



Epistle of James

James Introduction/Overview

- Outline for today's lesson on the *Epistle of James*:
 - Which James was this?
 - When was the epistle written?
 - Divine origin questioned?
 - Who was the audience?
 - Topics to be addressed, i.e., faith vs. works; are there more?
- Sources of information:
 - Mackintosh CH (1820–1896); Final Perseverance: What is it?
 - McCalley, Book of James; <http://www.wordoftruthkc.org/>
 - Constable, James Commentary: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/constable-commentary-bible-commentaries-with-kjv-verses/id990922736>
 - Tasker RVG, The General Epistle of James, Tyndale NT Commentaries; 1957
 - Manton, James: Geneva Banner of Truth, 1693; last printing 1982



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- Outline for today's lesson on the *Epistle of James*:
 - **Which James was this?**
 - James the son of Zebedee
 - *Matt 4:21 - Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, **James the son of Zebedee**, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them,*
 - James the son of Alphaeus who is sometimes called the “less” because of either his stature or his age.
 - *Matt 10:3 - Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; **James the son of Alphaeus**, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;*
 - James the father of Judas
 - *Luke 6:16 - **Judas the son of James**, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.*
 - The author of this letter is James, Jesus' half-brother ,
 - *Matt 13:55 - “Is this not the carpenter's son? **Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joseph Simon, and Judas?***
 - *Gal 1:9 - But I saw none of the other apostles **except James, the Lord's brother.***
 - Like the other disciples, James was not a believer during the public ministry of Jesus, but he was a witness to the resurrection.
 - *I Cor 15:7 - After that **He was seen by James**, then by all the apostles.*
 - James also joined the followers of Jesus after the resurrection.



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- *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 brothers.*
- Subsequently, after the Jerusalem Church Council, James is seen as the leader of the Jerusalem church (*Acts 15:13-21*).
 - *Acts 15:13 - And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me:*
- **When was the epistle written?**
 - It is estimated that this letter was probably written between A.D. 45-48, making it one of the first books of the New Testament.
 - Josephus said that James died in A.D. 62, during the high priesthood of Ananus, so he must have written the letter before then.
 - Many commentators believe that James' lack of reference to the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 suggests he wrote this before that meeting.
 - Constable claims that this is a very tenuous argument since the issues James dealt with in this epistle are different from those the Jerusalem Council discussed.
 - Many scholars have taken James' lack of references or allusions to other inspired New Testament epistles as additional support for this position.
 - But others, e.g., Sunday prefers a later date (~A.D. 60) claiming ‘that the distinctive doctrines of Christianity were presupposed’ and thematically the epistle addresses the misinterpretation of justification by faith of Paul in the epistle to the Romans (A.D. 52).



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– **Divine origin questioned?**

- Those, i.e., Dibelius maintains that the **epistle is pseudonymous** (without known authorship) and dates the epistle later, from the late first to mid-2nd century.
- Manton quoting Eusebius – ‘And these things concerning James, whose epistle that is reported to be, which is the first among the epistles called universal; yet we are to understand that the same is not void of suspicion, **for many of the ancients make no mention thereof, nor of Jude, being also one of the seven called universal;** yet notwithstanding we know them to be publicly read in most churches.’
- Manton quoting Jerome – ‘James wrote but one epistle, which is also said to be put forth by another in his name, though **by little and little in process of time it gained authority in the church.**’
- **Luther plainly rejected it** – ‘This epistle, though not owned by many of the ancients, I judge to be full of profitable and precious matter, it **offering no doctrine of a human invention, strongly urging the law of God; yet, in my opinion (which I would speak without prejudice), it seemeth not to be written by any apostle;** which was the error and failing of this holy and eminent servant of God; and therein he is followed by others of his own profession,’
- But all of these are interpretations by man, and we have the comfort in trusting that the Lord as the author of His Word!
 - *2 Tim 3:16 - All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*



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- *Heb 4:12 - For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*
- *Heb 6:18 - So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because **it is impossible for God to lie**.....*
- **Who was the audience?**
 - McCalley – ‘The word dispersed was a technical term for the diaspora, or the **Jews who had been scattered among the Gentile population** and did not live in Palestine. They were therefore exposed to both **gentile persecution** and gentile conduct. That the twelve tribes are mentioned shows that Israel has never ceased to be a distinguishable entity in the sight of God,’
 - *James 1:1,2 - James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, **To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad**: Greetings. My brethren, count it all joy when you **fall into various trials**,*
 - *James 2:6 - But you have dishonored the poor man. **Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?***
 - James also often refers to Old Testament examples of the faith including Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah as well as the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses.
 - Are there any other books in the NT that are more Jewish than James?
- **Topics to be addressed, i.e., faith vs. works, but are there more?**
 - There are many references to nature consistent with the Rabbi’s teaching of the day and of the Lord Jesus Christ.



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- Many allusions to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount are present.
- Other themes include temptation, trials, partiality, the tongue, wisdom, pride, piety of the poor, and patience.
- Now, faith vs. works; and using in part what's written by Mackintosh CH
 - 'Final Perseverance: What is it'?
 - First, let's make sure we rightly interpret the Word of God – justification is by faith!
 - *Rom 3:27,28 - Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that a **man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.***
 - *Eph 2:8,9 - **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.***
 - But let's reflect briefly what James has to say.
 - *James 2:14 - What does it profit, my brethren, **if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?***
 - Mackintosh – 'There is a little word in verse 14 which will furnish the key to the entire passage. The inspired apostle inquires, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith?" Had he said, "What doth it profit though a man have faith?" But the important word "**say**" quite removes all difficulty, and unfolds, in the simplest possible way, the point which the apostle has in his mind. We might inquire, "What doth it profit though a man say he has ten thousand a year, if he has it not?": **Law-works are such as are done in order to get life; life-works are the genuine fruits of life possessed.**

Let's see what the epistle of James has for us and as always by rightly divide the word of truth.

