



# WAS JESUS MARRIED?

## A QUICK FACT SHEET

### SUGGESTIVE EVIDENCE

1. The marriage of Jesus Christ is a taboo subject because most Christians regard it as an impious suggestion. They think this way because marriage implies sexuality, and sexuality is defiled in Christian dogma. A married Christ is rejected for *theological* reasons, not because of historical facts which may disprove the thesis.
2. While the New Testament "appears" to be silent on the subject, it was not until Clement of Alexandria, from the 2nd Century, that any Christian leader denied that Jesus Christ was married. Clement believed that a married Jesus was inconsistent with His role as the Savior of the world, not that marriage would have disqualified Him, but rather, that His public ministry was too demanding to allow Him the opportunity for marriage.
3. All later references in the Patristic writings show the Church Fathers following the same pattern: they deny that Jesus was married based upon the supposed silence of the Scriptures and doctrinal problems which were inconsistent with the Church's dogma (e.g. a celibate priesthood, the ritual defilement of seminal emissions, etc.).
4. There was a 2nd Century tradition among various heretical sects which taught that Jesus was married. Clement and others may have been reacting to those movements.

5. Although he didn't say one way or the other, Ireneaus' Doctrine of Recapitulation supports the notion of a married Savior. With a style similar to the Druids, Ireneaus, another 2nd Century leader, taught that Jesus Christ symbolically entered every critical stage of human existence and sanctified it. Since family life, including sexuality, is central to our lives, it seems logically consistent with the mission of a Savior to redeem and sanctify this aspect of our experience, as well.

6. In their dispute with Augustine, the Celtic Pelagians argued that the Atonement of Christ cancelled Original Sin. If Original Sin was, as Augustine argued, a sexually transmitted disease of the soul, then Christ has reversed the process and made it a transmitter of healing, health, and virtue.

7. In keeping with the Creeds of the Church, the offspring of Christ would not have represented a "divine race". The Creeds teach that Christ had two natures: one human and one divine, without mingling and without confusion. Since procreation is a human function, we can reasonably say that the children of Jesus would have been just as human as any other human being.

## INDIRECT EVIDENCE

1. Jewish customs of Jesus' day required married Rabbis. Unmarried men were considered a curse to Jewish society. Jesus would not have had much credibility as a leader had He not been married. Although Jesus was a non-conformist and had many conflicts with Jewish tradition, His parents, Joseph and Mary, were not. The Bible says that they were careful to perfectly obey the laws of their people. It also says that Jesus was "subject unto them". Since Jewish culture practiced arranged marriages and early marriage, as well (a Jewish boy was marriageable at age 16), it is reasonable to assume that Jesus' parents would have performed their parental duties faithfully and arranged a bride for the young Jesus. There are 18 silent years in His life (12 - 30). The Gospel of John tells us that there were many other things which Jesus did which have not been recorded.

This point is important because it shifts the weight of presumption. Given the cultural milieu in which Jesus lived and the supporting Biblical evidence, the burden of proof lies with those who do not believe Jesus was married. They must show *why Jesus and His parents would have been derelict in their civic responsibilities and not contracted a marriage.*

2. According to Josephus, descendants of the House of David felt a moral obligation to perpetuate their line, never knowing which one among their

descendants would be the chosen Messiah. Jesus may or may not have known who He was, but regardless, He lived as a normal person until called by the ministry of John the Baptist.

## DIRECT EVIDENCE

1. Hippolytus, a Christian leader from the late 2nd Century, was followed by Origen in the 3rd Century in saying that the Song of Solomon was a prophecy of a marital union between Christ and Mary Magdalene. Although they believed Mary was symbolic of the Church, nevertheless, the notion presupposed a real, albeit a spiritual (meaning non-sexual), marriage between Mary and Jesus.

2. There are hints scattered in the Gospels of a special relationship between Jesus and Mary. If she is the same Mary of Bethany in John 11, then we can explain why Martha arose to greet Jesus and not Mary. Some scholars say she was sitting *sheva* according to Jewish custom. "Sheva" was when a woman was in mourning. Married women were not allowed to break-off from their mourning unless called by their husbands. In this story, Mary does not come to Jesus, until He calls her.

- At the Resurrection, when Mary meets Jesus in the Garden, there is a degree of intimacy (see the Aramaic here) which one would expect between lovers, not friends.
- The Greek word for "woman" and "wife" is the same. Translators must rely upon the context in deciding how to translate it. Sometimes, the translation is arbitrary. When Mary is referred to as a "woman" who followed Jesus, it can just as easily be translated as "wife".

4. The story of Mary with the alabaster jar anointing the feet of Jesus is cited by some scholars as the most direct witness to their marriage. It is in all four Gospels and was a story in which Jesus gave express command that it be preserved. This ceremony was an ancient one among many royal houses in the ancient world, which sealed the marital union between the king and his priestess spouse. We find it mentioned briefly in the Song of Solomon. Although we may not understand its significance, Jesus and Mary knew exactly what they were doing. To be the valid Messiah, He had to be anointed first by the Bride. They were by-passing the corrupt Jewish establishment.

There is more support for the marital status of Jesus. However, it involves a discussion of the Old Testament prophets which would be too tedious to undertake, here. It is important to realize, however, that belief in a married Jesus does not require any more faith than a resurrected Jesus. And if you know where to look, you can find just as much biblical evidence for both.

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