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Telephone: 503 292 4352

• **Internet:** www.askelm.com •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

Who's Who in the New Testament

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., March 1994

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, March 2018

First read the March 1, 2018 Commentary, "[The First Family ... and the Last Family](#)"

Then read the "[March 2018 Newsletter](#)"



Understanding the character and personality of individuals God picked to lead His people is a useful key to comprehending the Scriptures. This particularly applies to the writings those individuals wrote and the offices that God gave them. The personalities of those called by God to serve Him are also instructive when it comes to the theme of God's messages presented to groups through those people. The people God selected also help us understand the intent of God's plan for the human family.

God (Elohim in the Old Testament), is shown in Scripture to be a family, with a firstborn Son (Jesus Christ) and other children. I, you, and all human beings represent His children.¹ Since that is a fact, God's emphasis in picking people to represent Him is to concentrate on a family relationship. That is why at the very beginning we find usually a patriarch, and family members of the patriarch, who do important things pertaining to the creation and perpetuation of God's people on earth, or the message He wishes to give to that family, His people, and to the world.

When you read Scripture, one thing you note is that at the beginning it is patriarchal. That means it is family oriented, starting with Adam and Eve. Going through Genesis, you find the first six chapters are all devoted primarily to family relationships — both of the family of Adam going through Seth, and the family of Adam going through Cain, with both family lines reaching the time of Noah. With Noah we have the flood. The Bible concentrates on Noah, his family, and how he became important. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth, with Shem being the youngest. From those three come forth all the nations of people on earth today after the flood. Every single individual on earth today comes from one of the three children of Noah.

In many cases, we say that Adam is the progenitor of the human race, and that is correct according to the biblical revelation. Since the destruction of the world by the great flood, Noah now becomes the central patriarch, the one the entire world must look to as being father, the patriarch. He had three sons who had three

¹ Dr. Ernest Martin goes into detail on "what" and "who" God is in Chapter 30, "[Just What Is God?](#)" from his book, [Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#) (free online). DWS

wives, six people altogether. With Noah and his wife, they were the only eight people on the ark that came through that great flood.

Noah's Family and Abraham

God concentrates on family, Noah's family. Noah had three children. Those three children were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Japheth was the oldest. He was to produce the greatest number of people on earth. They are today, the oriental peoples, primarily in the East, and they represent the greatest population on earth today. The Hamitic peoples were the darker people. From the Shemitic people would come the Jews and others (such as the Assyrians), and Northwestern Europeans.

The biblical text particularly focuses on the youngest son Shem. Out of Shem comes forth, some two hundred odd years later, an individual named Abraham. Abraham was a great patriarch himself. We all know by reading the Scripture, starting from Genesis chapter 12 onward, God emphasizes Abraham. In fact, he leaves the other children of Noah, and the succeeding generations of Noah up to Abraham, and more or less lets them go their own way. They scatter around the world to various places, and populate the entire earth (Genesis 9:1, 11:9).

From Genesis chapter 12, God concentrates on one particular family to be the most important — important in one way, that is. Through this Abrahamic family, the message God had for the whole world would come forth. It would concentrate on various members of Abraham's family, going far in the future when many of Abraham's children would be significantly indicated in the Scripture as very important people. God Himself would give messages to them, and they would write those messages down so the whole world would understand what God wanted, and why humanity was put on the earth in the first place.

With Abraham, we find a patriarch and a family. Abraham's son, Isaac, was the most important of that family because through him a central knowledge and understanding was to be given. Isaac was able to have Jacob, who had twelve sons. From those sons we find one of them, being Judah. From him the Jews came into existence. From the descendants of the Jews, David came along many generations later. He became the great king who was given prophecies about his descendants, which out of his loins would come forth a great king who was to rule over all nations on the earth with a rod of iron. That king was Jesus Christ.

From the patriarch Jacob came twelve sons who became the tribes of Israel, with Judah being one of them. Another son of Jacob was Levi. Levi becomes important later in the history of Israel, because from that tribe comes an individual by the name of Moses. Moses, Aaron and Miriam ... Moses and Aaron were brothers, and Miriam was their sister. This was another family God concentrated on at that time.

From the family of Judah comes David and his family. That Davidic family would be the kings who would produce the Messiah who will rule over all nations of this earth (yet in the future). Now what have I shown so far? It is simply that God concentrates on and works through families.

Family Relationships Continue to be Important

Since this article is about who's who in the New Testament, why am I building it up in this way? It is because in the New Testament you will find that God continues to emphasize families, just as He did with Adam, with Noah, and especially as He did with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, then Moses, and finally David. God also concentrates on particular families in the New Testament. It is most important that we understand this. Who are the individuals of the New Testament that God picked to carry His messages to the world?

Once we realize who they are, we will find family relationships that figure prominently in all of the messages God gives to mankind; the messages that you and I depend upon today called the "Gospel," really come through family members. The reason God concentrates on families is because God Himself is a family.

You might say a great deal of nepotism is involved in these issues. Nepotism is a rather pejorative term, which means that family members are put ahead of others at the expense of the general population. That is usually what nepotism means. God is not in that sense using nepotism, but He does concentrate on individual family members. The reason He does so is because if you have a very strong father and a mother, you will find the

children will generally think like, act like, and live like the father and the mother. They will carry the principles that the father and the mother have given to them throughout their lives, and will continue to perpetuate those principles in their children as they come along. You find this was the case with Noah, and Abraham, in particular. Jacob, Moses, and David were very strong family leaders, and they gave forth teachings that have been maintained to this day.

The New Testament is no exception. We find that Jesus Himself came from a family that was rather extensive. He was the firstborn of Joseph and Mary, legally. He was not from Joseph at all. Nor, unbelievably, was He actually from the ovum of Mary. The sperm of Joseph and the ovum of Mary had nothing to do with the conception of Jesus Christ. I will give details of this later.

On the other hand, Jesus legally was reckoned the son of Joseph and Mary. Obviously, the gestation period for Jesus, from His conception until He was born of Mary was the normal nine months and ten days — around 280 days. Certainly Mary was His mother. But if you will look at the Scripture carefully, you find that in no way could Mary have supplied the physical ovum that God used to have a spiritual sperm, to create the conception that resulted in Jesus. Both the sperm and the ovum were spiritually created, engendered, and implanted by God the Father Himself. However, we find Jesus was born into the family of Joseph and Mary. As far as the people of the 1st century were concerned, Joseph was His father and Mary was His mother.

Joseph and Mary's Family

Mary had sisters. We find that one of the sisters' names was Salome. Salome was married to a man by the name of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21, 27:56). Zebedee and Salome produced some children of their own; two became apostles. One was James (“**James was less**” he was normally called, to distinguish him from James the first full-born child of Joseph and Mary), and the other was the apostle John. Both were sons of Zebedee and Salome. James was the first apostle to be martyred (Acts chapter 12).

John, however, continued on, and lived a long time to near the end of the 1st century AD. He wrote the Gospel of John, the three epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation (which was actually a revelation from Jesus Christ; John wrote what he was shown in visions).

Jesus actually had half-brothers. In Catholic tradition, they say they were cousins. Protestant tradition normally presents what the biblical revelation shows, that Joseph and Mary did in fact, have children after Jesus was born. There were at least four brothers, and two sisters. With Jesus Himself, that would make seven children altogether in Joseph and Mary's family. As I mentioned before, the Scripture makes it clear that Jesus Himself was only the legal, or the adopted, son of Mary and Joseph. Consider:

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said,

‘Whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas [Jude]? And his sisters [plural, indicating at least two], are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things?’

And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, ‘A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.’”

• **Matthew 13:54–57**

The firstborn son of Mary and Joseph — that is, after Jesus — was James. He was a literal human being just like each of us. James is the Greek word for Jacob. He was the true firstborn of Joseph and Mary. I hope you understand how I mean that, because Jesus was the firstborn of Mary, but the sperm of Joseph was not used in the production of Jesus, nor was the ovum of Mary.

We find when Joseph and Mary came together as a normal couple, they produced children, and their firstborn was James. We also know there were at least six of them altogether. There were at least two sisters of James. He had one brother by the name of Jude who wrote one of the short epistles of the Bible, in the

section known as the general epistles. Jude and James were full brothers, and legally speaking, both were half-brothers to Jesus because all had Mary as their mother, and Jesus came forth from Mary.

What I am giving is a survey of what the Scriptures show to be true, that many of the first church leaders, the leaders of the Christian *ekklesia* in Palestine in the 1st century AD were all very close family members. They were either half-brothers, or cousins to one another. Jesus had some half-brothers, one of them by the name of James, who became head of the Jerusalem *ekklesia*, and was very famous amongst all the Jews in that city.

In one rendition of Josephus, the Jewish historian of the 1st century, he mentions James who became famous after the crucifixion of Jesus. James believed his older half-brother was none other than the Son of God. James knew that to be true because he had talked to his mother many times, and to his father. He understood Mary was a virgin when his older brother was conceived, and his mother would not lie to him.

Josephus says James became very prominent in the Jewish community. There were tens of thousands of Jews who began to believe the gospel that Jesus who was born legally to Joseph and Mary, born of a virgin, that He was the Son of God, and the prophesied Messiah destined to come to earth from the line of David. They began to believe these things.

Not only were James and Jude, important in the early New Testament *ekklesia*, but you find the other James (of the brothers James and John) was also important. They were the sons of Salome and Zebedee, who produced children as well. James and John both became apostles. They were cousins of Jesus because Salome, as I will show, was the sister of Mary.

We find a number of links between all these people at the very beginning. Some could say, a great deal of nepotism was being shown in these earlier periods, but when Jesus picked His apostles, He did not choose from His own family members, James and Jude. They were very skeptical of Him at the beginning. Only after His crucifixion and death on the Mount of Olives, His burial, and then His resurrection from the dead — and Jesus showing Himself to a variety of peoples, up to five hundred people who were still living in the apostle Paul's day (1 Corinthians 15:1–8), they witnessed the fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

When all the evidence came forth, which was very powerful, even His family members were converted to the understanding that Jesus Christ was whom He said He was. He had all of the credentials. He had the credentials of the Old Testament in many, many Scriptures, which showed that Jesus would become the Christ, the Messiah. The prophecies of the Old Testament about Him are scattered in the Psalms, even back to the time of Moses, and particularly in Isaiah, Micah and other prophecies. They coalesced into a scenario which fit perfectly with Jesus when He came into the world.²

It took some teaching and many miracles performed by Jesus to convince His own family members that He was who He said He was. As He said, a prophet is not honored in his own country (Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; John 4:44). That was true until after His resurrection from the dead. After Christ was resurrected and presented Himself with **“many infallible proofs”** (Acts 1:3) that He was who He said He was, only then do we find his brothers James and Jude, and others accepting Him — no doubt quite a number of them, in addition to their mother. After Jesus' ascension into heaven:

“Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 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.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren [the brothers and sisters of Jesus, and perhaps other relatives].

• **Acts 1:12–14**

Mary was at the crucifixion when Jesus died, and was actually placed in the charge of John the apostle,

² Read Dr. Martin's article [“God's Inspiration Made Clear”](#) about Messianic prophecies and how they were understood. DWS

who was her nephew. Look at the gospel of John carefully. Jesus said to His cousin John, that “into your hands I commit the care of my mother” (paraphrasing John 19:26–27). John did what Jesus asked and he took her into his care. Tradition has it that she remained in the care of her nephew until she died.

This means that John (who wrote his Gospel, three short epistles, as well as the Book of Revelation) was the first cousin of Jesus Christ. When you realize who John was, you can see that family relationships played a significant part in the dissemination of the gospel in the earlier days. John’s brother James was the first of the apostles killed. In Acts chapter 12 James was a powerful personality himself amongst the apostles.

God continually uses family relationships to coalesce His teaching, and for family members to give it to the world. He operates in the same vein ...

- as He did with Noah and his children;
- as He did with Abraham and his children;
- as He did with Jacob and his children;
- as He did with Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam and their children; they were all of one family;
- as He did with David and his extended royal family.

God concentrates on families because there is a cardinal teaching in all of this. He is not picking people for special favors simply because they are family members, but it shows He Himself is head of a family; that He (the Father) and Christ (the firstborn Son), work together, harmoniously, hand in glove with each other.

Our Destiny

In fact, Jesus said when you see Me, you see the Father; and when you see the Father, you see Me (John 14:7–9). Then He also said that each of the disciples could be one with each of them, that they could be family members with God, with the Father. What are we destined to be? We are destined to be the very thing that we are called to be: sons of God and daughters of God in the future, to become members with God. God reckons you and me now to be members of the very family of God. He shows consideration and concern, and gives special things to those who are His close family members. The truth is this: close family members reared by a strong father or a mother normally pursue and perpetuate family ideals, family teachings. The way the father does a thing is the way the family will do them.

This principle is followed in the Bible continually. It is not “nepotism” or favoritism. On the other hand, when you understand our societies today and throughout history, there is such a thing as a father, a mother, and children being a family that everyone recognizes — they should be closer to one another than to those outside the family. It is normal and natural for that to be the ideal.

In legal matters of law, you realize a grandfather and a grandmother have certain legal rights to grandchildren, and that grandchildren have legal rights to grandparents, to parents, or to heirs. Most people have a last will and testament to bequeath certain objects, privileges, or property to family members after they die. If someone dies without a will (and everyone should have a will of course, but sometimes some have not), courts of law often will look for the surviving family members to take the property of the one who dies, because even in matters of law, the family should stick together in certain things. Therefore, it is normal, it is natural, and it is not a matter of nepotism. It is the way many societies show responsibility.

Speaking of responsibility, even in matters of caring for a family, the apostle Paul said family members ought to take care of their own in times of need. It should not be the responsibility of the *ekklesia*, or even of the state to take care of family members. Paul said that if you do not take care of a family member you are worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8), and it is what laws and responsibility and respect are all about.

In our societies, the family should be central to our civilization. If we do that, and if the family is made up of members with a strong father and mother relationship, with proper teachings, the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren, and everyone around that family, will benefit from that family.

There is such a thing as “closeness” of family relationships. I focus here on the New Testament family

relationships because most people do not realize the connections we find in Scripture. You will find strong family relationships were in evidence, intimate relationships to Joseph, Mary, and to Jesus Himself, and even to Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Zacharias and Elisabeth, and Their Priestly Connections

Zacharias and Elisabeth were the father and mother of John the Baptist. John was a priest because he was born to Zacharias and Elisabeth. In Luke 1:5 you find both Zacharias and Elisabeth were of the family of Aaron in the tribe of Levi. Zacharias was a chief priest of the 8th order of Abijah. There were 24 priestly orders that administered in the temple in Jerusalem. The top men of each order were called “chief priests.” They were not the high priest; they were chief priests. There is a difference between the two. The chief priests represented 24 family groups in the time of Christ. Zacharias and Elisabeth were of the 8th group, known as the group of Abijah mentioned in 1 Chronicles 24:10. The other 23 are mentioned in the rest of that chapter.

Zacharias and Elisabeth had no children, and they were getting older all the time. In fact, the implication in the New Testament is that Elisabeth was beyond the age of ever having children, somewhat like Sarah in the case of Abraham in Genesis chapter 16. Not quite, but similar. When Elisabeth petitioned God for a child, an angel told her she would bear a child. Zacharias was told that his name was to be John.

John the Baptist was a Levitical priest. He had short hair because priests were required to have their hair short. They were supposed to look like God. John was a wild type of individual according to Josephus, but he groomed himself as a priest would groom himself.

In the 1st and 2nd chapters of Luke we find Mary was “kinswoman” to Elisabeth. (The King James Version says “cousin.”) That means that Mary the mother of Christ, married to Joseph, was none other than a cousin of Elisabeth. This meant that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were cousins to one another. Even this was a close relationship. We also know from Luke that they were personally close to one another.

John the Baptist

Though John the Baptist was reared in one particular section of the country, and Jesus was reared in another, they would meet each other, no doubt, at festival periods they would go to every year in Jerusalem. Jesus and John must have known each other in childhood. John was six months older than Jesus.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, about six months before Jesus began His ministry, John was told, and Zacharias the priest and Elisabeth were told, that he had a great mission to perform. He was to be the greatest of the prophets. Jesus said that of all the prophets of the Old Testament — all put together — none was any greater than John the Baptist (Luke 7:28). Yet John performed no miracles. John began teaching in the wilderness of Judaea. Thousands of Jews began to come out to hear him because he began to preach in a sabbatical year.

If you want to know what a sabbatical year is, go to the 25th and 26th chapters of the Book of Leviticus. It says that every 7th year all farming was to cease in the land of Israel. You could not harvest crops. You could do other types of work, but not harvest crops, or do any type of farming, or things of that nature. Since most people were farmers in those times, many of the farmers were off-duty, so to speak, during sabbatical years. It is no wonder that thousands and thousands of people began to follow John the Baptist in his teaching. **“Repent you, for the kingdom of heaven (or the kingdom of God) is nigh”** (with variations in Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3, 5). The Kingdom is imminent. That was the message John preached.

He commenced his preaching about six months before Jesus, but they would have known each other from childhood. After all, the biblical narrative implies strongly that Elisabeth was a very close relative, and since Mary spent considerable time in Bethlehem before giving birth to Jesus, at least three months, the implication is they continued contact with each other after the births of John and Jesus. They were all extended family members. This all shows that John the Baptist would have been well acquainted with Jesus Himself.

John's Baptism of Jesus

When John looked up at the time he was baptizing in the River Jordan, and he looked in the distance and saw Jesus walking to him, Jesus would have been very familiar with him. And he looked at him and the text says, **“The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him, and said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world’”** (John 1:29). John recognized through the Holy Spirit’s descent upon Him (John 1:32–34),³ that Jesus was who He said He was.

For family members to think other family members are important as far as God is concerned is as far from belief as you can get. Remember what Jesus said, a prophet is not honored in his own country (remember Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; and John 4:44). James, Jesus’ half-brother, and Jude, His half-brother, did not accept Jesus right at first, and the implication is the other two brothers as well as sisters did not accept Him either. Yet here is His cousin, John the Baptist, he accepted Him.

Later when John felt Jesus was not doing some of the things that He should be doing as the Son of God, John began to question whether or not He was the Christ. Jesus sent a message to John to assure him that He was performing the role the Father wished, a role they both knew about (Luke 7:18–28).

Some might say, “Well, family members getting together, perhaps they are in collusion with one another to be able to bring these things to pass. They are trying to exalt the family itself.” Well, when it comes to matters of spirituality, when it comes to matters of someone becoming a chief prophet, or a messiah, or someone like that, it is far more likely that family squabbling is going on and they would begin to criticize anyone who claimed to be such a personality.

When you consider John the Baptist and Jesus, as well as the other apostles, James and John, His brothers, James and Jude, and all who later became ardent Christians, when you realize, though He was a little older than most of them, they saw Jesus grow up as a three-year-old, four-year-old, five, six, seven, ten and so forth. They saw Him at play and work all the time. (Jesus did not begin His ministry until He was age 31.) We all know how normal children are. They are not very kind to one another in most cases.

I am one of the nicest guys I ever knew, but I got into more fights than you can imagine as a kid. Do you know who I fought mostly? My own brother. It usually works that way. I did not want to kill or seriously harm my brother, I just wanted to make him understand I disapproved of what he did, and half the time he said the same to me. You know, we fight with one another. That is normal with children, and that is what happened here with John the Baptist, Jesus, James, and Jude, as well as the other James and John. They were all extended family members, and grew up, basically, in the same area. (John the Baptist did not. He was mainly in the south; the others were in the north.)

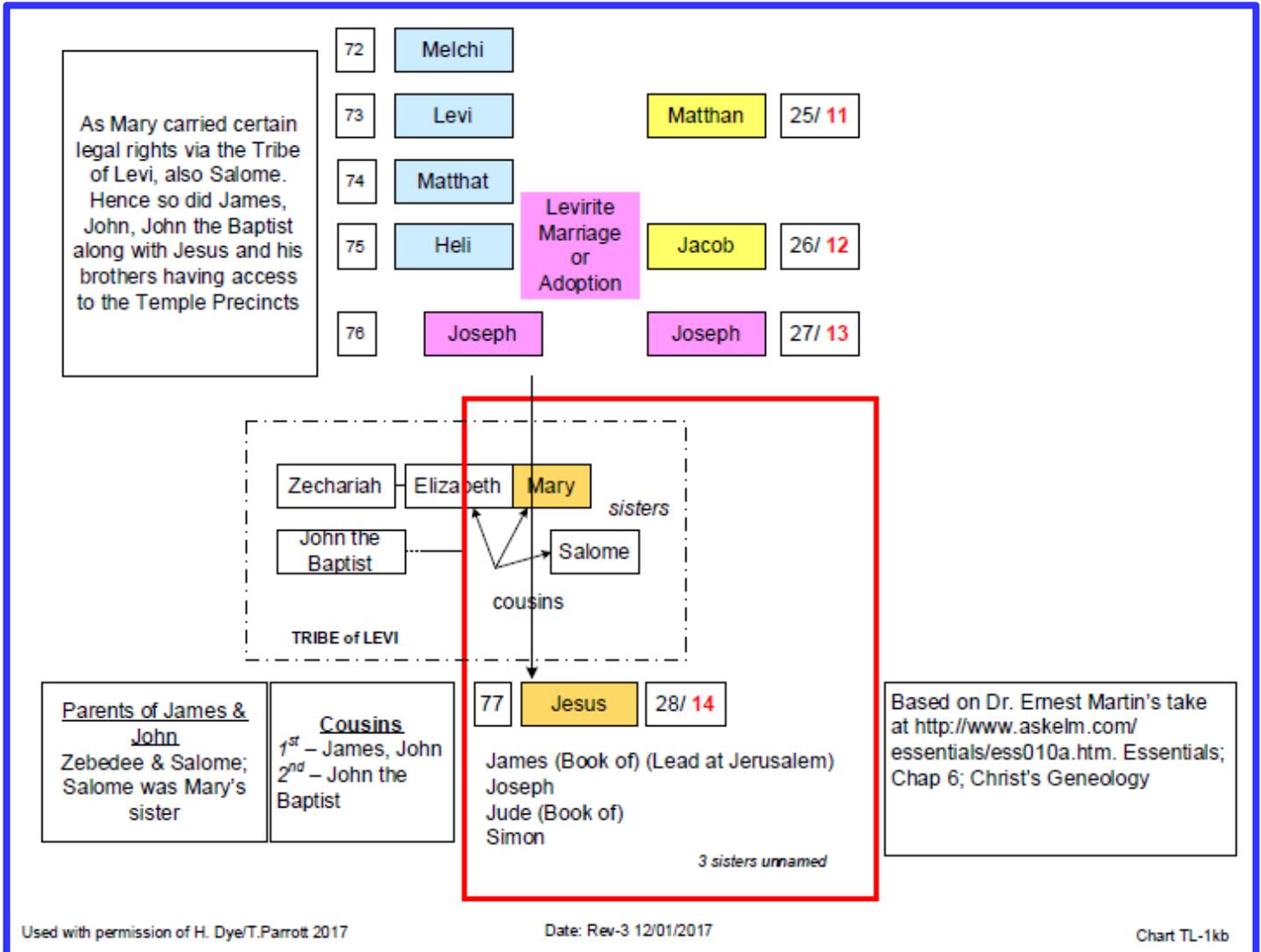
The very fact they were family members helps show that since they later became ardent Christians, they had the deck stacked against them to do such a thing. While a prophet is not honored in his own country, we find Jesus was finally honored by His own family members. Again, close family members, reared by a strong father and mother will pursue and perpetuate family ideals. The way a father does a thing, is the way the children will do a thing. The same principle is followed in the Bible. While it is nepotism, it is a sense of looking out after the family itself, and growing in family principles and ideals.

What I am trying to show is that family relationships which were so prominent in the Old Testament are continued in the New, and many of the apostles, and great leaders of the early New Testament *ekklesia*, were none other than close family members of Jesus Christ.

³ There is more to the narrative, John 1:32–34:

“And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not [did not recognize Him]: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, ‘Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizes with the Holy Ghost [Spirit].’ And I saw, and bore record that this is the Son of God.”

EDITOR'S NOTE: Below is an enlarged graphic extracted from part of page 25, "The Genealogy of Jesus Christ" of the "[ELM Timeline Project](#)" created for ASK by Henry Dye and Tim Parrott. I hope it will help you understand some of the relationships in the extended family of Jesus. For further discussion, scroll down to the middle of Chapter 6, "[Our Sins Are Imputed to Christ](#)" from Dr. Martin's book *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*.



- John the Baptist himself was a cousin of Jesus Christ.
- John the apostle also a cousin of Jesus in another line. James the apostle (John's brother) was also a cousin of Jesus.
- James, who wrote the epistle of James in the New Testament, was legally speaking the half-brother of Jesus.
- Jude, who wrote the small epistle that we find in the Scripture, was also a half-brother of Jesus.

James and Jude had Mary, the mother of Jesus, as their mother.

There are other relationships found in the New Testament. The apostle Paul writes about some people he dealt with as being his own relatives, and that he could deal with them in an easier way.

The Gospel and the Least-born

The Gospel is far more important than family relationship. Its purpose is to explain who we are, what we are, what we are now, the responsibilities that we should have, where we are going, and what we are to become. We are members of the very family of God right now, in human flesh, as Paul in Galatians 4:4 writes about Jesus: **“made of a woman,”** and in Romans 1:3, **“made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”**

That means that we are the least of the family. The Bible shows the least will one day be the first. We will be elevated to the very position of Jesus Christ Himself. It will take time, but God our Father is the one who will initiate our growth into perfection. He will also complete it. That is the teaching of the gospel. That is what should be taught in the world today. It is what the Bible is all about. The Bible is not a religious book in that sense, it is a scientific book. It is a book of history. It is a book showing what we are to be doing in the future, and what we are doing now, who we are. We are the least born of the family of God at present.

When you consider the least born, God can deal with the least born. As I mentioned earlier, after the flood Noah became the patriarch of all of the races on earth today, he became a new Adam, so to speak. His three sons were Shem, Ham and Japheth. Japheth was the oldest, then Ham, and Shem was the least-born.

Shem, however, though he was given a prominent position (the word “Shem” means “name,” meaning “renown.”). Though he was not any better than his two brothers, Shem was selected to be the one who would produce the righteous line through which the Messiah would finally come, whose name was Jesus Christ. Shem was the least born, just like Seth.

Abraham was about ten generations from the flood. Abraham’s father was Terah. Do you know who Abraham was? Abraham’s name at first was Abram. He was given the name Abraham in his 99th year of life, when God gave a special commission to him, a special covenant, that from his family would come forth the genealogical people who would produce the Messiah here on earth.

Abraham was the least born of Terah. He was not the first-born. That is interesting. You might think by looking at some of the ancient patriarchs that a pattern is being set up. That is true, because Abraham had seven children, six by Keturah, and one by Hagar. He also had one child by Sarah — eight altogether. Do you know who was the one who had genealogical prophecies associated with him? Again, the least born, Isaac.

From Isaac came Jacob. Jacob had two wives. He also had two concubines. From those wives and concubines, he produced twelve boys. We know of one girl, Dinah, but there were other girls as well. Jacob was old when he had those children. You will hardly believe this but if you look at the chronological tables, you find that when Jacob married, and at a time when normal people were marrying at about 30 years of age — 25 to 30, clearly — Isaac, who produced Jacob who came along later, Jacob did not marry until he was 86 years of age. An 86 year old man, having two wives, and two concubines, and twelve children. Some might say that man had no right to father those children at that age. Yet God was the one who did it all.

Jacob had his favorite wife, who was Rachel. Rachel produced for him Joseph and Benjamin. She died in childbirth with Benjamin. Benjamin was the least born. I will say more about Benjamin later. God picked Benjamin to do a particular job for all of Israel and all the world. Judah in particular benefited tremendously from the least born son, Benjamin.

Back to Jacob. Jacob had a son by the name of Joseph. Joseph, was the first born of Rachel, his favorite wife. When Joseph, in Egypt, near the time of Jacob’s death, wanted to put before Jacob his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, he put on his right side Manasseh to be blessed because he was the oldest. He put on his left side Ephraim to be blessed because he was the youngest. You know what Jacob did? Being half-blind, he knew he had his right hand on Manasseh, and the left hand on Ephraim, exactly where Joseph wanted those hands to be. Jacob switched his hands and put the right hand on Ephraim, the least-born. That is interesting. Ephraim became the top tribe once the northern ten tribes developed into a separate kingdom, after Solomon’s death. Judah headed the southern two tribes. The least born of Jacob was Benjamin, who went with Judah.

The Tribe of Benjamin

If you look at the history of Benjamin, the least born of Jacob, he grew up as a juvenile delinquent. Even

as the tribe developed, once they got into the land of Canaan after the exodus, all you can say about the tribe of Benjamin was it showed extensive wickedness. The tribe was almost wiped out by Israelites because of their abominations. But reasons that are unclear, in the time of David, it seems that the Benjaminites “grew up,” and they became very close to Judah. Surprisingly, God honored Benjamin, the least born of Jacob, with such prodigious powers (in one way of looking at it), that it is almost amazing when you think about it because — do you know what God did? Through David (and Solomon), God had His great Temple, the dwelling place of YHWH Himself, built inside the southern border of Benjamin.

There was a prophecy given by Jacob that He [meaning YHWH] will dwell between the shoulders of Benjamin. That prophecy was given in the time of Jacob, and the shoulders of Benjamin mean that He [God] would dwell in Benjamin. That is where the temple was built on Mount Moriah. There was something in young Benjamin, though he grew up to be a juvenile delinquent.

What would you think of a 90-year-old man who had this little boy running around, who looked exactly like his favorite wife, Rachel, who died giving birth to him. Jacob loved that child. You can love a child in a wrong way. You can give gifts and favors to a child that can spoil that child. We all spoil children, if we are not careful. That is exactly what Jacob did with this Benjamin. The people of the tribe of Benjamin grew up and put away their childishness. God placed His dwelling place with the tribe of the least born of Jacob.

Levi and the Priesthood

Jacob had another child by the name of Levi. Levi was given the priesthood. The kingship was to come through Judah, and David was from Judah, but the priesthood, the people who represented God before the other Israelites, were chosen to be priests. God chose one famous Levite to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. That was Moses. He picked his brother Aaron to be his lieutenant to help and be prophet to him. Aaron was three years older than Moses. A sister, Miriam, was very powerful. She was also older than Moses. Moses became like God to the people of Israel. Moses was the least born.

God is showing a pattern here. He picks families, but the least-born, it seems, get important positions as time goes on. You know what we are, living in this generation right now? We are the least born of all of them. But Jesus said the last shall be first. You and I, being in the last generation before the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, we are given some very important powers because we are the ones able to witness the end-time events of which all of the Old and the New Testament prophecies, the culmination of things, we will witness.

King David's Family Line

Yes, Moses was the least born. Yes, Benjamin was the least born, and in Benjamin is where the temple was, but it does not end there. Going up to the time when a king was to be made, who was to be the ideal king, the king was to introduce a dynasty from whence the great Messiah would come. That person was named David. David was picked to be king and anointed by Samuel the prophet. It bears reviewing. We find Samuel going to Jesse, a prominent man in Judah at the time, the father of David. He said to Jesse, “I want to anoint one of your boys as king over Israel.”

Jesse said that was fine, he liked that very much. Normally, you would bring the oldest. That is exactly what he did. He brought the first-born. Samuel looked at him, and said, “No, I don’t want this one.” He brought the second born. “I don’t want him, either.” Third, fourth, fifth, sixth. Jesse said, “That’s all I have.” Samuel said, “No, you must have one other.” He said, “Well, as a matter of fact, I do have David, but he’s just a stripling kid. He’s out there minding the flock.” “That’s the one I want.” So David was anointed king, as a boy, to be king over Israel. David was the least-born.

New Testament Least-born

In New Testament times, the Jews themselves would hold various people in disdain. Do you know the first Gentile who was converted was completely outside the acceptability of Israel? He was the Ethiopian

eunuch (Acts 8:26–39). Ethiopians were from the people of Ham, and this fellow was from Africa. They were dark people. They were as far from Israel racially as possible. The Ethiopian also had another strike against him, he was a eunuch.⁴

This Ethiopian had two strikes against him. He was very far racially from Israel. He was also a eunuch. Though he was in the service of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia, he had come up to Jerusalem to give alms, and to pray. He was the first one God picked of all of the Gentiles to be given the message of the gospel. You might say, the least born, coming up.

The second Gentile to be acknowledged by the *ekklesia* as a believer was Cornelius. Do you know who he was? He was part of the Roman armies occupying Israel at the time, one of the hated Romans. He and his family were the second ones God called to be part of Christendom of the Gentiles (Acts chapter 10). You see, there is the least-born status coming in.

Where We Fit In

Where do you and I fit in all of this? You may consider yourself not coming from a very prominent family. If you do not — congratulations! Because you are the very one that God can use, in many cases. If you come from a prominent family that is fine also. The emphasis that what God has used is this: He is calling the least born ones to do most of the work of the family. It is exactly opposite from the sociological principles among people that God Himself established in the Old Testament, and in the New. It is most interesting.

Now we come to an individual in the New Testament. Do you know that the apostle Paul, though he was of Jewish derivation, politically and religiously by race, he was a Benjaminite by tribe? He was the least of the apostles, as he called himself (1 Corinthians 15:8–10). Many do not realize that the name “Paul” means “little.” His name was changed to be “little,” to be “small,” in his estimation. He called himself “**the least of the apostles,**” and indeed, he was the least from that point of view.

In the original arrangement of the New Testament books, we find the four gospels come first, and then the Book of Acts (all five deal with the history of Jesus Christ), followed by the seven universal epistles, starting with James (Jesus’ half-brother), then Peter (no relation to Jesus) with First and Second Peter; then First, Second and Third John (the cousin of Jesus); and then Jude (another half-brother of Jesus).

Paul and the Tribe of Benjamin

Next come the 14 epistles of the apostle Paul, or shall I say the apostle “small,” the apostle “little,” the least born, the one who was the least of all. Paul comes from the least-born tribe of Israel, Benjamin. Now Benjamin had a very interesting history.

Editor’s Note: Read Dr. Martin’s extended presentation, “[The Tribe of Benjamin](#),” which gives more surprising details about this troubled but redeemed tribe. The narrative includes Benjamin’s early years as the troublesome youngest son of Jacob once Israelite tribes entered the Promised Land, their time with the Benjaminite King Saul, their opposition to David and Solomon, and also their change of heart and loyalty to Judah against the other ten northern tribes. Benjaminites also played a major role in the physical salvation of the Israelite people during the Persian Empire period. *DWS*

Just before the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century BC, Jeremiah the prophet warned the Jews to repent of their evils or the temple would be destroyed and Jerusalem demolished. Jeremiah gave a prophecy to the Benjaminites, saying that because of the loyalty they showed to Judah and to himself, they would be spared

⁴ A eunuch could not even enter the portals of the temple. Daniel, the Jewish prophet 500 years before, though he gave many prophecies about the future kingdom of God, and the future of the temple, would not be allowed to enter the temple himself because he was a eunuch. *ELM*

from the holocaust. Jeremiah was born in the town of Anathoth, a priestly town about four to five miles north and west of Jerusalem in the middle of the tribe of Benjamin. Jeremiah had a heart relationship to the people of Benjamin, and he promised they would be spared, if they would continue in their righteous ways.

Let us come to New Testament times. Do you know Benjamin again helped Judah and the world? This was because Paul, a Benjaminite, gave 14 epistles (books) to the New Testament, more than anyone else. God was dwelling in Benjamin, you see, not only in the temple form, but also in the apostle Paul.

Every one of us today who claim to be a Christian, who go by what the apostle Paul taught us in his epistles, are indebted to the tribe of Benjamin — the least born tribe of Israel. The apostle Paul, along with Esther and Mordecai earlier on, came to the rescue, not only of the Jews, but also of the entire world.

In this close-to-last generation before the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, we are those who are considered the least. But God has shown that the least can become the first. We should take heart and realize God works through families, and families are important. The tribe of Benjamin saved the Jews in the 5th century BC, and they will be instrumental again, according to the prophecies, in saving the Jews at the end time. It is most important for us to realize these things.

Sin and Jesus' Birth

When you come to the family of Jesus Himself, remember that He had two of His cousins come into the apostleship, and two of his own “legal” half-brothers, because remember the sperm and the ovum, the sperm of Joseph and the ovum of Mary were not used in the creation of Jesus.⁵

Let me give you one Scripture that shows pretty clearly the situation regarding Mary. As far as Joseph is concerned, all Christian people have accepted that his sperm did not conceive the fetus of Jesus. Catholics have understood that for generations, as have Protestants.

When it comes to Mary, people have said, “well, I think Mary’s ovum would have been perfectly proper to be used.” But that cannot be the case, because in Romans 5:12–20 the apostle Paul said that God looks upon Adam as the initiator of all sin on earth, and through a manipulation God used of His own, He transferred sin from one child of Adam to the next. He transferred sin down through the human race, so that all humans (who all come from Adam) are represented as having sin.

Paul continues. That sin can be taken away through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but there is a problem. This would mean that Mary herself, being a descendant of Adam, would carry sin in her, just like all descendants of Adam, if Mary’s ovum were used to produce Jesus. That would be a spiritual sperm, with a human ovum, an ovum that came from Adam. That ovum would be tainted by sin, according to Romans 5:12–20.

The Roman Catholics long ago understood this. What they did in the last century was to establish a brand new dogma, that Mary herself was conceived immaculately. However, there is no Scripture for that whatsoever in the Bible. They invented the idea out of thin air. If Jesus was perfect, their only argument was, Mary also had to be perfect, because Joseph did not interfere with the conception. Mary must be sinless, so Jesus would not have sin inherited from Adam. They invented what is known as the doctrine of “Immaculate Conception.”

They meant well but they were wrong. The answer is clear: Mary did not supply the ovum nor did Joseph supply the sperm. You and I today [in 1994] should not have any difficulty understanding that principle, because in the last 20 years, last 10 in particular, in the news we have heard of surrogate motherhood. It is possible for a conception to take place outside of a woman’s body, and for the impregnated fetus (though it be initiatory at the very beginning), to be placed into a host mother, and for that mother to produce that child. This is not a “way out” at all. We are told clearly by example in modern times this is not only feasible, but when you read the Scripture, it is the answer to the whole thing.⁶

⁵ See “[Chapter 6: Our Sins Are Imputed to Christ](#)” of Dr. Martin’s book, *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*. DWS

⁶ A similar concept was understood in the time of Abram. Sarah could not bear children. Sarah told Abram to bear a child by

Jesus was not born of Adam, although He was “**flesh**” as is stated many times (1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18, 4:1; 1 John 4:2–3; 2 John 1:7). Jesus had no human origin in the sense of being “**of Adam.**” He became a human, exactly as you and I are. He had a body just as we do, but His conception was external to Mary, and the fetus placed in Mary, and she became a surrogate mother. After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had other children as mentioned before.

Others in Jesus’ Circle

Joseph and Mary then gave birth to James, who became the head of the Christian church in Jerusalem. He was killed in 62 AD. He was a righteous individual. Josephus mentions him in his text (*Antiquities of the Jews* 20:199–201).⁷ He was killed at Passover time by being thrown off the southern wall of the Temple Mount. It was rather precipitous at that particular part of the temple, going into the Kidron Valley. At the bottom of the wall, the escarpment tended to go into a type of an angle where the fall was not as harsh as you might imagine. It was deflected by an incline. Josephus says he was still breathing. So they went down and clubbed him to death and he died a martyr.

Josephus wrote that the Jewish War of 66 to 70 AD, which saw the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple demolished, came about in part because of James being killed. He was held in such high esteem by most of the righteous Jews at the time, and there were tens of thousands of Jews who believed because of the example of James. His brother Jude continued to live, and wrote the small epistle that we have in our Bibles.

The relationship of other family members to Jesus must be considered. You will be surprised, but at the “Last Supper,” priestly connections were looked upon as a very important part of authority. I have in my book *Secrets of Golgotha* [in chapter 27 toward the end] if you want to read it, you will find all the details of who sat next to Jesus at the “Last Supper.” There were two individuals. One was Judas Iscariot. The other was the writer of the 4th gospel, none other than John, Jesus’ cousin. John heard Jesus whisper certain things to Judas Iscariot. Judas was on one side of Jesus, and John was on the other. The other apostles, being at a distance from them, were unable to hear what Jesus said in His whispering to Judas Iscariot. He told Judas go and do what he had to do.

Judas “**had the bag**” as it says in John 12:6, and 13:29. He was the treasurer of the group at the time. Jesus said a year before all this happened that “is there not a devil amongst you, and I picked him?” (John 6:70–71). Judas was chosen beforehand, and it even says he was ordained to do the job that he did.

However, Judas finally turned in Jesus to the authorities. Jesus was taken and tried before the Sanhedrin, and what did Judas do? He took the 30 pieces of silver given to him; he went to the temple and if you read it carefully, it says he went into the temple and threw those 30 shekels of silver in the holy place. That meant that Judas was able to go into the temple. To go into the temple means he was a priest. Judas was from Levi, and a priest. That is interesting. From family relationships, the priests in the Old Testament were the ones ordained to be the intermediaries between God and the people of Israel. Who turned in Jesus? The one who should have supported Him was the very one who turned Him in. All that was ordained to happen. Some probably have heard the expression “Judas priest.” In the old days, we used to hear it often, but not much anymore. Judas was a priest.

On the other side of Judas, at the Last Supper, was John. John and Judas were on either side of Jesus. Do you know who John was? Yes, John was a cousin of Jesus. He was the son of Salome and Zebedee. Salome was sister to Mary. Mary was kin to Elisabeth, and Elisabeth was married to Zacharias, who was the father of John the Baptist. They were priests.

When you read the 19th chapter of John’s Gospel, you find four occasions which shows that **[1] John knew who the high priest was**, and they were in communication with each other. **[2] John knew the servant of the**

Hagar and that child would inherit the promises. Once Sarah had her miraculous birth, she wanted Abraham to cast out Hagar and her child Ishmael. He did so, but God rescued Hagar and Ishmael from almost certain death. The full (and shameful) story is told in Genesis chapters 16 and 18:1–15, and 21:1–21. *DWS*

⁷ Three other accounts of James’ death are in Eusebius’ [Ecclesiastical History, vol. II, ch. 23](#) (scroll down to chapter 23). *DWS*

high priest, who Peter had cut off the ear of. John called him Malchus. [3] He knew the individual who was the brother, or kinsman, of that very person, of the high priest. He knew who he was personally. [4] John was able to go into the inner sanctum of the temple near where the Sanhedrin met, yet Peter had to stay outside.

Peter was not a close family member, you might say, linked with others. He was the “odd man out,” but he was the top apostle. He was from Galilee, yes, but he and his brother Andrew were the only apostles that we know were from Galilee. He was like Jonah.

John himself, his mother Salome, and his father Zebedee, must have been of Aaron, and must have been priestly. This means that in the family of Joseph and Mary, Joseph was of David, Mary was of Aaron. The Jews had a tradition that the Messiah would come forth both from David and also from Aaron. The two family lines legally came together in the family of Joseph and Mary. So, you see, family relationships are important. They are not there for nepotistic reasons; they are there to show what you are.

The Conclusion

All this information shows a principle in the Scripture, that God showing forth a patriarchal way of looking at things. He, as the Father, Jesus Christ as the firstborn Son, they are doing nothing more than perpetuating the teachings of family, the togetherness of family, or the principles that govern family from the very beginning, are those which will continue into the future. While we are in training ourselves to learn what those principles of the family are all about, each of us can be happy, joyful, and loving each other. Not only that, but we should bear the responsibilities that go with being a member of the very ruling family of this universe. They created and sustain this universe.

In the last chapter of the Book of Revelation it says that God the Father will bring His very throne down to earth. This little speck of earth [even the enlarged and glorious New Earth, *DWS*], is part of our solar system, and the solar system part of a greater galaxy. The greater galaxy is itself a part of billions of other galaxies that are out there, that have been created with trillions of stars (each unique and named by God, Psalm 147:4), as we all are aware. The universe is unbelievably large, and no one has seen the end of it. Yet it is magnificent. It is awe-inspiring. All of that will be governed in the future, not too long ahead of us, from this speck in the universe we call Earth, as we call it, God the Father will bring heaven, so to speak, down to this earth, beginning with the 1,000-year reign of Christ when He returns to this speck of earth.

Instead of us wanting to go up there, the interesting thing is, God the Father will come down here. He will come to us. That is why He is rearing His children on this earth, because a New Earth is destined to be the center of the entire universe, the government headquarters of all creation. That is what the Scripture says. In the future, by the resurrection from the dead, when you assume not only the same bodily composition of God, and of Christ, which is spiritually based, you will also have the same character They have. Eventually you will possess the same power and authority as God and Christ, because you see, all power is invested in one family. The key is family.

That is why in the New Testament, when we look at the “Who’s Who” there, you will be surprised to find how close family relationships, personalities, and characters actually were, because God — not only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament — He concentrated upon close families, because that is what you and I are to Him. Eventually, the whole of the human race will find that they have been created to become members of the very family of God, which will rule the entirety of this universe.⁸

Now ruling does not mean as a king who just sits on a throne in the old Roman way, and grapes are put in your mouth, luxury from then on. It simply means we will be a part of the ruling family of God: The Father

⁸ Estimates are impossible, but I will give one anyway. There are 7.6 billion people alive today. By the time the 1,000 year reign of Christ ends, and the human population is again repopulated, and the last child of Adam is born, there may well be 20 billion people since Adam who have been born. After each of those individuals are reconciled to God after the great white throne judgement, each of them will be your family member after God becomes all and in all (1 Corinthians 15:26–28) and every person has a celestial body (1 Corinthians 15:51–57). You will eventually know each of the 20 billion better than you know anyone today. That is an “extended family.” *DWS*

there, Jesus Christ the firstborn there, and all of us will be there.

God has shown that we are the least born of that family at the present. Granted, any of us that have any doubts about that, I suggest going to the mirror and looking in it. You see an image of a family member of God, in physical form. At the same time, there is weakness shown within each of us. None of us is perfect. We all are weak in so many ways. We do not have the character of God. Nor do we have the physiological composition of God. Nor do we have His wisdom, His understanding, or His ability to create. None of us has it except only in a very tiny manner. We do not fit into the family of God as we imagine God to be now, though we look like God in a very basic sense.

Editor's Note: See Dr. Martin's surprising and fascinating article, "[The Bodily Composition of God.](#)" It is surprisingly because all too many Christians think we become angels when we die. This is not stated anywhere in Scripture and it is a false concept.

We are children of God — at this moment if you are a believer. Angels have never been called **"sons"** of God according to the apostle Paul (Hebrews 1:5).

God has hands. God has a body. He has eyes. This is clearly taught in the Scripture, and we are the same way. We do not share with Him His extensive powers now. Small powers yes, and we may think they are awesome. When we look at our television sets and see the accomplishments that humankind is able to do, sending people even to the moon, and thousands of satellites sent into space, the ability to create nuclear weapons, to put submarines underneath the sea, or any thousands and thousands of things we are able to accomplish, it is awesome, really, when you think about it.

When Noah, Abraham, David or some of those will look at the accomplishments of humanity today, they may think we are becoming more godlike every day, and in some ways, in fact we are. But we are far from inheriting the characteristics of God in their fullness (only God can fulfil His purpose in us.) However, all that is promised to each one of us. That is what the gospel is about. The gospel is not about going to a meeting of some evangelist, important as that may be, walking down the aisle, shaking the preacher's hand, and then you will all be saved and go to heaven. Oh my goodness! That is not what the gospel is about.

We are the least of the family at present, because we are one of the last generations. We are destined to be one of the first. You have an honorable position. You will be a part — and you are already — of the very family of God, with your elder brother being Jesus Christ:

"Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that every one that does righteousness is born of him.

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

• 1 John 2:28–3:3

The "Who's Who of the New Testament" is most important, and you know who figures in that Who's Who of the New Testament? You do, and I do, through our attachment to the family of God. We should be grateful to God for this knowledge and understanding.

Ernest L. Martin, March 1994
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