

From Skeptic To Slave

James 1:1

I. Skeptic: When Your Brother Is The Savior, It's Hard To Believe (1a)

James,

- James Is The Oldest Half-Brother Of Jesus (Mt 13:55-57; Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19)
- James Didn't Believe In Christ During His Earthly Ministry (Jn 7:5)
- James And Family Actually Thought Jesus Lost His Mind (Mk 3:21, 31-35)
- James Converted During Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearance (1 Cor 15:7)
- James Had The Reputation Of Being Just

II. Slave: When Your Savior Is Lord, It's Compulsory To Serve (1b)

a servant (doulos) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

- Slavery Depicts Ownership
- Slavery Deflects Will
- Slavery Demands Sacrifice
- Slavery Defines Humility
- Slavery [To God] Denotes Honor

III. Scribe: When Your Commands Are From God, It's Mandated To Transform (1c)

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

A. The Author

- Apostle (Gal 1:18-19)
- Founding Member (Acts 1:14)
- Pillar (Gal 2:9 and Peter, Acts 12:17)
- Presider (Acts 15:1-21)
- Martyr

B. The Audience

C. The Purposes

D. The Date (Early View: A.D. 45-48; Later View: A.D. 60-62)

Discussion Questions:

1. How awkward would it be for you to have Jesus Christ as a half-sibling? Why?
2. What issue of pride prevents or formally prevented you from acknowledging Christ as your Lord and Savior?
3. How could one who once mocked Jesus for claiming to be God change his/her mind?
4. What is your reaction the link between being a Christian and a slave?
5. How does your life reflect that Jesus is your Lord?

From Skeptic To Slave

James 1:1

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

Introduction:

Q: What would it take for Jermaine and Tito Jackson to realize they weren't as talented as Michael?

- Sibling rivalries occur as each sibling strives to be significant.
- Bible: Cain & Abel, Esau & Jacob, Leah & Rachel (Jacob), Joseph's brothers & Joseph
- Literature: Sherlock & Mycroft Holmes, Ann Landers and Abigail Van Buren (competing advice columnists)
- Can you imagine having Jesus as your sibling?
- He never misbehaved? He was never late? He never got punished?
- What look did Jesus give James when James sinned against God?

1. James Aims

- James has been nicknamed the "Proverbs of the New Testament"
- Yet Martin Luther cast his doubts calling it "a rather strawy letter" (*eyn rechte stroern Epliste*) because it did not declare "justification by faith alone" with the same vigor as Romans, Galatians or Ephesians. Yet he still accepted James as part of the biblical canon.
 - Martin Luther: "I cannot include him among the chief books, though I would not prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him" (LW 35:397). Cited by *Douglas J. Moo. The Letter of James (Pillar New Testament Commentary) (Kindle Locations 160-161). Kindle Edition.*
 - This was not a sentiment shared by the other reformers like Calvin who readily embraced the book
- James writes like an Old Testament prophet confronting sin like Nathan did with David (2 Sam 12)
- He used strong language and heavy-handed comparisons
- Of the 108 verses in James, 50 of them are commands

2. James Frames

- **Sinclair Ferguson** (*Let's Study James*, p. xi)
 - I. The Basics of Faith (1)
 - II. How Faith Works (2)
 - III. Marks Of Consistent Faith (3)
 - IV. Living By Faith Not By Sight (4-5)
- **Homer Kent** (*Faith That Works*, pp. 29-31)
 - I. Greetings (1:1)
 - II. Trials and Temptations (1:2-27)
 - III. Favoritism (2:1-13)
 - IV. Faith and Works (2:14-26)

- V. Teachers and the Tongue (3:1-18)
- VI. Worldliness and Strife (4:1-17)
- VII. Warning to Corrupt Rich Men (5:1-5)
- VIII. Miscellaneous Exhortations (5:7-20)

- **D. Edmond Hiebert** (*The Epistle Of James*, Moody Press, 1979, p. 7):
 - Part 1: Introduction (1:1-18)
 - A. The Opening Salutation (1:1)
 - B. The Theme: Tests of a Living Faith (1:2-18)
 - Part 2: The Fruits Of Faith (1:19 – 3:18)
 - A. Faith Tested By Its Response To The Word Of God (1:19-27)
 - B. Faith Tested By Its Reaction To Partiality (2:1-13)
 - C. Faith Tested By Its Production Of Works (2:14-26)
 - D. Faith Tested By Its Production Of Self-Control (3:1-18)
 - Part 3: Faith's Reaction To Worldliness (4:1 – 5:12)
 - A. Faith Tested By Its Reaction To Selfish Strife (4:1-12)
 - B. Faith Tested By Its Reaction To Presumptuous Planning (4:13-17)
 - C. Faith Tested By Its Reaction To Injustice (5:1-11)
 - D. Faith Tested By Its Reaction To Self-Serving Oaths (5:12)
 - Part 4: Closing Comments (5:13-20)
 - A. Faith Tested By Its Resort To Prayer (5:13-18)
 - B. The Conclusion (5:19-20)
- **Norman Geisler** (*A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, pp. 266-267):
 1. Patience in Trials Rewarded (1:1-15)
 2. Practice of Truth Required (1:16-27)
 3. Partiality in Thoughts Rebuked (2:1-13)
 4. Productivity of Trust Revealed (2:14-26)
 5. Perfection of Tongue Related (3:1-18)
 6. Principles of Transgressions Remedied (4:1-17)
 7. Perversion of Treasures Reviled (5:1-6)
 8. Perseverance in Testing Recommended (5:7-20)

JAMES

| | | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Faith | When stretched, it doesn't break. | When pressed, it doesn't fail. | When expressed, it doesn't explode. | When distressed, it doesn't panic. |
| Deeds | Authentic stability | Authentic love | Authentic control and humility | Authentic patience |
| | Greeting | Partiality and prejudice | The tongue | Money matters |
| | Trials | Indifference and mere intellectualism | The heart | Sickness |
| | Temptation | Obedience and action | The will | Carnality and correction |
| | Response to Scripture | | | |
| | CHAPTER 1 | CHAPTER 2 | CHAPTERS 3-4 | CHAPTER 5 |
| Background | The difficulties of life caused the scattered saints to drift spiritually, leading to all forms of problems—unbridled speech, wrong attitudes, doubt, strife, carnality, shallow faith. | | | |
| Characteristics | "The Proverbs of the New Testament," James contains many practical, straightforward exhortations. Emphasis is on importance of balancing right belief with right behavior. The book has many Old Testament word pictures and references. | | | |
| Theme | Real faith produces authentic deeds. | | | |
| Key Verse | 2:17 | | | |
| Christ in James | Jesus is the glorious Lord, who inspires true faith and authentic works (2:1, 14-26). | | | |

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<https://insightforliving.swncdn.com/images/ifl-usa/content/ascendio/resources/bible/59-James.png>

3. James Games – Possible James:

- ("James" is a form of the name "Jacob")
- James, brother of John (Mt 4:21), son of Zebedee (Mk 1:19), martyred c. A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2) prior to the writing of the book of James
- James, son of Alphaeus (Mk 3:18) – would not have been well known to a degree that his letter would be accepted as Scripture
- James the Less (Mk 15:40)
- James the father of Thaddaeus (aka Judas, not Iscariot – Lk 6:16)
- James, half-brother of Jesus (Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19), half-brother of Jude (Jude 1)
 - A.K.A. James the Just
 - Sinclair Ferguson: "He was probably named after Joseph's father Jacob (Mt 1:16)." (*Let's Study James*, p. xv)
 - The other James' had other descriptions to identify them (the less, father of Thaddeus, son of Alphaeus)
 - James was a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15)
 - He was most likely married
 - The Epistle of James and James' letter in Acts are comparable (Jas 1:1 & Acts 15:23; James 2:5 & Acts 15:13; James 2:7 & Acts 15:17)

I. **Skeptic: When Your Brother Is The Savior, It's Hard To Believe (1a)**

James,

A. **James Is The Oldest Half-Brother Of Jesus (Mt 13:55-57; Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19)**

Matthew 13:55-57 ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers **James** and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "**A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.**" (also Mark 6:3)

- James is recognized as the **brother** of Jesus (Gal 1:19)

Gal 1:19 ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

- Mary did have **children** (sons and daughters) with Joseph (Mt 12:46-50; 13:55; Mk 6:3; Jn 2:12; 7:3,10) after Jesus was born (she was not a perpetual virgin as the Roman Catholics conjectured)
- James was probably the **oldest** brother, being named first (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)

B. **James Didn't Believe In Christ During His Earthly Ministry (Jn 7:5)**

John 7:3-5 ³So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵For not even his brothers believed in him.

- James rejected his brother's Messiahship and deity until after the resurrection (Jn 7:5)
- John 7 is about 7 months before the crucifixion. So James unbelief remained at least until 7 months before his Brother's death.
- V. 3-4 – the brothers wanted to help Jesus with the earthly strategy of publicity, but his brothers didn't understand or believe that Jesus was their Messiah

C. **James And Family Actually Thought Jesus Lost His Mind (Mk 3:21, 31-35)**

Mark 3:21 ²¹And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

- Berkeley version: "He is deranged"
- Phillips N.T. "He must be mad"
- NASB: "He has lost his senses."
- The Message: "They suspected he was getting carried away with himself."
- If you were a half-sibling of Jesus, wouldn't you ...
 - Wonder what really happened when mama got pregnant before she married daddy?
 - Realize though your brother never sinned, he was still just an honest carpenter?
 - Think your brother is a little zealous hanging out at the synagogue all the time?

- Chuck Swindoll: "No second-born son or daughter can possibly fathom what it must have been like to suffer second child syndrome with an older brother who never sinned. But James did. Can you even imagine? Jesus always came when His mother called Him the first time. He always washed His hands properly before supper. He always did His chores quickly and with delight. He always obeyed. Then there was James, born with a sinful nature like the rest of us, living in the shadow of a big brother who was God in the flesh. Being far from perfect, younger brother James had a built-in problem right from the start." *Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 13) (p. 8). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.*

Mark 3:31-35 ³¹And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³²And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." ³³And he answered them, "**Who are my mother and my brothers?**" ³⁴And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "**Here are my mother and my brothers!**" ³⁵**For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."**

- The brothers were not a part of Jesus' teaching ministry – they stood apart from Him
- The absence of Jesus' brothers and sisters at the crucifixion might hint towards a shame the family had of Jesus' claim of being God

D. James Converted During Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearance (1 Cor 15:7)

1 Corinthians 15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

- What's needed to convince a hardcore skeptic? The **RESURRECTION!**

E. James Had The Reputation Of Being Just

- R. Kent Hughes: "James was a 'late bloomer,' but he flowered well! ... when he truly came to know Christ, his boyhood privilege was not wasted, for he became known as James the Just, a man of immense piety." (*James: Faith That Works*, Preach the Word series, Crossway, 1991/2013, p. 16)
- Hegisippus states that as James was camel kneed because he prayed alone in the temple confessing the sins of his people so much that "from his excessive righteousness he was called the Just." (recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*)
- Daniel M. Doriani: "In the early church, James acquired the title 'James the Just' because of his personal righteousness and his passion to promote righteousness in others." (*James*, Reformed Expository Commentary, P&R Publishing, 2007, p. 6)

II. Slave: When Your Savior Is Lord, It's Compulsory To Serve (1b)

a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

- "servant" = *doulos*
- D. Edmond Hiebert: "*doulos*, which means a slave, a bondservant, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another." (*The Epistle Of James: Tests Of A Living Faith*, Moody Press, 1979, p. 59)

- James isn't describing his physical relationship to Christ as a family member, but a spiritual relationship to Christ His Lord and Master
 - Douglas Moo: "But if James the Lord's brother wrote this letter, why does he not mention his special relationship to Jesus? Probably because being a brother of Jesus gave James no authority to admonish other Christians as he does in this letter. **What qualified James to write such a letter was not his physical relationship to Jesus but his spiritual relationship.**" *Douglas J. Moo. The Letter of James (Pillar New Testament Commentary) (Kindle Locations 762-764). Kindle Edition.*
- Our **imagery** of slavery has been shaped by the **abuses** and **racism** in America
- Even when the King James was being translated in the 17th century, the term "slave" gave the image of one bound by chains
- Thus "servant" softened the translation of "slave"
- The NT use of the term "slave" is of a different context
- The NT borrows the Roman concept of slavery which has little to do with race

A. Slavery Depicts Ownership

- Sinclair Ferguson: "To be a slave meant that one's life was owned by another.... For to be such a servant means saying of Christ: 'What he says to me, I will do; what he asks of me, I will give; where he sends me, I will go.'" (*Let's Study James*, pp. 1-2)
- John MacArthur: "In the Greco-Roman world, slaves were considered property, to the point that in the eyes of the law they were regarded as things rather than persons. To be someone's slave was to be his possession, bound to obey his will without hesitation or argument." *MacArthur, John F.. Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity in Christ (p. 17). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*
- James sees himself as a slave of God and Christ
- This is amazing, considering he was skeptical of his brother's Lordship for most of his life
- Charles Spurgeon: "Where our Authorized Version [KJV] softly puts it 'servant' it really is 'bond-slave.' The early saints delighted to count themselves Christ's absolute property, bought by him, owned by him, and wholly at his disposal." ("Eyes Right," July 14, 1887, Sermon 2,058, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 34*)
<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/eyes-right#flipbook/>

B. Slavery Deflects Will

- Lord = *Kurios*
 - James uses *Kurios* 14x in the epistle
- Homer Kent: "In the writings of Hegesippus (ca. A.D. 180), James is depicted as a Nazirite whose times of prayer for his nation were so frequent and prolonged that his knees became calloused like the knees of a camel." (p. 25)

- D. Edmond Hiebert: "For them [the New Testament writers] the term did not suggest any degradation but only their total surrender to their spiritual Master." (p. 60)
- John MacArthur: "The Gospel is not simply an invitation to become Christ's associate; it is a mandate to become His slave." *MacArthur, John F.. Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity in Christ (p. 19). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

C. Slavery Demands Sacrifice

David P. Nystrom (*A Youth Worker's Commentary on James*. Zondervan. Kindle Edition.) describes **4 types of Roman slaves**:

- 1) The Mine Slave** – This lowest form of slavery reserved for criminals and those deemed as enemies of Rome. These slaves worked hard and died early. The early church actually did compassion ministry to them. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 4.23.10)
- 2) The Agricultural Slave (rural)** – They would work the field in chain gangs. If they were sick, their rations were limited. They could have a family depending on their owner.
- 3) The Household Slave (urban)** – This would be the type of slave most referred to in the New Testament. Some have sold themselves into slavery for better living conditions under benevolent masters, while others have sold themselves to pay the ransom that frees another slave.

1 Clement 55:2 "We know of many among ourselves who have given themselves up to bonds, in order that they might ransom others. Many, too, have surrendered themselves to slavery, that with the price which they received for themselves, they might provide food for others." *Cited by Nystrom, David P.. A Youth Worker's Commentary on James . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*

- "Many scholars believe that urban household slaves could expect **manumission** (i.e., **the process by which a slave was legally set free**) after only a few years of service; some argue it was nearly automatic by the **age of 30**. Manumission could come in a variety of forms, including the awarding of a sum of **money** to the freed or even **adoption** by the master. This helps enlighten New Testament injunctions of slaves to "please" their masters (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-11) and perhaps even for masters to "provide your slaves with what is right and fair" (Colossians 4:1; Ephesians 6:9)." *Nystrom, David P.. A Youth Worker's Commentary on James . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*
- 4) Imperial Slave** – These slaves worked for the emperor and attained wealth and status.

D. Slavery Defines Humility

- "... the designation combines the softness of humility and the strength of authority in an integrated vision of leadership." *Guthrie, George H.. Hebrews, James (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*

- Pride might have prevented James from being saved by his own brother
- But when we realize the depth of our sin towards God, the greatness of Christ's substitution for us on the cross, and the amazing reality of the resurrection, then we bow ourselves to Christ
- Hiebert: "Among the Greeks, with a strong sense of personal freedom, the term carried a degrading connotation.... For James the use of the term did not convey the thought of an unwanted, compelled servitude. Most of our modern English versions continue to use 'servant' to avoid implications of involuntary servitude, yet this term does not adequately convey the basic pictures of the master-slave relationship present in the original." (pp. 59-60)

E. Slavery [To God] Denotes Honor

- Hiebert: "It is possible that James, in presenting himself as a servant of his heavenly Master, had in mind the religious use of the term in Judaism. In the Old Testament, the expression 'servant of the Lord' was used as a term on honor and authority, of those who served God in a special way." (p. 61)
- This term was used of Moses.

III. Scribe: When Your Commands Are From God, It's Mandated To Transform (1c)

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

- Chuck Swindoll: "James does not identify himself by saying 'I am Jesus' brother.' That would have been **name-dropping**, something James condemns later in his letter as being a phony and empty practice." (*James: Practical and Authentic Living*, Word, 1991, p. 3)
- Homer Kent: "The author of this Epistle was a **forceful and dramatic communicator**, not unlike his half-brother Jesus. His imagery is **colorful** and frequent. His illustrations are drawn from nature and commonplace experiences. His themes are **practical**, not theoretical. He dealt with people and their immediate needs, and he was clearly in touch with human problems." (*Faith That Works: Studies In The Epistle Of James*, Baker Books, 1986, p. 17)
- Moulton and Howard compliments James use of the Greek language as "perhaps the **best Greek** in the New Testament." (*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, cited by Kent, p. 19)

A. The Author

1. **Apostle:** James was mentioned by Paul as an apostle (Gal 1:18-19)

Galatians 1:18-19 ¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

- Paul visited Peter & James for 15 days (Gal 1:18-19)

2. **Founding Member:** James Was In The Upper Room At Pentecost When The Church Started (Acts 1:14)

Acts 1:14 ¹⁴All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

3. **Pillar:** James was among the “**pillars**” of the church, along with Peter and John (in the eyes of Paul, Gal 2:9 and Peter, Acts 12:17)

Galatians 2:9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be **pillars**, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me,

Acts 12:16-17 ¹⁶But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Tell these things to **James** and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place.

- When Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel, the first ones he wanted to tell was James and family. This would indicate James’ prominence in the Church and Peter’s high regard for him.
- Clement of Alexandria, quoting Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2.1.3.) calls James the **First Bishop** of Jerusalem

4. **Presider: James Was A Moderator For The Church’s First Major Conflict (Acts 15:1-21)**

- In A.D. 49, a controversy arises that threatens to divide the early church.

Acts 15:1-2 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²And after Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension and debate** with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

- Many among the Jewish element of the church wanted to require following the Mosaic Law to be saved (e.g. circumcision).
- This was “no small dissension and debate”

Acts 15:13-19 ¹³James replied ... ¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

- James listened then responded (Acts 15:13-14)
- Cited Scripture – Amos 9 (Acts 15:15-18)
- Rendered judgment that salvation is solely the result of the grace of God (Acts 15:19-21)
- Then circulated a letter to the churches about the decision (Acts 15:22-29)

- Wiersbe: "he was able to permit all the factions to express themselves, and then bring peace by drawing a conclusion based on the Word of God." (Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 336)

5. Martyr

- James asked Paul to purify himself ceremonially as a testimony to Jewish Christian converts who still had high regard for the Law (Acts 21:18-26). Paul's participation in this event led to his arrest and imprisonment (Acts 21:27 – 28:31).
- Eusebius claims that Paul's enemies also pursued James, arrested him under Roman authority and taken to Rome. James' refusal to renounce Christ as Lord would lead to his death from being thrown off the temple roof then beaten with a club.
- Josephus claims that James was martyred through stoning when the Jews rose against Rome in between the rule of Festus and Albinus. The High Priest Ananus (Sadducee) ordered his death.
- Hegesippus reports that "James was asked to give his understanding of Jesus. When he said that Jesus was the Son of man, seated at the right hand of God, he was thrown down from the temple, stoned, and then killed with a club." (Kent, p. 25)
- It was cited that James even mimicked his brother saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 336)
- Though the method of martyrdom is not certain, the timeframe is: A.D. 62-63.

B. The Audience

- Motyer: "If James were to post his letter today it would be marked 'Return to sender' on the ground of being insufficiently addressed. He names no names and specifies no place as destination: twelve tribes contain a lot of people and the Dispersion, in its special sense of the scattered people of God, was in principle world-wide." *Motyer, J. Alec. The Message of James (The Bible Speaks Today Series) . InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.*
- Most likely the Jewish believers of the Western dispersion who once lived in Palestine, then were scattered throughout the Roman empire because of persecution or lack of jobs.
 - Peter wrote to the eastern dispersion (1 Pet 1:1)
 - "tribes" (James 1:1) is a reference to Israel
 - "scattered" = *en te diaspora* (in the diapora) = Jews who lived outside of their homeland
 - "In the wake of the destruction of the northern kingdom by Assyria (722 BC; see 2Ki 17:5–6) and the exile brought against the southern kingdom by the Babylonians (587–538 BC; see 2Ki 25:1–12), the Jewish people were dispersed" among the nations. The term diaspora (GK 1402) could variously refer to the place to which the Jews had been scattered, the scattered people themselves, or the state of being dispersed abroad." *Guthrie, George H.. Hebrews, James (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*
- James was a Jewish author writing to a Jewish audience (1:18; 2:2,21; 3:6; 5:4,7)
- James was a leader in Jerusalem – particular after many of the Apostles spread out as missionaries.

- Many of the Jews dispersed to other regions kept in touch with James
- James letter was written to the Jewish Christians dispersed from Jerusalem (*diaporia*)
- James presided over the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-19) concurring with Paul's teaching on justification

C. The Purposes

- To comfort believers in tribulation and persecution (1:5)
- To prescribe what a "pure religion" is (1:27)
- To rebuke for practicing favoritism (2:1-13)
- To exhort believers to practice what they preach (2:14-26)
- To guard the tongue (3:1-12)
- To delineate what wise-living was (3:13-18)
- To contrast a worldly life from a spiritual life (4)
- To warn the rich and pleasure seeking of the condemnation for ignoring God (5:1-6)
- To urge their patience (5:7-11)
- To gird their prayerfulness (5:12-18)
- To deal with sinning believers (5:19-20)

A Comparison of Paul and James on Justification and Works

| Paul | James |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Justification <i>by</i> faith | Justification <i>for</i> works |
| Faith as <i>producer of works</i> | Works as the <i>proof of faith</i> |
| Justification <i>before</i> God | Justification <i>before</i> man |
| Not by works | By good works |
| <i>Root</i> of justification | <i>Fruit</i> of justification |
| Against dead <i>works</i> | Against dead <i>faith</i> |

(Norman Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, Baker Books, 2007, p. 265, 269)

D. The Date (Early View: A.D. 45-48; Later View: A.D. 60-62)

1. Early View: A.D. 45-48

- If this is true, this epistle would have been the first inspired book of the Bible
- Strong Old Testament connection and Jewish flavor (2:2)
- Connected with Christ's oral teaching (pre-written Gospel)
- Reflects more of an early church government than a more systematized church government decades later (5:14)
 - Leaders are called teachers and elders, rather than bishop or deacons (3:1; 5:14)
- The church met in a synagogue (2:2)
- The Jerusalem council (A.D. 49) was not referred to (Acts 15) when it could have been relevant to James' topics
- The Jewish believers are the focus, not the Gentile believers
- Paul's writings are not reflected in James' writings
- The poverty conditions may reflect an earlier time period (5:1-6)
- Chuck Swindoll: "As one of the chief leaders in the church at Jerusalem, James wrote from that city prior to the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, which Luke recorded in [Acts 15](#). At that council, James, along with Peter and Paul, affirmed the decision to take the gospel message to the Gentiles. This council met in AD 49,

meaning James likely wrote his letter in AD 45–48. Such a significant event as the Jerusalem Council warranted comment from James, as he was writing to a Jewish Christian audience. But James made no mention of Gentile Christians at all, making an early date for the letter most likely. In fact, it was likely the first New Testament book written.” <https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-general-epistles/james>

2. **Later View: A.D. 60-62**

- Seems to be written after the Jewish dispersion (1:1; Acts 18:2) which was at A.D. 50
- Seems to follow up on Paul’s teaching of justification (1:25; 2:21-22) to which James concurred (Acts 15)
- The ethical topics and exhortational themes tend to match up with a more mature church
- The other General Epistles were also written later
- The absence of the topic of Christ’s resurrection may demonstrate that the believers were well entrenched in doctrine and did not need a defense on this fundamental Christian doctrine
- The heresies James contended with probably fit the later date when the church encountered more false teachers
- James was martyred in A.D. 62

Discussion Questions:

1. How awkward would it be for you to have Jesus Christ as a half-sibling? Why?
2. What issue of pride prevents or formally prevented you from acknowledging Christ as your Lord and Savior?
3. How could one who once mocked Jesus for claiming to be God change his/her mind?
4. What is your reaction the link between being a Christian and a slave?
5. How does your life reflect that Jesus is your Lord?