

# The First Church at Jerusalem James (59-6)

## James and the 1<sup>st</sup> Church at Jerusalem

The courtyard seemed to overflow with people. Spilling into the entrance halls they stood excitedly sharing with one another. Up at the front end of the palatial home was a small platform and a chair. Welcome to Jerusalem AD 38. Jesus had ascended to Heaven from the Mt. of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley, only 5 years ago. Here in the massive home of Nicodemus the church met for quiet and private worship and instruction.

Off to the right of the chair used in teaching was a man kneeling. That was old camel knees, James, the oldest living half-brother of Jesus. Camel knees was a nickname for his habit of always getting on his knees when he spoke to Jesus. James had such a reverence for his now exalted family member. As he had scorned Jesus for most of his early days, he worshiped Him now.

With a hush the crowded saints began to look intently to the front, James was rising and soon his message would ring through the ornate halls, around the quiet pools of water and past the fountains to reach the ears of every one assembled. James had arisen to the ranks of the apostles. He had come to faith at the Crucifixion of Christ and had a personal visit from the exalted Lord. He had submitted himself to the apostles teaching, fellowship and the breaking of bread. He never wavered in the initial persecutions. He was constantly at each time of worship, always on his knees whether it was on the rocks, stones or tiled floors. His reverence for the exalted Son of God was complete.

As the apostles moved out to Judea and Samaria he stayed at home. As they gave the gospel to the Gentiles he was faithfully a part of the church at Jerusalem. Gradually he was recognized by the saints and apostles as the natural choice to lead the Jerusalem assembly. He had known Christ Jesus the longest. And now, he knew Him as intimately as any. So he served the church at Jerusalem. And what a church it was . . .

Across the front row are assembled worshipers faces aglow and intent upon the words of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that overflowed from their Spirit filled hearts. There was Bartimaus, eyes aglow sitting next to Zacchaeus. They always came up from Jericho and shared with all that would listen how Jesus had changed them. Off to their right were Lazarus, Martha and Mary. They were singing about Christ's triumph over the Tomb with eyes pressed shut and tears streaming down their faces.

Some out of town guests were on the left. From Nain the widow and her son whom Jesus raised to life often visited the fellowship. The Demoniac formerly of Gadera, now with his sweet wife and family were singing with upturned faces about the One who loved them and loosed them from the chains of sin.

Rich and poor, famous and unknown, locals and out of town, all were seemingly one at this vibrant fellowship. But all was not perfect. Tensions were present, and James was about to present his letter he had written to the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> church driven out by Saul's ravaging of Jerusalem's saints. Many had scattered around the land; others had gone to far reaches of the Empire. All were facing the challenges of integrating the life changing gospel with every day life in new and often hostile cultures. James was moved by the Holy Spirit to write a letter. The first inspired letter from God to His people for over four hundred years is presented. What an incredible moment to again hear God's directions for His people. The 27 books of the New Testament were beginning here and the crowd was full of anticipation.

What did James write as the opening chapter of God's New Covenant people? Simply this, a clear and simple way of life that reflects **A MATURING WALK OF FAITH**. As Christ was received by faith, so the way of life flowing from His presence in a life would be reflected in the walk of faith. So James gives 12 clear indicators of how the walk of faith is going. You are headed toward Christian maturity when these areas are in line:

James: Twelve Tests of Spiritual Maturity (1:4)

- I. A Maturing Walk of Faith **ENDURES** troubles 1:2-12
  - A. Maturing saints see Trials from God's perspective (1:2-8) a source of purifying faith builders. This gives life a whole new orientation.
  - B. Maturing saints have a whole new standard for assessing personal-worth (1:9-11). God clarifies the new valuation has nothing to do with money or comforts of life.
  - C. Maturing saints are Seeking the Crown of Life. v. 12
- II. A Maturing Walk of Faith **DEALS** with temptation 1:13-18
  - A. Maturing saints understand and resist temptations. v. 13
  - B. Maturing saints turn from desires that would drag them away from God. They have a new revulsion of the flesh that rebels against God. v. 14-16
  - C. Maturing saints are appreciating the faithfulness of God. v. 17-18
- III. A Maturing Walk of Faith **OBEYS** the Word 1:19-27
  - A. Maturing saints pursue the disciplined life. v. 19-21
  - B. Maturing saints have a teachable spirit. v.22-25
  - C. Maturing saints are learning the elements of true worship v. 26-27:
    1. Harnessed Talking
    2. Humble Serving
    3. Holy Living
- IV. A Maturing Walk of Faith **ALLOWS** no prejudice 2:1-13
  - A. Maturing saints The Dangers of externalism (2:1-13)
  - B. Maturing saints God honored Rechabites no favorites;
  - C. Maturing saints Godly impartiality
- V. A Maturing Walk of Faith **DISPLAYS** itself in godly works 2:14-26
  - A. Maturing saints How to detect the Vital signs of Living Faith (2:14-26)
  - B. Maturing saints How to have the Proof of Faith
  - C. Maturing saints How to discern between Profession and Practice
- VI. A Maturing Walk of Faith **BRIDLES** the tongue 3:1-12
  - A. Maturing saints Is your Body in check? (3:1-12)
  - B. Maturing saints How to perfect our speaking
  - C. Maturing saints The power of the Tongue
  - D. Maturing saints How to muzzle your mouth
- VII. A Maturing Walk of Faith **DEMONSTRATES** heavenly wisdom 3:13-18
  - A. Maturing saints Signs of heavenly wisdom v. 13
  - B. Maturing saints Signs of Devilish Influence v. 14-16
  - C. Maturing saints Elements of Wise Living (3:17-18)
- VIII. A Maturing Walk of Faith **SEPARATES** unto God 4:1-12
  - A. Maturing saints Worldliness or Godliness: your choice
  - B. Maturing saints avoid Reptilian Desires (4:1)
  - C. Maturing saints know How to end wars v.1-2

- D. Maturing saints avoid the Consequences of a pleasure dominated life v. 3
- E. Maturing saints know How to avoid Infidelity to God: spiritual adultery = friendship world = distraction from worship, ministry and devotion! v. 4-6
- F. Maturing saints demonstrate the Marks of God's friends. They seek His:
  - 1. pleasures 1-3;
  - 2. friendship 4-5;
  - 3. humility 6-10;
- IX. A Maturing Walk of Faith **TRUSTS** the future to God Solidarity (4: 13-17) Lord willing Borden life
  - A. Maturing saints never Mistakenly put their Confidences in Empty wealth v. 13-14
  - B. Maturing saints use God's daily planner called "Deo Volente" v. 15-17
- X. A Maturing Walk of Faith **AVOIDS** the dangers of wealth 5: 1-6
  - A. Maturing saints know How to avoid dangers of wealth. v. 1-2
  - B. Maturing saints know that Hoarded Riches corrode spiritual living v.3
  - C. Maturing saints know that Money Talks to God v. 4. God watches if you pay your debts, and fair wages to employees. If not the greed cries out for His judgment!
  - D. Maturing saints know Luxury Living is dangerous to their spiritual health (5:5-6)
- XI. A Maturing Walk of Faith **WAITS** patiently for Christ's return 5:7-12
  - A. Maturing saints grow in Triumphant Patience.
  - B. Maturing saints are the Singing Church
- XII. A Maturing Walk of Faith **PRAYS** (5: 13-20) rescue mission living
  - A. Maturing saints are the Praying Church
  - B. Maturing saints use the Power of Effective Kneeling
  - C. Maturing saints know how to Handle Straying Saints