

Notes on: James of Jerusalem, Brother of Jesus and Martyr

James: “While not a follower of Jesus during his ministry, James seems to have been converted shortly afterwards, perhaps when the risen Jesus appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:7; cf. Acts 1:14). James gradually took over the leadership of the Jerusalem church from the leaders among the Twelve, becoming one of the most important leaders in the 1st-century Church. Paul witnesses to James’ leadership in Jerusalem (Gal. 2), and in Acts 15 James presides over the Apostolic Council and issues its decision. An evidence of his position in the Church, after the death of James the son of Zebedee most references to him call him only James, although there were others by that name alive as well. This James died for the faith at the hands of the high priest Ananus, shortly before the Jewish revolt (Josephus Ant. 20.9.1 [197-203]; for a probably more legendary account, cf. the witness of Hegesippus cited by Eusebius HE 4.22.4).”

James is the traditional author of the NT letter in his name. While most contemporary scholars dispute the authenticity of the letter, some stoutly defend it. The author of Jude presumably refers to this James as his own brother (Jas. 1:1).

(from the article, “James,” Freedman, David Noel, ed., Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, © 2000 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI.)

Sermon Notes – Oct 23, 2022 – “The Grace of God on James”

John 7:1-5. After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” For not even his brothers believed in him.

Acts 15:12-15 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,...”

1. Brothers were unbelieving while Jesus was with him.

- Children born to Mary after the birth of Jesus
- Some say cousins or from a first marriage of Joseph, but natural brothers and sisters is the clearest understanding of the Scripture text
- It seems that only Mary, Jesus' mother, believed that Jesus was the Messiah
- Only God gives faith, even family relations and direct evidence in front of our eyes does not guarantee faith – it is a gift from God

2. James is later leader in the Church

- In 1 Corinthians 15:7, Paul specifically states that Jesus appeared to James
- Acts 1 records that Jesus' brothers were gathered with Mary, when all the disciples gathered together just before Pentecost
- Explain Acts 15
 - Were Gentiles (idol worshippers) allowed to become Christians without the OT ceremonial laws?
 - Peter baptized Cornelius and family, Paul's first missionary journey many were converted
 - 1st major church council
 - Jesus proposes the answer based on Paul, Peter and the OT Scriptures
- Secular history records that James was martyred for the faith

3. God's timing

- for faith in Jesus
- for service to Jesus and His people – Many ways to serve the Lord Jesus
 - Council meetings
 - teaching about Jesus
 - encouraging people to look to Jesus
- for the timing of physical death in the faith