

#28 James the Brother of our Lord | September 9, 2018

Meet James...and James...and James...and James!

- The name *James* was a very popular name in first century Judaism. The name appears 43 times in the Greek Scriptures, as follows:
 - James, Son of Zebedee – 21 times (this is the Apostle James, who was killed by King Herod in Acts 12)
 - James, Son of Alpheus – 16 times (this is the Apostle “James the less)
 - James, brother of Jesus – 5 times
 - James, unknown (Acts 1:3) – 1 time

The ministry of James, the brother of our Lord

- A few background scriptures:
 - The first mention of James by name is found in Matthew 13:55 (previously noted without name in Matt. 12:46).
 - Paul mentions his first meeting with James in Galatians 1:19, which was at least three years after having gone to Arabia following his conversion on the road to Damascus (Gal. 1:17-19).
 - From 1 Corinthians 9:5 it appears that James was married, though we know nothing more about his family.
 - The James of 1 Corinthians 15:7 is most likely the Lord’s brother.
- James was not a follower of Jesus during Jesus’ earthly ministry (John 7:5) but quickly became a believer following the resurrection, and was present at the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14).
- The prominent ministry of James appears to have happened fairly early after the establishment of an assembly in Jerusalem – James is mentioned by name by Peter, who had just been miraculously released from prison, in Acts 12:17.
- James is the clear leader of the assembly at Jerusalem by the time of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and Peter is playing a “behind the scenes” role. See Acts 15:13, Acts 21:18-19, Galatians 2:9
- James’ ministry is *as a Jew* and *to the Jews* (see Gal. 2:12).

The writing of James, the brother of our Lord

- The book of James is one of the earliest books of the Greek Scriptures, written about 45 AD. This would have placed it before the Jerusalem Council (about 51 AD).

- We should read the book of James as a book written *to the Jews* and *before the mystery of grace was explained by Paul*.
 - Paul was converted approximately 34 AD.
 - He went to Arabia and three years later had a short encounter with James (Gal. 1:19).
 - Fourteen years after this meeting (so at least 17 years after Paul’s conversion, thus 51AD) Paul met with James in Jerusalem and explained to him **the gospel which I preach among the gentiles** (Gal. 2:1-2).
- Notice the Jewish nature of the book of James-
 - He writes **to the twelve tribes** (1:1)
 - He speaks of going into the *synagogue* (2:2 – in the Greek).
 - He speaks of keeping **the whole law** (2:10)
 - His words are not compatible of a doctrine of *faith without works* (compare Rom. 3:28 with James 2:24).
 - He speaks of the Lord coming in *judgment* not in *rapture* (5:8-9).
 - He displays the *keys to the Kingdom* power of the age in which he was living and ministering (5:14-15).
- The writing of James is perfectly compatible with his totally Jewish audience living under the Law in earnest expectation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom.
- While much of the book of James contains a moral code that is compatible with our dispensation, If you try to apply the book of James *line by line* to our dispensation, you will run into inevitable conflict and contradiction.
- How should we read James?
 - As one part in the unfolding of God’s eternal plan.
 - In the context of *where* it was in that unfolding.
 - As a picture of the earliest Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah.
 - As instruction for Jews who will be living in the Tribulation and who want to be right with God for the coming judgment.

Things you may not know

- The name James was one of the most popular Jewish names because it is based on the name of the *namesake* of the nation: Jacob.
 - James is the French version of the Hebrew *Yackov*, thus is equivalent to *Jacob*.
 - The Latin name *Santiago* is a shortened version of *Saint Yackov*.
- James has another famous brother: *Jude* (see Jude 1:1).
- James was mentioned by the historian Josephus as having been martyred by a brutal high priest (Antiquities 20:9:200), and even believed that God punished the nation for its treatment of James.