



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone
who asks you for a reason for your hope"
1 Peter 3:15

The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

To Begin With . . .

To fully understand the Church's teaching on the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, we must begin with the Old Testament types and prophecies regarding this Biblical reality.

St. Augustine wrote: "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament and the Old is revealed in the New."

It is important to remember that **NOTHING** in Scripture is by accident. ALL of the Old Testament pointed to Christ in the New Testament. Every Old Testament type and symbol has a New Testament fulfillment. NT fulfillments are ALWAYS more glorious and perfect than their OT types – *without* exception.

Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant (Jesus)

Whereas the **symbols** of God's word were contained in the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, Mary actually carried God himself - ***the Word*** - in her womb in the New Testament. And, whereas the Old Testament Ark had to be made of pure materials and blessed and undefiled, how much ***more*** pure and undefiled would the vessel that **actually carried God** have to be?

The following comparison chart illustrates the Old Testament type, the ***Ark*** of the Covenant with the New Testament fulfillments of that type, ***Mary***:

Comparison: The Ark & Mary

OT type: "Who am I that the Ark of my Lord should come to me?" (2 Sam. 6:9)

NT Fulfillment: "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43)

OT type: When the Ark carrying the Word of God returned "David was leaping and dancing before the Lord" (2 Sam. 6:14)

NT Fulfillment: When Mary came into Elizabeth's presence carrying the word of God, the baby "leaped for joy" in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 2:38)

OT type: The Ark carrying the Word of God is brought to the house of Obed-Edom for 3 months, where it was a blessing. (2 Sam. 6:11)

NT Fulfillment: Mary (the new Ark) carrying the Word of God goes to Elizabeth's house for 3 months, where she is a blessing (Luke 1:56)

OT type: The Ark is captured (**1 Sam 4:11**) and brought to a foreign land and later returns (**1 Sam 6:13**)

NT Fulfillment: Mary (the new Ark) is exiled to a foreign land (Egypt) and later returns (**Matt. 2:14**)

OT type: On the **Day of the Dedication of the Temple** which Solomon built, there were **120** priests present (**2 Chron. 5:11**). The **Ark of the Covenant** was carried into the Temple (**2 Chron. 5:7**) and **fire came down from Heaven** to consume the burnt offering (**2 Chron. 7:7**).

NT Fulfillment: On the **Day of Pentecost**, there were **120** disciples of Jesus (priests) present in the Upper Room (**Acts 1:15**). **Mary**, the Mother of Jesus - the **Ark of the NEW Covenant** was also present while the **Holy Spirit came down** as tongues of fire (**Acts 2:3**).

Contrary to what some may believe – the Bible was not written in chapter and verse. Each Book of the Bible was written as a single continuous letter. Chapter and verse weren't added to Scripture until the Middle Ages.

In the **Book of Revelation**, we see the New Ark of the Covenant in Heaven being spoken of at the very end of **Chapter 11, verse 19**: *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm.*

The very next verse is in **Chapter 12 (Rev 12:1)**: *A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

Verse 2 says: *She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth.*

We know that this child is Jesus because in **verse 4**, we read: *She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod.*

There is simply no getting around the fact that the Woman here in **Revelation 12** is Mary.

Finally – Old Testament Prophecy must also be taken into consideration when discussing the matter of Mary’s Perpetual Virginitly.

Ezekiel 44:1-2

Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary facing east, but it was closed.

The LORD said to me: **This gate must remain closed; it must not be opened, and no one should come through it. Because the LORD, the God of Israel, came through it, it must remain closed.**

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold **a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.**

The charge that Mary had other children is ludicrous at best. If Mary indeed had other children, why would we be inclined to believe that Jesus was different from his siblings? Or that he was the 2nd Person in the Godhead? Mary’s perpetual virginitly is the first evidence we have that Christ’s miraculous conception and birth provide proof of His eternal existence.

Biblical Evidence

The ***Septuagint*** is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is a collection of **46** Old Testament books which includes **7** Books that are not found in Protestant Bibles. It can be illustrated that Jesus himself and the Apostles studied and quoted from the Septuagint. The fact is that around **200** passages in the New Testament are directly correlated to these 7 books from the Septuagint. Some examples include: **Matt. 27:42/Wis. 2:18-20, Luke 24:4/2 Macc. 3:26, John 10:22/1Macc 4:36 & 52-59.**

In the Septuagint, the normal Greek words for brother(s) “**adelphos**” and “**adelphoi**” were used much more liberally than the normal meaning. It was applied to cousins, uncles, nephews and kinsmen alike. The Aramaic word, “**ach**”, encompasses the meanings for ***brother of same parents, half-brother (same father), relative, kinship, same tribe***, and even ***a fellow countryman***. The attempt by some Protestants to apply one word for ***all*** of these meanings in 21st century English is ludicrous. Just as languages differ – so do the meanings of different words.

Furthermore, there was no term for the word "*cousin*" in the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek in the centuries before the birth of Christ (the Septuagint), the words "*adelphos*" and "*adelphoi*" were used in places where "*ach*" was. This is why we have many examples in the Septuagint of the following:

In **Gen. 14:14**, Lot is called Abraham's "*brother*", even though he was the son of Haran, Abraham's brother (**Gen. 11:26–28**).

In **Gen. 29:15**, Jacob is referred to as the "*brother*" of his uncle Laban.

Brothers Kish and Eleazar were the sons of Mahli. Kish had sons of his own, but Eleazar's daughters married their "*brethren*", the sons of Kish - who were actually their cousins (**1 Chr. 23:21–22**).

There is another quandary for Protestants who attempt to prove that Mary had other children and list the names given in the Bible. They give the names of these *adelphoi*, James, Joseph (Joses), Jude (Judas), and list the passages that mention these *adelphoi*, (**Matt. 12:46; Matt. 13:55; Mark 3:31–34; Mark 6:3; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12, 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5**).

According to the 2nd century document, *The Protoevangelium of James*, Joseph was a widower when he married Mary and these brothers and sisters of the Lord were Joseph's children from his previous marriage. However, there is even stronger Scriptural evidence that would debunk the myth of these "siblings".

The "other Mary" at the foot of the cross is described as being the mother of **James** and Joses (Joseph). She is also described as being Mary's (mother of Jesus) "**sister**" (**adelphe**) (**John 19:25**) and wife of **Clopas**. We know that she cannot be Mary's uterine sister because her name is also "Mary" and Jewish custom prohibits naming 2 children with the same name.

James is elsewhere described as the son of **Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3)**, which would mean this other Mary, **whoever she was**, was the wife of both Clopas **and** Alphaeus. However, Alphaeus and Clopas are the same person, since the Aramaic name for "**Alphaeus**" could be rendered in Greek either as **Alphaeus** or as "**Clopas**". It's also possible that Alphaeus took a Greek name similar to his Jewish name, the same way that Saul took the name Paul.

The 2nd century historian *Hegesippus* explains that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. James would thus be Joseph's nephew and a *cousin* of Jesus, who was Joseph's acknowledged son.

What do the Scriptures have to say about the women standing at the cross and their children?

Matt. 27:56 says, "*...among whom were Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James and Joseph**, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee*".

Mark 15:40 states, "*There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome***".

Finally, **John 19:25** states, "*But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, **Mary the wife of Clopas**, and Mary Magdalene*".

When you compare the different accounts of the crucifixion, they clearly show the mother of James and Joseph to be the wife of Clopas (also called, Alphaeus) – not Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Any attempt to connect these people as *uterine* brothers of Jesus are squashed by the Bible.

Another Protestant “proof” against the idea of Mary’s perpetual virginity is the word “*until*”. **Matt. 1:25** says: ***but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.***

Did Mary have other children *after* Jesus? As we have examined – the Bible does not support this idea. The Greek word used in **Matt. 1:25** is “**heos**”, which does not necessarily imply a change in the future. It can be used to express “up to” or “hither to” (***Strong’s Greek Concordance #2193***).

1 Timothy 4:13: “**Until (Heos)** I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching.”

Does this mean Timothy should **stop** teaching after St. Paul comes?

1 Timothy 6:13-14: In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame **until (heos)** the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Were they to **stop** this command after Jesus appears?

1 Cor. 15:25: For he must reign **until (heos)** he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Will He cease to reign after His enemies are under His feet?

2 Samuel 6:23 tells us: *Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until (heos) the day of her death.*

Are we to assume that Michal had children after she died?

Let's also examine **Acts 2:34-35** (also see **Psalm 110:1, Matt 22:44**): *For David did not go up into heaven, but he himself said: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until (heos) I make your enemies your footstool."*

Are we to surmise that Jesus will **cease** to sit at the right hand of the Father after his enemies are made his footstool?

The problem here is that the anti-Catholic attempts to apply 21st century **English** to **Hebrew** and **Greek** from a culture thousands of years ago.

Finally, Mary's question to the Angel Gabriel is very telling about her intention to **remain** a virgin:

Luke 1:34: *Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, **since I do not know a man?**"*

Mary was a betrothed girl who knew about marital relations. She didn't say "How can this be, **since I have not known a man?**" She said "How can this be, **since I do not know a man?**"

She was stating her intention to remain a virgin and was puzzled by Gabriel's announcement that she was to have a child. She **knew** that God was aware of her intentions. Her bewilderment and the words "**I do not know**", as opposed to "**I have not known**", is clear evidence that she had no intention of having marital relations.

This actually supports the 2nd century document, ***The Protoevangelium of James***, which said Mary was consecrated a Temple virgin by her parents – much like the prophetess, Anna (**Luke 2:36-38**). She was to marry the older Joseph, a widower, who was to be her protector.

Finally – non-Catholics point to verses like the following to “**prove**” that Mary had other children:

Luke 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her **firstborn son**. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The term, “**firstborn**”, they claim, is concrete evidence that Mary gave birth to children after Jesus. After all – He was only her **FIRST** born.

What they fail to understand – or admit – is that in the Jewish culture that the Holy Family was from, the term, “**firstborn**” simply means “**the one who opened his mother’s womb**”. It does **NOT** imply that a woman has other children.

Exodus 13:1-2

The Lord said to Moses, “Consecrate to me all the **firstborn**; whatever is ***the first to open the womb*** among the people of Israel, both of man and beast, is mine.”

It is also interesting to note that the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity is one that was held by the early Protestant Reformers. Men like **Martin Luther**, **John Calvin** and **Ulrich Zwingli** held Mary in high regard venerated her as a sinless person and/or perpetual virgin:

Martin Luther

Not only was Mary the mother of him who is born [in Bethlehem], but of him who, before the world, was eternally born of the Father, from a Mother in time and at the same time man and God.

(Weimer's *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 7, p. 572.)

Ulrich Zwingli

"I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin."

(Zwingli *Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.)

John Calvin

Helvidius displayed excessive ignorance in concluding that Mary must have had many sons, because Christ's "brothers" are sometimes mentioned.

(*Harmony of Matthew, Mark and Luke*, sec. 39 [Geneva, 1562], vol. 2 / From *Calvin's Commentaries*, translated by William Pringle, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1949, p.215; on Matthew 13:55)

[On Matt 1:25:] The inference he [Helvidius] drew from it was, that Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband . . . No just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words . . . as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called "first-born"; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin . . . What took place afterwards the historian does not inform us . . . No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation. **(Pringle, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 107)**

Under the word "brethren" the Hebrews include all cousins and other relations, whatever may be the degree of affinity. **(Pringle, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 283 / Commentary on John, [7:3])**

As a matter of fact, the ***abandonment*** of these beliefs has evolved over time by those seeking to further divorce themselves from the only Church established by Christ himself, following instead the precepts and traditions of men that our Lord spoke against (**Mark 7:5-9**).

In the final analysis – not only is the Scriptural evidence for Mary’s Perpetual Virginity overwhelming – the **LACK** of Scriptural evidence for her having had other children is also overwhelming. This, coupled with the fact that there is not even **ONE** Early Church writer with a dissenting opinion makes for an even stronger case. The burden of proof is on those who insist that Mary had children ***other*** than Jesus.

As we have examined from Prophecy, Type & Fulfillment, Tradition Linguistics and History – they have their work cut out for them . . .

Early Church Fathers on the Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Once again, the teachings of **Early Church Fathers** put the subject of Mary's perpetual virginity to rest:

Origen - *The Book [the Protoevangelium] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. **And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the first fruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first fruit of virginity (Commentary on Matthew 2:17 [A.D. 248]).***

Hilary of Poitiers - *If they [the brethren of the Lord] had been Mary's sons and not those taken from Joseph's former marriage, she would never have been given over in the moment of the passion [crucifixion] to the apostle John as his mother*, the Lord saying to each, "**Woman, behold your son,**" and to John, "**Behold your mother**" ([John 19:26-27], as he bequeathed filial love to a disciple as a consolation to the one desolate (Commentary on Matthew 1:4 [A.D. 354])).

Athanasius - Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence **deny also that He took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary** (Discourses against the Arians 2:70 [A.D. 360]).

Epiphanius - We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down and took flesh, that is, **was born perfectly of the holy ever-virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit** (The Man Well-Anchored 120 [A.D. 374]). 9:1–6 [A.D. 150]).

Jerome - *But as regards Victorinus, I assert what has already been proven from the gospel—that he [Victorinus] spoke of the brethren of the Lord not as being sons of Mary but brethren in the sense I have explained, that is to say, brethren in point of kinship, not by nature. (Against Helvidius: The Perpetual Virginity of Mary 19 [A.D. 383]).*

Didymus the Blind - *It helps us to understand the terms "firstborn" and "only begotten" when the Evangelist tells that Mary remained a virgin "until she brought forth her firstborn son" [Matt. 1:25]; for neither did Mary, who is to be honored and praised above all others, marry anyone else, nor did she ever become the mother of anyone else, but even after childbirth she remained always and forever an immaculate virgin" (The Trinity 3:4 [A.D. 386]).*

Ambrose of Milan - *Imitate her [Mary], holy mothers, who in her only dearly beloved Son set forth so great an example of maternal virtue; for neither have you sweeter children [than Jesus], **nor did the virgin seek the consolation of being able to bear another son (Letters 63:111 [A.D. 388])***

Augustine - *In being born of a virgin who chose to remain a virgin even before she knew who was to be born other, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than to impose it. And he wanted virginity to be of free choice even in that woman in whom he took upon himself the form of a slave (Holy Virginity 4:4 [A.D. 401]).*

It is written [quoting Ez 44:2]: 'This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it. Because the Lord God of Israel hath entered it . . .' What means this closed gate in the house of the Lord, **except that Mary is ever to be inviolate?** What does it mean that **'no man shall pass through it,'** save Joseph shall not know her? And what is this--**'The Lord alone enters in and goeth out by it.'** except that the Holy Ghost shall impregnate her, and that the Lord of Angels shall be born of her? And what means this--**'It shall be shut for evermore,'** but **Mary is a Virgin before His birth, a Virgin in His birth, and a Virgin after His birth.**"

Cyril of Alexandria - *The Word himself, coming into the Blessed Virgin herself, assumed for himself his own temple from the substance of the Virgin and came forth from her a man in all that could be externally discerned, while interiorly He was true God. Therefore he kept his Mother a virgin even after her childbearing(Against Those Who Do Not Wish to Confess That the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God 4 [A.D. 430]).*

Council of Constantinople II (553 - 554) twice referred to Mary as "ever-virgin."