

“James, An Apostle”
James 1:1

September 9, 2012

A. Introduction

1. Text: **James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.**
2. Purposes:

B. Who Wrote This Letter?

1. J_____!
 - a. the custom of that day in writing letters
 - b. but actually called J_____
2. James, the Son of Alphaeus and Mary^A
3. James the Son of Zebedee and Salome^B
 - a. His special position^C
 - b. His history^D
4. James, the Son of Joseph and Mary^E
 - a. “Queen of Heaven”^F
 - b. meaning of ‘brother’^G
 - c. at the Jerusalem council^H

^A Matthew 10:3, 27:56; Mark 3:18, 15:40, 16:1; Luke 6:15, 24:10; John 19:25; Acts 1:13

^B Matthew 4:21, 20:20; Mark 1:19, 5:37, 15:40, 16:1; Luke 5:10

^C Matthew 17:1, 26:37; Mark 3:17, 9:2, 14:33; Luke 8:51, 9:28, 54

^D Acts 12:2

^E Galatians 1:19, Matthew 13:55-56

^F Jeremiah chapters 40-44, especially 44:7-28

^G Romans 16:7, 11, 21

^H Acts 15

C. To Whom Was It Written?

1. to the
2. who consisted of
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. Not to Jews Alone^I

D. When Was It Written?

1. No One Knows!

E. Why Was It Written?

1. ‘Greetings!’
2. not a S_____ message but M_____ P_____ for Christian living

F. A Family Lesson

1. James’ Earlier Life^J
2. A Change Took Place^K
3. What Changed James?^L

G. Conclusion

1. James’ Life Is a Lesson to Us
2. The Family Lesson Applied

^I 2 Timothy 3:16-17

^J John 7:2-5, Mark 3:20-21, 31-35

^K Acts 1:13-14

^L 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 1 Timothy 3:16

A. Introduction

1. Text: **James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.** (James 1:1)
2. Purposes:
 - a. to introduce this letter written by James
 - b. to draw out a little lesson concerning families

B. Who Wrote This Letter?

1. That's Easy: "James"!
 - a. In both English and in the Greek, the book commences with the name of the writer; that was the custom of the day
 - (A) Paul, Peter and Jude all began their letters that way
 - (B) in English, the author's name is James; however, in Greek, it is Iakobos, that is Jacob – we will not track how this name changed through various languages; but King James was not involved!
 - b. James – or Jacob – is a common Jewish name
 - (A) after all, Jacob was one of three patriarchs of Israel
 - (B) parents often named one of their sons after him
 - (C) there were a number of such common names in the NT: Simon or Simeon; Jude or Judas; Mary or Miriam; these make it quite difficult to ascertain the relationships of the people so named
 - c. there are three men with the name James in the NT
2. James, the Son of Alphaeus and Mary^A
 - a. he, along with his brother Judas, was one of the twelve disciples
 - b. he is always identified by the naming of one of his parents
 - c. in some fashion these two brothers were related to Jesus Christ, their mother Mary being a sister (i.e.-

^A Matthew 10:3, 27:56; Mark 3:18, 15:40, 16:1; Luke 6:15, 24:10; John 19:25; Acts 1:13

in-law) of Mary the mother of Jesus

- d. after the list of disciples in Acts 1:13 he is mentioned no more
- e. the opinion of ancient and modern students alike is that James the son of Alphaeus was not the writer of this letter

3. James the Son of Zebedee and Salome ^B

- a. he was the brother of John writer of the gospel, always named first, indicating by Jewish custom, the elder brother
- b. these two brothers were among the first called to be Jesus' disciples ^C
- c. with Peter they were the inner circle of three disciples accompanying Jesus on some very special occasions: the transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and Christ's agony in Gethsemane ^D
- d. Jesus nick-named them Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder, because of their stormy personalities ^E
- e. in Acts 12:2 we read that this James was put to death by Herod about 10 years after the Christ's own death
- f. according to the Jewish historian Josephus, some of the evils this letter addresses fall after that date ^E, and so we conclude that ...
- g. James the son of Zebedee and Salome did not write this letter

4. James, the Son of Joseph and Mary

- a. to him Paul makes reference in Galatians 1:19, 'But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.'
- b. he is the first named in Matthew 13:55-56, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? ...'

^B Matthew 4:21, 20:20; Mark 1:19, 5:37, 15:40, 16:1; Luke 5:10

^C Matthew 4:21, Mark 1:19

^D Matthew 17:1, 26:37; Mark 5:37, 9:2, 14:33; Luke 8:51, 9:28

^E Mark 3:17; Luke 9:54

- c. let me step back for a moment to the book of Jeremiah^F
- (A) the main part of the people of Jerusalem and Judah had been taken away into captivity into Babylon over a 20-year period.
 - (B) only the poorest of the poor were left in the land
 - (C) some Jewish fugitives returned from the surrounding nations and slew the Babylonian governor of Judah, Gedaliah,
 - (D) the people, though they executed the murderers, feared reprisal from Nebuchadnezzar and decided, despite God's prohibition through Jeremiah, to flee and go to Egypt, taking Jeremiah along
 - (E) when they were in Egypt, this people continued to worship idols and God spoke through Jeremiah, that punishment would still come to them even in that land
 - (F) the Jews answered with these words: 'As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings and our princes did ...' (Jeremiah 44:16-17a) – then the women said the same thing
 - (G) so most of the pagan religions around the Great Sea worshipped the queen of heaven under various names
 - (H) when such pagans entered the church, they readily began to exalt Mary the mother of Jesus, to a divine status, eventually giving to her the title, Regina Coeli, that is, Queen of Heaven, declaring Mary's perpetual virginity, denying she had any other children
- d. the church came to promote this idea and reinterpreted the word 'brother' as 'cousin' in these verses
- (A) but look at them again: all the family terms used in the Matthew passage are direct relationship terms: father-son, mother-son, brother-sister; the Jews who were speaking were saying 'we know his closest relatives – what is so special about this Jesus?'
 - (B) these were Jesus' half-brothers, the only difference being that their biological father was Joseph, while Jesus' was the Holy Spirit
 - (C) or, look at Paul's words: 'James, the Lord's brother'
 - (1) Paul is not using the word brother as meaning a fellow-Jew; that would make the description

^F Jeremiah, chapters 40-44

- as totally irrelevant
 - (2) nor is he using it as a substitute for cousin or close relative in Jesus' extended family; for that purpose Paul elsewhere uses another Greek term, *suggenos*, meaning kinsman^G
 - (3) no, Paul used it in the only sense it could be used, that this James was the son of Jesus' mother, Mary
- e. it was this James, the son of Joseph and Mary who wrote this book
- (A) the authority of this writer is consistent with the authority that he demonstrated at the council in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15
 - (B) James' conciliatory attitude and his use of language in Acts 15 can also be found in this letter that bears his name
 - (C) it is this man, who along with Paul and Barnabas is called an apostle, even though they were not part of the twelve disciples

5. so today, we introduce this letter as from James, an apostle

C. To Whom Was It Written?

1. To the Jewish Dispersion

- a. "To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad"
- b. but again, that is not as simple as it sounds
- c. because underlying this letter is an underlying assumption
 - (A) what James has to say is not for unbelieving Jews, but believers
 - (B) James does not lay out again the foundations of the gospel of Jesus Christ – he assumes that his readers are grounded in them
- d. as we go through this book, Lord willing and as I may remember, I shall point out some of these things as we meet them
- e. these Jewish Christians would consist of several groups:
 - (A) those who were from all over the empire, and heard and believed the Gospel on its proclamation by Peter on Pentecost

^G Romans 16:7, 11, 21

- (B) those who were dispersed in the great persecution (led by Saul of Tarsus and others) following the martyrdom of Stephen
- (C) and those of the Jews already living outside of Judaea and Galilee to whom the apostles went with the message of salvation
- f. yes, it is written to these scattered Jews; yet, it is addressed

2. Not to Jews Alone

- a. prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, Jews predominated in the church of Jesus Christ
- b. Christianity was considered but another Jewish sect
- c. Paul's preaching was first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles
- d. Jews and proselytes who became Christians, having the OT knowledge and the NT writing, most naturally became the church's first leaders
- e. Gentile believers were, in accordance with the prophecies we noted when we were studying Isaiah, additions to the people of God
- f. so these words are as applicable to us today as they were to the Jewish Christians scattered through the Roman empire in those days; because James' letter is a part of the what Paul describes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: '[All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.](#)'

D. When Was It Written?

1. No One Knows!

- a. there are very good arguments for this being among the earliest of the letters written from shortly before the Council at Jerusalem in about 44AD to as late as just before James' death in 62AD ^{-{3}}.
- b. it would seem that the level of authority James takes, his assumption that the doctrines of salvation are clearly known, and the specific problems in Christian living that are being addressed, more closely fit later date, with its being written to second-generation Christians

2. But, No One Knows!

E. Why Was It Written?

1. "Greetings!"

- a. James uses the same word here as used in the letter from the council at Jerusalem – literally it means 'take joy, rejoice'
- b. it encompasses the whole idea of wishing someone well
- c. it comes very close to being an alternative to "Peace!" or "Shalom"
- d. James wishes his readers realize the blessing of a changed life

2. James is Not a Sermon with Single Point!

- a. when a person receives the gospel's saving word
- b. it is not only to enter the head, but also the heart
- c. there should be a demonstrable change in life and actions
- d. like the wisdom books of the OT, James has not a single message, but deals with how our faith should change us
- e. it is a series of presentations in a nut-shell of some kernel of truth
- f. a seed that is intended to grow and to produce fruit in the believer
- g. hence my title for this series is, 'Lessons in Practical Christianity'

F. A Family Lesson

1. "Of God and Lord Jesus Christ, a Bond-Slave"

- a. James could not have called himself that earlier in his life
- b. neither he nor any of the brothers of Jesus was a disciple
- c. for this we have the evidence of John 7:2-5, 'Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For not even His brothers were believing in Him.'
- d. early in Jesus' ministry, shortly after calling of the 12 disciples, Mark 3:20-21 tells us 'And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. When His

own people (literally, those close or near to him; i.e. his relatives or family) heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."" Later in that chapter his mother and brothers arrived and sent word to Him and called Him; but rather than going out to them, Jesus made this statement, pointing out his disciples, 'Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.' – Jesus brothers then had no spiritual relationship with Him.

- e. despite the Christian influence in his home; in the carpenter's shop
- f. despite his working next to Jesus, his hearing Jesus' wisdom
- g. James was not a believer
- h. but in Acts 1:13-14 we find a different situation; a wonderful change: 'When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 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.'

2. What Changed James?

- a. the answer is found hidden away in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, '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 Cephas, 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'
- b. James met the risen Jesus Christ
- c. Jesus ceased to be family member, someone with whom he had even grown up, whose spiritual wisdom he had heard from early infancy'
- d. Jesus ceased to be simply a prominent religious leader of the day
- e. Jesus became for him the Lord's Christ, able to make the '... common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.' (1 Timothy 3:16)

f. James met the risen Jesus Christ

G. Conclusion

1. James' Life Is a Lesson to Us

- a. until like James we have met the resurrected Christ
- b. Jesus remains at most but an important historical figure
- c. but when we receive Him as the risen Saviour
- d. then his teaching of walking the talk will bring true joy

2. Here Is the Family Lesson

- a. perhaps in your family there are those who do not yet believe
- b. they may have heard the gospel; they may know its truth
- c. but they have never seen Jesus other than an ancient religious teacher
- d. they haven't met the Jesus who is living today
- e. perhaps it may be in your life they will see Him as the risen Christ

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AV Authorized (King James) Version
NAS New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
Lange – Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament, *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. The oppression by farmers of workers (5:1-8) is described by Josephus; cf NICNT, *op cit*, page 19
3. TYN argues for a late date, NICNT for an early date, while the EGT presents an excellent summary on both sides without making a specific conclusion