

Epistle of James

Week 1 – December 6, 2009

Introduction and Overview

- Author – James, the brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55)
 - James was an unbeliever until after Jesus' resurrection (John 7:5 – six months before the crucifixion)
 - Christ appears to him after the Ascension (I Cor 15:3-8)
 - Paul meets him in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18-19)
 - Peter asks for James to be told of his release from prison (Acts 12:16-17)
 - James speaks at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:12-19)
 - Referred to as a "pillar" of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:9)
 - Pastor ("bishop") of the Jerusalem church
 - "nicknamed" "James the Just" because of his recognized piety
 - said to have "knees like those of camels" because of his much time spent in prayer
 - James was martyred in Jerusalem by being pushed from a high point of the temple. Yet the fall did not kill him and on the ground he was beaten to death, even as he prayed for his attackers. (62 A.D.)
- Written around A.D. 46 - the earliest of all the NT books, the "First Epistle to the Christians"
 - preserves more of Christ's teaching than all the other epistles combined
 - He never actually quotes his older brother, but he seems to constantly refer to his teachings as a basis for his own
 - at least 15 similarities to Jesus' sermon on the mount
 - James may be repeating some unrecorded teaching of our Lord
 - in this brief letter of 108 verses there are 54 imperatives (commands)
 - Greek scholars agree that the Greek written in the original of James is the best in the entire NT, except for the book of Hebrews. He seems to have been a well-educated man.
 - It is the most Jewish writing of the NT:
 - The meeting place is the synagogue (2:1),
 - Abraham is their father (2:21),
 - God is called The Lord of Sabbaoth (5:4, only time in NT),
 - His illustrations are often from the OT
 - the whole approach is that of an OT prophet