

Here is the complete paragraph from John L. McKenzie's *Dictionary of the Bible* (a Catholic source), with some emphasis and [comments] added:

The brethren of Jesus are mentioned in Mt 12:46; 13:55; Mk 3:31; 6:3; Lk 8:19; Jn 2:12; 7:3; 20:17; Acts 1:14; 1 Co 9:5; Gal 1:19 [eleven references]. Four are mentioned by name: **James, Joses (or Joseph), Simon, and Judas** (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). The tradition of the **perpetual virginity of Mary** has always rejected the idea that these were her children and the theory proposed by a few Fathers that they were children of Joseph by a previous marriage has no foundation [what he means is that there is not one syllable in the Scriptures that mentions a preceding marriage for Joseph]. The Greek word *adelphos*, brother (*adelphē*, sister) is used much as brother and sister are used in English. Here, however, one must recall the Hebrew-Aramaic background of the Gospels, which often shows that Greek words are translations of their Semitic usage. Hebrew words for distinction of degrees of kinship are neither as many nor as exact as our own words; and **we often see reflections of the ancient nomadic usage by which all members of a tribe or clan were called brothers**, just as the tribal or clan head, the sheik, was sometimes called father. Of the four mentioned by name it is clear that **James and Joses (Joseph) are sons neither of Joseph nor of Mary the mother of Jesus. A different Mary is the mother of them both**; she was among the group at the foot of the cross (Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40). James is called the son of Alphaeus in the lists of the apostles (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13). Furthermore, there is no mention of other children anywhere, and it is difficult to explain how Jesus commended Mary to the care of the disciple John (Jn 19:26) if there were other sons. **There is nothing in the Gospels or in linguistic usage which is opposed to the tradition of the perpetual virginity of Mary; and this tradition itself is difficult to explain if these allusions were ever understood as meaning uterine brothers and sisters.** The exact degree of relationship between Jesus and His brethren cannot be reconstructed.

1. Some people argue that **James the son of Alphaeus** is *not* the same **James who is the brother of Joses**; what is clear in either case both in Mt and Mk is that Mary the mother of Jesus is not Mary the mother of James and Joses. **Therefore, "brother" in this case definitely does not mean "son of the same mother and father."** If it is true of James and Joses, the first two men on the list of "brothers," it is very likely true of all of the rest that they are close blood relatives from different parents.

The assumption behind the reasoning in McKenzie and (on the next page) in McGarvey and Pendleton is that the James given in the list of brothers is the same James who in other passages is called "the brother of the Lord." This does not seem to be at all unreasonable. **Otherwise, you end up with two brothers of the Lord called James, one who followed him as an apostle and one who did not.** Occam's Razor, for what it's worth, suggests that we shouldn't imagine extra Jameses running around in Mt and Lk unless the text **compels** us to do so--"*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.*"

But if there is only one James, the brother of the Lord, then we know who his mother is: it is not Mary, the mother of Jesus, and James's mother is alive at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. This makes it highly unlikely that she was Joseph's first wife--unless he divorced her or else intended to take Mary as a second wife--which casts a long shadow over Escobales' theory of a preceding marriage of Joseph.

2. For a passionate argument that the sons and daughters are **Joseph's children by a previous marriage**, contact Dr. Richard Escobales in the Department of Mathematics. I concede his point that his interpretation is *possible*. But from that concession, it does not follow that his theory is *necessary*.

The root of the problem is **a desire to translate *adelphoi* consistently**. In some cases, "brothers" is an exact and literal translation. In other cases, the better translation would be "**kinsmen**" (close blood relatives). But in the first scene from the synoptics (Mk 3:31, Mt 12:46, Lk 8:19), Escobales is offended at the idea of using the looser term ("Your mother and your *kinsmen* are here") because Jesus then turns the phrase around to identify his true "mother and brothers and sisters" as "whoever does the will of God." The turn of phrase admittedly would be most powerful if, in fact, the relatives who were worried about Jesus were from the same two parents. Since Escobales believes in the perpetual virginity of Our Lady, at best he gets: "Your mother and your *half-brothers* and *half-sisters* are here." This is perhaps one step closer to the kind of brotherhood and sisterhood created by obedience to the will of God, but it is still not the perfect match that would be supplied by the children all being from Joseph and Mary--including Jesus. If we were *forced* to reason from the parallelism in the saying of Jesus to facts about the family, then we would be *forced* to say that Joseph is the father of Jesus as well as of James, Joses, Simon, and Judas; but this interpretation is firmly rejected by the scriptural and ecclesiastical teachings that **the Father conceived Jesus in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Here is a Protestant source that agrees with the Catholic reading of the scriptures. I have modified the second table to give Mary, the mother of Jesus, her own column, and made some corrections in the lists.

J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton  
*The Fourfold Gospel* (1914; pp. 220-226)

[http://www.ccel.org/m/mcgarvey/ffg/FFG041.HTM#{} \\*\\*](http://www.ccel.org/m/mcgarvey/ffg/FFG041.HTM#{})

	<b>Mt 10:2-4</b>	<b>Mk 3:16-19</b>	<b>Lk 6:14-16</b>	<b>Acts 1:13</b>
1	Simon, called Peter,	Simon, surnamed Peter;	Simon, named Peter,	Peter
2	and Andrew his brother;	and <b>James</b> the son of Zebedee,	and Andrew his brother,	and John
3	<b>James</b> the son of Zebedee,	and John the brother of James;	and <b>James</b>	and <b>James</b>
4	and John his brother;	and Andrew,	and John,	and Andrew,
5	Philip,	and Philip,	and Philip	Philip
6	and Bartholomew;	and Bartholomew,	and Bartholomew,	and Thomas,
7	Thomas,	and Matthew,	and Matthew	Bartholomew
8	and Matthew the publican;	and Thomas,	and Thomas,	and Matthew,
9	<b>James</b> the son of Alphæus [ <i>Clopas?</i> ],	and <b>James</b> the son of Alphæus,	and <b>James</b> the son of Alphæus	<b>James</b> the son of Alphæus,
10	and [Jude??] Thaddæus;	and [Jude??] Thaddæus	and Simon called the Zealot,	and Simon the Zealot
11	Simon the Cananæan,	and Simon the Cananæan,	and Judas the son of James, [Thaddæus??]	and Judas the son of James. [Thaddæus??]
12	and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.	and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.	and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.	

{\*} NOTE.--To aid the reader, we submit the following table of the women who watched the crucifixion of Jesus, for it is from their names and descriptions that we get our Scriptural light by which we distinguish the kindred of our Lord.

Mt 27:56		Mary Magdalene	and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, [Joses]	and mother of the sons of Zebedee.
Mk 15:40		Mary Magdalene,	and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses,	and Salome.
Jn 19:25	his mother	and Mary Magdalene,	Mary the wife of Clopas, [= Alphæus?] [= the sister of Jesus' mother?]	the sister of Jesus' mother. [?]

Matthew and Mark each name three women, whence it is thought that Salome was the name of the mother of James and John. But the solution of the problem depends on our rendering of Jn 19:25, which is translated thus: "But there were standing by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." Now, was Mary, the wife of Clopas, named and also additionally described as sister to our Lord's mother, or was it the unnamed Salome who was her sister? Does John mention three or four women? The best modern scholarship says that there were four women, and that therefore James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were cousins of our Lord. In support of this it is argued:

1. That it is unlikely that two sisters would bear the same name, a fact which, as Meyer says, is "established by no instance." [*But George Forman named each of his eight sons "George"!*]
2. John gives two pairs of women, each pair coupled by an "and." The first pair is kindred to Jesus, and is unnamed and is paralleled by the other pair, which is not kindred and of which the names are given. Hebrew writers often used such parallelism.
3. It accords with John's custom to withhold the names of himself and all kindred, so that in his Gospel he nowhere gives his own, his mother's, or his brother's name, nor does he even give the name of our Lord's mother, who was his aunt. [*I'm not familiar with this idea that Mary was John's aunt.*]
4. The relationship explains in part why Jesus, when dying, left the care of his mother to John. It was not an unnatural thing to impose such a burden upon a kinsman.

(In this excerpt from <http://www.globalserve.net/~bumblebee/ecclesia/brothers.htm>, I've reorganized the material and added some emphasis, but I have not changed the substance of the argument.)

In the Bible, the term **"brother"** is used to refer to a wide variety of relationships. For instance, "Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot" (Genesis 11:26). This verse shows that Abram is the uncle of Lot: Abram is the brother of Lot's father. But in another verse, Abram is called Lot's "brother": "And they took Lot, **Abram's brother's son** [i.e., Abram's nephew], who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And when Abram heard that his **brother** [Lot] was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan" (Genesis 14:12,14).

Similarly, the Bible tells us here that Laban is Jacob's uncle: "And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things" (Genesis 29:13). However, two verses later, Laban calls Jacob his brother: "And Laban said unto Jacob, 'Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?'" (Genesis 29:15 [*--story of Leah and Rachel*]).

**So we see that the term "brother" can refer to other relationships than the one to which we normally apply it.** This sort of thing was also done with other terms, such as **"children"**. Here's an example: "And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul" (1 Chronicles 12:29).

Here we see that a group of three thousand people are called "the children of Benjamin", although they are not really his children, but rather descendants. ...

Note that **'Alphaeus'** and **'Cleophas'** [Clopas] quite possibly refer to the same person. They could be two Greek forms of a single Aramaic name 'Halphai' (just as 'Louis' in Latin can be either 'Ludovicus' or 'Aloysius'), or Alphaeus could have taken a Greek name (Cleophas) that sounded like his original name (a Biblical example of this would be when Saul stopped using his Hebrew name and instead started using the similar Roman name Paul [Acts 13:9]).

If we accept that Alphaeus and Cleophas are the same person, then we have found that three of the brothers mentioned in Mark 6:3 are the sons of Alphaeus/Cleophas: James, Joses [*Joseph*], and Juda/Judas. And if we make the assumption that Mary the wife of Cleophas mentioned in John 19:25 is the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, and if we further assume that Mary the wife of Cleophas is the mother of Cleophas' children, that would make James, Joses and Juda the first cousins of Jesus. [*I find this very attractive because it gives James good reason to be called "the brother of the Lord."* My chief difficulty is understanding why two daughters would both be called "Mary"; a lesser problem is that no one lists James, Joses, and Judas in a single breath as sons of the **same** father and mother; lastly, the list in Mk 3 inserts a Simon before Judas. It may well be that we have an example of "conflation" of two or more mothers or fathers into one--some garbling in the tradition.]

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The Hebrew and Aramaic **"ah"** was used for various types of relations: Cf. Michael Sokoloff, "A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic" (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat-Gan, Israel, 1990, p. 45.) **Hebrew had no word for cousin.** They could say "ben-dod" which means son of a paternal uncle, but for other kinds of cousins they would need a complex phrase, such as "the son of the brother of his mother" or "the son of the sister of his mother". For complex Aramaic expressions see Sokoloff, p. 111 and 139.

Objection 1: We should not consider the Hebrew--Greek did have a word for cousin and other kinds of relatives also, and the Gospels do not use the other specific words for the relatives of Jesus. They use only Greek "adelphos," which means a real brother.

Reply 1: The Septuagint (the old Greek translation of the Hebrew OT--abbreviated LXX) uses Greek **"adelphos,"** brother, for Lot--who as mentioned above, was really a nephew.

**NT references:**

Mt 12:46	"His mother and his brothers stood outside..."
<b>Mt 13:55</b>	"Are not his brothers <b>James and Joseph</b> and <b>Simon</b> and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us?"
Mk 3:31	"And his mother and his brothers came ..."
<b>Mk 6:3</b>	"Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of <b>James and Joses</b> and Judas and <b>Simon</b> , and are not his sisters here with us?"
Lk 8:19	"Then his mother and his brothers came to him..."
Jn 2:12	"He went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples..."
Jn 7:3	"So his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea....'"
Jn 20:17	"Go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending..."
Acts 1:14	"All these ... devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."
1 Co 9:5	"Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" <b>Cephas</b> or <b>Kephas</b> is the Aramaic for "Rock," which, in Greek, is Petros (Peter), which is the nickname that Jesus gave to the apostle, Simon.
Gal 1:19	"But I saw none of the other <b>apostles</b> except James the Lord's brother." If this is James, the apostle, then we know his father was Alphaeus (Cleophas/Clopas) and we may speculate that his mother is "the mother of James and Joseph (Joses)"; if this is not James, the apostle, then we have an extra James who is not on the list, which would suggest that he is a more distant relative than the named brothers (James & Joseph and Simon & Judas. Or we have an apostle, like Paul, who is not one of the <b>twelve</b> .

**One Known Father:** Alphaeus (Cleophas? Clopas?) was the father of the apostle.

Mt 10, Mk 3, Lk 6, Acts 1: "James, son of Alphaeus." If Mary the mother of Jesus is the mother of *this* James (the apostle), then she committed adultery.

**The Mothers:** *The two gospels that name the "brothers" name a different mother for two of the four boys.*

<b>Mk 15:40</b>	"Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome."
<b>Mt 27:56</b>	"Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."
Jn 19:25	"His mother[,] and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas[,] and Mary Magdalene." <i>[There are no commas in Greek. It is the translator's choice how to use the commas and group the names. Do we have three women listed here or four?]</i>

**The James Gang:** James, son of Zebedee; James, son of Alphaeus, the apostle; James, the brother of the Lord (Acts 15:13?); James, the younger (has his own Mom); James, the father of the apostle, Jude (Lk 6, Acts 1); James the Just of Jerusalem (d. 62)?

Gal 2:9	"James and Cephas and John ... pillars." (James of Zebedee or Alphaeus? Or different from both?)
Jude 1	"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." (Jude & James from the Four Named Brothers? Or a different pair of James/Jude brothers? Not the apostle Jude? Not a "brother of Jesus"?)
James 1:1	"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Not the apostle? Same as Gal 1:19?)

**Possible meanings of "brother":**

1. From the same father and mother.  
But Joseph is not the father of Jesus (Mt 1:25, Lk 1:34), so the "brothers" cannot be full blood-brothers. Still, if Joseph and Mary had other children, outsiders would have called them "brothers."
2. Half-brothers: from the same father, different mother.
  - a. Joseph was married, widowed (Escobales, *Protoevangelium of James, Gospel of Peter*), and remarried (Jesus would then be not a brother of James & Joses, whose mother is alive at the Crucifixion).
  - b. Joseph was married and divorced: first the mother of James and Joseph (Joses), then Mary.
  - c. Joseph had two or more wives: the mother of James and Joseph (Joses) and the mother of Jesus.
3. Half-brothers: from the same mother, different father.  
Mary committed adultery with Alphaeus and gave birth to an illegitimate child (James)? Not likely!
4. Kinsmen: no parent in common, but some other close blood relationship (traditional interpretation). If the James in Galatians is not the son of "the mother of James and Joseph (Joses)," then he is not on the list of the four "brothers" and must be a more distant relative. If he is the James from the list, then his mother is not Mary and (in all likelihood) his father is not Joseph.