

Is not His Mother Mary?  
By Bob Vincent

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 13:53-58; Matthew 1:18-25  
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Well, I'm struck with this passage of Scripture. It's very striking, isn't it? People who had grown up around Jesus are scandalized. They recognized he had extraordinary wisdom. They had never heard anyone as wise as Jesus because Jesus was wiser than the wisest man who had ever lived up until that time, King Solomon. Where did this man get this wisdom? And then they say, "and these miraculous powers," in verse 54. They knew something was up but, you know, they didn't recognize Jesus for who he really was.

Why is that? Well, you know, there are a lot of false ideas that we've inherited over the past 1,700-1,800 years of Christianity. One of those is the kind of thing you see in paintings. What do you see when you see a picture of Jesus or the virgin Mary or the holy family? What do you see? They've got halos. You know, Jesus didn't have a halo nor did the virgin Mary have a halo. The only time that Jesus manifested his glory before his resurrection was on the Mount of Transfiguration when he took Peter, James and John high up on the mountain and Elijah and Moses came and visited with Jesus, and Jesus was transformed by the eyes of his disciples.

But if you had seen Jesus, you wouldn't have recognized him because he had this supernatural ring on top of his head. He looked like an ordinary man. In fact, I remember a cartoon years ago, it was based on the old tv show where you had to guess who the real mystery person was. I can't even remember the name of the show, but they asked these questions, the panelists did, and they had three people, one of whom was the real person. Does anyone remember that show?

“To tell the truth.” That’s exactly right, Miss Wanda. To tell the truth. And I saw this cartoon and the cartoon was three people purporting to be the Lord Jesus Christ. One was that Breck shampoo commercial Jesus. That’s the kind of effeminate Jesus with wonderfully, shining, beautiful, Aryan colored hair. Then there was the Campus Crusade for Christ Jesus. He looked like he had just been on the football field and had come in and was ready to take on whomever. And then there was a short, somewhat stocky man with balding hair. And that was the real Jesus.

Now, of course, that’s not true, but let me say that no one, absolutely no one knows what Jesus really looked like. You know, it’s interesting as you read the Bible, the Bible never gives us a description. You know, it gives us descriptions of people like King David, he had ruddy complexion, he may have had somewhat reddish hair. It gives us a description of King Saul, he was Head and Shoulders Shampoo, no head and shoulders above everybody else. But it doesn’t give us a description of what Jesus looked like. Why is that? I’ll give you several thoughts. One is that whenever we create Jesus, we’re creating an idol. Is it wrong to have a picture book with pictures like this that show Jesus with other people? No, but the point is that when we have our own creation, we’re giving a picture of Jesus that probably isn’t correct.

The second thing I think is that the Lord wants everybody to identify with Jesus. Jesus is Immanuel, he is God with us. And I remember visiting with a very good friend of mine who’s now dead, he was a Roman Catholic priest whose name was August Thompson, and he was an African American, and he had in his home—because I was a guest in his home on several occasions—pictures of St. Augustine, very much looking like the African that St. Augustine was. You see, he identified Jesus with his own people and so do people around the world.

So, I just want to say this: Had you been walking down the streets of Nazareth, had you been walking down the streets in Jerusalem, you probably would not have recognized Jesus because there was nothing to distinguish him. No halo. In fact, have you thought about it? Why did they have to hire Judas to betray him? Because you wouldn’t have noticed him in a crowd.

So here is the Lord Jesus, but he is well-known in his community because his father ... Was St. Joseph really Jesus’ father? And the answer is, not biologically, but legally and really. In other words, St. Joseph, once the Lord had been born from the virgin Mary, Joseph accepted her child as his child. So, St. Joseph was the father of Jesus but not biologically.

I was with one of my grandsons this past week. He's an African American, and he will be turning 8 in January. He's adopted. And I learned when I watched his adoption service in Memphis years ago, that there's a closer bond between parents and an adopted child than with a biological child. Why? I learned something I never knew before, you can get away from your own child, you can walk off and leave your own child, you can disinherit your own child, but once you have adopted someone, that bond never ends.

So, St. Joseph is the father of the Lord Jesus Christ even though he did not biologically produce him. So, Jesus grows up in the home of a technician. We commonly translate it as "carpenter," but he may have been a stonemason. He may have been any number of things. He was a builder, and there were lots of building programs going on near Nazareth, but as we read these words in verse 55 of Matthew 13, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?" They knew something that many people forgot when they got away from the Bible, and what is that? Mary had other children.

Turn with me, if you will, back to Matthew 1. Matthew 1, and as we read there on page 1,497, Matthew 1:18 says this, "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." Verse 19, "Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."

Let's think about that for a moment. You see, marriage in the Bible involved two things, it involved a covenant relationship that was entered into with our mouths. We pledged our commitment to each other. And in the Bible, there's a second thing that makes a marriage a marriage, and that is to come together as husband and wife. So, Joseph and Mary actually were married, but they had not had the second aspect of marriage until after she gave birth to the Lord Jesus, because marriage involves both the public act and the private act.

Now it says here that Joseph being a just man, did not want to put her to public disgrace. What would that mean? It means that under the Old Testament law, she should have been executed. Wow. Read it in Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). In other words, an engaged woman is in the eyes of the law of God, a married woman; it's just that the marriage has not yet been, in the \$10 word, consummated yet. And so, Joseph and

Mary are married legally but not finally, and when Joseph discovers that she is going to have a baby, he knows he's not the father, but he loves the virgin Mary, and he wants to do kindness for her, so he determines to divorce her quietly. Notice he was going to divorce her because they were legally married by the outward ceremony.

Now notice again that in Matthew 1, they had not yet come together, and so he's going to divorce her, because that was what he saw he needed to do because she had not been faithful to him in his natural understanding. But she had been, because the miracle of the Holy Spirit, who hovered on the waters of creation, hovered over her, and she came to become with child by a miracle of the Holy Spirit, who took of her substance and did something extraordinary. The Lord Jesus was created entirely out of the substance of Mary, and so it's not like in normal human conception, half the chromosomes from the male, half from the female, they were all from Mary.

And so, Joseph is going to divorce her, but the angel Gabriel tells him in a dream, "You don't do this." And so, what do we read here? He explains that he is called Son of David, Joseph is. "Don't be afraid to do this." Verse 21, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus."

Jesus is made up of two Hebrew words: Yahweh and Yeshua (יְשׁוּעָה), that is, Yahweh and Yasha (יֵשׁוּעַ), and so Jesus is "The Lord is salvation," Yehoshua (יְהוֹשׁוּעַ) or Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ), and so that's the name he needs to give him, but that's exactly the same name as Joshua, the son of Nun, the deliverer in the days of Moses. Why? "Because he will save his people from their sins."

Now look at this in verse 22, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet," quoting from Isaiah, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')."

Verse 24, "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife." Before they go down to Bethlehem, he took her into his home. He accepted her as his wife.

Normally, what would have happened if you read Deuteronomy, and it's still a practice in certain countries today. I talked to a Spanish priest once, and it's a custom that when a young lady is married, what happens is the parents spread a cloth on the bed, and so the outward covenant that's sworn with the mouth then is completed in the bedroom, and the parents save the sheet for proof that their daughter was a virgin. And that's the testimony of the Old Testament, that if a man accused his wife of not being a virgin when they got married, she could be stoned to death, but the parents always kept this

cloth that proved, A., the marriage took place, and B., she was a virgin when she got married (Deuteronomy 22:13-21).

Now, this is the background here, and so here's what happens. Joseph has now taken Mary into his home, they're living together, after all, they've been legally married by the covenant, but notice what makes this thing so unique. Verse 25, "But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son."

What does that mean? If you look at it in Greek, it's just like it is in English. It means he kept her a virgin until after she gave birth to the Lord Jesus, and after that, after the 40 days of cleansing for a male child have taken place, and they've offered the offering in the temple which Luke records (Leviticus 12:2-6; Luke 2:21-24), after that Mary ceased to be a virgin. In fact, biologically speaking, the moment that Mary gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, at that moment she ceased to be a virgin. The miracle is the virgin conception, not a virgin birth. It is a virgin conception.

But notice what's plainly stated here. She had other children, and I'm going to say this, as you read through the gospels, and you see these cases of the brothers of Jesus and the sisters of Jesus, only someone who is indeed highly prejudiced and wanting to take a stand on his own opinions rather than the word of God would ever say that Mary did not have other children.

Let's look at another passage of Scripture. Let's turn back to Matthew 12, page 1,516. Matthew 12 and beginning at verse 46, "While Jesus was still talking to the crowd," Matthew 12:46, and I've mentioned this passage before, "While Jesus was still 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 speak to you.'"

Now Jesus' response is very, very, very revealing because you need to understand that Mary was not sinless. Where is the idea that Mary was sinless come from? It came from people's imaginations. In fact, certain theologians going back to the Middle Ages and later on, only fairly recently in church history, came up with the idea of the Immaculate Conception. That has nothing to do with the conception of Jesus.

The Immaculate Conception means that Mary's parents conceived her without sin. Where did that come from? Did it come from the Bible? If you're listening to this on the internet, I'll write you a check for \$1,000 if you can prove that from the Bible. Where did the idea of the Immaculate Conception come from? It came from an idea to protect Mary from sin.

Mary was a sinner like everybody else, and you know what's amazing in the story of Mary and the conception of Jesus? God used this young woman. She was a godly woman, but she wasn't perfect. There's only been one human being since the fall who has been perfect who walked our earth and that is her beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you want proof of that, here it is in Matthew 12.

In Matthew 12, Mary who had experienced this incredible miracle, who had seen all of this evidence that Jesus was indeed who the angel Gabriel said he was, she's having doubts. Why did she have doubts? Because she hung out with the wrong people. She hung out with the wrong family. Probably Joseph is dead by now. We don't know. Maybe he was busy working. We don't know, but this is what we do know. When Jesus hears that Mary is out there with his family, verse 48, "He replied to him," the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"

Let that sink in for a moment. "Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'"

What does that mean? It means that Mary was not a disciple of Christ even though she was the mother of Christ. She was, to use the Greek church's word, the Theotokos (Θεοτόκος), the God-bearer. To use the Western church's word, she was the Mater Dei, the mother of God, the mother of Jesus, who in his human nature was conceived and born of the virgin Mary, in his human nature died on the cross. But he who died on the cross is not only a human being but Almighty God. And so, who died on the cross?

God died on the cross but not in his divine nature. It's a mystery. Do you understand it? Great. I don't. I accept it by faith because the Bible tells me so. The point that's crystal clear here in verse 49 and 50 is that Mary, who gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, did not remain a virgin, had other children, and was not herself a follower of Christ at this time. That explains why on the cross Jesus looks at the Apostle John and he tells him, "Take care of my momma" (John 19:26-27). Jesus loved his momma. He wanted to make sure his momma was taken care of, and that's why he instructed the Apostle John to take his momma into his home, rather than to be around these unbelieving brothers and sisters. So, it's very apparent there.

Now we go back over to the end of chapter 13 quickly, and we see here in verse 56, "'Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?' And they took offense." What offended them about Jesus?

Well, if you go back to Matthew 4, which we won't, it was the fact that he pointed out that nobody has a special claim on the promises of God by ancestry (Luke 4:24-29). So, what is our claim on the promises of God? It's belonging to the Lord Jesus because as many as may be the promises of God, in them are yea and in him amen.

And so Mary and Joseph had other children, sons and daughters, and it's patently obvious as we read the Bible at face value and not allow a bunch of neurotic men obsessed with their own idea of what's pure and not pure, and who hated the idea of marriage as Paul had predicted in 1 Timothy 4, there would come a great falling away and a doctrine of demons forbidding marriage (1 Timothy 4:1-3), but it's patently obvious that Mary had other children and that the New Testament has at least two books authored by half-brothers of Jesus, the letter of St. James and the letter of St. Jude. They were brothers together, half-brothers of Jesus.

Now let's close with this in verse 58, "And he did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief." Wow. As I think about where the world is today, not knowing who's going to be elected on December 14. You never know but looking at the world with the COVID-19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and an evolving virus. Wow, I don't know. I don't know.

As we look at the terrible economic devastation to our nation, as we look at hyper-inflation probably, as we look at this and that and angry people and people who are paid to be provocateurs, as we look at our world, as we look at the church of the Lord Jesus Christ which has gotten in the habit of not assembling together, churches are dying.

And the way of the future as I talked to a minister as I was driving out to the Hill Country that he shared with me what he observed, I think he's right. The future of the church is going to be very, very different. Ministers who cannot be bi-vocational . . . probably only very well-endowed, wealthy churches are going to be able to have a pastor who can be paid in a salary where he can take care of his family. It's the way of the future.

What's going to happen? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. But this I know: "As many as may be the promises of God, in Jesus Christ they are yea and in him amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Do you need a miracle today? I believe in miracles and I've seen so many miracles in my life, that's why as we gathered around the campfire Thanksgiving night on top of that mountain in Hunt, Texas, I shared with my children and my grandchildren the miracles that God had done for their grandmother and me, and they were moved.

I said, “The legacy I’ve got for you is a legacy of taking the promises of God seriously and believing them and claiming them by faith. If you know what God’s purpose is, then you can pray for a miracle, that you can be part of it, and he will meet your needs whatever they are.” Have faith.

May we pray.

*Lord, we pray that you would bless Trinity Evangelical Presbyterian Church in a very special way. And Lord, as we ponder what it’s like to be a 12-year-old girl\*, engaged to be married, and pregnant without a human father, what it must have been like for a young girl, bewildered, abandoned, an outcast, potentially facing public execution, Lord, may we be compassionate on all those whom we regard as living in sin, for the fact of the matter is, Lord, we have all lived in sin at one time or another. Give us the grace of compassion and grace and mercy and forgiveness towards others, even as you have shown great grace and mercy for us. In Jesus’ name, Immanuel.*

\* When we think of the Virgin Mary, we should think of a young woman around 12 or 13.

Earlier in the service, I had shared the story my ninth great grandmother, Mary Browne. Richard Browne was my tenth great grandfather. He was King Charles I’s ambassador to King Louis XIV. His daughter Mary was married in Paris to John Evelyn on June 27, 1647. She was 12 and he was 27.