

## Pt 1 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) - Introduction

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 02-14-2018

### † James 1:1-4

**WHO:** There are four men named James in the New Testament:

1. James the son of Zebedee and brother to John – Matt 4:21
2. James the son of Alphaeus - Matt 10:3 – also known as James the less, Mark 15:40
3. James the brother of Judas, not Iscariot – Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13
4. And James the half-brother of Jesus - Matt 13:55

Out of all these, only one could be the writer of this Epistle.

- It couldn't have been James the Son of Zebedee and brother to John because he was martyred by Herod as we read in **Acts 12:1-2** *Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*
- It is highly unlikely it would have been James son of Alphaeus because nothing it mentioned of him doing much of anything – especially Church instruction.
- It wouldn't have been the obscure James the brother to Judas because the Bible doesn't mention him other than being a brother to Judas.
- So, that leaves James, the half-brother to Jesus. Which makes the most sense. As we know from reading in the Scriptures, Jesus' brothers rejected him as Messiah at first. Then later they became believers and accepted him.

We find out that James became what we call "**the Church Father**," as he was the key leader or Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem. Throughout the Book of Acts, we see that whenever there was a question or dispute concerning the rules and regulations of the Church, they sought the counsel and advice of James. He was the one who presided over the Jerusalem council when there was a question of whether the Gentiles had to follow the law of circumcision or not.

**WHERE:** The Book of James, which is really a letter, would have been written from Jerusalem where James resided. Many believe that it was written around the year AD 42 and that it was most likely the very first book of the New Testament that was written. He doesn't mention the Jerusalem Counsel or the Gentiles so it was probably written before that occurred, which was in AD 49.

**WHY:** His intention of writing this letter, or why he wrote it, is for instruction on proper Christian living and for us to examine our hearts to see if our faith is true genuine saving faith which should show in our lives. The main theme of the book is **faith**. I named this sermon series **Faith Made Perfect**, because that is what we as Christians should be striving for, perfectness in Christ Jesus. So, the Book of James is a book for not only the Church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, but also the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**OPPOSITION:** There are many that despise the Book of James. Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer did not believe the Book of James should have been included in the canon of Scripture. He, along with numerous others believe that it teaches a "works salvation," which is contrary to the teaching of Paul. But, we will discuss more about this when we get to Chapter 2:14-26.

So, now that we have established the WHO, WHERE, AND WHY, let's look at the **WHAT** of the Book by examining the first verse:

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

### **James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**

Notice that James does not mention the fact that he is related to Jesus, nor does he mention that he is an Apostle, or the Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem. Instead, he simply calls himself "**a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

The word "**servant**" as used in our text, comes from the Greek word: **doulos**.

I like Thayer's dictionary the best for this word:

- 1) a slave, bondman, man of servile condition
  - 1a) a slave
  - 1b) metaphorically, one who gives himself up to another's will those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men
  - 1c) devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests

So, a slave is someone who lives to do the will of their Master.

We often think of slaves such as the blacks that were bought and sold here in America up until Dec. 6, 1865 when the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified to abolish slavery in the United States. But slavery is still alive and well in many parts of the world. Some of it is involuntary slavery but a lot is voluntary slavery such as it was in James's day. Some people because of poverty voluntarily commit themselves to a life of slavery in order to feed their families or for protection. There are numerous laws mentioned in the Bible that deals with slavery.

James states that he is **a servant (slave) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**. In other words, **the Lord is his Master**. You see, to James, being a servant was more important than being known as a relative of Jesus or for his accomplishments. He is not interested in boasting or talking about himself, he is interested in the welfare of the Church and those that are members of it. His view of God was high, holy, exalted, and lifted up.

May I say to you tonight, your Christian walk is defined by your view of God. If you view God as high, holy, exalted, and lifted up it will show in your life. You will make him your Master. You will live in a way to please him and to bring honor to him and to do His will – you will become his servant.

Just the opposite is true if your view of God is low. It will most certainly show in how you live your life, how you speak, how you treat others, what you wear, what you read, what you listen to, where you go, and what you spend your time doing. People whose view of God is low are not servants of His.

Some may accuse me of preaching a Lordship Salvation. I think that term has been misunderstood by most people. Let me just say this:

1. In your King James Bible (which by the way is the only English translation of the Bible needed for English speaking people), Jesus is referred to as **Lord Jesus** 118 times.
2. The word **Lord** comes from the Greek word: **Koo'-ree-os** which means "**Supreme authority, he to whom a person or thing belongs.**"

3. Also, throughout your Bible you will find Jesus using this phrase; “**follow me.**” In fact, he says it 18 times – let me read you 7 of those times:

- **Matthew 4:19 – Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**
- **Matthew 8:22 – Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.**
- **Matthew 9:9 – Follow me.**
- **Matthew 16:24 – If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.**
- **Matthew 19:21 – If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.**
- **John 10:27 – My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**
- **John 12:26 – If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.**

I think it is very clear that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ the call is to **follow him**. So, I could care less about the so-called “**Lordship Salvation Controversy,**” all I know is if you cannot trust the Lord to be Lord of all then you cannot trust Him to be Lord at all! If that means I teach a Lordship salvation, then so be it.

But, getting back to the “**servant**” or “**slave**” relationship: You may think you are a slave to nothing or nobody, but everyone is a slave to something: Some are slaves to money. Some to food. Some to sports. Some to entertainment. Some to sex. Some to power.

The truth is, whatever you think about the most or put as number one in your life is your Master and you are slave to it. The question is, who is your Master? Who or what are you a slave to? Is it the Lord Jesus? That what James said that he was, “**a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

James continues on in his greeting in verse one by stating that he is writing this letter to the “**twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.**”

These would be Jews who were living outside of the immediate area of Jerusalem. Remember in our studies in the Book of Acts we saw when the Church began to multiply that they came under heavy persecution by the Roman Government and also of unbelieving Jews. Right after Stephen was martyred, the Bible says this:

**Acts 8:1** And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

The Church had scattered into lots of places and that is how Christianity spread. Not only did James address his letter to those that were scattered but so did Peter in his Epistle: **1 Peter 1:1-2** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Notice also that he says, “**TWELVE tribes,**” indicating all of the tribes of Israel, not just the 10 tribes of the former Northern Kingdom or the 2 tribes of the former Southern Kingdom – but all 12 Tribes.

We don’t have time to discuss it in this study, but you may have heard the phrase “**the 10 lost tribes of Israel.**” And there are some groups out there claiming to be these so-called “lost tribes.” But the truth is, **there is no such thing as the 10 lost tribes of Israel.** They have never been lost physically (spiritually, yes) but not physically. It’s not the American Indians, the Japanese, the Mormons, or the British Israelites – all of those groups claim to be the lost tribes. The Bible makes no mention of any lost tribes of Israel. I’m sure it sells a lot of books and fills a lot of false cults, but there really is no such thing. We will preach about this at a later date.

We also know that the Jews he is writing to are **saved Jews**, the ones who had placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, because on 15 different occasions he calls them “**brethren**” in this Epistle, and he doesn’t spend time telling them how to be saved, it is already assumed that they are saved.

### 2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

The very first thing he mentions is joy. That is one of the greatest benefits of being a Christian, having the joy of the Lord inside of you. I preached on Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians this past Sunday night and we focused on that joy and where it comes from. James says that we should **count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations.** That word “**divers**” means “various sorts or different kinds.” The word temptation as used here means trials.

So, he is saying when all different types of life’s trials fall upon us, instead of getting upset, mad, or depressed, we need to count it as joy in our lives. Now that sounds awfully strange to our ears doesn’t it? Why on earth would we have joy over trials in our life? Well, he tells us why in the next verse:

### 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

So, these **divers temptations**, these trials that we come up against, **try our faith.** **FAITH:** This is the 1<sup>st</sup> of 16 times we will read that word “**faith**” in the Book of James; it is a recurring theme throughout this Epistle.

Faith should also be a recurring theme in the life of every Christian.

- Our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is all through faith. We’ve never seen him, yet we believe He is real because we have the faith that He is. That is why the Hebrew writer wrote: **Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- It is by grace through faith that we are saved. **Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
- Without faith, it is impossible to please God: **Hebrews 11:6a** But without faith it is impossible to please him...

Compared to Christians in James’ day, we have it easy to have faith. We know nothing about living under persecution and constantly living in fear of our lives simply because of our faith.

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† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version