



## *The Matthew 16:18 Group*

And In My Hour Of Darkness She Is Standing There In Front Of Me:

*Mary From Genesis To Revelation-*

***Or***

### **How I Stopped Ignoring Mary and Enhanced My Love For Jesus**

When I was a Protestant, I thought the Catholic focus on Mary was an unscriptural and idolatrous elevation of her to a position replacing the mediating role of Jesus between God and humankind. I was positive that the Bible proved that she was no different than any other human being, that she and Joseph had lots of sex after Jesus was born, and that she had other children. I had no doubt that the Bible taught that “all have sinned and all have fallen short of the Glory of God” so , Mary was sinner like the rest of us, in need of a Savior.

I denied that she was immaculately conceived. By this I mean that I did not believe she was miraculously conceived by God in her mother’s womb (like Jesus in her womb). Thus, I showed my profound ignorance of what “immaculate” meant. It disturbed me no end that this dogma was not declared official doctrine by The Catholic Church until 1854. This seemed like an innovation. As far as I was concerned, all the councils and dogmas established after Luther’s reformation were on the face false.

It never occurred to me to ask how the Church had the authority to declare doctrines like the trinity, the canon of the scripture, the divinity of Christ, etc, that I readily accepted but that same Church did not have the like authority in other matters---but still that’s what I somehow believed.

Then there was this problem I had with the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. In my thinking, it was a scandal of Catholic mythology---like Poseidon under the sea or Zeus in the Sky. To me, this was even worse than the Immaculate Concept because it was declared by the Pope after world wide consultation with not only the Bishops but polling many of the faithful . I called it “vote a dogma” , poll the faithful, they say “yes” , and

poof! It's dogma! And this came out in the 1950's. How modern, I thought, how utterly inventive! This was nowhere found in scripture! It did not make sense to me and it seemed like just another part of Mary worship---goofy at best and idolatry at worst.

A further problem was all the alleged Marian visitations. You know, the ones like her rusted image appears on a bridge, or on a piece of toast. If I couldn't believe that she appeared on some frosted window how could I believe she appeared at Lourdes?

Then there was the whole problem of the feminization of God. These Catholics, I was pretty sure made Mary a fourth member of the God head. I was told over and over that they worshiped her . And of course, they prayed to her. Now the Bible was clear to me that there was only one Mediator between man and God and that was Jesus Christ. In summary, I was not amused by what I thought was Marian theology.

Being convinced that the entire subject area was fraught with heresy and idolatry , I thought it would displease God if I studied it . Maybe I would get misled. Maybe I would open myself up to false teaching. And what would be the point? I already had Jesus.

### **Art Museums:**

By 1996 I was beginning to find serious flaws in my Christian world view. I remember going to the Toledo Museum in 1999 and viewing Marian art work of the counterreformation era. I remember standing and look at painting after painting of Marian pictures and thinking---“Did those Catholic artists really paint these themes as a propaganda response to the reformation?” And then it dawned on me. I could easily research pre-reformation art to discover if Mary was central to the faith. Of course what I found was that the earliest, oldest and most ancient Christian art had an extraordinary focus on Mary, the mother of Jesus. Art reflects history and culture and therefore I could conclude that what ever Mary had become over the last 550 years since the reformation, one thing was obvious to my eyes: Mary was more prominent in Christian art history than any other human in the scriptures. I decided I better open my heart to the mother of Jesus and take a good look.

### **Satan Despises Mary-**

Revelations 12

### **The Doctrine of The Assumption and The Immaculate Conception**

Assumption w/o death has a biblical basis—Enoch and Elijah were both assumed (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5; 2Kings 2:10-12).

Further, there is no city or place that claims to be the burial place of Mary---but Ephesus is the world pilgrimage spot where she lived with John in her final years.

### **Mary Was Not A Perpetual Virgin-Jesus had “brothers”**

This is a profound misunderstanding of the English translation of Hebrew words. Applying the literal English equivalent to Gen 13:8 presents a real problem when Abraham calls Lot his “brother” when clearly they are not brothers. **Firstborn** is likewise a technical term.

### **Be Not Afraid:**

Yet God calls to us as he called to Mary through the arch Angel Gabriel : Be not afraid! I came to see that all my life I never did so much as a Bible study on Mary. Sort of odd when I considered how I studied Ruth, Mary and Martha, Job’s, Sarah, Eve. So I decided to take a real long look at Mary. I felt certain that all my life I had trusted God to lead me and one thing I could not do any longer was to scripturally ignore the mother of my Lord Jesus. So, for many of my family and friends that find Catholic believes about Mary as strange as I did -- Here is what I have learned about her.

1. Mary’s grace was full, total, complete---there could be no more-what part of **full** don’t we understand?
2. Mary was unique in all human creatures because of this fullness of grace. Just as David was a “man after God’s own heart” and Jesus said that among men “there was no one greater” than John, so too in Mary we find no man or woman in all of scripture who was “full of Grace”
3. Mary was an intentional virgin, not a virgin in waiting. She had taken a vow to God. She was not a “rent a womb” in the sense that she was like any other normal woman. Virtually nowhere in the history of the Christian Church did anyone suggest that the “brothers” of Jesus were anything other than his cousins. Not until several years after the Reformation did the denial of her life long virginity start. ( See 19 below).
4. Mary was the one chosen by God to fulfill the prophecy of Genesis 3 and Isaiah 7
5. God sent an Archangel to announce and invite her to accept, and on Behalf of God—addresses her in the manner that God sees her. This was the greatest announcement ever made in Scripture.
6. Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit, makes a profound prophecy, that is that all generations for all time will call her “Blessed”
7. Her body was holy. Her womb was holy. She was the Arch of The Covenant made flesh.
8. She was pure. Humble. Lowly.
9. She made a total and complete self giving of herself, her soul and her body to God—she held nothing back. Her body was given to God . Her trust, Her hope, Her reputation. Unlike Abraham who did not have to watch his son die, Mary did. Still she trusted totally.
10. Her love for God was fruitful, in fact it was the most fruitful of any believers love (ever) because it produced the body of The Lord nine months later.
11. Her body nourished the body of the Lord. Therefore she and she alone had the most unique relationship with Jesus. He was her Lord but he was also flesh of her flesh and bones of her bones. He drew his nourishment and physical existence from her. Mary was also in the unique position to realize that her body, created by the Triune God, was then the body that nursed the Lord. Created by God, she fed God with the very milk that he himself created in her. Profound stuff.

12. She at no time takes any of this as her due or her own glory, at all times she points back to the Father and to The Son and To the Holy Ghost. Mary has the first full and complete encounter with the Trinity at the annunciation. What she knows from the moment of the annunciation takes several hundred years for the Church to hammer out as doctrine---that God is Three in One.
13. During the earthly kingdom God tells here through Gabriel that “she will be overshadowed by God” Thus she lives in the background throughout the Gospels. Always there, but never in front. She is at the birth, the presentation, the finding him in the Temple, at the First Miracle in Canaan, the last supper, at the passion and on Pentecost. Yet in the kingdom to come---she will be crowned as the Queen mother of Heaven in Revelation 12. In the end of the world, the fruit of her womb-Jesus- (the “heel” who put’s all his enemies under his footstool ) will crush the head of the serpent just as God promised in Gen. 3:15. Mary is the New Eve.
14. Just as nowhere in the scripture is the word “Trinity” used but only can be implied, so too the Immaculate Conception can not be found but only implied. It was the Church council of Nicaea that clarified and declared the Trinity to be an infallible doctrine of Christianity. It was the Church that recognized this doctrine.
15. So too, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is not accepted by most Protestant brothers and sisters, though many *do* believe it. It is a doctrine of Catholics and Orthodox but many *don’t* believe it. Still ,it is not without logic and reason if fully understood:---that Mary, born of human parents, was set apart by God so that from the moment of her conception she was preserved **TOTALLY BY GOD’S GRACE and NOT BY HER OWN MERITS** (she was not a goddess ) in such a manner that she was protected from the taint of original sin. As such she was fully human but did not sin. She thus became a perfect, fitting mother for Jesus --able to share with him the same sinless pure love for God but , unlike Jesus she did not have a Devine nature. Even so, as a member of the human race she still called Jesus “Lord” and “Savior”. There is documented evidence that Luther, the founder of the Reformation, believed in the Immaculate Conception and said so---although he felt it could not be totally supported by Scripture.
16. Her very physical appearance caused John The Baptist to be filled with the holy spirit in his mother’s womb. Because Mary’s flesh and Jesus’ flesh at the point of Visitation are inseparable, in some mysterious way Mary brings Jesus to John. And, in Mary’s visit to the house of her cousin---she introduces , ( though still in her womb) the body of Jesus to others. Today, to learn about her is still to see that she introduces the way, always and fully to her Son.
17. John The Baptist too, was born special. He was purged in Elizabeth’s womb of Adam’s sin even before his own birth. He was thus filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born. Proving again something special happed at the visitation. Proving God can and did make some people born without original sin.
18. Likewise, Mary’s appearance caused Elizabeth to venerate and pay the highest homage and honor to Mary. Elizabeth calls Mary “Blessed” and thus becomes the first one to begin the fulfillment of Mary’s prophecy that for all time she will be called blessed.
19. Shock of all Shocks: The following leading Protestants believed in the perpetual virginity of Mary and this can be easily verified by web research: Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Wesley. All were in agreement that the Bible’s references to the brother’s of Jesus did in fact mean cousins.
20. The Assumption is a doctrine that Mary at the end of her earthly life was assumed (she did not ascend of her own power like Jesus) by Jesus into heaven. Thus, her body did not undergo the physical degradation of human decay. This is consistent as to why, nowhere on earth is found a grave for her, like there is for Peter and Paul. It is also consistent that her body, with it’s holy womb would not be allowed

to decay by God. It is also consistent that if she was born without original sin there would be no need for her to await the resurrection. It is also consistent that she is now in heaven wearing the Crown of Revelation 12. The assumption is a gift of God that to show us that in the end times we too will be Assumed into heaven with all the angles. This doctrine gives us hope and shows us that “he did it for Mary and he will do it for us”

21. Fatima is an astounding, well document 20<sup>th</sup> century miracle. Read about it if you are uninformed. The sun danced. The prophecies about World War I and II and Russia all came true and for the life of me I don't know why I never looked into them. My unplanned visit to Fatima in September 2004 opened my eyes then to Lourdes, Guadalupe and others. This stuff is either the most preposterous lie the Church could make up, or Mary is warning us that the end times are drawing near and we should get ready for judgment. We must remember that “Gabriel” means power and judgment of God.
22. There is more that can united us about Mary than what we disagree on. She is a profound gift of God to us.

**Notes on Immaculate Conception-**{Bishop William Ullathorne, *The Immaculate Conception*, 1855}

Luke 1:35 "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

This verse explicitly establishes a link between Mary as bearer of the New Covenant and the Ark of the Old Covenant. The Gk. word for "overshadow" ("episkiasei") was used of the bright cloud at the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Mt 17:5; Lk 9:34) and is reminiscent of the Shekinah of the OT, which represented God's Presence (Ex 24:15-16; 40:34-8; 1 Ki 8:4-11). Mary became like the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where God dwelt. God gave extremely detailed instructions on constructing the ark, since it was to contain His Law (Ex 25-30 and 35-40). Mary had to be that much more holy, since she was to carry the Word of God in the flesh (Job 14:4). Further parallelism between Mary and the Ark is indicated in comparing Lk 1:43 with 2 Sam 6:9, Lk 1:44 with 2 Sam 6:14-16, and Lk 1:39-45,56 with 2 Sam 6:10-12.

Mary had to be sinless in order to be in such close proximity to God Himself. The whole Bible teaches this (e.g., Ex 3:5; Deut 23:14). God's Presence imparts and requires holiness (1 Cor 3:13-17; 1 Jn 3:3-9). The Jewish high priest entered the Holy of Holies (where the Ark and God's Special Presence were) only once a year, under threat of death if God's instructions were violated (Lev 16:2-4,13). The Ark itself was so holy that only a few were allowed to touch it (Num 4:15; 2 Sam 6:2-7). Thus, Mary, due to her ineffable physical and spiritual relationship with God the Son, the Holy Spirit (as "Spouse"), and God the Father (as "Daughter of Zion"), necessarily had to be granted the grace of sinlessness from conception, just as we all will be cleansed utterly in order to be present with God in heaven (Rev 21:27). Seen in this light, the Immaculate Conception, though still technically a deduction from the Bible, is a very biblical doctrine indeed.

4. Other biblical parallels to the Immaculate Conception exist. Jeremiah (Jer 1:5) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:15) were sanctified from the womb for the serious tasks to which God was calling them. The Apostles were endowed with many extraordinary gifts for their unique role in the history of Christianity (Acts 2; 2 Cor 3:5-6). Adam and Eve, before the Fall, were immaculate and without sin. They were brought forth from an immaculate earth, just as Jesus came forth from the immaculate Mary. Mary is the "second Eve" just as Jesus was the "second Adam" (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22,45). Mary, by her profound obedience (Lk 1:38), "undoes" Eve's disobedience in the Garden. The angels were created sinless and have remained so (except for the rebel demons). Saints in heaven are completely holy (Rev 14:5). God saved Mary by preserving her from the "pit" of sin, while He pulls the rest of us out of it. This is why God is every bit as much her Savior as He is ours (Lk 1:47).

The Immaculate Mary prefigures the perfected Church (Eph 5:25-27). Catholics venerate in Mary no more than the glory promised by God to every creature who stays the course. The doctrine of Original Sin is more difficult to believe than Mary's Immaculate Conception. It is no difficulty to believe that God can unite a soul to flesh without sin. It is much harder to accept the notion that millions of souls are conceived with it.

5. It is abundantly strange that so many Protestants see Catholic Marian beliefs as idolatrous, when in fact, the Immaculate Conception is nothing if not a case where God saves absolutely independently of human effort or "works," without even the possibility of them - pure grace and nothing but grace. Protestants hold that this is what saves everyone who attains salvation. So how can Catholics be chided for applying this notion of unmerited grace to Mary? The only difference is that Catholics believe that God's applied grace obliterates sin, whereas in Protestantism, it merely "covers it up." This notion, however, is unbiblical, and was originated, by and large, by Martin Luther.

6.

He who held back the waves of that Jordan, that the ark of the Old Testament might pass untouched and honored through its bed, could hold back the wave of Adam, lest it overflow the ark of the New Testament beneath its defiling floods. For He, who could have limited Adam's sin unto himself, can ward off that sin from Mary. And what He could, that He willed to do. For why should He not have willed it?

{Bishop William Ullathorne, *The Immaculate Conception*, 1855}