

## James The Brother Of Jesus

'Is this not the carpenter's Son? His mother is Mary and his brothers are James, Joses, Simon and Judah and all of His sisters are here with us' (Matthew 13:55 & 56).

'Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of (Jesus), James and Joses, and (Salome) the mother of the sons of Zebedee' (Matthew 27:56).

'Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Judah and Simon? Are His sisters not here with us?" (Mark 6:3).

'There were women watching from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of (Jesus), Joses and James the Younger, and Salome' (Mark 15:40).

In the New Testament there are four disciples named James but this study is specifically about the younger brother of Jesus. Jesus' brother James was nicknamed James the Younger, or James the Less. Perhaps he was the youngest son in the family. He would have been known as James ben Joseph, or James the son of Joseph. Jesus' cousins James and John were the sons of Zebedee and Salome. Salome was Mary's sister. It was Jesus' cousin John who took Mary home to care for her at Jesus' gentle request. 'When Jesus saw His mother and (John) the disciple whom He loved standing there, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to John, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour, John took Mary to his own home' (John 19:26 & 27).

The role of caring for Mother should have been taken by Jesus' brothers but at the time of Jesus' death, they were not believers. 'His brothers said to him, "Depart from here and go into Judea so Your disciples may see Your works, for no one does anything in secret when they seek to be known openly. If You must do these things, reveal Yourself to the world." For even His own brothers did not believe in Him. Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready' (John 7:3 to 6).

It was not until Jesus' resurrection when His brothers finally came to realise Who He was then they were instantly committed to Him. 'All the disciples with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers' (Acts 1:14). From the day of Jesus' resurrection, His brothers believed and grew in the Lord. Joses and Simon were not heard from again. Judah who wrote the Book of Jude, and James who wrote the Book of James. 'Jude, a servant of Jesus and brother of James ... (Jude 1:1). The apostle James was not called James until the British King James commissioned the whole Bible be translated into English in 1611 from where we get the original King James version. In deference to the British King, all references to the name Jacob in the New Testament were changed to James. Before that time, the Book of James was known as the Book of Jacob, or in Hebrew, the Book of Yaakov.

James had the wisdom of the Lord. He helped settle a dispute about the salvation of Gentiles and he seemed to have an authoritative stance because when he commanded the other apostles to be quiet and listen, they did just that. 'After they were silent James answered, "Brothers, listen to me" (Acts 15:13). James became an elder and leader of the early church and was involved with the Jerusalem Council. 'The following day, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present' (Acts 21:18). Jews and Gentiles alike used to gather in the synagogues to hear the Word of God preached (Acts 18:4) and James mentions the synagogue as the meeting place (James 2:2).

Paul had a very high regard for James, almost like a modern teenager looks up to a celebrity with the 'wow' factor. Paul acknowledged James was a brother to Jesus and was one of the 'pillars' of the new covenant. James befriended Paul after his dramatic conversion, then in turn Paul almost debased himself. 'Jesus appeared to James then to all the apostles, and last of all, to the child born at the wrong time, He appeared to me also' (1 Corinthians 15:7 & 8). 'Of the other apostles I saw no one except James, the Lord's brother' (Galatians 1:19). 'When the apostles perceived the grace that was given to me (Paul), James, Peter and John who were reputed to be pillars, gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship so we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews' (Galatians 2:9). Paul rebuked Peter for hypocrisy but was careful to mention James had not been involved with Barnabas and Peter's wrongdoing. 'When Peter came to Antioch I resisted him to his face because he stood condemned, for before some people came from James, Peter ate with the Gentiles, but when the Jews came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the Jews. The rest

of the Jews joined Peter in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy' (Galatians 2:11 to 13).

James was full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, lived a holy life and was an example to us all. The Book of James is a manual to holy living written circa 46 to 48 AD. When we struggle with our humanity and need some sound advice, we only need to turn to the Book of James for guidance. James grew up with Jesus so he would have seen for himself a Godly life that reflected the character, nature and image of God the Father. The Book of James strongly reflects the Hebraic roots of the Gospel message and the Lordship of Jesus over the new faith which was called The Way (Acts 19:23). The epistle was written to people living outside Israel. James felt there was no excuse for their faith to be weak regardless of location or circumstances and as followers of Jesus they had to show their faith by serving Him. They could not continue living a life of sin and carnality but had to show fruit of righteousness.

The first thing James said when he wrote his epistle, after his salutation, he minimised how people felt about suffering, telling them to endure trials with patience, without wavering or complaining. He said they would be blessed when their faith was being tried and promised a reward in heaven for all those who endured and overcame temptation to sin. James goes on to tell people how to live practical, holy lives. In this epistle there are over fifty commands to help people distinguish between someone who practices empty religion and a genuine Godly believer. James speaks of the essence of genuine religion, genuine faith and true wisdom from God and how to attain all three. He teaches on faith with works, humility, Godly living with social responsibilities, giving from the heart, spiritual growth, loving God and each other, which all echo his big brother Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5 to 7). That shows the deep love between the brothers, even though Jesus is mentioned only twice in the whole epistle. The reason for not talking about Jesus as being his Brother is obvious – it would seem to be showing off. Instead, James humbled himself and said he was a servant of Jesus (1:1) and told people not to practice their faith in the Lord Jesus with snobbery (2:1). As a Jewish man, James knew the Old Testament and taught life's lessons from there. 'You shall not show partiality in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be afraid of the face of man (be intimidated by someone); for the judgment is God's' (Deuteronomy 1:17). 'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor, nor show favouritism to the great, but you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness' (Leviticus 19:15). James said partiality was sin but we should love one another equally and not judge by outward appearances or wealth.

James expounds on more instruction in the Old Testament. He warns people to guard their tongues because we can bless or curse someone with the same tongue and he says, "These things ought not be so" (James 3:10). 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit' (Proverbs 18:21). 'You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people; neither shall you stand against the life of your neighbour. I am the Lord' (Leviticus 19:16). James went into detail explaining the effects of an unruly tongue and tells people to bring peace by what they say (James chapter 3).

In chapter four, James encourages people to lean on the Lord for everything as taught in the Old Testament. 'In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths' (Proverbs 3:6). Trying to be self-sufficient and independent of God is to be rebellious. We need to know and obey the will of God at all times and we need to have the right motives. To acknowledge the Lord in everything means to intimately know Him and His will for our lives. This intimacy is more than accepting God is in heaven somewhere, it a deep emotional attachment to the One Who gives us breath. Without breath, we die; without the Lord, we die. If we show off or boast, that is sin and if we see a need and do not try to meet the need, then that is sin too. 'You glory in your boasting. All such boasting is evil. To them who knows to do good and does not do it, to them it is sin' (James 4:16 & 17). In this chapter, James gave us a very, very simple direction how to overcome the devil. 'Be subject to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). How easy is that? The condition that we have the authority to resist the devil and can tell him to flee is we must submit ourselves to God in every area of our lives.

James gives us the ultimate merge of faith and works. Genuine faith must produce good works. 'Be doers of the Word and not only hearers deluding yourselves, for if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking in a mirror and goes away immediately forgetting what kind of man he is. He who looks into the perfect law of freedom and continues, not being a hearer who forgets, but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in what he does' (James 1:22 to 25). 'For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead' (James 2:26). We are saved by the grace of God and by faith (Ephesians 2:8), but once we are saved we must dedicate our lives to serving God (James 2:14 to 26). If there are no works, fruit or outward sign of the Spirit of God, then there is no genuine relationship with the Lord. Jesus

inferred, if we love Him we would willingly keep His commandments (John 14:15). Our faith does not contradict good works, but rather our faith encourages us to do good works. It is a genuine joy to serve the Lord and see the fruit of our labours. 'You will eat the labour of your hands. You will be happy and it will be well with you' (Psalm 128:2).

As Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). James goes all out to rebuke with severity the greed of the wealthy who it seems, was behind the call for Jesus to be crucified. 'Come now you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming on you ... you have murdered the Righteous One' (James 5:1 & 6). He goes on in that vein for six verses, then turns suddenly to comfort those who have suffered. He teaches about Godly living and healing the sick, then he encourages everyone by saying we are equal to Elijah, so if Elijah could do outstanding miracles, so should we! 'Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. He prayed again, the sky gave rain and the earth brought forth its fruit' (James 5:17 & 18).

James was killed by religious Jews about 63 AD. When James was martyred, his followers who had previously adored him, turned against him and disappeared into history. The Hellenistic Christians disregarded the Hebraic influence in the Book of James so this book was not accepted as part of the Bible until much later than other epistles. James has the last word; 'Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from eternal death and will cover a multitude of sins' (James 5:20).

Amen and God bless you.

[www.bibleabookoftruth.com](http://www.bibleabookoftruth.com)