

THE  
GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO  
MARY

*A New Testament for Women*



*Miriam Therese Winter*

ORBIS  BOOKS

Maryknoll, New York 10545

Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at [www.maryknoll.org](http://www.maryknoll.org).

---

Copyright © 1993, 2008 by Medical Mission Sisters.

Artwork copyright © 2008 by Jason K. Dy, S.J.

Published in 2008 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0308.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to:  
Orbis Books, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

---

The Library of Congress has cataloged the original edition as follows:

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Winter, Miriam Therese.

The gospel according to Mary : a New Testament for women /  
Miriam Therese Winter

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-57075-808-9 (pbk.)

1. Jesus Christ—Biography. 2. Feminist theology. I. Gospel  
according to Mary. II. Title.

BT301.2.W54 1993

232.9'01—dc20

92-40353

# ELIZABETH AND MARY



## *Elizabeth*

During the days when Herod was king of Judea and men alone were responsible for the things that pertained to God, there lived a holy woman whose priestly lineage went all the way back to Elisheba and Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Her husband belonged to the Abijah line of the traditional priesthood, and his name was Zechariah. Both of them lived blamelessly, keeping all the commandments and ordinances faithfully before God. Elizabeth had never had children. Men, assuming that she was at fault, referred to her as barren, while women had long been aware of Zechariah's periodic impotence. They had been married a very long time, and now Elizabeth was beyond her child-bearing years.

One day as Zechariah was leaving to fulfill his priestly office, Elizabeth heard a voice deep within her say, "Elizabeth, be at peace, for the prayer of your heart has been heard. You and Zechariah will have a child, and you are to name him John. You will know the joys of motherhood and your heart will sing with gladness, for many will rejoice at his birth. Your child will be filled with the Spirit while he is still in your womb, for the one you are about to bear will herald a new beginning and prepare the way for God."

Elizabeth ran to her husband. “Blessed be God,” she cried aloud. “It must have been an angel who told these things to me.” On hearing the words of the messenger of God, Zechariah was astounded. “What foolishness is this?” he asked. “Should I risk ritual defilement on the eve of my priestly duties to do what cannot be done?” Zechariah did not believe her.

Soon after, Zechariah was serving as priest and his section was on duty when it fell to him by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the inner sanctuary and offer incense to God. Outside, the people were assembled in prayer. Suddenly, at the side of the altar of incense, Zechariah saw an apparition, and he was terrified. “Do not be afraid, Zechariah. I am Gabriel, sent by God to bring good news to you. Elizabeth’s prayer has been heard. She will bear a child. Your son will walk among your people with the spirit and power of Elijah, and he will turn many hearts toward God.” Zechariah said to the angel, “How can this be? I am an old man and Elizabeth is no longer young. What am I to do?” The angel replied, “Do whatever Elizabeth tells you. And because you did not believe her, because you dismissed God’s word to her, you will be silenced, unable to speak, until these things occur.”

Outside the sanctuary the people were waiting, and they wondered at Zechariah’s delay. When he appeared, he could not say a word, and they knew he had seen a vision. Zechariah remained among the priests until his service was ended, then returned to his own home.

In due time, Elizabeth conceived. She chose to remain in seclusion, quietly praising God.

## **Mary**

Elizabeth’s cousin Mary of Nazareth in Galilee was engaged to a man named Joseph, who was of David’s lineage. In the

sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Mary heard a voice that said, "Shalom, favored one! The Spirit of God is with you." A radiant light filled the room. She was frightened and confused. The angelic presence said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will bear a child, and you will name him Jesus. He will be called God's Child, for he is the one whom God has promised." Mary said, "How can this be, for I am without a husband?" The angel replied, "The Spirit of God will encircle you, and the power of the Most High will enter you. The child to be born will be holy, for he is the child of God. Now your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a child. The one who was said to be barren is already six months pregnant, for nothing is beyond God's power." Then Mary said, "I am fully open to the will of God. Let it happen as you say."

### *Mary and Elizabeth*

Mary reflected on all that had been said to her, reliving the words in her heart. In due time she told her sister, and together they told their mother. It was decided that Mary would go at once to stay with Elizabeth. She could assist her elderly cousin as she prepared for the birth of her child. While she was away, her mother, Anne, would speak to her father; and he would go to Joseph. Perhaps Joachim could convince Joseph, even now, to take Mary as his wife.

Mary, accompanied by her sister and an older relative, set out for the home of her cousin in the hill country of Judea. Elizabeth was ecstatic when she heard Mary's greeting resounding through her house. Even her baby moved within her. Filled with the Spirit, Elizabeth exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child of your womb. Tell me, why should the mother of the one long awaited come to



*It was decided that Mary would go at once  
to stay with Elizabeth.*

visit me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the child within me leaped for joy. Blessed are you who dared to believe God's promise would be fulfilled." Then Elizabeth joined Mary in a canticle of praise.

My soul proclaims the power of God,  
my spirit delights in Her wonderful ways,  
for She has shown favor to me, a woman.  
Generations of women will all be blessed,

for She Who has power to open the womb  
has done inconceivable things through me:  
Holy is Her Name.  
Her mercy flows through mother and child  
from generation to generation.  
She silences the arrogant  
with the strength of Her outstretched arm,  
puts down principalities and powers  
as She empowers the poor,  
feeds those who are hungry,  
while those who seem to have everything  
are left unsatisfied.  
We have felt Her compassionate presence  
as She spoke through our mothers and grandmothers,  
keeping the promise She made to Sarah  
and her daughters, now and forever.

Mary remained with her cousin until after the birth of Elizabeth's baby.

### ***Birth of Elizabeth's Baby***

When the time came for Elizabeth to deliver, she gave birth to a son. Her relatives and friends praised God and rejoiced along with her.

On the eighth day the family gathered for the circumcision of the child. All assumed he would be called Zechariah, which was his father's name, but the baby's mother protested, saying, "He is to be called John." They paid no attention to her. "None of your relatives has this name," they said to Zechariah, the father of the child. He motioned for a writing tablet and wrote, "The mother said, his name is John." Everyone was amazed. Then Zechariah's voice returned to him and

he spoke, praising God. Word spread to the neighboring villages, and people throughout the hill country of Judea talked about these things. “What will this child become?” they asked, “for surely God is with him.”

Elizabeth and Zechariah, filled with the Spirit of wisdom and with love for their newborn child, sang a canticle of praise:

Blessed be God forever,  
for She has visited Her people,  
liberating us, and through us,  
liberating all Her sons and daughters.  
We are saved from all who would harm us,  
through a covenant of mercy  
promised by the prophets,  
that we might serve God fearlessly  
in holiness and justice  
all the days of our life.  
You, little child, are the prophet  
God has called  
to prepare the way,  
to proclaim a year of favor  
and the forgiveness of our sins,  
to reveal God’s tender mercy  
as a new dawn breaks upon us,  
filling with light all those who sit  
in the shadow of oppression,  
guiding us with integrity  
along the paths of peace.

The child grew strong in spirit under the guidance of Elizabeth and Zechariah until the day he appeared as a prophet in the wilderness of Judea.