

The Immaculate Conception

ABSTRACT: The Bible supports the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The proof hinges on Jesus' having no sin and being holy. Catholic and Protestant sources say the Immaculate Conception largely lacks Scriptural support. For Mary to bear a Holy Son she had to give birth without any flow of blood and she must never have had a monthly period or Jesus would have been defiled at birth. For Mary to give birth without blood she would have had to have a physiology similar to Eve before the fall, hence the Immaculate Conception. This is required so that Jesus the Holy Son of God could be born human and yet remain holy.

NOTE: The uncleanness being sin described in this article is restricted to the Old Covenant, Christians under the New Covenant are not made unclean, but rather are holy (1Peter 2:9).

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The scriptural proof for the Immaculate Conception flows from two facts about Jesus, He had no sin and He was most holy. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not say Mary never sinned, rather it says that Mary was "free from original sin" and the Catechism further adds she "remained free from personal sin".¹ This is different from Jesus of whom Scripture says, "He had no sin". The distinction is subtle, but necessary because under the Old Covenant, mother and child were unclean and therefore guilty of 'sin' at birth. "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything holy or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over (Leviticus 12:2-4)." A child because of contact with his mother would become unclean and so a sinner (Lev 5:1-6)². But the woman was unclean "just as" one was unclean during one's period. If Mary never had a period the "just as" would not require uncleanness, because she was never unclean from a period.

Why is the Immaculate Conception needed? Whether Mary was conceived with or without original sin, her mother was descended from Eve and therefore Mary became unclean and so a sinner at birth. After birth she with her mother were purified after eighty days. Then as long as Mary did not have a monthly period and bleed as part of giving birth, she could give birth to Jesus without making Him unclean and therefore a sinner. Second, the child Jesus was holy, if a holy object came in contact with an unclean object (and the uncleanness could not be eliminated), it was defiled so Jesus would have been defiled at birth.

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, and God is holy, therefore Adam and Eve were created in a state where they were and could remain holy. Eve as created was holy and therefore

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 411, 491, 493.

² Leviticus 5:1-6 "If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible. 2 "Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean—whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground—even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty. 3 "Or if he touches human uncleanness--anything that would make him unclean--even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty. 4 "Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil--in any matter one might carelessly swear about--even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty. 5 "When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned 6 And, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to Yahweh a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin."

did not have a monthly period, because a period would have made her unclean. Adam as created was holy therefore did not have an emission of semen, because an emission would make him unclean. The command to be fruitful and to increase in number (Gen 1:28) came before the fall, therefore we know that they could beget children and remain holy through that process. This means that there was a clear physiological difference in both men and women before and after the fall. Now for Christ to be born of a woman and to not become unclean in the birth process, He had to be born of a woman made after the likeness of Eve, who did not have monthly periods and could give birth without bleeding. Hence the necessity for Mary to be conceived in the likeness of Eve before the fall, that is never having a monthly period and the ability to give birth without bleeding. Mary was conceived without the effects of original sin, but still was born of her mother who was affected by the fall. Because she was born of a woman she was made unclean and therefore sinful at her birth.

Every person born of woman except Jesus, became a sinner, usually at conception and then again at birth. The exception was Jesus, because He had no sin. But for Jesus to be born without sin He had to be born of a woman who could give birth without shedding blood, thus the necessity of Mary. Mary as conceived did not have the stain of sin, therefore she could give birth to a sinless child, even though her birth necessitated that she sin, because she was born of a woman and therefore contaminated by sin at birth. The distinction is between personal sin resulting from ones own action and the contamination of sin that occurs through contact with members of the human race.

Mary was nursed by her mother and her mother had another daughter Salome (Mark 15:40, John 19:25) who became the wife of Zebedee and the mother of the apostles James and John (Mark 10:35, Matt 20:20). Any contact between Mary and her mother during her monthly period or her sister during her monthly period or with her mother after she had had sex with her husband, for instance before Jesus was weaned would cause Mary to be unclean and therefore contaminated with sin, even though there was not fault on her own part. The uncleanness could have occurred repeatedly, but once Jesus was conceived, Mary remained clean.

This proof hinges on the fact that Jesus never sinned, but to come in contact with a person who is unclean even if unintentional or beyond ones control, caused one to become a sinner. Mary kept the period of ritual purification following the birth of Jesus. Why would she do that rite if she was clean? Because it was required by the law and she was faithful.

At conception it is possible to be holy, because where there is an emission of semen those who come in contact with it are unclean only until the following evening after they have bathed, and conception can occur at least several days after the emission, and by that time the mother could be clean.

To Bring Pure from the Impure

God had to get involved with Mary to bring about her Immaculate Conception, because her mother was unclean or impure. Following are a few verses that highlight the problem. Job 14:4 Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one! Job 15:14 "What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous? Job 25:4 How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? Psalm 51:5 In sin did my mother conceive me. Matthew 19:25-6 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." These verses make it clear that Mary's purity was not just

some sort of hormonal problem that kept her from having a period, because then reproducing this sort of purity could be done by men today by controlling a woman's hormones, but only God could bring a holy Jesus from an unholy human race. To bring holy from unclean God first step was to bring someone clean so she could be recleansed after birth so being a clean vessel she could bear a holy vessel.

Jesus had no sin

The Bible repeatedly states that Jesus was without sin. John 8:46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? 2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 1 Peter 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 1 John 3:5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Unclean Equals Sinner

The clear teaching of the Bible if one is unclean then one has sinned. "If a person sins because ... he touches human uncleanness—anything that would make him unclean—even though he is unaware of it, ... he must confess in what way he has sinned And, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to Yahweh a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin (Leviticus 5:1-6).

Uncleanness Defined and communicated

One was unclean if one had a flow of blood such as a woman's monthly period, an emission of semen, came in contact with a dead person or were in the house of a dead person. Ate an unclean animal, had leprosy, or came in contact with a person who was unclean or sat in a chair or bed that an unclean person had used. If something that was clean came in contact with something that was unclean the clean thing or one became unclean.

Leviticus 15:16-28 "When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. 17 Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. 18 When a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 19 "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.... 28 "When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. (Num 19:11, 14, 22 "Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days. ... 14 "This is the law that applies when a person dies in a tent: Anyone who enters the tent and anyone who is in it will be unclean for seven days, ... 22 Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean, and anyone who touches it becomes unclean till evening."

All mothers had a required purification period—Leviticus 12:2-4 "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. 3 On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. 4 Then the

woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything holy or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.

Holiness communicated:

There were seven objects that were “most holy” all were associated with the Tabernacle/Temple: the altar of sacrifice, the laver, the Tabernacle, the Lamp stand, the altar of show bread, the altar of incense and the ark of the covenant. There were also four sacrifices that were most holy, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the showbread and unleavened bread baked from the grain offered with the sacrifices. Touching any of these most holy things made the object touched holy. The altar was most holy and when an offering touched the altar, it became holy. So an object or person that is most holy can convey holiness to another object and it appears that if an unclean (person or object) ceases to have the root cause for the uncleanness still present the unclean becomes holy when coming in contact with the most holy. This even extended to unclean persons for Isaiah said, "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for (Isaiah 6:5-7)". So just as uncleanness was communicated, so also holiness could be communicated and if a most holy object came in contact with an unclean object, if possible the unclean object was cleansed.

Now something that is most holy can become defiled—e.g. the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14, So for instance if a pig, which was unclean, came in contact with the altar of sacrifice it did not cease to be a pig so the holiness of the altar was “defiled” by the uncleanness of the pig. These most holy objects are able to protect themselves (e.g. Nadab and Abihu died Lev 10:1-2). A most holy person being born, cannot “not be” born, so one’s holiness cannot makes one’s birth clean.

Jesus and Holiness

Jesus was and always remained holy. This whole argument falls apart if it can be proven that Jesus was ever unclean. Was Jesus “ever” unclean? We will look at the common times when a person would become unclean, conception, birth, coming in contact with an unclean person such as a woman with a flow of blood, a leprous person, a dead person, at the time of His death, and at the time of His burial.

At Conception? There was no emission of semen at Jesus’ conception so there was no chance to become unclean. Matthew 1:18 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. Matthew 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

At Birth? This is the key question, could Jesus be born without becoming unclean. The angel Gabriel answers the question before it was asked. Luke 1:35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. The angel is emphasizing the miracle a holy

one will be born not an unclean mother and child. If Mary had a period before Jesus was weaned, Jesus would have become unclean. Jesus was holy before and after birth.

During Jesus' Ministry? From repeated incidents in the gospels where Jesus came in contact with people who would normally have made him unclean, they were healed or raised from the dead so that Jesus did not become defiled or unclean. This is evidence of His most holiness. When Jesus encountered unclean spirits, rather than being contaminated, He was acknowledged as the holy One. Mark 1:24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" (also Luke 4:34)

When touched by a woman with a flow of blood? The woman with a twelve year flow of blood was healed when she touched Jesus' tassel, rather than Him becoming unclean by contact with her. (Matt 9:20; Mark 5:27-31) —Here the cleansing happened the instant Jesus was touched by the woman. Jesus felt power leave him just as coal touching someone's lips would cool somewhat, but it did not cease to be a burning coal from the altar and it was not contaminated (Isaiah 6:6-7). Note immediately following this Jesus raised the twelve year old daughter of Jairus, before He went into the house (because He said, "she is asleep" Mark 5:41) because to enter the house of one who had died, before the cleansing of the house occurred made one unclean.

When touching a leper? Lev 13: A leper was one clean and contact with a leper made one unclean. But Jesus touched a Leper Mark 1:39-41 Touched and was cleansed (Luke 5:12-13).

When touching the dead? Son of the Widow of Nain Luke 7:14 touched coffin and the dead was raised. Note Jesus did not touch Lazarus or the tomb, because both would be unclean because of the other dead in the tomb, Jesus would have had to raise everyone in the tomb.

At the time of his own death? Jesus was covered with blood on the cross, wouldn't that make Him unclean? No Jesus was a sacrifice and the sacrifices were skinned. Jesus tomb was a "new tomb" that had "never been used"—a dead body would make the tomb unclean. We are told it was a new tomb because that the body was not defiled by the tomb. Acts 2:27 Because you will not abandon me to the grave [Hades], nor will you let your Holy One see decay. So Jesus' body in the grave was still holy, His body being dead was not unclean. This says His body was a sacrifice, because the body of a dead sacrifice was holy, not unclean, until the third day (Lev 7:17; 19:7), but on the third day it became unclean, hence Jesus' Resurrection occurred before dawn. In a holocaust the entire body of the sacrifice was burned up, which is what occurred at the Resurrection.

Unchangingly holy

So from conception to Resurrection Jesus remained not only free from sin and clean, but most holy. So the question then is how could Mary under the law bear a holy child? The short answer is the Immaculate Conception. The prophet Daniel gave us the timeline for the appearance of the Christ (the Anointed One), in that prophesy the Anointed one is identified as the most holy.³ Thus Daniel certifies what we have otherwise surmised, Jesus was not just holy, He was most holy. There is only one attribute of God that is identified in triplicate holiness, "holy, holy, holy" and to emphasis that it is stated in both the Old and New Testament.

³ Daniel 9:24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Because a wet dream would render Jesus unclean, He never had a wet dream. He also was Immaculately Conceived (but that is already believed by most).

Mary

If Mary had a period for instance while nursing Jesus, then it would have been impossible for Jesus not to have come in contact with an unclean person, unless the presence of Jesus completely prevented His mother from having a normal monthly cycle. Note mothers often go a long time without a monthly cycle while nursing. Because of the small size of the living quarters in Nazareth, Jesus could not have easily kept out of contact with His mother and where she sat and slept to avoid uncleanness, therefore it is likely that Mary did not have any periods. Since Mary was unclean from the blood of her mother at birth, she was not without sin and still needed and recognized the need for a savior (Luke 1:47).

Hypothetical

We can imagine that Mary got pregnant before her first period and that she had no sex with Joseph and that she had no period until Jesus was weaned so that Jesus was not be defiled by her menstrual blood flow at which time He severed contact with His parents. The only remaining problem is that with our current physiology there is a certain amount of bleeding at birth. For example the placenta (afterbirth), cutting the umbilical cord, etc. And no there is no bleeding at a circumcision. So all that had to happen was God did a small miracle and at Jesus' birth there was no blood. The problem is that Mary was by "definition" unclean at Jesus' birth just as during her period, so if she ever had a period, either before or after Jesus' birth she was unclean at the birth. So we now have to have Mary with a continuous hormone imbalance so she never again has a period. There still is one problem if a menstrual period makes one unclean which one has no control over, how much more would personal sin make one unclean.

Jesus says of the Pharisees that they strain out a gnat and swallow a camel (the smallest and largest unclean animals known in Judah). Did Jesus really mean that the Pharisees swallowed a camel? No, He meant that they became unclean in a big way without coming in contact with unclean food. They became unclean by their personal sins. With this in view, Mary would certainly have been an unusual person not to sin at all through the years in which she would have very regular contact with Jesus. How could she do that? The answer no sin nature. If Mary did not have a sin nature, and her body was different from the bodies of other woman in that she could give birth in the way it was designed for Eve to give birth without becoming unclean by the flow of blood.

Joseph's Death and Jesus

Jesus' father Joseph could not have died while Jesus was at home, because the presence of a dead person makes the house and everyone in the house unclean for a week during the time the house is being cleansed with the water of cleansing. It is therefore likely that Joseph passed away after Jesus left home to be baptized, or his death occurred while Jesus was away from home for at least a week for example during Passover, and someone else buried His father and completed the purification rites on His home. It would also seem reasonable that Jesus was not present because if He would have healed Lazarus if He had been present, how much more would the necessity to honor his father have required that Jesus heal Joseph if he had been sick.

Jesus' Holiness Compared to John the Baptist

John says of Jesus, Matt 3:11 Not fit to carry sandals Luke 3:16 the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. The holiness of Jesus explains John the Baptist's statement that he was not worthy to loosen the thong of Jesus' sandal, because that would bring him in contact with Jesus who was apparently more than "most holy" because John was a priest and required to minister in the Temple and so came in contact with the "most holy" objects, but he was not worthy to come in contact with Jesus. Not being the High Priest John could not enter the Holy of Holies.

Was Mary present for the Birth of John the Baptist?

This can also answer the question, "Did Mary leave Elizabeth before or after the birth of John the Baptist?" The answer was Mary left Elizabeth before or at the birth of John. Because Mary was carrying Jesus she could not come in contact with anything unclean and so become unclean. Both the new mother and the new child were unclean; therefore Mary did not come in contact with either one at the birth of John. Note, because Elizabeth was pregnant she would not have had a period and so would not be going through the periodic periods of uncleanness during the last of her pregnancy. Also since Mary left before the birth of John the Baptist and she stayed with Elizabeth three months and Elizabeth was in her sixth month at the annunciation, Mary came to Elizabeth at the beginning of her sixth month and stayed until just before the birth of John. Note Jesus was conceived on Passover when both Mary's and Elizabeth's home would be thoroughly cleaned and free from yeast.

Why the need for a virgin birth? A semen emission was unclean so any normal fertilization was by definition unclean. The only way to get around this is virgin conception, leading to virgin birth. The virgin conception is a corollary to the Immaculate Conception.

Why the need for an Immaculate Conception?

If Mary did not bleed would she become unclean? Blood is the thing that makes a woman unclean during her period. Could bleeding be a result of the fall and this is the reason that Mary was conceived without original sin? If there was some physical change as a result of the fall then this is possible. It would mean that as originally created, we did not go through periods of uncleanness (including death) this is as a result of being created in the image of God who is holy. Being in the image and likeness of God Adam and Eve were always holy until they sinned.

The Immaculate Conception is a part of the two step method that God used to bring something that was holy out of something that was unclean (all of humanity before Mary and after Adam and Eve sinned). In the first step Mary was conceived with a body like Eve (one that could stay in a state of cleanness through life including childbirth). When Mary's parents had sex that act made them unclean, but if conception did not occur until after both had purified themselves and become clean Mary at conception could be clean (but semen was unclean). Now Mary's mother would not have had a period during her pregnancy and if Mary's parents did not have sex during the pregnancy then Mary could have come to the point of birth without ever becoming unclean. Now if she could be born and stay clean, her mom would not be a post Adamic mom so there was blood at Mary's birth and this made Mary unclean. (There is at least the possibility that there was no blood, but if so why did Jesus need a mother so conceived when He could have bypassed the uncleanness in the same way that Mary did?).

Assumption of Mary

The Eastern Fathers refer to Mary as the New Eve. The Immaculate Conception underscores the reason for that, because she had no Original Sin so she was like Eve before she ate from the tree. Now the question comes was Mary going to die or live forever? She did not have the Tree of Life to feed upon (Unless Jesus is the fruit of the Tree of Life)? And she was “contaminated” at her own birth, but since she was pure enough to bear the Son of God, she was going to live forever because she would not be denied access to the Tree of Life and being a New Eve she could expect to live for almost a thousand years without eating from the Tree of Life, hence the need for the Assumption. If Mary continued to live for hundreds of years after Jesus’ death there would be all sorts of ramifications. Assassination attempts, Mary worship (much as Paul and Barnabus had to resist being worshipped (Acts 14:13)), a distraction for the church and much as the pole with the bronze serpent became a problem for the Israelites long after its time of need had passed. The need for the Assumption flows from the Immaculate Conception. Once in heaven Mary would have access to the Tree of Life.

It could be that something in the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, “infected” Adam and Eve’s DNA and that “infection” was passed on to all their offspring. The miracle of the Immaculate Conception was to prevent the infection from being passed on to Mary.

We also know that all creation was subjected to futility (Rom 8:20) presumably because of the fall of Adam and therefore this infection could be affecting all.

Brothers and sisters of Jesus

If Mary gave birth to additional children there would be a mix of fallen and unfallen physiology in her children. The presence of additional females in the house would increase the difficulty of Jesus remaining clean throughout all the years until He started His ministry. One must also answer the question how did Mary have a large family and never have a period.

Conclusion

To be born of a woman descended from Eve made one unclean by blood at birth. Jesus was born. Unless Mary was unique, there was blood shed at Jesus’ birth, but we know that there could not be any blood shed at His birth or He would become unclean, therefore for Mary was unique. To give birth to Jesus, God had to make Mary in the state that Adam and Eve were in when they were in the garden. The Immaculate Conception is a requirement in order to give birth to a Holy Son. It is the method that God used to allow His most Holy Son to be born pure into the corrupt human race. Without the Immaculate Conception, God could not have become man, because God was holy and man was not. God cannot stop being holy. A holy God could only become man through a clean vessel not defiled by the fall.