

James Series Introduction

Introduction: Today we begin a look at what is probably the first book written in the NT. There are many similarities with the Sermon on the Mount, as well as @ 30 references to nature. There are references to OT saints such as Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah. He alludes to @ 20 OT books. He uses @ 60 commands in 108 verses. Primary doctrines are addressed, including the doctrine of God, sin, salvation, and the end times. James will address several ethical issues, such as: our speech, our use/view of wealth, our use of time, as well as the importance of humility and perseverance. It has been referred to as the Proverbs of the NT.

Overview of the book by William Varner

Prescript		1:1
1.	Be Joyful in Trials	1:2–15
2.	Do Not Be Deceived about God’s Goodness	1:16–18
3.	Become a Good Hearer/Doer of the Word	1:19–27
4.	Do Not Show Favoritism	2:1–13
5.	Show Your Faith by Your Works	2:14–26
6.	Be Consistent in Your Speech	3:1–12
7.	Follow the Wisdom of God	3:13–18
8.	Become a Friend of God	4:1–10
9.	Do Not Speak Against One Another	4:11–12
10.	Do Not Plan Presumptuously	4:13–17
11.	You Rich Should Treat the Poor Justly	5:1–6
12.	Wait Patiently for the Lord’s Coming	5:7–11
13.	Do Not Swear but Pray	5:12–18
14.	Convert the Erring Brother	5:19–20

1) The participants:

- a) The author: *James* [iva,kwboj],
 - i) Jacob
 - ii) The half-brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19)
 - (1) Possibly the second eldest son of Mary and Joseph. (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3)
 - (2) Became a believer after Jesus’ resurrection. (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:7)
 - iii) The pastor of the Jerusalem church. (Acts 12:17; 15:3; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12)
 - (1) While there seems to have been a plurality of leaders, James was the “first among equals” as noted in Acts 15:19–ff.
 - iv) He was married. (1 Cor. 9:5)
 - v) Martyred by stoning in 62 AD. (according to Josephus)
 - (1) Josephus remarks that this led to the destruction of the Temple.
 - vi) From non-Biblical sources: (mentioned in Fruchtenbaum)

- (1) Two other sources, Heggisippus and Eusebius, add more detail concerning Jacob/James' death. They noted that in Jerusalem, he was known even among the unbelieving Jews as Jacob/James the Just. Furthermore, at the time of Jacob/James' arrest, Ananus presented an option: if he would stand on the walls of Jerusalem and publicly renounce his faith in Jesus, he would not be stoned to death. Jacob/James agreed. He was then brought to the top of the wall of Jerusalem. When the Jewish masses gathered, Jacob/James proceeded to preach the gospel. Ananus became angry and pushed him off the wall. The half-brother of and believer in the Messiah was stoned to death by those below the wall.
 - (2) As already noted, Jacob/James' piety was very well known. Because he spent a lot of time praying on his knees, he was often referred to as "Camel-Knees." A camel raises itself first on its knees before getting up and gets down first on its knees before lying down. So, the knees of the camel become broad, bulky, and bulgy. The tradition is that Jacob/James spent so much time on his knees, their shape took on that of a camel's knees. Heggisippus wrote:
 - (a) *He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a [public] bath ... He was in the habit of entering the temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people: so that his knees became as hard as camel's, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God.*
- b) God the Father
- i) Mentioned in the book:
 - (1) 16x as **God**: 1:1, 5, 13, 20, 27; 2:5, 19, 23; 3:9; 4:4, 6, 7, 8
 - (a) He is Judge (4:12)
 - (2) 8x as **Lord**: 1:7; 3:9; 4:10, 15; 5:4, 10
 - (3) 3x as **Father**: 1:17, 27; 3:9
 - (a) Perhaps alluded to in the use of "brothers"
 - (4) 1x as **Lord of Hosts**: 5:4
 - ii) *a servant [dou/loj] of God* (the Father)
 - (1) Acts 16:17; Titus 1:1; Rev. 7:3; 10:7; 15:3; 22:3, 6
 - (2) This is a matter of both authority and humility.
 - (a) "But to claim the status of slave is to point beyond oneself to one's 'master' in the truest sense." (William Brosend in Ben Witherington)
 - iii) The emphasis is on full submission to the authority of another. This is nothing less than unconditional allegiance to a master.
- c) God the Son
- i) Mentioned in the book:
 - (1) 2x by name: 1:1; 2:1

- (a) He is glorious/splendorous (2:1) (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8)
- (2) 3x as **Lord**: 5:8, 14, 15
 - (a) He is returning (5:7-9)
- ii) *and* (a servant) *of the Lord* [ku,rioj] *Jesus Christ* (Messiah):
 - (1) Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Col. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1:1
 - (2) This is a matter of both authority and humility.
 - (3) Jews referred to themselves as slaves only with reference to God. Thus, this implies the deity of Christ. (McCartney)
- iii) NB that James emphasizes his **spiritual** relationship Jesus and not his **physical** relationship. (Moo)
- d) The readers:
 - i) *To the twelve tribes* [dw,deka fulh,] (of Israel) (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1)
 - 12 tribes (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7; Rev. 21:12) naturally refers to Israel, never Gentiles.
 - The context will determine which group he is referring to:
 - (1) **Positively** (believing Jews) called “*brothers*” 19x
 - (a) Beloved brothers (1:16, 19; 2:5)
 - (b) Dispersed brothers (cf. John 7:35)
 - (2) **Negatively** (possibly unbelieving Jews) called:
 - (a) *Adulteresses*: 4:4
 - (b) *Sinners*: 4:8
 - (c) *Doubleminded*: 4:8
 - ii) These were Jews not living in Palestine. *dispersed abroad* [evn o` diaspora,].
 - (1) They still met in synagogues. (2:2)
 - iii) The Jewish believers struggled with:
 - (1) Thinking of God as miserly. (1:16-17)
 - (2) Superficial religion. (1:22-27)
 - (3) Being mistreated. (2:7; 5:1-4)
 - (4) Temptations regarding wealth. (2:2, 6, 15-16; 4:13)
 - (5) Bitterness of speech. (3:1-12)
 - (6) A divisive spirit. (4:1, 11; 5:9)
 - (7) Prayerlessness. (4:2)
 - (8) Worldliness. (4:4)

2) The salutation:

- a) *Greetings* [cai,rw]. (i.e. Be glad! Rejoice!)
 - i) Like his earlier letter in Acts 15:23-29.

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Pray that each of us will grow and mature as we study this book together.
- b) Pray that each one of us will consistently reflect these Biblical truths at home, work, and church.