

I. Introduction

A. Siblings

1. Most common causes of sibling rivalry: need to be noticed, unequal treatment, jealousy, competition, frustration
2. What would it have been like growing up with Jesus? Not hypothetical but actual

B. Book of James connection

1. Citizen and Kingdom
 - a. Kingdom behavior/expectations found in Sermon on the Mount
 - b. James is intimately connected to the teachings of Jesus, particularly, the Sermon on the Mount
2. James unpacks, in a very practical way, how to live as citizens in a world that is very different.

II. James: the background

A. The man

1. Half-brother of Jesus - Gospels and Josephus agreement
2. Conversion story

a. Wasn't always a believer

1) Mocked Jesus (John 7:3-5)

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.

2) Thought Jesus crazy (Mark 3:21)

Then He went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when His family heard it, they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, "He is out of His mind."

b. Eyewitness to the resurrected Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me.

3. Leader of the church in Jerusalem

a. Speech to the counsel at Jerusalem (Acts 15)

b. Endorsed Paul's Gospel (Gal 2:9)

and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

- c. Traveled preaching the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:5)

This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?
 - 4. Death
 - a. Killed by the Jewish leaders for crimes against the Temple and Law
 - b. Stoned in Jerusalem between A.D. 62-69
 - B. The letter
 - 1. Canon—slow and hesitant, why?
 - a. Not rejected but neglected
 - b. Traditional and practical admonition rather than theological debate
 - c. Misrepresented by early heretical groups
 - 2. Heart of the letter
 - a. James depends more than any other New Testament author on the teachings of Jesus (Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5-7)

*James was so soaked in the atmosphere of Jesus' teaching that he could reflect them almost unconsciously.
 - b. Wisdom literature—Proverbs
 - 1) Many concerns parallel the themes of wisdom lit - speech, wealth and poverty, etc
 - 2) Challenging wisdom speeches about loving God and neighbor
 - 3. The occasion
 - a. Jewish diaspora
 - 1) Jews forced to leave their homes and country—poverty and oppressed condition
 - 2) Many influenced by the Zealot movement: Jewish political movement which held to the Torah, used the tool of activism even violence and saw Rome as illegitimate.
 - b. Message
 - 1) A call to repentance from compromising spiritually and to intervene in the lives of people who are straying down such a dangerous path
 - 2) The displaced status of these Jewish Christians has brought to the surface some basic spiritual issues; and it is to these spiritual issues that the author directs his exhortations
- III. Starting point: James 1:1-4
 - A. V1: Why not mention his familial connection to Jesus? Because what qualified James to write was not his physical relationship to Jesus but his spiritual relationship of surrender.
 - B. V2: First things first, most pressing/urgent
 - 1. Goal: Spiritual wholeness and integrity, “mature and complete, lacking in nothing.”

*God brings difficulties into life for a purpose which will be accomplished when we respond rightly to them.
 - 2. Trials
 - a. Casting a wide net: poverty, persecution, sickness, loneliness, bereavement, disappointment, etc.
 - b. Trials will be accompanied with sadness, etc. but should be an occasion for genuine rejoicing.

*Why? Because we know God and we know His purpose in pain (vs 3-4)

3. Difficulties in life are intended by God to refine our faith. Testing of faith here is not intended to identify or determine **if** there is faith, it is to purify faith that already exists.

IV. As we go

A. Framework

1. James writes in the greater context of Jesus' teaching, specifically the Sermon on the Mount.
2. Difficulty reveals issues to work on so that we can become mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

B. Moving forward, position and posture