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The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

The first thing to be asked regarding the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary the mother of Jesus is this: What biblical evidence is there that she remained a virgin? Does the Bible teach that her maidenhead was miraculously preserved during the birth process? Does the Bible teach that she and Joseph abstained from sexual intercourse after she had given birth and observed the forty days of ritual purification?

The unequivocal answer to these questions is “No, there is no evidence whatsoever in the Bible that Mary remained a virgin either in the biological sense after giving birth, or in the sense of sexual relations after the forty days of purification.”

Sola Scriptura does not mean that we are not guided by things other than the Bible, but it does mean that **only Scripture can bind our consciences** because Scripture is the **only word that God has declared infallible**. We are, indeed, helped in our understanding of Scripture by what those who have gone before us have taught.

We are helped in our understanding of Scripture by what others have written, but we are not theologically helped by the writings others **when they simply make up doctrine out of the air**.

Now, I submit that the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is simply made up out of the air. Please prove to me from the Bible that Mary remained a virgin.

The second thing to be asked regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary is this: Does it go contrary to a straightforward reading of the biblical evidence? The answer here is “Yes, a straightforward reading of Scripture gives us to understand that Mary lost her virginity by having sexual relations with her husband forty days after giving birth.”

That clearly is what Matthew is affirming in Matthew 1:25, where he writes that Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary until after she had given birth to the Lord Jesus.

Now, if we had any biblical texts that asserted that Mary remained a virgin, we might look for some other meaning to Joseph “knowing” Mary, or we might say that Matthew does not go on explicitly to tell us the details of what happened next,

as if we should expect the Bible to read like a Harlequin romance.

But we don't find any evidence in the Bible whatsoever that Mary remained a virgin after the forty days of purification (Luke 2:22-39; Leviticus 12).

Therefore, there is no reason to reject the straightforward reading of Matthew 1:25. Matthew is the first person who teaches that Mary lost her virginity after the birth of Jesus.

Thirdly, confirming what Matthew wrote in 1:25 is the statement that Jesus had brothers and sisters. Not only Matthew (Matthew 12:47; 13:55-56), but Mark (Mark 3:31-32; 6:3), Luke (Luke 8:19-20), John (John 7:5) and Paul (Galatians 1:19) all tell us this. (Repeating somewhat from above)

Now, if we had any biblical texts that asserted that Mary remained a virgin, we might look for some other meaning to the word "brother" or "sister". But we don't find any evidence in the Bible whatsoever that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus.

Therefore, there is no reason to reject the straightforward reading of these verses that Jesus had both brothers and sisters. People have advanced the idea that these brothers and sisters of Jesus might be his cousins or Joseph's children by a previous marriage, even though **there is no biblical evidence whatsoever, nor any historical evidence whatsoever**, that Joseph was married before being married to Mary.

But, again, there is no biblical teaching whatsoever that Mary remained a virgin after giving birth to Jesus, and so an honest reader must conclude that Mark, Luke, John, and Paul join Matthew in teaching that Mary lost her virginity after the birth of Jesus.

The fourth thing to be asked regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary has to do with the nature of marriage itself: Were Mary and Joseph actually married according to the Bible? The answer here again is, "Yes, they were married."

But biblical marriage involves two things: one verbal, the other physical. The verbal aspect of the marriage covenant involves the affirmation of a life-long commitment in the presence of family and friends; it is always public. The physical aspect of the marriage covenant is always private (though with the physical evidence of the marriage having actually taken place being publicly available,

Deuteronomy 22:13-21). The physical aspect involves the “cutting” of the covenant by means of sexual intercourse.

Unless both of these elements are present, there is no biblical marriage. Sexual intercourse without the public affirmation of commitment to marriage is simply fornication. And the public affirmation without the cutting of the covenant by means of sexual intercourse is no marriage at all according to the teaching of Scripture.

Furthermore, regular renewal of the cutting of the marriage covenant is the duty of every married person according to 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Had Mary abstained from sexual intercourse with Joseph after the prescribed period, she would have been living in sexual sin. God’s commandments are not only about not doing things; they involve duties to act as well. In effect, a perpetually virgin Mary would be a woman who lived in adultery, in the sense that she would have regularly failed to do the duty implicit in the seventh commandment.

As we have seen, the mother of our Lord was not always a follower of Christ: In her weakness she was sinfully influenced by the cynicism of her other sons (John 7:3-5), as is clearly seen in the incident recorded in Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:20, 21; and Luke 8:19-21. But while Mary had doubts and was not perfect, she was not an exceptionally sinful woman, which is what she would have been had she remained a virgin: The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is an assault on the character of the mother of our Lord.

Without biblical evidence that Mary remained a virgin after giving birth to Jesus, these texts cited above irrefutably rebut the notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary. **Give me a statement from the Bible that Mary remained a virgin, and I will mail you a check for one thousand dollars.**

[Bob Vincent](#)

Scripture Quotations Mentioned Above

Matthew 1:25

But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Luke 2:22–39

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been

completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Leviticus 12

The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

‘When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall

offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

‘These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’”

Matthew 1:25

But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew 12:47

Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

Matthew 13:55–56

“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

Mark 3:31–32

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

Mark 6:3

Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

Luke 8:19–20

Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.”

John 7:5

For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Galatians 1:19

I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother.

Deuteronomy 22:13–21

If a man takes a wife and, after lying with her, dislikes her and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying, “I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity,” then the girl’s father and mother shall bring proof that she was a virgin to the town elders at the gate. The girl’s father will say to the elders, “I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her. Now he has slandered her and said, ‘I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.’ But here is the proof of my daughter’s virginity.” Then her parents shall display the cloth before the elders of the town, and the elders shall take the man and punish him. They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the girl’s father, because this man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives. If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl’s virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father’s house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father’s house. You must purge the evil from among you.

1 Corinthians 7:1–5

Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

John 7:3–5

Jesus’ brothers said to him, “You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Matthew 12:46–50

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” He replied to him,

“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Mark 3:20-21

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

Luke 8:19–21

Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.” He replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”