

# Introducing James

Lesson for Sunday, September 24, 2023

## INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ What are some of the difficult questions about the Christian faith do we often have to wrestle with? *Allow for discussion...*
  - Example: Why do bad things happen to good people?
  - Example: How does what the Bible teaches mesh with science?
- ⇒ A big question that many often wrestle with is: What is the relationship between faith and works?
  - How would you answer that question? *Allow for discussion but don't look to correct anything...*
- ⇒ The good news: We have an entire book of the Bible dedicated to this question. It is the book of James and today we begin our study through this highly practical book.
- ⇒ Today we are going to introduce the book. Let's begin by reading the very first verse (1:1).

## BIBLE STUDY:

1. The Man James
  - a. What do you know about the author of this book?
    - i. *Allow for discussion to see what they know...*
    - ii. Tip: Bring some resources for the class to look through on their own to learn more about James.
  - b. There is a lot to learn about the human author of this book. Let's see what we can learn about James from the pages of Scripture itself.
  - c. James was the half-brother of Jesus.
    - i. See Matthew 13:55 & Mark 6:3
    - ii. Briefly discuss: What perspective should this fact alone give to James as he writes?
  - d. James was an unbeliever for most of Jesus's earthly life.
    - i. See John 7:5 (interestingly this was prophesied about in Psalm 69:8)
  - e. It appears that James became a believer after the resurrection.
    - i. See 1 Corinthians 15:7 – notice that Paul lists James specifically
    - ii. By the ascension, James is now with that early group of believers (see Acts 1:14).
  - f. James became the main leader in the early Jerusalem church.
    - i. See Paul's reference in Galatians 2:9
    - ii. Paul actually refers to James as an apostle in Galatians 1:19.
    - iii. James is recognized early in Acts 12:17 as a leader in Jerusalem.
    - iv. James presides over the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:13ff & is still leading in Acts 21:18-19.
  - g. That is who the Bible says James was. Interestingly, that is not how James introduces himself in today's text.
    - i. He describes himself as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."
    - ii. The word "servant" is *doulos* which means slave.
  - h. James had come a long way since John 7:5! Henry Morris wrote, "It is a fascinating testimony to God's grace that James, who had been an unbelieving brother of Jesus, was chosen to write the first inspired book to believing Jews,

*and Paul, the chief persecutor of the early church, was chosen to write the first epistle to believing Gentiles.” Amazing grace!*

## 2. The Book of James

- a. Verse 1 tells us that James is writing to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.”
  - i. This is a reference to the Jewish converts who had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire due to their persecution (see Acts 8:1).
  - ii. James was writing as a concerned pastor to his flock that had been spread out and needed encouragement and instruction.
- b. Historians tell us that the book of James was probably the earliest written epistle – even before Paul began writing (probably between 40-43 AD).
  - i. The Christian faith was still very new and James recognized that these young Christian converts needed some written guidelines as they were growing in their new faith.
  - ii. James’s approach is more moral than it is theological. James is dealing with the nuts and bolts of basic Christian living.
- c. The theme verse is James 1:22 (read).
  - i. Throughout the book, James will stress the necessity of good works as evidence of saving faith.
  - ii. At the same time, James is very clear that works themselves do not suffice for salvation.

## 3. The Reason for James

- a. There are two primary reasons to study this wonderful book of James.
- b. First, we need to examine the relationship between faith and works.
  - i. James uses the word “faith” 14 times in just 5 chapters.
  - ii. He also provides 59 commands that we should obey.
  - iii. His point is that genuine faith acts. Or, as we refer to this series, FAITH WORKS.
  - iv. We live in a day where as soon as you talk about works someone will cry, “Legalism!”
  - v. Many today will say that Christianity is not about doing this and doing that. James says, “Yes, it is!”
  - vi. We are not to just listen to the Word. We are to do it. If you don’t, your faith is dead.
- c. Second, we need to explore the impact of our faith on life in this world.
  - i. James is very practical! He is teaching that what we believe ought to impact the way we behave!
  - ii. Our faith is intended to impact every aspect of life, which ought to inevitably impact the lives around us.

### APPLICATION:

- ⇒ Challenge your class to memorize one keystone verse from each chapter of James. If you learn these verses, you will understand the heart of James. The verse from chapter 1 should be a familiar one, James 1:22.
- ⇒ Second, challenge your class to dive into the book of James. Encourage them to read it often and study it for themselves.