

Chapter 6 – Mary, mother of Jesus

Birth Events

1. She lived in Nazareth.
2. She was of the lineage of David.
3. She was a cousin to Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist.
4. She was engaged to a carpenter, named Joseph.
5. She was visited by an angel.
6. She was a virgin, at least until after Jesus' birth.
7. She conceived a son by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.
8. She was a godly woman.
9. She was filled with the Holy Spirit in pronouncing the Magnificat (Lk. 2:46-55)

Early Life Events

10. She gave birth to her firstborn in a stable in Bethlehem.
11. She dedicated her firstborn male child to God in the Temple.
12. She and Joseph were poor (note sacrifice offered)
13. She fled with Joseph to Egypt.
14. She and Joseph returned to Nazareth.
15. She was a normal married mother.

Later Life Events

16. She was with Jesus at the marriage at Cana, and somehow knew he was to do something about the lack of wine.
17. She visited Jesus in his ministry but did not follow him during his journeys.
18. She apparently had other children whose names are recorded for us in Scripture.
19. She accompanied his brothers to Capernaum (Mark 3:21, 31-35) to take Jesus home fearing he was "beside himself".
20. She was at the crucifixion and watched her son die. Jesus, from the cross, speaks to John to take Mary to his home.
21. In the book of Acts she is mentioned only as being among the disciples and women who continued with one accord in prayer and supplication for the Holy Spirit.
22. In all the epistles, the life of the early church, and in all 10 post-resurrection appearances she had no special dispensation or visit from her son.

Can you think of any biblical fact about Mary's life that has been left out?

Did Mary Continue a Virgin?

In the next chapter of our study will look more carefully at the virgin birth. The Roman Catholic Church asserts that Mary remained a virgin all her life. This is based not on the Scripture but as we have seen, on the apocryphal writings, which are dubious at best. This is not to say that Mary's continued virginity, or subsequent birthing of children, is of any theological import. It is not. Nor is it worth arguing except when men wish to make her a co-redemptrix or co-mediator. Such arguments become mute when we let Scripture dictate our facts and beliefs. (Fausset p.456-457)

Did Mary Have Other Children?

The question would be a moot one except for the fact that the bible in several instances unabashedly describes Jesus as having brothers and sisters.

There are at least three very clear passages which indicate that Mary had other children.

1. 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?"
2. Mark 3:21, Matthew 12:46-49, Luke 8:19 "While Jesus was 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 talk to you.' He replied, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother and brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.' "
3. John 7:5 "Even his own brothers did not believe in him."

The very concept of Mary's alleged perpetual virginity is ridiculous when one seriously considers scripture the highest source of knowledge of such things. The Bible nowhere even hints of such a doctrine. On the contrary, it advocates the opposite. The first few centuries of the church did not know of this doctrine. "It was in the early century's strict asceticism regarding celibacy as a higher state than marriage, and that sexual relations were part of man's sinful nature that incubated this fiction." (Zondervan Vol. 4 p.111)

The scriptures surrounding Mary's life beg the question. The phrase, "I know not a man" (Luke 1:34), "before they were come together" (Matthew 1:18) and "He had no union with her until she gave birth to a son" (Matthew 1:25) all indicate that there was a later normal sexual relationship between Mary and Joseph.

Betrothal

Engagement and marriage were sacred institutions in Jewish customs. Commitments were deep sacred vows made before God and were not to be taken lightly and were unalterable except under extremely extenuating circumstances. Betrothal was as serious as marriage and just as binding. The bible calls the betrothed man the husband and the betrothed woman the wife as though marriage had already taken place. To become engaged a man would make a formal proposal of marriage to his prospective bride and a small gift was given as an earnest on the pledge. From that time the community viewed them as surely married as if they had consummated the marriage ceremony. The betrothal period normally was about a year. A betrothal could only be broken by a bill of divorcement, just as in marriage. Any sexual relationship during the engagement was treated as adultery with all of its legal and social ramifications. (Zondervan, Vol 4, p. 107)

BIRTH OBLIGATIONS

There were religious obligations imposed on every Jewish mother and equally on the firstborn male child of a Jewish family. There were Old Testament commandments of Moses and ceremonial laws to be fulfilled. Of these rituals there were three specifically that needed to be cared for: circumcision, purification and dedication.

Circumcision

The first of the rituals was that of circumcision as proscribed by the law of Moses and initiatory to the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant. If you would like to read some fascinating facts regarding the medical value of circumcision on the eighth day read *None of These Diseases* by S.I. McMillen. (Try <http://www.amazon.com> to find this book) The covenant of Abraham was sealed by circumcision in Genesis 17. Circumcision was practiced by Moses in his own family in Exodus 4:24 and laid down in the Mosaic Law for all Israel in Exodus 12:43-48. The rite was to be done either in the temple, a synagogue, by a priest, and at some times permitted to be done in the home usually by the father-in-law. The Hebrew word for the father-in-law is "circumciser", perhaps indicating that the father-in-law from the earliest days was responsible for this rite.

By the time of Jesus' birth the official naming of the child was done at the same time. In the case of Jesus, his Jewish name was "Yeshua", translated, Joshua or Jesus.

Purification

According to Mosaic law a woman giving birth was ceremonially unclean. Luke uses the term "when the time of their purification according to the law of Moses had been completed". The word "their" has caused some consternation among various commentators. Some assume that "their purification" refers to the Jews' purification. If we view Luke as a careful scholar and historian we must assume that "their" means both Mary

and Joseph. It is obvious that according to the law of Moses in Leviticus 12:2-8 it is the

mother who is unclean for seven days, then after the boy's circumcision she is to wait another 33 days to be purified from her bleeding. The father is not mentioned as being unclean. However, if the father participated in the childbirth he would be considered unclean according to Leviticus 5:1-13. That is, if he touches anything that is unclean, or if he touches any human uncleanness such as the blood of childbirth he would be unclean. If Joseph had been ceremonially unclean he would naturally wait to go with Mary at the end of her purification period.

Mary would have had to wait at least 40 days for the purification ceremony at which time they would have walked the six miles to Jerusalem to care for this matter. Being poor, Mary and Joseph were permitted to substitute a sacrifice of "a pair of young doves or two young pigeons" for that normally required. What is especially interesting is that the need of Mary to be purified precludes that she was as any other woman - not without sin.

Dedication

An often forgotten ceremony required by the law was that of the dedication of the firstborn male to the Lord. (Exodus 13:12,13; Numbers 3:11-13; 8:17,18) The child had to be the firstborn of the mother and should not be of Levitical descent, or the child would be dedicated to the priesthood if free of all physical blemishes. The ceremony was brief in which the parents formally presented the child to the priest. The priest offered two short benedictions, or blessings, then the redemption money was exchanged. (Edersheim p.136)

The whole idea of redemption springs from Numbers 3:11-13 in which God claims every firstborn as his own, but according to Numbers 8:15 God says, "I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons of Israel." Therefore, every non-levite firstborn had to be redeemed, or bought back from God. Even the firstborn of livestock belonged to the Lord and had to be redeemed if they were not given wholly to God's service.

Discussion

1. Without being offensive, how would you show a Roman Catholic friend that Mary is not co-redeemer with Jesus? (Be tactful!)
2. Do you believe that the Virgin Birth is an important doctrine? Why?