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Congregation Kol Ami

Women of the Jewish and Christian Bible: A Four Session Series  
**Session III: Mary, the Mother of Jesus/the Mother of God**

“Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’” (The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Gospel of Matthew, 1:18-21)

“. . . The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. . . . Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her. In those days Mary set out and went . . . [to] the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth [her cousin]. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child [John the Baptist] leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’ . . . And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will called me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.’” ( Gospel of Luke 1:26-56)

“In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage’. . . . On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage.” (Gospel of Matthew, 2:1-11)

“ . . . A decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. . . All went to their own [ancestral] towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. . . . an angel of the Lord stood before . . . [some shepherds in the fields], and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. . . . [The shepherds went to Bethlehem] and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.’” (Gospel of Luke 2:1-19)

“[Jesus] went home; and the crowd came together again. . . When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind.’ . . . Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, ‘Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.’ And he replied, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’” (Gospel of Mark 3:19-35)

“[When Jesus was twelve years old and had gone with his parents, as always, to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover, Mary and Joseph started to return to Nazareth but didn’t know that Jesus had stayed behind. After three days of looking for him] . . . they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions . . . . When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, ‘Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.’ He said to them, ‘Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’” (Gospel of Luke 2:41-50)

“ . . . There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ [Jesus told the servants to fill the six stone water jars that were for purification and asked them to pour some out and give it to the chief steward. . . . The steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from] . . . . Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.” (Gospel of John 2:1-12)

“ . . . [Pontius Pilate, Roman Governor of Judea, before he had Jesus crucified] said to the Jews, ‘Here is your King!’ They cried out, ‘Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Shall I crucify your King?’ the chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but the emperor.’ Then he

handed him over to them to be crucified. . . . Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the [male] disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home." (Gospel of John 19:14-27)

"[Forty days after the crucifixion, the [apostles of Jesus] returned to Jerusalem [from the Mt. of Olives, just east of Jerusalem]. . . . All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus. . . ." (NT, Acts 1:12-14)

"[After Joachim, a wealthy and pious Jew, went into the desert where he fasted for forty days and night, lamenting that he and Anna were childless, Anna lamented her husband's having left her and the fact that she had no children]. She petitioned the Lord saying, 'God of my ancestors, bless me and hear my prayer, just as you blessed our mother Sarah and gave her son Isaac to her.' . . . Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood in front of her, saying, 'Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and give birth and your child will be spoken of everywhere people live.' And Anna said, 'As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child, I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life.' Next, two angels came, saying to her, 'Look your husband Joachim is coming with his flocks' [for an angel told him that you are pregnant] . . . . The next day. . . when he was presenting his [sacrificial] offerings [to the priest in the Jerusalem Temple], he said to himself, 'If the Lord God will be reconciled to me, he will make it clear to me with the priest's metal disc.' And Joachim presented his offerings and paid attention to the priest's metal disc until he went up to the altar of the Lord. And he saw no sin in it. Joachim said, 'Now I know that the Lord God has been reconciled to me and has sent all my great sins away for me.' And having been justified, he departed from the temple and went to his house. . . . After nine months, Anna gave birth and she said to the midwife, 'What is it?' The midwife said, 'A girl.' Anna said, 'My soul exalts this day.' And she put her baby to bed. After her days were completed, Anna cleansed her menstrual flow and gave her breast to the child and gave her the name Mary. [When Mary turned three, her parents brought her to the temple where she was welcomed by the priest. She stayed there until she was twelve] when the high priest met Joseph, who was old and already had sons, but whom the priest said had been 'chosen by lot to take the virgin' into his own keeping. Some time after, the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she would conceive a child]. Upon hearing this, however, Mary was distraught, saying to herself, 'If I conceive from the Lord God who lives, will I also conceive as all women conceive?' And the Angel of the Lord said, 'Not like that, Mary, For the power of God will come over you. Thus, the holy one who is born will be called son of the most high. And you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'" *The Infancy Gospel of James*, ca. 145 CE/AD

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed as infallible by Pope Pius IX in the bull (formal proclamation) *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854: "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."



Mary as *Maria Regina* (Mary, the Queen), identified with the Church and its power, leading to the “Cult of the Virgin” and the worship of Mary

“The first image of *Maria Regina* on a wall of the church of S. Maria Antiqua, the oldest Christian building in the Roman Forum, was painted in the first half of the sixth century. Seated in majesty on a throne, the Virgin Queen contains a multi-layered message: she belongs to a classical tradition of personifying cities and institutions as goddesses, and as such, in the heart of Rome, she embodies the new Rome which is the Church. . . . And because she is arrayed in all the pearl-laden, jewel-encrusted regalia of a contemporary secular monarch, she also proclaims, in a brilliantly condensed piece of visual propaganda, the concept that the Church is a theocracy of which the agent and representative is the pope, the ruler of Rome. . . . The honor paid Mary as queen redounded to the honor of queens, to the exclusion of other women; and the fact that the Virgin was female was mitigated by her regal precedence over all other women. . . . The regal role of Mary as the mother of the God-Emperor became a central and forceful symbol of power, which could be and was used to reinforce the authority of the Church on Earth. . . . *Maria Regina* [became] the living embodiment of the Church triumphant.” Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Knopf, 1976, pp. 104-105.

Mary as intercessor: “To thee [Queen of Heaven], we cry, banished children of Eve. To thee do we sigh, groaning and weeping in this vale of tears.” *Salve Regina* (Literally, Hail O Queen), Latin Marian hymn, 1140, sung on the feast of the Assumption

“On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption of Mary to be a dogma of faith: ‘We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma that the immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.’ The pope proclaimed this dogma only after a broad consultation of bishops, theologians and laity. There were few dissenting voices. What the pope solemnly declared was already a common belief in the Catholic Church. We find homilies on the Assumption going back to the sixth century. In following centuries, the Eastern Churches held steadily to the doctrine, but some authors in the West were hesitant. However by the 13th century there was universal agreement. The feast was celebrated [in August] under various names—Commemoration, Dormition, Passing, Assumption—from at least the fifth or sixth century.” (Franciscan Media, a non-profit ministry of Franciscan friars, on-line resource) [Note: Jesus ascended to heaven by his own power, Mary was assumed through a force other than herself].

1954 Encyclical of Pius XII: “From the earliest ages of the catholic church a Christian people, whether in time of triumph or more especially in time of crisis, has addressed prayers of petition and hymns of praise and veneration to the Queen of Heaven. And never has that hope wavered which they placed in the Mother of the Divine King, Jesus Christ; nor has that faith ever failed by which we are taught that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, reigns with a mother's solicitude over the entire world, just as she is crowned in heavenly blessedness with the glory of a Queen. . . . Epiphanius, the bishop of Constantinople, writing to the Sovereign Pontiff Hormisdas, says that we should pray that the unity of the Church may be preserved by the grace of the holy and consubstantial Trinity and by the prayers of Mary, Our Lady, the holy and glorious Virgin and Mother of God. . . . The Blessed Virgin, sitting at the right hand of God to pray for us is hailed by another writer of that same era in these words, ‘the Queen of mortal man, the most holy Mother of God.’” *Ad Caeli Reginam* (On Proclaiming the Queenship of Mary)