

James, a Servant of Christ # 1

James 1:1

Tonight I want to begin our study in the book of James. I am convinced that a systematic study of the Word of God is beneficial for each of us, and the best way to do that is to take the time to study particular books or passages of the Bible verse by verse. We have just finished our study of Nehemiah and I felt led to spend some time going through the book of James. As we begin I would like to take a few moments to introduce the book.

➤ **The Author** - Clearly, through self acknowledgment, we find that James is the author of the book. He was the half-brother of our Lord, listed first in [Matthew 13:55](#), and perceived to be the eldest of Mary and Joseph's children. He encountered the risen Lord prior to His ascension, [1 Corinthians 15:7](#), and was among those who assembled in Jerusalem following the ascension, [Acts 1:14](#). He was a recognized as a leader among the early believers in Jerusalem according to [Acts 12:17](#) and [Galatians 1: 18-19](#).

➤ **The Time of its Writing and the Audience to whom it was written.** Many scholars agree that the book of James was the earliest of the New Testament writings, likely written somewhere around 45-50 AD. Our text reveals that it was written to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. We discover that it was a general epistle that was given to all believers in that day, regardless of their geographic location. The twelve tribes are mentioned, including all of the Israelite people, revealing the nature of the letter. We must keep in mind that the gospel had not been taken to the Gentiles yet nationally, and the church was made up largely of Hebrews that had received Christ as the Messiah.

Some would argue that there is no benefit for the church in the book of James, but I disagree with that line of thinking. This epistle was written to the early church, those who had received Christ as their Savior. They were born again of the same spiritual birth that we are and the truth that James reveals concerning the church is relevant and needful in our day as well.

➤ **The Purpose of James** – It appears that there were two main purposes for the writing of this epistle:

1. To address and confront a corrupt faith that was rapidly gaining momentum among the church. Many had professed Christ as Savior, and yet they were living immoral, unrighteous lives. Their faith appeared to be a mere profession with no real commitment. Many used their faith as a license to sin, with little or no restraint on their behavior.

2. To present the reality of genuine faith: a faith in Christ that was revealed for the world to see through fruit produced by the believer. James challenged the church to live out their faith for the world to see. He wanted the world to experience Christians who lived according to the Word of God and following the leadership of the Spirit. Apart from that, the world would see no difference in the Christian and those who denied Christ.

➤ **The Focus of James** – There are several features discovered in James that reveal the heart and focus of the book.

1. As mentioned, James is considered a *General Epistle*, given to the church at large, to all Christian believers.

2. It is also considered *The Epistle of the Royal Law*, emphasizing the necessity to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, [James 2: 8-12](#).

3. James is viewed by many as *The Epistle of Practical Living*. He focuses on the life of the believer after salvation, emphasizing the need for spiritual growth and maturity. He deals with many areas concerning the ethical aspects of Christian life.

4. Some also view James as *The Proverb of the New Testament*, due to its general exhortations and admonitions in everyday Christian living.

➤ **The Emphasis on Christ in James**

▪ His equality with God: [James 1:1 – James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.](#)

▪ Christ is the Lord of Glory: [James 2:1 – My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.](#)

▪ The Lord's Coming is at Hand: [James 5:7-8 – Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. \[8\] Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.](#)

▪ The Authority and Power of Jesus' Name: [James 5:10 – Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.](#)

➤ **Key Verses:** James 1:22 – But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. James 2:17 – Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. As we will discover in our study, these are not advocating a “works based salvation,” but the importance of living out our faith and serving the Lord according to the dictates of His Word. I trust that our time in this precious book will challenge us to be doers of the Word and live abundantly for the Lord.

Now that we have taken the time to introduce the book of James, let’s consider the **credentials** that James possesses as we think on: **James, a Servant of Christ.**

I. His Person (1) – James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. We have already mentioned that James was the brother of Christ our Lord, but let’s take a moment to consider a few of the biblical references that confirm this.

Mat.13:55 – Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? Mark 6:3 – 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.

▪ In fairness I must admit that there is some debate as to whether this James was actually the brother of Christ. We know that James was a popular name in that day. One of the disciples was James, the brother of John. Most scholars agree, as do I, that this was in fact, James the brother of Jesus. He does not mention that in the text, and I am convinced that it was purposely left out. We will deal with that in a moment. However, at this time James the brother of Jesus was well known among the church. He was accepted and viewed as a leader among the brethren, Acts 12:17, Gal.1:18-19. Had he been another James, other than the one recognized as a leader among the people and the Lord’s brother, it seems he would have needed to clarify his identity.

II. His Salvation – James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here James simply identifies himself as a servant of the Lord. On the surface that may seem insignificant, but in reality it reveals the spiritual state of James. The word servant in the text comes from the Greek word *doulos* and literally means “a bond slave.” It reveals that James recognized Jesus as his master.

▪ We have already established that James was the brother of Jesus, but that physical relationship did not guarantee a right spiritual relationship. In fact the brothers of Jesus were very reluctant to accept Him as the Messiah. They had grown up with Him, watched His behavior and actions, surely recognizing that there was something very special about Him, but for whatever reason they were reluctant to believe on Him as the Christ. John 7:5 – For neither did his brethren believe in him.

- Sometime after the resurrection of Jesus, James came to a saving knowledge of Christ and accepted Him as the Messiah. We find Him in the upper room in Jerusalem after the ascension. [Acts 1:14 – These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.](#) Jesus Himself appeared to James after the resurrection. [1 Cor.15:7 – After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.](#) We don't know exactly when James experienced salvation, but he has clearly received Christ as his Savior and recognized Him as Lord.
- We discover a simple and yet profound truth in the opening comments of James: one must have a personal relationship with Christ through salvation in Him if we are to be His servant. We must come to the realization that He is Lord and that we need His grace in our lives!

I. His Person

II. His Salvation

III. His Submission – [James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.](#) James identified himself as the servant of Christ. There is no mention of his physical relationship to the Lord. He is not seeking to gain advantage due to the fact that he was raised in the same home as Christ. He is not arrogant or proud at all; he is simply humbled and grateful that he too had the opportunity of salvation. He is happy just to be a servant of the Son of God. He is happy to be used of his Lord and desires to be of service of Him.

- We need the heart and attitude of James in that regard. Many today are willing to labor if they receive “proper” recognition. Many want to be identified according to their association or relationship to other men. We need those who are happy to submit to the authority and lordship of Christ. We need those who are willing to serve at the leisure of the Master. [Luke 5:8 – When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.](#) [Ephes.3:8 – Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;](#)

IV. His Position – [James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.](#) It is interesting to note that there is no mention of his position among the brethren. James doesn't seek to portray himself as anything other than a servant, a slave, of the Lord. Surely he was recognized and appreciated for the leadership he provided among the church, but in light of service to Christ, all of that paled in comparison. James is actually saying that he has nothing to boast in other than his relationship and submission to the Lord of glory.

- It is sad to see the state of affairs among the church today. Many are jockeying for position and seeking a place of recognition and applause. The work of the Lord and service to Him has taken a back seat in the lives of many. They seem to be more concerned with how they are perceived than actually being of service unto the Lord. May we ever be humble and grateful for the precious opportunity we have to serve the risen Lord. I have nothing to boast of today other than the gracious gift that I have received of Christ. All that I am or ever hope to be rests in Him! [Gal.6:14 – But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.](#)

I. His Person

II. His Salvation

III. His Submission

IV. His Position

V. His Compassion (1) – [James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.](#) It didn't take long for persecution to come to the church. Many of the early believers faced intense persecution for their faith. At this point most of the believers were Hebrews and they were greatly ostracized for abandoning the synagogues and the dictates of the law. This persecution caused many of them to flee Jerusalem into other areas. James was concerned for the well being of the church as a whole, not just those who remained in Jerusalem. He sought to challenge and encourage all who had received Christ as Lord. He wanted to exhort them to remain steadfast in the faith, resisting the temptation to embrace the doctrines of the legalists.

- That presents a challenge to us as well. I know we are aware that the church is much greater than our local body of believers, but are we genuinely concerned for the entire church as we should be. We are blessed beyond measure to live where we do. Although I fear that the lack of persecution creates a sense of apathy and lack of concern. But, we must be mindful of others who are facing intense persecution for their faith. There are Christians in hiding tonight for fear of their lives. Many fear to openly speak of their faith. Even in America, there are churches that are facing real struggles. We are blessed to enjoy the harmony we have. We are blessed to have the resources that God has given us. Are we doing all we can to pray for and support the work of the church? Do we possess the compassion and concern that the Lord desires of us?

VI. His Salutation – James offers a greeting to all who will read this epistle. That is not unusual. The word translated [greeting](#) has the same idea as “Hello!” It is translated over 70 times in the New Testament as simply a greeting of hello. It is also translated over 60 times as [rejoice](#).

Apparently it was a word that held both meanings. It appears that early on in his greeting, James sought to encourage the church and challenge them to ponder the abundant blessings of God. They may have faced persecution and been forced to leave the homes they knew, but even then there was reason to rejoice.

- We too need to be reminded of our blessings and challenged to rejoice in them. We have all faced difficulty in the recent past, and many continue to struggle, but even in the face of our adversity, there is reason to rejoice. The child of God ought to have a song of praise and rejoicing at all times. This world will likely grow darker and present tougher challenges, but the saved have the assurance of a better day when this life is through. Regardless of what we face or endure in this life, God is still good and He will always care for His own!

I pray that we can all relate to James this evening. Most importantly I trust that we can all identify as a servant of the Lord. The only way we can serve the Lord is to belong to Him, having placed our faith and trust in Him through salvation. Also for those who are servants of Christ, I hope that we are submitted to Him as James was. I pray that He is our priority and our desire. I hope that we have a genuine compassion and concern for the church, and are willing to do all we can to further the gospel message, reaching the lost for Christ.