



James: The Man With A Message
An Introduction to the Book of James
James 1:1

Introduction to the Book of James

- written around A.D. 45 to the people of God dispersed all over the world in the first century
- broken into a number of “sermonettes” and written in an Old Testament style
- written with the theme: “Faith That Works” - “walk the walk”
- called “The New Testament Book of Wisdom”
- called “The Proverbs of the New Testament”
- could also be called “James’ Reflections on the Sermon on the Mount”

Our Text: James 1:1 “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.”

I. James: The Man James = Hebrew: Ya’aqobh = Greek: Iakobos = English Jacob or James
“James, the Lord’s brother.” (Galatians 1:19)

A. His Early Life

1. His Unique Family

- born into the family of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth in Galilee.
- the first, natural born son of the union of Mary and Joseph with at least four brothers and two sisters. cf. Matthew 13:55-56
- lived with Jesus as an older brother (Imagine living with a brother who was God in the flesh!)

2. His Surprising Reaction

- Jesus’ brothers and sisters did not believe in Him
John 7:5 “For not even His brothers were believing in Him.”
Matthew 13:57 And they took offense at Him (Jesus). But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.”
Mark 3:21 And when His own people (i.e. His family) heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him (Jesus); for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.”

- But things changed...

Acts 1:14 “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, *and with His brothers.*”

B. His Dramatic Conversion

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Ciphers, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

- Jesus Christ appeared to hundreds of “believers” but the Risen Lord appeared to only two “unbelievers.” One was Saul of Tarsus (later to become the Apostle Paul); the other unbeliever was James, his younger brother.
- Encouragement to parents who children, like James, do not respond early to Jesus as Savior and Lord
Live your faith before them. Share your faith with them. Leave the rest up to our Sovereign Lord.

C. His Extensive Ministry

1. James was a witness of the transforming power of the gospel

- He witnessed his brothers and sisters becoming born-again followers of Christ.

2. James was a key leader in the Church of Jerusalem

- The apostle Peter calls the brethren to give their ministry reports to James (Acts 12:17)
Galatians 2:9 “...and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas (Peter) and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

Gal. 1:19 “But I did not see any other of the apostles (Note: not one of the Twelve) except James, the Lord’s brother.”

3. James was a key leader in the Church at Large

- James became the head of the Jerusalem Council—a church-wide gathering of elders that met to resolve the problem over whether Gentile believers should observe the Law of Moses or are set free by grace. cf. Acts 15:12-13, 19-22

II. James: His Life Message

1. James was a man of integrity

- Historians actually called him **James, the Just** — **James, the Righteous One** — just like his father Joseph...(Mt. 1:19)

James 2:18 But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

2. James was a man of wisdom

- Wisdom demonstrated while heading up the Jerusalem Council.
- “The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the apostles, and the rest of the apostles to the seventy.” (Clement)

James 1:5-6 “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

3. James was a man of prayer

- Historians tell us that James was such a man of prayer that he was called “Camel Knees” because he had calluses on his knees from long seasons of fervent prayer.

James 5:16 “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

4. James was a man of humility

James 1:1 “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...” (**Note:** He could have said “James the brother of Our Lord”...)

1 Peter 5:5-7 “. . . all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

5. James was a man of obedience

James 1:1 “James, a bond-servant (Greek: doulos = slave) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.”

- His mother, Mary, was a great example of obedience (Lk. 1:38)
- His father, Joseph demonstrated the same kind of obedient heart. (Mt. 1:24)
- His brother, Jesus was also an example to James (Jn. 6:38)

Note: There are some 54 imperatives in the 108 verses that make up the five chapters epistle of James.

James 1:22 “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

6. James was a man of sacrifice

- According to the historian, Josephus, James was martyred around A.D. 62, Other accounts concur...

III. James: His Written Message

We would do well to make it our life ambition to be like James. And a great place to start is studying the epistle that bears his name. See you next time as we begin our on-going study of the Epistle of James...

Discussion Questions:

1. What stirred you most about the life and testimony of the man, James?
2. How were you influenced spiritually as a child? How did you react to those influences?
3. In which of the following areas do you have the most difficulty: integrity, wisdom, prayer, humility, obedience?
4. If historians of the future were speaking about the depth of your faith, what might they say?
5. How familiar are you with the Book of James? What is your favorite passage in this epistle and why?
6. Are you willing to read through the entire epistle of James this next month? How many times? _____