



## What Does The Bible Tells Us About Jesus' Family? By Karen Sue Nyquist

Jesus had a family? The Bible tells us that Mary was His mother and Joseph was His stepfather and that Jesus had brothers and sisters. What! Jesus had siblings? Yes, let's look at their fascinating story which God tells us in His Word the Bible.

**1. Mary was a virgin when the angel Gabriel spoke to her.** "Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus' ... Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man (*am not having a physical relationship with any man*)? And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:30-35). Mary obediently accepted God's will.

**2. Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus.** "But while he (*Joseph*) thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'" (Matthew 1:20-21). Joseph also accepted God's will.

**3. Does the Bible indicate that Mary and Joseph consummated their marriage after Jesus' birth?** Yes! "Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her (*did not have physical relations*) till she had brought forth her firstborn Son" (Matthew 1:25). This not only tells us that they did consummate their marriage, but by calling Jesus her "firstborn son," Matthew indicates that she bore at least one other child after Jesus.

**4. Does the Bible mention that Jesus had other siblings?** Yes, at least six different books in the Bible mention Jesus' siblings. The gospel writers used the Greek word "adelphos" which means brothers and "adelphē" which means sisters. They did not use the Greek word "asepsis" which means cousins nor the word "suggenes" which means relatives. The writers made it clear for Jews and Gentiles that they were talking about blood brothers and sisters.

**a) Apostle Matthew mentions Jesus' brothers and sisters.** When Jesus taught in the synagogue where he grew up, His neighbors said, "'Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?' So they were offended at Him" (Matthew 13:54-57).

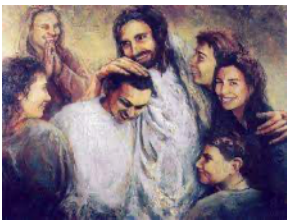
**b) Mark writes of Jesus' siblings twice.** 1) "Where *did* this *Man* get these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?' So they were offended at Him" (Mark 6:2-3). 2) "Then His (*Jesus*) brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You!'" (Mark 3:31-32).

**5. This means that Mary and Joseph, together had at least 6 other children after Jesus' birth.** Mary and Joseph enjoyed their marital relationship and as a godly couple, they obeyed God's command to multiply (Genesis 1:28). The Bible does say more about Jesus' brothers, but not anything more about His sisters. It is good to know Jesus had the joy of growing up with brothers and sisters.

**6. But, could these siblings be from a previous marriage that Joseph may have had? Because of the next three examples, we'll see that the siblings were born after Jesus.**

**a) Luke never wrote about any other children on their trip to Bethlehem.** "Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child (*expecting Jesus*)" (Luke 2:4-5).

**b) Matthew never mentioned other children as the family flees to Egypt.** "Now when they (*the wisemen*) had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt'" (Matthew 2:13-15). **Nor did Matthew mention other children on their trip back from Egypt.** "Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.' Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother ..." (Matthew 1:19-21).



**7. Was there a time when Jesus' brothers didn't believe in Him?** Yes! "His brothers therefore said to Him, 'Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also

may see the works that You are doing.'... For even His brothers did not believe in Him" (John 7:3-5). Jesus also referred to their unbelief when He said, "'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' ... And He marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:4-6). Neither His neighbors nor brothers believed! Sometimes, those closest can't see a prophet's anointing. The devil is such a deceiver!

**8. Jesus was on the cross dying. As the oldest son, He was responsible for the care of His mother. Jesus knew His brothers' couldn't emotionally take care of Mary during her time of grief, they didn't even believe in Him! Who could? What could Jesus do?** "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved (*John the Beloved*) standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*" (John 19:26-27).

**9. Did His brothers ever believe in Jesus?** Yes! When Jesus rose from the dead, they believed in Him. Luke tells us that Mary and Jesus' brothers were in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit with the other disciples. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:13-14). **This is so encouraging for us who have unbelieving family members, they can come to believe even as Jesus' brothers did!**

**10. Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus' brother James even became an apostle!** "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of **the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother**" (Galatians 1:18-19). He also tells us that after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to James. "and that He was seen by Cephas (*Peter*), then by the twelve (*the first 12 apostles*). ... After that He was seen by James (*Jesus' brother*), then by all the apostles (*the 12 and other apostles that were added*)" (1 Corinthians 15:5-7). **Jesus' brother James became the head of the Jerusalem church** (Acts 13:15-19) and was called, "James the Just," and "James the Elder." It is believed that the book of James was written by James the Just, though he humbly refers to himself only as, "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). He is not to be confused with "James the Less" or "James the Younger," who was one of Jesus' original 12 apostles, nor with the James who was killed by Herod ("James the Less," Wikipedia).

**11. What about Jesus' other brothers?** More than one became Christians, but we don't know if all four did. Paul mentions that Jesus' brothers brought their saved wives with them when they traveled. "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, **the brothers of the Lord (Jesus)**, and Cephas (*Apostle Peter*)?" (1 Corinthians 9:5). Jesus' brother Judas, became known as Jude to prevent confusion with the other Judas that was also called Thaddeus. He wrote the book, Jude, in which he humbly refers to himself as "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (Jude 1). This humility was common. In John's gospel, John doesn't refer to himself by name but five times calls himself, "the disciple Jesus loved." It could have seemed that Jude was boasting if he called himself, the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does correctly identify himself as the brother of James, who all knew at the time to be the head of the Jerusalem church and a brother of Jesus.

**12. Why then do some say that Mary is a perpetual virgin?** This belief was first written in the Protoevangelium of James, which was written in the mid-second century (*about 145 AD*) **after Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and all their eye-witnesses were gone.** The traditional dogma became ingrained when, "The Second Council of Constantinople in 553 (*AD*) gave her the title "Aeiparthenos", meaning Perpetual Virgin, and at the Lateran Synod of 649 (*AD*) Pope Martin I emphasized the threefold character of the perpetual virginity, before, during, and after the birth of Christ." ("Perpetual Virginity of Mary" - Wikipedia). **These all happened hundreds of years later!**

**13. So, how do we know what to believe?** We can believe those apostles and disciples who were there and were eye-witnesses. They were chosen by God to write His Word. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they've documented what they had seen and knew to be true.

**14. If this is all new to you, you can pray:** Our Father, please, show me, I want to know what is true. I trust that You will lead me. Thank You, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

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