



**WIN Program: Witnessing in Neighborhoods  
Advanced Class on Catholicism**

**Week Five**

**Mary's Virginity and Matt. 1:25**

**Is Mary the mother of God, theotokos?**

**If Mary was sinless, why was she unclean and had to offer a sacrifice  
for sin?**

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# Mary's Virginity and Matt. 1:25

[By Matt Slick](#)

The Roman Catholic Church maintains that Mary retained her virginity after the birth of Christ. It says in paragraph 510 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin" (St. Augustine, Sermon 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is "the handmaid of the Lord" ([Lk 1:38](#)).

Did she remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus? Answering the question can have a strong effect on subsequent doctrines. As far as Protestant theology goes, it makes no difference if Mary remained a virgin or not; but in Roman Catholic theology, it is very important since it elevates Mary to such a high degree that she seems almost like a goddess and receives titles such as co-mediatrix, queen of heaven, mother of the church, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the issue of her perpetual virginity in hopes of providing a more biblical position.

The word "virgin" in the New Testament is *parthenos*, and it occurs 14 times. However, the word does not occur in [Matt. 1:25](#). Instead, the literal Greek says, "and he knew her not until she gave birth to a son and called his name Jesus."

This would seem pretty straightforward that Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary until the birth of Christ; and that after the birth of Jesus, they had relations. The word "until" is a preposition and means "up to that time, before a specified time, to the extent that."

1. Up to the time of: "I ate until I was stuffed." This means that I ate and stopped when I was full and designates a change of action. "I ate up to the time that I was stuffed."
2. Before a specified time: "You can't go until you've paid the fine." This designates a condition required before a change can occur. "You can't go before you've paid the fine."
3. To the extent that: I worked until I was exhausted. Signifying an effect or condition as a result. "I worked to the point that I was exhausted."

In [Matt. 1:25](#) it says that Joseph kept Mary a virgin until the birth of Jesus. The implication is that she stopped being a virgin after the birth of Christ when they consummated their marriage, but typical Roman Catholic apologists cannot accept this explanation. Instead, they say she remained a virgin and cite verses where "until" does not mean a change in condition. For example,

- [1 Cor. 15:25](#), "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."
- [Phil. 1:10](#), "so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."
- [1 Tim. 6:14](#), "that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In each verse, the word "until" does not designate cessation of the condition mentioned. In [1 Cor. 15:25](#) Jesus still reigns after he puts all enemies under his feet. In [Phil. 1:10](#) we will still be blameless after the day of Christ. In [1 Tim. 6:14](#) we are to still keep the commandments of God after Jesus returns. Therefore, the Roman Catholics say that Mary retained her virginity because the word "until" does not necessitate that she stopped being a virgin.

Of course, it is just as easy to find verses that show a change in condition.

- [Acts 20:11](#), "And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed."
- [Acts 23:12](#), "And when it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul."
- [Rev. 7:3](#), "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."

In each verse above, the word "until" designates a change in condition/action. In [Acts 20:11](#) Paul talked with them until daybreak and then left. In [Acts 23:12](#) evil men would not eat or drink until Paul had been killed. [Rev. 7:3](#) prohibits harm to the earth, sea, and trees until the bond servants were sealed.

Therefore, we can see that the word "until" is used in different contexts; and it is not appropriate to look to other persons to see how the word is used and transfer the meaning of that word to [Matt. 1:25](#). What are we to do?

## Words mean what they mean in context

Context is the most significant thing we must look at when determining the meanings of words. The context of [Matt. 1:25](#) is,

"Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." <sup>24</sup> And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup> and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus." ([Matt. 1:22-25](#)).

The context deals with a virgin bearing a child. Virginity here is the important topic, and Matthew clearly wants us to understand that Jesus was not the result of normal sexual relations between a husband and wife. This is why Mary's virginity is cited in prophecy in the Old Testament and its fulfillment in the New. The issue of her virginity is primary since Jesus is the son of God, the divine Messiah. Matthew then tells us that Joseph kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son. The most natural reading is to conclude that he kept her a virgin until Jesus was born; that is, she wasn't a virgin after Jesus was born because she and Joseph had sexual relations.

## Conclusion

Is this conclusion airtight? No, it is not. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin affirmed the perpetual virginity of Mary. Whether or not they and the Roman Catholic Church are correct will ultimately be decided when we encounter the Lord, and he reveals the truth to us in heaven. But whether or not Martin Luther, John Calvin, Roman Catholics, or anyone else believe Mary retained her virginity has no bearing on whether or not she did. We must always appeal to the primacy of Scripture and not to the opinions of theologians.

It is the opinion of CARM that Mary was a virgin until the birth of Jesus.

## Objections Answered

Objection: While Jesus was on the cross, why didn't he commit his mother Mary to one of his brothers instead of John? If he had brothers and/or sisters, shouldn't Jesus have committed her to them? Since he didn't, therefore it must mean that he didn't have any brothers and sisters. [John 19:26-27](#), "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"<sup>27</sup> Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household."

Answers:

1. "But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and fled." ([Matt. 26:56](#)).
2. "Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered." ([Matt. 26:31](#)).
3. "I have become estranged from my brothers, and an alien to my mothers sons." ([Psalm 69:8](#)). Psalm 69 is a Messianic Psalm.
4. [Matt. 13:55-56](#) says, "Is not this the carpenters son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"<sup>56</sup> And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"
5. First, Jesus was separating himself from his mother, breaking the earthly ties ([2 Cor. 5:16](#)) and committing her to the one male disciple, John the Apostle, who was actually present and who apparently showed the greatest love for him by being there and possibly risking his own life in doing so. After all, everyone else had abandoned him.
6. In committing Mary to John, he was providing the best for Mary by not committing her to the siblings who had abandoned him. Also, he gave John a higher place than he gave to Peter regarding Mary. Notice that Jesus told Mary first to look to John--not John to Mary. This dispels any idea that Mary has any supremacy in the church. We later see in Acts that Mary took her place among (not over) the believers at a prayer meeting. "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." ([Acts 1:14](#)).
7. Second, there is biblical evidence that Jesus had siblings.
8. Third, it is possible that because He desired to have John take care of Mary (due to his faithfulness) instead of his brothers who had abandoned him ([Matt. 26:31, 56](#)), it was necessary for Jesus to specifically declare what he wanted. This declaration can be seen as evidence that Jesus was speaking to make clear his intention that John take care of Mary, not his own brothers.[1](#)

# Is Mary the Mother of God, theotokos?

By [Matt Slick](#)

The Roman Catholic Church frequently refers to Mary as "The Mother of God." The phrase is associated with the Greek *theotokos* which means God-bearer. It is intended to be a term of exaltation and reverence to Mary who bore the Messiah, and is especially used by Catholic theologians.

Called in the Gospels "the mother of Jesus", Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as "the mother of my Lord". In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God" (Theotokos), (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 495).

Now, there is a problem with the term. The phrase "Mother of God" does not occur in [Scripture](#). However, the phrase "mother of my Lord" does. "And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?" ([Luke 1:43](#)). So is the title "Mother of God" warranted of Mary? It depends on what is meant by the phrase, as well as what is attached to it.

Mary is called the mother of God in the Catechism of the Catholic Church 29 times in the following paragraphs: 466, 467, 469, 493, 495, 509, 721, 963, 966, 971, 975, 1014, 1020, 1138, 1161, 1172, 1187, 1192, 1195, 2131, 2177, 2502, 2619, 2675, 2677, 2678, 2725, 2827, 2853. Within these paragraphs that call Mary the mother of God, we see some pretty bold statements about her.

1. "the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son..." (CCC 721)
2. "the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church" (CCC 975)
3. "our inviolate Lady, the holy Mother of God..." (CCC 1161)
4. "This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God..." (CCC 2502)

Such exalted praises of Mary cannot be justified from Scripture. Instead, they are inventions of the Roman Catholic Church. Yes, Mary bore the Messiah who is God in flesh, but she is not the "mother of God" in the sense that she was before him and/or superior to him as is what motherhood implies.

## The Mother of God

God himself is a supreme being, and the emotional inference of being the "mother of" someone carries with it authority over, maturity beyond, and even superiority. This kind of attitude has led to further errors.

1. She is called the second Eve, (Mystici Corpois Christ, par. 110)
2. expressed devotion to Mary, (CCC 971)
3. They pray to Mary, (CCC 2679)
4. Mary sits at the right hand of Christ, "(Pope Pius X, 1835-1914, Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum, 14)
5. Mary is second only to Jesus, (Handbook for Today's Catholic, p. 31)
6. "so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother," (Vatican Website: Encyclical of Pope Leo 13th on the Rosary, Octobri Mense, Pope Leo 13th, 1903-1914)

## Problems with "Mother of God"

As you can see from the above quotes, Mary is highly exalted. Along with her exaltation is the implication that Mary has better access to [Jesus](#) because she is his mother and Jesus will listen to his mother. I've heard countless Roman Catholics tell me this. Add to this the error that no one goes to Christ but through Mary (Pope Leo 13th), and it should be clear that Mary is being idolized beyond what is appropriate. That is why Roman Catholicism advocates praying to Mary (CCC 2679). This is a problem because this leads to people putting their focus, hope, and prayers in Mary instead of Jesus. This is heresy. It is idolatry.

An additional problem is found when we compare Mary in relation to God the Trinity (the teaching that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). When the Catholic Church says that Mary is the "mother of God" there is the possibility of implying that Mary is the mother of the [Trinity](#). Since this is not logically possible, the Catholics would have to understand the term in a different sense. They would, of course, say that Mary is only the mother of the second person of the Trinity, the Word. But they don't clarify this very often. Instead, they continually use the phrase "mother of God" and leave it open that somehow Mary has a special relationship to God himself by being the mother of Christ. Again, this is dangerous since it encourages people to take their eyes off of Christ, putting on to the creature: Mary.

God is the preeminent one, the most important and praiseworthy being in the universe. God has no "mother." He is the creator of all things. Motherhood, on the other hand, is a biological function (as it is used in the context of Mary in Roman Catholicism), not one dealing with the nature and essence of God as it relates to a human being who is a mother. But, God has no mother. There is nothing and there is no one before him, equal to him, or comparable to him. We must guard his glory and not give it to another.

Finally, the term "mother of God" runs the risk of suggesting that Mary is somehow divine and part of the Godhead. So far, the Roman Catholic Church does not teach this, but there is a movement within Catholic adherents to exalt Mary to the level of divinity. The Roman Catholic Church, so far, has rightly denounced this proposal, but it does not mean that later on there might be a movement that succeeds in elevating her to divinity or semi-divinity. After all, consider the above references that exalt her far beyond what the Scriptures teach. If the Roman Catholic Church can go beyond what is written in Scripture ([1 Corinthians 4:6](#)) in disregard to it, who is to say that it won't eventually elevate her to the status equal to a goddess?

# If Mary was sinless, why was she unclean and had to offer a sacrifice for sin?

By [Matt Slick](#)

Roman Catholics teach that [Mary](#) never sinned. But, if that is the case, why did she need to offer an atonement according to Old Testament Law ([Lev. 12:1-8](#)) after giving birth to [Jesus](#)? According to the Old Testament, it was only the mother who needed purifying after a birth because of the issue of blood. She was ritually unclean. If she had a male child, the days of her period of uncleanness was seven days, then the child was circumcised, then she remained unclean for 33 days (v. 4)--for a total of 40 days. If she bore a female child, her period of uncleanness would be 14 days plus 66 days for a total of 80 days. Notice in [Leviticus 12:2](#) it says if she bears a male child, she shall be unclean for seven days. If Mary was sinless, how could she also be unclean?

Below is a chart that has Leviticus 12 and Luke 2 side by side. You can see from the text that Mary had to offer a sacrifice for uncleanness and as it says in [Leviticus 12:8](#), a sacrifice for sin offering that is an atonement. Why would Mary, if she is sinless as the Roman Catholics assert, be unclean and also need a sacrifice?

	<a href="#">Lev. 12:1-8,</a>	<a href="#">Luke 2:16, 21-24,</a>
	1 "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,	
<b>Birth of a Son</b>	2 " <u>Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: 'When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean.</u>	16 And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.
<b>Circumcision at Eight Days</b>	3 ' <u>On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.</u>	21 And when <u>eight days were completed before His circumcision,</u> His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb
<b>33 Days</b>	4 ' <u>Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed.</u>	22 And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord
<b>If she bears a female</b>	5 'But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation;	23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every first-born male that



	and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for sixty-six days.	opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord” ),
<b>Days of Purification</b>	6 <u>‘When the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering.</u>	22 And when the <u>days for their purification</u> according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.
	7 <u>‘Then he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether a male or a female.</u>	
<b>Two Turtledoves or Two Pigeons</b>	8 <u>‘But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’</u>	24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”