



The Bible gives the names of these "brothers" of Jesus: James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3). But in other passages the parents of these people are identified.

In the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 27:55-56) it is said that there were three women watching the crucifixion from afar, and that among these were the mother of James and that of Joseph. This rules out *James* and *Joseph* as Mary's children.

In Luke's Gospel (Luke 6:16) we read that Judas is the son of James. This rules out *Judas* as the son of Mary.

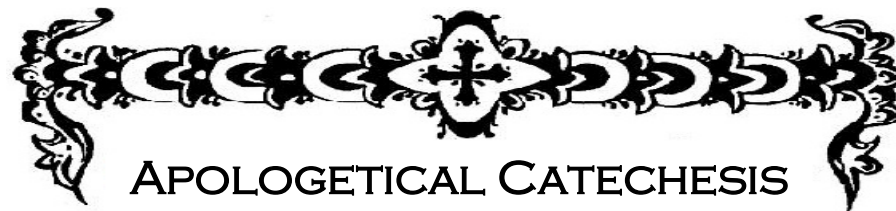
In the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 10:4) *Simon* is called "the Canaanite." This indicates that Simon was originally from the town of Cana in Galilee. Jesus and Mary were from Nazareth. This rules out *Simon* as Mary's son.

Those who cling to the fact that the word "brother" always describes the children of the same father, and cling to this meaning only to try to deny Mary's virginity; if the word brother always indicates fleshly brethren, then the Bible tells us that Mary had more than 500 children, and this is utterly absurd.

When God appeared to Moses at Sinai, He said, "*Mark a boundary around the mountain and declare it holy.*" (Exodus 19:23) and "Everyone who touches the mountain will die" (Exodus 19:12).

How dare some think that any man could have defiled Her who bore God in her womb nine months?

If touching a mountain of stone where God manifested Himself invisible to man brought death, what spiritual death occurs to those who defile the one who gave birth to God by making Him visible, denying His virginity?



APOLOGETICAL CATECHESIS

WAS MARY ALWAYS A VIRGIN?

From the earliest years of the Church, Mary was called not only Virgin, but Ever Virgin.

He was considered to have never come into sexual union with Joseph, before or after the birth of Christ. Ezekiel 44:1, 2 is a passage of Holy Scripture quoted by the early Church Fathers as a prophecy of her virginity: "*Then she turned me to the outer porch of the sanctuary, which looked toward the east. It was closed. And the Lord said to me, 'This porch will remain closed.' It will not be opened, and no one will pass through it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has passed through it. It will therefore be closed.*"

In the traditional interpretation of this passage, Mary is the Temple and Christ is Lord. The portico mentioned is seen as



an image of Christ's passage through the door of Mary's womb. This interpretation was held by most of the early Church Fathers, as well as many of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation.

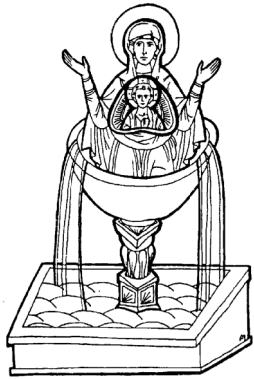
If he remained a virgin, why does the Gospel of Matthew say that Joseph did not know his wife until Christ was born? (Matthew 1:25 KJV)

From the point of view of Scripture, the presence of the phrase "*until she gave birth to her firstborn son*" does not automatically mean that Joseph knew her later. This is because in Greek and Hebrew the word "up or up to" can have several meanings. In 2 Samuel 6:23, we see that, "*And Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no children until the day of his death.*"



ORTHODOX ANSWERS 7





It is used again in Matthew 28:20, when the risen Christ says, "*And behold, I am with you always, **even to the end of the age.***"

And in Deuteronomy 34:5, we read that Moses was buried "*in the valley, in the land of Moab... No one has known his tomb **to this day.***"

Obviously, the use of the word in these passages does not mean that Michal had a son *after* his death, that Christ will *depart* or *will not be* with us at the end of the world, or that the place of Moses' burial was discovered *on the day* Deuteronomy

34:6 was written.

In the same way, the word **until** in Matthew 1:25 does not mean that Joseph and Mary began a sexual relationship after the birth of Christ. Such teaching is nowhere found in Scripture and is inconsistent with the voice of the entire early Church:

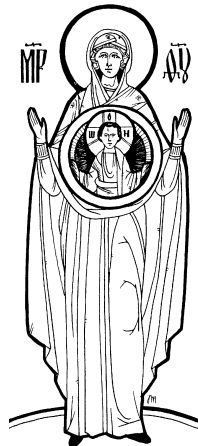
St. Ignatius (110 A.D.) calls Mary: "the Virgin Mary."

Didymus (313 A.D.) tells us that: "For Mary, who is to be honoured and exalted above all others, married no one, nor was she the mother of anyone else, for after the birth of her son she remains always and forever a virgin."

St. Augustine of Hippo (334 A.D.): "Virgin at conception, Virgin at birth, Virgin with childbirth, Virgin at birth, perpetual virgin. Why are you astonished at this, O man? It was fitting for God to be born in such a way."

St. Cyril of Alexandria (423 A.D.) "kept his mother a virgin even after she gave birth."

St. Peter Chrysologus (405 A.D.): "Where are those who think that the Virgin's conception and childbirth are like those of other women? Theirs are of the world, and hers are of heaven. Hers are by divine power and hers by human weakness. Virgin conceived, virgin gave birth, virgin remains."



"He, being the **Only Begotten of God**, by his love, became the **Only Begotten of Mary**" (Prayer of St. Ephrem).

The "brothers" of Jesus. But doesn't the Bible mention other "brothers and sisters" of Christ?

Who are they and where do they come from?

In the accounts of the Evangelists four persons are called "brothers" and are mentioned as "sisters" of Jesus—no less than three, as seen in the words, "*And your sisters, are they not all among us?*" (Matt. 13:56). But none of them is directly called the son or daughter of Mary.



In the account of the Infant Jesus' journey to Jerusalem at the age of 12, where "relatives and acquaintances" are mentioned among those who sought Jesus and who were also on Mary and Joseph's annual journeys to Jerusalem, there is no mention of the presence of other minor sons of Mary: and so, flowed the first 12 years of the Saviour's earthly life.

When, nearly twenty years later, after the journey described, Mary stood before the Cross of the Lord, she was alone and was entrusted by her Divine Son to his disciple John, and "*from this moment the disciple took her with him.*" Evidently, as the early Christians also understood, the Evangelists speak of "half-brothers" or first cousins of Jesus Christ.

In numerous passages, the Bible speaks of children and relatives as "brothers." Abraham and Lot are called brothers, although Lot was actually Abraham's nephew. And Jacob and Laban are called brothers, although Jacob was the son of Rebekah the daughter of Laban.

Scripture is silent about the nature of the relationship between Christ and these "brothers and sisters."

The early Church Fathers differed slightly in their understanding of the meaning of these terms. St. Ambrose believed that they were children of a previous marriage between Joseph and a wife prior to Matthew chapter 1. Others taught that they were cousins of Jesus. But, they all agree on one thing: Mary and Joseph never had sexual contact, either before or after Christ was born.

