

# JAMES 1

A STUDY THROUGH THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

## The Epistle of James

**James 1:1**



## According to Homer Kent:

The Epistle of James is almost certainly “the oldest surviving epistolary glimpse into Jewish Christianity” and “shows us what the earliest Christian churches were like, what problems they grappled with, and what solutions were appropriate.”

# Today's Outline: James

**1. When?**

**2. Who?**

**3. To Whom?**

**4. Why?**

**5. What?**

# When Was the Letter Written?

- According to Josephus, James died in 62 A.D., so clearly, no later.
- The Jerusalem Council took place in 49 A.D., and since this epistle is addressed to the “twelve tribes,” it indicates a church made up of Jewish believers.
- I would argue (as does tradition) that James was the first inspired epistle of the NT, and it was written in 45 A.D.

# An Interesting Observation

- There are also many allusions to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.
- The margin of the Nestle Greek Testament version of James identifies 38 references to statements in Matthew.
- Which would indicate that Matthew was also composed early, a position I would wholeheartedly affirm.

# Evidence for Early Dating

1. **Poor vs rich within the assembly**
2. Simple ecclesiastical organization
3. **An eager expectancy of Christ's return**
4. **No hint of the Jewish-Gentile controversy that Paul so often deals with**

James 1:1

1 James (Ἰάκωβος), a  
bond-servant of God and  
of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
To the twelve tribes who  
are dispersed abroad:  
Greetings.

# Modern Liberal “Scholarship”

Contends that James was not written by James at all, and it was a forgery because of its “obvious” contradictions with Paul’s theology.

Let’s Talk for a Moment about  
Canon.

# Authorship: Potential Candidates

1. James, the son of Zebedee
2. James, the son of Alphaeus
3. James, the brother of the Lord

There is a mild amount of controversy about which James authored the epistle, however, in mainstream evangelical scholarship, the matter is largely settled.

# Examining the Candidates

✘ James, the son of Zebedee

- Killed by Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D.  
(Acts 12:2)

✘ James, the son of Alphaeus

- Does not figure prominently in the  
NT

😊 James, the brother of the Lord

**Before We Get To The Evidence**

**Why the  
Controversy over  
Authorship?**



# James, the brother of Jesus

- Mentioned among the brothers of Jesus in the gospels (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3)
- Probably the eldest after Jesus
- Presumably still a member of the family when Jesus moves the family to Capernaum (Matt. 4:13)
- Along with Mary and his brothers, James tried to visit Jesus and thought him mad (Mark 3:21-35)
- Less than a year before the crucifixion, he remained an unbeliever (John 7:3-5)

# James, the Brother of Jesus

- One of the preeminent witnesses of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:7)
- Among the disciples awaiting the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:14)
- When Peter was released from prison, he requested that James be alerted (Acts 12:2-17)
- James is the lead elder (bishop) of the church at Jerusalem, and he oversees the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23-29)
- James affirms the results of Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 21:18-19)
- Paul calls him a "pillar" of the church (Gal. 2:9)

# Extra-Biblical Sources

- **From Eusebius (quoting Hegesippus):**

“James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day...And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people.

# Eusebius on James' Death

“Leading him into their midst they demanded of him that he should renounce faith in Christ in the presence of all the people. But, contrary to the opinion of all, with a clear voice, and with greater boldness than they had anticipated, he spoke out before the whole multitude and confessed that our Saviour and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. But they were unable to bear longer the testimony of the man who, on account of the excellence of ascetic virtue and of piety which he exhibited in his life, was esteemed by all as the most just of men, and consequently they slew him. Clement...records that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club.”

# Claim to Apostleship

- Rom. 1:1 – “Paul...called to be an apostle...”
- 1 Cor. 1:1 – “Paul, called...to be an apostle...”
- 2 Cor. 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle...”
- Gal. 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle...”
- Eph. 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle...”
- Col. 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle...”
- 1 Tim. 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle...”
- 2 Tim. 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle...”
- Titus 1:1 – “Paul...an apostle...”
- 1 Pet. 1:1 – “Peter, an apostle...”
- 2 Pet. 1:1 – “Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle...”

# Luke 1:1-4

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

# The Lord's Brothers Both Start:

- James 1:1 – “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...”
- Jude 1:1 – “Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James”

# James 1:1 & Acts 15:23

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

23 The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

In Short...

Throughout the New Testament and extrabiblical literature, no other James looms as large within the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

James 1:1

**1 James, a bond-servant  
of God and of the Lord  
Jesus Christ, To the twelve  
tribes who are dispersed  
abroad: Greetings.**

# That Word Again: *doulos*

- Undoubtedly the background for the concept of being the Lord's slave or servant is to be found in the Old Testament scriptures, and for a Jew this concept did not connote drudgery, but honor and privilege.
- It was used of national Israel at times, like in Isaiah 43:10 –  
“You are My witnesses,” declares the Lord, “And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He...”

# 4 Implications of *doulos*

## 1. It implies absolute obedience.

- Slaves know no law but their master's word; they have no rights of their own; they are the absolute possessions of their master; and they are bound to give their master unquestioning obedience.

## 2. It implies absolute humility.

- It is the word of someone who thinks not of privileges but of duties, not of rights but of obligations. It is the word of someone who has lost all sense of self in the service of God.

## 3. It implies absolute loyalty.

- It is the word of someone who has no self-interest, because whatever is done is done for God. Personal gain and preference do not enter into the calculations; all loyalty is to God.

And Yet...

*Doulos* implies a certain pride.

Far from being a title of dishonor, it was the title by which the greatest ones of the Old Testament were known.

# *Doulos of God*

- **Moses** (1 Kings 8:53; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4)
- **Joshua** (Joshua 24:29)
- **Caleb** (Numbers 14:24)
- **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** (Deut. 9:27)
- **Job** (Job 1:8)
- **Isaiah** (Isaiah 20:3)
- **Amos, Zechariah, and Jeremiah** (Amos 3:7; Zechariah 1:6; Jeremiah 7:25)

# “servant” or “bondservant”

- Underestand, the word does not bear the connotation of a free individual serving another.
- The use of “servant” instead of “slave” is largely confined to more modern Biblical translations.
- “Bondservant” is accurate, in that it indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another, however our modern understanding is often skewed.

# *A doulos* of Christ

- Romans 1:1 – “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle...”
- 2 Peter 1:1 – “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ”
- Jude 1:1 – “Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James”
  - Only James and Jude refer to themselves as bondservants, only.

# Servant Leadership

Is not the favored model in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
century.

But since an attitude of service is what  
distinguishes biblical leadership, there  
is no contradiction between service and  
leadership.

This was James.

# Why Not “brother of Jesus?”

- He evidently purposed not to know Jesus after the flesh but only as his Lord and God, and being a bond-servant of God was his most important relationship.
- George M. Stulac writes,  
“It is only his servanthood to the Lord Jesus Christ that matters to him here, for this is the theme of his letter: How shall we live as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

# Recipients

**“To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad”**

- The Greek term διασπορά (diaspora, “dispersion”) refers to Jews not living in Palestine but “dispersed” or scattered among the Gentiles.
- So, the recipients of the letter were Jewish Christians of the Diaspora, Jews who had scattered from Palestine and had come to faith in Christ.

# A Jewish Audience

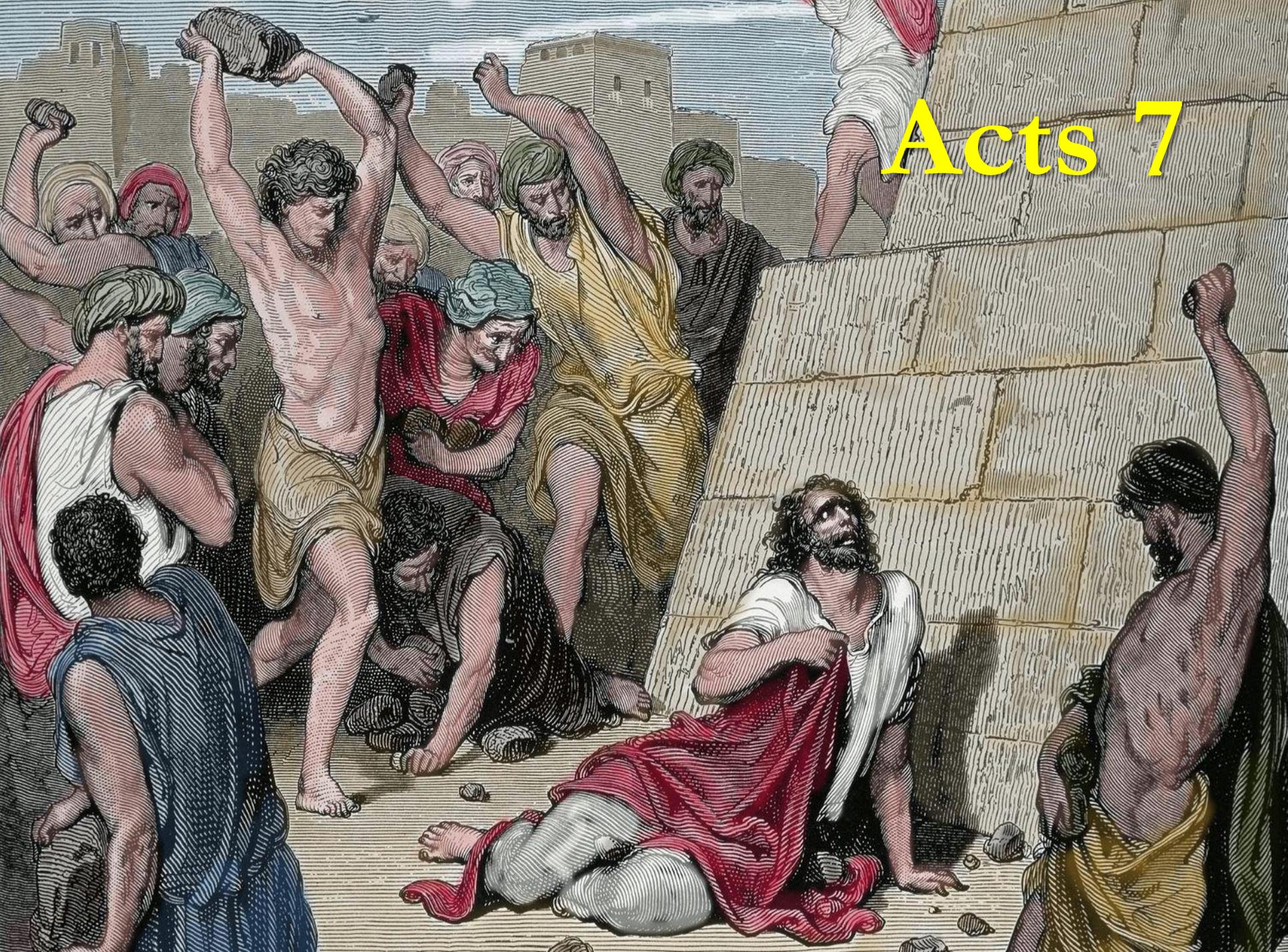
- James alludes to over 20 Old Testament books and many Old Testament characters, including Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah as well as the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses.
- One commentator observed that this book “has a more Jewish cast than any other writing of the New Testament.”
- There are many references to nature, which was characteristic of the Jewish rabbis’ teaching in James’ day and the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

# “Jewishness” of the Epistle

- 2:2 – “For if a man comes into your assembly (synagōgē) with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes...”
- 2:21 – “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?”
- 5:4 – “...and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”

Why Were  
They  
Scattered?

# Acts 7



# Acts 8:1, 3-4

1 And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles... 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

# Acts 11:19-20

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

## Acts 12:1-3

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

# As the Elder in Jerusalem

- Those believers scattered throughout the Diaspora were his sheep, and therefore, this letter is entirely appropriate.
- In addition, the heavily Jewish makeup of the church brought a different hope in the dispersion than a Gentile believer would understand.

# Deuteronomy 30:1-4

1 “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, 2 and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you.”

# Jeremiah 30:3, 11

3 For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.”

11 For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end...

**One More**

**Turn to Ezekiel 37:19-24**

## And Later, Galatians 3:7-9

7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

# J. Alec Moyter said:

“As soon as we read through the letter of James we say to ourselves, ‘This man was a preacher before he was a writer.’”

- Another commentator wrote:

“In style it reminds one now of the Proverbs, now of the stern denunciations of the prophets, now of the parables in the Gospels.”

# James is Less Theology

**And More Practicality.**

There is a large number of imperatives in the letter, about one for every two verses.

**There are many figures of speech and analogies, probably more than in all of Paul's epistles.**

In other words, James is preaching to his people!

# A Little Theology...

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

James is affirming the deity of Jesus Christ; one possible interpretation is “of Jesus Christ who is God and Lord.”

# “of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”

- In 2:1 (ESV), James references “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory”
- In 3:9, James says that with our tongue, “we bless our Lord and Father.”

James is also exalting both God the Father and Christ the Lord; in serving Christ as Lord, James served God the Father.

# Let's Review

## 1. When?

- Circa 45 A.D. (1<sup>st</sup> NT epistle)

## 2. Who?

- James, the half-brother of Jesus

## 3. To Whom?

- The early church scattered in the diaspora

## 4. Why?

- An elder writing to his flock.

## 5. What?

- Practical solutions for early church problems.

# Issues Covered in James

**Trials and Suffering**  
Evil and Temptations  
**Authentic Religion**  
Loving Others  
**Faith**  
The Tongue  
**Wisdom**  
Conflict  
**Justice**  
Prayer

**And Believe It or Not...**

**Many of these same problems exist today.**

**And in the coming months, James will teach, preach, exhort, rebuke, and correct us in our approach to the local church in 2018 at PBC.**

