

JAMES, JESUS' BROTHER?

Reza Aslan notes that in the earliest Christian writings, James, Peter and John are the pillars of the Church. The order indicates that James mattered most and James even sent people to correct Peter when Peter refused to accept Gentiles properly. See Galatians 2. Aslan writes, "It should be noted that the famous statement of Jesus calling Peter the rock upon which he will found his church is rejected as unhistorical by most scholars." No wonder. But who was this James who was the first "pope"?

He is called the brother of Jesus.

There was a tradition in existence in the early Church that James was not the literal brother of Jesus Christ. The tradition is reflected at the beginning of the unorthodox First Apocalypse of James found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. "It is the Lord who spoke to me. He said, "Behold now the completion of the redemption I accomplished. I have give you a sign of these things brother James. And it is not without cause that I have called you my brother although physically you are not my brother." We are not told the reason why he is called a brother at all. There is no motive for the writer to go to the trouble of making out that James was not a literal brother. Read The Nag Hammadi Library in English page 262 (James M Robinson General Editor, HarperCollins, San Francisco 1990).

In Galatians 1:19, Paul says that he met James the Lord's brother. This seems to say that Jesus lived in the first century when his brother was still alive. But the most important thing to realise is that Paul told Philemon that Onesimus the slave was to be his blood-brother and not just a brother in the Lord so blood-brother among the early Christians didn't always mean that you shared a parent. Josephus who also called James Jesus' brother could have made a mistake due to this confusing practice. The practice probably had a lot to do with the universal accusations of incest that supposedly was rife among the early Christians.

According to the letter of Paul to Philemon Christians believed you could make somebody you loved your brother or sister by blood even if they were not a blood relation. Paul told Philemon that Onesimus was not just a brother in the Lord but a blood brother from now on. A brother in the Lord means a non-literal brother but Paul's saying Onesimus who was not related to Philemon was more than that and a blood brother indicates plainly that you can become a literal blood brother by adoption. This practice could have confused people about James and made them think he really was born a brother of Jesus'. It is important to note that James is only called the Brother of the Lord never the brother of Jesus. Brother of the Lord sounds like a religious title. The Jews were more likely to call him the Brother of Jesus if that was what he was.

The Historical Evidence for Jesus, G A Wells, Prometheus Books, New York, 1988 (page 168) mentions the research of Brandon which showed that calling James the brother of the Lord could mean the Principle Servant of the Lord. Strabo who discussed how the vizier of the Nabatean Kings was called the Brother of the King is mentioned too. Also, Cerfaux wrote of inscriptions that showed brother was a honorific title. Jesus in Matthew 28 speaks of relations and non-relations as brothers of his.

The Roman Church insists that brother here in Galatians and Josephus means relation and not literal brother. This could be right because in the gospels a Mary, the mother of James is mentioned as if we know James (Mark 16:1). If James were Christ's brother the gospel would call her the mother of Jesus. Mary has a sister called Mary implying that they were not sisters but relations (John 19:25) for you don't have two literal sisters with the one name. James could have been the man who was thought to be a relation of a Jesus who was believed to have died centuries before.

This James may have written the Epistle of James. But he uses his own authority in that Epistle (NAB, Introduction to the Epistle of James) and not that of the brother he supposedly knew as the infallible revelation of God and only mentions him twice. And this in an Epistle to a group of Jewish Christians who could depart from Christ anytime and needed to be inoculated against heresy with the details about Jesus and who he was! James was not the literal brother of Jesus. Notice how he tends in his epistle to use his brothers to refer to Church members? This habit could have confused Josephus who called him the brother of Christ. Some claim that Josephus proves there was no tradition for the Virgin Birth for they hold that James was older than Jesus. Jude in his epistle claims to be the brother of James but is careful not to call himself the brother of Christ and indicates that he was not so probably James was not a brother of Jesus either.

James introduces the letter by calling himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus the Messiah. Would it not be better to call himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ his brother?

In James 5:10, James offers the prophets as role models and singles out Job for mention. The real brother of Jesus would have stressed Jesus as role model. Why would Jesus' brother mention the suffering of prophets inferior to Jesus and not

Jesus'? He never calls Jesus the Son of God or hints that Jesus lived a perfect life before his glorification. It seems that James did not even think that Jesus was the best exemplar. He had very little interest in Jesus in his epistle. This suggests that James was not his brother at all and knew very little about him.

Also, James denied Jesus' power struggle with the Devil when he wrote that we are tempted by our own desires. James may have believed in devils but he did not believe they tempted us. He wrote that our desires are to blame in the context of refuting the view that God was the tempter. So he was saying that God was not tempting us and proving it by telling us to see that we tempt ourselves. Obviously, this rules out the possibility of blaming demons for tempting us for a God who lets demons tempt is no better than a God who tempts himself especially when he has no reason to give demons who are condemned to eternal punishing the power to tempt for even respect for free will is no excuse then for the power is only given so that we might love and is not important if we will not love again like the spirits in Hell cannot love. This is a very significant departure from the gospels which are filled with demons and Jesus even has a struggle with the Devil in the wilderness. This James did not claim to be the literal brother of the gospel Jesus and as good as denied that he was.

When this James wrote that the man who doubts cannot expect to receive an answer for prayer from the Lord (James 1:5-7) there is no mistake about it. This James though a leading Christian did not know of the faith healing Jesus we have in the gospels. All faith healers have people who they seem to have cured and many of these would be clearly doubters having little interest in the ways of God. If there had been a Jesus he would have known him and got the story about him for he was a leading Christian. He would have known that Jesus' healings did not tally with his opposition to doubt and his assertion that doubt blocks a response from God.

Acts says that the apostle James brother of John the apostle was executed in 12:2. But the problem is that that James is mentioned as living a few verses later as if the author forgot he had killed James off. And both Jameses were pillars in the Church. But the second James may be another person, the Lord's so-called brother for John the apostle was not a brother of Jesus'. There is no proof that Acts made a mistake or did not make one but if this James was John's brother and Jesus' then he was not literally Jesus'. It is hard to believe that Acts would mention this man whose killing was important enough to make Herod go after Peter when he saw the pleased reaction of the Jews meaning that the man was as important as Peter so briefly. It is like the author did make a mistake. Further evidence of this is the fact that Acts was written after 62-4 AD when Paul was first imprisoned in Rome for it stops just after it records it and it does not mention the death of James the Less the brother of the Lord in 62 AD. The author was embarrassed at the mistake he made and it was too late to fix it so thought it was best to forget about what happened in 62 AD.

We must face the possibility that somebody altered Josephus's text to make it deceitfully call James the brother of the so-called Christ, Jesus. That would explain an awful lot. Somebody thought Josephus had not been very clear and made a so-called clarification. The Epistle of James can stand as evidence that this interference took place for it tells against the literal brother view. James is certainly an early epistle and precedes the gospels. It is too primitive and normal to have come from a later stage in the Church's theological development.

How does the denial that James was a brother fit in with my assertion that the New Testament states that the virgin Mary did have sons and daughters including a James besides Jesus? Only the gospels say that and we are noticing that the epistles never say that Jesus had real brothers and sisters and we know the gospels give Jesus false historicity. If Jesus had brothers or even cousins they would have been killed for Pilate, who the gospels lie about, said Jesus really was a king meaning his relations would be in line for the throne. So the gospels are incoherent regarding the matter. No relations of Jesus would have been allowed to survive or at least be free. There was no way Josephus could mention that James had a brother called Christ who was allowed to live for it makes Rome look incompetent.

Also modern scholars think there were three Jameses. One was the apostle James the son of Zebedee who was beheaded by Herod Agrippa, the other was the apostle James the Less the son of Alphaeus who was an apostle too and the other James who was called the brother of the Lord. The Gospels say that Jesus had a blood-brother called James but nowhere is it said that he was an apostle or a believer. The brothers of Jesus are presented as hostile to him in the gospels and nowhere in the New Testament is there any hint of a change of heart. Galatians 1:19 seems to say James the brother of the Lord is an apostle but it can be interpreted to mean he was not (NAB, Biblical Dictionary and Concordance, page 95). So he was not for it would be clearer if he was. Never did the New Testament call this James an apostle and Paul in Galatians denies it. This James according to every source was adulated by the Jews meaning that he refused to put forward the reforms Jesus tried to make for the Jews despised what Jesus was trying to do. He was not the apostle James then who was the blood brother of the Lord according to the gospels for a heretic could not be made an apostle.

Brother of the Lord was James' honorary title because he could not become an apostle. Those who wonder then why Peter was not called the brother need to realise that Peter was not as important as James, Peter had his own honour as an apostle and if Peter could have been called brother and we don't know for our sources are sparse.