

# A STUDY OF JAMES (1)

## Introduction

# James - Background

- James is part of section of letters known as the **general epistles**. 7-8 letters (James – Jude, some include Hebrews)
- These are written by 4 (or 5) men, typically shorter letters (though no less important).
- They are addressed to more general audiences than Paul's letters

# James - Background

- **WHO** wrote this book?
- James was a common name. 4 have been suggested.
- James, the father of Judas – **Luke 6:14**. We know nothing of him
- James, the son of Alphaeus – **Luke 6:15**. He was an apostle, but little is recorded about him

# James - Background

- **WHO** wrote this book?
- James the brother of John & Son of Zebedee  
**Luke 6:14, Matthew 4:21, 10:2.**
- An apostle and one of Jesus' "inner circle".
- A possible author of this letter
- But he was executed ~44 AD—**Acts 12:2.**
- It is still possible, considering James was written to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad" (**Jas. 1:1, cf. Acts 8:4**)
- IF he is the author, this is the earliest NT letter

# James - Background

- **WHO** wrote this book?
- James the brother of Jesus (**cf. Matthew 13:55**)
- **John 7:5**, at first, they did not believe in Him
- But they became followers – **Acts 1:14**.
- James became a prominent leader in the church at Jerusalem – **Galatians 1:19**. Likely this is the same James we read of in **Acts 15:13 & Galatians 2:9**.
- I lean toward this James as the author.

# James - Background

- To **WHOM** was this book written?
- *The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*  
**James 1:1**
- Likely, his audience was primarily Jewish.  
**Acts 8:1-4, 26:7**
- They were likely struggling – facing trials and spiritual immaturity.  
As Jewish Christians – they faced problems with Gentiles and fellow Jews.

# James - Background

- **WHEN & WHERE** was this book written?
- We are not told, but IF either suggested James wrote this letter, it was probably from Judea
- Dating depends on who is the author.
  - John, brother of James – early 40s
  - John, brother of Jesus – later 40s-60s. Tradition holds he was executed ~64 AD.
- NOTES: 1) James does not deal with false doctrine;  
2) No mention of Jerusalem being destroyed.  
Any of the above-mentioned dates are plausible.

# James - Background

- **THE AUTHORITY** of the book of James
- We accept it as the inspired word of God.
- But it was *slow to be accepted*. 1 of 7 NT letters.
  - 1) Because of uncertainty of which James
  - 2) Not mentioned often by early church leaders
  - 3) Its emphasis on a works-based faith (**2:14-26**)
- NOTE: While slow to be accepted, this demonstrates the careful effort taken to ensure a letter belonged in the canon of scripture.

The book was NEVER outright rejected early.



# James - Background

- **THE PURPOSE** of the book of James
- James is writing to an audience that needed spiritual maturity.
- He addresses what life as a Christian ought to look like.
- Key verse(s) – **James 1:22**, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*  
**James 4:7**, *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

# James - Background

- **CHARACTERISTICS** of the book of James
- This is a book about living the Christian life. A good “beginners guide” for one young in the faith. Perhaps after suggesting a gospel and Acts

# James - Background

- **CHARACTERISTICS** of the book of James
- Dan King (Truth Commentaries) presents the following characteristics of this book
  1. James has an authoritative tone
  2. He does not include what we generally think of as “Christian doctrine.”

Jesus is only mentioned 2x - **James 1:1 & 2:1**

No mention of His incarnation, life, death & resurrection, etc.

BUT that is not his purpose

# James - Background

- **CHARACTERISTICS** of the book of James
- Dan King (Truth Commentaries) presents the following characteristics of this book
  3. James is eminently practical in its approach
  4. The letter is impersonal in nature
  5. James appreciates nature – taming animals, fresh & salt springs, fig trees, withering grass and flowers, etc.
  6. His teachings has similarities to the sermon on the mount. A chart with 28 markers of similarity is included in King's work.

# James - Background

- **CHARACTERISTICS** of the book of James
- Dan King (Truth Commentaries) presents the following characteristics of this book
  7. His writing is in the tradition of OT literature – Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Job
  8. It is written in a refined Greek style, with rich Greek vocabulary. There are many words in his letter not found elsewhere in the NT.

# James - Background

- Some subjects addressed in the book of James
- Finding joy and good as we face trials (**1:2-8**)
- Dealing with temptation (**1:12-18**)
- Be swift to hear & slow to speak (**1:19-20**)
- Be doers of the word (**1:21-27**)
- Do not show favoritism (**2:1-13**)
- What a living faith looks like (**2:14-24**)
- Controlling the tongue (**3:1-12**)

# James - Background

- Some subjects addressed in the book of James
- Heavenly wisdom vs. worldly wisdom (**3:13-18**)
- Pride and humility (**4:1-10**)
- Judging our brethren (**4:11-12**)
- Including God in your plans (**4:13-17**)
- Warnings to the rich (**5:1-6**)
- Patience (**5:7-12**)
- Prayer (**5:13-18**)
- Restoration of the erring (**5:19-20**)

## HOW does James apply to us?

- As you read through this book, it is clear his audience struggled with a number of issues in their personal lives and within churches.
- Looking at the subjects James addresses, we see how practical this book is for us today.
- We can ALL find something in this letter that we need to work on.
- While these subjects are diverse, they all fall under the heading of spiritual maturity. That maturity can help us grow both as individuals and as the Lord's body.



Let us examine this book with a desire to  
grow closer to God and each other

Let us pray!