

# Marys' Children, the brothers of Jesus?

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## Introduction

The idea that Mary had other children first surfaced from Helvidius around 380 A.D. and it caused quite a stir because no one held that belief at the time. Jerome, responded with a treatise called *On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary*. He used not only the scriptural arguments, but cited earlier Christian writers, such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr. Helvidius was unable to come up with a reply. His theory died and lay dormant for over 1500 years until it resurfaced among modern Evangelicals.

Prior to the time of Jerome, the standard theory was that they were Jesus' "brothers" who were sons of Joseph though not of Mary. According to this view, Joseph was a widower at the time he married Mary. He had children from his first marriage. This is mentioned in a number of early Christian writings. One work, known as the *Proto-evangelium of James* (A.D. 125) records that Joseph was selected from a group of widowers to serve as the husband/protector of Mary, who was a virgin consecrated to God. When he was chosen, Joseph objected: "I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl" (4:8–9).

Using the Bible, St. Jerome showed that the younger Apostle James was actually a cousin of Jesus, and that his mother's name was also Mary. Jerome, in his *De Viris Illustribus*, argued that James was not Jesus' brother but his cousin, son of Mary of Cleophas, "the sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in Jn 19:25.

The Mary referred to in the Bible, as 'Mary the mother of James and Joses' is referred to as 'the other Mary' in Mathew, and in John as 'Mary wife of Clopas, the sister of Virgin Mary'. The two brothers of Jesus said of in Matt 13:55-56, James and Judas being the apostle James and his brother Judas the sons of Alphaeus and so not of Joseph. Thus pointing to the fact that this 'other' Mary is not the Lord's mother, but a different one. James, the brother of the Lord in Gal 1:19 is also said in the same verse, to be an 'apostle'. Among the list of apostles in the gospels we do not see any apostle who was a son of Mary or Joseph, but we see two apostles by the name James. These two were sons of parents other than Jesus' parents. Thus the names mentioned as Jesus brothers were not children of the Virgin Mary and, the Mary shown to have other children is another Mary. Mary the mother of the Lord did not have any other child than Jesus.

According to the Church historian Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria in the late second century stated the following concerning the appointment of James to the Jerusalem episcopacy,

*For they say that Peter and James and John after the ascension of our Saviour, as if also preferred by our Lord, strove not after honor, but chose **James the Just bishop of Jerusalem**... The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to **James the Just and to John and Peter**, and they imparted to **the rest of the apostles**, and the rest of the apostles to the seventy, of whom Barnabas was one... [James] was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and was beaten to death with a club by a fuller (Eusebius, c. 260-340 A.D., "The Church History of Eusebius" in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Eerdmans, 1982 reprint, volume I, p. 104).*

John Chrysostom opined: "If anyone should say, 'Why then was it James who received the See of Jerusalem?' I should reply that He [Christ] made Peter the teacher not of that See, but of the world." It has been suggested that Peter entrusted the Jerusalem community to James when he was forced to leave Jerusalem.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 275 – 339) reports the tradition that James the Just was the son of Joseph's brother Clopas, and therefore was of the "brethren" (which he interprets as "cousin") of Jesus described in the New Testament. (see Eus., *EH* iii 11) that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary.

This is echoed by Jerome (c. 342 – 419) in *De Viris Illustribus* ("On Illustrious Men") - James is said to be the son of *another* Mary, wife of Clopas and the "sister" of Mary the mother of Jesus - in the following manner:

*James, who is called the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary, sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book..*

Jerome refers to the scene of the Crucifixion in John 19:25, where three Marys - the mother of Jesus, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene - are said to be witnesses. John mentions the "sister" of the mother of Jesus, often identified with Mary of Clopas. Mary "of Clopas" is often interpreted as Mary "wife of Clopas". Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Clopas also need not be literally sisters, in light of the usage of the said words in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic.

Mary of Clopas is suggested to be the same as "Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joses", "Mary the mother of James and Joseph" and the "other Mary" in Jesus' crucifixion and post-resurrection accounts in the Synoptic Gospels. Proponents of this identification argue that the writers of the Synoptics would have called this Mary, simply, "the mother of Jesus" if she was indeed meant to be the mother of Jesus, given the importance of her son's crucifixion and resurrection: they also note that the mother of James and Joses is called "Maria" whereas the mother of Jesus is "Mariam" or "Marias" in Greek. These proponents find it unlikely that Mary would be referred to by her biological children other than Jesus at such a significant time.

Jerome's opinion suggests an identification of James the Just with the Apostle James, son of Alphaeus; *Clopas* and *Alphaeus* are thought to be different Greek renderings of the Aramaic name *Halpai*.

Since this Clopas is, according to Eusebius, Joseph of Nazareth's brother and this Mary is said to be Mary of Nazareth's sister, James could be related to Jesus by blood and law.

This view of James-as-cousin gained prominence in the Roman Catholic Church, displacing the "stepbrother" view to an extent. Roman Catholics may choose for themselves whether James was a stepbrother or cousin of Jesus, since either could be true.

## **Scripture says, James and Jude 'the brothers of Jesus' were apostles, the sons of Alphaeus and not of Joseph**

The **names of four brothers** of Jesus are actually listed in the Gospels. According to Matthew: "*Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers **James and Joseph and Simon and Judas**? And are not all his sisters with us?*" [Matt. 13:55-56; RSV]. Mark uses 'Joses' instead of 'Joseph'. Galatians 1:19 says that 'James the brother of the Lord' was an apostle. If James the Lord's brother, James the son of Mary, is an apostle as Gal 1:19 says, he must be the son of Alphaeus and a believer in Jesus. Since Paul says, "*Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But **other of the Apostles** saw I none, **save James** the Lord's brother*" [Gal 1:18-19]. And in the same Epistle, "*And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars*" [Gal. 2:9], etc. And that you may not suppose this James to be the son of Zebedee, you have only to read the Acts of the Apostles, and you will find that the latter had already been slain by Herod.

Looking in the sequence of the usage of the names of the two apostles by the name of James namely James the son of Alphaeus and James the son of Zebedee, the two apostles by the name James' are differentiated by the adding of their father names (i.e. James the son of Zebedee & James the son of Alphaeus) or coupling with their brother (John the brother of James Mk 3:17, Mk 5:37 & Jude the brother of James Lk 6:16 Acts 1:13, Jude 1:1).

Only after one of the James's i.e. James the son of Zebedee is killed by Herod that the only other James left is not differentiated by coupling with a brother or with a father's name, as there is no need for differentiation as there is only one left.

Lu:5:10: And so was also **James, and John, the sons of Zebedee**, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Lu:6:14, 15, 16: Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, **James and John**, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, **James the son of Alphaeus**, and Simon called Zelotes, And **Judas the brother of James**, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Lu:8:51: And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and **James, and John**, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

Lu:9:28: And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and **John and James**, and went up into a mountain to pray.

Lu:9:54: And when his disciples **James and John** saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

Lu:24:10: It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of **James**, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

Ac:1:13: And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and **James, and John**, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, **James the son of Alphaeus**, and Simon Zelotes, and **Judas the brother of James**.

Ac:12:2: And **he killed James the brother of John** with the sword.

Ac:12:17: But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto **James**, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Ac:15:13: And after they had held their peace, **James** answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

Ac:21:18: And the day following Paul went in with us unto **James**; and all the elders were present.

1Co:15:7: After that, he was seen of **James**; then of all the apostles.

Ga:1:19: But other of the apostles saw I none, save **James** the Lord's brother.

Ga:2:9: And when **James**, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Ga:2:12: For before that certain came from **James**, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

The most sound traditions within the Roman Catholic Church and first visible in the writings of Papias, identify Mary wife of Clopas' sons James and Joses/Joseph referred to in scripture as the "brothers of Jesus" as his biological cousins, **Mary of Clopas** being the sister (or sister in law or even cousin of Mary the Mother of Jesus). Other traditions outside the Church make her the mother of the "brethren of the Lord".

## Scripture says, Mary the mother of James and Joses is the sister of the Lord's mother Mary

In all the Gospel accounts we see Mary the mother of Jesus and also a Mary mentioned as the mother of James, except the Gospel of John! In John's account he uses the more familiar term of the sister of Mary, which he would know because we know from Scripture as well as oral tradition that Mary, the mother of Jesus; went to live with the Apostle John after the Crucifixion!

According to **Matthew**, the women, who followed Jesus, were " Mary Magdalene, and Mary **the mother of James and Joses**, and the mother of Zebedee's children." [Matt. 27:56; KJV]. Also called the 'other Mary' in [27:61].

Mark's list includes: " Mary Magdalene, and Mary **the mother of James the less and of Joses**, and Salome," [Mark 15:40; KJV] Here as well Mark uses 'Joses' instead of Joseph' (Salome being the name of the wife of Zebedee according to Hippolytus)

According to both texts, James and Joseph (or Joses) are the sons of Mary. But this Mary **is not referred to as** the mother of Jesus. If the woman addressed by the gossellers as 'Mary the mother of James and Joses was referring to Jesus's mother

Mary, it would be awkward that the name Jesus is not mentioned among the list of her children. Where 'Mary the mother of James, Joses' is mentioned, there among the children the name of Jesus is never mentioned. This would be an odd omission, if she were also the mother of Jesus. It would be right if they called her, Mary the mother of Jesus, James, Joses, Juda. But not even once do we see thus in any of the gospels. In Scripture, we see many references to Jesus as Son of Mary but **never** do we see a reference to anyone else as Jesus' mother Mary's literal son or daughter.

John's Gospel has a similar list of women: "...standing by the Cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." [John 19:25; RSV] According to John, Mary the mother of Jesus was present at the Cross, but John also records another Mary other than Mary Magdalene.

The scene after the burial of Jesus we see Mathew calling this Mary as 'Mary the mother of James' as well as the 'other Mary'.

Mt:27:56: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Mt:27:61: And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

Likewise in the scene of the end of the Sabbath, Mathew calls her 'the other Mary' while Mark calls the same person as Mary mother of James. The presence of Salome or the mother of 'Zebedee's children' is also pointed out here.

Mt:28:1: In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

Mt:28:16: And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

Comparing lists, it appears that Mary the mother of James and Joses is the 'other Mary' in the gospel and these children James the less, Joseph (or Joses) were the sons of the other Mary. **Matthew** actually calls her both 'Mary mother of James and Joses' as well as "the other Mary." [Matt. 27:56-61]

Mt:27:56-61: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

Mathews description above shows that this Mary, mother of James is the 'other Mary'. This mysterious "Mary" appears again in the gospel of John, this time called "Mary the wife of Clopas." (John (19:25).

standing by the Cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." [John 19:25; RSV]

In John 19:25, the original Greek states. "But by the cross of Jesus were the Mother of Him **AND** the sister of the Mother of Him, Mary the wife of Cleopas **AND** Mary the Magdalene." The precise positioning of the **ANDs** in the original Greek makes it clear that Mary the Wife of Cleopas, is also referred to as the Virgin Mary's **sister**. This 'other Mary', John says is Mary the "sister" of Jesus' mother. Therefore, James and Joseph (or Joses) are children of Jesus' mother's sister and so Jesus' cousins and not His siblings. Now since both Marys share the same name, it is unlikely that they were siblings. Instead they were most likely members of the same clan. It would be confusing for parents to name their children with the same name. This is an example of "sister" or 'adelphos' being used in the wider sense as cousin. The gospel writers' use of the Greek word "adelphos" (as a translation of the Hebrew "ah"), which could mean brother (or sister in the feminine), as well as cousin, nephew, relative, etc.

While James and Joses are mentioned as Jesus's **brothers** in Matthew 13:55, it is made clear in Mathew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 that their mother was '**another Mary**'. This Mary, a person other than the mother of Jesus. If the latter is true, then Mary, wife of Clopas would have been the Blessed Virgin Mary's sister-in-law; married to her husband's brother. That would have made her Jesus' aunt, and thus her sons would be Jesus' first cousins.

James "Brother of Jesus" is referred to as one of the APOSTLES by Paul in Galatians 1:19. . We know from Matthew 10:2-4 that **no apostles** named James was actually a Son of Mary mother of Jesus. So James, "brother of Jesus" **cannot be a Son of Mary**. He is actually James, Son of Alphaeus (Cleophas)! James is a **kinsman** of Jesus, but not a sibling. In **Acts** 1:13 and **Matt** 10:3, the younger James, an Apostle, is said to be the son of Alphaeus. Perhaps Alphaeus was also called Clopas (not uncommon in the Bible, e.g. Israel vs. Jacob, Simon vs. Peter, Paul vs. Saul...). Also Alphaeus and Clopas can be the same person, since the Aramaic name for Alphaeus could be rendered in Greek either as Alphaeus or as Clopas, Judas the zealot in another Gospel is called Thaddeus, The apostle Mathew is called Levi elsewhere and even seen as the son of (probably another) Alphaeus. And there are numerous other examples which the reader will be able to collect for himself from every part of Scripture. Another possibility is that Alphaeus took a Greek name similar to his Jewish name, the way that Saul took the name Paul. The Bible text shows that Mary, mother of James, and Mary, mother of Jesus, are different women. The case of two Marys can cause confusion today as perhaps with the crowds of Jesus' day.

Finding, then, a James, son of Alphaeus, in the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel and its sequence the Acts of the apostles, and a James undesignated frequently recurring afterwards in Acts, the presumption is, that the two refer to the same person.

In Lk 6:16 and Acts 1:13, there is a Jude, designated as "Jude the brother of James," the same reflected in the first verse of Jude's Epistle as "Jude, *the brother of James*."

Now, we know under what circumstances a person comes to be known by the name of his brother, rather than by any other title. It is only when the brother has attained a peculiar and eminent position. Thus, James, the son of Zebedee, is designated (Acts xii. 2) as "James, the brother of John," though John was a younger brother. When we find Jude, therefore, described as simply James's brother, we conclude that this James was some very eminent person. He must have been one to whom the mere name of James would be a sufficient designation. But the only person of whom this could be said was James of Jerusalem. We have reason to conclude, therefore, that, Jude, the Apostle, was a brother of James of Jerusalem. From the position of his name in, the list of apostles in Lk 6:16 & Acts 1:13, the apostle Jude is the brother of the apostle James, the son of Alphaeus.

### **Judas the brother of Jesus and also a brother of James, and son of Mary is also the son of Alphaeus**

In the list of apostles in Acts 1:13 the apostle Judas is addressed as 'Judas the brother of James'. And in his letter, Jude describes himself as the 'brother of James'. If Jude/Judas were truly the brother of Jesus, why wouldn't he say so? He identifies himself in his letter as brother of James, but significantly **not** as a brother of Jesus, only as a **servant**. To have identified himself as Jesus's blood brother would have added enormous weight to his epistle, but Jude doesn't so identify himself here. We know the reason, because James and Joseph have already been revealed to be sons of the **other Mary** in Matthew 27 and Mark 15. **Judas then must also be a son of this other Mary**. Mary wife of Cleophas.

Ac:1:13 (KJV) : And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, **James the son of Alphaeus**, and Simon Zelotes, and **Judas the brother of James**.

Jude:1:1: Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and **brother of James**, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

Jude also was a son of Clopas and the Virgin Mary's sister, as Scripture speaks of him as a brother of James the younger: "**James** son of Alphaeus (Clopas),

The two apostles, Jude & James are then brothers, and sons of Alphaeus. The same pair of brothers seen as brothers of Jesus in the list of the brothers of Jesus in Matt 13:55-56.

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers **James** and Joseph and Simon **and Judas**? And are not all his sisters with us?" [Matt. 13:55-56; RSV].

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* concludes that, based on Hegesippus's account, it is "probable" that James the Just is also James the Less, and in line with "most Catholic interpreters", that he is therefore James, son of Alphaeus as well as James the son of Mary (of Clopas or Alphaeus).

There is a concise discussion on the various Marys of the New Testament (NT) found in the New Scofield Reference Edition - King James Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1967). In a footnote for **Luke** 1:27, the second Mary is discussed:

*Mary, the mother of the Apostle James (called 'the less,' Mk. 15:40) and wife of Clopas (Jn. 19:25), who may be identified with Alphaeus (Mt. 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk. 6:15). She was evidently the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This Mary watched the crucifixion (Mt.27:56; Mk. 15:40; Jn. 19:25), visited the garden tomb (Mk. 15:47; 16:1; Lk. 24:10), and was presumably among the women who saw the risen Lord on the resurrection day (Mt. 28:7-9; Lk. 24:9,22-24). She is normally mentioned only in connection with one or both of her sons. Some have conjectured that this Mary was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, but it is highly improbable that two sisters would have the same name. [p. 1076]*

Even from a Protestant edition, this footnote confirms St. Jerome's argument that there were two Marys. Eusebius who was an historian who lived in the fourth century called James, "James the Just." In his history of the early church, Eusebius tells us how James died. According to Eusebius said that he was appointed bishop by the Apostles Peter, St. James (son of Zebedee), and John. Eusebius is quoting from Clement, who lived even earlier, in the first century. Eusebius quotes Clement concerning James,

*For they say that Peter and James and John after the ascension of our Saviour, as if also preferred by our Lord, strove not after honor, but chose **James the Just bishop of Jerusalem**... The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to **James the Just and to John and Peter**, and they imparted to **the rest of the apostles**, and the rest of the apostles to the seventy, of whom Barnabas was one... [James] was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and was beaten to death with a club by a fuller (Eusebius, c. 260-340 A.D., "The Church History of Eusebius" in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Eerdmans, 1982 reprint, volume I, p. 104).*

According to Eusebius, James was killed at the instigation of the high priest, Ananus, in about the year 63.

With four names, then, which may be regarded as fixed points in our inquiry, namely, James, an eminent and well known person at Jerusalem; Jude, "the brother of James," one of the Apostles; Mary, "the mother of James," who accompanied Mary Magdalene to the sepulcher; and Alphaeus, James's father.

### **Simon the brother of Jesus in Matt 13:55-56 was also a son of Alphaeus / Clopas**

Eusebius of Caesarea relates in his Church History (Book III, ch. 11), that after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, Simeon was elected by the community at Jerusalem chose to succeed James:

*After the martyrdom of James and the capture of Jerusalem which instantly followed, there is a firm tradition that those of the apostles and disciples of the Lord who were still alive assembled from all parts together with those who, humanly speaking, were **kinsmen of the Lord** - for most of them were still living. Then they all discussed together whom they should choose as a fit person to succeed James, and voted unanimously that **Symeon, son of the Clopas** mentioned in the gospel narrative [note: Jn 19:25; perhaps Lk 24:18], was a fit person to occupy the throne of the Jerusalem see. He was, so it is said, a **cousin of the Saviour**, for Hegesippus tells us that **Clopas was Joseph's brother**.*

(The History of the Church, translated by G.A. Williamson, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965, 123-124; emphasis added)

It turns out, then, that early tradition, from the second-century historian Hegesippus (which we have no reason to doubt in its non-theological reporting of relationships) tells us that "Symeon" is also a son of Clopas. That's very interesting because we have "Simon" (another form of Symeon) listed as a "brother" of Jesus, alongside James and Joseph, in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. Thus, he is another first cousin, according to this scenario, not a direct brother. That would identify three of these named "brothers" (there are only four named, total) as cousins, based on clear biblical evidence (James and Joseph) and a combination of sound early historical tradition and the Bible (Simon or Symeon). Eusebius cites Hegesippus again:

*When James the Righteous had suffered martyrdom like the Lord and for the same reason, **Symeon the son of his uncle Clopas** was appointed bishop. He being a **cousin of the Lord**, it was the universal demand that he should be the second.*

*(p. 181 [IV, 22]; emphasis added; cf. III, 32, p. 143: "... Mary, wife of the Clopas whose son he was" and "the son of the Lord's uncle, the aforesaid Simon son of Clopas ...")*

The same Mary, whom we have found St. Luke to designate as simply "the mother of James," St. Mark (xv. 40) more fully describes as "the mother of James and Joses"—that is, of the two, whose names are first mentioned on the above list of brethren of our Lord. Furthermore, Jude, as we have seen, was a "brother of James." If so, he was a son of that same Mary. Accordingly, we find his name the *third* on that same list. There remains only Simon, or Simeon, of whom nothing is told us in the New Testament. We find, however, in Eusebius, that one Simeon, "the son of Cleophas," (the husband of that same Mary, John xix. 25,) and "the *cousin* of our Saviour," succeeded James in the See of Jerusalem. Thus, the list is completed, and the *four* brethren of our Lord are identified in name with the four sons of Mary and Cleophas.

Now, in the present instance, the fact is simply this: There was a certain Mary, "the mother of James," according to St. Luke; the "mother of James and Joses," according to St. Mark; the mother of James, Joses, Jude and Simon, according to inference from St. Luke and the testimony of Eusebius; in short, the mother of those who are called the brethren of our Lord. This Mary (John xix. 25) was the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, and the sister of Mary, the Lord's mother. It is probable, on the authority of Eusebius, that her husband, Cleophas, was Joseph's brother. Thus, the four sons of Mary were cousins, and probably double cousins, of our Lord. This is amply sufficient to establish their claim to be called His brethren: whether the object in so calling them was to depreciate Him, as was the case with the unbelieving Jews, or to exalt and honor them, as was the case with Christians in later times.

In addition to this, it is natural and reasonable to suppose, that Joseph having died before the commencement of our Lord's ministry, Mary, thus left a widow resided henceforward with her sister; and the two families, so closely united before, were drawn together into bonds of still nearer brotherhood and friendship. On this supposition, we are not surprised to find the two Mary's together, as in John xix. 25, or to find Mary, the mother of our Lord, accompanied by her sister's sons, as in Mark iii. 21.

List of brothers of Jesus show brothers by the names of James, Joses, Simon & Judas

Their mother is named in the Bible as Mary the mother of James **the less** and Joses.

Lord's brother James is an apostle (Gal 1:19)

List of apostles show two apostles by the name James.

James the son of Zebedee was already dead (killed by Herod) before the incident of Paul meeting James the Lord's brother in Gal 1:19. The James the apostle is then the apostle James son of Alphaeus

List of apostles also shows this James had a brother named Judas who was also an apostle

The two brothers are then children of Alphaeus and not of Joseph and so not direct brothers of Jesus or children of Mary the mother of Jesus.

History says Simon a brother of Jesus was also son of Alphaeus / Clopas.

This much being settled, the Acts of St. Luke are exhausted, furnishing us: with three points. We have James before us, a person so eminent that he needed commonly no patronymic or other title to designate him to his contemporaries. We have Jude, a brother of James, one of the Twelve. We have also a fair presumption that "James," "*the son of Alphaeus*," is merely the full name of the aforementioned James.

Thus one mentioned as simply James is James the apostle, the son of Alphaeus. Mary is the wife of Alphaeus and the apostles James and Jude the sons of Alphaeus. None of them the sons of Mary the mother of the Lord.

The three of Jesus' brothers James, Juda & Simon, mentioned in Matt 13:55-56 are children of Mary wife of Clopas and cousins of Jesus.

The Bible never states directly that Mary, mother of Jesus, had other children. Only Jesus is said to be the son of Mary. Even though the Bible does refer to the brothers and sisters of Jesus in several places (Matt. 12:46; Mark 3:32; Acts 1:14), they could be cousins or simply members of Jesus' clan. Clans and extended families are common in the Bible. There are examples in the Bible where the term "brother" is used in the narrow sense of siblings (Matt. 1:2; 4:18; Mark 3:17). However, there are examples where the terms, "brother" and "sister", are used in a much wider sense (e.g. John 19:25). According to the Douay-Rheims Bible, "*he (Abram) brought back...Lot his brother.*" [Gen 14:16] Yet according to **Gen 11:31**, Lot was Abram's nephew.

*Gen. 11:26-28 - Lot is Abraham's nephew ("anepsios") / Gen. 13:8; 14:14,16 - Lot is still called Abraham's brother (adelphos) . This proves that, although a Greek word for cousin is "anepsios," Scripture also uses "adelphos" to describe a cousin.*

*Gen. 29:15 - Laban calls Jacob is "brother" even though Jacob is his nephew. Again, this proves that brother means kinsmen or cousin.*

*Deut. 23:7; 1 Chron. 15:5-18; Jer. 34:9; Neh. 5:7 -"brethren" means kinsmen. Hebrew and Aramaic have no word for "cousin."*

*2 Sam. 1:26; 1 Kings 9:13, 20:32 - here we see that "brethren" can even be one who is unrelated (no bloodline), such as a friend.*

*2 Kings 10:13-14 - King Ahaziah's 42 "brethren" were really his kinsmen.*

*1 Chron. 23:21-22 - Eleazar's daughters married their "brethren" who were really their cousins.*

*Neh. 4:14; 5:1,5,8,10,14 - these are more examples of "brothers" meaning "cousins" or "kinsmen."*

*Tobit 5:11 - Tobit asks Azarias to identify himself and his people, but still calls him "brother."*

*Amos 1:9 - brotherhood can also mean an ally (where there is no bloodline).*

*Jn 19:25 Mary, wife of Clopas. This other Mary (Mt 27:61; 28:1) is called Mary's "adelphoe" in Jn 19:25 (two Marys in one family?! - thus even this usage apparently means "cousins" or more distant relative).*

The terms "brothers," "brother," and "sister" did not refer only to close relatives, as in the above examples.

## **Can't the usage 'apostle' in Gal 1:19 be just a general reference and not referring to the 12 prominent apostles?**

St Paul has four passages in all, bearing upon the subject, but shedding light upon only two points, namely, upon the apostleship of James, and upon his relationship to our Lord.

In 1 Cor. ix. 5, 6, St. Paul asks, "have we not power?" namely, "I and Barnabas," to "lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and the brethren of our Lord and Cephas?" where grammatical precision requires that the first "and" should be rendered "both;" otherwise it would read as if Cephas were not numbered among the Apostles. With this easy and obvious correction, ("and—and" being used both in Latin and Greek for "both—and,") we have "the brethren of the Lord" in the same category as Cephas, namely, reckoned among the original Apostles.

In 1 Cor. xv. 7, it is mentioned that our Lord, after His resurrection, "was seen of James, *then of all* the Apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also, as of *one born out of due time*." Whether in this, James is reckoned or not, among the Apostles, is a question much debated. As the sentence occurs, however, just after the parallel phrase, "He was seen of Cephas, *then of the Twelve*," and as Cephas was undoubtedly one of the Twelve, the natural inference is, that James also is to be interpreted as one of the Apostles; and, further, as St. Paul distinguished himself by the phrase, "one born out of due time," giving that as a reason why he was the "last" to see Christ, we naturally infer that James was not "born out of due time," but was one of the original Twelve.

The other passage is Gal. i. 19, where St. Paul says, "but other of the Apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother." Here there are two presumptions, cited respectively on opposite sides of the question. The passage seems to say, that James was an Apostle, namely, one of those whom St. Paul distinguishes in the context as *Apostles before him*. It also seems to say, that he was the Lord's brother.

St. Paul, in these opening chapters in: the Galatians, is asserting his own equality (as an *Apostle of later appointment*) with those whom he entitles "Apostles before him." To prove the independence and directness of his own commission, he mentions the fact, that when first made Apostle he did not "go to Jerusalem to them that were *Apostles before him*," but *after three years* went up "to see Peter;" on which occasion, we are told by St. Luke, Acts ix. 27, "Barnabas took him and carried him *to the Apostles*," namely, Peter and James, there being no others in Jerusalem at that time. With Peter he abode fifteen days; but other of the Apostles saw he none, except James, the Lord's brother, an assertion which, if he meant Apostles in the larger sense of the word, would be simply untrue, for (as we have seen) *Barnabas* (an Apostle in that larger sense Ac:14:14) "took him?" and introduced him. He plainly means, then, that other of the Apostles (which were "Apostles before him," namely, the Twelve) saw he none, save James. This is confirmed by the next chapter, where he refers to "James, Cephas and John," as "pillars," and declares that *they*—these pillars—gave to him "and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship;" acknowledged, in other words, their apostolic equality. Here, throughout, there is the same contrast between the earlier Apostles and those of more recent date; and James, in every circumstance, is placed among the former.

To this the only objection is a verbal criticism, first suggested by the historian Neander. From the structure of the sentence, Gal. i. 19, there is reason to suspect that the clause, "save James, the Lord's brother," is not so much an exception as a sort of prudential qualification, so that Neander would paraphrase the passage, "other of the Apostles I did not see, *unless* (indeed) James, the Lord's brother, (be reckoned as an Apostle.\*)" To this we have already answered, that if such be the meaning, Barnabas also ought to have been excepted in the same way; for Barnabas was an Apostle in the larger sense, and St. Paul not only saw him, but was introduced by him to "the Apostles." Another answer equally satisfactory may be stated as follows: granting Neander's premises, the "prudential qualification" implied in the word "save," (literally "if not," or "unless,") applies most naturally to the verb "did not see," which immediately precedes it; so that the sentence might be paraphrased, "other of the Apostles *I did not see*," unless (indeed) James, the Lord's brother, (whom I merely saw, but had no intercourse with him.\*)" On the whole, then, Neander's objection comes to nothing, and James stands before us ranking with Cephas and John, as one of "the pillars" —one of the original Twelve.

If James be the same as the son of Alphaeus, then, he had a brother named *Jude*, one of the original Twelve, and a mother named *Mary*, the same who accompanied Magdalene to the sepulchre; he was himself an *Apostle*, one of the Twelve—"a pillar" in the same sense as Cephas and John; he was, also, according to the Scriptural sense, a "brother" of our Lord. To attain this result, no text has been handled otherwise.

St. Luke, when he mentions James without designation, he refers to a James whom he has designated before. When he speaks of "the mother of James," he means the person whom he elsewhere calls James. When St. Paul mentions our James in connection with Cephas and John as "a pillar," he means a pillar in the same sense as when the same is said of Cephas and John; in other words, grant that he includes James among those who were "Apostles before him,". Thus, the James of St. Luke, St. Paul and St. Jude is connected with the James of apostolic catalogues, by three independent links, each, if established, amply sufficient in itself.

It is also quite possible that, as John's gospel so often does, this reference to Mary as "wife of Clopas" is a conscious intention to clear up any questions about the "mother of James and Joseph (Jose)" in the Synoptics -- that is, to clearly distinguish her from Jesus' mother.

So James the younger is the son of Mary and Clopas. And as the second-century historian Hegesippus explains that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. Clopas's sons and Jesus were close relatives, and hence they were called brothers in close knit familial society of the Hebrews.

## **'Adelphos' meaning**

``Brethren": ancient Hebrew, Aramaic (the language spoken by Christ and his disciples) and other languages had no special words for different degrees of relationship, such as are found in more modern languages. In general, all those belonging to the same family, clan and even tribe were ``brethren". The Hebrew and Aramaic "ah" was used for various types of relations: Cf. Michael Sokoloff, "A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic" (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat-Gan, Israel, 1990, p. 45.) Hebrew had no word for cousin. They could say "ben-dod" which means son of a paternal uncle, but for other kinds of cousins they would need a complex phrase, such as "the son of the brother of his mother" or, "the son of the sister of his mother". For complex Aramaic expressions see Sokoloff, p. 111 and 139.

The writers of the New Testament were brought up to use the Aramaic equivalent of "brothers" to mean both cousins and sons of the same father--plus other relatives and even non-relatives. When they wrote in Greek, they did the same thing the translators of the Septuagint did. (The Septuagint was the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible; it was translated by Hellenistic Jews a century or two before Christ's birth and was the version of the Bible from which most of the Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament are taken.). In the Septuagint the Hebrew word that includes both brothers and cousins was translated as adelphos, which in Greek usually has the narrow meaning that the English "brother" has.



The Greek word for "brothers" "adelphos" is a compound word. A = "same" and delph = "womb." So, some Protestants argue that these "brothers" of Jesus must be from the same womb as Himself and thus children of Mary, His mother. However, this is an etymological fallacy. The derivation of a word, its etymology, will give you the history of a word, but it does not necessarily give you the correct definition of that word. For example, Plato (429 -347 BC) in his LAWS XI 924 E for his model state: "That brother [ADELPHOS] who is born of the same father or of the same mother ... " Therefore, the word "adelphos" cannot necessarily mean from the same womb. Plato also uses the same word to mean "kindred, or relatives."

When trying to understand these verses, the first thing to note is that the term "brother" (Greek: adelphos) has a very wide meaning in the Bible. It is not restricted to the literal meaning of a full brother or half-brother. The same goes for "sister" (adelphe) and the plural form "brothers" (adelphoi).

The Old Testament shows that the term "brother" had a very wide semantic range of meaning and could refer to any male relative from whom you are not descended (male relatives from whom you are descended are known as "fathers"), as well as kinsman such as cousins, those who are members of the family by marriage or law though not related to you by blood, and even friends or mere political allies (1 Sam. 9:13; 20:32; 2 Sam. 1:26; Amos 1:9).

Unlike Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek **has** a separate word for cousin, *anepsios*, but the translators of the Septuagint favored *adelphos*, even for true cousins. You might say they transliterated instead of translated, importing the Jewish idiom into the Greek Bible. They took an exact equivalent of the Hebrew word for "brother" and did not use *adelphos* in one place (for sons of the same parents), and *anepsios* in another (for cousins). This same usage was employed by the writers of the New Testament and passed into English translations of the Bible. To determine just what "brethren" or "brother" or "sister" means in any one verse, we have to look at the context.

The well-known Protestant linguistic reference *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W.E. Vine, defines *Adelphos* as follows:

*Adelphos*: denotes a brother, or near kinsman; in the plural, a community based on identity of origin or life. It is used of: 1) male children of the same parents . . . ; 2) male descendants of the same parents, Acts 7:23,26; Hebrews 7:5; 3) people of the same nationality, Acts 3:17,22; Romans 9:3 . . . ; 4) any man, a neighbour, Luke 10:29; Matthew 5:22, 7:3; 5) persons united by a common interest, Matthew 5:47; 6) persons united by a common calling, Revelation 22:9; 7) mankind, Matthew 25:40; Hebrews 2:17; 8) the disciples, and so, by implication, all believers, Matthew 28:10; John 20:17; 9) believers, apart from sex, Matthew 23:8; Acts 1:15; Romans 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 19:10 (the word 'sisters' is used of believers, only in 1 Timothy 5:2). {Vine, W.E., *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1940 (four-volumes-in-one ed.), vol. I, pp.154-155}

The word "brother" or "brethren" is often used in Scripture for relationships other than that of those born of the same parents: Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic have words for "uncles," "nephew," "niece," "step-brother," "step-sister," etc. All were referred to as "brother" and "sister," which were translated into Greek as *adelphos* or *adelphe*. Mostly because the people in Israel lived in "clans" or "tribes", in groups of may be 10 or 15 families, all related, descendants of the same grandparents, but children of different father and mother, and all of them were known as "the brothers".

So, in the Old Testament, "brother" is used for "nephew" (Gen.12:5), "uncle" (Gen.29: 15), "husband" (Songs.4:9), a member of the same tribe (2Kgs.9:13), of the same people (Exod.2:21), an ally (Amos 1:9), a friend (2 Kgs.1:26), one of the same office (1Sam.9:13).

In the New Testament, "brother" is used even for people of the same nationality (Acts 3:17), for persons united by a common interest (Mt 5:47), for persons united by a common calling (Rev 22:9), for mankind (Mt 25:40), for the disciples (Mt 23:8), for believers (Mt 23:8).

In the Bible, in fact, the term **"brother"** is used 350 times, mostly not in reference to a natural brother.

Therefore, the reference to the brothers and sisters (ADELPHOS) of Jesus does not mean that Mary had other children.

## Could it not be that the two Mary's in the gospels are one and the same?

Why is Mary the mother of James, Joseph, Simon & Judas never called the mother of Jesus in the cross/tomb accounts? (Wouldn't that be easier than constantly "switching" between James and Jose?)

Why is she always listed second (and in Luke, third) after Mary Magdalene?

Why does Matthew refer to her as merely "the other Mary" in 28:1?

Why does John cite a second Mary at the cross: Mary the wife of Clopas? (A character who doesn't appear in the Synoptics, unless she's the mother of James and Joseph.)

It therefore must be admitted that, **if** "Mary the mother of James and Joseph/Jose" and Jesus' mother are one and the same, then

-- The three Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are **INTENTIONALLY** neglecting to call her Jesus' mother in their cross/tomb accounts (as if she's not Jesus' mother anymore.)

-- The Synoptics are also **INTENTIONALLY** depicting her as a minor character, less important than Mary Magdalene. And, in the case of Matthew, she's reduced to merely "the other Mary" in 28:1.

**ALL THREE** refer to her as "his mother" earlier in their Gospels and when one considers that in Acts 1:14 she is again called "the mother of Jesus." Since Acts is the companion volume to Luke (produced by the same author), it doesn't make much sense for Luke to call her "Mary the mother of James" in 24:10, and then re-bestow the title "mother of Jesus" in Acts 1:14 if he's trying to make such a "theological point".

It is proved conclusively that the Synoptics' "Mary the mother of James and Joseph/Jose" is **NOT** Jesus' mother.

And, since this Mary is certainly the mother of the same James and Joseph/Jose who are also called Jesus' "brothers," then it's equally proven that they **COULD NOT** have been the Lord's brothers in a fraternal sense.

According to John's Gospel, Jesus while on the Cross gives His mother Mary to the Apostle John for her care (John 19:26-27). This would be very strange, if Mary had other children, especially sons. A mother leaving a large family of sons and daughters, who had lived with her constantly from childhood, in order to be cared for by one who was only an adopted son. This supposed family of Mary must have consisted of *at least* four sons, and *at least* three daughters, ranging from under twenty to not more than thirty years of age, constantly accustomed to the society of their mother, and just at that time of life when sons and daughters are, in the eyes of a mother—especially a widowed mother. How such a mother could have left such a family, at just such a time, to live with an adopted son; or how, if she had done it, *they* could patiently have borne it. Jesus spoke few words from the Cross, because it is extremely painful to speak while being crucified. If Mary had another son, Jesus would not have wasted His words on the obvious. But the Bible says, 'And from that hour the disciple John took her to his own home' (John 19:26-27). Now the Gospels mention four of his "brethren," James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. **Especially, James the "brother of the Lord" was alive in 49 AD (Gal 1:19). He should have taken care of her.** Jewish law would have demanded it. It is hard to imagine why Jesus would have disregarded family ties and made this provision for his mother if these four were also her sons. If Jesus had brothers, His statement to His Mother in the Gospel of John 19:26-27, "behold your son...Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother.'" This would have been a grave insult to His real brothers, that is, to give the care of their mother to a non-relative. This insult would not only be from Jesus but also from Mary, since Mary did not stop Jesus. For a Jewish mother it would have been unthinkable to go to live at the home of a friend after her son's death if she had another natural child.... but Virgin Mary had only one child, and now he was dead. This passage only makes sense, if Mary had no other children to care for her. Knowing that after He leaves, his mother would be all alone, He gave her to John the son of Zebedee as his mother, though John's mother Salome was just beside them at the foot of the cross.

## Mary the Mother of Jesus, and Mary the mother of James – A Comparison

### At the foot of the cross -

*Mt:27:56: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James and Joseph**, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*

*Mt:27:40: There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph**, and Salome;*

*Joh:19:25: Now there stood by the cross of Jesus **his mother**, and **his mother's sister**, **Mary the wife of Cleophas**, and Mary Magdalene.*

### After the burial

*Mt:27:61: And there was Mary Magdalene, and **the other Mary**, sitting over against the sepulchre.*

*Mt:28:1: And Mary Magdalene and **Mary the mother of Joseph** beheld where he was laid.*

### After the Sabbath

*Mt:28:1: In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and **the other Mary** to see the sepulchre.*

*Mt:28:1: And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James**, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*

## Sequence of addressing the two Marys in four gospels

### Mathew

M't:1:16: **Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ;**

M't:1:18: **his mother**

M't:2:11: **Mary his mother**

M't:2:13: **his mother**

M't:2:14: **his mother**

M't:2:20: **his mother**

M't:2:21: **his mother**

M't:12:46: **his mother**

M't:27:56: **Mary the mother of James and Josés**

M't:27:61: **the other Mary** (Thus the other Mary & Mary the mother of James are the same as seen in this paragraph 56 & 61)

M't:28:1: **the other Mary**

### Mark

M'r:3:31: **his mother**

M'r:15:40: **Mary the mother of James the less and of Josés**

M'r:15:47: **Mary the mother of Josés**

M'r:16:1: **Mary the mother of James**

### Luke to Acts the sequence

Lu:1:43: the **mother of my Lord**

Lu:1:60: **his mother**

Lu:2:33: **his mother**

Lu:2:34: **Mary his mother**

Lu:2:43: And **his mother**

Lu:2:48: **his mother**

Lu:2:51: **his mother**

Lu:8:19: **his mother**

Lu:24:10: **Mary the mother of James**

Ac:1:14: the women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**

### John

Joh:2:1: the **mother of Jesus**

Joh:2:3: **the mother of Jesus**

Joh:2:5: **His mother**

Joh:2:12: **his mother**

Joh:19:25: **his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.**

Joh:19:26: he saith unto **his mother, Woman**

The scene after the burial of Jesus we see Mathew calling this Mary as '**Mary the mother of James**' as well as the '**other Mary**' in the same passage.

M't:27:56: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James and Josés**, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

M't:27:61: And there was Mary Magdalene, and **the other Mary**, sitting over against the sepulchre.

It's interesting to note that whenever Matthew mentions the Virgin Mary, he always identifies her as "Jesus' mother." (See: Matt 1:18, 2:11, 2:13, 2:14, 2:20, and 2:21, in which the author all but beats us over the head with the phrase "His mother.") It's unlikely, therefore, that Matthew is abandoning this point by later identifying her as merely the mother of James and Joseph: a secondary character, less important than Mary Magdalene. Likewise for Mark.

Luke in the beginning and elsewhere in his gospel addresses Mary only as 'his (Jesus's) mother' & towards end of his descriptive of Jesus' mother i.e the beginning of Acts which is the sequence to the Gospel of Luke he addresses her as 'mother of Jesus'. This shows that the other Mary shown in between i.e. 'Mary the mother of James (Lu:24:10) is someone else.

Luke + Acts the sequence together and John clearly confirms that there were two Marys ; one the Mother of Jesus and the other another Mary or Mary the mother of James the lesser apostle, the son of Alphaeus.

John gives a clearer picture when he presents both the Mary's together at the foot of the cross distinguishing the two to be two different Marys..

Mathew & Luke in their gospel narratives address Jesus' mother as 'his mother', while he addresses the other Mary as 'Mary the mother of James, etc' or 'the other Mary'. John in his narrative never even once addresses Mary by her name, but addresses her only as 'mother of Jesus', and 'his mother', while he has the other Mary as 'His (Jesus's) mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas'.

If the woman addressed by the gossellers as 'Mary the mother of James, James, etc' was referring to Jesus's mother Mary, it would be awkward that Jesus is not mentioned among the list of her children. It would be right if they called her, Mary the mother of **Jesus**, James, James, Juda. But not even once do we see thus.

The passage, (John vii. 5,) "Neither did His brethren believe in Him," is of little force in this question, either way. It may mean, that His brethren, *in general*, (*i. e.*, his near relations,) did not believe: a proposition perfectly true, according to the ordinary use of language, though two of His cousins did believe: just as in the parallel statement, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," we readily admit, nevertheless, that *many* of His own *did* receive Him. In fact, nothing is more characteristic of Scripture, than a generous, unsuspicious breadth in the use of language.

In all these passages there is absolutely nothing to oppose the common belief, that two of our Lord's "brethren" were numbered among the Apostles. And for those who claim these brothers were the direct brothers of Jesus, the same question applies that, if the brother James was a direct brother, he is seen to be a strong believer, will the 'Neither did his brethren believe' include James and his brother Jude? How is he seen as a believer then?

The Bible does *not* say anywhere that these "brothers James, James, Simon, Judas and sisters" of Jesus were children of Mary. Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God. In parallel fashion, Jesus is the only-begotten son of Mary. According to the **Catechism**, "*Mary is a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith 'unadulterated by any doubt,' and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will. (1 Cor. 7:34-35) It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Savior*" [CCC 506]. Mary's perpetual virginity helped her to remain focused on God and His will to save all mankind.

## The controversial 'Till' & 'Firstborn'

Fundamentalists are insistent nevertheless that "brethren of the Lord" must be interpreted in the strict sense. They most commonly make two arguments based on Matthew 1:25: "[A]nd he did not know her until (Greek: heos, also translated into English as "till") she brought forth her firstborn son." They first argue that the natural inference from "till" is that Joseph and Mary afterward lived together as husband and wife, in the usual sense, and had several children. Otherwise, why would Jesus be called "first-born"? Doesn't that mean there must have been at least a "second-born," perhaps a "third-born" and "fourth-born," and so on?

Fundamentalists claim Jesus could not be Mary's "first-born" unless there were other children that followed him. But this shows ignorance of the way the ancient Jews used the term. For them it meant the child that opened the womb (Ex. 13:2, Num. 3:12). Under the Mosaic Law, it was the "first-born" son that was to be sanctified (Ex. 34:20). The gosseller points to this as given in brackets. Did this mean the parents had to wait until a second son was born before they could call their first the "first-born"? Hardly. The first male child of a marriage was termed the "first-born" even if he turned out to be the only child of the marriage.

Mt:1:18-25: **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:** When as his mother Mary was **espoused** to Joseph, **before they came together**, she was **found with child of the Holy Ghost**. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and **not willing to make her a publick example**, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, **the angel of the Lord appeared unto him** in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: **for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost**. And she shall bring forth a son, and **thou shalt call his name JESUS:** for he shall save his people from their sins. Now **all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet**, saying, Behold, **a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel**, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and **took unto him his wife:** And **knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.**

Lu:1:26-27: And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, **To a virgin espoused to a man** whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Lu:1:30-35: And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, **thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son**, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary

unto the angel, **How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?** 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.

## I. 'Till'

What does "till" mean according to the Bible? The expression "till" in Hebrew usage has no necessary reference to the future.

Gen. 8:7, the dove went forth from the ark and did not return **till** the waters dried up.

That expression does not suggest that it returned afterwards. It did not return at all, having found resting places.

Gen. 35:4, "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem, and lost them till this day".

Does it mean that after 'that day' it was found?

Ge:28:15: And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

This does not mean the Lord will leave Jacob afterward.

Deut. 34:5-6 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in the valley, in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor. But no man knows of his sepulcher unto this day.

Does any man know his sepulcher after 'that day'. We know that no one has known since that day either.

2 Sam. 6:23 Michal the daughter of Saul had no children till the day of her death.

Are we to assume she had children after her death?

Psalms 72:7, in his days "peace will abound until the moon is no more.

The power of the Messiah is not to stop when the moon no longer gives its light (Mt.24:29).

Psalms 110:1, (Mt.22-42-46), The Lord said to my [David's] Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, **until** I make your enemies your footstool.

Of course, Jesus was not to stop being at the right hand of the Father at any point. So the word until here does not mean a change of status.

Ps. 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the Lord our God till he has mercy upon us.

Will the prophet, then, look unto the Lord till he obtain mercy, and when mercy is obtained will he turn his eyes down to the ground?

Is. 46:4 Even unto old age I am He.

Will He cease to be God when they have grown old?

Mt. 11:23 Our Lord says that if the miracles done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, "it would have lasted until the present day.

Had it lasted, Jesus did not intend to destroy it now in His time.

Matt 28:20 Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Will the Lord then after the end of the world has come forsake His disciples? In Mt 28:20 Jesus promised to be with His Church, His followers until the end of the world -nor would He desert them in eternity.

Luke 1:80: He was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Did John leave the desert after the manifestation?

John 9:18 The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man.

Should we infer that they believed afterwards? No, for in the passages which follow, it is quite clear that they believed neither before nor after calling upon the blind man's parents.

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Did groans and travail end on that day of Paul's time.

1 Cor. 15:23-25 For he must reign, **till** he has put all enemies under his feet.

Is the Lord to reign only until His enemies begin to be under His feet, and once they are under His feet will He cease to reign?

1 Timothy 4:13 the Apostle tells Timothy to devote himself to reading, exhortation and teaching "until I come."

He did not mean Timothy should stop such things when Paul did come.

1 Tim 6:14 St. Paul writes: "I charge you to keep the commandments unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He is not advising Timothy to break the commandments after the appearance of Christ.

Revelation 2:25-26: "But hold fast what you have until I come. And he who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power"

We should hold fast and obey even after Jesus returns.

--and there are more, but these should be more than enough to show that not always does until in OT and NT, mean a change of things is to come at the point referred to.

In the Bible, The Greek and the Semitic use of the word *heos* (until or before) does not imply anything about what happens after the time indicated, it means only that some action did not happen up to a certain point; it does not imply that the action did happen later, which is the modern sense of the term. In fact, if the modern sense is forced on the Bible, some ridiculous meanings result.

Recent translations give a better sense of the verse: "He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son" (New American Bible); "he had not known her when she bore a son" (Knox).

In Matt 1:18, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise" clearly shows that what is said afterwards is a description of the long foretold out of the ordinary virgin birth of Jesus.

Why did Joseph refrain until the day of her delivery? Because the angel said, 'that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit' [Matt. 1:20b]. The angel said, "Joseph, you son of David, fear not to take unto you Mary your wife" [Matt. 1:20a]. The reason why he was forbidden to forsake his wife was that he might not think her an adulteress. Is it true then, that he was ordered not to have intercourse with his wife? Is it not plain that the warning was given him that he might not be separated from her? And **could the just man dare, he says, to think of approaching her, when he heard that the Son of God was in her womb?** We are to believe then that the same man who gave so much credit to a dream that he did not dare to touch his wife, yet afterwards, when he had learnt from the shepherds that the angel of the Lord had come from heaven and said to them, "Be not afraid: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" [Luke 2:10ff], and when the heavenly host had joined with him in the chorus "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will" [Luke 2:14], and when he had seen just Simeon embrace the infant and exclaim, "Now let you your servant depart, O Lord, according to your word in peace: for mine eyes have seen your salvation" [Luke 2:29], and when he had seen Anna the prophetess, the Magi, the Star, Herod, the angels; even after all this, would Joseph, though well acquainted with such surprising wonders, dared to touch the temple of God, the abode of the Holy Spirit, the mother of his Lord?

There is a strong rabbinic tradition that Moses, after his first contact with God, refrained from knowing his wife. This first appears in Philo, is taken up by the rabbis. Therefore, if Moses with only an external contact with God did that way, what of Our Lady who was filled with the divine presence at the conception of Jesus, and carried divinity itself within her for nine months?

The phrase, "had no relations with her until," is only intended to affirm that up to this point of time she was a virgin and that her son was of supernatural origin.. the Evangelist tells us what did not happen before the birth of Jesus, without suggesting that it happened after his birth. i.e. yes!! Thus it is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah that 'a virgin shall give birth' the Saviour Jesus was born of a virgin or born without male intervention. This passage confirms the divine origin of Jesus and that He was not a product of human sexual intercourse, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah again repeated in Mathew just before this verse 'knew her not'. It does not indicate that at some point in time thereafter Mary had a sexual relationship with Joseph. The word "until" shows that the writer is concerned primarily to inform us what happens **before** a specific event - not after.

As the Bible reaffirms

"now **all this was done that it might be fulfilled** which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel." (Matt 1:22).

And the following verse Matt 1:25, the last one of Matthew I, is Matthew's summary, or corollary, or bottom line, of all the previous verses 18-24, on how the conception of Jesus happened, without any intervention of Joseph... to interpret it other way, and specially as that Joseph had sexual relations with Virgin Mary after the birth of Jesus, is to change the whole meaning of the chapter, it is nothing but a false interpretation of Satan.

The angel appearing to Joseph in a dream (Matt 1:20) and doing the explaining as to why all this, and 'Then Joseph being raised from sleep **did as the angel of the Lord had bidden** him, and **took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.** Matt 1:24)

The whole of Mt 1:18-25 is concerned with the VIRGINAL CONCEPTION of Jesus and its consequences for paternity. If the author had wished to imply that after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary consummated their marriage, it is more likely that he would have used here the Aorist (-egno-). "His choice of the imperfect implies rather that he did not EXCLUDE the possibility that Joseph and Mary lived a life of virginity after the birth of the Lord." (John McHugh, **THE MOTHER OF JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**, p. 204)

Even J.P. Meier, who works so strenuously to try to show that most probably Jesus had real siblings, admits that the arguments from "until" proves nothing (In CBQ Jan. 1992, pp. 9-11).

So Matthew's expression, 'know her until' meant that "Yes, Jesus was born of a virgin" or 'Jesus was born without male intervention'. Joseph had nothing to do with the conception of Mary's Son, as is indicated by Luke 1:31 and 35, not that Joseph and Mary later had relations.

## 2. 'firstborn'

Another to the perpetual virginity of Mary arises from the use of the word *prototokos*, translated "first-born" in Luke's gospel.

Lu:2:6-7: *And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth **her firstborn son**, (*prototokos*) and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Lu:2:21-24: *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (**As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord**;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.*

Protestants claim that Jesus is said as the firstborn son of Mary and so she must have had other sons which is why Jesus is called firstborn. Then isn't it that they acknowledge that **Jesus was Mary's son** and thus that Mary was **His mother & not just an eggshell**.

Consider one's own self, if you were the only son of your mother, what would you be called? The firstborn of your mother, as well as the only son. And what if you were the first of 2 children? You would still be the firstborn of your mother and the others the nextborns. How is it different with the Lord. He would be the firstborn whether his mother had or did not have children after Him. So 'firstborn' does not mean Mary had other children. If she had or if she had not other children, Jesus would still be her firstborn.

The Bible, in Zechariah 12:10, about the prophecy fulfilled in John 19:37, of the crucifixion says, of Jesus as the 'only son' and 'firstborn'. The only son can be the firstborn as well.

Zec:12:10: *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and **they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him**, as one mourneth for his **only son**, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his **firstborn**.*

Joh:19:37: *And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*

The Greek word *prototokos* is used of Christ as born of Mary and of Christ's relationship to His Father (Col 1:25). As the word does not imply other children of God the Father, neither does it imply other children of Mary. *Pidyon ha-Ben* in particular. *Pidyon ha-Ben* is the "Redemption of the Firstborn," who were to have been consecrated to God and serve as priests and Temple workers. The "firstborn" is the **male child that "opens the womb"**. If the child that "opens the womb" is a female child, there is no "firstborn" for the family because the child that "opened the womb" is not a masculine child. If no more children are born after the firstborn, the firstborn still has the status and title of "firstborn." The relevant Torah verses are:

Exodus 13:2 *Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.*

Exodus 13:14-15 *And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.*

Numbers 18:15 *Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.*

A mother's first child is her "firstborn" regardless if any other follow or not (Ex 13:2). In Mosaic Law the first male child in a family had certain rights and obligations. Luke was pointing out that Jesus had these rights and obligations! Not that Jesus was the first of a large family! Parents had not to wait to see if other children were born before they could call the first their first-born! The term "first-born" was a legal term under the Mosaic Law (Ex 6:14) referring to the first male child born to Jewish parents regardless of any other children following or not. "Firstborn" is a legal title in the Law for those males who open the womb and not necessarily the first of several children (Ex. 13:2). God commanded that all "firstborns" must be redeemed from Him (Ex. 13:2-15; 34:19; Ps. 78:51). This ceremony of redemption must be performed shortly after the birth of the firstborn and not after the birth of the second child. Even if the mother has only a son and no more children, what would her son be called? Her son would still be called "firstborn." Every only-begotten is a firstborn, but not every firstborn is only-begotten. Hence when Jesus is called the "first-born" of Mary it does not mean that there were second or third-born children.

Further, the Greek word "*prototokos*", "*first-born*", is used of Christ as born of Mary in Lk.2:7, and of Christ's relationship to His Father in Col 1:15... As the word does not imply other children of God the Father, neither does it imply other children of Mary

Firstborn does not imply that Mary had other children, as an 'only son', can also be a 'firstborn son' as well.

Zec:12:10: *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and **they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him**, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

### Mary's 'I know not' & the Bible's 'Knew not'.

Lu:1:34: *Then said Mary unto the angel, **How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?***

M't:1:24-25: *Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And **knew her not** till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.*

At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would conceive a son, she asked, "How can this be since 'I know not a man' (Luke 1:34) **even though** at the time she was espoused to Joseph. Mary presumably knew how children were conceived, so the question makes sense only if Mary had taken a vow of lifelong virginity. Mary inquires of the angel how she is to conceive, not because she does not believe (cf. verse 45, below), but because she wants to be able to cooperate fully with the plan of God. Jewish law of the time allowed marital relations between a betrothed couple. Mary's question therefore seems out of place: clearly she could conceive by Joseph even then, so lacking a husband was not the issue. Therefore a better translation is, "because I do not know man." The best explanation for her question is that she already knew that she was not to have relations with any man, that is, she was to be perpetually a virgin because she was set aside specially by God. This is how the earliest Church Fathers understood this passage. From the earliest days of the Church, as the Fathers interpreted this passage of the Bible, we see that Mary's question was taken to mean that she had made a vow of life-long virginity, even in marriage (this was not common, by any means, but neither was it unheard of). If she had not taken such a vow, the question would make no sense at all. We know that some first century Jews took such vows (for example, the Essenes, the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls), and Mary's question indicates that she had done so. Jesus Himself indicated as much: "*Not all can accept this...some have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.*" (Mt. 19:11,12). A eunuch is one who can't engage marital relations, so here, it is a metaphor for those who willingly abstain from sex.

As Catholic apologist Karl Keating says –

"If she anticipated having children and did not intend to maintain a vow of virginity, she would hardly have to ask 'HOW' she was to have a child, since having a child the normal way would be expected by a newlywed. No, her question makes sense only if there was an apparent, but not a real, conflict between keeping a vow of virginity and acceding to the angel's request." (**CATHOLICISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM**, p. 283-284)

And as the great **ST. AUGUSTINE** wrote –

"Surely, she would not say, 'HOW shall this be?' unless she had already vowed herself to God as a virgin...If she intended to have intercourse, she wouldn't have asked this question!

"In being born of a Virgin who **CHOSE** to **REMAIN** a Virgin even **BEFORE** she **KNEW** who was to be born of her, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than to impose it. And He wanted virginity to be of **FREE CHOICE** even in that woman in whom He took upon Himself the form of a slave." (Holy Virginity 4:4 c. 401 A.D.)



A careful look at the New Testament shows that Mary kept her vow of virginity and never had any children other than Jesus.

When Zachariah asked the same question "How will I know this is so" (Lk 1:17) regarding the birth of John the Baptist to a 'well stricken in years' and 'barren' Elizabeth, God punished him for his doubt. (Lk 1:20) But Mary wasn't doubting God. She honestly didn't know how she would have a child and remain a virgin in her marriage.

Lu:1:18: And Zacharias said unto the angel, *Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.*

And to the question from Mary, as to how this will happen without her 'knowing man', or without breaking her vow of virginity, or without male intervention, the angel explains to her in Lk 1:35-37 as to 'how' this would happen.

Lu:1:35-37: 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. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.**

The angel answers the questions of both Mary as well as that of how Zacharias would father a child. The angel assured Mary that her child would be due to the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, and that she would not be asked to forfeit the virginity she prized so highly, and then only did she consent. Luke 1:26-38. When Jesus was born, Mary had none of the suffering usually associated with childbirth. The child was born miraculously. Mary herself in no way incapacitated. She herself attended to her own needs and those of the child. "She brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." Lk. 2:7. The Virgin Birth means that Mary had at one and the same time the privilege of Motherhood and the privilege of Maidenhood.

Thus, when Mary says **I know not** (Lk 1:34), the Bible responds by Joseph '**knew not**' (Matt 1:25).

The Bible also concludes "now **all this was done that it might be fulfilled** which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel." (Matt 1:22)

## Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament contained the word of God (the tablets containing the commandments), the manna (bread from heaven), and the staff of Aaron (symbol of Israel's High priesthood). Uzziah merely reached out to steady it when it was toppling over, and was struck dead (2 Samuel 6:2-7). Others died when they simply looked inside of it (1 Sam 6:19; cf. Ex 33:20). Likewise, Mary's womb was the Ark of the New Covenant which was used to hold the Incarnate Word of God, the Bread of Life from Heaven and the High Priest of the New Covenant. Would Joseph dare to have sexual relations with such an instrument of God knowing the Jewish Law and also the admonition of Angel Gabriel.

The Ark of the Old Testament, a wooden chest made from wood, that carried only the word written in stone, if that was much revered and highly holy, then Mary the Mother of God 'overshadowed by the power of the Highest' who carried in her womb the real Word of God, the Son of the Most High Himself (in place of the tablets of stone), the True High Priest Jesus (in place of Aaron's rod, and the real Bread from heaven (in place of the pot of manna), is she not more than the wooden chest with God's presence. This Ark prefigured the incarnation of God the Son in the womb of Mary.

Mary was required to bear the physical presence of God in her womb. God requires a pure, unblemished and holy vessel as the Ark of the Old Covenant with the mercy seat. She is the ark of the new covenant and she is prefigured by the ark of the old covenant. God demanded that only the finest materials and the purest gold be used in the construction of the Ark (Ex 25:10-22). Similarly, the Holy Spirit used only the purest material to tabernacle the Divine Son. For in Mary "the Word became flesh and dwelt [literally "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent"] among us" (Jn 1:14).

1Sa:4:21: And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

1Sa:4:22: And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

1Sa:6:19: And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

1Sa:7:1: And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

*I Ch: 15:12: And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.*

St. Joseph himself a Jew in the lineage of King David who almost came to the point of disowning Mary (Matt 1:19) did not forsake Mary though she carried a child that he did not father, owing to the revelations of Angel Gabriel that Mary had in her the Son of the Highest, that she was the Ark of the New Covenant, something highly dear to the Lord, would he dare to have normal relations with her. Knowing that the Lord had warned in the Book of Exodus, etc asking Moses & Joshua and the people of Israel not to tread where the Lord had appeared, those places being 'holy places' (Ex 3:5; 19:12, 13, Acts 7:33 Joshua 5:14, 15 ).

*Ex: 19:12: And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:*

*Ex: 19:13: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.*

*Ex: 3:5: And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

*Ac: 7:33: Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.*

*Jos: 5:14: And he said, Nay; but as **captain of the host of the LORD** am I now come. And **Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship**, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? Jos: 5:15: And **the captain of the LORD's host** said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for **the place whereon thou standest is holy**. And Joshua did so.*

## **Prophecy in Ezekiel 44:2**

Catholics and Orthodox Christians, as well as some Early Church Fathers such as St Jerome, cite Ezekiel 44:2 as evidence for Mary's perpetual virginity:

He said to me: This gate is to remain closed; it is not to be opened for anyone to enter by it; since the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it, it shall remain closed.

The anti catholic propaganda of the Virgin Mary of not having remained a virgin after Jesus' birth and that she had other children of her own is unfounded in the Bible or tradition.

The official Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox doctrine is that Mary was a perpetual virgin, as did many of the early Protestants, including Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, as well as John Wesley, the 18th Century Methodist leader. Indeed, the majority of early Christians seem to have left this doctrine completely unquestioned. The Roman Catholic Church, following Jerome, conclude that the *adelphoi* were Jesus' cousins, but the Eastern Orthodox, following Eusebius and Epiphanius, argue that they were Joseph's children by his (unrecorded) first wife.