

The Brother of Jesus

And the Lost Teachings of Christianity

by: Jeffrey J. Butz

Part 1 The Nature of Jesus' Family

Chapter 2 A Family Divided: Jesus' Family in the Gospels

Due to statements in the gospels the vast majority of scholars and theologians have understood Jesus' family to have been opposed to Jesus' ministry and mission in his lifetime. Clergy reference materials and uncritical acceptance of such commentary has left the impression that Jesus' rejection by his family is historical fact. How did this come about? True? Misinterpretation? Of Hidden Agenda?

The Family According to Mark

Mark – the earliest gospel, composed after 70 AD: Mark 3: 20-21; 31-35. Dissecting Greek:

Kai akousantes hoi par autou exelthon krattesai auton elegon gar hoti exeste

And hearing the ones with him went forth to seize him for they said he is beside himself.

hoi par autou is driven as “his family” by linking verse 21 with verse 31.

Wansbrough: *exeste* (crazy) is not Jesus, but the crowd (*ho ochlos*).

Word-smithing? If so by whom? And when? And why? This is Mark's own interpretation!

Analyzing the Synoptic Accounts

Mark 3: 20-35 is a classic example of Mark's Sandwich technique - filler material between two associated episodes uniquely throughout Mark. Why does Mark's story of Jesus' family interject the controversy with the scribes? Was it to subtly cast a shadow on his family? Why?

Page 32 – Mark's larger *inclusio*: hoi par autou follows the choosing of the twelve. Painter's interpretation: It is the disciples who question Jesus' sanity – not his family. Mark consistently portrays the apostles as dense, uncomprehending, cowardly and egotistical. Compare Matthew 12: 46-50 and Luke 8: 19-21 with Mark: The disciples, the crowd, the scribes and Jesus's family all feel Mark's stinging rebuke and critique.

Compare Mark 6: 1-4 with Matthew 13: 54-58 and Luke 4: 22-24. “Not without honor” – where?

The Family According to John

John 2: 12 implies that Jesus' brothers were an essential part of Jesus' following.

John 7: 1-5: Everyone misunderstands Jesus and his messianic mission - until the resurrection.

Analyzing Mark's Agenda

Is Mark attacking the disciples intentionally? If so, why? Is it a polemic against a conservative Jewish Christian group in Palestine (The same group Paul rails against)? Rival interpretations of Jesus in the earliest Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian communities. (James vs. Paul?)

Crossan: Mark is fighting a “double front” both against Judaizing “heretics” (Jesus' family who continue to head the Jerusalem Assembly) and jurisdictional and doctrinal hegemony of the same. Mark is a Pauline Gentile Christian. Jesus' family and key disciples continue to run the conservative Jewish Christian Jerusalem Assembly after James' death.

The Faith of the Family

1. Despite a lack of certainty about Mark's intent in the use of the term hoi par autou in 3: 21, there is nothing in the gospels that incontrovertibly shows opposition to Jesus by his family during his ministry.
2. Leading scholars, Bauckman and Painter, who have done the most research in this area conclude: Jesus' mother and brothers were followers of his ministry prior to the crucifixion. Bauckman is more circumspect: They became followers during Jesus' ministry. Painter is more certain: Jesus' family had always been an essential part of Jesus' following.

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Mark 3: 20-35: and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.' ²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.' ²³And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. ²⁸ 'Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin'— ³⁰for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.' ³¹ Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.' ³³And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' ³⁴And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

Matthew 12: 46-50: While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷Someone told him, 'Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.' ⁴⁸But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' ⁴⁹And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

Luke 8: 19-21: Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.' ²¹But he said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.'

Mark 6:1-4: He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.'

Matthew 13: 54-58: He came to his home town and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?' ⁵⁷And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour except in their own country and in their own house.' ⁵⁸And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief.

Luke 4: 22-24: All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' ²³He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum." ' ²⁴And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town.

John 2: 12: After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there for a few days.

John 7: 1-5: After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. ²Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near. ³So his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing; ⁴for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' ⁵(For not even his brothers believed in him.)