

## Jesus' Earthly Family

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The following brief study harmonizes known Scriptural information and Spirit of Prophecy statements in order to provide some background on the earthly family of Jesus. A few comments derive from reliable SDA sources and, in one case, from the renowned Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus. These help to piece together a few loose ends.

- Mary, a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23; Lk. 1:27) from Nazareth in the province of Galilee, wife of Joseph and mother of Jesus. While she stood at the foot of the cross, Jesus commended her to the care of His disciple John (Jn. 19:25–27). This action implies that Mary had no children subsequent to Jesus, as surviving sons would have been the obvious ones to take her in. Her stepsons appear, at least at this time, to have been either unwilling or unworthy to undertake this sacred trust, since they had not yet believed Jesus to be the Messiah (Mt. 12:46, 47; Jn. 7:5).
- Joseph, a carpenter (Mt. 13:55) from Nazareth, the husband of Mary (Mt. 1:16; Lk. 3:23) and thus Jesus' stepfather. Evidently Joseph was a widower (5BC 282; SDADic 621) and the father of at least six children: James, Joses, Simon, Judas, and an unspecified number of unnamed daughters (Mt. 15:55; Mk. 6:3). Joseph died before Christ's ministry began (2SP 100.0), before His first miracle at Cana (Jn. 2:1–11), which took place a few days after His wilderness temptation (ST Sept. 6, 1899) and two months after Jesus was called from "the carpenter shop that had been Joseph's" (DA 109.1), separating from Mary to enter upon His ministry (DA 145.1).
- Jesus' "brothers" (Mt. 12:46; Jn. 2:12; 7:3–5) were actually stepbrothers, the sons of Joseph (DA 86.2), and were therefore older than Jesus (DA 87.2). The men were married (1 Cor. 9:5) and evidently had been converted by the time of Pentecost (Acts 1:13, 14; cf. SDADic 163). They were:
  1. James (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Gal. 1:19), possibly the James who was the prominent leader of the early Christian church in Jerusalem and the probable author of the epistle bearing his name (SDADic 548, 549). He was probably the eldest brother, since his name appears first in lists (SDADic 548). He died by stoning, according to Josephus (*Antiquities* xx. 9. 1, cited in SDADic 163);
  2. Joses (Mt. 13:55 [or Joseph, RSV]; Mk. 6:3), about whom nothing else is known;
  3. Simon (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3 [which lists him last instead of third]; cf. 5BC 1042), about whom nothing else is known;
  4. Judas (Mt. 13:55), or Juda/Judah\* (Mk. 6:3), identified with Jude (5BC 613), the probable author of the epistle bearing his name (Jude 1; cf. SDADic 630).
- Jesus' "sisters" (Mt. 13:56), obviously at least two in number, were actually stepsisters, the daughters of Joseph (DA 90.1, 237.5). Their names and histories are unknown.

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\* The spelling as rendered in Mk. 6:3 varies with printings of the KJV.