

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

In the Light of Scripture

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE CONTINUING VIRGINITY

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH CLAIMS that Mary continued in her virginity. That is why she is continually referred to as the Virgin. In holding this belief; Rome has been influenced by heathen religions in some of which marriage was considered an unholy thing, so that those who preserved their virginity were holier and more enlightened than the rest.

The doctrine of the continued virginity of Mary has no solid foundation.

1. For the first three centuries of the Christian era, it was not once mentioned.
2. The Scriptures do not bear it out. On the contrary the Bible says that Joseph “**knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus**” (Matthew 1:25). The language clearly indicates that there was no continuing virginity. Moreover, the very word firstborn implies that Mary had other children afterward.
3. Contrary to the tenets of heathen cults, a mother in Israel had far greater honor than a virgin.

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck (Luke 23:28, 29).

After the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, she is referred to in Scripture as His mother.

4. The Church of Rome says that the brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus were really His cousins, and the Greek Orthodox church says they were His half-brothers and sisters. There are good reasons, however, for recognizing them as His real brothers and sisters.
 - a. The New Testament refers to His brethren on seven occasions: John 2:12; Matthew 12:46, with Mark 3:31 and Luke 8:19; Matthew 13:55, 56 with Mark 6:3; John 7:3-5, 10; Acts 1:14; I Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19. In none of these passages is there the least hint that they were anything other than Jesus' own brothers.
 - b. In the New Testament, brothers and sisters are distinguished from cousins. Mary and Elisabeth were cousins:

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren (Luke 1:36).

And Elisabeth had other cousins besides:

And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her (Luke 1:58).

Our Lord Himself made this same distinction:

And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren [the same Greek word used of the brethren of Christ], **and kinsfolk** [the word used of Mary and Elisabeth, translated cousins], **and friends** (Luke 21:16).

Not once are the brethren of the Lord called either cousins or kinsfolk.

c. There is not the least suggestion that they were half-brothers, Joseph's children by a supposed first wife. Had this been so, who looked after the children when Joseph and Mary were refugees in Egypt (Matthew 2:13)? And if Joseph had sons older than Jesus, then the throne of David would be theirs, and not His:

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

d. Messianic prophecy confirms the correct interpretation of the Old Testament in the New; Psalm 69 reveals that the mother of the Messiah had children.

I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me (Psalm 69:8).

And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up (John 2:17).

5. The brothers lived with His mother.

After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples; and they continued there not many days (John 2:12).

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? (Mark 6:3).

With the exception of John 7:3-5, 10, Jesus' brethren are never referred to apart from His mother. If they were not His own brothers, why should this be?

From all these Scriptures we can only deduct that the brothers of Jesus were His own brethren, and not cousins or half-brothers. Although the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Greek churches, and even some Protestants think that because Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born, she must have preserved her virginity to the end, and that she and Joseph never afterward lived together as husband and wife, we conclude that this is not the teaching of Scripture.

That Jesus was born of a virgin is an important Bible doctrine. It was necessary in order that He should be born without any trace of hereditary sin and deterioration. But that Mary bore other children after the birth of Jesus in no way detracts from His glory, though it does show that “**the marriage is honorable in all, the bed undefiled**” (Hebrews 13:4; cf. I Timothy 4:3, 4).

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