

The Authorship of James

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Upon extensive study and deep reflection by many, the book of James is believed to be by way of application of Christian principles the most practical of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The “James” who is the human author has been believed by Bible students down through the ages to be our Lord’s half brother.

The fact that our Lord had a half brother needs to be established because the world’s largest “church” teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary which would leave Christ without siblings. [“The world’s largest ‘church’” is the Roman Catholic with 1.8 billion adherents and growing at a rate of approximately 15 million a year. Incidentally, the Muslims surpassed the Catholics in number in 2009 having 1.57 billion followers. (cf. *Vatican: Number of Catholics is up, still behind Muslims* at www.usatoday.com, February 22, 2011.)]

To the contrary, Matthew, the inspired apostle, and Mark, the inspired writer, provide a listing of the half brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Matthew 13:55-56 affirms, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?” Mark 6:3 reads, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.”

The “James” who wrote the book of James is not established by the fact the Lord had a half brother by that name but by further consideration of the man “James.” Sadly, he did not believe on Jesus during the personal ministry of our Lord for John tells us, “For neither did his brethren believe in him” (John 7:5). But, after the passion of Christ he is with the 120 disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:13-14). While no specific reason is given in the Scripture for his change of conviction, it is obvious that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ have a significant bearing. It is this “James” who becomes a leader in the Jerusalem church. Note a few passages in evidence of this from the book of Acts. Acts 12:17, “But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.” Acts 15:13, “And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me.” The verses which follow record James’ declaration of how the significant issue of division between Jewish and Gentile converts could be peacefully and effectively resolved. (His comments show a very detailed knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament references to salvation through the Christ.) Luke tells us that after James’ remarks the apostles and elders were pleased to send letters of instruction to the area which had been the source of the controversy. Upon the completion of his Third Missionary Journey Paul presented a report to the Jerusalem church with James present. Acts 21:17-19, “And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.”

The apostle Paul observed that James was a significant influence in the church at Jerusalem. He said, “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem.... James, Cephas, and John...seemed to be pillars” (Galatians 2:1, 9). Scholars have noted the book of James bears

the marks of a writer very familiar with the writings and ways of both the Greeks and Hebrews. Given his prominence in the Jerusalem church and his kinship with the Lord Himself, what better suggestion of authorship could be made for the book of James than the James herein described? “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting” (James 1:1).