

Ministry in Pakistan

The Controversy over the Brothers of Jesus

An Invitation

It may seem like an unlikely time to go to Pakistan to minister with the recent civil unrest. Yet, the Lord Jesus knows best. Over a year ago, a pastor in East Pakistan found the Gate Breaker website and invited me to come, because the Christians there were confronted daily with non Christian religions and heretical teachings.

That began a year of praying by various cell churches in Pakistan that the Lord would make a way in His perfect timing. After another invitation this January by a different pastor in the same region of Pakistan and renewed prayer on my part, the Lord revealed His will to me.

At a pastor's home in Quincy, WA, moments after I had been seeking the Lord about the invitation, the pastor's wife, who knew nothing about the potential trip, gave me a prophetic word, "Go", plus a financial seed offering. Later that day, a couple in the church offered me a plane ticket after I had briefly shared with the church about the invitation.



When I mentioned the upcoming ministry to a church in Spokane, WA, a young man named James Fish was called out by the Lord to accompany and assist me. Now, two of us are going.

The name *Pakistan* means "pure country". At twice the size of California, it has roughly half the population of the U.S., making it the sixth most populated country with the second largest concentration of Muslims.

The Ministry

May 20 - June 8 are the travel and ministry dates. Besides equipping the Christians to withstand heretical teachings, the ministry work has now grown to include a pastor's conference, evangelistic crusades, teaching in a Bible college, and multiple church and ministry events.

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The Lord Jesus had brothers and sisters. His brothers were James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon (Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3). Yet, there are different views held by Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox about their role.

Someone might ask: why is this an important subject for practical living? The conclusion will show that major doctrines have developed which impact entire systems of belief and actions.

Before getting into the controversy, let's consider some history about James and Jude.

James

He eventually became known as "James the Just", the author of *The Epistle of James*. This was possibly the earliest epistle of the New Testament.

Prior to the resurrection, Jesus' brothers did not believe that He was the Messiah and spoke sarcastically to Him (John 7:3-5). This would have included James.

He, like other Jews of that time, probably looked for a Messiah that would rise up militarily to oppose the Roman occupation of Palestine, not truly understanding the role of Christ. We do not know how

James responded to the many miracles of Christ.

After Jesus' resurrection, James had a personal meeting with Jesus (1st Corinthians 15:7). This private meeting was possibly quite humbling yet revelatory for James.

All of Jesus' brothers were with the apostles in the upper room and present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). So they must have become believers after the resurrection.

Two of Jesus' original disciples were named James. Then there was James His brother, making things a bit confusing.

James, His brother, eventually became the bishop and leader of the Church in Jerusalem. His elevation into a leadership role probably happened soon after the martyrdom of another

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The Controversy (continued)

James, who was known as James the elder, the brother of John (Acts 12:1). Peter acknowledged the new leadership role of James, the brother of Jesus, in Acts 12:17 just prior to his own departure from Jerusalem.

One ancient writing that may or may not be true says that it was James who instructed Peter to go confront Simon the Magician in Caesarea.¹

Paul refers to James as an *apostle* in Galatians 1:19. This confirms Peter's recognition of James ascent in leadership. Galatians was probably Paul's earliest epistle, written prior to the council of Jerusalem in c 49. James presided over that council directing the decisions (Acts 15:13, 19).

Regarding his marital status, 1st Corinthians 9:5 says the brothers of Jesus had wives that they took on their missionary journeys. So he was probably married.

According to Josephus the historian, James was stoned to death in 63 AD by the order of the high priest, Ananus, of the sect of Sadducees.² Hegesippus (170 AD) wrote that James had been thrown from a pinnacle and then stoned in 69. Just prior to dying he said, "God, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."³

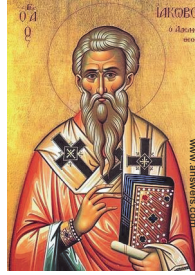
Jude

We know relatively little about Jude's life. He wrote the *Epistle of Jude*. As with James, he converted after Jesus' resurrection. Also, he was married and traveled as a missionary (1st Corinthians 9:5). His epistle could have been written as early as 50 AD but probably later. His later acts are obscure as he is often confused with the apostle Jude Thaddaeus.

The Controversy

The characterization of their identities has caused controversy among the various Christian traditions. Three different theories have been promoted based upon doctrinal view point. They are: The brother theory; the half-brother theory; and the cousin theory. The first is held primarily by Protestants, the second by Eastern Orthodox, and the third by Roman Catholics. Below, I have portrayed the brother-theory as the most likely with an explanation following.⁴

The explanation is somewhat com-



James the Just

plex but can be simplified into the following: The brother theory holds that Jesus was blood brothers with James, Jude, and the others through their mother Mary. The half-brother theory states that Joseph was their father but Mary was not their biological mother; it says that Joseph brought his sons and daughters from a former marriage into his marriage with Mary. In the cousin theory, the siblings of Jesus are actually distant relatives. Their mother is also called Mary, wife of Alphaeus and is sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This makes Jesus a cousin to them.

The brother theory is held by Protestants. It is exegetically and biblically the most natural and sound. The biblical Greek word *brother* means brother, not cousin. The father of Latin theology, Tertullian (c. 150-220, held this view. The first century historian Josephus said James was Jesus' brother. Also, the children were often with Mary (Matthew 12:46; 13:55; John 2:12). Why would they be with Mary if they were older than Jesus and had a different Mother?

The only real objections to the brother theory are two: First, Mary would not be a perpetual virgin. The doctrine of Perpetual Virginity (she never had sex) is a foundational doctrine of both the Roman and Eastern Church (649 AD). Upon it rest the Catholic doctrines of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Bodily Assumption (1950).

The Immaculate Conception is the doctrine that Mary was born without sin; some take it further to say she too was born to a virgin.⁵ In the doctrine of Bodily Assumption Mary rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Today, some even believe that she is the Co-Redeemer with Jesus.

Ideas have consequences! These faulty doctrines have impacted the belief system and actions of millions of people in the history of Christianity.

Second, why did Jesus ask John to care for Mary rather than His own family (John 19:25)? The simple answers to this are 1) John was His closest disciple: 2) He emphasized a spiritual relationship over a natural one (Matthew 12:48-50); and 3) His brothers were not

yet believers (John 7:5).

The half-brother and cousin theories were adopted by certain early Church fathers in the zealous age that leaned towards celibacy. Jerome promoted the cousin theory early in his career (383) "to save the virginity of both Mary and Joseph, and to reduce their marriage relationship to a merely nominal and barren connection."⁶ Yet, later in his life he was not so sure about this theory. Today, the half-brother theory is held by Eastern Orthodox and the cousin theory by the Catholic Church.

The cousin theory causes the most confusion. It is the one which proposes that Jesus' brothers were actually three of the apostles: James is James the Younger, son of Alphaeus, Jude is Jude Thaddaeus, and Simon is Simon the Canaanite or Zealot. You can see how this confuses things for the modern student of early Church history!

Yet, the cousin theory is not practical for many reasons. Here are some:

1) The words "brother" and "cousin" are both found in the New Testament. James and the others are called Jesus' brothers, not cousins by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. The authors knew the difference.

2) Mary would have had a sister named Mary; this is not likely.

3) No where does the Bible say that Joseph had children or that he was married prior to Mary.

4) John 7:3-5 says Jesus' "brothers" were not believers before the resurrection; thus they were neither apostles nor disciples. John 7:3 clearly distinguishes between Jesus' brothers and the disciples, just as 1st Corinthians 9:5 distinguishes between the brothers and the apostles.

5) In Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus, Himself, distinguishes between His brothers and His disciples.

6) Since Jesus only had four brothers according to Matthew and Mark, and the cousin theory states that three of them (James, Jude, and Simon) were apostles / disciples, then there would

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A Hummingbird at Rest

People are fascinated by hummingbirds. The name comes from the humming noise that their wings make as they move in aerobic wonder - up, down, forward, backward, sideways, and upside-down.

I think that we could learn from them, but first let's consider a few of their habits.

They eat about every twenty minutes to provide fuel for their high metabolism. Did you know that some species flap their wings up to 200 times per minute or have a heart rate of 1,260 t/p/m? They may fly 40 mph. Some go non stop for hundreds of miles. Wow, it seems like they are always on the move, but they aren't! In fact, they rest more than they work.

I discovered this in mid-March, on the Oregon coast. I was sitting in a restaurant with my sister, my brother and his wife. Outside, a hummingbird was flitting around a bird feeder. Then he landed on a rail and just sat there. That's right - he was still, for a moment anyway. I was amazed, never having witnessed a hummingbird at rest.

Since then I have learned that these little guys only spend 10 - 15% of their time working to eat, 75 - 80% sitting, digesting, resting, and the balance of time in other activity.¹

They sleep at night, often entering a deep sleep, a hibernation-type called *topor*.² This conserves energy. In other words, when they rest, they rest really well. In fact, on cold nights they must enter into *topor*, saving energy because of their high metabolism or they will die.³

Okay, so what can we learn? People are not aerobic with high metabolisms nor do they go into *topor*. We usually have to work at jobs more than 15% of our time to make enough money, but we also need true rest, as well as time for play, family, dreaming, individual growth, and seeking God. Here are a few things for Christians to contemplate and learn.

First: work hard. We may not have the lightening quickness or accuracy of a hummingbird, but we are to be industrious and not lazy. Proverbs 12:11 *"He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread."* Ecclesiastes 9:10 *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might."* Employers should be impressed by the diligent example of Christian employees. *"Let your light shine"* (Matthew 5:16).

Second: rest well; there are two types - natural and spiritual. (1) Natural: The idea of resting one day each week goes back to

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Genesis and Exodus. Learning to relax from labor is good for your health, stress level, family relationships, mental strength, and positive outlook. There is also the need for time each day to reflect and spend with God.

(2) Spiritual: Sometimes converts to Christianity carry a work, work, work lifestyle into their ideas about salvation and God. Like the hummingbird they go, go, go. They think

they must work enough or be good enough to get to heaven. Yet, people are saved through faith and not good works

(Ephesians 2:8-9). In balance, it should be emphasized that Christians are to share the Gospel and shine their light in a dark world.

However, we do this because we know the truth about Christ, not because we are trying to work our way to heaven. This goes along with the work of which Jesus tells us: John 6:29 *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'"* So our true work is not to do, do, do, but to believe in Jesus.

This brings us to another concept about rest. We are to rest in Christ. The Lord Jesus said, *"Come to me and I will give you rest-all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke-for it fits perfectly-and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens."* (Matthew 11:28-29 TLB) Are you resting in the Lord?

We are to rest in - or rely upon and believe in - what He has done for us and what He will do for us: His sacrifice on the cross, the atonement for our sins, the saving grace, the resurrection life, the actual work that He has for us to do, and His promises.

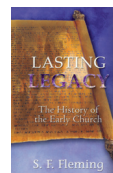
Third: I don't know if hummingbirds worry, but we shouldn't. We are to trust God. Jesus uses the example of birds in Matthew 6:26 to tell His followers that God will provide. We are not to spend our time worrying but rather seeking God's kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33-34).

Praise God. He is faithful and will fulfill all of His promises. He teaches Christians to be industrious but not to worry. He supplies for every need and provides not only food, clothing, and shelter, but a place of rest and shelter from the storms of life. He gives vision for new seasons of promise. We must believe in Him to appropriate those promises.

One final thing about hummingbirds: they only live a few years. Life is short! So take advantage of the time you have to work

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Books FOR SALE



Lasting Legacy: Discover the roots of Christian faith, the facts, legends, people, movements, and miracles from Christ to the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD.



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Servants of the Third Watch is based on a prophetic vision that the Lord gave me about the modern Church. What is the midnight hour of the Church? It may be closer than you think.



Gate Breakers is now in two volumes. Book One equips Christians regarding cults, and Book Two deals with world religions and the occult.



These are great, easy-to-read resource books for individual or group studies. You don't have to be an expert to teach from these. A perfect gift for pastors and students of Christianity.

Book One is also available in Spanish.

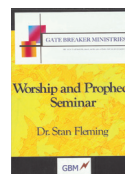
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- **Direct order:** Make checks payable to *Gate Breaker Ministries*. Send to: 2508 S. Abaco Way, Meridian, ID 83642. Please specify which books you are ordering.

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History of the Early Church: Five hours of teaching, including full power point. Learn about what happened to the apostles, how the New Testament was formed, and much, much more. Perfect for church groups or individuals. It includes notes. \$30.00 plus \$3.50 shipping.



Worship and Prophecy Seminar: Four hours of teaching: The Thirst, The Rain, The Well, & The River. Get washed in the Spirit. \$25.00 plus \$3.50 shipping. Send check with request to GBM.

Ministry in Pakistan (continued)

GBM is also coordinating with World Map (Missionary Assistance Plan), headquartered in Burbank, CA, to give to the Pakistani pastors leadership manuals printed in the Urdu language. These are called *The Shepherd's Staff* and are incredibly valuable tools for those leading congregations. See more information about them at www.world-map.com.

Ten Dollars for Pakistan

Can you give five or ten dollars that will help a pastor attend a life-changing conference or that will assist in a Christian outreach? You will be making a difference in someone's life. I was told by the pastor organizing the conference that the average Pakistani pastor can only contribute about 62 cents to attend, but the cost of the conference is more. You may send a donation in the enclosed envelope to GBM or donate online at www.gatebreakers.com.

Pakistan

The name *Pakistan* means "pure country". At twice the size of California, it has roughly half the population of the U.S., making it the sixth most populated country with the second largest concentration of Muslims. The annual per capita income is under \$3,000.¹

It became a republic in 1956. English is the official language used for government, but Urdu is the national language. With some of the world's highest mountain peaks in the north and west, there are also deserts, plateaus, and plains in other parts. The Indus River flows from the north for a thousand miles ending in the Arabian Sea.²

95% of the population is Muslim, that being a mixture of 80% Sunni and 20% Shi'a. There are small concentrations of Hindus, Sikhs, and others, with the Christian population being at 1.6%.

Prayer

Would you please pray for the people there and for this ministry opportunity? Consider this: "Prayers open a whole planet to man's activities. I can as really be touching hearts for God in far away India and China through prayer, as though I were there."³ - S. D. Gordon

Endnotes

1. "Pakistan" www.factmonster.com
2. "Pakistan" [Wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
3. S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer* (NY: Grosset & Dunlap - Fleming H. Revell, 1941), 15.



Dr. Stan Fleming

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Questions: For inquiries regarding articles and topics of interest, please email me.

Prayer requests: Send us your need and we will pray for it.

Board Members: Stan Fleming, Ron Hamel, Larry Starke



MINISTRY EVENTS

CHECK ON WEBSITE FOR OTHERS AND UPDATES

April - July, 2009

- 4/10: Boise, ID: - teaching at Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship.
- 4/17 - 27: Central Kenya - teaching at the College of Ministry and preaching in churches.
- 5/13 - 15: Meridian, ID - *Missions* for interns at CCC.
- 5/20 - 6/8: Eastern Pakistan - teaching, preaching, prophetic, and other ministry in multiple church settings.
- 6/19-22: Fabens, TX - *Worship and Prophecy seminar* at Temple Shalom.
- 7/12: Oldtown, ID: preaching at House of the Lord.

Pastors Training Program in Kenya

A wonderful ministry is beginning in Central Kenya through the vision of various leaders at Capital Christian Center in Meridian, Idaho. One of those leaders is Evans Baiya. He and I are going to Kenya for a pastors conference on April 21-23, followed up by the launching of a new on-going training program for pastors.

Many of these pastors are from rural areas and do not get much opportunity for spiritual refreshing from other leaders or a practical avenue through which to get biblical training.

This is a key event for these leaders. Please pray for a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on these ministry times, and for miracles, transformation, impartation, and renewed vision for these men and women who serve God in Kenya.

A Hummingbird at Rest (continued)

hard, not worry, rest well, and above all to know Jesus! Happy flight and rest well!

Endnotes

1. Hummingbird - www.wikepeida.com
2. <http://hummingbirdworld.com/h/behavior.htm>, <http://www.worldofhummingbirds.com/sleep.php>, <http://hummingbirdsformom.com/hummingbirds/d-o-hummingbirds-sleep/>
- 3.

The Controversy (continued)

only be one other brother - Joseph. Yet, the Bible continually refers to Jesus "brothers" (plural) as being outside of the apostles. For instance, Acts 1:13 lists the eleven apostles (Judas had killed himself) waiting in the upper room, but the next verse adds to this group the mother and *brothers* of Jesus. Joseph would have been the only brother not yet mentioned, but the verse says "brothers". Thus, the brothers were not listed among the twelve. This is clearly a contradiction in the cousin theory.

7) Finally, it is only natural that Joseph would have had sex with his wife, Mary. An unconsummated marriage would be unlikely.

Conclusion

At the heart of the debate is the status of the perpetual virginity of Mary, the mother of Jesus. To the Protestants, Mary was a virgin when she gave miraculous birth to Jesus.

Afterwards, Mary and Joseph "knew" one another (Matthew 1:25). This same concept is used in Genesis 4:1 in which Adam "knew" Eve in an intimate, physical, conjugal sense, and she gave birth to Cain and then Abel. Thus Mary gave birth to the brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Mary is to be honored but not worshipped, and to be fair, many Catholics agree with this. They worship Jesus and not Mary.

No where in Scripture does it say that we are to pray to Mary. She was not born without sin, nor to a virgin, nor did she rise from the dead and ascend into heaven.

Final thought: if and when the Eastern Orthodox and especially the Catholic leaders accept the simple truth that the brothers of Jesus were indeed his blood brothers, it will have profound impact upon their entire belief system. It would free them from the bondage of traditionalism and put their focus upon the life-giving power of the Lord Jesus Christ! Let's pray that they receive this revelation!

Endnotes

1. *Recognitions of Clement 1, 72*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 8* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 96.
2. Josephus, *Antiquity of the Jews, 20, 9, 1*.
3. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume 1* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 268.
4. See Schaff, pages 272-277 for more information.
5. "The Immaculate Virgin Conception of the Virgin Mary", www.catholicplanet.com [accessed 9/26/08].
6. Schaff, 274.