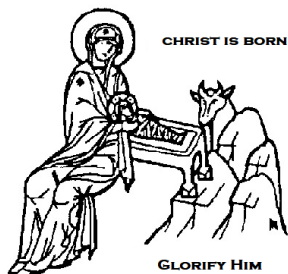
And the Bible teaches that Mary is the Mother of God.

Let's read the text, and then see why this title is so important to our lives as Christians in the Church.

After Christ was conceived in Mary's womb, she paid a visit to the homes of her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth, who would soon be the parents of John the Baptist. When Mary greeted her cousin, Elizabeth called her Blessed and said,

"Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord may come to me?" (Luke 1:43)

Elizabeth knew that **her Lord**, the Messiah of Israel, was in Mary's womb.



The title of *Mother of God* took on great importance in the fourth century, when a heretic named Nestorius – who held a high position in the Church – claimed that the one in Mary's womb was indeed a man, but not God. And we Orthodox Christians all say with one voice: False!

To see Jesus Christ as anything less than God in the flesh is not truly Christian. For unless the one who was in Mary's womb was and is God, we are dead in our sins. To safeguard the complete divinity of Christ, the Church has always insisted that Mary be justly called—as Elizabeth called her—the Mother of God (*Theotokos*).



ORTHODOX ANSWERS 3





This title, of course, does not mean that she is the mother of the Holy Trinity, because the Holy Trinity has no mother.

Nor does it mean that She is the origin of the Person who is God the Son. It refers to Mary, the Mother of the Son of God, Who assumed full humanity in her womb.

Just as we insist on the Virgin Birth of Christ, we also insist that for nine months Mary bore Him in Her humanity. He was at all times completely God as well.

The Orthodox Faith says plainly and insistently that Mary is the Mother of God, the Theotokos, the one who gave birth to God.

To say otherwise is to side with those who deny the Divinity of Christ our Lord.

When a man buys a large piece of land for his cattle to graze on, he fences off his farm. He does this to protect his livestock, to keep them on the loose, and to deter thieves. In the same way, the Church places doctrinal fences around its foundational truths.

And nothing is more basic and important to us than the deity of Christ. Because Christ is God, we put a firm, non-negotiable fence around His Divinity through our unshakable confession that Mary is the Mother of God.

WHY DO WE HONOR MARY AND CALL HER BLESSED?

The Bible tells us that she is the most blessed of all women, that she is the Mother of God, and that we are to bless and honour her.

During her stay at Elizabeth's house, Mary offered God one of the most beautiful prayers of praise in all of Scripture. It begins with the words, *"My soul magnifies the Lord..."* and which is known as "The Magnificat."

In that prayer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Mary prophesied, *"All generations will call me blessed"* (Luke 1:48).

Essentially, every generation in the history of the Church has done so, only the last few centuries have failed.



Some Christian groups have dogmatically risen up against Christ and the New Testament and refuse to bless it.

From the earliest records of Christian worship, Orthodox Christians have taken special care to venerate and honour Mary in the Liturgy. There is an old hymn that begins: *"Worthy indeed is to bless thee, O Theotokos (Mother of God). In this hymn she is also called, "Ever blessed and blameless."*



The biblical command to honour Mary is taken very seriously. Of course, we do **NOT** worship Mary, because worship is reserved for the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But Mary, with complete certainty, is to be honoured and venerated.

As Christ is our oldest brother, the Firstborn of many brethren; we honour the virgin Mary as our Mother, our Lady. Just as Eve was the mother of the old race of Adam, so Mary is the mother of the New Race, the Body of Christ: The Church.

THE GREATEST WOMAN WHO EVER LIVED



Although our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that no man greater than John the Baptist has ever walked the earth, both the Archangel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth say to Mary, *"Blessed are you among women"* (Luke 1:28 and 42). She is the most blessed of all women for several reasons, the greatest of all being that she conceived, carried, gave birth, and fed the very Saviour of our souls.

The one who now sits on the heavenly throne of David, actually seated at the right hand of God the Father, entered the human race and became our Saviour in its womb. She was sovereignly chosen by the Father to conceive His Only Begotten Son.

In that role, Mary is the first person in all of history to receive and accept Christ as her Saviour. You and I are called to enthrone the Lord in our hearts and lives – following His example in doing so.

