

My question on this issue has always been, how, when looking at the text of Matt. 13.55, someone says to themselves, 'Gee, that can't mean that!'

Though the actual importance of the perpetual virginity of Mary is not as great as some imply; it has no salvific import, one way or the other, it is extremely important as an indicator of one's or one's church's method of interpretation or hermeneutic. In that vein, I would argue that if a church goes to so great an extent to "make[s] the word 'brother' a non-argument" when its meaning is so very crystal clear and in no need of an "infallible teacher" to clear up what is already clear, then the more weighty matters of Truth and Salvation as taught by that church are open to question. If you are confused about what adelphos means and go to such great lengths to prove that it doesn't mean brother, then you are very likely confused or wrong about what other words mean.

The easy things first. The whole argument over "until" has been turned around backwards by the Catholic church. It does not necessitate a change in state, conjugal relations in the case of Matthew 1.25, but the easiest, obvious, surface sense of the phrase is that there was a change—after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph carried on a normal, natural, blessed, marital relationship and from that other children were born. Matthew himself in 2.13 uses "until" to mark a change when Joseph was told to stay in Egypt until told to move. The larger context of Matthew's narrative is the key to 1.25. Matthew used "until" and then later in 13.55 identified brothers and sisters of Jesus. The obvious impression of the combination of the word until in 1.25 coupled with the brothers in 13.55 means that Joseph and Mary had sex and had children. Until can mean either a change of state or not. In Matthew 1.25 and 13.55 it seems obvious that a change is intended.

Concerning the reformationists, there is much to agree with, there is much to disagree with. I suspect you don't agree with many of their writings and positions, though you find agreement with them on this issue. There is much about them that I agree with, but on this issue, and others, I disagree with them.

In the passages that introduce us to the fact that Jesus had brothers by Mary (Matt. 13.55 & Mk 6.3) the syntax makes it clear (in addition to the very clear word adelphos). In Matthew the mother and four brothers are the subject of one verb. Joseph is treated separately. Matthew goes to great lengths to separate the legal-but-not-biological father of Jesus from his biological mother and brothers. To push the syntax would lead to the conclusion that Mary is more related to the brothers than Joseph is, quite the opposite of what the Catholic church used to teach, following the Protoevangelium Jacobi argument. Matthew chooses to place Jesus' brothers with his biological mother, not his legal father. In both passages, the mother and brothers are treated together and not apart; they are treated as a unit.

So too, to take the argument that 'brothers' may also mean a relationship other than uterine sibling, which it can (context will tell), then to be consistent you also have to admit that so does 'father' and 'mother.' So to argue that 'brothers' in this instance means 'cousin' or someone other than a uterine sibling then to be logical and consistent you

have to indicate that 'mother' means aunt or someone other than uterine parent. So too with 'father.' As you argue, Joseph then was Jesus' 'uncle.'

But, the context points very clearly to nuclear family—father, mother, siblings.

Now, if I read you correctly, you made the point from Acts 1.13 that "...JAMES, the son of Alphaeus, and SIMON Zelo'tes, and JUDE the brother of JAMES." From these four passages, we see we have another 'Mary', who was the wife of Cleophas (Alphaeus)." James the Less, the Apostle, is the son of Alphaeus. You erroneously label Jude as James' brother (following Duoay or King James). Most modern translations more often note that Jude is the son of James (based on grammar, the word son is not in the text). The New Jerusalem Bible (1985 ed. Nihil Obstat John Deehan, Imprimatur Cardinal George Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster) notes this and further notes that "The apostle Jude is not the Jude 'brother' of Jesus, see Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3, and brother of James (Jude 1). Nor is it likely that the apostle James son of Alphaeus was James, the brother of the Lord, 12:17; 15:13 etc." Now, I am not sure of the relationship of the magisterium to a Nihil Obstat or an Imprimatur but that note disagrees with what you are saying as to the identification of the persons in the verses that you note. The James and Jude of the list of the Apostles is not the James and Jude in Matt 13.55 and Mark 6.3.

It is instructive to note James the son of Alphaeus in these verses. As you rightly pointed out, he is an apostle, one of the twelve (Mt 10.3; Acts 1.13). He may or not be the James the less of Mark 15.40. The question then is, is he the James, the brother of the Lord of Matt 13.55 and Mark 6.3?

In Acts 1.13 we have the following account:

Acts 1.13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

Now notice verse 14. Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Notice in the above that a distinction is made between "the twelve" and the brothers of Jesus. If the argument is made that the James of vs. 13 is one of the "brothers of Jesus" mentioned in Mark 6.3 and Matthew 13.55, then who are the brothers of Jesus mentioned in vs. 14? It is obvious from the passage that the James of verse 13 (the son of Alphaeus) is not to be equated with the James of Mk. 6.3 and Matt. 13.55. A distinction is made between James, the son of Alphaeus and James, the brother of the Lord.

Paul always makes a distinction between the apostles and James, the brother of the Lord. If they are to be equated as you imply, the why does Paul make the distinction clear? There is no reason or evidence for equating James, the son of Alphaeus with James who

became the head of the Jerusalem church and who is called "the Lord's brother." Paul always mentions James separate from the twelve. (1 Cor 15.5-7; Gal. 1.19).

Early church history does know of those who did not believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary. Tertullian (~200 AD) arguing against the docetic views of the Marcionites states emphatically that Jesus' brothers were truly (vere) his brothers by blood. Eusebius quotes Hegesippus (2nd century) who speaks of James and Jude as "brothers of the Lord according to the flesh." Josephus calls James the "brother of Jesus." It was not until Jerome (~380 AD) (Protoevangelium Jacobi accepted) that there was a move to turn Mary's virginity from merely ante-partum to post partum. As much as Jerome knew scripture, it seems he had way too much Greek influence when it came to matters of asceticism. This included a very low view of the physical aspects of marriage.

The giving of John to Mary and Mary to John more than likely relates the fact that Jesus knew that his brothers and family would not be available to take care of her as long as John would. Based on your argument, even if the "brothers" of Matt 13 are not hers, they enjoyed a closer relationship to her than did John and hence would be closer to her and would naturally take care of her before John would. However, there are strong indicators that Salome of Mk 15.40 is the mother of the sons of Zebedee of Matt 27.56 and Mary's sister in John 19.25. Jesus would then be putting his mother in the care of his first cousin. She would go to live in her sister's household. Jesus also knew that John would outlive everyone and would be available to care for Mary until she died.

The scriptural evidence is strong for the fact that Jesus had real, physical, blood siblings from his mother and his step father. To argue otherwise flies in the face of the clear teachings of the Bible and relies more on the "traditions of men" than the counsel of God. You may not (probably not) buy my argument. But, if what I have shown rings true and your view of Mary's perpetual virginity is wrong, it is time to examine other things. Within the church that Jesus founded there are many sects. Roman Catholicism is one of them, there are many others. Within each of the sects there are disagreements. Within yours there are many and they are heated, I know, I surf. All of those who truly trust Christ as their savior are Christians and members of his church. There is no requirement to belong to a particular sect and none can claim exclusive authority. It is God's love for us through the sacrifice of his son that unites us, not a membership in one particular group.

The confusion between the James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas from Matt 13.55 and Mark 6.3 and the Mark 15.40 mentioning of "Mary the mother of James the less and Joses" may be cleared up by a simple look at the cross passages set side by side. Those who wish to negate what Matt 13.55 and Mark 6.3 clearly says about the siblings of Jesus all to often erroneously and ignorantly point to the mention of "Mary the mother of James the less and Joses" in the Mark 15.40 passage. This ignores the Matt 13.55 and Mark 6.3 passage that lists Jesus' brothers as "James, Joses, Judas, and Simon", four, not two. Those denying the siblings of Jesus, following Jerome, have found themselves positing Mary having a sister of the same name, not impossible but not well attested outside of the George Foreman family.

The women going to the tomb on Easter morning were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Mary's sister and Jesus' aunt) Mk 16.1

Matthew 27.56 among whom was	Mark 15.40 And there were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were	John 19.25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
Mary the mother of James and Joseph	Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses,	Mary the wife of Clopas
mother of the sons of Zebedee	Salome	His mother's sister
		His mother

Your brother. Shawn