

## CHAPTER I

James 1:1

### SALUTATION

*Text 1:1*

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting.

*Queries*

1. Is there more than one "James" in the New Testament? (Identify them, if possible.)
2. Is the position of servant generally considered to be a position of honor among men, or dishonor? Is it a position that calls for pride, or humiliation? Is "servant" the correct connotation for every Christian?
3. Could the Lord Jesus ever be referred to as "God", or must the term God always refer to the Father? (Remember John 1:1)
4. How many of the original twelve tribes were in existence at the time of Christ's incarnation? What happened to the tribes that no longer existed?
5. To what could the term "twelve tribes" refer? (Try to think of more than one possibility.)
6. Why do you think the translators of the American Standard Version capitalized the word "Dispersion"? Do you think it should be capitalized?

*Paraphrases*

- A. James, a bondservant of the God and Lord, Jesus Christ; writing to the true Israel - the church that is scattered far and near - sends you joy.
- B. James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, writing to the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion, sends you greetings.
- C.\*From: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.  
To: Jewish Christians scattered everywhere. Greetings!

*Summary*

James, the author, expresses his humble relationship with God. He then addresses his letter to the twelve tribes (evidently figurative, for the twelve tribes did not then exist), and expresses joy in writing to them.

*Comment*

The Greek word "servant" is here *doulos*. Its root meaning is bond-servant (A.S.V., margin), or slave. It is thus not a means of elevating the author above other men because of his relationship with God. Although the word may indicate subjection without the idea of bondage, it always connotes the idea of subjection, never elevation. There are nine different nouns translated "servant", but this particular one can only mean humble submission—whether submission of bondage or voluntary submission.

Bondslaves in the Roman empire were sometimes bound by an iron neckband. The iron collar was welded around the neck. Only a blacksmith could remove it - and no blacksmith dared remove it for it was the mark of a slave!

Wonderful Jesus: I am His bondslave, with the band of His love about my heart. Only I have the key. No one, other than myself, can remove it. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39). Although no creature can steal me from my Lord, yet, I may, if I so desire, unlock the band and slip away to the pigpens of this world. Of my own free will, I am His bondslave. He made me, and He purchased me. This is fact. I choose to recognize His ownership. This is my will.

At least three persons in the New Testament are referred to as "James:" the son of Zebedee, the son of Alphaeus, and the brother of Jesus. All known facts point to James, the brother of Jesus, as the author of this epistle. It is agreed by all from antiquity that the James of Gal. 1:19 is the author. The author could not have been the son of Zebedee, who was an apostle and also the brother of John, for he was killed by Herod in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:2). There are some, however, that argue that there are only two James' in the New

Testament; that the James of Gal. 1:19 was not in reality a brother of the Lord, but a cousin, and the same as "James the less" (i.e. the son of Alphaeus.) Thus (they argue) Jesus had no real brothers, and Mary (Jesus' mother) had no sons and daughters, other than Jesus. The obvious refutation of the ingenious argument is in the parenthesis in the chart that follows.

The date of the epistle cannot be exactly established. James, the author, died in 63 or 68 A.D. It was written from Jerusalem, probably during the final ten years of his life. Some, however, hold that it was written previously to the Jerusalem council in the year 50.

Some may wonder that the Lord's brother, James, was called an apostle in Galatians 1:19. James is here distinguished from the twelve apostles by positive identification: The phrase, "The Lord's brother," prevents any possibility of confusing him with one of the twelve. The word "apostle" also describes Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14), Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), Silas and Timothy (I Thess. 2:6), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25, R. V. margin), and two unnamed brethren (2 Cor. 8:23, R.V. margin). These were not of the apostolic office, and were not members of the "twelve", although all were obviously "sent forth" with the Word. In each of these uses, along with James in Gal 1:19, the word, "apostle", is used in a sense beyond the twelve chosen to the apostolic office.

"Of God" and "of the Lord Jesus Christ" could refer to two different personalities (i.e., the Father and the Son, Jesus), or the two phrases could be two different designations for the same one, Jesus, who is both God and Messiah (Christ). This latter is not only a possibility, but a probability that is in perfect harmony with other Scriptures. 2 Peter 1:1 and Titus 2:13 leave no doubt that God is a term that is properly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Also compare Gen 1:1 with John 1:1; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; and Heb. 1:1-2.) In this light Jesus' true nature is more clearly revealed. Jesus is not only the man who suffered temptation, humiliation, and death; but He is the God who broke the bonds of death in His resurrection. He reigns in heaven over His kingdom not as man, but as God. He was not created as were men but came from, and returned to, eternity—co-existent with the Father. He not only is my "elder brother," but He is my Savior and God, and truly worthy of my adoration and worship.

The "twelve tribes of the Dispersion" likewise has two applications. The Jewish heart held dear the concept of the twelve tribes

1. **JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JOHN**  
**SON OF ZEBEDEE AN APOSTLE**  
**KILLED BY HEROD 44 A.D.**  
 (Acts 12:2)
3. **JAMES THE LESS (Mk. 14:40)**  
**AN APOSTLE, THE SON OF ALPHEUS.**  
 Question: Was the son of Alphaeus the same as the brother of Jesus?  
 (The seven point argument that he was the same is followed by the refutation in parenthesis.)  
 (1) Mary always remained a virgin, so Jesus could not have brothers through Mary. His cousins were called brothers and sisters.  
 (A complete assumption about the status of Mary. The New Testament nowhere indicates she remained a virgin, but rather the contrary.)  
 (2) Brother is equal to the term "cousin."  
 (Nowhere in the New Testament Scripture is it so used.)  
 (3) Mary, the wife of Clopas (John 19:25) was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.  
 (Is it likely that there would be *two sisters* in one family with the *same* name?)  
 (4) Alphaeus and Clopas are different forms of the same name.  
 (5) "James, Joses, Simon, Judas" were all cousins of Jesus—and James and Judas were his cousin Apostles.  
 (They were never so called. When they became Christians, they were distinguished from the twelve in Acts 1:14.)  
 (6) Since Jesus on the cross commits the care of His mother to John, this proves she had no sons except Jesus.  
 (Jesus' brothers were not his followers at this time; so Jesus gave his mother to the care of John.)  
 (7) Gal. 1:19 calls Jesus the brother (i.e., cousin) of Jesus an "apostle."  
 (The term is also used of eight others who were not of the apostolic office . . . see comment on next page. "Apostle" is here used in a general sense of one being sent, and not one of the "twelve," of the apostolic office.)
2. **JAMES, THE FATHER (OR BROTHER) OF JUDAS**  
**ONLY MENTIONED ONCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
 Luke 6:16
4. **JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JESUS**  
**A SON OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS**  
**THE AGREED AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF JAMES.**  
 This James was a permanent resident of Jerusalem.  
 He was preeminent in the church (Acts 12:7; 15:9; 2:21). He was a chief figure of the council of Jerusalem and a pillar of the church. (Acts 15, Gal. 2:9).  
 He was killed by stoning before the Sanhedrim (A.D. 63...?) \*  
 (Josephus, Antiq. 20:9:1)  
 \* (Hegesippus says about 68 A.D.)

even though they were no longer in existence. (The northern tribes were completely obliterated after their captivity in 722 B.C.) Yet those who remained still preferred to maintain their tribal identity (see Luke 2:36). "Dispersion" was a term often applied to the Jews who were scattered.

However, the word, which means scattering, could be properly applied to any people who were scattered. There are two possibilities here: (1) The Jewish Christians who were scattered abroad, or (2) All Christians who were scattered abroad. Although there were three or four million Jews in the Dispersion at this time, the church of Jesus Christ was also scattered abroad. The expression here most probably refers to the scattered church, for the church of Christ is the true successor to the twelve tribes, and all Christians are the adopted sons of Abraham. (See Gal. 3:23-29.)

Also, note the epistle is addressed to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. Dispersion need not be capitalized here if the term *refers to the church* rather than being limited to the Jewish Christians. The contents of the entire epistle bear out the argument it was addressed to all Christians who were dispersed, and not just to the Jewish saints.

Thus, we may properly conclude the epistle was not addressed and intended for a particular people and circumstance that has no bearing, or only indirect bearing and application for us, and no general instruction for the church. Rather, this is God's instruction to us; and by our personal study and application of this epistle, we can live lives more pleasing to Him and be more adequate witnesses for Him in this world. This epistle is medicine for many sick souls, and contains the answers to many church problems.