

﴿O Maryam! Allah has chosen you and purified you﴾ from imperfections that could undermine your good character ﴿chosen you above the women of all nations﴾. The first choosing is because of her praiseworthy characteristics and righteous deeds; the second choosing is because she was favoured above the women of all nations, meaning that she was favoured either above the women of all nations of her own time, or in general terms, even though in the latter case some other women shared that status with her, such as Khadeejah, 'Â'ishah and Fâtimah (*raḍiya Allāhu 'anhunna* – may Allah be pleased with all of them). Thus the fact that other women were also chosen later on does not contradict what is mentioned in this verse about Maryam. When the angels told her that Allah had chosen her and purified her, that was a great blessing and gift that required her to give thanks. Hence the angels said to her:

﴿O Maryam, worship your Lord devoutly﴾. What is meant by the word translated here as “devout” is persisting in obedience, with submission and humility.

﴿prostrate and bow [in prayer] with those who bow﴾. Prostration and bowing are singled out for mention because of their virtue and because they are indicative of the utmost submission to Allah. So Maryam did what she was instructed to do, in gratitude and obedience to Allah (ﷻ). As Allah told His Prophet (ﷺ) what He told him about Maryam, and how she followed the course that Allah had set for her, and this was one of the matters of the unseen that could only be known through revelation, He said:

﴿This is an account of the unseen [the distant past], which We reveal to you [O Muhammad]; you were not with them when they cast lots with their pens, [to decide] who, from among them, should be the guardian of Maryam﴾. That was when her mother took her to those who were in charge of Bayt al-Maqdis, and they disputed amongst themselves as to which of them would take charge of Maryam. They cast lots concerning her by throwing their pens into the river; the one