

# James

## Describing the Book of James

- A. Practical. Filled with simple clear directions.
  - a. More imperative verbs than any other NT book
  - b. Touches briefly on theology, and spends his words on practical application of Truth
  - c. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (1:22)
- B. Concise
  - a. No point is developed at length
  - b. James moves quickly from point to point
- C. Theologians have struggled with this book, but the general believer finds the selected verses popular.
  - a. Martin Luther found the book of James to be in conflict with Paul and referred to it as an “epistle of straw.” Yet, Luther often quoted the verses of James in his writings
  - b. So critics from history considered the book of James as a holdover from Jewish writings since it was so similar to the wisdom books and literature in the OT and Jewish writings.
- D. Illustrations and metaphors used by James helps readers picture and remember. Images we all recall such as:
  - a. Surging sea
  - b. Withered flower
  - c. Face in a mirror
  - d. Bit in the mouth of a horse
  - e. Rudder of a ship
  - f. Destruction of a forest fire
  - g. Pure spring water
  - h. Arrogant, self-important businessman
  - i. Corroded metal
  - j. Clothes eaten by moths

## Type or Genre of Writing

- A. It is sent to a group of people identified in 1:1 as “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion.”
  - a. This was a particular group
  - b. But, the identification of the recipients is illusive, obscure or cryptic...maybe intentionally
- B. Letters in the ancient world ranged anywhere between:
  - a. Brief notes of information
  - b. Long argumentative discourses in a debate
  - c. These documents had many different forms, but simply add the opening and the closing before sending it to a particular audience and the contents became a letter. Consider the letter of the book of Hebrews or Romans.
- C. Also missing in James are:
  - a. Details of situations being addressed
  - b. Ending of the letter greetings to individuals
  - c. References to others and fellow workers
  - d. Travel plans

- e. Location of writing (but, assumed to be Jerusalem, just as the identification of James is assumed.)
- f. No mention of people, places or situations
- D. It can be assumed that the “twelve tribes” include:
  - a. Jewish believers
  - b. Several locations (cities) where these believers gathered
  - c. Not written to a particular individual or a particular local group...thus, the generic advice on generic situations
- E. James’s writing is:
  - a. Pastoral exhortation
    - i. James is not informing or teaching, but is commanding, exhorting and encouraging
    - ii. James is compassionate addressing the readers as “my brothers” 15 times (modern updated translation: “my brothers and sisters” or “my beloved brothers and sisters.”)

80 [k]	1473 [h]	1437 [k]	5100 [k]	1722 [k]	4771 [k]	4106 [k]	575 [k]	3888 [k]	225 [k]	2532 [k]	1884 [k]	5108 [k]	846 [k]
Adelphoi	mou	ean	tis	en	hymin	planethe	apo	tes	altheias	kai	epistrepse	tis	auton
19	Ἀδελφοί μου ,	ἂν	τις	ἐν	ὑμῖν	πλανηθῆ	ἀπὸ	τῆς	ἀληθείας ,	καὶ	ἐπιστρέψῃ	τις	αὐτόν ,
Brothers	of Me	if	anyone	among	you	might wander	from	the	truth	and	should bring back	someone	him
NAMP	RPro-G15	Conj	IPro-NMS	Prep	RPro-DOP	VASP-3B	Prep	Art-OFB	N-GFS	Conj	VASA-3B	Pro-FMS	Pro-AMCS

- b. Looseness of structure
  - i. James moves quickly from topic to topic
  - ii. Relationship of the topics is not clear
  - iii. The theme of the letter is not clear
  - iv. The structure of the letter is not clear
- c. More dependent on Jesus than other NT writers
  - i. James doesn’t directly quote Jesus, (although James 5:12 on oaths is close to Matt. 5:33-37)
  - ii. James does write the very essence of Jesus’ teaching into his own words
  - iii. James’ writing style is similar to Jesus’ teaching style

### James, the author

- A. “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1)
  - a. English name *James* comes from the Latin *Jacomus* which is a translation of the Greek name *Jakobos*.
  - b. *Jakobos* occurs 42 times in the NT to refer to four men. Three of the four are mentioned in the same verse in Acts 1:13 in the names of the apostles – “And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.”
    - i. James the father of Judas is mentioned only here and Luke 6:16 in order to distinguish him from Judas the betrayer
    - ii. James the son of Alphaeus is mentioned in the Gospels in the list of apostles and is identified as such to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John

- iii. James, the brother of John, one of the “sons of thunder”, is one of the prominent apostles (along with Peter and John). He was executed in 44 AD by Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12:2
- c. The fourth James is the brother of Jesus mentioned several times in the Gospels and is a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem in the book of Acts and historically recorded by Josephus and church history.
- d. James was not a believer in the Gospels:
  - i. Matthew 13:55
  - ii. Mark 6:3
- e. James became a believer after the resurrection:
  - i. 1 Corinthians 15:7
  - ii. John 7:5
- f. James was a leader in the Jerusalem church:
  - i. Acts 12:17
  - ii. Acts 15:13-21 – James is the one who summarized the Jerusalem Council of 48 AD and penned the letter. Several parts of this short letter match the book of James:
    - 1. The “greeting” – *chairein* – in Acts 15:23 and James 1:1 (This word occurs only one other time in the NT)
    - 2. The use of “name” – *onoma* – in connection with “call” – *kaleo* – in Acts 15:17 and James 2:7
    - 3. (Similar) - The encouragement to the believers to honor the “name” in Acts 15:17 and James 2:7
    - 4. The use of the phrase “listen, my brothers” in an appeal to James’s audience in Acts 15:13 and James 2:5
    - 5. Both letters speak of the need to “keep” oneself from sins in Acts 15:29 and James 1:27
    - 6. “Care for” in Acts 15:14 and James 1:27
    - 7. “turning in Acts 15:19 and James 5:19-20
- g. James was called the first bishop of Jerusalem and title “James the righteous” and “James the Just”
  - i. James is known for being pious and his commitment to the Torah. But, understanding the Torah is presented as lifestyle, character, an understanding of God more than legalistic ritual observances.
  - ii. The view that James was legalistic is an exaggeration and likely developed and exploited by the Ebionites, a Torah-observant form of Christianity around 140 AD
  - iii. A legalistic James is not consistent with:
    - 1. His work in the early church in Acts
    - 2. His dialogues with Paul
    - 3. His letter
    - 4. His brother’s teaching which James was immersed in while writing the letter of James
  - iv. James worked mainly with the Jews in Jerusalem and in the letter he wrote. This is true because of:
    - 1. Where he lived

2. The people he wrote to would have been familiar with the land, culture and religion of Israel:
  - a. “His reference to the early and late rains of 5:7 was only understood in the Eastern half of the empire and eastern coast of Mediterranean. This would not have been understood by Roman, Greek, Egypt. But, would have been understood by people in Syria and the city of Antioch.
3. In Galatians 2:12 the Jews who came from Jerusalem claimed to be speaking for James, but that issue was rejected. James met with Paul and help navigate the early church through theological issues:
  - a. Acts 21:18
  - b. Galatians 1:19 – “
  - c. Galatians 2:9 – “
  - d. Galatians 2:12 – “

Acts 15:13 and 15:23-24:

3326 [e]	1161 [e]	3588 [e]	4601 [e]	848 [e]	611 [e]	2385 [e]	3004 [e]	435 [e]	80 [e]						
Meta	de	to	sigēsai	autous	apekrithē	Iakōbos	legōn	Andres	adelphoi						
13	Μετὰ	δὲ	τὸ	σιγῆσαι	αὐτοὺς	,	ἀπεκρίθη	Ἰάκωβος	,	λέγων	,	Ἄνδρες	,	ἀδελφοί	,
	After	now	-	were silent	they		answered	James		saying		Men		brothers	
	Prep	Conj	Art-ANS	V-ANA	PPro-AM3P		V-AIP-3S	N-NMS		V-PPA-NMS		N-VMP		N-VMP	

181 [e]	1473 [e]
akousate	mou
ἀκούσατέ	μου
hear	me
V-AMA-2P	PPro-G1S

1125 [e]	1223 [e]	5495 [e]	846 [e]	3588 [e]	652 [e]	2532 [e]	3588 [e]	4245 [e]	80 [e]	3588 [e]				
grapsantes	dia	cheiros	autōn	Hoi	apostoloi	kai	hoi	presbyteroi	adelphoi	Tois				
23	γράφαντες	διὰ	χειρὸς	αὐτῶν	:	Οἱ	ἀπόστολοι	καὶ	οἱ	πρεσβύτεροι	,	ἀδελφοί	,	τοῖς
	having written	by	[the] hand	of them		The	apostles	and	the	elders		brothers		To those
	V-APA-NMP	Prep	N-GFS	PPro-GM3P		Art-NMP	N-NMP	Conj	Art-NMP	Adj-NMP-C		N-NMP		Art-DMP

2596 [e]	3588 [e]	480 [e]	2532 [e]	4947 [e]	2532 [e]	2791 [e]	80 [e]	3588 [e]	1537 [e]	1484 [e]	5463 [e]			
kata	tēn	Antiocheian	kai	Syrian	kai	Kilikian	adelphois	tois	ex	ethnōn	Chairein			
	κατὰ	τὴν	Ἀντιόχειαν	καὶ	Συρίαν	καὶ	Κιλικίαν	,	ἀδελφοῖς	τοῖς	ἐξ	ἐθνῶν	:	Χαίρειν
	in	-	Antioch	and	Syria	and	Cilicia		brothers	-	among	the Gentiles		Greetings
	Prep	Art-AFS	N-AFS	Conj	N-AFS	Conj	N-AFS		N-DMP	Art-DMP	Prep	N-GNP		V-PNA

1894 [e]	191 [e]	3754 [e]	5100 [e]	1537 [e]	1473 [e]	1831 [e]	5015 [e]	4771 [e]	3056 [e]	384 [e]	3588 [e]	5590 [e]		
Epeidē	ēkousamen	hoti	tines	ex	hēmōn	exelthontes	etaraxan	hymas	logois	anaskeuazontes	tas	psychas		
24	Ἐπειδὴ	ἠκούσαμεν	ὅτι	τινὲς	ἐξ	ἡμῶν	ἔξεληθόντες	ἐτάραξαν	ὑμᾶς	λόγοις	,	ἀνασκευάζοντες	τὰς	ψυχὰς
	Inasmuch as	we have heard	that	some	from	us	went out	troubled	you	by words		upsetting	the	minds
	Conj	V-AIA-1P	Conj	IPro-NMP	Prep	PPro-G1P	V-APA-NMP	V-AIA-3P	PPro-A2P	N-DMP		V-PPA-NMP	Art-AFP	N-AFP

4771 [e]	3004 [e]	4059 [e]	2532 [e]	5083 [e]	3588 [e]	3551 [e]	3739 [e]	3756 [e]	1291 [e]				
hymōn	legontes	peritemnesthai	kai	tērein	ton	nomon	hois	ou	diesteilametha				
	ὑμῶν	,	λέγοντες	περιτέμνεσθαι	καὶ	τηρεῖν	τὸν	νόμον	,	οἷς	οὐ	διεστειλάμεθα	,
	of you		saying	[you must] be circumcised	and	keep	the	law		to whom	not	we had given instructions	
	PPro-G2P		V-PPA-NMP	V-PNP		Conj	V-PNA	Art-AMS	N-AMS	RelPro-DMP	Adv	V-AIM-1P	

- h. Eusebius records Hegesippus’s account of James’s death. Hegesippus records in the fragments from his five books of “Commentaries on the Acts of the Church”:
  - i. Hegesippus the Nazarene
    1. Was born in Israel in 110 AD and died in Jerusalem on April 7, 180

2. He was a Christian writer of the early Church who may, in spite of his Greek name, have been a Jewish convert
3. He wrote against heresies of the Gnostics and of Marcion.

“James, the Lord's brother, succeeds to the government of the Church, in conjunction with the apostles. He has been universally called the Just, from the days of the Lord down to the present time. For many bore the name of James; but this one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine or other intoxicating liquor, nor did he eat flesh; no razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, nor make use of the bath. He alone was permitted to enter the holy place: for he did not wear any woollen garment, but fine linen only. He alone, I say, was wont to go into the temple: and he used to be found kneeling on his knees, begging forgiveness for the people—so that the skin of his knees became horny like that of a camel's, by reason of his constantly bending the knee in adoration to God, and begging forgiveness for the people. Therefore, in consequence of his pre-eminent justice, he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek Defence of the People, and Justice, in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.

Now some persons belonging to the seven sects existing among the people, which have been before described by me in the Notes, asked him: "What is the door of Jesus?" And he replied that He was the Savior. In consequence of this answer, some believed that Jesus is the Christ. But the sects before mentioned did not believe, either in a resurrection or in the coming of One to requite every man according to his works; but those who did believe, believed because of James. So, when many even of the ruling class believed, there was a commotion among the Jews, and scribes, and Pharisees, who said: "A little more, and we shall have all the people looking for Jesus as the Christ.

They came, therefore, in a body to James, and said: "We entreat you, restrain the people: for they are gone astray in their opinions about Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat you to persuade all who have come hither for the day of the Passover, concerning Jesus. For we all listen to your persuasion; since we, as well as all the people, bear thee testimony that you art just, and show partiality to none. Do you, therefore, persuade the people not to entertain erroneous opinions concerning Jesus: for all the people, and we also, listen to your persuasion. Take your stand, then, upon the summit of the temple, that from that elevated spot you may be clearly seen, and thy words may be plainly audible to all the people. For, in order to attend the Passover, all the tribes have congregated here, and some of the Gentiles also."

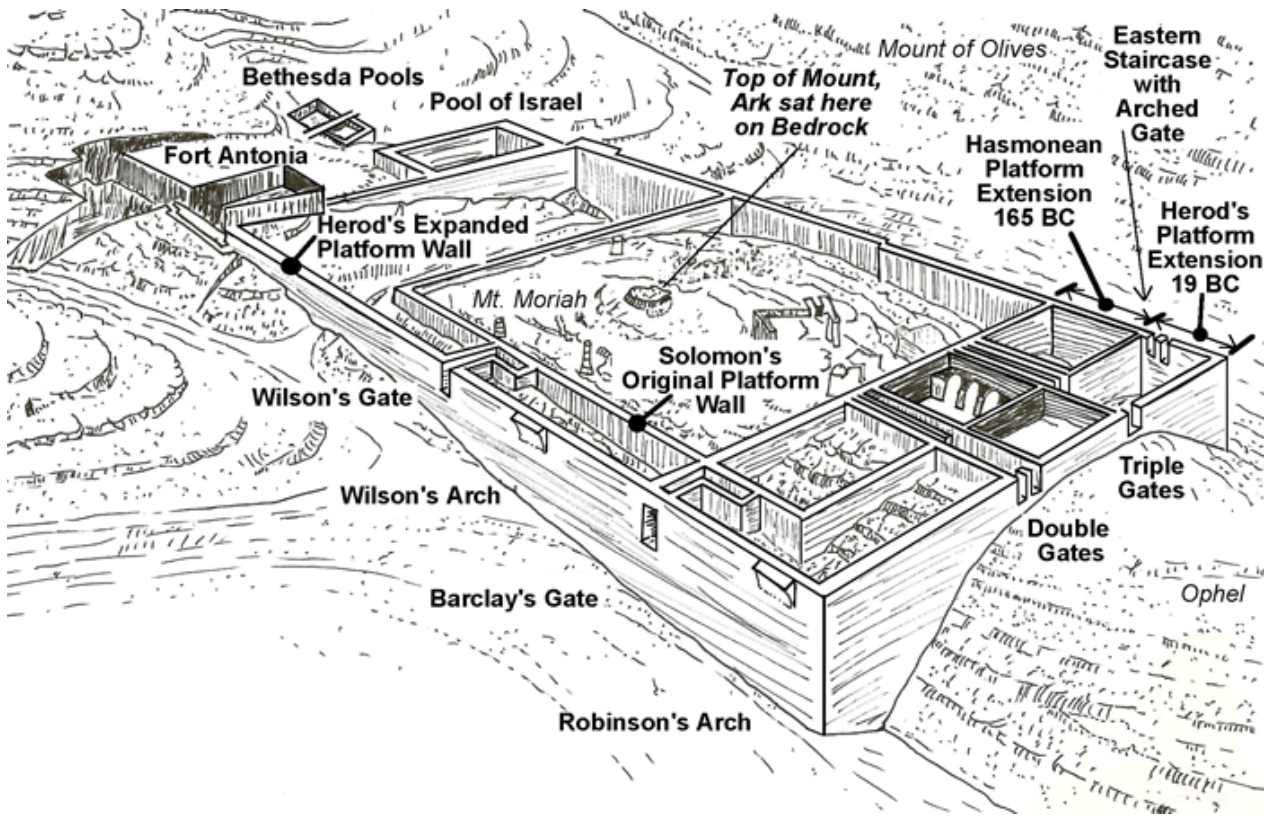
The aforesaid scribes and Pharisees accordingly set James on the summit of the temple, and cried aloud to him, and said: "O just one, whom we are all bound to obey, forasmuch as the people is in error, and follows Jesus the crucified, do you tell us what is the door of Jesus, the crucified." And he answered with a loud voice: "Why ask me concerning Jesus the Son of man? He Himself sits in heaven, at the right hand of the Great Power, and shall come on the clouds of heaven."

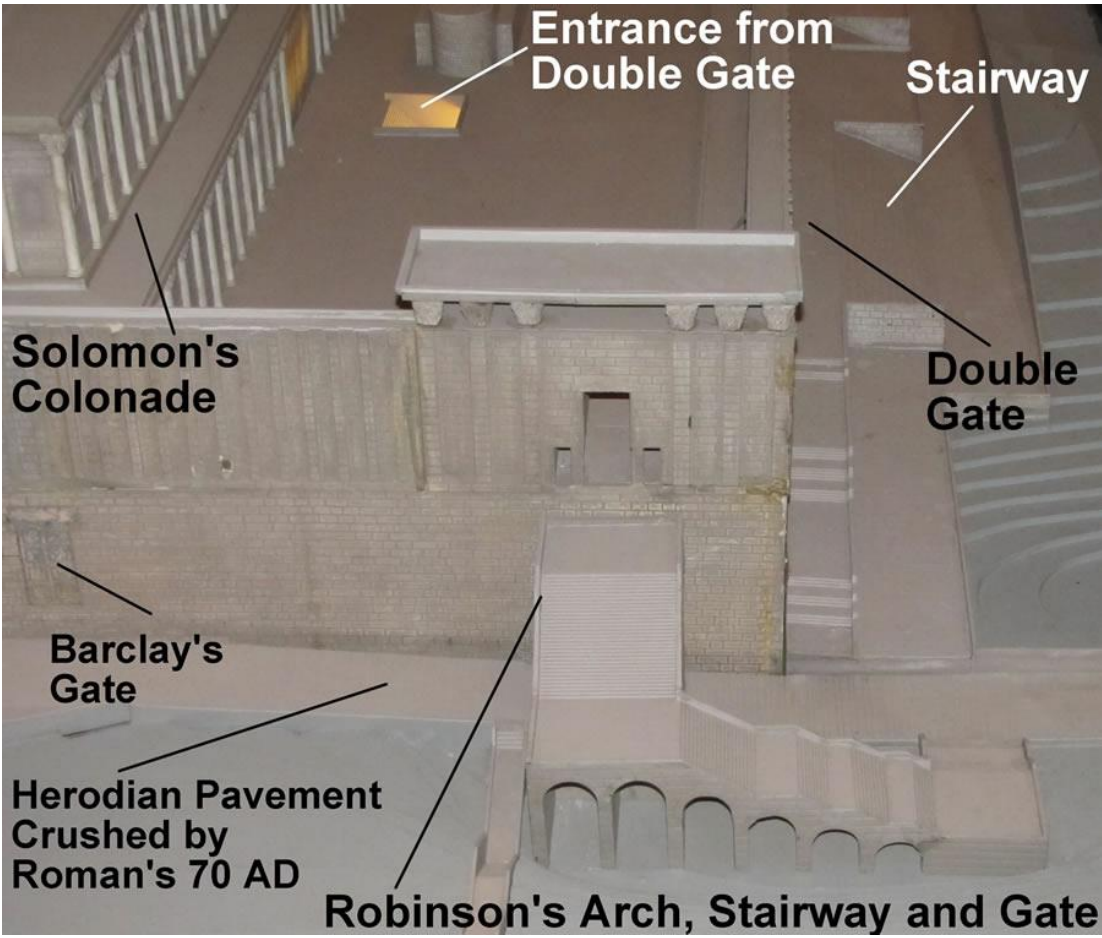
And, when many were fully convinced by these words, and offered praise for the testimony of James, and said, "Hosanna to the son of David," then again the said Pharisees and scribes said to one another, "We have not done well in procuring this testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, that they may be afraid, and not believe him." And they cried aloud, and said: "Oh! oh! the just man himself is in error." Thus they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah: "Let us away with the just man, because he is troublesome to us: therefore shall they eat the fruit of their doings." So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to one another: "Let us stone James the Just." And they began to stone him: for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned, and kneeled down, and said: "I beseech You, Lord God our Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

And, while they were thus stoning him to death, one of the priests, the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, to whom testimony is borne by Jeremiah the prophet, began to cry aloud, saying: "Cease, what do ye? The just man is praying for us." But one among them, one of the fullers, took the staff with which he was accustomed to wring out the garments he dyed, and hurled it at the head of the just man.

And so he suffered martyrdom; and they buried him on the spot, and the pillar erected to his memory still remains, close by the temple. This man was a true witness to both Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ.

And shortly after Vespasian besieged Judaea, taking them captive."





Toni sits on the curb of the NT street in front of NT shops on the west side of the SW corner of the Temple Mount







***The Trumpeting Stone – “place of the trumpeter” - a stone that fell from the Temple Mount above. It is a piece of the railing from the course of stones at the top of the southwest corner, and is called the Trumpeting Stone. The priestly trumpeter would have stood on this stone to sound the trumpet signaling the beginning and end of Sabbath days and festivals. The sharp corner that has been cut out of this block is where the priest would have stood, and the beveled edge served as a guard railing. In the top left portion of the guard rail is a Hebrew inscription. It is likely that James, the pastor of the Jerusalem church who wrote the book of James, was forced to stand on this stone in 62 AD to proclaim that Jesus was not the Messiah. Instead, James confessed Jesus by announcing to the crowd that Jesus was the Christ, that he sits at God’s right hand, and that he will return in the clouds from heaven. The scribes and Pharisees responded by pushing James, the brother of the Lord, over this railing to his death.***



*The SW corner of the Temple Mount. The Trumpeting Stone would have been part of top railing on this corner.*

### **Josephus on James (Antiquities 20.9.1)**

And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, **Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned:** but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent. (24) Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

James met with Paul and help navigate the early church through theological issues:

#### 4. Acts 15:13 and 15:23-24:

3326 [e] 1161 [e] 3588 [e] 4601 [e] 846 [e] 611 [e] 2385 [e] 3004 [e] 435 [e] 80 [e]  
**Meta de to sigēsai autous apekrithe Iakōbos legon Andres adelphoi**  
**13 Μετά δὲ τὸ σιγῆσαι αὐτοὺς , ἀπεκρίθη Ἰάκωβος , λέγων , Ἄνδρες , ἀδελφοί ,**  
**After now - were silent they answered James saying Men brothers**  
 Prep Conj Art-ANS V-ANA PPro-AM3P V-AIP-3S N-NMS V-PPA-NMS N-VMP N-VMP

181 [e] 1473 [e]  
**akousate mou**  
**ἀκούσατέ μου .**  
**hear me**  
 V-AMA-2P PPro-G1S

1125 [e] 1223 [e] 5495 [e] 846 [e] 3588 [e] 652 [e] 2532 [e] 3588 [e] 4245 [e] 80 [e] 3588 [e]  
**grapsantes dia cheiros autōn Hoi apostoloi kai hoi presbyteroi adelphoi Tois**  
**23 γράψαντες διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῶν : Οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι , ἀδελφοί , Τοῖς**  
**having written by [the] hand of them The apostles and the elders brothers To those**  
 V-APA-NMP Prep N-GFS PPro-GM3P Art-NMP N-NMP Conj Art-NMP Adj-NMP-C N-NMP Art-DMP

2596 [e] 3588 [e] 480 [e] 2532 [e] 4947 [e] 2532 [e] 2791 [e] 80 [e] 3588 [e] 1537 [e] 1484 [e] 5463 [e]  
**kata tēn Antiocheian kai Syrian kai Kilikian adelphois tois ex ethnōn Chairein**  
**κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν , ἀδελφοῖς τοῖς ἐξ ἔθνων : Χαίρειν .**  
**in - Antioch and Syria and Cilicia brothers - among the Gentiles Greetings**  
 Prep Art-AFS N-AFS Conj N-AFS Conj N-AFS N-DMP Art-DMP Prep N-GNP V-PNA

1894 [e] 191 [e] 3754 [e] 5100 [e] 1537 [e] 1473 [e] 1831 [e] 5015 [e] 4771 [e] 3056 [e] 384 [e] 3588 [e] 5580 [e]  
**Epeidē ēkousamen hoti tines ex hēmōn exelthontes etaraxan hymas logois anaskeuazontes tas psychas**  
**24 Ἐπειδὴ ἤκούσαμεν ὅτι τινὲς ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξελθόντες ἐτάραξαν ὑμᾶς λόγοις , ἀνασκευάζοντες τὰς ψυχὰς**  
**Inasmuch as we have heard that some from us went out troubled you by words upsetting the minds**  
 Conj V-AIA-1P Conj IPro-NMP Prep PPro-G1P V-APA-NMP V-AIA-3P PPro-A2P N-DMP V-PPA-NMP Art-AFP N-AFP

4771 [e] 3004 [e] 4059 [e] 2532 [e] 5083 [e] 3588 [e] 3551 [e] 3739 [e] 3756 [e] 1281 [e]  
**hymōn legontes peritemnesthai kai tērein ton nomon hois ou diesteilametha**  
**ὑμῶν , λέγοντες περιτέμνεσθαι καὶ τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον, οἷς οὐ διεστείλαμεθα ,**  
**of you saying [you must] be circumcised and keep the law to whom not we had given instructions**  
 PPro-G2P V-PPA-NMP V-PNP Conj V-PNA Art-AMS N-AMS RelPro-DMP Adv V-AIM-1P

#### 5. Acts 21:18

#### 6. Galatians 1:19 – “

#### 7. Galatians 2:9 – “

#### 8. Galatians 2:12 – “

- i. Any other “James” that might be identified as an unknown James authoring this book is speculation based on total silence from scripture, tradition and history.
- j. The fact James does not identify himself with a descriptive title indicates he was well known and his readers did not wonder, “Which James wrote this to us?” It was clear it was James (the leader of the Jerusalem church, the brother of Jesus):
  - i. James, the son of Zebedee
  - ii. James, the son of Alphaeus
  - iii. James, the unknown
  - iv. James, from Syria

James 1:1 – “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2385 [e]	2316 [e]	2532 [e]	2982 [e]	2424 [e]	5547 [e]	1401 [e]	3588 [e]	1427 [e]	5443 [e]	3588 [e]
Iakōbos	Theou	kai	Kyriou	Iēsou	Christou	doulos	Tais	dōdeka	phylais	tais
1 Ἰάκωβος ,	Θεοῦ	καὶ	Κυρίου	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	δοῦλος ,	Ταῖς	δώδεκα	φυλαῖς	ταῖς
James	of God	and	of [the] Lord	Jesus	Christ	a servant	To the	twelve	tribes	-
N-NMS	N-GMS	Conj	N-GMS	N-GMS	N-GMS	N-NMS	Art-DFP	Adj-DFP	N-DFP	Art-DFP

1722 [e]	3588 [e]	1290 [e]	5463 [e]
en	tē	Diaspora	Chairein
ἐν	τῇ	Διασπορᾷ :	Χαίρειν .
in	the	Dispersion	Greetings
Prep	Art-DFS	N-DFS	V-PNA