

When did Mary die?

The Bible last mentions Mary, the mother of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit came upon her (and many others) on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). After that, we hear nothing else about Mary in the Bible.

Mary most likely lived out her remaining years in John's home, according to John 19:27. We don't know where exactly John lived. He may have had a home in Jerusalem or Ephesus. Some have suggested that, since it is probable that John oversaw many of the churches in Asia Minor, Mary moved to Ephesus with John and was part of the Ephesian church where Timothy pastored (1 Timothy 1:3), but we cannot know for certain. One tradition says that Mary died in AD 43 and another in AD 48, but we have no way of confirming either date.

Traditions and legends try to fill in more detail about what could have happened to Mary in the years that followed Pentecost. One legend says that Mary never lived in Ephesus but resided in a small stone house built over a spring on a hill on the road outside Jerusalem. According to the legend, Mary's house included a prayer chapel and an alcove in which she placed a cross. Behind her house, per the legend, Mary erected memorial stones marking various stations of the cross. Another legend says that Joseph of Arimathea, sometime after Jesus' crucifixion, took Mary to Glastonbury in southern England. There she lived out her remaining days and was buried—along with the Holy Grail. None of these legends are corroborated by any historical evidence.

In the early 1800s, Catholic mystic Catherine Emmerich had a vision in which she claimed to have seen Mary's final minutes. In her vision, Catherine describes the apostles' presence at Mary's deathbed, Peter's administering of the Mass and extreme unction to

Mary, her death (at the same hour as Jesus had died), her spirit's ascension into heaven (accompanied by many souls released from purgatory), her burial, and her body's assumption the following night. We have absolutely no reason to believe anything that Catherine Emmerich claims to have seen in her extra-biblical (and very Catholic) visions.

In the end, we must accept the fact that we do not have any information concerning Mary's later life or her death. The focus of the Bible is Jesus' death and resurrection and His continuing work in the world through the Holy Spirit. Mary's story, although more than incidental to the story of Christ, is subordinate.