

Play the video from sermon.net on the introduction to James:

https://ebs.sermon.net/James/james/21405806?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=FIRSTNAME+%2C+Here+are+your+requested+Eyewitness+Videos&utm_campaign=send+18+videos

¹ *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*, James 1:1a The video began by describing the conditions in Jerusalem. The Jews were increasingly resistant to the gospel and beginning to persecute Christians. The church was impoverished. It was a time for change. They had a top-down leadership style but had to change as the apostles were aging and the church was growing outside of Jerusalem with Gentile converts. They needed to move to independent elder-led churches similar to the way synagogues were led.ⁱ But to keep them from straying from the pure gospel, instructions needed to be written that would take the place of the apostles' verbal instructions and teaching. The churches needed to know not only the gospel and sayings of Jesus, but how it was to be applied to daily life. We have the same need today. James was one of the first books of the New Testament to be penned.

James is a unique addition to the New Testament as Jonah was in the Old Testament. The book speaks very little of the doctrine of salvation which is the theme of most of the New Testament. Instead, it focuses on living out our faith. Some have seen it as a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. I will include parallel passages on the last page of the manuscript of this sermon. There are some in foyer today.

There were two prominent James in the New Testament, the brother of John and Jesus' half-brother. James the brother of John was martyred in A.D. 44, shortly before the time most commentators believe this book was written (A.D. 45-48). That leaves us with the Lord's half-brother. He was the leader of the early church. Jesus appeared to him after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7ⁱⁱ). His devotion to God and relationship with Jesus propelled him to become the leader of the church in Jerusalem. Tradition tells us that he was called Old Camel Knees because his knees were calloused from time in prayer. He loved Scripture and will cite the Old Testament four times and allude to it more than 40 times in this short letter. The parallel language with his words in Acts 15 during the Jerusalem council add to the certainty that he is the author. Early church history tells of an attempt to kill him by pushing him off a high point of the temple, but the fall did not kill him. He was then beaten to death while forgiving his attackers.

He does not introduce himself as an apostle, or as the leader of the early church, or as Jesus' brother, but as a servant. Moses and Daniel of the Old Testament were described as servants of God (Exodus 14:31ⁱⁱⁱ; Daniel 6:20^{iv}). Even Jesus is referred to as God's servant, for He always did His Father's will (John 5:19^v), and we are to follow His example (Isaiah 42:1^{vi}). Jesus said we are not only servants of God, but just as He came to serve us, we are to serve others (Matthew 20:28^{vii}; John 20:21^{viii}). Jesus also taught that the greatest among us is the servant of all (Matthew 23:11^{ix}). **Are you a servant of God**

and of the Lord Jesus Christ? If the answer is yes, then you will do what the Word and the Holy Spirit prompt you to do regardless of what your old nature desires.

Does James' humble description of himself as a servant of God *and* of the Lord Jesus Christ contradict Jesus' teaching that we cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24^x)? This is the exception because as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30^{xi}). The Holy Spirit, and the Word made flesh (John 1:14^{xii}), which is Jesus, and God the Father are all in complete unity. James was serving them by writing this letter to help us understand what it looks like to let Christ live in us. The early church needed doctrine, which will come in the letters of Paul and the Gospels, but James knew right faith, true faith, would manifest itself in righteous behavior. His teaching on godly behavior would help these young churches to know if they were walking in the flesh or in the Spirit.

Some people argue that Paul and James are at odds as Paul stressed faith and James stressed works. Motyer clarifies: *To Paul the question was, 'How is salvation experienced?' and the answer, 'By faith alone.'* *To James the question was, 'How is this true and saving faith recognized?' and the answer, 'By its fruits.'*^{xiii} They are not at all in conflict, but rather are expressing the answer to different questions. It is clear to see when carefully looking at both authors that they have the same faith and expectations of what that faith should produce. James is describing what Paul referred to as walking by the Spirit and being a new creation in Christ (Galatians 5:16^{xiv}; 2 Corinthians 5:17^{xv}).

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. James 1:1b We start right off with the difficulty of who this is written to. Nine of the dispersed tribes had long since melted into other cultures. Many no longer maintained their Jewish identities. Jews, meaning mostly the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and some of Levi had more people living outside of Israel than those inside the land. Does James mean it is only for them and not for those in Jerusalem? In Acts 26:7^{xvi} Paul testified before Agrippa that the twelve tribes lived in hope of the resurrection but he was being persecuted by the Jews. He seems to be contrasting the people of faith with Jews who reject Jesus. Did James understand what the Apostle Paul taught, that they are not all Israelites who are descended from Israel, but are the people of faith, those who live in the faith of father Abraham (Romans 9:6-8^{xvii})?

Motyer again explains: *Our Lord Jesus chose out twelve apostles (Mark 3:13, 14^{xviii}) and looked forward to the day of his own glory when they would sit on twelve thrones ruling the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28^{xix}). In doing this he was not creating a 'new' Israel (either alongside or replacing an 'old' Israel); he was leading the Israel of the Old Covenant on into its full, intended reality as the Israel of the New Covenant, the apostolic people of our Lord Jesus Christ, those whom Paul calls 'the Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16^{xx}). In a word, 'Israel' is the name of the people of Jesus; it is the true and inalienable title of his church. Because of this Paul teaches that Christians are children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7^{xxi}) and that Abraham is our father (Romans 4:11^{xxii}, 16^{xxiii}). He does not qualify this relationship by saying, for example, that we can think of ourselves as if we were children of Abraham, or that we might find it helpful to draw an analogy between ourselves and those who are Abraham's children, or anything like that. He asserts a fact: those who have put their faith in Jesus for salvation are Abraham's children and the Israel of God.*^{xxiv}

Peter called those in the dispersion God's elect who had been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ making them his brothers (1 Peter 1:1,2^{xxv}). Or as Paul explained in Romans 11^{xxvi}, that we Gentiles have been grafted into the Jewish trunk. Followers of Jesus live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13^{xxvii}). Whether we are in Jerusalem or Sedona, we are not home, for our home is where Jesus is, New Jerusalem. Remember that Israel means one who prevails with God. We are God's Israel. We do not replace physical Israel, but we heirs of the promises are the people of God (Ephesians 3:6^{xxviii}; Galatians 6:16^{xxix}).

All the above is to help us understand this letter is not just to Jews as some interpret it. It is written to the people of faith. Like the Jews of faith before us, we are the persecuted because we are not of this world. We escaped the slavery of sin (Exodus 2:23^{xxx}); we were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Exodus 12:13^{xxxi}); we are following our Lord through the wilderness of life (Exodus 15:22^{xxxii}), and battle to enter our promised land (Joshua 1:2^{xxxiii}); we struggle to not give in to the idolatry and pagan gods all around us and to give ourselves wholly to worship and obey the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 29:17,18^{xxxiv}).

James understood these parallels and calls the church the twelve tribes of Israel. But there is also a warning within that prestigious title. The nine northern tribes turned to idolatry and blended in with the world. The tribe of Dan was one of the first to fall into paganism (Judges 18:18,19^{xxxv}). They did not take the land that was allotted them and settled for something easier to conquer. They did not act according to what they professed to believe. They forgot the words of Moses, just as we forget the words of Jesus and fail to act on what we say we believe. True faith results in faithfulness. Do our deeds, conduct, and speech demonstrate that our faith is more than an idea? James is going to challenge us to do what we read in 2 Corinthians 13: *⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!* 2 Corinthians 13:5

My prayer for us as we journey through James is that we all examine our deeds, conduct, and speech to see if our faith is alive. We are not going to go down the road of condemnation (Romans 8:1^{xxxvi}). However, we do need to see if our faith is alive, and if it is, then where do we fall short in applying what we believe to our daily lives. The apostles are not physically with us, but the Word of God is! The Holy Spirit is! In Him, we can be more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Romans 8:32^{xxxvii}).

Questions:

- 1 Why was James written and when?
- 2 How is it different from other New Testament books?
- 3 What did the actor declare about the words faith and faithful?
- 4 What did he say Hebrews 11 should be called?
- 5 What did James call himself? Why is that important?
- 6 Why could James say he served two masters?
- 7 Why can we say Paul and James do not differ?
- 8 Why can we say we are the Israel of God?
- 9 How is our journey similar to theirs?
- 10 What is the pastor's goal as we go through James?

	James	Sermon on the Mount
1.	1:2	5:10–12
2.	1:4	5:48
3.	1:5	7:7–12
4.	1:9	5:3
5.	1:12	7:14
6.	1:20	5:22
7.	1:22	7:21–27
8.	2:5	5:3
9.	2:13	5:7
10.	2:13	6:14–15
11.	2:14–16	7:21–23
12.	3:6	5:22
13.	3:10–12	7:15–20
14.	3:17–18	5:9
15.	4:4	6:24
16.	4:10	5:3–5
17.	4:11–12	7:1–5
18.	5:2–3	6:19–20
19.	5:10	5:12
20.	5:11	5:10 ¹

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [James](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 2.

ⁱ The main difference between the synagogue structure and the church was that the lead elder in the synagogue was called 'ruler of the synagogue' but the lead elder was called 'first among equals'. The former had more authority whereas the latter had the *authority of collecting the sentiments and executing the resolutions* . . . of the church according to Edward Gibbon early church historian.

ⁱⁱ **1 Corinthians 15:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Exodus 14:31 (ESV)**

³¹ Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

^{iv} **Daniel 6:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

^v **John 5:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

^{vi} **Isaiah 42:1 (ESV)**

¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

^{vii} **Matthew 20:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

^{viii} **John 20:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

^{ix} **Matthew 23:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your servant.

^x **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

^{xi} **John 10:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ I and the Father are one."

^{xii} **John 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

^{xiii} J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James: The Test of Faith*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 20.

^{xiv} **Galatians 5:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

^{xv} **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

^{xvi} **Acts 26:7 (ESV)**

⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

^{xvii} **Romans 9:6-8 (ESV)**

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

^{xviii} **Mark 3:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach

^{xix} **Matthew 19:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

^{xx} **Galatians 6:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

^{xxi} **Galatians 3:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

^{xxii} **Romans 4:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,

^{xxiii} **Romans 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

^{xxiv} J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James: The Test of Faith*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), p.24.

^{xxv} **1 Peter 1:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

^{xxvi} **Romans 11:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,

^{xxvii} **Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)**

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

^{xxviii} **Ephesians 3:6 (ESV)**

⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

^{xxix} **Galatians 6:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

^{xxx} **Exodus 2:23 (ESV)**

²³ During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

^{xxxi} **Exodus 12:13 (ESV)**

¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

^{xxxii} **Exodus 15:22 (ESV)**

²² Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

^{xxxiii} **Joshua 1:2 (ESV)**

² “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.

^{xxxiv} **Deuteronomy 29:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, which were among them. ¹⁸ Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit,

^{xxxv} **Judges 18:18-19 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And when these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" ¹⁹ And they said to him, "Keep quiet; put your hand on your mouth and come with us and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?"

^{xxxvi} **Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

^{xxxvii} **Romans 8:37 (ESV)**

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.