

## James I – Study Notes

*James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.*

In the gospels we find that James did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. (*Read John 7:5*). But things didn't stay that way, Paul gave us a brief glimpse of an otherwise unknown event, the appearance of Jesus to his brother James. *Read 1 Corinthians 15:7*

When Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room, James the half brother of Jesus sat amongst them, (*Read Acts 1:14*) James would have experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. He would have been active in the Church when Stephen was stoned.

In AD 49 a dispute broke out in the church, threatening to destroy the unity between Jews and Gentiles. Acts 15 tells us that some Jews came down from Judea and began to teach the brethren that unless the Gentiles were circumcised according to the custom of Moses they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas returned immediately to Jerusalem to consult with Peter and James to endorse the gospel message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from works (*Read Galatians 2:15-21*). Following this, James stood up (*Read Acts 15:13-21*) and instructed the Church in Christian living and to not allow this false teaching.

It is not long after this in AD 50 that James wrote the very first book in the NT called James, which is a short practical manual in Christian living.

James' wise and convincing words became the basis for the Jerusalem council to affirm Paul's gospel of salvation **by grace alone, through faith alone**. In order to keep the unity between Jewish and Gentile believers, and to keep from offending Jewish Christians who felt compelled to keep the law of Moses, Gentile converts were asked to avoid practices that would cause offence.

Almost 10 years later in A.D. 58 in *Acts 21:15-19* we read of James again. Shortly before being arrested, sent to Caesarea, and later to Rome, Paul arrived in Jerusalem from his third missionary journey and met with James, who had now become the leader of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. James continued himself to keep the Law of Moses as a testimony to his fellow Jews. Though the Law was never a means of salvation, for James, the Law was a means of testimony to unbelieving Jews that their faith empowered them to do good works.

Ancient historians tell us that James remained in Jerusalem, convincing many Jews and visitors that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. He apparently was known for piety and spent so much time kneeling in the temple praying that he was nick named – Camel Knees.

Eventually his authentic faith brought about his death in AD 62. His words and works attracted thousands of Jews to Christ. Eusebius, the ancient church historian described the events leading up to his death.





*But after Paul, in consequence of his appeal to Caesar, had been sent to Rome by Festus, the Jews, been frustrated in the hope of entrapping him by the snares which they laid for him, turned against James, the brother of the Lord... Leading him into their midst they demanded of him that he should renounce Christ in the presence of all the people. But, contrary to the opinion of all, with a clear and with greater boldness than they had anticipated, he spoke out before the whole multitude and confessed that our savior and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. But they were unable to bear the testimony of the man who, on account of his excellent virtue and piety, was esteemed by so many men, and consequently they slew him.* Eusebius recorded that James was thrown from the temple and then beaten to death with a club.

We will see as we unpack this first NT book to be written, a practical manual of Christian living, that pride, is one of the things that he taught against.

James was the Jewish believer writing to other Jewish believers in the first century who were dispersed abroad. When James wrote this letter many Jewish communities had been established throughout the Roman world. Roman Emperor Claudius had persecuted and driven all Jews from Rome. Christian Jews had also been driven out of the Jewish community, because of their faith and where now looking for a place to call home. Many of them found themselves ostracized. Many of the Jewish believers had begun to grow weary, tempted either to turn their back on the Jewish roots or to defect from their faith in Christ. Because of these extreme pressures some claimed they believed the truth of Jesus Christ but began to live a lie.

In the context of suffering persecution it was not surprising James writes the first New Testament book on practical Christian living. This letter assumes his readers already know and follow Jesus. James wrote a letter about authentic faith lived out in a hostile world. His main theme is that faith produces genuine works. In other words, the person who has truly found the way genuinely walks in it.

We are going to unpack the themes with James that:

-  real faith produces genuine stability;
-  real faith produces genuine love;
-  real faith produces genuine humility;
-  real faith produces genuine patience.

The church struggled with persevering through hardship, maintaining good works, promoting peace and living patiently in anticipation of the Lord's return. They believed Jesus as **The Way** of life, but they needed a travel guide for walking in the Way. So do we! In the midst of everyday life, we can all use a dose of James' hands on Christianity.