

James



**“BUT BE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT
HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOURSELVES.”**

Who Wrote This Letter?



- Assuming this is a James mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, we have several options:
 - James, the son of Zebedee (an apostle) – Mark 3:17; Acts 12:2
 - James the son of Alphaeus (an apostle) – Mark 3:18
 - James the Less – Mark 15:40 (same as one of the others?)
 - James the brother of Jesus – Mark 6:3; I Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19
- James #1 would put the letter very early in church history, in fact as the earliest of all NT writings
- James #2 is only mentioned four times in the NT
- The author of this letter must have been prominent enough to be known simply as “James”

Who Wrote This Letter?



- James, the Lord's brother, is consistently simply called "James"
 - See Gal 2:6-9; Jude 1; Acts 12:17, 15:13ff, 21:18
- This James was clearly a prominent leader and teacher in the early church (in Jerusalem)
- Several authors point to similarities between the language of Acts 15:13-29 and this letter
- Early Christians frequently attributed this letter to James, the Lord's brother (though not without contradiction):

Who Wrote This Letter?



- Not listed in the Muratorian fragment (non-conclusive)
- Quoted or alluded to by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, etc.¹
- Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome indicate there was some confusion as to the identity of the author, though all accepted the letter as canonical
- Slower reception in the churches of the West:
 - Gives credence to the authorship of James, the Lord's brother
 - As seen in previous studies, inspired authorship was the first priority in acceptance by early Christians
 - James lived, taught, and died in and around Jerusalem

¹ see Reese, G.L. "James and 1,2,3 John." pg. 20ff (2007)

Who Wrote This Letter?



CONCLUSION:

The bulk of evidence points to James, the Lord's brother and the brother of Jude, prominent leader in the church at Jerusalem, as the author of this letter.

What Do We Know About James?



- Assuming that the following verses refer to James, the Lord's brother, construct a brief biography of this author:
 - Mark 3:21; 6:3; John 7:3; Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18-26; 1 Cor 9:5; 15:7; Gal 1:18-19; 2:9, 12; Jude 1

What Do We Know About James?



- Construct a brief biography of James:
 - Mark 3:21; 6:3; John 7:3 – Not a believer from the beginning, along with the rest of Jesus’ family
 - Acts 1:14 – Was a believer and a disciple, at least by the time of Christ’s ascension
 - It appears that Jesus appeared to this James after His resurrection (I Cor 15:7)
 - Acts 15:13-21 w. Gal 1:18-19, 2:9,12 – James became a prominent leader (a “pillar”) in the church at Jerusalem
 - For a time, it appears that Peter left Jerusalem, and by then James was already a leading figure in the church
 - Acts 12:17)21:18-26; 1 Cor 9:5; Jude 1

What Do We Know About James?



- Construct a brief biography of James:
 - Acts 21:18-26 – During Paul’s third missionary journey, James (apparently an elder in the Jerusalem church) advised him about avoiding trouble with the Jews
 - 1 Cor 9:5 – James was apparently married (one of the qualifications for eldership)
 - Jude 1 – James was the brother of Jude (see also Matt 12:46; 13:55)
 - *Note:* it is possible that this is James the son of Alphaeus, making Judas (i.e. Jude) the *brother* of James in Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13, John 14:22 and Jude 1 (aka. Thaddaeus), instead of “son” as some translations have it (meaning decided by context). Also, this would make James and Jude the cousins of Jesus (*adelphos*, “brother,” meaning a brother, near or distant, depending on context). Variations of this view are expressed by John Calvin, N.T. Caton, among others, though Reese and J. J. Turner disagree. After all, neither writer refers to himself as an apostle. However, this view does ease certain difficulties, for example Gal 1:19, and the sensible concern that James and Jude are the only non-apostolic writers (besides perhaps *Hebrews*). Jude 17-18 does not necessarily exclude Jude from the apostles, as Clinton Hamilton suggests, cf. “they told you” (not “us”), along with II Pet 3:2-3; Eph 2:20; etc.

Who Were The Intended Recipients?



- “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (NAS)
- Or “the twelve tribes of the Diaspora” (ASV)
 - The Diaspora, or the Dispersion, is the historically official name of the scattering of the Jews (cf. John 7:35)
 - This doesn’t fit the letter: this instruction is not intended to convert Jews to Christ (cf. Romans)
- **These recipients were Christians:**
 - James description of himself (1:1)
 - Believers in Christ (2:1), awaiting His return (5:7)
 - Organized as churches with elders (Jam 5:14)
 - Frequent allusions to Christ’s teachings (e.g. 2:13, 4:11, 5:1,etc.)

Who Were The Intended Recipients?



- Is this letter intended only for Jewish Christians?
 - “twelve tribes” (1:1) – this phrase is not conclusive, but might refer to all Christians (Matt 19:28; Gal 6:16; Phil 3:3; I Pet 1:1, 2:9-11)
 - “Abraham our father” – also not conclusive, since all Christians are heirs of Abraham (Rom 4:1; Gal 3:7-29)
 - “synagogue” – probably simply refers to an assembly (NASU), but does not conclusively limit address to Jews
 - Similar allusions to the OT writings are found in every book in the New Testament
 - Missing prominent Jewish themes of the NT (e.g. Gentile circumcision, return to the OT, superiority of Christ, etc.)

Who Wrote This Letter?



CONCLUSION:

There is absolutely no content in this letter limited in meaning or application to Jewish Christians alone: these inspired lessons are vital for all Christians alike!

Assignment #1



- Read through the book of James in its entirety (as a letter should be read) and draft an outline of its content.

Outline of the Epistle



1. Salutation (1:1)
2. Facing trials with joy, wisdom, thankfulness (1:1-18)
3. Doers and not hearers only (1:19-27)
4. Danger of pride and favoritism (2:1-13)
5. Faith without works is dead (2:14-26)
6. Danger of an unbridled tongue (3:1-12)
7. Heavenly vs. worldly wisdom (3:13-18)
8. Danger of worldliness (4:1-17)
9. Danger of riches (5:1-6)
10. Attitudes toward trial, illness, sin (5:7-20)