

The Book of James Part 1 - Introduction

Thank you for joining me once again to look into God's Word. Today, we want to start a study in the book of James. Before we do that, let me invite you to write to me today. Now, if you haven't written me for a while or if you've never written, let me invite you to write Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. Write to me today and if you have a computer and you go on the Internet, you can look at our Website, www.LRWM.org. On the Website, you'll be able to scroll to the bottom of any of those pages that you see on our Website and you'll see an email down there. You can press that and you can send me an email. I look forward to hearing from you today. May the Lord bless you.

Now, let's take time and look at the book of James today. We're not going to get through the whole letter of James today, but what I'd like to do is go through an introduction. We may get into a few verses, but first of all, we need to understand who wrote the book of James.

Who wrote the book of James? There are several men in the Bible who were named James. The name "James" is derived from the same Hebrew name as "Jacob," meaning heel. If you go back and read the book of Genesis, you'll find the narrative there about Jacob, and you'll see that Jacob was born grasping Esau's heel. Of course, once again, that's what Jacob means. It means "heel." As he grasped that heel, we also read later on that Jacob bought Esau's birthright. Now, whether that was right or wrong, I believe, once again, that things seem to be wrong sometimes and God works it out for the best. We see that this took place, of course, in the life of Jacob.

The James who wrote this letter was not James, the brother of John whose father's

name was Zebedee. In Matthew 4:21 it says, *And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren... [This is Jesus, of course]... James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother....*

And then in Matthew 10:2, it says, *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.* James, the brother of John, was one of the Lord's twelve disciples, and he was the first disciple to be martyred. This happened, as we are told and as we study history and the Word of God, around 44 A.D.

In Acts 12:1-2 it says: *¹Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. ²And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

So, as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see that James, the brother of John, could not have written the book of James because he was martyred before the book of James was written.

There was another James, a named apostle found in Matthew 10:3, the son of Alphaeus. And this was not the James who wrote this letter that we're getting ready to study. In Matthew 10:3, it says, *Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus....* This James may be James the younger whose mother, Mary, was among the women at Jesus' crucifixion and tomb. We read about that in Matthew 27, Mark 15-16, and Luke 24.

In John 19:25, we see that this Mary is called the wife of Cleophas, perhaps to be identified with Alphaeus. Now, some consider that Cleophas and Alphaeus are the same name. Not

much is known about this James, James the younger.

In John 19:25, it says, *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.* The James who wrote the book of James was the half-brother of Jesus, I believe. This would be the son of Mary and Joseph.

In Mark 6:3, it says, *Is not this the carpenter... [speaking of Jesus...]... Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*

Remember, Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph. He was supernaturally brought into this world. Remember, if you go back and study the Scriptures, you'll find that Jesus was born of a virgin and He had no earthly father. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she conceived. The Bible says she brought forth her firstborn son. Of course, Mary did have other children, as we just read in Mark 6:3, but keep in mind, Jesus had no earthly father. He had a Father who was in Heaven. The Bible says that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and we read about that in John 3:16. God gave His only begotten Son. He brought Jesus into the world.

We later learn that this same James that I've just mentioned, the Lord's half-brother, became the leader of the church that was in Jerusalem in Acts 12. Acts 12:17 says, *But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.*

And then in Acts 15:13, it says, *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me.*

And there are so many verses that we could look at today. Let's look at some more.

Acts 21:17-18: *¹⁷And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.*

This James in Acts 15 and Acts 21 was obviously not the James who had just been slain by Herod in Acts 12:2 but, rather, James the half-brother of Jesus who was becoming increasingly responsible for the leadership of the Jerusalem church. Remember, in Acts 12:2, it says, *And he killed James the brother of John*, so this person who wrote the book of James, the letter of James, could not have been the brother of John because he was killed with the sword in Acts 12:2. And we read about James, the one who wrote the book of James after Acts 12:2.

The letter that James wrote was probably the first New Testament book that was written. The epistle of James was probably written between 45 and 49 A.D., and this would have been less than 20 years after the Lord rose again from the dead. The truths found in this five-chapter letter are just as meaningful to believers today as they were to those Christians who lived in the first century A.D.

I believe James, the Lord's half-brother, is most likely the author of this epistle. In Galatians 1:19, it says, *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

And I believe that James was made an apostle. Of course, we see this after the Lord's death, after His resurrection. James, the author of James, was evidently placed as an apostle after the death of the James we read of in Acts 12:2

who was the brother of John. Now, as we look on, the author, the half-brother of Jesus.

The setting of this book was written to Jewish Christians who had been scattered from Palestine by persecution or other situations. We read about this in Acts 8:1-4, 12:14-17, and also James 1:1.

The key verse of chapter 1 is found in verse 22. It says, *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

In 108 verses in this epistle, there are 54 imperatives or commands, prompting some to call James the Amos of the New Testament. You can go back and read it and get some information about Amos. Go back and read the book of Amos, and you'll see why James is compared by some to Amos of the Old Testament.

We can also go back to Psalm 15 and we can compare Psalm 15 with the epistle of James. We see comparisons. We see some likenesses there. Psalm 15:1-5 says this: *¹A Psalm of David. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? ²He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. ³He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. ⁴In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. ⁵He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.*

As we go through the book of James, the epistle, the letter that James wrote, we're going to see some likenesses from the book of Psalms, Psalm 15, and I want you to keep this in mind as we study this epistle.

In James 1:1, I want to read this verse and we'll stop here this week, but I want to read this verse to you. It says, *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

Did you know that Jesus wants to greet everyone? Did you know that Jesus is a friend of sinners? The Bible says that Jesus came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost, and I'm so thankful that Jesus looked to me and the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, "You are a sinner and you need to be saved."

I'm so glad that the Word of God came forth and showed me that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that "all" included me. And when I saw that, I realized that I needed a Savior. I realized that I wanted to go to Heaven and I wanted to serve God. I realized the only way I could serve God was by receiving His Son, Jesus Christ, as my Savior, and I pray that you've done that. I pray that you have asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart.

If you haven't done that, bow your head right now and ask Him to come in for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Well, it's been good being with you today, and let me invite you to join me the next time you'll hear me say, "It is a good life." May the Lord bless you.