



Today we begin a journey through the writing we call James. Sometimes referred to as the New Testament Proverbs, this writing is full of interesting word pictures, practical wisdom, & easy-to-understand commands, challenging us to put feet to our faith and walk what we talk. Join us for the journey!

☞ "Is my faith is the **real deal** or just an **empty shell**? Just in case you thought you should never question your salvation - like you're somehow hurting God's feelings if you do - look how the apostle Paul issued the same challenge:

**2 Corinthians 13:5** (NET) Put yourselves to the test to **see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!** Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you—unless, indeed, you fail the test!

As we study through James, will YOU take the challenge to really look in the mirror, to examine yourself and see if you are who you think you are?

Imagine that your life ends tonight. You stand before your Creator with no masks or facades. **HOW YOU LIVED YOUR LIFE** will answer this question:

### **BIG QUESTION: Do I believe THAT or believe IN?**

The author of the writing we are going to study demonstrates the difference when he writes...

**James 2:19** (NET) You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe [that]—and tremble with fear.

The demons believe THAT God exists, but they certainly don't believed IN or TRUST IN Him!!!

*If your life ended today, how would how your life answer this question? **Do I believe THAT or believe IN?***

### **AUTHOR**

**James 1:1** (NET) From **James**, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the **twelve tribes** dispersed abroad. Greetings!

**James** is translated from the Greek word is **lakōbos** (Greek - Ἰάκωβος; pr. ee·ak·o·bos), which would be better rendered '**Jacob**' in English. The shortened version, **lakōb**, IS rendered 'Jacob' in Matt. 1:2 & Matt. 22:32. Otherwise it would sound really weird - like this:

**Matthew 22:32** (NET) 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of **JACOB**' [why not JAMES?]

**So what? Why does that matter?** Translating this as 'James' causes English speakers to forget this was a Jewish man writing to a largely Jewish audience - **the twelve tribes dispersed abroad**. In so doing many don't realize nor appreciate that God has given us the Messiah through the Jewish people.

\* A Jewish believer and scholar, **Michael Brown**, writes more about why this matters in an article called *Recovering the Lost Letter of Jacob*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/38591-recovering-the-lost-letter-of-jacob>

## ***So just who IS this man named Jacob?***

It seems that this author is none other than **Jacob, the half-brother of Jesus**. He is found throughout the New Testament writings.

- Jacob is listed as the first of Jesus' brothers in **Matt. 13:55 & Mark 6:3**.

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**Matthew 13:54-56** (NET) <sup>54</sup> Then he came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers? <sup>55</sup> Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother named Mary? And aren't his brothers **James [Jacob]**, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? <sup>56</sup> And aren't all his sisters here with us? Where did he get all this?"

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- The Scriptures describe the family of Jesus, *including Jacob*, thinking Jesus to be out of his mind (Mark 3:20-21). John 7:2-5 notes his own brothers - including Jacob - did **NOT** believe in Him.

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**Mark 3:20-21** (NET) <sup>20</sup> Now Jesus went home, and a crowd gathered so that they were not able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard this they went out to restrain him, for they said, "**He is out of his mind.**"

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**John 7:5** (NET) (For **not even his own brothers believed in him.**)

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*A strange thing happens AFTER the resurrection of Jesus*. Just after Jesus ascends into the clouds and his followers of Jesus gather in prayer, including Jesus' mother and **brothers** (Acts 1:14).

What changed between their thinking Jesus was crazy and now gathering to pray with His followers?

- Paul writes that Jesus specifically showed Himself alive to Jacob (**Jakōbo**) in **1 Cor. 15:7**. How did Paul know that? Paul writes that he spoke with "**James [Jacob], the Lord's brother**" (Gal. 1:19).

🕒 Evidently **THIS was the GAME CHANGER - THE RISEN JESUS!!!** Until this point, Jacob believed THAT Jesus existed but didn't believe IN Jesus...and as we will see shortly, **there's a major difference between believing THAT Jesus and believing IN Jesus**. It's clear that Jacob/James really did come to **believe IN Jesus**.

- Peter is released from prison in Jerusalem and stops by to tell his believing friends what happened, he asks them, "**Tell Jacob (James) and the brothers these things.**" (Acts 12:17)

- Jacob (aka James) gives the last word at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

- Paul names 3 "pillars" of among the Jewish believers. Look who he mentions first, before Peter or John:

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**Galatians 2:9** (NET) and when **James [Jacob]**, Cephas, and John, who had a reputation as **pillars**, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we would go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

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- When Paul gave the report of his Gentile ministry to the elders in Jerusalem, James/Jacob is mentioned as the first leader he reports to (Acts 21:18).

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**Acts 21:18** (NET) The next day Paul went in with us to see **James [Jacob]**, and all the elders were there.

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So it is most certainly true that the author is a Jewish leader & follower of Jesus - most likely the half-brother of Jesus...**no longer just believed THAT Jesus but believed IN Jesus**.

## AUDIENCE

**James 1:1** (NET) From Jacob, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the **twelve tribes dispersed abroad**. Greetings!

Because of their disobedience in the past, the Jewish people had been taken into captivity in Assyria and Babylon. Although many of them eventually returned to Israel, many stayed in the countries that had been taken to.

Years later in Jerusalem, when Jews who didn't trust Jesus persecuted those who did trust Jesus, the Jewish followers of Jesus fled (as we saw in our Acts study). So this letter is written to Jewish followers of Jesus - **the twelve tribes dispersed abroad**.

## The Author's Answer to the Question

**James 1:1** (NET) From Jacob, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. Greetings!

Jacob answered the question YOU need to answer...the question I need to answer...**Do I believe THAT or believe IN?**

*Jacob calls himself a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

What would YOUR BROTHER have to do so that you would call him your LORD...the RULER over your life? But this is exactly what Jacob writes. He has now come to *BELIEVE IN* Jesus. He is now his slave/servant...in other words - ***Jacob says I belong Jesus - he rules my life.***

**Can you say that about yourself?**

**BIG QUESTION: Do I believe THAT or believe IN?**