

A LOOK AT THE BOOK JAMES

Ralph Porter
© 2003

AUTHOR AND DATE

The book claims to have been written by James but fails to identify which James he means.

There are three main candidates:

James the son of Zebedee and brother of John would have been a likely possibility were it not for his martyrdom in A.D. 44, which makes it unlikely.

James the son of Alphaeus was another disciple, but otherwise unknown. He is not likely to have written this authoritative note.

The most prominent candidate is the half brother of our Lord.

He was considered a key figure in the church at Jerusalem and was an author of the authoritative letter sent at the conclusion of the Jerusalem council.

This opinion is supported by tradition, as well as parallels to the letter in Acts 15.

He was martyred about A.D. 62.

James may be the earliest book in the New Testament.

It was written to Jews within a Jewish context.

There is no reference to Gentile Christians, nor to distinctive Christian doctrines, much less to Paul's developed theology.

These evidences argue for a date of about A.D. 40-50.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

James was written to Jewish believers, about ten to twenty years after the death of Christ.

They were probably scattered because of the Jewish persecution (cf. Acts 8:1-4).

Their Scriptures are the Old Testament, plus perhaps some records of Christ's life.

The readers are suffering severe persecution.

They have been expelled from their synagogues.

Some have been "buried" and cut off from their families.

Many have lost their jobs or had their businesses boycotted.

Persecution produces a self-centered interest in self-preservation.

They are trying to watch out for themselves and not helping one another.

James, as a pastor of the Jerusalem church, felt a pastoral responsibility toward those who had gone out from his church.

PURPOSE AND THEME

James' purpose for writing was to encourage them in their affliction.

He wanted to correct some errors which existed among them and to demonstrate how God's people ought to live during a time of discouragement and affliction.

To accomplish his purpose, James presents a call to faith in the midst of persecution.

The faith he wishes to see is a living faith which works.

A living faith will produce fruit, even in the midst of suffering.

WHAT LESSONS DOES JAMES TEACH US FOR OUR LIFE TODAY?

JAMES

A Living Faith Produces Fruit, even in Times of Suffering!

Ralph Porter

A Living Faith Endures Tribulation 1:1-12	A Living Faith Conquers Temptation 1:13-27	A Living Faith Faces the Problems of Suffering 2:1-5:6				A Living Faith Receives Practical Exhortations 5:7-20
7 Factors Help Us Endure Suffering:		Living Faith Shows No Partiality for the Rich 2:1-13	Living Faith Produces Works 2:14-26	Living Faith Controls the Tongue 3:1-12	Living Faith Produces Peace 3:13-5:6	
Introduction 1:1	Temptation not from God 1:13	Exhortation 2:1	Problem presented 2:14	Danger of teaching others 3:1-2	Source of peace 3:13-18	Exhortation to patience 5:7-11
Joyful attitude 1:2		Temptation comes from our desires 1:14-15	Problem 2:2-4	Practical application 2:15-16	Big results from little things 3:3-5	Source of fighting 4:1-6
Divine perspective 1:3-4	Explanation 2:5-11					
Patient endurance 1:4		Good gifts come from God 1:16-18	Election of poor 2:5	Living illustrations 2:20-25	Difficult control of the tongue 3:7-8	Seeking personal pleasure 4:3
Discernment 1:5	Practical results of living faith 1:19-27					
Trust in God 1:6-8		Teaching of law 2:8-11	Rahab 2:25	Conclusion 2:26	Submission to the Lord 4:7-10	Seeking personal benefit 4:5-6
Contentment 1:9-11	Conclusion 2:12-13					
Reward 1:12						