

Who are the twins in the Bible?

The Bible records three cases of twins. The known twins of the Bible include the following:

Jacob and Esau: These two brothers are certainly the best-known set of twins in Scripture. Isaac and his wife Rebekah are the first couple mentioned in the Bible to have twins. Genesis 25:22-26 says, “The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, ‘Why is this happening to me?’ So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.’ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.”

These two brothers would continue in conflict, with Jacob stealing their father’s blessing and then running away to live with his uncle Laban. However, Jacob would indeed become the stronger of the two brothers, fathering twelve sons who would become the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Perez and Zerah: The account of twins Perez and Zerah can be found in Genesis 38. Jacob’s son Judah slept with a woman he thought was a prostitute, only to find out later it was his widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar. King David would later descend from the family line of Perez (Ruth 4:18). Matthew 1:3 notes Perez in the line of ancestors of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Didymus: The Gospel of John notes that Thomas was called Didymus, a Greek word meaning “twin” (John 11:16). The name Thomas also means “twin” in Aramaic, a common language of Jesus’ time. This likely indicates that Thomas was one of two twin brothers. The same title is given in John 20:24 and 21:2. However, Thomas’s twin brother is never specifically mentioned in Scripture. There is speculation that Thomas and Matthew were twins due to their names often being listed together in the Gospels. But this is just speculation.

Cain and Abel: It is possible Cain and Abel were twins, but the Bible does not explicitly indicate this. It depends on how much later Abel was born: “Eve became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. . . . Later she gave birth to his brother Abel” (Genesis 4:1-2). Was it minutes later or more than nine months later? The Bible does not say.

Finally, Acts 28:11 notes that, on their voyage to Rome, Paul, Luke, and others were boarded on “an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.” Today, these twin gods of ancient myth are often called the Gemini.