

## 1. Today we start the book of James

- A. A controversial book that has been much maligned throughout the church age
- 1). It is a book that some believe shouldn't even be in the Bible - Why?  
Because they claim that James teaching contradicts Paul's teaching
    - a). That Paul taught Justification by Faith Alone apart from any works of the law
      - 1a). Church has rightly taught is the doctrine that Christianity stands or falls upon
      - b). Those objectors to James say he is teaching a justification by works instead

**Transition:** We must take a moment to understand this to allow us to receive all that James has to say to us

- A. Need to see James is not in conflict with Paul – he simply emphasizes different aspect of salvation

## 2. Paul teaching of Justification by Faith Alone apart from works

- A. Paul is teaching how to be made right with God in a positional sense
- 1). The moment one embraces Christ by faith they are justified in the court of God
    - a). Justification is a legal declaration that this sinner is now considered to be righteous  
Not through any merit of their own but because  
God has imputed the righteousness of Christ to them (into their account)
  - 2). So they stand accepted before God on the basis of Christ's performance NOT their own

**Point:** So that's how you come into the faith – this is the starting point of salvation

- A. This happens by faith alone – it is not earned – this righteousness is a free gift given to all who believe

## 3. James emphasis is on what happens after one has been justified by faith

- A. What a life should look like after he or she is saved by faith alone in Christ alone apart from works
- B. His point is if that life has been radically changed in salvation - there should be certain indicators  
**Paul tells the change salvation produces: 2 Co 5:17 (ESV)** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, *the new has come*.

- 1). New creation = new nature. Comes wired with new desires to obey – new values and goals
    - a). Plus the Spirit takes up residence to empower us to live out those new holy desires
- C. So James is simply saying that a person who is saved by faith will have evidence of that salvation

- 1). He tells us that *works* will be part of that evidence
  - a). He is not saying works cause salvation –  
He is saying correctly - they follow it and become proof of it
- 2). This does not contradict Paul – he said exactly the same thing

**TURN: Eph 2:8–10 (ESV)** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>(9)</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>(10)</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, *that we should walk in them*.

- a). Salvation is entirely the work of God – designed in such a way leaves no room to boast
- b). But salvation does not only save us from hell – it sets us in motion  
Into a walk – Paul in other places calls it a race = motion - action
  - 1a). And that action involves doing those works God has already prepared for us

**Listen how Paul puts it: Tt 2:13–14 (ESV)** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>(14)</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession *who are zealous for good works*.

**Point:** So good works is to be a part of every believer's life AFTER they are saved

- A. So James is not contradicting Paul at all– he is saying what Paul said too
- B. Where people struggle is the lack of the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone in this book

- 1). That doesn't mean James is contradicting Paul – he is simply emphasizing a different aspect
- C. Also we should not forget Paul's teaching as we read James
  - 1). It would be easy to turn James teaching into legalism – we earn God's acceptances through works
  - 2). No! We have God's acceptance through Christ alone by faith alone - grace
    - a). James will help us to live out that faith properly – a life that exalts the one who saved us

**Transition:** Let's look at some of the details of the book

## I. THE AUTHOR

**Jas 1:1 (ESV)** *James*, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

### 1. The author is James. What James?

- A. It is widely accepted that this was James the half-brother of Jesus (Same mom different father)
  - 1). James: Mother was Mary. Father was Joseph  
Jesus: Mother was Mary. Father was God
- B. The only other James that is prominent enough to have written a letter like this  
Is the Apostle James the son of Zebedee and the brother of John
  - 1). But he was martyred before this letter was written so that eliminates him

**Summary:** We will go with the crowd on this one – and accept this is James the brother of Jesus

- A. Any argument that it is not him – there are a few – are easily handled

**Transition:** So James the brother of Jesus is the author

## II. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

### 1. Date: AD 44-49

- A. This date is considered to be the best estimate
  - 1). They base that on no mention of the Jerusalem Council in Act 15 – a watershed moment  
When the church met and stood against legalism – justification by works of the law
  - 2). The scholars seeing no mention of that council that James presided over  
Assume this letter must have been written before it – so AD 44-49

### 2. Place: More than likely Jerusalem where James lived and ministered

- A. James gives no hint where it was written from so this is an assumption – but a good one

**Transition:** Date: AD 44-49 from Jerusalem – let's take a moment to look at James the man

- A. He has a very interesting history

## III. JAMES THE MAN

### 1. He was the half-brother of Jesus

- A. But along with his other siblings He rejected Jesus claims while He was alive  
**Jn 7:5 (ESV)** For not even his brothers believed in him.
  - 1). Even though they had grown up with Him and saw how unique He really was  
They weren't willing to link that to His claims of being the Messiah – Messiah! Our brother!
- B. Some have suggested a bit of sibling rivalry here – a bit of jealousy
  - 1). Can you imagine growing up with a brother that never sinned!  
I wonder if Joseph and Mary ever said “Why can't you be like your brother Jesus?”
    - a). You look over and He's being all perfect – serving - cleaning the house joyfully for Mom

- C. But whatever the reasons – they did not accept His teachings
- 1). When He went public with those teachings – saying He was Messiah – they thought He was mad  
**Mk 3:21 (ESV)** And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

**Transition:** It seems that this rejection continued throughout the life of Christ

- A. But sometime after His resurrection we find something very encouraging

## 2. He became a follower of Jesus

**The disciples in the upper room: Ac 1:13-14 (ESV)** And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. <sup>(14)</sup> All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and *Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*

- A. What happened to change James – Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15

**1 Co 15:1–7 (ESV)** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>(2)</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. <sup>(3)</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>(4)</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>(5)</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>(6)</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>(7)</sup> *Then he appeared to James*, then to all the apostles.

- 1). It seems James was saved in this post-resurrection appearance

## 3. He was there when the church began

- A. We find Him gathered there in the upper room with the rest – before the launch of the church
- B. He experienced the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon those early disciples
- C. He was in attendance with Peter preached that first sermon and the new church exploded
- 1). 1000’s of men, women and children responding to the truth – and were baptized
- D. He also experienced the persecution of the church that scattered believers all over the Roman world
- 1). He was there when Stephen was martyred and Saul of Tarsus began to pour out his hatred

## 4. Eventually he became the leader in the church of Jerusalem

- A. It seems once James was saved – he was all in

Historians tell us he was known for his zeal, piety and evangelistic efforts

- 1). Eventually God raised him up to be the leader (Sr. Pastor) of that first church there in Jerusalem
- 2). Paul lists him alongside of Peter and John as a pillar of that first church

**Transition:** If he’s listed with Peter and John

Why do we think he became THE leader of that church – rather than Peter or John

- B. Why we believe James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem

- 1). We have the council in Acts 15 (Mentioned earlier) – a watershed moment in church history
  - a). This is where the church hammered out how a sinner was justified  
 Was it by faith in Christ PLUS works of the law like some were saying  
 Or was it by faith in Christ alone – apart from the works of the law
    - 1a). What a moment - the Gospel was under attack – Christianity on the line
  - b). Paul and Barnabas – being missionaries to the Gentiles  
 Explained how God was graciously moving amongst the Gentiles who simply believed
    - 1a). God wasn’t requiring them to keep the law  
 They were being saved by faith in Christ alone apart from the law
  - c). After much debate it was James who handed down the council’s decision  
 A man is saved by faith alone apart from the works of the law

- 1a). I find it interesting that those who say James is contradicting Paul  
Forget that it was James who sided with Paul over Justification by Faith Alone  
In the most important decision the church has ever made
- d). So James was the one presiding over this council  
Showing he had risen up to the most prominent position in the church in Jerusalem
- 2). Plus. Many years later when Paul returned to Jerusalem after another missionary trip
  - a). It was James he reported too  
**Ac 21:17–18 (ESV)** When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. <sup>(18)</sup>  
On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

## 5. His character: Historians tell us He was known for his piety, prayer life and zeal

- A. They speak of him convincing many Jews and visitors to Jerusalem that Jesus was the Christ
  - 1). So he was an extremely godly man – who was sustained by prayer  
And had God’s heart for the lost
  - 2). Great combination – Godliness – Prayer – Evangelistic (that is a man I want to learn from)

**Transition:** Because he was so effective for Christ – his life so filled with good works

- A. Because so many were being won to Christ through his efforts
  - 1). This caused an increasing jealousy and anger in the Jewish religious leaders
- B. Some 60 years after they murdered Jesus because of jealousy – they did the same to James

## 6. His death: AD 62

- A. Eusebius the historian tells us that the religious leaders took him by force  
And led him out amongst the crowd where they demanded he publicly renounce his faith in Christ
  - 1). I love this – “Instead with a great boldness that they had not anticipated”  
James proclaimed to the crowd the truth that Jesus was Lord and Savior. The Son of God”
  - 2). They were incensed – took him to the pinnacle of the temple – threw him off  
Then finished him off with a club – beating him to death

**Transition:** Let’s finish by looking at v. 1 – here we can see how James viewed himself - instructive

- A. This gives us further insight into the character of this man
  - 1). We’ll see the title James gives to himself
  - 2). The ministry James was given
  - 3). Then a quick look at James heart – why he wrote this letter

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## IV. THE TITLE JAMES GAVE TO HIMSELF

**Jas 1:1 (ESV)** James, *a servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

### 1. James could have chosen many titles

- A. James the Senior Pastor of the church in Jerusalem  
James the brother of Jesus Christ – the Son of Mary – I got that special family thing going on
- B. We see the humility of James – here is the title he chose – *James a servant* of God and of Jesus Christ

### 2. Servant defined (Doulos) = *a bond slave*

“one who is subservient to, and entirely at the disposal of, his master; a slave.”

- A. Roman times this usually referred to one who had no rights at all – considered to be mere property
  - 1). The owner could treat them anyway they liked – even killing them with impunity
  - 2). Nobody would volunteer to be a slave – nobody did this willingly
- B. But the Christian’s thought of bond slave was NOT taken out of the Roman law but OT law

IN the OT the thought of a bond slave spoke of a willing servitude

- 1). The Mosaic Law allowed an indentured servant to voluntarily become a servant for life
  - 2). If the servant was Hebrew – he would serve for 6 years then be set free in the seventh
- But the slave could forfeit his freedom if he or she wanted to

**Ex 21:5–6 (ESV)** But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’<sup>(6)</sup> then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

- a). If he said – I love serving my master – he’s been so good to me – so kind  
Why would I want to go anywhere else? I want to stay here – with him
- b). He could voluntarily give himself entirely to the master – give up all his rights  
To serve the one he loves – the one who has been so good to him

**Point:** The NT Christians picked up on this – and it became a beautiful picture of the Christian

- A. Paul, Peter and here James joyfully took on this title “bond slaves”

Those who had joyfully and wholeheartedly chose to live for God to do His will

- 1). Man can give us all kinds of titles – England letter addressed to “The right reverend Foote”
- 2). The writers of the NT gloried in this “I’m a bond slave of God and His Son Jesus Christ”
  - a). I am one who has given up all my rights to serve the one who has been so good to me

- B. Paul says in Romans 12 – this is just a logical choice – reasonable way to live

- 1). He calls all to do the same – to offer themselves entirely to their master

**Rom 12:1 (NIV)** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, *in view of God's mercy*, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

- 2). In view of God’s mercy we are to do the same as that servant in the OT

We willingly surrender ourselves to Him – giving up our rights to live out His will

**Peter puts it this way: 1 Pe 2:16 (ESV)** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, *but living as servants (doulos) of God.*

### 3. Here is the place of real freedom

- A. In Matthew 6 after speaking of the necessities of life – eating – drinking – clothing etc.

- 1). Jesus says don’t be like the pagans – unbeliever’s who don’t have somebody taking care of them  
Who feel like they have to strive to get all these things

**Mt 6:33 (ESV)** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- a). You concentrate on giving yourself to God – and then rest in His loving provision
- b). Here is the most secure social security program around – Him first

**Transition:** James tells us what title he gave to himself. Now he moves on to his ministry

- A. I don’t think there is any mistake that the designation “Servant” is before “Service”

- 1). The order it always takes – surrender as servant and God will send you into service

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## V. THE SERVICE GOD ENTRUSTED TO JAMES

**Jas 1:1 (ESV)** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, *To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:*

### 1. He was the leader in the church at Jerusalem

- A. But the Lord had called him to a much wider ministry – to Jews scattered outside of Jerusalem

- 1). Theo one who had been faithful in little had been given more – more influence – effectiveness

### 2. 12 Tribes defined

- A. This is the title used in the NT to refer to the nation of Israel

- B. God's chosen people consisted of Jews from 12 tribes - who had descended from the 12 sons of Jacob Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin
- 1). James would have been from the same tribe as Jesus – the tribe of Judah

**Transition:** So James says his ministry stretched outside of Jerusalem to the 12 tribes of the dispersion

### 3. Dispersion (scattering) defined

- A. This referred to the Jews outside the land of Israel – driven out by persecution
- B. Interesting: God blessed Christianity with favor for awhile
- Ac 2:46–47 (ESV)** And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>(47)</sup> praising God and *having favor with all the people*. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
- 1). But favor only lasts for a season – it is usually followed by persecution
- a). I have a feeling God allows the persecution ‘  
Because a church enjoying favor eventually grows comfortable – starts to nap
- b). We've seen it here – 70's – revival – God blessed the churches with favor - exciting
- 1a). But the church has grown comfortable – indifferent - apathetic
- 2a). We need persecution (it's coming) to wake us up again
- C. The early church exploded – had favor in Jerusalem – But eventually persecution came
- 1). Acts 8 tells us when it began and what effect it had – the martyrdom of Stephen
- Ac 8:1–4 (ESV)** And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose *on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria*, except the apostles. <sup>(2)</sup> Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. <sup>(3)</sup> But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. <sup>(4)</sup> *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*
- a). There are some who suggest – God allowed persecution to scatter them  
They had become comfortable in Jerusalem – enjoying this favor
- 1a). But God had told them to take the Gospel out to those nations around them
- 2a). To Jerusalem yes – but also to Judea, Samaria and to the utter parts of the world
- b). Notice what happened when they were scattered  
**Ac 8:4 (ESV)** Now those who were scattered *went about preaching the word.*
- D. Acts 8 began the first wave of persecution – there would be more
- 1). Eventually the Jews ended up scattered all over the Roman world  
Jewish communities started to crop up in these areas where they had some peace
- a). But by the time James writes – persecution was now happening outside of Israel too
- b). The Jew began to suffer in the Roman empire under emperor Claudius
- 1a). Jewish businesses began to be boycotted
- 2a). Jewish children were thrown out of school
- 2). This was the beginning of a hatred towards the Jewish Christians that would only grow worse
- a). By the time Peter writes his first letter some 15-20 years later *to the scattered Jew*
- b). Claudius had been replaced by Caesar Nero
- 1a). It had become legal to kill the Jewish Christians for no reason at all
- 2a). They were being torn apart by wild beasts in front of the crowds in the Colosseum
- 3a). Caesar Nero was dipping them in wax and using them as living candles
- 3). So James was writing to people who had taken a double hit for their Christianity
- a). Hated by their own countrymen - losing everything when they had to flee
- b). And then hated by those in the countries they fled too trying to find some peace

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**Thought:** This gives us some insight why James starts this letter the way he does

**Jas 1:2 (ESV)** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

A. He is writing to those experiencing trials – he writes to give them hope

1). To show them why they can still have joy even in their circumstances

**Transition:** Just to finish off v. 1 – look at James greeting – one word

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## VI. JAME'S GREETING

**Jas 1:1 (ESV)** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

### 1. Greeting defined: To rejoice. To be glad.

A. This word (Ki-rō) was a typical secular greeting – but it takes on a greater meaning here

1). James writes to those who are finding joy hard – his pastoral heart longs to help

2). So this is much more than a typical greeting – a “Hey how you doing?” – when we don’t care

a). He cares and this word reflects his heart – he desires to bring joy and gladness to them

b). He desires his truths (beginning in v. 2) will give them strength in times of trial

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## CONCLUSION

### 1. A book I've always wanted to teach

A. Pray for me that I would bring these truths to you – week after week correctly – what God wants

B. I think it's going to be an interesting time – I think it is a great book for where the church is today

1). A book that shows that faith must have action to it

Which is perfect in a church age where much of the church has fallen asleep