

NOON BIBLE STUDY: INTRO-JAMES

INTRO: WHO WAS JAMES?

JESUS HAD A DISCIPLE NAMED JAMES, WHO WAS THE BROTHER OF THE APOSTLE JOHN. THESE TWO WERE NICKNAMED "THE SONS OF THUNDER" FOR THEIR ENTHUSIASM AND ZEAL. HOWEVER, THAT JAMES IS *NOT* THE JAMES OF THE BOOK OF JAMES. THE JAMES OF THE BOOK OF JAMES IS ACTUALLY SOMEONE THAT MIGHT BE A BIT SURPRISING. LET'S DISCOVER WHO JAMES IS FROM HIS FIRST MENTION IN THE BIBLE:

MATTHEW 13:54-58 - HE CAME TO HIS HOMETOWN AND BEGAN TEACHING THEM IN THEIR SYNAGOGUE, SO THAT THEY WERE ASTONISHED, AND SAID, "WHERE DID THIS MAN GET THIS WISDOM AND THESE MIRACULOUS POWERS? 55 "IS NOT THIS THE CARPENTER'S SON? IS NOT HIS MOTHER CALLED MARY, AND HIS BROTHERS, **JAMES** AND JOSEPH AND SIMON AND JUDAS? 56 "AND HIS SISTERS, ARE THEY NOT ALL WITH US? WHERE THEN DID THIS MAN GET ALL THESE THINGS?" 57 AND 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." 58 AND HE DID NOT DO MANY MIRACLES THERE BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.

WHO IS JAMES? JAMES IS THE HALF (BIOLOGICAL) BROTHER OF JESUS! JESUS WAS THE FIRST BORN SON OF MARY (AND JOSEPH) BUT AFTER HIS BIRTH, THERE WERE OTHER CHILDREN BORN. JAMES WAS ONE OF THESE CHILDREN. THERE IS NOT MUCH KNOWN ABOUT THE CHILDHOOD AND MATURING OF JESUS AFTER THE RECORD IN THE TEMPLE AT 12 YEARS OLD. BUT HE WOULD HAVE GROWN UP IN NAZARETH AND PLAYED AND LEARNED WITH THESE SIBLINGS. ONCE JESUS WAS NEAR 30 YEARS OLD, HE BEGAN HIS MINISTRY, AND THIS APPARENTLY CAUSED SOME TENSION AMONGST HIS FAMILY.

MARK 3:20-21 - ONE TIME JESUS ENTERED A HOUSE, AND THE CROWDS BEGAN TO GATHER AGAIN. SOON HE AND HIS DISCIPLES COULDN'T EVEN FIND TIME TO EAT. 21 WHEN HIS FAMILY HEARD WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THEY TRIED TO TAKE HIM AWAY. "HE'S OUT OF HIS MIND," THEY SAID.

MARK 3:31-35 (NLT) - THEN JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS CAME TO SEE HIM. THEY STOOD OUTSIDE AND SENT WORD FOR HIM TO COME OUT AND TALK WITH THEM. 32 THERE WAS A CROWD SITTING AROUND JESUS, AND SOMEONE SAID, "YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR BROTHERS ARE OUTSIDE ASKING FOR YOU." 33 JESUS REPLIED, "WHO IS MY MOTHER? WHO ARE MY BROTHERS?" 34 THEN HE LOOKED AT THOSE AROUND HIM AND SAID, "LOOK, THESE ARE MY MOTHER AND BROTHERS. 35 ANYONE WHO DOES GOD'S WILL IS MY BROTHER AND SISTER AND MOTHER."

JOHN 7:3-5 NLT - AND JESUS' BROTHERS SAID TO HIM, "LEAVE HERE AND GO TO JUDEA, WHERE YOUR FOLLOWERS CAN SEE YOUR MIRACLES! 4 YOU CAN'T BECOME FAMOUS IF YOU HIDE LIKE THIS! IF YOU CAN DO SUCH WONDERFUL THINGS, SHOW YOURSELF TO THE WORLD!" 5 **FOR EVEN HIS BROTHERS DIDN'T BELIEVE IN HIM.**

JAMES WAS NOT A FOLLOWER OF JESUS. IN FACT, IT SEEMS LIKE JAMES WAS LIKELY PART OF THE GROUP SENT TO BRING JESUS BACK HOME, THINKING WHAT HE WAS DOING WAS WRONG.

JAMES EVENTUALLY CONVERTED

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-8 - FOR I DELIVERED TO YOU AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE WHAT I ALSO RECEIVED, THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, 4 AND THAT HE WAS BURIED, AND THAT HE WAS RAISED ON THE THIRD DAY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, 5 AND THAT HE APPEARED TO CEPHAS (PETER), THEN TO THE TWELVE. 6 AFTER THAT HE APPEARED TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN AT ONE TIME, MOST OF WHOM REMAIN UNTIL NOW, BUT SOME HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP; 7 **THEN HE APPEARED TO JAMES**, THEN TO ALL THE APOSTLES; 8 AND LAST OF ALL, AS TO ONE UNTIMELY BORN, HE APPEARED TO ME ALSO.

AT SOME POINT AFTER JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION, THE RESURRECTED CHRIST MAKES A SPECIAL APPEARANCE TO HIS BROTHER JAMES! PERHAPS THIS WAS THE POINT OF INITIAL BELIEF FOR HIS BROTHER! CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT? WHAT LOVE JESUS SHOWED FOR HIS EARTHLY FAMILY TO SPECIFICALLY VISIT JAMES DURING THE BRIEF 40 DAYS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION. WHETHER THIS WAS JAMES' CONVERSION OR NOT, WHAT IS CLEAR FROM THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE IS THAT JAMES DOES BELIEVE, AND WILL ACTUALLY BE RESPECTED AND HONORED AS ONE OF THE FIRST LEADERS OF THE NEW CHURCH.

JAMES: LEADER OF THE CHURCH

PETER IS RELEASED FROM PRISON AND GOES TO FIND BELIEVERS IN THE CITY:

ACTS 12:16-17 - BUT PETER CONTINUED KNOCKING; AND WHEN THEY HAD OPENED THE DOOR, THEY SAW HIM AND WERE AMAZED. 17 BUT MOTIONING TO THEM WITH HIS HAND TO BE SILENT, HE DESCRIBED TO THEM HOW THE LORD HAD LED HIM OUT OF THE PRISON. AND HE SAID, "REPORT THESE THINGS TO **JAMES** AND THE BRETHREN." THEN HE LEFT AND WENT TO ANOTHER PLACE.

JAMES VISITED AFTER PAUL'S CONVERSION:

GALATIANS 1:15-19 - BUT WHEN GOD, WHO HAD SET ME APART EVEN FROM MY MOTHER'S WOMB AND CALLED ME THROUGH HIS GRACE, WAS PLEASED 16 TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME SO THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE GENTILES, I DID NOT IMMEDIATELY CONSULT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD, 17 NOR DID I GO UP TO JERUSALEM TO THOSE WHO WERE APOSTLES BEFORE ME; BUT I WENT AWAY TO ARABIA, AND RETURNED ONCE MORE TO DAMASCUS. 18 THEN THREE YEARS LATER I WENT UP TO JERUSALEM TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH CEPHAS, AND STAYED WITH HIM FIFTEEN DAYS. 19 **BUT I DID NOT SEE ANY OTHER OF THE APOSTLES EXCEPT JAMES, THE LORD'S BROTHER.**

JAMES WEIGHS IN AT JERUSALEM COUNCIL - "WHAT TO DO ABOUT GENTILE'S COMING TO BELIEVE?"

ACTS 15:12-14 - ALL THE PEOPLE KEPT SILENT, AND THEY WERE LISTENING TO BARNABAS AND PAUL AS THEY WERE RELATING WHAT SIGNS AND WONDERS GOD HAD DONE THROUGH THEM AMONG THE GENTILES. 13 AFTER THEY HAD STOPPED SPEAKING, JAMES ANSWERED, SAYING, "BRETHREN, LISTEN TO ME. 14 "SIMEON HAS RELATED HOW GOD FIRST CONCERNED HIMSELF ABOUT TAKING FROM AMONG THE GENTILES A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME.

JAMES VISITED AFTER PAUL'S ARRIVAL IN JERUSALEM AFTER MISSIONARY JOURNEY

ACTS 21:17-19 - AFTER WE ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM, THE BRETHREN RECEIVED US GLADLY. 18 AND THE FOLLOWING DAY PAUL WENT IN WITH US TO **JAMES**, AND ALL THE ELDERS WERE PRESENT. 19 AFTER HE HAD GREETED THEM, HE BEGAN TO RELATE ONE BY ONE THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE AMONG THE GENTILES THROUGH HIS MINISTRY.

ISN'T THIS AN INTERESTING NARRATIVE? JAMES ONE OF JESUS' BROTHERS DOES NOT BELIEVE HE IS THE CHRIST AT FIRST! IT REMINDS US THAT SOMETIMES WHAT SEEMS "OBVIOUS" TO ONE PERSON IS NOT "OBVIOUS" TO ANOTHER. IT TAKES THE LORD REVEALING HIMSELF AND UNCOVERING THE EYES OF THOSE WHO CAN'T SEE, EVEN WHEN THINGS ARE RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEIR FACE. IT'S A GOOD REMINDER TO US THAT IF JAMES DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HIS OWN BROTHER WAS ALL ABOUT, IT SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISING THAT PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES WHO DON'T BELIEVE JUST BECAUSE WE TELL THEM ABOUT THE LORD.

WHAT OUR WORDS AND TESTIMONIES NEED TO BE UNITED WITH IS A PRAYER FOR GOD TO OPEN THE EYES OF THE "BLIND"! REMEMBER, PEOPLE DON'T SEEK GOD AS THEIR DEFAULT SETTING (ROMANS 3:10-12). IT IS GOD WHO INITIATES THE RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND HELPS US SEE HIS POWER AND LOVE. THIS IS WHAT EVENTUALLY HAPPENED TO JAMES. IT MAY HAVE TAKEN JESUS *LITERALLY* APPEARING TO HIS BROTHER JAMES (1 CORINTHIANS 15:7) FOR HIM TO BELIEVE AND IT WILL CERTAINLY TAKE THE LORD REVEALING HIMSELF TO OUR LOVED ONES AS WELL. THANKFULLY, THIS IS NOT ONLY OUR DESIRE, IT'S GOD'S DESIRE FOR THEM AS WELL! REMEMBER THIS SO THAT YOU DON'T GROW DISCOURAGED WITH YOUR NOT-YET-BELIEVING FAMILY MEMBERS, NEIGHBORS, AND LOVED ONES.

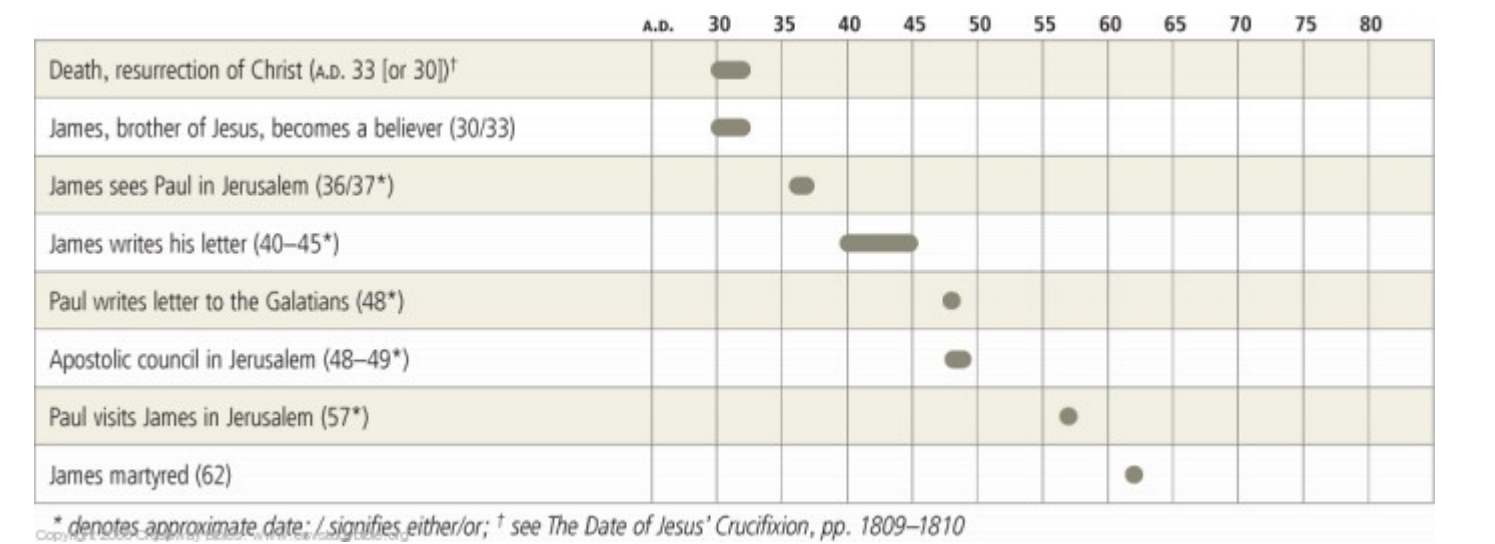
INTRO: THE BOOK OF JAMES

THOUGH NOT MUCH ELSE IS SPOKEN OF ABOUT JAMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS, WE CAN CONCLUDE FROM WHAT WE DO READ THAT JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS WAS A/THE LEADER OF THE EARLY CHURCH. AND AS SUCH, HIS LETTER, WHICH IS ONE OF THE EARLIEST NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS WOULD HAVE BEEN WIDELY RESPECTED BY THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

AND YET, JAMES IS NEVER SEEN TO BOAST IN HIS BIOLOGICAL CONNECTION TO JESUS. IN FACT, THIS IS NEVER MENTIONED IN HIS LETTER, BUT INSTEAD HE OPENS CHAPTER 1 LIKE THIS:

JAMES 1:1 - JAMES, A BOND-SERVANT OF GOD AND OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, TO THE TWELVE TRIBES WHO ARE DISPERSED ABROAD: GREETINGS.

THE BOOK OF JAMES IS INDEED ONE OF THE EARLIEST NT BOOKS, DATED SOMEWHERE AROUND 50 AD.



BECAUSE OF ITS EARLY DATE, WE WILL DISCOVER THAT MUCH OF THE BOOK WILL FOCUS ON PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING, AND HOW A BELIEVER, ESPECIALLY A JEWISH CHRISTIAN WOULD LIVE OUT "FAITH" IN THEIR WORLD. WE KNOW THE AUDIENCE WAS PRIMARILY JEWISH-CHRISTIANS BECAUSE OF THE DATING, AND ALSO BECAUSE OF HOW JAMES OPENS HIS LETTER "TO THE TWELVE TRIBES WHO ARE DISPERSED ABROAD (JAMES 1:1B)."

IN FACT, THE ACTUAL NAME "JAMES" IS INTERESTING IN LIGHT OF THIS FACT. IN THE ORIGINAL GREEK TEXT OF THE BOOK OF "JAMES", THE NAME "JAMES" NEVER APPEARS. INSTEAD, WHERE WE READ OUR ENGLISH WORD JAMES IS THE GREEK WORK "Ἰάκωβος" (IAKOBOS) WHICH IS THE SAME AS THE HEBREW NAME "JACOB". IF YOU MET JAMES IN THE FIRST CENTURY, YOU WOULD HAVE CALLED HIM "JACOB"!

JACOB (AKA JAMES) WAS WRITING HIS LETTER TO THE FIRST BELIEVERS OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS, THE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVED HE WAS THE LONG PROMISED MESSIAH. THEY ARE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN SEPARATE IDENTITY AS *CHRISTIANS* AND AS A RESULT ARE GOING TO FACE TRIALS IN THIS WORLD. AND IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT JAMES FIRST OPENS HIS LETTER ADDRESSING TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS (JAMES 1:1-4). HE WILL GUIDE THEM TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO DEAL WITH TEMPTATIONS (1:5-18) AND ENSURE THEY ARE "DOERS" THE WORD RATHER THAN JUST "HEARERS" (1:19-27). THE LETTER WILL CONTINUE ON TO TALK ABOUT THE EVILS OF PERSONAL FAVORITISM (JAMES 2), THE POWER OF OUR WORDS (JAMES 3), DEALING WITH CONFLICT AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HOLY (JAMES 4), AND THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE FAITH UNTO THE END (JAMES 5).

THESE TRUTHS WERE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE NEW CHURCH BEGINNING THEIR MISSION OF FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE FIRST CENTURY. THIS WOULD BE THE FIRST GROUP OF DISCIPLES WHO WOULD "FOLLOW JESUS" WITHOUT HIM BEING BODILY PRESENT ON THE EARTH TO SHOW THEM THE WAY. INSTEAD, IT WOULD BE THROUGH WRITTEN WORDS LIKE THE BOOK OF JAMES, ENLIGHTENED AND EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT WOULD GUIDE THEIR FAITH AND PRACTICE.

JAMES IS DIRECT AND FIRM, PRACTICAL AND SIMPLE. AND AS WE REFLECT ON THE MAIN THEMES OF JAMES, AND BEGIN OUR JOURNEY THROUGH HIS LETTER IN THE 21ST CENTURY, WE WILL RECOGNIZE HOW TIMELY AND NEEDED HIS WORDS ARE FOR US TODAY.

AND AS WE TURN TO THE TEXT ITSELF NEXT WEEK, IT'S A GOOD TIME TO CONCLUDE OUR INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES BY PONDERING HOW JAMES HIMSELF ENDED UP. INITIALLY NOT A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, JAMES EVENTUALLY WILL BECOME A DISCIPLE HIMSELF. IT MAY HAVE BEEN VERY EASY FOR JAMES TO LIVE WITH SORROW, REGRET, AND SHAME FOR THE "WASTED YEARS" OF HIS LIFE - THOSE DAYS WHEN HE LITERALLY THOUGHT HIS BROTHER WAS "CRAZY" AND TRIED TO GET HIM TO COME HOME. BUT INSTEAD WE SEE A MAN WHO WAS LIVING IN THE GRACE THAT CAME FROM JESUS. HE DOESN'T WASTE TIME LIVING WITH REGRET, INSTEAD HE WHOLEHEARTEDLY POURS OUT HIS LIFE FOR THE LORD, ALMOST AS IF TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.

WE MAY NOT BE WHERE WE HAD HOPED TO BE IN OUR LIVES FOR THE LORD AT THIS STAGE IN OUR JOURNEY. PERHAPS YOU ONLY CAME TO FAITH OR GOT SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD LATER IN LIFE. MAYBE YOU STARTED WELL WITH CHRIST, BUT THEN FELL AWAY, ONLY TO GET BACK ON TRACK AFTER MANY FOOLISH YEARS. MAYBE YOU LOOK AT OTHERS WHO HAVE BEEN CHRISTIANS FOR A WHILE AND ENVY HOW MUCH THEY KNOW, HOW MUCH THEY'VE SEEN.

NO MATTER WHAT YOUR STORY, TODAY IS A GREAT DAY TO DECIDE TO GIVE OUR ALL TO LIVE FOR HIM, NOW. REGRET KEEPS US IN THE PAST, DRAGGING OUR MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL FEET. THIS IS NOT THE LORD'S WILL FOR YOU AND I. INSTEAD, THE LOVE OF GOD AND GRACE OF JESUS HELPS US TO LEAVE THOSE REGRETS IN THE PAST AND MOVE FORWARD WITH A NEW HEART, A FRESH CHANCE AND RENEWED PURPOSE. JAMES DIDN'T SULK IN THE CORNER ABOUT HOW WRONG HE WAS OR WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN HAD HE BELIEVED SOONER IN HIS LIFE - HE ACCEPTED WHAT HAD BEEN AS WHAT HAD BEEN AND MADE THE MOST OF HIS "TODAY". A GOOD MINDSET FOR US TO MODEL AS WELL. DON'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME. TODAY IS A GREAT DAY TO LIVE FOR THE LORD!