

## Study of James / Spring Quarter 2011 Bellevue Church of Christ / Lesson 1

### Introduction

**Author:** James, who identifies himself as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1). There are four men who bear this name in the New Testament:

- James, son of Zebedee and brother of John - A fisherman called by Christ (Matthew 4:17-22) who later became an apostle (Matthew 10:2). Together with John, they were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder" because of their impulsiveness (cf. Mark 3:17 with Luke 9:51-56). He was killed by Herod in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:1-2).
- James, son of Alphaeus - Another one of the apostles (Matthew 10:3; Acts 1:12), about whom very little is known.
- James, father of Judas the apostle - Even more obscure, one of the few references to him is Luke 6:16.
- James, the brother of our Lord - A half-brother of our Lord (Matthew 13:55), who did not believe in his brother at first (John 7:5). He became a disciple following the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7; Acts 1:14) and gained prominence in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9). As evidence of his prominence, Peter sent him a special message following his own release from prison (Acts 12:17). James also played an important role in the conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-33), and Paul brought him greetings upon arriving at Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-19).

Of these four, "James, the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19) is the most likely the author of this epistle. According to Josephus, he was martyred in 62 A.D.

**Recipients:** The epistle is addressed to "to the twelve tribes in Dispersion:" (1:1). This naturally leads one to think of Jewish believers who had been dispersed from Jerusalem in the persecution following Stephen's death. While Jews, the epistle makes it clear that they were also brethren in the Lord, i.e., they were Jewish Christians. Nineteen times James calls them "brethren."

**Time and Place of Writing:** With no mention of the Jerusalem conference recorded in Acts 15 (A.D. 49), and the use of the word "synagogue" (assembly, 2:2), A.D. 48-50 is the date commonly given for this epistle. This would make it the first book of the New Testament written. If James, the Lord's brother, is the author, then he probably wrote it in Jerusalem.

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**James – Who Wrote the Epistle?**

**Matthew 4:18-22 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup> And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

**Matthew 10:1-4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. <sup>2</sup> The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**Matthew 13:53-58 (ESV)**

<sup>53</sup> And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, <sup>54</sup> 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? <sup>55</sup> 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? <sup>56</sup> And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" <sup>57</sup> And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." <sup>58</sup> And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

**Mark 3:16-19 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**Luke 6:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

**Luke 9:51-56 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> And they went on to another village.

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**John 7:1-11 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. <sup>2</sup>Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. <sup>3</sup>So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. <sup>4</sup>For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup>For not even his brothers believed in him. <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup>After saying this, he remained in Galilee. <sup>10</sup>But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. <sup>11</sup>The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?"

**Acts 1:12-14 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

**Acts 12:1-5 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. <sup>2</sup>He killed James the brother of John with the sword, <sup>3</sup>and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup>And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. <sup>5</sup>So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

**Acts 12:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup>But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the

**Acts 21:17-19 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup>When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. <sup>18</sup>On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup>After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

**1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

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**Galatians 1:18-20 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)

**Galatians 2:7-9 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised <sup>8</sup> (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup> and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

**Acts 15:13-33 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup> Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup> And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup> " '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, <sup>17</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup> known from of old.' <sup>19</sup> Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." <sup>22</sup> Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, <sup>23</sup> with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. <sup>24</sup> Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, <sup>25</sup> it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup> men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup> We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup> For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: <sup>29</sup> that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." <sup>30</sup> So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup> And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. <sup>32</sup> And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. <sup>33</sup> And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them.

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**Dispersion**

**Acts 8:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

**Acts 11:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.