

**SERVE** – **SLIDE** [fathomchurch.org/serve](http://fathomchurch.org/serve)

**WELCOME** – **JAMES SLIDE**

Alright, if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to James chapter 1. James 1. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to James 1. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, James 1 will be on page **1011**.

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first week of our Fall series in the book of James!

- The primary way we preach here at Fathom,
- is we just go through the scriptures.
  - Sometimes verse by verse,
  - and sometimes chapter by chapter.
- And that type of preaching is called expository preaching.

And basically, it just means this,

- it means that my job is to EXPOSE YOU to the Word of God.
- So, I read a verse...this is what it means...
- read a verse...this is what I think it means...
  - oh, that reminds me of a dumb story...
  - to illustrate what we just read.

That's what I do, and that's why it's going to take us until Christmas to finish the 4 pages in your bible that is James.

- So, it's my job is to EXPOSE YOU to the Word of God...
- but it's the Holy Spirit's job to expose the Word of God TO YOU

I can't do that!

- If you've ever learned anything from any preacher...
  - you've learned it from the true preacher,
  - who is the Holy Spirit.
- Only he can change you.
- Only he can open you up to what God has to say to you.

And so, this is what we do:

- that the Holy Spirit,
- through the preaching of the Word of God,
- would do to your heart what only he can do.

## TRANSITION

So, today we're only going to look at verse 1 in James...

- and I promise, we'll speed things up some more
- once we get going,
- but today, just one verse.

And though it may not seem like much, there is a TON here to bread down.

So, let's begin with the author.

- Who wrote this letter?
- I was gonna quit if you said Paul!

Look at James 1 verse 1:

## JAMES 1:1

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

### EXPLAIN: WHICH JAMES?

So, who wrote the book? Yes, James.

But the question becomes, which James?

Because the writer of this letter doesn't give us much more to go on.

- No last name.
- No accolades.

He's not like Paul,

- who gives a huge list of his accomplishments
- and his failures:
  - a Pharisee of Pharisees...
  - studied under Gamaliel...
  - persecutor of The Way...
  - shipwrecked a billion times...
- that kind of stuff.

No! He just says, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, which James is this?

Well, there are really four James's in the New Testament.

Let's work through these.

## EXPLAIN: SON OF ALPHEUS

The first James in the New Testament is James son of Alphaeus.

Who is that?

- Well, he was one of the Twelve Apostles.
- We find his name in all the lists of the Twelve.

In fact, this summer as we preached through Matthew's gospel,

- when we came to Matthew chapter 10,
- I actually preached on the list of the Twelve.
- And when I came to James son of Alphaeus,
  - do you know what I said?
- NOTHING!

I said nothing, because this is one of the Twelve Apostles we know literally nothing about!

One interesting note about James son of Alphaeus...

- is that in Mark chapter 2 we find Jesus' call of Levi,
  - who is also known as Matthew,
- and in that account Levi is noted as **Levi the son of Alphaeus**.

Now, there's no way of knowing if this is the same Alphaeus.

- Maybe Alphaeus was just a common name
  - like Mike or David?
- But if it was the same guy,
- then James and Matthew would be brothers...
- interesting...

But there's no reason to believe that James son of Alphaeus wrote this.

- There's no evidence to credit him as the author.
  - It's not an impossibility...
- but there is no reason to assume that he did.

## **EXPLAIN: FATHER OF JUDAS**

The second James is James father of Judas.

- Judas was another of the Twelve Apostles...
  - not to be confused with Judas Iscariot...
- because there were two Judas' in the Twelve Apostles.
  - Which is a real bummer...
  - to be the other Judas...
    - Imagine for the rest of his life...
    - every time he's introduced...
    - he had to say,
    - "No, I'm not THAT Judas!!"

But in Luke 6 he is called **Judas son of James**.

But this James is even more obscure, so there's no reason to credit him with the writing of this Epistle.

## **EXPLAIN: SON OF ZEBEDEE**

The third James is the James we are most likely familiar with. And that's James the son of Zebedee.

- Again, another of the Twelve disciples,
- but James and his brother John are the sons of Zebedee.

- These guys are also known as the Sons of Thunder.
  - What a great nick name!
    - Every time they walk in a room...
    - “Thunder! AhhhhAhhh!”
  - Peter was called the Rock,
  - these guys are the Sons of Thunder...

It just makes me even more sad for Doubting Thomas.

- He’s like,
- “Are you kidding me!
- I had one bad day,
- and I’ll forever be remembered this way!?!”

So, we know a lot about this James...

- he was in the inner circle of Jesus.
  - Within the Twelve Apostles,
  - Jesus often separated Peter, James, and John.

So, this guy certainly has the chops to be the James who wrote this letter...

- Except...we know that James son of Zebedee
  - was one of the first Apostles killed.
- In Acts 12 we find the account,
- that James was killed by Herod.

So, even though this James could have penned this letter...

- his early death makes him pretty unlikely.
  - He had the pedigree,
  - but it probably wasn’t him.

## EXPLAIN: BROTHER OF JESUS

So, we come to the fourth James, and the most likely candidate to be our author. And this is James the brother of Jesus.

- Now, James was the half-brother of Jesus.
- And I say half-brother
  - because he was born to Joseph and Mary
  - after Jesus was born.

We find out about his siblings Mark 6.

- The crowds in his hometown are astonished with his teaching,
- and they ask this:

### SLIDE MARK 6:2b-3

“Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him?

How are such mighty works done by his hands? [3] Is not this the

carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and

Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?”

## EXPLAIN: ELDEST BROTHER

So, Jesus is the big brother to James and a bunch of other siblings!

- But, James is mentioned first in this list,
- which likely means he is the eldest of the brothers.
- So, he and Jesus would have been closest in age.
  - How many years different?
  - No idea.

- But we can surmise
- that they weren't that far off from one another
- because in order for Mary to have that many kids
- she must have gotten to work pretty soon after Jesus' birth.

So, we need to picture this:

- Jesus and James were raised in the same home.
  - They probably shared a bedroom.
  - Maybe bunk beds or something.
- Of all his brothers,
- James might have been relationally closest to Jesus
- since they were nearly the same age.

Now, what did James think of his brother, Jesus?

- Well, we have two records of their thoughts.

First, we find that after Jesus begins his ministry,

- He starts to gather quite a following of people,
- and in Mark 3:21 here's what his family thinks:

### **SLIDE MARK 3:21**

[21] And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

They thought he was crazy!

- They went to get him back to try to control him.
- His family did not believe in him!

- They tried to grab him and have him institutionalized!
  - Because that's what you do
  - when someone you love claims to be God!

And then in John chapter 7

- Jesus has amassed a huge following...
- But in John 7:5 we find this:

### **SLIDE JOHN 7:5**

**[5] For not even his brothers believed in him.**

### **EXPLAIN: SIBLING DEITY**

- They didn't believe in him!
- They thought he was crazy.
- They wanted to stop his bizarre behavior.

And this makes complete sense, right?!?

- If you were raised with someone,
- it would be very difficult to ascribe deity to them. Right?
  - I've got a brother...
  - and I tell you what...
    - it'd take an awful lot for me to start worshipping
    - The Lord Matthew Martin.

### **TRANSITION**

So, how does this James get to the point where he could start a letter with: **James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ?**

- Well, in order to answer that
- we need to see what happens to James
- AFTER Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

In Acts chapter 1 we find these verses:

### **SLIDE ACTS 1:12–14**

[12] Then they [the disciples] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. [this is after they had met the Resurrected Jesus, and watched him ascend to heaven] [13] 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. [14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

There's all four of our James' listed in one paragraph!

But, the brothers of Jesus are with the Apostles in the upper room.

And this is where the church will be birthed.

- So, how is it that the brothers are there?
  - When back while Jesus was alive
  - they thought he was crazy
  - and didn't believe in him?

Well, 1 Corinthians 15 gives us the answer.

## **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-7**

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James...

Jesus revealed himself to James in a personal post-resurrection revelation.

- And that is precisely why James appears in the Upper Room.
- Because he has seen the resurrected Christ!

I said, it would take an awful lot for me to start worshipping my brother!

- He would literally have to die,
- stay dead for a few days,
- come back to life,
- and show up to eat some fish with me...

## **POINT 1**

So, let me make my first point from the first verse of the James:

### **SLIDE THE RESURRECTION CHANGES EVERYTHING**

- What you believe about the death and resurrection of Jesus
- are the MOST important things you to believe!

And we see it here with James,

- but if the tomb is empty,
- then it changes everything!

Pastor Andy Stanley, says that the way to understand something is to go back to its starting point.

Everything has a starting point.

- Every job...
- every relationship...
- every living thing had a starting point.
- You had a starting point.
  - Some of you were started on purpose.
  - Others of you were more of an accident.
- Romances always have a starting point.
  - Some of you remember your very first romance...
    - Mine was when I was four-years-old
    - and I thought I was going to marry my cousin!
  - Thankfully I outgrew that!

But your faith journey also has a starting point.

And James' real starting point is witnessing the resurrected Jesus.

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES EVERYTHING.

In fact, that James believed in the resurrection is astounding!

- That the very closest brother to Jesus
- witnesses the resurrection of his brother,
- and now gives his life to be,
  - as our text says,

- a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - He never changes his story.
  - He goes to his grave faithfully proclaiming
  - that Jesus is who he said he is!

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES EVERYTHING!

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## TRANSITION

So, this is James the brother of Jesus. But that still doesn't show us that he's the author of this letter.

- He's the most likely candidate from the four James',
  - but we need some more,
  - and we have some more.

So, James has come to faith in Jesus, through a resurrection revelation.

- And now he finds himself in the upper room with the apostles,
- and it isn't long before he is a very important part of the church.

In Acts chapter 12 the new church movement is under harsh persecution.

- I've already mentioned James the son of Thunder's is killed,
- but after he is killed,
- the Apostle Peter is imprisoned.

So, the church gathers to pray for Peter's release.

- Well, an angel shows up
- and miraculously breaks Peter out of prison,
- and when Peter shows up to the prayer gathering
- this is what he says:

## **SLIDE ACTS 12:17**

[17] But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place.

- So, James goes from the Upper Room,
- to becoming the focal point leader
- of the church at Jerusalem.
- And when there's any important news it is to go to James.

James, if we can borrow a contemporary term, has become the lead pastor of the church at Jerusalem.

- It's understandable.
- You can imagine what renown he had
  - as the brother of the Lord Jesus.

So, he is the one who now appears in a very prominent position.

## **EXPLAIN: JERUSALEM COUNCIL**

And then in Acts 15 we find what's known as the Jerusalem Council, which happened in 49 A.D.

- Some decisions are needing to be made
- concerning the spread of the gospel to the gentiles,
- and so, the church leaders of the time have a meeting.

And when all the arguments had been made, Acts 15:13 says this:

## **SLIDE ACTS 15:13**

[13] After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me...

James is again the key leader in the church at Jerusalem.

- He presides over the Jerusalem Council.
- And he will go on to pen the letter sent to the gentile churches.

Now, traditions tells us that James will be the main pastor over the Jerusalem church until he is martyred in 62 A.D.

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### **EXPLAIN: WHY HE’S THE AUTHOR**

So, why do we think he wrote this letter? Let me give you some compelling reasons:

### **PROMINENT POSITION**

First, that he rose to this position of prominence in the Jerusalem Church, which was the hub of this new movement.

- I mean, we have churches that are movement setting churches.
- Like, everyone wants to know how they do small groups,
- or preaching, or leadership development.
  - Now, no one’s asking Fathom those kind of questions...
  - It took us 6 years just to get coffee...
- but to be the prominent leader
- in the most prominent church in this new movement.
- James must have had some sway.

## WRITING STYLE

Second,

- when you compare the letter of response
- from James at the Jerusalem Counsel in Acts chapter 15,
- with the style of writing in the Letter of James,
- there are so many linguistic similarities
- between these two letters,
- that it would be difficult to discredit
- that they share an author.

## OCCAM'S RAZOR/TIMING

And thirdly, James the brother of Jesus just fits the best.

- Occam's Razor, put simply, states:
- *"the simplest solution is almost always the best."*
- And this James just makes the most sense.

You see, another way to determine the authorship is to consider who a letter is written to and when a letter is written.

So, who is this letter to?

Well, our text says: **To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion.**

- This means it's written to the Jewish Christians
- in the earliest days of the movement of the church.

You see, the church had spread from Jerusalem

- when the persecution of Christians
- began after the stoning of Stephen in 44 A.D.

And because this letter is written to those **twelve tribes in the Dispersion**,

- and has no mention of the gentile inclusion in the church
- which happened at the Jerusalem Counsel in 49 A.D.,
- scholars date this book to between 44 and 49 A.D.

Which is right when James would have been in leadership in Jerusalem.

It just fits.

And that also makes this the earliest New Testament book.

- This book is older than Paul's writings.
- This is even older than any of the four Gospel accounts!

So, I think we can say this letter was written by James the brother of Jesus.

## **EXPLAIN: CONTROVERSY**

Now, you may know that there is some controversy concerning the book of James:

- Specifically, around the balance
- of the doctrines of faith and works.

It is famously known that the great reformer Martin Luther did not like the Epistle of James. In fact, here's his actual quote:

**SLIDE** *"Therefore St James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it."* **BLANK SLIDE**

So, Luther calls this letter “an epistle of straw.”

- But Luther was coming from
- a Medieval Catholic worldview
- with a hyper-focus on the value of works or deeds,
- and not on faith.

And when Luther read the Apostle Paul,

- and his emphasis on justification by grace through faith...
- and then James on how works fit into the equation...
- he kinda lost his mind!

But I think it’s helpful to consider who this was written to.

- It was written to Christians!
- James does not deal with the essence of salvation.
  - There’s nothing in here about the crucifixion of Christ
  - or His resurrection,
  - nothing about the deity of Christ,
  - nothing about justification,
  - nothing about regeneration.
- These things aren’t mentioned at all...
- because they are assumed – they’re all assumed.

It’s very clear that he is writing to people who say they believe.

- So, the underlying assumption here
- is that you have people who claim
- to already have faith in Christ.

He doesn’t explain what it is to be a Christian...

because he assumes that they already are!

## POINT 2

And here's where I want to make my other point from this passage.

### **SLIDE THE RESURRECTION MUST CHANGE YOU**

- Before you can get what James has to say in this book,
- you have to deal with what you believe about Jesus.

Listen, in this series we'll talk at length about the faith/works theology.

But this morning,

- if you have not been changed by the resurrection.
- If you haven't been convinced that Jesus is who he says he is.
- If you haven't submitted your life to Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- If you aren't a Christian...

And if you join us the next three months to study this book.

- You will learn how to be a very moral person...
- who is still destined for hell.
  - If that sounds harsh,
  - just go back three weeks
  - and podcast my sermon on hell.

**But the obedience and works that James will call us to CANNOT save you.**

- If this book is going to make any sense at all to you,
- first THE RESURRECTION MUST CHANGE YOU.

So, this is your chance! This sermon series is going to be amazing!

But you need to be a Christian to get out of it what you're meant to.

- So, have you been changed by the resurrection?
- You might even be sensing God beckoning to you this morning,
- and if that's the case, man, jump in here with us!

- Just pray,
  - *“Jesus, I give you my life.*
  - *I need you.*
  - *I believe in you.*
  - *I submit to you.*
  - *Be my Savior.*
  - *Be my Lord!”*

THE RESURRECTION MUST CHANGE YOU

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## CONCLUSION

Now, all of that is why we primarily preach expository sermons!

- All that from one verse.
- And I could say more from this one verse,
- But for the sake of time,
- I’m gonna end.

Now, I don’t know if you know this...

- but most church-growth specialists
- don’t advise you spend all Fall,
  - the best time to grow your church,
- going verse by verse through a book of the Bible.

No! They tell you to market something attractational to your church.

Deal with a felt need in a really creative way, and keep the sermons short and snappy to really draw a crowd.

## ILLUSTRATION: DANGER THINGS

So, we could just take some pop culture thing and Christianize it...  
Take the TV show Stranger Things.

- Season 4 is supposed to come to Netflix next year.

Ok, so let's say that we're at church today...

- and we just finished singing...
- and I come up and go,
  - *"Um, I want to start a sermon series today called...*
  - **SLIDE** *'Danger Things'...*

*And over the next 5 weeks*

- *I have 5 things that are dangerous to you.*
- *And the first thing that's dangerous to you is debt!"*

And then I preach a whole sermon on why financial debt is dangerous...

- and maybe I link a half-a-verse of scripture
- from some obscure Prophet
- just to make my point...
- But I say in my conclusion,
  - *"And that's why debt is a danger thing."*

And then as I walk down,

- Amanda comes up and gets her guitar
- and she wrote a song called "Debt Danger."
- And she sings,
  - *"If you have four bucks*
  - *but you spent seven,*
  - *Danger Thing."*

And then on the way out,

- just to remind you,
- you get a bumper sticker or a t-shirt...
- that has the “Danger Things” logo on it.

## ENDING

And we could do that...because debt is dangerous! It's true...

OR...

- we can spend 45 minutes on one verse...
- that shows us that the resurrection changes everything!
- And that the resurrection must change you!

I know what I prefer.

**James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,**

**To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:**

**Greetings.**

Now we're ready for the book of James.

Verse 2...next week!

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES USED:

- Blomberg, Craig. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James.
- MacArthur, *An Introduction to James, Part 1*.
- Moo, Douglas. Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter of James.
- Wilkin, Jen. *Introduction*.