

Our Lord's Brethren

A Bible Study for Bible Students

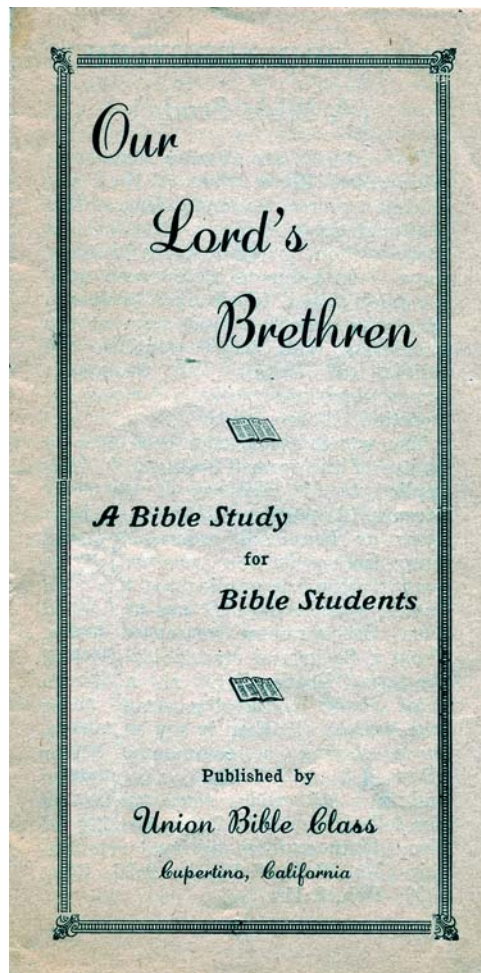
The following transcript was made from a small printed and folded treatise found among the belongings of Bible Students now no longer with us.

The subject matter appears to have been well researched with considerable detail. We feel it necessary to indicate a few original words in a lighter gray font and suggest some clarifying text [in brackets with a red font]. This does not seem to change the basis of the thesis and what appears to be a plausible deduction. The author also references an article by Pastor Russell. So we submit this for consideration.

The front of the leaflet says it was published by the Union Bible Class of Cupertino, California. There is no full name of the author. At the end are simply the initials: C. G. R. The style of the cover and fonts appears to have been printed in between 1920 and 1940. Other than it was printed by Bible Students, we do not know more about the author.

We here print the cover followed by the transcript. We have added a few footnotes to include some sources noted in the text. We have also added the last page with a graphic to illustrate the proposed family lines.

Jerry Leslie, Portland Area Bible Students



Our Lord's Brethren

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Few subjects are of more interest to consecrated Bible students, than obtaining a correct understanding of this profound relationship. Nor is this study without profit. It helps in many ways. It helps us understand why our Lord placed His Mother in John's care, why certain women were at the crucifixion, and helps establish the validity of certain Old Testament Types which were written for our admonition. (1 Cor. 10:11).

The world has always been free in its use of the term "Brethren." It is applied to (1) children of the same parents, (2) members of the same Religious or Fraternal orders, (3) and more frequently the term "Brotherhood of Man" is applied to the whole human race because all are descended from the common ancestor, Adam. From a Scriptural standpoint we find the term "Brother" (1) also refers to those of or having the same Father and Mother, (2) then in a wider sense, those having a common ancestor (Rom. 9:3; Acts 7:23,25) as Abraham, and in a still wider sense describing our fellow men (Matt. 7:3-5; 18:15) and also (4) to express spiritual relationship (Matt. 23:8; 28:10; Acts 9:27; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11).

The texts in which our Lord's Brethren are referred to are as follows: (Matt. 12:46,47; 13:55; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19-21; John 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19). Without going any further in their investigation, some Bible students claim these texts apply only to the children of the same Father and Mother, but we will adjudge this later. For the present, let us consider three outstanding conclusions which have been given to us during the Gospel Age, and then let us examine a possible fourth. Each Bible Student should consider these from a Bible viewpoint and reach his own conclusion as the Lord may lead him.

The first conclusion that has been given us is by **Helvidious**¹ and his associates of the fourth century. This teaching is still adhered to by many of our present day, namely — that Jesus had four brothers and three sisters by his parents Joseph and Mary. But let us consider. If we examine John 19:25 in the King James translation we find these children were not the children of Joseph and Mary but [may have] belonged to Mary and Cleopas. Therefore the conclusion of **Helvidious** is wrong and should not be adopted by any Bible student.

The second popular conclusion is known as the **Epiphanian** hypothesis². This conclusion, receiving special support from Dr. Lightfoot, is based on Matt. 13:55 and taught that these men and women were half brothers and sisters of our Lord. They claimed they were children of Joseph by an earlier marriage. But again we find this teaching is not supported by John 19:25. These children were clearly the offspring of Cleopas (Alphaeus) and Mary (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). If this rendering alone were considered, these children would be cousins. Early tradition makes them cousins, on their Father's side also. (Hegesippus aqud Eusebius³, ('H.E.' 3:11)⁴. If the two Marys were sisters, and Cleopas (Alphaeus) and Joseph were brothers, the cousin idea would have preference over the half-brother idea found in this our second popular conclusion.

The third “reasonable” conclusion is the one, originally advanced by **St. Jerome**⁵, that they were cousins as above indicated. They claim John 19:25 proves their point. But let us examine further. In our first two conclusions there is theoretical support but there is practically no Scriptural support for either of them. Nor should the use of the term Brother disprove the thought of cousin. The Scriptures frequently use the term Brother to indicate near relationship, for example Abraham and Lot (Gen. 14:14) and Jacob and Laban (Gen. 29:12-15); also see Lev. 10:4; 25:48,49.

The reference to Mark 3:14-21, omitting the name of Joseph, gives reasonable grounds for the belief that Joseph was dead. In all probability Joseph had lived formerly at Nazareth in the province of Galilee since the days of Matthat, the common grandfather of both Mary and himself (Luke 3:23,24)⁶. When Jesus was twelve years old he was still living and attended the Passover at Jerusalem. That he died before the crucifixion is a reasonable conclusion from John 19:27 and Mark 6:3, else why should Jesus place His mother in the care of John? The date of Joseph’s death is not known. During the time of our Lord’s ministry, Mary was living with Cleopas, Helis’ brother (Deut. 25:5-10) in Nazareth. The fact that the Greek word “*adelphos*,” means “one much like a brother,” is translated “Brethren,” does not lend weight because it may be translated “Cousin” with equal propriety.

Now let us continue. By comparing Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40 with John 19:25 we find there were four women at the Cross, and not three as many are inclined to suppose. This means it is Salome and not Mary the wife of Cleopas who is called “His Mother’s Sister.” This revelation is made more clear in the Diaglott, the Syriac, the Revised Version and the 20th Century than in the King James translation.

If our conclusion is right, the far reaching results involved will constitute our fourth hypothesis. If the Virgin Mary and Salome were sisters, then James (the less), and Simon, Joses and Jude must have been their Brothers. Again let us consider. It is hardly likely that two sisters of the same parents would be given the same name. On the other hand, it is quite common for parents to name children after themselves. Therefore we have some reason for believing the four women at the Cross were as follows:

MARY the Mother of Jesus, Wife of Joseph, Sister of Salome and their four Brothers, and Daughter of Mary and Heli.

MARY the Grandmother of Jesus, the Mother of the Virgin Mary, Salome, James, Simon, Joses and Jude; and wife of Cleopas but formerly of Heli.

SALOME, Sister of Mary the Virgin, daughter of Mary and Cleopas (Alphaeus), and Aunt of Jesus the Messiah, was the Wife of Zebedee and mother of James (the great) and John (the beloved). These last two were natural Cousins of our Lord.

MARY MAGDALENE, out of whom Jesus had cast seven Devils, and who had ministered greatly to His material needs throughout His earthly Ministry.

If these conclusions are right, then we must admit that James (the less), Simon, Joses and Judas were really Uncles of Jesus and not cousins, as some would believe, nor were they His brothers. James (the great) and John (the beloved) were manifestly cousins of about His own age. If Jesus had any Brothers or Sisters it would not have been necessary for Him to make provision for His Mother. As conditions existed, He asked His beloved Cousin John to care for Her (John 19:27).

There is another reason for believing Jesus was the only child of His Mother Mary and this is found in the Old Testament Types. We refer to Sarah the wife of Abraham (and his half sister). (Gen. 20:12). In the New Testament she is referred to as the type [example] of conjugal obedience (1 Pet. 3:6), and as one of the types [examples] of Faith (Heb. 11:11). Sarah had but one son, so the covenant she represented has but “One Seed which is Christ.” (R.1389). The Virgin Mary was the antitype [counterpart in bearing the child of promise (Gen. 17:19; 21:10,12)] of Sarah. She gave birth to the “One Seed which is Christ.” As Isaac was the type of the Seed of Promise, so Jesus, the Messiah, the One Seed of Promise, of which the consecrated Gospel Church is a part. (Gal. 4:23-31; 1 Pet. 1:3,5,23; 2 Pet. 1:4). If Mary had been the Mother of more than one child she would not have fulfilled the type given in Bible prophecy [singular nature of the prophecies. Isa. 9:6,7; 7:14; Mat. 1:23].

In conclusion let us again carefully note that God’s promise to Sarah was that the promised Seed of Abraham should come through her, (Gen. 17:19, 21; 21:2; Rom. 9:9) and she gave birth to one son, Isaac. As a descendant of Isaac, God promised Mary the one Seed of Promise [the Saviour] should come through Her (Luke 1:30,31; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:20,21) and she gave birth to one child, Jesus the Messiah. “Now to Abraham and his Seed, were the promises made. He said not, And to Seeds, as of many but as of one, And as to thy Seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16). And to the consecrated Gospel Church is the promise made, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s Seed: and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:28,29).

But does God’s love stop here? No, not at all. We read that all will know Him from the least to the greatest. (Jer. 31:34). “Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.” (Phil. 2:10,11). Furthermore even dead people are to hear the voice of the only Son of Mary, for we read, “ALL that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth.” (John. 5:28). All of this is accomplished by the one Seed of the woman Who shall crush the serpent’s, head. (Gen. 3:15). — C. G. R.

1. Helvidius (sometimes Helvetius) was the author of a work written prior to 383 against the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary.

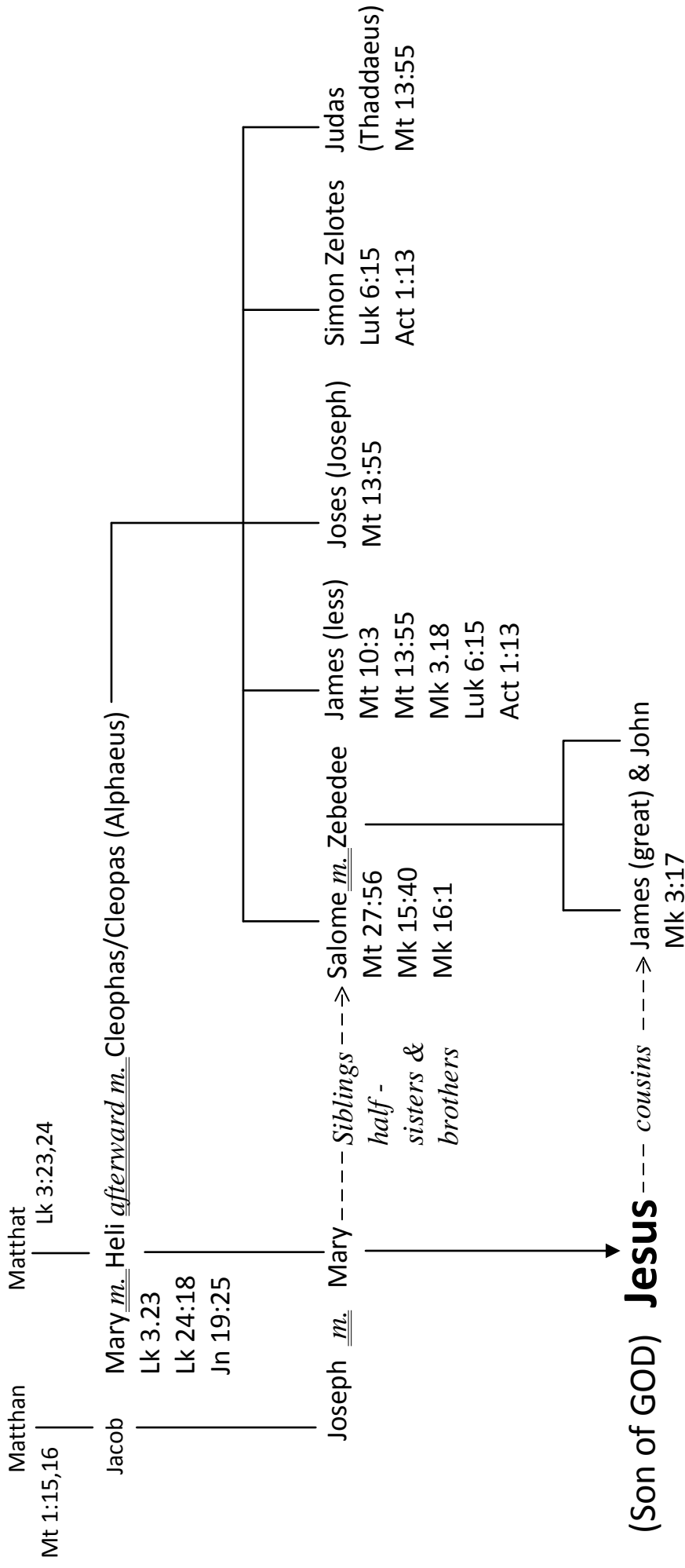
2. The Eastern or Epiphonian hypothesis holds that the brethren of Jesus were children of Joseph of Nazareth by a former wife, and not the children of Mary the Lord’s mother.

3. Hegesippus (c. 110 — c. April 7, 180 AD), was a Christian chronicler of the early Church who may have been a Jewish convert and certainly wrote against heresies of the Gnostics and of Marcion. His works are now entirely lost, save eight passages concerning Church history quoted by Eusebius, who tells us that he wrote *Hypomnemata* (“Memoirs” or “Memoranda”) in five books, in the simplest style concerning the tradition of the Apostolic preaching.

4. *History of Eusebius and the Early Church*. Book 3, section 11: “After the martyrdom of James and the capture of Jerusalem which instantly followed, there is a firm tradition that those of the apostles and disciples of the Lord who were still alive assembled from all parts together with those who, humanly speaking, were kinsmen of the Lord—for most of them were still living. Then they all discussed together whom they should choose as a fit person to succeed James, and voted unanimously that Simeon, son of the Cleophas mentioned in the gospel narrative (John 19:25) was a fit person to occupy the throne of the Jerusalem church. He was, so it is said, a cousin of the Saviour, for Hegesippus tells us that Cleophas was Joseph’s brother.”

5. Jerome (c. 347 – 30 September 420) was a Latin Christian priest, confessor, theologian and historian, who also became a Doctor of the Church. He is best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate), and his commentaries on the Gospel of the Hebrews.

6. Regarding Luke 3:23,24 and Matt. 1:15 Mary and Joseph’s grandfathers though with similar names, appear to be different persons, as Matthan and Matthat themselves had different fathers. Heli in Luke chapter 3 appears to be Mary’s father and Joseph’s father-in-law.



Brothers: Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19-21; John 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; 1Cor 9:5

Names: Mat 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

John 19:25 (20th Century) Meanwhile near the cross of Jesus were standing his mother and **his mother's sister**, as well as **Mary the wife of Clopas** and Mary of Magdala.

Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses**, and **Salome**;

Sons of Cleopas (Alphaeus): Mat 10:3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Luke 6:15 Matthew and Thomas, James the *son of Alphaeus*, and Simon called Zelotes,

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.