

## **NOTES ON JAMES** (with Questions for Discussion)

### **AUTHOR**

The author identifies himself as James (1:1), and was probably the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Four men in the NT have this name. The author of this letter could not have been the apostle James, who died too early (A.D. 44) to have written it. The other two men named James had neither the stature nor the influence that the writer of this letter had.

James was one of several brothers of Christ and was probably the oldest since he heads the list in Mt. 13:55. At first he did not believe in Jesus and even challenged him and misunderstood his mission (Jn. 7:2-5). Later he became very prominent in the church:

1. He was one of the select individuals Christ appeared to after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7).
2. Paul called him a "pillar" of the church (Gal. 2:9).
3. Paul, on his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem, saw James (Gal. 1:19).
4. Paul did the same on his last visit (Acts 21:18)
5. When Peter was rescued from prison, he told his friends to tell James (Acts 12:17).
6. James was a leader in the important council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13)
7. Jude could identify himself simply as "a brother of James" (Jude 1:1), so well known was James.
8. He was martyred about A.D. 62.

### **RECIPIENTS**

The recipients are identified explicitly only in 1:1: "the 12 tribes scattered among the nations." Some hold that this expression refers to Christians in general, but the term "12 tribes" would more naturally apply to Jewish Christians. Furthermore, a Jewish audience would be more in keeping with the obviously Jewish nature of the letter (e.g., the use of the Hebrew title for God, *kyrios sabboath*, "Lord Almighty," 5:4).

That the recipients were Christians is clear from 2:1; 5:7-8. It has been plausibly suggested that these were believers from the early Jerusalem church who, after Stephen's death, were scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syrian Antioch (Acts 8:1; 11:19). This would account for James's references to trials and oppression, his intimate knowledge of the readers and the authoritative nature of the letter. As leader of the Jerusalem church, James wrote as pastor to instruct and encourage his dispersed people in the face of their difficulties.

### **SECTION 1: Trials & Temptations** (James 1:1-18)

1. What is the value in problems, difficulties, ordeals, heartaches? (1:2-4)
2. What should we ask for in prayer and why is this important? (1:5)
3. What is James point in commenting on faith in prayer? (1:5-8)
4. What is the perspective on materialism James advances? (1:9-11)
5. How does James see perseverance in? (1:12)
6. Where does temptation come from? (1:13-15)
7. What does James say about God and His relationship with us? (1:16-18)