



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

TRUE FAITH: INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES

COLORADO

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Is there a difference between what you say and what you do? If you say that you believe in Jesus Christ, can I tell you believe in Him by the way you behave? The book of James says that it matters how you live! It's a book that doesn't tell us how to be saved, but rather how to live when you are saved. James is not about creed, but conduct. It's not doctrinal but practical.

James is not teaching about Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." But rather, James is teaching about Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Therefore, James is an extremely practical book for living life as a Christian in the Capitol, for it matters how we live. May we submit ourselves to the sound insight that James will give us as we study together about true faith!

I. WHO WAS THE AUTHOR OF JAMES? JAMES 1:1A

"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings." James 1:1

The first verse in James gives us a clue as to who wrote this book. There are four men mentioned in the New Testament with the name of James. Two of them have never been considered as contenders for the author of this book. They are James the son of Alphaeus mentioned in Matthew 10:3 and Acts 1:13. He was an Apostle but little is known about him. And the second is James, the father of Judas, not Iscariot, mentioned in Luke 6:12 and Acts 1:13. This James is the father of an Apostle who was called Thaddaeus in the gospels. Let's spend our time concentrating on the other two.

A. JAMES, THE SON OF ZEBEDEE-

This James was also one of Jesus' disciples and he was the brother of John, Matthew 4:21. James and John were known as the "sons of thunder", mentioned in Mark 3:17. James was a fiery Apostle for the Lord. In Acts 12 when the church comes under persecution and Herod Agrippa the king arrests Peter but puts James to death! (Acts 12:2) James was the first apostle to die for his faith in Jesus Christ. Since James was martyred sometime around 40-44 A.D., this would eliminate him from being the author of this Epistle.

B. JAMES, THE HALF BROTHER OF JESUS-

You would think that if James was the half brother of Jesus he would have said so. Wouldn't you? But let's investigate further. In John 2:12, we find

that Jesus' brothers were present for His first miracle where He changed the water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Can you imagine growing up with an older brother who claimed to be God and see him perform miracles? How would you respond?

In Mark 6:2, we find Jesus coming to his home town of Nazareth with His disciples. There Jesus began to teach in the synagogue and the people found it hard to believe this was the same One Who was the son of Mary and "brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him?" This James grew up with Jesus as his older brother and yet, he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

In John 7:1-5, Jesus' brothers were encouraging Him to go to Judea. At first glance, that doesn't seem strange except his brothers knew that the Jews were waiting for Jesus to return to Judea so they could kill Him. Essentially they were encouraging Him to go to Judea to die, "for not even His brothers were believing in Him."

But an incredible transformation occurred in the lives of James and his brothers. Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, they were obviously changed. For in Acts 1:14, all the disciples were gathered in the upper room following Christ's ascension into heaven, including "Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." 1 Corinthians 15:7 records that Jesus appeared to James following His resurrection and then to all the Apostles. His life was never the same and he became a prominent leader of the Christian church at Jerusalem. (Acts 12:17, Galatians 2:9) James continued in this leadership role in the church until his martyrdom in 62 A.D. when the High Priest had James put to death for his faith in Jesus Christ. In Galatians 2:9, Paul lists "James and Cephas (Peter) and John" as pillars of the church. James was not an Apostle, but was used of God to be a leader in the early church in Jerusalem. It is apparent that James wrote this book to deal with the practical issues of a true and living faith in Jesus Christ.

II. WHEN WAS JAMES WRITTEN?

James is a book written by a Jew to Jewish Christians as we will see in our next study. In Acts 15, James addresses the Jerusalem Council and moderates a potentially explosive situation regarding Gentile Christians and their status in the church. This took place in A.D. 49 and was a critical, pivotal issue in the life of the early Christian church. Because James does not mention the meeting of this council nor deal with any of the newly formed, Gentile churches or believers, we can conclude that James was written prior to this Jerusalem Council. The most probable writing of James would be somewhere between 44 and 49 A.D. It is apparent that this James

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was used to pen not only the earliest Epistle, but the first New Testament book as well. As James ministered in the Jerusalem church, he most likely authored this Epistle from Jerusalem as well.

III. WHAT IS THE THEME OF JAMES?

What is true faith? How would you answer that question? As we will see from the very first verses, James wrote this book to challenge the Jewish Christians and all believers to examine their faith to see if it is a genuine, saving faith. James answers the question of what is true faith! This book is a test of the genuineness of our faith in Christ. James is very practical. It doesn't teach us how to be saved, but rather how to live when we are saved. James relates everything he writes to true faith and how it works. Let's take a quick overview of the book with this main message in mind. What does James say about true faith?

- *James 1:2-12 True Faith...endures trials.*
- *James 1:13-18 True Faith...endures temptations!*
- *James 1:19-27 True Faith...is a doer of the Word!*
- *James 2:1-13 True Faith...doesn't show partiality but love!*
- *James 2:14-26 True Faith...produces good works!*
- *James 3:1-12 True Faith...controls its' tongue!*
- *James 3:13-18 True Faith...has a wisdom from above!*
- *James 4:1-10 True Faith...submits to God!*
- *James 4:11-12 True Faith...doesn't speak against its' brother!*
- *James 4:13-17 True Faith...seeks God's will!*
- *James 5:1-11 True Faith...waits in patience for the Lord's return!*
- *James 5:12 True Faith...keeps its' word!*
- *James 5:13-18 True Faith...prays in faith!*
- *James 5:19-20 True Faith...bold brothers accountable to true faith!*

IV. WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAITH?

James wanted to give us practical ways in which we could test ourselves to see if we have true, saving faith which produces eternal salvation! This book is essential for every believer for it matters how we live.

Consider first, if your belief doesn't match your behavior then James is written for you and you need to be saved. Faith, without these good works, is no faith at all! It is not a true, genuine and saving faith resulting in eternal salvation. It is not the works that save, rather the works that result from a saving faith! James does not want you to be deceived. In the book of Romans, Paul answers the question of how eternal salvation is received. *It is by faith alone.* James answers the question of how our eternal salvation is verified. *It is by works alone.* James says it matters how you live! It is Biblical to examine and test to see if you are in the faith. Does your faith in God reflect the same qualities as James lays out? Reflect on the following Scriptures:

- *Psalm 17:3 "You have tried my heart; You have visited me by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress."*
- *Psalm 26:1-2 "Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart."*
- *Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."*
- *Lamentations 3:40 "Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the Lord."*
- *Ezekiel 18:28 "Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die."*
- *Galatians 6:4 "But each one must examine his own work"*
- *2 Corinthians 13:5 "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you- unless indeed you fail the test?"*
- *1 John 2:5 "but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him."*

Secondly, James teaches us how to live out a true and genuine faith in a difficult world with trials and testing at every turn. In James, we will study a faith that's real, a faith that works, and a faith that endures. True faith endures patiently till Christ's return with works that result and bring glory to God. The overall theme of the book of James is our faith in Christ, if true and genuine, will be verified by our righteous deeds.