

# JAMES: FAITH LIFT

## MEET JAMES

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**OPEN:** I want to introduce you to the book of James this morning and “tee” things up for our fall series (to begin September 9).

**James 1:1 (NLT)** – This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the “twelve tribes” – Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!

### 1) THE **AUTHOR.** *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

- The Holy Spirit would direct/guide James to give us these inspired words.
  - o Remember: **2 Peter 1:20-21 (NLT)** – <sup>20</sup>Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding <sup>21</sup>or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.
- ✓ The Spirit of God guided the mind, heart and hand of man giving us the very words of God.
- ✓ Words that bring life and shine light on the path we are to take.
- The man with the message – James (but which James)?
  - ✓ 4 men by the name of James are mentioned in the N.T., we can quickly dismiss two...
    - o James the lesser, (younger, shorter, “the little”), son of Alphaeus (one of the lesser known of the 12) (**Matthew 10:3, Mark 15:40, Acts 1:3**) meant to distinguish him from James (brother of John, son of Zebedee).
    - o James the Father of Judas (not Iscariot/the traitor) (**Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13**).

- The two more popular men by the name of James...the apostle (Peter, James, and John...made up the inner circle).
  - The problem with this man being the penman...he was the first of the apostles martyred (**Acts 12:2**) and would not have been around to write the book.
  - Which gives us our best option: James, the oldest half-brother of Jesus (**Mark 6:3** mentioned first in the list of four brothers).
- ✓ Yes, it is true, Joseph and Mary would go on to have other children.
- ✓ This truth is implied in the statement: **Matthew 1:25 (NLT)** - **But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born...until after her firstborn...**
- ✓ Like most couples living in their day, Joseph and Mary would have other children. **Matthew 13:55** and **Mark 6:3** would give us the names of the boys...**Mark 6:3 (NLT)** – **Then they scoffed, He’s just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. And His sisters live right here among us...**
- ✓ James would have the privilege (or pressure) of being raised in the same home with Jesus.
- ✓ Surprisingly, Scripture tells us of the unbelief of the brothers until some future event took place.

**John 7:2-5 (NLT)** - <sup>2</sup> But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, <sup>3</sup> and Jesus’ brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! <sup>4</sup> You can’t become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!” <sup>5</sup> For even His brothers didn’t believe in Him.

- ✓ Things we can conclude from Jesus’ childhood...he did what his parents told him, showed compassion, helped others, displayed wisdom, was sinless/perfect...why can’t you be like your brother?☺

- ✓ Though the apocryphal books credit Jesus for doing childhood miracles it is doubtful (else his brother would have believed)...**John 2:11** tells us that changing water into wine at Cana was the **beginning of His signs**.
- ❖ So, what was it that turned these skeptical unbelieving brothers into devoted followers?
  - Paul gives us the answer in **1 Corinthians 15:7 (NLT)** – **Then He was seen by James and later by all the apostles.**
    - ✓ James saw Jesus after His resurrection and he came to saving faith in Christ.
    - ✓ He became a key leader in the Jerusalem church (**Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18**).
    - ✓ He along with Peter and John were called pillars of the church.

**Galatians 2:9 (NLT)** - ...James, Peter and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me (Paul) as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles and they continued their work with the Jews.

- ✓ The apostles were frequently away preaching the gospel, James remained in Jerusalem and became the pre-eminent leader of the church...today we would call him the “senior pastor” or the lead pastor.
- ✓ He is seen presiding over the Jerusalem council (**Acts 15**) when the question came up: does a Gentile have to convert to Judaism after coming to Christ? Is it Jesus plus circumcision or is trusting in Jesus all that is required for salvation?
- ✓ Years later, when Paul returns from his third missionary journey, James is faithfully leading...

**Acts 21:17-19 (NLT)** - <sup>17</sup> When we arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed us warmly. <sup>18</sup> The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present. <sup>19</sup> After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry.

- James, a Jew, from the same home as Jesus, once he was sure that Jesus is Messiah...he was “all in”...committed, follower.
  - ✓ He became known as “James the Just” because of his devotion to righteousness.
  - ✓ He so believed in the power of prayer (which he addresses in Chapter 5) that his habit of kneeling in intercession caused his knees to become calloused like a camel...he was sometimes referred to as “the man with camel knees.”
  - ✓ According to Jewish historian, Josephus, James was martyred by the Scribes and Pharisees in AD 62.
    - He was thrown off the pinnacle of the Temple, but the fall did not kill him so he was beaten until dead with a club.
  
- Before I give you my second and final point...did you notice the caliber of individual he was (James 1:1).
  - ✓ This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.
  
- Of all the accolades, he might have used...James the son of Mary, brother of Jesus, Lead Pastor (Head) of the Jerusalem church...he simply referred to himself as a “bond servant” (doulos) of Jesus Christ.
  - ✓ The term is used to describe a slave who is under their master’s control.
  - ✓ We see humility and loyalty in this statement.
  - ✓ To be a “doulos” of God was considered a great honor in Jewish culture.
    - Such O.T. men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua...were described as God’s servants.
    - In the N.T. Paul, Peter, Timothy bore that title.
    - By referring to himself as such, James numbered himself with those honored not for who they were, but whom they served – the living God.

## 2) HIS AUDIENCE. *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

- He writes with authority having seen the resurrected Christ.
  - ✓ He addresses an even larger group than the Jerusalem church though it would have included them.
    - The 12 tribes would refer to the nation of Israel.
    - We think it to be the first of N.T. books written...(AD 44-49) just a decade after Jesus' ascension. 1<sup>st</sup> N.T. document.
    - They are scattered out because of persecution...their faith in Christ has brought them trials and difficulties.
    - James writes to help them navigate through this difficult time.
  - ✓ James doesn't beat around the bush, but is direct...his statements are reminiscent of Proverbs...wise living.
  - ✓ The book is very practical and if applied, will lead to godly living.
  - ✓ He is passionate and uncompromising in his call to obey God.
  - ✓ He seems to be comfortable with the outdoors...makes 30 references to nature (waves of sea, reptiles, rain, etc.)...you men will enjoy his no-nonsense approach.
- He doesn't contradict Paul's emphasis on "justification by faith" but demands that real faith works...not faith plus works but faith that works.

**CLOSE:** Maybe it's time for a little "faith lift"...a fresh coat of paint, an opportunity to look at the structural/spiritual integrity of your life...time to commit...to be all in like James.

Our lessons will include:

- 1) Pain and Problems.
- 2) Dealing with Temptations.
- 3) Faith Leads to Change.
- 4) Faith Leads to Action.
- 5) Taming the Tongue.
- 6) Becoming a Person of Prayer.

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