

# Jesus' Mother and Brothers

**Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21**

**DIG:** What did the crowd expect? In light of the growing controversy, why might Jesus' mother and brothers be eager to speak with Him (see Mark 3:20-21)? What did the Lord say is the basis for a family relationship with Him? How do we know these were the Nazarene's own **brothers and sisters** from the same womb, and not His cousins? Is doing ADONAI's will an action or a belief (see Luke 6:46 and John 6:29)? **What seven areas does the Roman Catholic Church elevate Mary over Jesus?**

**REFLECT:** From your life this week, would others see you as a "**brother or sister**" of Yeshua, or a distant relative that no one wants to talk about at family gatherings? **Why? How do you get near to Jesus in the midst of your crowded life?**

After finishing His parables by the Sea (see Es - **The Public Parables of the Kingdom by the Sea**), Messiah returned to Peter's house in Capernaum with His talmidim. At some point it was announced to Him that His mother and half-brothers were standing outside of the house wanting to see Him privately. The family had already been living in a suburb of Capernaum for some time. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the stepfather of Jesus, had already passed away. **But again a smaller crowd gathered in the house.** It was so packed and demanding that Christ and His apostles were not even able to eat (Mark 3:20).

Jesus had four half-brothers (also see Fj - **Isn't This the Carpenter's Son? Aren't His Brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Jude?**), and several half-sisters, who are not named (Matthew 13:55-56). These brothers were friendly toward Him earlier in His ministry (John 2:12); but after the Galilean Rabbi was rejected in Nazareth (see Ch - **The Spirit of the LORD is One Me**) they seemed to distance themselves from His claims. Later on they ridiculed Him, calling Him the "Secret Messiah" (John 7:5).

At the present time they were unbelieving and indifferent, not to say hostile, or at least ready to interfere with Christ's work in favor of some kind of quiet and respectable life for sake of the family. They had been forced to move from Nazareth on His account and now the Pharisees and Torah-teachers from Jerusalem were present in Capernaum and the might of the Sanhedrin was against Him. Miryam wanted to be close to her Son, and it was their responsibility to take care of their mother after Joseph had died. They probably felt that they had better interfere now, or else the fanatical zeal of this brother of theirs might force them and their mother to face the inconvenience and difficulty of another move.

They had doubtless heard of the slander that was spoken about Him by the Pharisees and the Torah-teacher's who came down from Jerusalem. They said that Beelzebub possessed him! By the prince of demons He is driving out demons (Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; John 7:20). When the Lord's family heard that He was so engrossed by His work that He even failed to take care for His physical needs, that they went to take charge of Him. This probably meant they decided to take Him back to Nazareth. They were intending to take Him by force against His will, for they said: He is out of His mind (Mark 3:21). The Meshiach's own family realized something was very different. But they misinterpreted His actions and thought that He needed to be protected from Himself. His zeal seemed to be bordering on insanity to them. Christ's healing ministry begged for theories to explain it. Herod had his theory (Matthew 14:1-12), the Pharisees and Torah-teachers had theirs, and the family of Jesus had theirs.

Yeshua's brothers and sisters had witnessed the intensity of His ministry and perhaps reasoned among themselves that His zeal bordered on fanaticism. The nervous tension was showing on His face. He looked tired. They probably convinced Mary to come along with them and bring her oldest Son home and let the excitement subside while He got some needed rest. So the family all came to Peter's house together. Surely He would be persuaded by the show of interest and solidarity on their part.<sup>706</sup> After all, they were His own flesh and blood!

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, which was sitting around Him in a circle (the talmidim naturally forming the inner ring and other disciples behind them and partly mingled with them filling the house), His mother and brothers (*adelphos*) stood outside, wanting to speak to Him. But they were not able to get near Him because of the crowd (Matthew 12:46; Luke 8:19). Therefore, they sent someone in to call Him (Mark 3:31).

Then a certain one at the request of the family wedged his way in and interrupting the Lord said: Your mother and brothers (*adelphos*) are standing outside wanting to speak to You (Matthew 12:47; Mark 3:32; Luke 8:20). The arrival of Messiah's mother and brothers and sisters gave Him the perfect opportunity to give Miryam the due worship that the Catholic Church teaches she deserves. But He did nothing of the sort. On the contrary, He gave a graphic illustration of the need for a personal relationship with Him.

There must have been a stir in the room as the crowd was silent. What did they want? The situation was tense. Jesus had just emerged victorious over the dreaded Pharisees and Torah-teachers. But now His family, whether motivated by fear or affection, interrupted His ministry. What should He do about it? He replied to those sitting around Him: **Who is My mother, and who are My brothers** (*adelphos*) (Mark 3:33)? Context determines the use of the Greek word *adelphos*. Here the context is **mother and brothers**, or family.

Then the Anointed One looked at those seated in a circle around Him (see Ey - **The Private Parables of the Kingdom in the House**) and pointing to His apostles, He said: **Here are My mother and My brothers** (*adelphos*). **For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother** (*adelphos*) **and sister** (*adelphe*) **and mother** (**Mattityahu 12:48-50; Mark 3:34-35**). His words sent a double meaning their way. First, to direct His **mother and brothers** (*adelphos*) to focus on what matters most, hearing and obeying **God's** Word, and second, to guide them to a true relationship with **Him** that surpassed any physical blood ties.

At this point, our **Savior** clearly teaches here the spiritual nature of **His** Kingdom. It is to be a great spiritual family. They will do the will of the heavenly Father and are **His** true spiritual family. **Yeshua's** own earthly family, even **His** own **mother** failed to understand **Him** (at least on this occasion). It is good to understand that **His** family did understand **Him** more perfectly later on, but that was only after **His** resurrection.

If **Miryam** had had the influence and authority over **Christ** that is claimed by the Church of Rome, **He** would not have answered her as **He** did, but would have immediately honored **her** request to see **Him**. Here again we have Scriptural evidence that **Mary** has nothing to do with the ministry of **the Son of God** as regards to salvation. In fact, **He** rejects all earthly relationships, and accepts only spiritual ones. The Pharisees claimed the right to enter the kingdom of Heaven merely on the basis of their physical ties back to Abraham. But the point **Jesus** made was that only those who are the spiritual seed of Abraham would enter in.

**Jesus'** words marked a radical turning point for **Himself**, and more significantly, for **His** mother. **He** was redefining the family. Biological ties, which predominate all through the Bible, are not the strongest ties for **Yeshua** or to those who follow **Him**. The kingdom of **God** is not biological, but spiritual. **The Lord's** family isn't built on bloodlines, biology, or genetics, but on the blood of **Messiah** and a shared commitment to **ADONAI** and **His** Word. The family ties that bind **God's** family together come from hearing and putting **His** words into practice.

**Jesus** was giving **Mary** the Gospel, the only path to blessedness. Shocking as it sounds, physically giving birth to **the Messiah** ultimately meant nothing if **Mary** never listened, believed in, and lived out the teachings of her **Son**. **Her** true calling in life - and the only bond with **Him** that matters - was to hear **His** words, believe in them and live by them. **Her** greatest calling was to follow **the Savior of Sinners** and cultivate the family resemblance by becoming like **her Son**. The one who takes to heart the words **Christ** spoke regarding **His** biological mother belongs to the only family in the world that truly matters as a full-fledged **brother** or **sister** or **mother** of **Jesus**. This is the most important family tree for us all.

Jesus knew He would end up on the cross being crucified in front of His mother. Mary, of course, was unaware of this until the end. So throughout His life, Yeshua prepared her for that eventuality by adding her perception of herself from not only being His mother, but more importantly to being His disciple. So what may be perceived as harsh or unkind words like: **Why were you searching for Me? Didn't you know I had to be in My Father's house (Luke 2:49)?** Or possibly, **Woman, why should that concern Me (John 2:4a CJB)?** were actually words of kindness and compassion.<sup>707</sup>

When the Church began at the Festival of Shavu'ot, there was only one name given under heaven by which we must be saved, that of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Wherever we are directed to the Giver of Grace, Mary is never mentioned. Surely this silence is a rebuke to those who would build a system of salvation around her. God the Holy Spirit has given us all the record in the Scriptures that we need concerning Mary, and there is no record of anyone ever calling on Miryam for salvation. **Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary is superior to Christ in seven different ways.**

**First, the Roman Catholic Church elevates Mary to a superior position over Christ.** *The Glories of Mary*, written by Bishop Alphonse de Liguori in 1931 and revised in 1941, has become widely accepted as Catholic doctrine. It was indirectly a product of the Council of Trent, the 16<sup>th</sup> century version of Vatican II, to counter the Protestant Reformation. Known today as the Baltimore Catechism, it is still widely used and has never been repudiated. In it, Miryam is given the place belonging to Christ, "And she is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by . . . Mary alone" (*The Glories of Mary*, pages 82-83). But the Bible declares: **For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus (First Timothy 2:5).**

**Second, the Catholic Church glorifies Mary more than Christ.** "Many things . . . are asked from God, and are not granted; however, [when] they are asked of Mary, they are obtained," for "she . . . is even Queen of Hell, and Sovereign Mistress of the devils" (*The Glories of Mary*, pages 141 and 143). But the Word of God says: **In the name of Jesus Christ . . . for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 3:6 and 4:12).** His name is far above all rule and authority, power, dominion, and every name . . . not only in the present age but also in the one to come (Ephesians 1:21).

**Third, the Roman Church believes that Mary is the gate to heaven instead of Christ.** "Mary is called . . . the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her" (*The Glories of Mary*, page 160). "The way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary," and since "our salvation is in the hands of Mary . . . [the one] who is protected by Mary will be saved, and [the one] who is not will be lost" (*The Glories of Mary*, pages 169 and 170). However, Christ said: **I AM the gate; whoever enters**

through Me will be saved (John 10:9a), and I AM the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).

Fourth, the Catholic Church gives Mary the power of Christ. "All power is given to you in heaven and on earth," so that "at the command of Mary all obey - even God . . . thus . . . God has placed the whole Church . . . under the domination of Mary" (*The Glories of Mary*, pages 180-181). Mary "is also the Advocate of the whole human race . . . for she can do what she wills with God" (*The Glories of Mary*, page 193). The Word of God, however, states: **All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and He is the head of the body, the Church . . . so that in everything He might have the supremacy (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18). But if anybody does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (First John 2:1-2).

Sixth, the Catholic Church teaches that Mary is the peacemaker instead of Christ. "Mary is the peace-maker between sinners and God" (*The Glories of Mary*, page 197). "We often more quickly obtain what we ask by calling on the name Mary, than by invoking the name of Jesus." "She . . . is our salvation, our life, our hope, our counsel, our refuge, our help" (*The Glories of Mary*, pages 254 and 257). But thankfully, the Bible teaches: **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:13-14a). And: Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive for whatever you ask in My name My Father will give you (John 16:23-24).**

Seventh, the Roman Catholic Church gives Mary the glory that belongs to Christ. "The whole trinity, O Mary, gave you a name . . . above every other name, that at your name, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (*The Glories of Mary*, page 260). The B'rit Chadashah, however, answers this heresy when it says: **Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, the at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-10).**<sup>708</sup>

It is an understatement to say that not every Catholic believes in this doctrine of Mary, and there are many true believers who have been saved despite the teaching of Rome. My wife was saved out of the Catholic Church. However, it cannot be overstated that this still remains the official doctrine of the Catholic Church and continues to be taught in Catholic parochial schools and colleges around the world.

The Roman Catholic Church uses these verses to perpetuate the myth of the perpetual virginity of **Mary**. **She** was a virgin when **the Holy Spirit** impregnated **her**. But afterward had normal sexual relations with **her** husband Joseph, and they had a family together. Whether the inspired Gospel writers used the masculine *adelphos* for **brother**, or the feminine *adelphe* for **sister**, they both have the same root, and mean *from the same womb*.

The Roman Catholic Church attempts to explain these away as cousins, and therefore not children of **Mary** and Joseph at all. However, biblical Greek has a different word for *cousin*, which is *anepsios*. **My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin (anepsios) of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10)**. It is true that there is another general Greek word for *relative*. **Even Elizabeth your relative (suggenes) is going to have a child in her old age, and she was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month (Luke 1:36)**. But neither of the words *cousin* or *relative* are used here. At best, it is bad scholarship; and at worst, it is a blatant attempt to twist the Scriptures to fit their preconceived theology.<sup>709</sup>

**Messiah replied: My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice (Luke 8:21)**. Does **Jesus** have anything to say about dealing with difficult relatives? Is there an example of **Christ** bringing peace to a painful family? Yes there is. **His** own. It may have surprised you to know that **the Lord** had a family at all. You may have not been aware that **Messiah** had **brothers and sisters**, or that **His** family was less than perfect. **They** were. If your family doesn't appreciate you, take heart, neither did **Yeshua's**.

Yet **He** didn't try to control **their** behavior, nor did **He** let **their** behavior control **His** behavior. **He** didn't demand that **they** all agree with **Him**. **He** didn't sulk when **they** insulted **Him**. **He** didn't make it **His** mission in life to please **them**.<sup>710</sup> **They** were sinners (yes even **Mary**), and **they** had the freedom to accept **Him** or reject **Him** just like everyone else.