

# James

## Describing the Book of James

- A. Practical. Filled with simple clear directions.
  - a. More imperative verbs than any other NT book
  - b. Touches briefly on theology, and spends his words on practical application of Truth
  - c. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (1:22)
- B. Concise
  - a. No point is developed at length
  - b. James moves quickly from point to point
- C. Theologians have struggled with this book, but the general believer finds the selected verses popular.
  - a. Martin Luther found the book of James to be in conflict with Paul and referred to it as an “epistle of straw.” Yet, Luther often quoted the verses of James in his writings
  - b. So critics from history considered the book of James as a holdover from Jewish writings since it was so similar to the wisdom books and literature in the OT and Jewish writings.
- D. Illustrations and metaphors used by James helps readers picture and remember. Images we all recall such as:
  - a. Surging sea
  - b. Withered flower
  - c. Face in a mirror
  - d. Bit in the mouth of a horse
  - e. Rudder of a ship
  - f. Destruction of a forest fire
  - g. Pure spring water
  - h. Arrogant, self-important businessman
  - i. Corroded metal
  - j. Clothes eaten by moths

## Type or Genre of Writing

- A. It is sent to a group of people identified in 1:1 as “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion.”
  - a. This was a particular group
  - b. But, the identification of the recipients is illusive, obscure or cryptic...maybe intentionally
- B. Letters in the ancient world ranged anywhere between:
  - a. Brief notes of information
  - b. Long argumentative discourses in a debate
  - c. These documents had many different forms, but simply add the opening and the closing before sending it to a particular audience and the contents became a letter. Consider the letter of the book of Hebrews or Romans.
- C. Also missing in James are:
  - a. Details of situations being addressed
  - b. Ending of the letter greetings to individuals
  - c. References to others and fellow workers
  - d. Travel plans

- e. Location of writing (but, assumed to be Jerusalem, just as the identification of James is assumed.)
- f. No mention of people, places or situations
- D. It can be assumed that the “twelve tribes” include:
  - a. Jewish believers
  - b. Several locations (cities) where these believers gathered
  - c. Not written to a particular individual or a particular local group...thus, the generic advice on generic situations
- E. James’s writing is:
  - a. Pastoral exhortation
    - i. James is not informing or teaching, but is commanding, exhorting and encouraging
    - ii. James is compassionate addressing the readers as “my brothers” 15 times (modern updated translation: “my brothers and sisters” or “my beloved brothers and sisters.”)

80 [k]	1473 [h]	1437 [k]	5100 [k]	1722 [k]	4771 [k]	4106 [k]	575 [k]	3888 [k]	225 [k]	2532 [k]	1884 [k]	5108 [k]	846 [k]	
Adelphoi	mou	ean	tis	en	hymin	planethe	apo	tes	altheias	kai	epistrepse	tis	auton	
19	Ἀδελφοί μου ,	εἰάν	τις	ἐν	ὑμῖν	πλανηθῆ	ἀπό	τῆς	ἀληθείας ,	καὶ	ἐπιστρέψῃ	τις	αὐτόν ,	
	Brothers of Me	if	anyone	among	you	might wander	from	the	truth	and	should bring back	someone	him	
	NAMP	PPro-G15	Conj	PPro-NAB	Prep	PPro-DOP	VASP-3B	Prep	Art-OFB	N-GFS	Conj	VASA-3B	PPro-FMS	PPro-AMCS

- b. Looseness of structure
  - i. James moves quickly from topic to topic
  - ii. Relationship of the topics is not clear
  - iii. The theme of the letter is not clear
  - iv. The structure of the letter is not clear
- c. More dependent on Jesus than other NT writers
  - i. James doesn’t directly quote Jesus, (although James 5:12 on oaths is close to Matt. 5:33-37)
  - ii. James does write the very essence of Jesus’ teaching into his own words
  - iii. James’ writing style is similar to Jesus’ teaching style

### James, the author

- A. “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1)
  - a. English name *James* comes from the Latin *Jacomus* which is a translation of the Greek name *Jakobos*.
  - b. *Jakobos* occurs 42 times in the NT to refer to four men. Three of the four are mentioned in the same verse in Acts 1:13 in the names of the apostles – “And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, 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.”
    - i. James the father of Judas is mentioned only here and Luke 6:16 in order to distinguish him from Judas the betrayer
    - ii. James the son of Alphaeus is mentioned in the Gospels in the list of apostles and is identified as such to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John

- iii. James, the brother of John, one of the “sons of thunder”, is one of the prominent apostles (along with Peter and John). He was executed in 44 AD by Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12:2
- c. The fourth James is the brother of Jesus mentioned several times in the Gospels and is a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem in the book of Acts and historically recorded by Josephus and church history.
  - i. James was not a believer in the Gospels:
    1. Matthew 13:55
    2. Mark 6:3
  - ii. James became a believer after the resurrection:
    1. 1 Corinthians 15:7
    2. John 7:5
  - iii. James was a leader in the Jerusalem church:
    1. Acts 12:17
    2. James was called the first bishop of Jerusalem and title “James the righteous” and “James the Just”
    3. Eusebius records Hegesippus’s account of James’s death.
    4. Hegesippus the Nazarene
      - a. Was born in Israel in 110 AD and died in Jerusalem on April 7, 180
      - b. He was a Christian writer of the early Church who may, in spite of his Greek name, have been a Jewish convert
      - c. He wrote against heresies of the Gnostics and of Marcion.
    5. Hegesippus records in the fragments from his five books of “Commentaries on the Acts of the Church”:

**“James, the Lord's brother, succeeds to the government of the Church, in conjunction with the apostles. He has been universally called the Just, from the days of the Lord down to the present time. For many bore the name of James; but this one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine or other intoxicating liquor, nor did he eat flesh; no razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, nor make use of the bath. He alone was permitted to enter the holy place: for he did not wear any woollen garment, but fine linen only. He alone, I say, was wont to go into the temple: and he used to be found kneeling on his knees, begging forgiveness for the people-so that the skin of his knees became horny like that of a camel's, by reason of his constantly bending the knee in adoration to God, and begging forgiveness for the people. Therefore, in consequence of his pre-eminent justice, he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek Defence of the People, and Justice, in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.**

**Now some persons belonging to the seven sects existing among the people, which have been before described by me in the Notes, asked him: "What is the door of Jesus? " And he replied that He was the Saviour. In Consequence of this answer, some believed that Jesus is the Christ. But the sects before mentioned did not believe, either in a resurrection or in the coming of One to requite every man according to his works; but those who did believe, believed because of James. So, when many even of the ruling class believed, there was a commotion among the Jews, and scribes, and Pharisees, who said: "A little more, and we shall have all the people looking for Jesus as the Christ.**

They came, therefore, in a body to James, and said: "We entreat thee, restrain the people: for they are gone astray in their opinions about Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat thee to persuade all who have come hither for the day of the passover, concerning Jesus. For we all listen to thy persuasion; since we, as well as all the people, bear thee testimony that thou art just, and showest partiality to none. Do thou, therefore, persuade the people not to entertain erroneous opinions concerning Jesus: for all the people, and we also, listen to thy persuasion. Take thy stand, then, upon the summit of the temple, that from that elevated spot thou mayest be clearly seen, and thy words may be plainly audible to all the people. For, in order to attend the passover, all the tribes have congregated hither, and some of the Gentiles also."

The aforesaid scribes and Pharisees accordingly set James on the summit of the temple, and cried aloud to him, and said: "O just one, whom we are all bound to obey, forasmuch as the people is in error, and follows Jesus the crucified, do thou tell us what is the door of Jesus, the crucified." And he answered with a loud voice: "Why ask ye me concerning Jesus the Son of man? He Himself sitteth in heaven, at the right hand of the Great Power, and shall come on the clouds of heaven."

And, when many were fully convinced by these words, and offered praise for the testimony of James, and said, "Hosanna to the son of David," then again the said Pharisees and scribes said to one another, "We have not done well in procuring this testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, that they may be afraid, and not believe him." And they cried aloud, and said: "Oh! oh! the just man himself is in error." Thus they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah: "Let us away with the just man, because he is troublesome to us: therefore shall they eat the fruit of their doings." So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to one another: "Let us stone James the Just." And they began to stone him: for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned, and kneeled down, and said: "I beseech Thee, Lord God our Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

And, while they were thus stoning him to death, one of the priests, the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, to whom testimony is borne by Jeremiah the prophet, began to cry aloud, saying: "Cease, what do ye? The just man is praying for us." But one among them, one of the fullers, took the staff with which he was accustomed to wring out the garments he dyed, and hurled it at the head of the just man.

And so he suffered martyrdom; and they buried him on the spot, and the pillar erected to his memory still remains, close by the temple. This man was a true witness to both Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ.

And shortly after Vespasian besieged Judaea, taking them captive."

- iv. James met with Paul and help navigate the early church through theological issues:

## 1. Acts 15:13 and 15:23-24:

3326 [e] 1161 [e] 3588 [e] 4601 [e] 846 [e] 611 [e] 2385 [e] 3004 [e] 435 [e] 80 [e]  
**Meta de to sigēsai autous apekrithe Iakōbos legon Andres adelphoi**  
**13 Μετά δὲ τὸ σιγῆσαι αὐτοὺς , ἀπεκρίθη Ἰάκωβος , λέγων , Ἄνδρες , ἀδελφοί ,**  
**After now - were silent they answered James saying Men brothers**  
 Prep Conj Art-ANS V-ANA PPro-AM3P V-AIP-3S N-NMS V-PPA-NMS N-VMP N-VMP

181 [e] 1473 [e]  
**akousate mou**  
**ἀκούσατέ μου .**  
**hear me**  
 V-AMA-2P PPro-G1S

1125 [e] 1223 [e] 5495 [e] 846 [e] 3588 [e] 652 [e] 2532 [e] 3588 [e] 4245 [e] 80 [e] 3588 [e]  
**grapsantes dia cheiros autōn Hoi apostoloi kai hoi presbyteroi adelphoi Tois**  
**23 γράψαντες διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῶν : Οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι , ἀδελφοί , Τοῖς**  
**having written by [the] hand of them The apostles and the elders brothers To those**  
 V-APA-NMP Prep N-GFS PPro-GM3P Art-NMP N-NMP Conj Art-NMP Adj-NMP-C N-NMP Art-DMP

2596 [e] 3588 [e] 480 [e] 2532 [e] 4947 [e] 2532 [e] 2791 [e] 80 [e] 3588 [e] 1537 [e] 1484 [e] 5463 [e]  
**kata tēn Antiocheian kai Syrian kai Kilikian adelphois tois ex ethnōn Chairein**  
**κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν , ἀδελφοῖς τοῖς ἐξ ἔθνων : Χαίρειν .**  
**in - Antioch and Syria and Cilicia brothers - among the Gentiles Greetings**  
 Prep Art-AFS N-AFS Conj N-AFS Conj N-AFS N-DMP Art-DMP Prep N-GNP V-PNA

1894 [e] 191 [e] 3754 [e] 5100 [e] 1537 [e] 1473 [e] 1831 [e] 5015 [e] 4771 [e] 3056 [e] 384 [e] 3588 [e] 5580 [e]  
**Epeidē ekousamen hoti tines ex hēmōn exelthontes etaraxan hymas logois anaskeuazontes tas psychas**  
**24 Ἐπειδὴ ἠκούσαμεν ὅτι τινὲς ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξελθόντες ἐτάραξαν ὑμᾶς λόγοις , ἀνασκευάζοντες τὰς ψυχὰς**  
**Inasmuch as we have heard that some from us went out troubled you by words upsetting the minds**  
 Conj V-AIA-1P Conj IPro-NMP Prep PPro-G1P V-APA-NMP V-AIA-3P PPro-A2P N-DMP V-PPA-NMP Art-AFP N-AFP

4771 [e] 3004 [e] 4059 [e] 2532 [e] 5083 [e] 3588 [e] 3551 [e] 3739 [e] 3756 [e] 1281 [e]  
**hymōn legontes peritemnesthai kai tērein ton nomon hois ou diesteilametha**  
**ὑμῶν , λέγοντες περιτέμνεσθαι καὶ τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον, οἷς οὐ διεστείλαμεθα ,**  
**of you saying [you must] be circumcised and keep the law to whom not we had given instructions**  
 PPro-G2P V-PPA-NMP V-PNP Conj V-PNA Art-AMS N-AMS RelPro-DMP Adv V-AIM-1P

2. Acts 21:18
3. Galatians 1:19 – “
4. Galatians 2:9 – “
5. Galatians 2:12 – “

- d. Any other “James” that might be identified as an unknown James authoring this book is speculation based on total silence from scripture, tradition and history.
- e. The fact James does not identify himself with a descriptive title indicates he was well known and his readers did not wonder, “Which James wrote this to us?” It was clear it was James (the leader of the Jerusalem church, the brother of Jesus):
  - i. James, the son of Zebedee
  - ii. James, the son of Alphaeus
  - iii. James, the unknown
  - iv. James, from Syria

James 1:1 – “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2385 [e]	2316 [e]	2532 [e]	2982 [e]	2424 [e]	5547 [e]	1401 [e]	3588 [e]	1427 [e]	5443 [e]	3588 [e]
Iakōbos	Theou	kai	Kyriou	Iēsou	Christou	doulos	Tais	dōdeka	phylais	tais
1 Ἰάκωβος ,	Θεοῦ	καὶ	Κυρίου	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	δοῦλος ,	Ταῖς	δώδεκα	φυλαῖς	ταῖς
James	of God	and	of [the] Lord	Jesus	Christ	a servant	To the	twelve	tribes	-
N-NMS	N-GMS	Conj	N-GMS	N-GMS	N-GMS	N-NMS	Art-DFP	Adj-DFP	N-DFP	Art-DFP

1722 [e]	3588 [e]	1290 [e]	5463 [e]
en	tē	Diaspora	Chairein
ἐν	τῇ	Διασπορᾷ :	Χαίρειν .
in	the	Dispersion	Greetings
Prep	Art-DFS	N-DFS	V-PNA