

Lessons From James

Introduction To The Book

(Ja 1:1)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
 - a. Greeting...
2. We have now finished up our series of lessons on the "Fundamentals Of The Church."
 - a. We have covered a number of lessons covering a number of topics within this series.
3. New series of lessons.
 - a. We are going to start a breakdown of each N.T. book starting with the most practical for Christians today...James.
3. My goal in this series...
 - a. Is to have a thorough exegetical sermon on the book of James.
 - b. Is to have practical lessons from which we can use today to better our walk with God.
4. Let us begin by looking at those things that give us some insight into the book itself.

I. The History

A. About the author James

1. There are many "James" in found in the Bible.
 - i. James the son of Zebedee & brother of John.
 - a. He was a fisherman, but was called by Christ.
 1. [Mt 4:17-22](#)¹
 - b. James & John were called the "sons of thunder" because of their impulse to see Samaria destroyed.
 1. [Mk 3:17; Lk 9:51-56](#)
 - c. He was killed by Herod in about 44 A.D.
 1. [Ac 12:1-2](#)
 - ii. James the son of Alphaeus.
 - a. He is another apostle.
 1. [Mt 10:3; Ac 1:12](#)
 - b. Not very much is known about this James.
 - iii. James the father of Judas the apostle not the betrayer.
 - a. Even less is known about this man. He is only mentioned twice.
 1. [Lk 6:16; Ac 1:13](#)
 - b. They are just passing statements about being Judas' dad.
 - iv. James the half brother of our Lord and Savior Jesus.
 - a. We see this James as Jesus' brother in [Mt 13:55](#).
 - b. He did not believe in Jesus at first.
 1. Jn 7:5
 - c. After Jesus' resurrection & Jesus appearing to James, he believed in Him.
 1. [I Co 15:7; Ac 1:14](#)

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

Lessons From James

- d. He eventually became a leader in Jerusalem.
 - 1. **Ga 2:9**
 - i. When Peter was delivered from prison he sent a letter to James.
 - a. **Ac 12:17**
 - ii. He was very instrumental in the conference at Jerusalem.
 - a. **Ac 15:13-33**
 - iii. When Paul visited Jerusalem it was James that brought greetings too.
 - a. **Ac 21:18-19**
 - 2. Only one of these James' is the author.
 - i. The author, James, would seem to be James the brother of Jesus.
 - ii. From the middle of the 3rd century the patristic fathers called the author "James the just" referring to Jesus, brother. (<http://goo.gl/5jtH5>)
- B. The timeframe for the book
 - 1. Most hold to the early date meaning the early 40's.
 - i. Considering that there is no extensive mention of the Gentiles and since there was such an uproar around 48-49AD (Ac 15) it is assumed before this then the book was written.
 - 2. Some hold to the idea that it was written at the end of James' life around 63 A.D.
 - i. This is usually because it is seen as an answer to Paul's letters to Galatia and Rome.
 - ii. Many see this as an attempt to discredit the perceived Paul's "justified by faith alone" doctrine however Paul never taught justification by faith alone.
- C. The canonicity
 - 1. Many have questioned the book of James as being part of the canon ie scripture inspired by God.
 - i. Luther was probably the most vocal about it because he saw it as a direct contradiction to the book of Romans which he thought taught justification by faith alone.
 - a. "In sum: he wished to guard against those who depended on faith without going on to works, but he had neither the spirit nor the thought nor the eloquence equal to the task. He does violence to Scripture, and so contradicts Paul and all Scripture. He tries to accomplish by emphasizing law what the apostles bring about by attracting men to love. I therefore refuse him a place among the writers of the true canon of my bible; but I would not prevent anyone placing him or raising him where he likes, for the epistle contains many excellent passages." (<http://goo.gl/y7vJd>)

Lessons From James

2. However the problem with this is that Paul never teaches justification by faith only. In fact he teaches against it.
 - i. **Ro 2:5-6** "But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 He will render to each one according to his works" (ESV)
3. The book of James belongs in the Bible as God's Word.

II. The Context

- A. The letter was written to what group of people?
 1. The "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."
 - i. **Ja 1:1** "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings."
 2. It would appear from this to be to the Jewish Christians that were outside Palestinian area.
 - i. **Ja 1:1; 2:1**
- B. The letter was written to what general social class of people?
 1. It would appear that many of these Jewish Christians were poor and oppressed.
 - i. Being Jewish they would be persecuted by the Gentiles.
 - ii. Being Christian they would be persecuted by the Jews.
 - iii. Being poor they were being oppressed by the rich.
 - a. **Ja 2:6-7**
- C. The letter was written to a wide area (everywhere but Palestine) and to a large number of hurting brethren.

III. The Content

- A. Brethren were having trouble in their personal life & in the church
 1. They were going through difficult trials.
 2. They were facing temptations.
 3. They were not working for the Lord.
 4. There was a distinction in the church between the rich and poor.
 5. There was competition for positions in the church.
 6. Their mouth was improperly used and they desired the world it would appear.
 7. Some were straying from the faith.
- B. Thus James writes to bring the brethren to spiritual maturity.
 1. The brethren were immature and in need to a wakeup call. James delivers it in an eloquent and magnificent way.

Lessons From James

IV. Some Instructions For Today

- A. The issues found in this letter are found today.
 - 1. That is what makes the book of James so great a study.
- B. There is a need for spiritual maturity which would fix all spiritual falls.
 - 1. Most of our congregations and thus Christians are spiritually immature.
 - i. That is why so many are falling into liberalism and thus sin.
 - a. **He 5:12** "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food."
 - ii. That is why congregations struggle period.
 - a. Churches can & will go through trials and they will go through tribulations but the congregation that is spiritually mature will come out on the other side better for it as with the individual.
 - b. This is the sign of a mature or maturing congregation...how do they handle the difficult times.
- C. When we examine our congregation here how do we stack up?
 - 1. Would you consider us spiritually mature?
 - i. If we were to go through some intense persecution like we see in the early days would we overcome it or would it overcome us?
 - ii. If we were to go through some intense tribulations would we face it, beat it, and overcome it or would be cower underneath it?
- D. When we examine ourselves here how do we stack up?
 - 1. Would you consider yourself spiritually mature?
 - i. If the authorities came in right now and took your child or grandchild and said deny Christ or we torture him/her...would you deny or bless and glorify Christ?
 - ii. If you were given the choice to assemble with the saints to worship God or go to a school function, study for a test, travel, or anything else you want to put in there...what would you choose.
- E. When we examine our homes how do they stack up?
 - 1. Wives do you let your husbands' miss services without challenging them?
 - 2. Husbands do you let your wives miss without challenging them?
 - 3. Parents do you let your kids miss for any reason or do you train and teach them?
 - 4. Are there daily Bible studies in your home?
 - 5. Is there daily prayer in your home?
 - 6. Could your family withstand the persecution of the early church?

CONCLUSION

- 1. As we will see the book of James is filled with so many great lessons it is astounding it all fit in so little of a book.
 - a. This is why it is often called the "Proverbs of the N.T."
- 2. Let us ask ourselves this question today...Are we spiritually mature?
 - a. If not figure out why and start growing today.

Lessons From James

3. Invitation²

a. God's Plan of Salvation

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| i. Hear/Study | Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15 |
| ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ | Jn 3:16; 8:24 |
| iii. Repent/Turn To God | Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47 |
| iv. Confess Jesus As Lord | Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9 |
| v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins | Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21 |
| vi. Live A Faithful Life | I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8 |

² Mark Copeland's sermon "Introduction To The Epistle Of James" was very helpful in the development of this sermon.