

Notes and Introduction to The Book of James

The New Testament falls into various sections, each dealing with specific themes. A last section, introduced by the book of Hebrews is concerned with the single theme of faith. The whole thrust of these letters of the New Testament is to explain to us what faith is and how it works, and each letter makes its unique contribution to that theme.

Who Was James?

James was a popular name of the time:

- James the son of Zebedee and brother of John. He was a fisherman called by Christ to become a disciple.
- James the son of Alphaeus but little is known about him and there is little evidence that he wrote the book of James.
- James the father of Judas the disciple not Judas Iscariot.
- James the half-brother of Jesus—who seems most likely to have penned this book.
 - He does not identify himself in this way.
 - James and the other brothers did not believe in Jesus' earthly ministry (John 7:1-5; Mark 3:31-35) but later he is found in the upper room praying with the disciples (Acts 1:14).

James is the second book, then, in this section that deals with faith. This letter is of unique and peculiar significance to us because it comes from the one who knew more about the Lord Jesus than any other human being -- at least as far as the record that is passed on to us is concerned.

James, the brother of our Lord, was raised in the same home in Nazareth, grew up with the Lord Jesus, saw him through all those silent years of which we have no record, and joined with his three other brothers -- Joseph, Simon, and Judas -- in opposition to the Lord Jesus during the early days of his ministry.

James was finally converted by the resurrection of the Lord; and the Apostle Paul tells us that after the resurrection, the Lord appeared to James (1 Corinthians. 15:7).

Who was James Writing to?

James led the church in Jerusalem during a difficult time, but his letter was directed to the Jews living outside the land of Palestine.

James sent his letter to Christian Jews, addressing them as brethren.

These Christian Jews faced some unique challenges in that they were rejected by Gentiles and as Christian Jews they were rejected by their own countrymen.

Why Did James Write?

As we read the book, we will see that these newly converted Christian Jews were having some issue in their personal life and as well as their church.

They faced temptations and one of the major issues in the church is that the people failed to live what they had been professing.

They also had issues caused by divisions and careless words; and many of them were dealing with worldliness.

QUESTION:

- Do churches today not have people who are going through difficult times? Facing trials and tribulations.
- Wrestling with the self-control and worldliness?
- The common cause for all of this is *Spiritual Immaturity*" –they simply weren't growing up.

James follows the pattern of the Book of Hebrews:

1. The theme of Hebrews is Spiritual Perfection. The Hebrew writer explains how perfect salvation could be had in Christ.
2. James encourages the readers to build on this perfect salvation and grow into maturity.

This study will be an opportunity to check our hearts to see where we stand in our faith.

We will begin Chapter 1 and discuss how to turn our Trials into Triumphs.¹

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