

A Study of the General Epistles **(NT Survey Lesson 190--Introduction to James)**

Introduction: The epistle of James has been called “the gospel of common sense”. In these five short chapters James explores some of the most practical matters affecting the Christian’s life. James tells us how the justified man gives expression to his faith in everyday life. He explores some of the basic challenges to our faith and how we should act toward them.

Lesson aim: To become familiar with James and to get a feel for the overall thrust of his epistle.

A brief survey of James' life

1. Paul in Galatians wrote about a man named James. What can we learn about him from Gal. 1:19, 2:9,12?
2. Luke also writes of a man named James with great influence in the Jerusalem church. What can we learn about him from Acts 12:17? Ac. 15:13ff? 21:18ff?
3. Is the James mentioned in Ac. 15 the apostle James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John? (Cf. Ac. 12:2)
4. There was another apostle named James (See Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15). Let's see what we may learn about him. What was his mother's name? (Cf. Mk. 15:40 & Mt. 27:56). What was his father's name? (Cf. Jn. 19:25) Did James have any brothers? (Cf. Mk. 15:40 & Mt. 27:56) What were their names?
5. How does Jude identify himself in his epistle? (Jude 1:1) Did "James the son of Mary & Alpheus" have a brother named "Jude" (Mk. 15:40).
6. Did Joseph and Mary have sons named "James" and "Jude"? (Mt. 13:55) Is the James who wrote the epistle the son of Alpheus or the brother of the Lord?
7. Were Jesus' brothers believers in him during his ministry? (See Jn. 7:5)

8. Were Jesus' brothers believers after his resurrection? (See Ac. 1:14)
9. To whom did Jesus appear after his resurrection? (1 Cor. 15:7) Could this have changed their view of Jesus?
10. Was James prominent in the Jerusalem church? (Ac. 12:17).
11. What did James suggest about the Gentiles in Ac. 15:13-21?
12. What recommendation did James make to Paul in Ac. 22:17-25? What was James' attitude toward the Law and those who practiced it?
13. How then would you summarize the role of James in the early church?
14. See if you can find out any historical information on James' death.

The readers of James' epistle

1. To whom does James address his letter? Would it seem these people knew and respected James? Could they have been Jewish Christians scattered because of the persecutions in Jerusalem? (Cf. Ac. 8:2) or converts among the Dispersion? (Cf. Ac. 2:9-11)
2. What factors do you see in the book that favor the idea that these were primarily Jewish Christians? (Appeal to OT characters, words reflecting a Jewish background)

An overview of James' epistle

1. What important words are repeated most in chapter one?
2. What do each of the sections in chapter two (2:1-13 & 2:14-26) discuss?
3. Chapter three begins and ends with the same subject. What is it?
4. What seems to be the problem James deals with in chapter four?
5. What types of circumstances are mentioned in chapter five?

6. Make up a brief chapter by chapter outline of the book based on your discoveries.

How true faith responds to temptations--1:1-27

How true faith leads us to view others (discrimination)--2:1-13

How true faith results in works of faith--2:14-26

How true faith overcomes personal ambition--3:1-18

How true faith overcomes worldliness--4:1-17

How true faith responds to life's various circumstances--5:1-20

Temptation vs. obedience--1:1-26

Discrimination vs. love for all--2:1-13

Perfect faith vs. dead faith--2:14-26

Personal ambition vs. peaceable instruction--3:1-18

Spirituality vs. worldliness--4:1-17

Faithfulness in all circumstances vs. impatience and apostasy --5:1-20