

# New Testament Survey

## James

### I. Attestation and Authorship<sup>1</sup>

#### A. External

1. Clement of Rome may allude to 3:16 in his *Epistle to the Corinthians* (chapter 3), to 4:2 (chapter 3), to 5:10 (chapter 5) and to 4:16 (chapter 21).
2. The *Epistle to Barnabas* has language resembling 1:21 (chapter 1), 3:1 (chapter 1), and 2:5 (chapter 16).
3. James is frequently alluded to in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.
4. Polycarp may allude to 1:18, 25 in his *Epistle to the Philippians* (chapter 3), and to 1:126, 3:2 in chapter 4.
5. Origin, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, Jerome, and Augustine all recognize the canonicity of James.

#### B. Internal Evidence

1. The Epistle harmonizes with what we know of James from Josephus.
2. The Epistle harmonizes well with James as found in Acts 15:13-21; 21:17-25 and Galatians 1:19; 2:9-10.
3. There is no reason for the book to be a forgery since it is without much doctrinal content and a forger would have been more likely to pick a more prominent Apostle as opposed to an obscure man like James.

#### C. Critical Objections - Authorship

1. The author of the Book of James is considered to be the Lord's half-brother (Matthew 13:55). He was an elder in the church at Jerusalem and eventually died a martyr.
2. Other possibilities are James the Less (Matthew 10:3, Mark 15:40), or James the brother of John (Matthew 4:21, 10:2, Luke 9:54). The only other James in the Bible is James the father of Judas the Apostle, not Iscariot.
3. Tradition holds to the authorship of James the Lord's brother.
  - a. James the Apostle died very early in the history of the Church. He was slain by Herod according to Acts 12:2. This probably occurred in the early 40's A.D.
  - b. James the Less (son of Alphaeus) is mentioned only a few times in the New Testament. We know very little about him other than his name.

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1987), p p. 272-275.

- c. James the Lord's half-brother was the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:8, Galatians 1:19, 2:9). He held this position for many years until his martyrdom.
  - d. In Acts 13, the letter to the Churches from the Jerusalem Council starts exactly like the book of James and the Greek used is quite similar. Since James was the leader of the Jerusalem Church, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that he wrote the circular letter. This is not proof, but it increases the possibility of his writing the book.
4. Historical facts that we know about James.
- a. James was the Lord's half-brother (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).
  - b. James was one of those who probably sought an interview with Jesus in Galilee (Matthew 12:46). He probably also went with Jesus to Capernaum (John 2:12), and most likely persuaded him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:3).
  - c. James went to the Feast of the Tabernacles, but was not a believer at the time (John 7:5, 10).
  - d. After Christ's resurrection he appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7).
  - e. The next time we see him, he appears to be a believer awaiting the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:14. He also must have taken part in selecting Matthias as the replacement for Judas.
  - f. Sometime in A.D. 35 or 36 James was visited by Paul when Paul returned from Arabia (Galatians 1:18-19, Acts 9:26).
  - g. In A.D. 44 we find James one of the leaders of the Jerusalem Church when we find Peter imprisoned under Agrippa I (Acts 12:17).
  - h. James apparently presided over the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13, 19; Galatians 2:1; 9-10).
  - i. Eusebius writes of James:  

Clement in the sixth book of his Hypotyposes writes thus: 'For they say that Peter and James and John after the ascension of our Savior, as if also preferred by our Lord, strove not after honor, but chose James the Just bishop of Jerusalem''
  - j. When the Judaizers showed up in Antioch in Syria to bring their brand of Judaistic Christianity, they presented themselves as having come from James (Galatians 2:12).
  - k. The only other time James is mentioned in the New Testament is when we find Paul bringing him the gift from the Gentile Churches in Acts 21:18-25.
  - l. Josephus tells us that James was stoned by the order of Annas, the High Priest. Other accounts have James being thrown off the pinnacle of the Temple. In any case, James died a martyr prior to the destruction of Jerusalem since many thought the destruction of Jerusalem was due in part to the martyr of James.

### E. Critical Objections - Theology and Content

1. Some scholars have suggested a conflict between the theology of James and Paul. Many Ph. D's have been earned following this rabbit trail.
2. The issue is that some say James preached a justification by works whereas Paul preached a justification by faith.
3. This objection disappears when one understands that James is teaching that works are the result of justification, not justification the result of works. He cites Abraham's offering of Isaac as proof of his justification before men, whereas Paul uses Abraham's obedience in leaving Ur and believing God's promise as proof of his justification before God.

## II. Background and Destination

### A. Written to Jews Scattered.<sup>2</sup>

1. The actual word for "scattered" is *diaspora*.
2. In New Testament times Jews were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Note that in Paul's travels he always visited the synagogues first.

## III. Occasion and Date<sup>3</sup>

### A. Written to deal with the outward experiences, spiritual state, and doctrinal misconceptions of the Jewish Christians in the Diaspora.

### B. Probably written in the mid-forties.

1. Since the book was written to Jews, we are led to believe that the Church was still largely made up of those of Jewish nationality. This would mean that the book was written prior to the ministry of Paul which started in the mid-40's A.D..
2. In James 2:2, the word "assembly" is *synagogua*. Obviously, James was writing to those Jews who were still meeting in synagogues. This would place its writing very early in the history of the Church before Christianity split off from Judaism.
3. The word "scattered" in verse 1 is *diaspora*. It actually means "dispersion". This points to the conclusion that James was written after the Jerusalem persecution mentioned in Acts 9 and 12. This would place its writing some time after A. D. 35.
4. James lacks the Ecclesiology of the later books of the New Testament. There is no mention of "church" in the book. On the other hand, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are filled with issues of ecclesiology since they are also some of the last books written (about 64 A.D.).

## IV. Purpose and Plan<sup>4</sup>

### A. To set forth the marks of true believers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Thiessen, pp. 275-276.

<sup>3</sup> Thiessen, pp. 276-277.

<sup>4</sup> Thiessen, pp. 278.

- B. To encourage the Jews in the Diaspora.
- C. To teach that "faith without works is dead."

#### V. A Basic Outline

- A. Introduction - James 1:1
- B. Test #1 - Perseverance in Suffering - James 1:1-12
- C. Test #2 - Blame in Temptation - James 1:13-18
- D. Test #3 - Response to the Word - James 1:19-27
- E. Test #4 - Impartial Love - James 2:1-13
- F. Test #5 - Righteous Works - James 2:14-26
- G. Test #6 - Tongue - James 3:1-12
- H. Test #7 - Humble Wisdom - James 3:13-18
- I. Test #8 - Worldly Indulgence - James 4:1-12
- J. Test #9 - Dependence on God - James 4:13-17
- K. Test #10 - Patient Endurance - James 5:1-9
- L. Test #11 - No Panic Approach to Life - James 5:10-11
- M. Test #12 - Truthfulness - James 5:12
- N. Test #13 - Prayerfulness - James 5:13-18

#### VI. Chapters To Remember

- |         |                               |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| James 1 | Be Doers and Not Just Hearers |
| James 2 | Faith Without Works is Dead   |
| James 3 | Watch Your Tongue!            |

#### VII. Points and Peculiarities

1. James is the most Jewish of all the books in the New Testament.
2. James is most likely the earliest book written in the New Testament.
3. James is an interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount and Old Testament Law in light of the New Covenant.

#### VIII. A Closer Look

- A. James 1
  1. Test #1 - Perseverance in Suffering - James 1:1-12

2. Test #2 - Blame in Temptation - James 1:13-18
  3. Test #3 - Response to the Word - James 1:19-27
- B. James 2
1. Test #4 - Impartial Love - James 2:1-13
  2. Test #5 - Righteous Works - James 2:14-26
- C. James 3
1. Test #6 - Tongue - James 3:1-12
  2. Test #7 - Humble Wisdom - James 3:13-18
- D. James 4
1. Test #8 - Worldly Indulgence - James 4:1-12
  2. Test #9 - Dependence on God - James 4:13-17
- E. James 5
1. Test #10 - Patient Endurance - James 5:1-9
  2. Test #11 - No Panic Approach to Life - James 5:10-11
  3. Test #12 - Truthfulness - James 5:12
  4. Test #13 - Prayerfulness - James 5:13-18