

A Study of the Book of James

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The Book of James

Author –

- Probably James, Jesus half – brother
 - There were only 2 people who could sign the name “James” in all of the early church and have instant recognition:
 - James the brother of John who was martyred in Acts 12 (before the time this book could have been written)
 - James – Jesus, half brother

James – Jesus’ half brother

- James was an unbeliever prior to the resurrection of Christ (John 7:3-10; 1 Cor.15:7).
- After Jesus was crucified, and the disciples were huddled in the Upper Room praying, James is there.....
- Clement of Alexandria says that Peter and James and John, who were the three apostles most honored of the Lord, chose James, the Lord's brother, to be the bishop of Jerusalem after the Lord's ascension.
- James welcomes Paul to Jerusalem and in Acts 15 at the General Assembly, James supports Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles.
- Therefore, he was very influential in the early church among the Jews and in the Church.
 - Peter reported to him upon his release from prison (Acts.12:17)
 - Paul acted on his advise (Acts 21:18-26).
 - He also endorsed Paul's work to the Gentiles, but was himself mainly concerned with the Jews.
- According to Josephus and Hegesippus (first and second-century historians), James was stoned and clubbed to death while he was on his knees praying, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," when he refused to denounce Christ as the Messiah.

Written to:

- written to those Jewish Christians who had been dispersed from their homeland in Israel because of persecution. (James 1:1) and to all Christians everywhere.

Setting:

- The setting must have been in Palestine because it was only there that farmers employed labor, rather than slaves (James 5:4).
- James alluded to participation in worship in Jewish synagogue (James 2:2) which suits the first generation of the church.

The Book of James

Timing:

- It is widely accepted that the Book of James was written between A.D. 45 and 48
- James was killed in A.D. 62, so the epistle had to be written before this date.
- Also there is no mention of the decisions made at the Jerusalem Council held around A.D. 48 to 49, that James presided over (Acts 15/Gal 1:19). At this council, the momentous issue discussed was whether salvation came through obedience to Moses' Law or by grace alone through faith. So, this means the epistle had to be written prior to this date.
- The book of James is probably the earliest of the New Testament writings.

Style:

- The Book of James has been compared to:
 - Proverbs because of its direct statements on wise living
 - The Book of Amos due to its strong condemnation of social injustice

Key :

- The proof that our faith is real is a changed life

Commentary:

- The Book of James has been called a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.