

## Was Mary A Perpetual Virgin?

- I. This study is a supplement to a previous study, “Mary’s Other Children.”
  - A. Jesus had other siblings. **MAT 13:55-56; GAL 1:19.**
  - B. The primary definition of “brother” is one who is a son of the same parent or parents.
  - C. Scripture knows nothing of Joseph fathering children by another woman.
  - D. Mary only conceived miraculously once.
  - E. Therefore, Jesus’s siblings must have been the children of Joseph and Mary by normal marital intercourse.
  
- II. Romanists, however, hold that Mary was a perpetual virgin: Joseph never consummated their marriage.
  - A. This doctrine took centuries to gel.
  - B. It was formally declared at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.
  - C. Other Marian doctrines were also gradual developments, such as the Immaculate Conception (the belief that Mary was conceived without sin), 1854 A.D., of which *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says, “No direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma can be brought forward from Scripture.” (vol. 7, pp. 674-675).
  - D. Similar observations may be made about the Bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven, which did not become Church dogma until 1950 A.D.: “Still, fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none...The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it is true.” (Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on “Romanism” by “Bible Christians”* p. 275)
  - E. Mind that this implies that the Christ-appointed apostles of the 1st C. had somehow been delinquent in declaring what came to be Church dogma. ct/w **JOH 14:26; 16:13; 1JO 4:6.**
  - F. NOTE: The developments of Marian doctrine are the logical extensions of faulty premises. Perfect logic based upon a faulty premise guarantees a faulty conclusion.
  
- III. Karl Keating, a Catholic apologist, says of **LUK 1:34**: “If she anticipated having children and did not intend to maintain a vow of virginity, she would hardly have to ask “how” she was to have a child, since having a child the normal way would be expected by a newlywed.” (*Ibid*, p. 283)
  - A. Her question was not, “How do you expect this to occur in light of my vow?”
    1. Such an assumption as a preexisting vow has to be read into the text. Scripture knows nothing of any such vow.
    2. Mary was obviously wondering how she could conceive since she was still a virgin.
    3. Before she could ponder further, the angel declared the miraculous conception by God. **LUK 1:35.**
  - B. If Mary had made a vow of perpetual virginity, why was she espoused to marry Joseph?
    1. Marriage is two becoming one flesh (**MAT 19:4-5**); it is the grant of sexual union.
    2. The marriage covenant establishes sexual fidelity in both parties (**EXO 20:14; JOB 31:1**), which would have bound Joseph to perpetual virginity also.
    3. Had she told Joseph, “I will marry you but I will not let you have sex with me?”
      - a. If she had not so informed him, she was deceiving him. If she had informed him, what was he thinking? Neither of them at that point would have known about the impending miraculous conception.
      - b. Refusing to consummate a marriage may be grounds for annulment.
    4. Refusing marital sex is a defrauding of one’s spouse. **1CO 7:3-5.**

- a. The only exception for refusal is *temporary consensual* fasting and prayer. (**1CO 7:5**), beyond which is an open door for temptation.
  - b. The imagined Marian vow of perpetual virginity actually turns her into a deceiver, temptress or defrauder.
  - c. The Law would have empowered Joseph to negate her vow. **NUM 30:8**.
- C. Joseph, "...being a just man..." (**MAT 1:19**), would not only have kept himself from Mary until after Jesus's birth but would have consummated the marriage afterwards. **MAT 1:25**.
1. We have no reason to believe that Joseph was anything but a good husband with good sense who dwelt with her according to knowledge and gave her the *duty of marriage*. **1PE 3:7 c/w EXO 21:10**.
  2. We have no reason to believe that Mary was a deceiver, temptress or defrauder as a wife. She was a member in good standing of her Son's church. **ACT 1:14**.
  3. We have no reason to believe that either of them were prone to extra-biblical spirituality that nullified God's order for lawful marriage. **MAR 7:13 c/w 1TI 4:1-3**.
  4. It is not the married but the *unmarried* that are particularly fitted for pleasing God in abstinence. **1CO 7:32-34**.
  5. One may vow celibacy only outside of the context of marriage.
- IV. (**MAT 1:25**) And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.
- A. Plain reading and common sense would naturally conclude from this text that Joseph and Mary did not consummate their marriage until after the birth of Jesus.
  - B. The Roman Catholic spin on this text is that it is only the modern use of "till" or "until" that anticipates a different action or condition afterwards.
    1. It is affirmed that "till" or "until" only denote a condition that continues to a point but does not stop there.
    2. Sometimes, a text like **1TI 6:14** is offered as proof: "See, we obviously don't stop keeping God's commandments after Christ appears---the same condition continues."
    3. Question: If Mary had told Joseph, "I will not have sex with you until we are married," what do you think Joseph would have concluded: no sex until after we get married or no sex ever?
    4. The Holy Spirit could have rendered **MAT 1:25**, "And never knew her, not even after she brought forth her firstborn son..." But He didn't.
  - C. The importance of primary definitions:
    1. till: Onward to (a specified time); up to the time of (an event); during the whole time before; until. (Denoting continuance up to a particular time, and usually implying cessation or change at that time: cf. B. 1.) B. 1. a. To the time that; up to (the point) when; until. (Denoting the continuance of the action or state expressed by the principal clause up to the time expressed by the dependent clause, and usually implying that at that time such action or state ceases and a different or opposite one begins.) (underscore mine, TEB)
    2. until: Onward till (a time specified or indicated); up to the time of (an action, occurrence, etc.); b. With (usu. after) a negative. Examples: (1) *Science-Gossip XXV. 255/2* Brooks's comet..may be visible..until the end of the year. (2) W. O. Morris *Napoleon* (1894) 158 Nelson had not left Europe until the second week of May.
    3. See **GEN 3:19; JDG 16:3; MAT 2:13-15; 24:38-39; LUK 15:8; ACT 23:14, 21**.

4. **ACT 23:1** is no proof of an unchanged action or condition after “until” since Paul is only considering time already past.
  5. The position that “till” or “until” cannot imply a change of action or condition afterwards is simply wrong. Exceptional uses of “until” such as when it denotes “unto” (e.g. **MAT 1:17; 11:23**) do not undo the definition.
- D. What about **1TI 6:14**?
1. The commandment under consideration is faith. **1TI 6:12.**
  2. Faith and hope are for this life, not the next one of sight.  
**HEB 11:1; 1PE 1:8; ROM 8:24-25; REV 2:10.**
  3. Charity alone pertains to sight and never fails: it is for both worlds.  
**1CO 13:13; 1JO 3:17; 4:20.**
- E. Plain reading, primary definitions, common sense, context and comparative scripture verses and reason yield one valid conclusion: Mary did not remain celibate after she gave birth to Jesus, and this in no way diminishes her special place in God’s plan.