

"Oh Brother"

We will spend some time in the Book of James. Like any of the books of the bible, we must first study the background, the unique personality of the author, their experiences that shaped their perspective, the audience that they were writing to, and the overall focus, theme, and purpose of their writing.

I think it is critical to understand the life and experiences of the author of each of the Books of the Bible. Every time you see a scripture from Matthew, Luke, Peter, John, Jude and of course James, you should consider the source.

Not from a reliability standpoint....God wrote every word....but understanding who they are and what they have experienced helps you to interpret their perspective.

We all see the world and experience the world through our lens and our experiences. So before we start the book of James...we need to have a clear understanding of exactly who James is. That we will continue to reference as we go through this book.

So today, we will focus on the man...this Jewish man...who lived in the first century...had real life encounters with Jesus and wrote this letter to us.

In general, people tend to either love or not love the book of James. For those who are highly doctrinal, this book seems to lack a great deal. For those who are more practical, this book seems to be gold.

James' writings are clearly not similar to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They wrote of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They were eyewitness accounts of the gospel ministry of Jesus.

Paul's letters to the churches were very focused on the gospel and meaning of salvation. How does one get saved? What happens when we are reborn? What is the role and purpose of the Holy Spirit? What was the meaning of why Jesus came and what He offers to us? Those who love doctrine...love Paul's logical arguments laid out in a Socratic way...each point following the next and answered in a logical way.

But then there is the Book of James....it is not a book about how to get saved....not really about the life and ministry of Jesus....Not so much about your initial relationship with Christ....

James is more like Proverbs in the Old Testament. James is all about how your salvation...your surrender to Christ...your new life as a born again spiritual person...is to be lived out in your life. James skips over it seems all the other things everyone talks about and cuts to the core of your walk WITH Christ.

James is not against faith and clearly understood that Salvation comes through faith alone....but for James...that is a given. He doesn't really address how you are saved...He is totally taking your salvation as a given but then moving on to how your new status as a follower of Jesus should change your life.

James is the....don't talk it...walk it book. While most of the other books of the Bible are about Salvation, Christ's life on earth, the theology of what Christ did and what we believe, and how the early church should operate, James is the yeah...but book.

James is not educated like Paul. He didn't train under the best of the best. It is obvious in his writings...they are more You Tube than Ivory Tower....Practical advice on how to live out your faith.

The Gospels and Letters of Paul are all about salvation and how you come to that through faith alone. They focus on reaching the lost

James, on the other hand, is about living out your faith as a follower of Christ. James was more interested in how what you believed influenced the way you act.

He isn't against the Gospels and Paul's Letters...he is just the next step...They wrote about how to become a believer in Christ....He writes more about how to become a disciple of Christ as a natural outpouring of your belief.

So just by seeing these differences we can begin to understand who the writer actually is...you see there were a lot of James' in the Bible and in the first century AD.

James

There are only two James' who are in a position to write this Book of the Bible. None of the other known ones had the connections or understanding that are demonstrated in this writing.

First is James the son of Zebedee...One of Jesus' disciples...the brother of John...One of the "Sons of Thunder" Part of Jesus' inner circle of Peter, James and John. He was at the transfiguration....He clearly was in a position to write a gospel...

The other James is James the half-brother of Jesus who ends up leading the church that is established in Jerusalem.

So, which one is it? Well almost all scholars agree that this book was written by James the half brother of Jesus. I think the writing itself validates this position.

James seems to be written by someone who was not steeped in the nuances of the gospel message or the events of Jesus' ministry. Surely if James the son of Zebedee wrote a book it would be more a gospel...let me tell you about my time with Jesus...book.

James we will see was written by someone with more practical rather than theoretical knowledge. It is almost as if the person writing it was trying to make up on lost time. Almost as if the author has to defend his faith a bit to those who are more scholarly.

James the half brother of Jesus suits this bill. He was a non-believer during Jesus' earthly ministry. He grew up with Jesus, lived in the same house with Jesus, learned the same trade as Jesus...Had Joseph and Mary as Parents...He likely originated the complaint siblings often have...."You think He is perfect...you think he can never do anything wrong."

Think about that for a moment when you lament your children's relationship with Jesus. James had Joseph and Mary....saw almost every moment of Jesus' life until he was about 30...and lived in a very devout Jewish Home. He too grew up in Nazareth...lived with Jesus and their brothers and sisters.

Yes...the scriptures tell us that Jesus had at least four brothers and an unknown number of sisters. Contrary to Roman Catholic dogma, Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus was born. That truth is implied in Matthew's statement that Joseph kept Mary a virgin until the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25) and is explicit in Luke's description of Jesus as Mary's firstborn son (Luke 2:7, emphasis added). Those children were His half brothers and half sisters. The number and name of the brothers we see....

Matthew 13:54–57 (ESV) 54 and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55 Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

So we know Jesus had 4 brothers and some number of sisters. We know from the order of the list that James was the first physical son of Joseph and Mary's second. That both Matthew and Mark list James first implies that he was the eldest of Jesus' half brothers. He was next in age behind Jesus. Did you notice that Jesus had a brother named Judas? Interesting.

They were a family....like many other first century Jewish families....

They supported the family trade...they made the pilgrimage feasts with Jesus every year...Had to turn around and go back up to Jerusalem when Jesus was lost at age 12....Listened to Jesus reveal His incredible knowledge about Scripture to the Priests.... James' big brother cast a long shadow with shoes impossible to fill for all of them....Not really surprising that none of them, as far as we know, believed in Him as the Messiah until after His resurrection.

Think about this for a moment...suppose your brother claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. No matter who you are...that would be really hard to believe. This is you brother...the one who wrestled with you...gave you noogies and wet willies....the one you grew up admiring but would never tell...Big Brother yes....Messiah? No so much.

So let's look at the introduction of James in the New Testament.....This is where we first see James the Half Brother of Jesus. They went as a family to the Wedding at Cana.

John 2:11–12 (ESV) 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. 12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Note that specifically we are told that after the first miracle at Cana...even though both His family and the disciples were present....only the disciples are credited with believing in Him...that is not an oversight. They left Cana and went to Capernaum together.

The next family outing is recorded in several of the Gospels and occurs early in His ministry.

Mark 3:20–21 (ESV) 20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

Jesus' family...including Mary...thought He was crazy. For those who try to portray Mary as perfect and sinless, the Catholics, this is far from her shining moment. She is influenced by Satan to try to stop Jesus and His ministry....So when Jesus hears of it...his comments are not kind.

Mark 3:31–35 (ESV) 31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." 33 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And 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."

Don't miss the point of what He is saying here. My mother and brothers are those who do the will of God. Currently those who are standing outside are not here to do the will of God.

James has another moment with Jesus later in Jesus' earthly ministry. It was September or October the temperatures would have been warm, and excitement would have been building as the Feast of Booths approached. John tells us that Jesus was at home in Capernaum with His brothers and sisters. Jesus had just given his disciples a teaching that they said was hard to accept. Many turned away and yet His disciples said...where are we to go you are the Christ.....then contrasted with that...we next hear of an interaction with Jesus' earthly family.

John 7:1–3 (ESV) 1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. 2 Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. 3 So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing."

When His brothers said, "Leave here" they were referring to the city of Capernaum, which was the headquarters for Jesus' ministry. It was also home, the place where He had moved His family earlier (John 2:12). He and the disciples would travel north into the region of Upper Galilee and Gaulanitis, east into the Decapolis and Perea or south into Samaria or Judea and then return to Capernaum. The city was located on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was a significant city in Jesus' day. Today only the ruins of an ancient Jewish synagogue exists. But in Jesus' time a Roman garrison was located in the city (Matthew 8:5) and apparently Roman government offices were also located there (John 4:46). The city sat on a major trade route. Matthew had a tax office there (Matthew 9:9). Since the city of Capernaum was about 120 miles (194 km) from Jerusalem it would have taken a few hours to get there by automobile. But they did not have automobiles. Travel by horse, camel or donkey would have taken about one week of travel time. So, they had to plan ahead and allow sufficient time for travel in order to be on time for the festival.

Sounds supportive right? Leave here and go to Jerusalem. Not so fast.

Notice the reason that they gave Him, "... so that Your disciples may see Your works which You are doing..." They said, "Your disciples." That is a detached comment. Also, notice the word "Your." Their statement reveals that they were not Jesus' disciples yet. We know that James and Judas become Christians later because they wrote the two New Testament books of James and Jude. But they were not Christians yet at this point in time. Now notice the rest of their comment to Jesus.

John 7:4–5 (ESV) 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For not even his brothers believed in him.

Why did Jesus' brothers make this comment about doing "anything in secret?" A quick look at verse 10 tells us that Jesus will eventually go to Jerusalem in secret.

John 7:10 (ESV) 10 But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.

It appears that Jesus and His brothers had a discussion about going down to the feast and Jesus explained that He was not going down with them. Jesus was most likely asked to explain why He was not going up to Jerusalem, and verse 1 gives us the reason that He probably gave.

John 7:1 (ESV) 1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

He did not want to go up to Jerusalem, to teach and do miracles. Most likely He did not want to go up for another reason: His brothers would probably have revealed His presence at the Feast. The gospels reveal that Jesus avoided doing certain activities because it was not yet time to die on the cross

They were taunting Him....challenging Him....double dog daring Him...Go to Jerusalem...do some miracles...don't do them in secret...show yourself to the world. Wow everyone and prove who you say that you are.

Then Jesus' response...

John 7:6–9 (ESV) 6 Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. 8 You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." 9 After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

Now some have tried to suggest that Jesus lied to His brothers...He said He was not going to the feast and then went. But the context here is showing yourself to the world....that time had not yet come and thus Jesus would not go with them because they were mocking him and would reveal His presence...He is not going to the feast with them at this moment...but He is going.

So why did His brothers make their comment and why were they mocking Him? Verse 5 reveals that they did not believe in Him. Their comment reveals that they did not believe He really performed miracles. Their comment was sarcastic. They are saying, "If you really do miracles,

why not go up to Jerusalem and show everyone your tricks? Then everyone will believe! Why stay here in Capernaum?" The implication is that Jesus was a fake and not real. They must have been laughing at Him when they said, "If you really do these things, show Yourself to the world" – to everyone! Sadly they were still influenced by Satan to reject the claims of Jesus...it is an old trick...

Luke 4:2–3 (ESV) 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

Luke 4:9–11 (ESV) 9 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,

Look at Jesus' response in the Wilderness....

Luke 4:12–13 (ESV) 12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' " 13 And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

So when would a more opportune time come? Through His brothers regarding the Feast of Booths....They too were mocking Him...saying essentially..If you are the Son of God...go the Feast and prove it with your so called miracles.

So Jesus does go and He does so in private. He does however not remain a secret....He stands up and begins teaching. He knows they want to kill Him but He silences them at the moment with His truth.

Jesus doesn't wow them with miracles...He preaches truth...and then He ends with a passage we unpacked two weeks ago....

John 7:37–39 (ESV) 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' " 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The Author

Ok..so now we have a clear background on the Two James who could have written our text. James of Peter James and John...the one that was Jesus' disciple...was the most qualified...at least it would seem...but there is just one problem....

That James died before the book of James was written.

Acts 12:1–5 (ESV) 1 About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. 2 He killed James the brother of John with the sword, 3 and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

So the book of James is universally believed to have been written by James the half brother of John. The writing support this....It is written more from the perspective of someone who has experienced the truth of who Jesus is... rather than one who has come to it through logic and understanding.

James seems like it was written by a very practical non-scholarly faithful believer who had to defend his faith by showing everyone his actions. In a way, and we will see this in the text, James seems to be trying to make up for lost time....making sure that he is doing everything he can do in the time that he has left. He came to this party a bit late and he wants to make the most of it.

And He does....This non-believing half brother of Jesus does eventually believe but not until after Jesus resurrects.

Why was James a believer? He had an encounter with the resurrected Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:6–7 (ESV) 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Notice not "James and all the other apostles" This is James the half brother and in addition all the apostles.

Notice this appearance of James...for the first time as a believer in Christ....He was in the upper room...

Acts 1:12–14 (ESV) 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Then James is all in. He becomes the leader of the church in Jerusalem...a huge position of the most important first Christian church....The real First Baptist or Methodist or whatever. James church and audience were new Jewish Believers in Jerusalem. His conversion gives testimony to the overwhelming power that came from being a witness of Jesus' resurrection: James turned from being a skeptic to a leader in the church based on his meeting the resurrected Christ.

Acts 15:12–21 (ESV) 12 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things 18

known from of old.' 19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, 20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. 21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

James' speech at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:14-21 reveals his reliance on Scripture, his desire for peace within the church, his emphasis of grace over the law, and his care for Gentile believers, although he himself ministered almost exclusively to Jewish Christians. Also worthy of note is James' humility—he never uses his position as Jesus' blood relative as a basis for authority. Rather, James portrays himself as a "servant" of Jesus, nothing more. In short, James was a gracious leader through whom the church was richly blessed.

Further evidence that James wrote the epistle comes from the strong verbal parallels between the book of James and James's speech and letter recorded in Acts 15

The epistle's distinctively Jewish character is in keeping with the picture of James given in Acts 15 and 21. The book of James contains four direct quotes of the Old Testament and more than forty Old Testament allusions. In addition, James expresses himself in distinctly Old Testament terms, beginning in the first verse with the reference to the "twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad." James describes the gospel as the "law of liberty" (2:12).

He describes his readers' meeting place using the Greek word transliterated "synagogue" (2:2). In 4:4 he uses the common Old Testament figure of adultery to describe spiritual defection. Contemporary Jewish abuses regarding oath taking are condemned in 5:12. The prominent Old Testament figure Elijah appears as an example of the power of righteous prayer (5:17–18). Such important Old Testament names as Abraham (2:21), Rahab (2:25), and Job (5:11) also appear in the book. James is also the only New Testament writer to employ the distinctly Old Testament title for God, "Lord of Sabaoth [Hosts]."

Non believing critics say James the Half Brother of Jesus could not have written this book....he wasn't smart enough...and they argued he doesn't know Greek.

A simple Galilean peasant like James, they argue, was incapable of writing such excellent Greek. Research has shown, however, that many first-century Palestinian Jews likely spoke Greek in addition to Hebrew and Aramaic. That would have been especially true in predominantly Gentile Galilee (cf. Matt. 4:15), particularly in Nazareth, which lay on a busy trade route. Thus it is highly probable that James knew Greek from boyhood. And as head of the Jerusalem church, he would have been in daily contact with the Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish believers, who had been part of the Jerusalem church from its inception (Acts 6:1). That contact would have given James ample opportunity to polish his Greek.

Then they said that he didn't establish an obvious relationship that would bring him credibility.

They say that James lacked any emphasis on his exalted position as the Lord's brother and head of the Jerusalem church as evidence that he did not write the epistle. But

James, like Paul, recognized that knowing Jesus "according to the flesh" was no longer of any value. Actually, that the writer of James does not emphasize his personal authority argues convincingly that he was so well known and respected that such claims were unnecessary.

The Time and Place

James was probably the earliest and first book of the New Testament ever written.

We know that Paul and Barnabas came back to the church in Jerusalem following their Missionary Journey in about 49 AD.

It was there that they presented their case to James about the gospel going to the Gentiles. If James' letter was written after that council surely he would have mentioned it. Particularly since this letter is directed to all who are scattered around the world.

His very Jewish book is written to a very Jewish audience and does not mention at all the issues of Gentiles coming to the faith...what to do about circumcision and meat sacrificed to animals. If those issues had arisen before James wrote his book he surely would have included them.

So the date of the Book of James is probably around 44AD just 11 years after the crucifixion of his half-brother. With that established, let's dive in.

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

There is a lot to unpack in this very first verse.

His Biography...How does James introduce himself?

The first verse of this letter introduces us to the human author, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note the absence here of any mention of his status as the leader of the Church or as Jesus' half brother. Also notice that there is no clarifying statement other than James...Not James the Son of Zebedee or James of whatever....no just James.

That means that people knew exactly who he was...and in keeping with the Jewish tradition of not promoting yourself in your writings...particularly not promoting yourself above God...He simply states what he believes his relationship is....a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church was born on the Day of Pentecost and James, although not an apostle, soon became one of its key leaders. When Paul visited Jerusalem, he discovered that James, as well as Peter and John, were pillars of the church there (Gal. 2:9–12). Because the apostles were frequently away preaching the gospel, James eventually became the preeminent leader of the Jerusalem church. To borrow a contemporary term, he was its senior pastor.

Following his miraculous release from Herod's jail, Peter ordered the astounded believers to "report these things to James and the brethren" (Acts 12:17). Remember that the other James was killed during that same episode in prison....this clearly indicates that James had become the one to whom important news was to be first reported.

James presided over the pivotal Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), which had been convened to decide the momentous question of whether salvation required obedience to the Mosaic Law or was by grace alone working through faith. After much debate, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas reported God's gracious salvation of Gentiles through their ministries (vv. 6–12). James then reinforced Peter's point, handed down the council's decision (vv. 12–21), and most likely composed the resulting letter to Gentile believers (vv. 23–29).

Many years later, when Paul returned to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey, James again appears in the presiding role. Luke reports that "after we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present" (Acts 21:17–18). The plurality of elders did not negate James's primary leadership role, as equality of apostolic office did not negate Peter's leadership of the Twelve. Also known as James the Just because of his righteous life, he was martyred about a.d. 62, according to Josephus.

His Character

In spite of his prominence, what stands out in the first verse of his epistle is James's humility. He does not describe himself as Mary's son and the Lord's brother, refer to his position as head of the Jerusalem church, or mention that the resurrected Christ personally appeared to him. Instead, he describes himself simply as a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Doulos (bond-servant) depicts a slave, a person deprived of all personal freedom and totally under the control of his master. Absolute obedience and loyalty to his master (who provided him with food, clothing, and housing) was required of every doulos. In contrast to the andrapodon, who was made a slave, the doulos was born a slave. James had become a doulos by his new birth through faith in Jesus Christ.

To be a doulos of God was considered a great honor in Jewish culture. Such Old Testament luminaries as Abraham (Gen. 26:24), Isaac (Gen. 24:14), Jacob (Ezek. 28:25), Job (Job 1:8), Moses (Ex. 14:31), Joshua (Josh. 24:29), Caleb (Num. 14:24), David (2 Sam. 3:18), Isaiah (Isa. 20:3), and Daniel (Dan. 6:20) are described as God's servants. In the New Testament, Epaphras (Col. 4:12), Timothy (Phil. 1:1), Paul (Rom. 1:1), Peter (2 Pet. 1:1), Jude (Jude 1), John (Rev. 1:1), and our Lord Himself (Acts 3:13) all bore the title of doulos. By taking that title, James numbered himself with those honored not for who they were, but whom they served—the living God.

His Ministry

In addition to his vital leadership role in the Jerusalem church, James also had a wider ministry. The term twelve tribes was a title commonly used in the New Testament to refer

to the nation of Israel (cf. Matt. 19:28; Acts 26:7; Rev. 21:12). **IMAGE 1** Although the twelve tribes split into two nations (Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah, the southern kingdom), God's chosen people always consisted of the Jews from all twelve tribes, which one day God will sovereignly reunite (Ezek. 37:15–22). When the kingdom split after Solomon's reign, ten tribes made up the northern kingdom of Israel, and Benjamin and Judah formed the southern kingdom of Judah.

James was therefore addressing all Jews who [were] dispersed abroad, regardless of their tribal origins. In this context, abroad refers to any place in the world outside of Palestine. Over the previous several hundred years, various conquerors (including the Romans in 63 b.c.) had deported Jews from their homeland and spread them throughout the known world.

In addition, many other Jews had voluntarily moved to other countries for business or other reasons (cf. Acts 2:5–11). By New Testament times, many Jews lived abroad. The Greek word diaspora ("scattering") became a technical term to identify Jews living outside Palestine (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1).

From the message of the letter itself, as well as from James's frequent addressing of his readers as brothers, it is clear that he is writing to Jewish Christians. It is likely that most of those believers were converted in or near Jerusalem and may have once been under James's pastoral care to some degree. James's primary audience were those Jews who had fled because of persecution and were still suffering trials because of their faith (1:2). To give them confidence, hope, and strength to endure those trials, James gave them a series of tests (see the Introduction) by which they could determine the genuineness of their faith.

His Greeting

Chairein (greetings) means "rejoice," or "be glad," and was a common secular greeting. But to James the word was no mere formality; he expected what he wrote to gladden his readers' hearts by giving them means to verify the genuineness of their salvation. That, James knew, would provide great comfort to them in their trials, which Satan persistently uses to try to make Christians doubt they are indeed God's children and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ.

So James...the half brother of Jesus....but initially not a follower of Jesus....has written to us. He is not a scholar but has first hand personal experiences with Jesus. He knew him for over 25 years and spent a great deal of time with him. He knows what it is like to mock Him, reject Him and essentially try to have Jesus committed.

He grew up with a perfect brother. A brother who claimed to be the Messiah. He was likely embarrassed by Jesus and at times likely tried to distance himself.

But he could not deny the truth once he encountered the resurrected Christ. It took the resurrection to convince James that Jesus was truly God and truly the Messiah.

I think one of the reasons the Book of James is such a favorite for people is because many share his story. I know I do.

We spend many years rejecting the truth. Perhaps mocking Jesus if not by our direct actions and words and least by rejecting who He claims to be. At some point, the intellectual pursuit moves to our heart and we too have an encounter with the Resurrected Christ. It took that revelation to open our eyes to believe.

Like James...we look back over our lives and wonder what would have it been like if we would have believed earlier. We have a sense of a need to make up for lost time. I know that I have felt that way. Not trying to earn my salvation but like James trying to make sure that I take every ounce of every moment to its fullest. Not out of guilt or shame, but out of gratitude and thanks.

James is going to teach us how to live out our faith as already saved followers of Jesus. It is an incredible story from an incredible man. I can't wait to share it with you in this series. Let's Pray.