

Jesus' Family

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. In a Gospel about faith in Jesus, John speaks often of doubters.
 - 1. Thomas was not the only doubter in the book - John 20:24-31
 - 2. Those in His own nation - John 1:11
 - 3. Those among His disciples - John 6:66
 - 4. "Even his brothers did not believe" - John 7:5; Mark 3:21; Psalm 69:8
 - 5. They eventually believed in Jesus - Acts 1:14
- B. Why did Jesus' brothers not believe in Him from the beginning?
 - 1. They had been with Him from the beginning, heard some of His teaching, and witnessed a number of the miracles.
 - 2. We will consider the following: their lives, their unbelief, their faith.

I. BIOGRAPHIES

- A. He had four brothers and a few sisters - Matt. 13:55-56
 - 1. James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude and more than one sister.
 - a. Believed to be born in this order: Jesus, James, Joseph, Simon, Mary, Salome, Jude.
 - 2. Followers of the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox traditions, as well as Anglicans and Lutherans, subscribe to the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary and reject the claim that Jesus had blood siblings. They maintain that these brothers and sisters were closely associated with the family of Jesus as either cousins or children of Joseph from a previous marriage.
 - 3. Who were they really?
 - 4. John 2:12; Mark 3:20-21, 30-31
- B. James
 - 1. James (Jacob Iakobos) is believed to be the oldest of the brothers, and has the name of Joseph's father (Iakobos in the Solomonic genealogy of Jesus in Matthew), when in Bible times the grandson occasionally gets the name of the grandfather.
 - 2. Died in AD 62 (according to Josephus and Jerome) or AD 69 (Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius of Caesarea), by the order of high priest Hanan ben Ananias he was stoned to death.
 - 3. Sometimes identified as James, son of Alphaeus (an ancestor) and James the Less (the shorter).
 - 4. Author of the Epistle of James, a letter to the Diaspora, Jews dispersed all over the world.
 - 5. Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:17-19; 1Cor. 9:5, 15:7; Gal. 1:19, 2:12; James 1:1
- C. Joses
 - 1. Joses is a short Greek form of Joseph.
 - 2. He is a brother of Jesus, mentioned seldom in the New Testament.
 - a. Matt. 13:55, 27:56; Mark 6:3

3. History records him as one of the elders at Jerusalem (Epiphanius and Eusebius), but not in the New Testament.
4. Some scholars believe he is the Joseph Barsabas Justus of Acts 1:23 who was considered a candidate to take Judas' place; not certain.

D. Simon

1. He is numbered among the brothers of Jesus and is also called Simon of Jerusalem.

E. Jude

1. Also called Judas, Judah, Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus was one of the four brothers of Jesus.
2. He is the author of the Epistle of Jude.
 - a. Note that his family placed emphasis on the more important of their relationship to Jesus, servants rather than brothers - Jude 1
3. Eusebius records that Jude had two grandsons tried and released with the contempt of Domitian, who later lived well into the reign of Trajan. (Eusebius of Caesarea, Historia Ecclesiae, 3:20)

F. Sisters, one of whom may have been named Salome.

1. Mark 15:40, 16:1 - Some scholars believe this may have been a sister.
2. Cannot be proven; not important.

II. WHY THEY DID NOT BELIEVE IN THE BEGINNING

A. Possible reasons for unbelief:

1. Familiarity - Matt. 13:54; John 4:44
2. Envy - Matt. 12:47-49
3. Preconceptions - John 6:14-15, 7:3-5
 - a. It is easy to dismiss someone if they do not live up to our expectations.
4. For some reason, Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him.

B. A warning

1. Familiarity can blind us to the truth. My primary reason for initial reluctance to come here.
 - a. Truth can be communicated by imperfect messengers - Phil. 1:15-18
2. Envy can get in the way of truth.
 - a. Jealous that we might be wrong and others right.
 - b. Admitting others are right somehow makes them better than us?
 - c. Craving the center of attention or the power of leadership.
3. Preconceived expectations obstruct a clear view of the truth.
 - a. Refusing to reexamine cherished beliefs.
 - b. Rejecting a message simply because we have never heard it before. Some brethren reject teaching because it is outside of their limited knowledge.
 - c. Truth requires a willingness to hear, and has nothing to fear from investigation - Acts 17:11

III. HOW THEY CAME TO BELIEVE

- A. Jesus' brothers eventually became disciples.
 - 1. They were with the apostles after the Ascension - Acts 1:12-14
 - 2. James became a key figure in the church at Jerusalem - Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18; Gal. 2:9
 - 3. James and Judas wrote epistles - James 1:1; Jude 1
 - 4. According to history, James was martyred for the faith.
- B. What changed? The resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
 - 1. Jesus appeared to James - 1Cor. 15:7
 - 2. And to Jude - John 20:19
 - 3. And to others - 1Cor. 15:6
 - 4. Miracles can be faked; a resurrection cannot - Acts 1:3, 10:39-41
- C. They never went back on their testimony; their faith never wavered.
 - 1. Remember them, not for being the brothers of Jesus, but for their great faith that grew out of great unbelief.
 - 2. The conversion of His brothers who first doubted should strengthen our faith in Jesus.
 - 3. "If the disciples were totally disappointed and on the verge of desperate flight because of the very real reason of the crucifixion, it took another very real reason in order to transform them from a band of disheartened and dejected Jews into the most self-confident missionary society in world history." (Pinchas Lapide, former Chairman of the Applied Linguistics Department at Israel's Bar-Illand University; TIME, 5/7/79)
 - 4. Jude 20-21