

James: Introduction

James 1:1

August 7, 2016

The Author

The book is written by a man named James. There are _____ men in the Bible named James. First, there is James, one of the _____ twelve, called James the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3, Acts 1:13). There is James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee. He was executed by Herod Agrippa I before this letter was written (Acts 12:2). In all likelihood, the author of the book of James is the _____ son of Joseph and Mary, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus. Initially, James and his brothers _____ Jesus (John 7:5, Mark 3:20-22). In time, James came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (1 Corinthians 15:7). James became one of the leading apostles in the church (Galatians 1:18-19, 2:9, Acts 21:18, Acts 15). James was given the name, James the Just, for his love of _____.

About the Book

James is one of the earliest books in the New Testament. Scholars believe it was written around 50 A.D. James is heavily _____ by the teachings of Jesus, especially the _____ on the _____ (Matthew 5-7). There are _____ commands within _____ verses.

A Controversial Book

Martin Luther

In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle — these are the books which show you Christ, and teach you everything that is needful and blessed for you to know even though you never see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore, St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.

Luther's complaint is this: James does not show us _____. He does not give the _____. It appears that James is at odds with Paul over the issue of _____. How do we explain these issues? James is not a _____ book. James is not concerned about what the Christian _____. James is concerned about how the Christian _____. Paul and James are addressing _____ issues.

James is not completely _____ of the gospel. He gives _____ of the gospel throughout the book (James 2:13, James 5:11, James 4:6, James 1:18).

Luther said books like Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter are such wonderful books, that, if one of these were the _____ book from the Bible we have ever read, they would be _____ for us. The truth is, God gave us _____ books. We _____ them all. No _____ book in the Bible is _____.

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Introduction

For many, James is a favorite book. It is short. It is practical. It addresses a huge array of issues we face as believers in Jesus: trials; poverty, wealth, and materialism; favoritism; social justice; the tongue; worldliness; prayer; and sickness. James is not like Paul. Paul invented the run-on sentence. James is precise. Paul speaks about complex theological constructs. James uses down to earth illustrations. James is a two-edged sword: we know clearly what he says; the hard part is doing what he says.

This morning we will begin our study on the book of James. We are going to introduce the study this morning.

The Author

The book is written by a man named James. Who is he? He introduces himself in verse one: "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

There are three men in the Bible named James. First, there is James, one of the original twelve, called James the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3, Acts 1:13). Almost nothing is known of him. If this is the author, I think he would give more information about himself. There is James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee. He was executed by Herod Agrippa I before this letter was written (Acts 12:2). Chances are he is not the author of this book.

In all likelihood, the author of the book of James is the natural son of Joseph and Mary, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus. Initially, James and his brothers rejected Jesus. They mocked Jesus as he was going to the Feast of Booths. John 7:5 says, "For not even His brothers were believing in Him." When Jesus came to His hometown of Nazareth, He drew large crowds. At this time the Pharisees said Jesus cast out demons through the prince of demons. Jesus' brothers were concerned that He had drawn such a large crowd and stirred up the opposition of the religious leaders. They wanted to take Jesus into custody and stop Him from teaching, saying, "He has lost His senses" (Mark 3:20-22).

In time, James came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. We don't know when James came to faith in Jesus. Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). It's possible this is when James came to believe in Jesus. Afterward, James became one of the leading apostles in the church, Paul calling James one of the pillars of the church (Galatians 1:18-19, 2:9). James was the lead Apostle in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 21:18). He also led the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15).

James was given the name, James the Just, for his love of righteousness. This love for righteousness is seen throughout the book. His love for righteousness gave him a good reputation in Jerusalem. Josephus writes about the great esteem the people of Jerusalem had for James. James defended the poor and criticized the aristocracy. This criticism for the aristocracy played a part in the death of James. James was executed in 62 AD by the high

priest, Annas the Younger. The Roman governor Festus had just died and Annas took advantage of the absence of a Roman official and had James executed. The public outcry was so great when the new governor arrived, Annas was deposed from being high priest.

About the Book

James is one of the earliest books in the New Testament. Scholars believe it was written around 50 A.D. Scholars debate which book was written first – James or Galatians. Both are very early books. James is heavily influenced by the teaching of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Some have called this book a practical commentary on the Sermon of the Mount. James does not directly quote Jesus, allusions to the words of Jesus abound. For example, James, along with Jesus:

Admonishes us not to swear by an oath but to let our words be true (James 5:12, Matthew 5:33-37)

Commands us not to judge (James 5:2, Matthew 7:1-5)

Warns of the temporary nature of material possessions (James 5:2, Matthew 6:19)

Calls us to rejoice in the midst of trials (James 1:2, Matthew 5:11-12)

Reminds us the goal of the Christian life is maturity (James 1:4, Matthew 5:48)

We must act upon our profession of faith (James 2:14-26, Matthew 7:21-23)

These are just a few examples. **There are 59 commands within 108 verses.** This is a practical book. James is also a controversial book.

A Controversial Book

The book of James has its share of controversies. It was a disputed book. What is a disputed book? The early church was not unanimous on whether or not the book belonged in the Bible. It was eventually accepted, being one of the last books to be recognized as inspired.

Martin Luther was very skeptical of the book of James. This is what he said:

In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle — these are the books which show you Christ, and teach you everything that is needful and blessed for you to know even though you never see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore, St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.

Why is Luther acting this way? Is he just being grumpy, angry Luther? Luther called this book, "a straw of an epistle." I think that means Luther thought James had no substance. It is an inferior book. It is not a good book. At one point Luther did not believe James belonged in the Bible. Why did Luther react so strong against this book? **Luther's complaint is this: James does not show us Christ.** Unlike Paul's epistles, unlike 1 Peter, unlike other books in the New Testament, James does not point us to Jesus. **He does not give the gospel.** This is true. James does not proclaim the gospel. This is important to Luther considering his background. He lived as a monk under the authority of the church of Rome. Rome said, "Just be good. Just do what you are told. Maybe you'll get to heaven." Luther knew he was never good enough to earn eternal life. The gospel of Jesus set Luther free. Jesus did what Luther could not do. We can relate to this, considering our past.

Furthermore, **it appears that James is at odds with Paul over the issue of justification**. Paul is emphatic: "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5). James is equally emphatic: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24).

How do we explain these issues? Why no gospel? Why the apparent contradiction with Paul? It is about the intent of the author. **James is not a theological book. James is not concerned about what the Christian believes**. He is not concerned about doctrinal precision. **James is concerned about how the Christian behaves. Paul and James are addressing different issues.** Paul is concerned with doctrinal precision. James is not. Paul grounds us in doctrine. James does not. Paul talks about theology. James does not. Paul's emphasis is practical living based on precise theology. James is concerned about practical living. It is not that doctrine or theology are unimportant. James emphasizes behavior. The people to whom he is writing know things and claim to believe things. He wants to see them act on what they believe and know.

Having said that, **James is not completely void of the gospel. He gives hints of it throughout the book.**

James 2:13

For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 5:11

We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

James 4:6

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

James 1:18

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

These are hints. We need a doctrinal background to see these hints. The book of James is not contrary or contradictory. It is different. Paul, Peter, and the author of Hebrews woo us to follow and obey. They appeal to us with logic and emotion. They can be forceful in their arguments. Most of the time they are not. James? James kicks us in our complacency. Paul says, "I urge you by the mercies of God." James says, "Prove yourselves doers of the word." Just do it! There is more. Whereas the Apostle Paul uses long complicated sentences, James is short and to the point. Whereas Paul will go on and explore the depths of various doctrines, James has little to no doctrinal content. Whereas Paul explores the wonders of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, James says almost nothing. While Paul's writings are imminently practical, James is more so. It takes Paul a while to become practical. Paul's

style is to explore doctrinal issues and then speak of practical issues. James just jumps right into practical matters. It is not that the man James is unconcerned about doctrine and theology. His readers need to be prodded into action, to live out their faith in Jesus. There are times we need a good kick in the seat of the pants to get us to live the Christian life. James gives us that kick in the seat of the pants.

This leads into another issue. Let us look at Luther's quote again.

In a word St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle — these are the books which show you Christ, and teach you everything that is needful and blessed for you to know even though you never see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore, St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.

I'm not sure if Luther is dogmatic or if he had a moment like some politicians where he talks too much and doesn't know when to stop. **Luther said books like Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter are such wonderful books, that, if one of these were the only book from the Bible we have ever read, they would be enough for us.** I've heard other people say this sort of thing. I've said it too. "If I had only one book from the Bible then Romans or Matthew or Daniel would be enough for me." **The truth is, God gave us 66 books.** He gave us 66 books for a reason: **we need them all. No one book in the Bible is enough.** If all we had was James, then we might believe we are justified by faith and works. If all we had was the book of Romans, we might become fatalists, since Paul talks so much about election in this book. Let us be careful not to pick and choose to read and study only what we really enjoy. We need sound doctrine. We need wise application. We need the entire Bible. James in particular reminds us that Christians not only believe certain things, or that we say certain things. Christians also do certain things. We are to be people of action. James is a book of action. We are to be obedient people. We need the book of James.

Communion

1 Corinthians 11:23-28

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

25 In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Communion is for the following people: they are believers in Jesus. They are truly sorrowful for their sins. They are comforted by the fact that Jesus has died for their sins and has forgiven them. Furthermore, they want their faith strengthened and they also want to be more holy. They want to obey more and sin less. We eat and drink this morning to remember Jesus, to be strengthened, to sin less, and to obey more. Before we eat and drink, we are going to take a few moments to pray. While we pray, let us examine ourselves. Let us thoroughly confess our sins. Let us be sorrowful for our sin. Let us repent of our sins. Then, let us rejoice in what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Let us be comforted concerning our sins and go forth determined, by His grace, to obey more and sin less.

From Middle English auctour, from Anglo-Norman autour, from Old French autor, from Latin auctor, from auge (to increase, originate). The h, also found in English authour, is unetymological as there is no h in the original Latin spelling. The OED attributes the h to contamination by authentic. (Received Pronunciation) IPA(key): /ˈɔːt̪ɔːr.ɪ.ə/. (General American) IPA(key): /ˈɔːt̪ɔːr.ɪ.ə/. (cot-caught merger) IPA(key): /ˈɔːt̪ɔːr.ɪ.ə/. (obsolete) IPA(key): /ˈɔːt̪ɔːr.ɪ.ə/. Rhymes: -ɔːt̪ɔːr.ɪ.ə(r). Hyphenation: au-thor. author - WordReference English dictionary, questions, discussion and forums. All Free. author, +n. Computing the writer of a software program, esp. a hypertext or multimedia application. Collins Concise English Dictionary © HarperCollins Publishers: author /ˈɔːt̪ɔːr.ɪ.ə/ n. a person who composes a book, article, or other written work. Related adjective(s): auctorial. a person who writes books as a profession; writer. an originator or creator: the author of this plan. vb (transitive). to write or originate. Author definition: The author of a piece of writing is the person who wrote it. | Meaning, pronunciation, translations and examples. Word forms: plural, 3rd person singular present tense, plural authors, present participle authoring, past tense, past participle authored. 1. countable noun. The author of a piece of writing is the person who wrote it. She is the joint author of a booklet on Integrated Education. [+ of]. 2. countable noun. An author is a person whose job is writing books.

author ˈɔːr I (originator) noun architect, auctor, begetter, causer, composer, contriver, creator, deviser, discoverer, effector, fabricator, founder, generator, inaugurator, initiator, innovator, institutor, introducer, inventor, maker, manufacturer, ˈɔːr | Law dictionary. author ˈɔːr ˌ ˌ author UK US /ˈɔːr ˈɔːr/ noun [C] ˈɔːr the writer of a book, article, etc.: ˈɔːr He is a best selling author. ˈɔːr The author of the report said his findings were very worrying. ˈɔːr a person who begins or creates something: ˈɔːr The authors of the proposal want ˈɔːr | From Middle English auctour, from Anglo-Norman autour, from Old French autor, from Latin auctor, from augeō (ˈɔːr to increase, originate). The h, also found in English authour, is unetymological as there is no h in the original Latin spelling. The OED attributes the h to contamination by authentic. (Received Pronunciation) IPA(key): /ˈɔːr ˈɔːr/. (General American) IPA(key): /ˈɔːr ˈɔːr/. (cot-caught merger) IPA(key): /ˈɔːr ˈɔːr/. (obsolete) IPA(key): /ˈɔːr ˈɔːr/. Rhymes: -ɔːr(r). Hyphenation: au- thor.