



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Did Jesus have any brothers or sisters?

The Bible tells us Mary was Jesus' mother, and God was his father, (not Joseph). Matthew 13:55,56 and Psalms 69:9 indicate that Mary and Joseph had four sons and several daughters after Jesus was born. Because they all had the same mother, these siblings were half brothers and sisters to Jesus.

JESUS' SISTERS

It is unclear exactly how many half-sisters Jesus had, although we believe it was more than two. Here's why: Matthew 13:55 says, "...and his sisters, are they not *all* with us?" Greek scholars tell us that if there had only been two sisters, the word "all" would have been "both." (Example: "...and his sisters, are they not *both* with us?") The word "all" could indicate 3 sisters, 7 sisters, 10, etc. This is why we believe he had "several" half-sisters.

JESUS' BROTHERS

We learn the names of Jesus' four half-brothers because Matthew 13:55,56 (NIV) records someone saying, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?..."

There are more Scriptures to indicate Jesus had brothers:

Mark 3:31 (NIV): "Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him."

Acts 1:14 (NIV): "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

JUDAS, JUDAH, OR JUDE?

Some translations of Matthew 13:55 list the name of Jesus' half-brother as "Judah." Some say "Judas." Yet our modern Bibles call the book of the Bible he wrote "Jude." How do we reconcile this?

This common Greek name, Judas, when translated into English, can be either Jude or Judah.

Here are some explanations regarding the name Jude by Greek scholars:

Both "Judas" and "Jude" are English translations of the Greek name Ἰούδας, which was a very common name in the 1st century. Jude (alternatively Judas or Judah) is one of the brothers of Jesus (Greek: ἀδελφοί, romanized: adelphoi, lit. 'brethren') according to the New Testament. He is traditionally identified as the author of the Epistle of Jude, a short epistle which is reckoned among the seven general epistles of the New Testament - placed after Paul's epistles and before the Book of Revelation - and considered canonical by Christians. (Source: Wikipedia "Jude - Brother of Jesus")

Eusebius of Caesarea refers to Jude as the brother of our Lord in two different places in his monumental work called *The History of the Church*.



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THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF JUDE

Jude 1 identifies the author of the Book of Jude as Jude, a brother of James. This likely refers to Jesus' half-brother Jude, as Jesus also had a half-brother named James (Matthew 13:55). Jude likely does not identify himself as a brother of Jesus out of humility and reverence for Christ. (Source: gotquestions.org)

WAS JESUS' HALF-BROTHER, JAMES, ONE OF THE 12 APOSTLES?

Galatians 1:19 (NASB): "But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother." Let us not get confused by this Scripture which seems to say the Lord's brother was one of the 12 Apostles. The Greek word for apostle means "one sent forth to represent the sender." James was an apostle, or one sent forth by the church in Jerusalem. In a similar way the word also applies to Hebrews 3:1: "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, set your focus on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. (Jesus was sent forth by God as his appointed representative.) There are 24 individuals called "apostles" in the Bible, but are not all what Revelation 21:14 refers to as the "twelve apostles of the Lamb."

1. Simon Peter (Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:14)
2. Andrew, Peter's brother (Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:14)
3. James, son of Zebedee (Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:14)
4. John, James' brother (Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:14)
5. Philip (Matthew 10:3, Luke 6:14)
6. Bartholomew, Philip's brother (also known as Nathanael) (Matthew 10:3, Luke 6:14)
7. James, son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3, Luke 6:15)
8. Thaddaeus, James' brother (also called Judas and Lebbaeus) (Matthew 10:3, Luke 6:16)
9. Matthew, son of Alphaeus, perhaps brother of James and Judas (Mark 2:14; Luke 6:15)
10. Thomas (Matthew 10:3, Luke 6:15)
11. Simon the Zealot (also called Simon the Canaanite) (Matthew 10:4, Luke 6:15)
12. Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:4, Luke 6:16)
13. Matthias (Acts 1:26)
14. Barnabas (Acts 13:1,2; Acts 14:4,14)
15. Andronicus (Romans 16:7)
16. Junia (Romans 16:7)
17. Apollos (1 Corinthians chapters 3-4, specifically 4:6-9)
18. James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19)
19. Silas (also known as Silvanus) (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:6)
20. Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:6)
21. Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23)
22. Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25)
23. Paul (Galatians 1:1; Galatians 2:8)
24. Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1)



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THEORY DISPROVEN - JESUS' SIBLINGS WERE HIS COUSINS OR CHILDREN FROM A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE OF JOSEPH; MARY WAS A PERPETUAL VIRGIN

There is an interesting prophetic Scripture in Psalms that refers to how Jesus was at first rejected by his brothers. Psalm 69:8 (New Heart English Bible) "I (referring to Jesus) have become a stranger to my brothers, a foreigner to my mother's children."

"I" in this Scripture is referring to Jesus, whose brothers at first did not appreciate him, and "he" (Jesus) was treated as a foreigner to his mother's children, (or his half siblings.). This disproves Catholic doctrine that Mary was forever a virgin and the siblings were either Jesus' cousins, or Joseph's by a previous marriage, as it shows she had other children after Jesus was born. Also note that in Matthew 1:25, Jesus is called Mary's "firstborn," implying Mary had other children.

See Appendix 182 from the Companion Bible:

So, did Jesus have any brothers and sisters? By reading the Scriptures and reasoning on how they fit together, we believe that Mary and Joseph had more children after Jesus was born. The Scriptures mention the names of at least four half-brothers, and Matthew refers to "all his sisters," meaning more than one, although they are not named.

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According to Matt. 13. 55, the Lord had four brothers (i. e. half-brothers, as we say), James, Joses, Simon, and Judas. He had at least three sisters also.—"and His sisters, are they not all with us?" Had there been but two, the word *all* would have been *both*.

The Lord is called Mary's "firstborn" (Matt. 1. 25 and Luke 2. 7), and the natural inference is that Mary had other children. The word *prototokos* is used only in these two passages and in Rom. 8. 29; Col. 1. 15, 18; Heb. 1. 6; 11. 28; 12. 23 (pl.); Rev. 1. 5, so that the meaning is easily ascertained. Had He been her *only* son, the word would have been *monogenēs*, which occurs in Luke 7. 12; 8. 42; 9. 38, of human parentage; and of the Lord, as the only-begotten of the Father, in John 1. 14, 18; 3. 16, 18; 1 John 4. 9. In Heb. 11. 17 it is used of Isaac, Abraham's only son according to the promise.

In Psalm 69, a Psalm with many predictive allusions to the Lord's earthly life (see Note on Title), verse 8 reads, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children". The Gospel history records His brethren in association with His mother. After the miracle at Cana, which they probably witnessed, we are told that "He went down to Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples" (John 2. 12). Later on they exhibit a spirit of opposition or jealousy, for while He is speaking to the people, His brethren, accompanied by His mother, sought Him, apparently to hinder His work (Matt. 12. 46, 47; Mark 3. 31, 32; Luke 8. 19, 20). In Mark 3. 21 we read, "When His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself". The expression "His friends" (margin "kinsmen") is *hoi par' autou*, "those beside Him", and it denotes a relationship so close as to identify them with the "brethren" of v. 31. Again (John 7. 3-10), they showed lack of sympathy with His work, and the reason is given in v. 5, "For neither did His brethren believe in Him". They are not seen again till, after His resurrection, they are gathered in the upper room with the apostles, and with His mother and theirs (Acts 1. 14). Their unbelief had gone. James had become a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ (James 1. 1), through the appearance to him of the risen Saviour (1 Cor. 15. 7), and, shortly, is a "pillar" of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12. 17; 15. 13-21; 21. 18; Gal. 1. 19; 2. 9, 12). The other brethren seem to have joined in the witness by itinerating; see 1 Cor. 9. 5.

The natural meaning of the term "His brethren", in the Scripture record, would never have been challenged, but for the desire, when corruption crept into the churches (Acts 20. 29, 30), of raising Mary from the position of "handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1. 38) to the exalted one of *Theotokos*, mother of God, whence it was an easy step to investing her with divine honours, as being herself a goddess. And thus the way was cleared for identifying her with the great goddess of Paganism, who is the mother of a divine son, and who is yet a virgin, a deity best known by the appellation she bore in Egypt, Isis, the mother of Horus. So it was put forth that Mary had no children other than the Lord, and that His brethren and sisters were either the children of Joseph by a former wife, or the Lord's cousins, the children of Mary the wife of Cleophas. Those who maintained the former opinion asserted that Joseph was an old man when he married Mary. Of this there is not the least hint in the Gospel records. If he had older children, the right of the Lord Jesus to the throne of David would be invalidated, for the two genealogies in Matt. 1 and Luke 3 show that the regal rights were united in Joseph and Mary (Ap. 99).

With reference to Jerome's "cousin" theory, it may be stated that the word "brother" is used in Scripture, (1) in the sense of blood-relationship, as children of the same parent or parents; (2) in the wider sense of descent from a common ancestor, e.g. Acts 7. 23, 25, where Abraham is the forefather; (3) in a still wider signification of fellow-man (Matt. 7. 3-5; 18. 15); (4) to express spiritual relationship (Matt. 23. 8; 28. 10; Acts. 9. 17; Rom. 8. 29; Heb. 2. 11). In the passages where His brethren are referred to, viz. Matt. 12. 46, 47; 13. 55; Mark 3. 31; Luke 8. 19; John 7. 3, 5, 10; Acts 1. 14; 1 Cor. 9. 5; Gal. 1. 19, only the first meaning can apply. Had they been cousins, the term would have been *sungenēs*, which is used in Mark 6. 4; Luke 1. 36, 58; 2. 44; 14. 12; 21. 16; John 18. 26; Acts 10. 24; Rom. 9. 3; 16. 7, 11, 21, and is translated "kin", "kinsman", or "kinsfolk", except in Luke 1. 36, 58, where it is rendered "cousin." The Scriptures distinguish "kinsman" from "brother"; see Luke 14. 12; 21. 16. Only in Rom. 9. 3 are the two words in apposition, and there "brother" is used in the sense of fellow-Israelite (No. 2). "Brother", therefore, when used in N.T. in any sense other than that of No. 2 or of No. 3, must be restricted to signification No. 1.