

“Introducing James (Part 1)” – James 1:1

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Good morning church. Today I am coming to you from our sanctuary and I wish you were here. I really miss us gathering together, but I am thankful that we can at least leverage technology to gather remotely and seek the Lord this morning. I know it's different. But aren't you thankful for the generosity and hard work of those men and women who have made this possible for us? And aren't you grateful that even in these trying times we have access to the Word of God and are able to study it in this fashion? We are a blessed people. With that in mind...

Take a Bible and meet me in James, chapter 1...

What is the first thing you do when you receive a letter in the mail? Before you tear open the envelope and examine the contents, you likely take a good look at the outside of the envelope. Who is it addressed to? Who did it come from? Is it handwritten or just mass-produced?

If it was sent to you by your daughter, who is halfway through her freshman year at an out-of-state college, you're going to open that letter the first chance you get, cherishing every stroke of her pen...until you hit the postscript that reads, "Send more cash, please. I'm out of money." If, on the other hand, the letter was affectionately sent to you by the local utility provider, then it quickly makes its way to the bottom of the pile to be attended to later. If the letter is addressed to you "or current resident" (and you're anything like me), you may just rip it to shreds on the spot without ever looking inside. And if the letter gives the impression that it comes from the federal government and may contain stimulus money with your name on it, then you're going to open that letter carefully and make sure you don't tear that check. Here's the point: the information on the envelope's exterior determines how you approach the letter. Therefore, you take time to glean that information before you take even one look at the letter itself.

We should approach the letters of the New Testament the same way—discerning the “to” and the “from”—so as to gain the historical context needed to rightly understand the letter's content. In the case of the New Testament, we have no envelopes to examine. What we have are the letter openings, which in the first-century, Greco-Roman setting, served essentially the same function—identifying the author and the recipients, while hinting at the contents to follow.

With that in mind, let's take a look at James' opening. It's just one verse, but that will be plenty for today. Follow along as I read verse 1. And let me remind you that this is God's Word...

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.” (James 1:1)

Believe it or not, this is a fairly standard opening to a first-century, Greco-Roman letter. We are told who sent the letter, who it was intended for, and a word of greeting is offered. That conforms to the norms of the day. However, the rest of the document does vary a bit from what we might expect. As others have pointed out, “James pens no [word of] thanksgiving, no standard letter body (comprising information and exhortation, in that order), and no discernible letter closing.”¹

Compare that to Hebrews, the letter that precedes James in the New Testament and the letter that we just finished studying.² Hebrews doesn't begin like a Greco-Roman letter, but it certainly ended like one. James is the opposite—it begins like a letter, but doesn't end like one. But, if you take them together, you can get a good sense of the epistolary form of the first-century, Greco-Roman world. Though I should add that they are both much longer than most of these ancient letters. E. Randolph Richards, who has long been considered one of the foremost experts on first-century letter writing, offers the following perspective:

“In the approximately 14,000 private letters from Greco-Roman antiquity, the average length was about 87 words, ranging in length from about 18 to 209 words. Yet the letters of more literary men like Cicero and Seneca differed considerably. Cicero averaged 295 words per letter, ranging from 22 to 2,530 words, and Seneca averaged 995, ranging from 149 to 4,134.”³

Hebrews is almost five thousand words (in Greek) and James over seventeen hundred. So both are much longer than the vast majority of the ancient letters that have been discovered. And that's true for the other New Testament letters, even the shortest of which (i.e., 3 John) is well above average in size. There are reasons for this that we won't get into this morning. And, no, one of those reasons is not that they are written by preachers, who tend to be more long-winded. Though perhaps that would account for some of it...

But getting back to our original thought, there is an additional advantage to comparing James with Hebrews and Warren Wiersbe has pointed it out.

“The Epistle of James logically follows the Epistle to the Hebrews, for one of the major themes of Hebrews is *spiritual perfection*. The word *perfect* is found in Hebrews at least 14 times. The key verse is Hebrews 6:1—‘...let us go on unto perfection’ meaning, ‘spiritual maturity.’ The writer of Hebrews explained the perfect salvation to be had in Christ. James exhorted his readers to build on this perfect salvation and grow into maturity. Without the perfect work of Christ there could be no perfecting of the believers.”⁴

In other words, Hebrews was very theologically dense. It helps us understand why Jesus came, what He accomplished for His people, and why our faith in Him is so well placed. James, by contrast, “has little theological argumentation” and can sound more like a “prophet or wise man” than a theologian.⁵ Hebrews helps us understand the Gospel. James helps us to understand how people who understand the Gospel live. Hebrews helped us to peer behind the curtains of heaven so that we can understand the inner-working of the Gospel. James will help us see the outworking of the Gospel on the ground—hence the title of this sermon series, “Gospel on the Ground.” Hopefully, after studying Hebrews we were left with a desire to persevere in faith and press on to maturity. Now with James, we will be encouraged to do just that in very practical ways.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. What I would like to do with our remaining time today and our time next Sunday is merely to introduce James—the man and the letter—to you through this opening verse. There are five items for us to consider. And the first of two that we'll consider today is...

The Identification of James

In other words, who is the author? Verse 1 simply calls him “*James*” and then describes him as “*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*”. That's not a lot of information, is it? The description (which we look at next week) would be an appropriate description of any true Christian. And “*James*” was a common name back then as it is now. We have several people in our church by that name and even one person on staff. My wife's brother is named James. And I imagine that most of you have known several people with this name throughout your life. It's a common name. So verse 1 doesn't really tell us much about the author's identity. At least, not explicitly.

You see, in *not* telling us much about this man, he's told us something significant, namely, he must have been a well-known "*James*." He must have been the kind of guy whose mere name would have conjured up an obvious association in the minds of the readers (which, as we will see next time, is a pretty vast audience). We are not dealing with a no-name James. This is a James of note, of distinction.

So who might the earliest Christians have thought of when they heard the name "*James*"? Perhaps a good place to start would be to ask a different question—Do we have anyone mentioned in the New Testament with this name? And of course the answer is, yes, we do. In fact, there are at least four individuals in the New Testament with this name, three of whom are even mentioned together in one verse (Acts 1:13). As you can imagine, this muddies the waters a bit when considering the authorship of this book. Not surprisingly there have been Christian figures throughout the centuries who have claimed that each of these men was the author. But really only one of them seems very likely. I don't want to get us too deep into the historical weeds this morning, but let me comment briefly on each. First of all, there is...

James, the Father of Judas

This "*James*" shows up on two lists in the New Testament (Acts 1:13; Luke 6:16). We know nothing about him beyond his paternal relationship to Judas (no, not that Judas). Indeed, the only reason he seems to be mentioned is to distinguish his son from Judas Iscariot.⁶ Could he be the author? Not likely. As I've already mentioned, the fact that the author's description in verse 1 is so vague surely indicates that he needed no introduction. He did not need to spell out which James he was because he was the most obvious James in the minds of the readers. That certainly could not be said of this James, who we know almost nothing about.

Next, we have...

James, the Son of Alphaeus

But he turns out to be just as obscure as the first guy. He too is only mentioned in lists of people (Acts 1:13; Mark 3:18; Matt. 10:3; Luke 6:15). Most scholars believe that he is to be identified with "*James the younger*," mentioned in Mark 15:40 (cf. Matt. 27:56). Though he was one of the twelve disciples, he was still not prominent enough to have written this epistle without further introduction.⁷ He's not even the most prominent James among the Twelve. That distinction belongs to our third James...

James, the Son of Zebedee

This New Testament James is the first to be famous enough to have penned the vague introduction from verse 1. In fact, James, the son of Zebedee (and the brother of John) was one of the most prominent disciples in all of the New Testament. He was one of Jesus' "inner three" (i.e., Peter, James, and John) who witnessed both the resurrection of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37ff) and the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2ff). Therefore, he would be a prime candidate for authorship of the epistle, were it not for one verse—Acts 12:2. Here Luke records the martyrdom of James, the son of Zebedee, at the hands of Herod Agrippa I (c. 44 A.D.). His early death excludes him from consideration, since it is highly unlikely that the epistle was written prior to 44 A.D.⁸

So that leaves us with one final possibility...

James, the Brother of Jesus (The Traditional View)

This contender has had the most support historically. And it's not just because he was well-known. One of the things we learn about James, the brother of Jesus, is that he seems to have presided over the so-called "Jerusalem Council," which convened to address some questions and controversies related to Gentile (i.e., non-Jewish) salvation and is described in Acts 15. Scholars have pointed out that James' speech at that Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21) and the letter that was sent out to the Gentiles of Northern Syria and Southern Asia Minor following that meeting (Acts 15:23-29),⁹ bear striking resemblances to his epistle.¹⁰ I'll give you a single example today, and it's right there in verse 1.

Do you see the final word, "*Greetings*"? The word that stands behind that translation is a Greek infinitive that literally means, "to rejoice." But it became something of a figure of speech that was roughly equivalent to our English "hello" and "appears as the most common form of salutation in letter introductions of the day."¹¹ That said, it's not common in the New Testament letters. In fact, the only other occurrences of this usage in the Bible are found in Acts 23:26, where Claudius Lysias uses it in his letter to Felix, the Roman governor, and in Acts 15:23, the Jerusalem counsel letter associated with James, the brother of Jesus. I don't think it's a coincidence that two of the three occurrences occur in letters likely penned by the Lord's brother. And if you really look over those two letters with a fine-tooth comb, you'll discover even more parallels. So many, in fact, that George Guthrie commented, "These parallels are remarkable in that they all occur within so short a passage attributed to James in Acts and because they are of such a character that they cannot be explained by the common accidents of speech."¹²

For these reasons (and others), the traditional view seems most likely. The evidence leads me to believe that James, the brother of Jesus, is the author of the New Testament book that bears his name, making it, arguably, the first book of the New Testament to have been written, perhaps in the mid-40s AD.¹³

So then, if we identify James, the brother of Jesus, as the author of this letter, then the next question we should ask is—What else do we know of the man? And this leads us to, second...

The Reputation of James

The Bible is silent on the details surrounding his birth and upbringing. One of the only things known about him pre-Easter is that he is referred to as "the Lord's brother" in the New Testament, which by modern accounting would be more precisely rendered "the Lord's half-brother" (since they shared a mother, but not a biological father). Contrary to Roman Catholic opinion, Mary did have other sons (and daughters), and most Protestants assume that those sons were born to both Mary and Joseph. In every instance where the brothers are listed in Scripture, it is James who is mentioned first (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), leading most scholars to conclude that he must have been the oldest brother of Jesus, though younger than Jesus Himself, so as to not negate the virgin birth.¹⁴

The only other thing known about James, prior to the Resurrection, was that he, along with his brothers, did not believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be (John 7:5). Scripture does not reveal why he was so skeptical, nor does it explicitly tell us what it was that changed James' mind about Christ. Paul did, however, inform the Corinthians that James was one of the individuals to whom Jesus appeared after His Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). Though we cannot say with absolute certainty, it was probably that encounter that dissolved any of James' remaining skepticism.

Luke notes that James was among those waiting for the Holy Spirit in Acts 1, the very same group that selected Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:13-26). From this point on, James' prominence in the early Church apparently snowballed. Paul, early on, seems to have ascribed to him the status of an apostle, in the same sense

that Paul himself was an apostle (Gal. 1:19).¹⁵ Paul also identified James as being one of the three “pillars” of the church, along with Peter and John (Gal 2:9).¹⁶

Indeed, James eventually becomes the dominant Christian figure in Jerusalem. In Acts 12:17, Peter instructs those in the house of Mary, the mother of John, to inform “James and the brothers” of his miraculous escape from prison. Peter’s instructions not only confirm James’ high standing, but may also suggest that James had become the undisputed leader of the Jerusalem church by that time, at least in Peter’s mind.¹⁷ This conclusion is further supported by the presiding role that James played during the Jerusalem Council, which was probably where he and Paul first became acquainted.

Paul was always very concerned with establishing and preserving good relations with the Jerusalem church and its leaders, which helps explain why, during his last trip to Jerusalem, he sought out James, informed him of God’s activity among the Gentiles, and obediently carried out his requests the following day (Acts 21:18-26).

Clearly, James became one of the most respected, influential, and devoted men in the New Testament.¹⁸ It was these same qualities that would eventually, and not surprisingly, lead to his martyrdom. According to Josephus (a non-Christian historian for the first-century), James was stoned to death in 62 A.D. at the hands of Ananus, a Jewish High Priest. The tradition goes that after Festus (the procurator of Palestine, occupying the same position that Pilate once held) died, but before Albinus (his successor) arrived, Ananus used this “in between” time to get rid of James. He had James seized, brought to a mock trial, and convicted of breaking the law, which then led to his stoning.¹⁹

Bryan Litfin, who earned a PhD in ancient church history from the University of Virginia, explains that...

“...later Christian accounts add some details that may be correct as well. The narrative of Hegesippus [a second-century historian] describes how the Jews respected James for his piety but demanded to hear what he would say about Jesus. James was allowed to stand on a high place in the temple so all could hear his words. However, when he declared Jesus was sitting in glory at the right hand of God, the authorities realized their error in letting James speak and hurled him to the ground. Since the fall did not kill him, everyone began to stone him, until at last he was struck on the head with a heavy club used by launderers to beat cloth...”²⁰

Clearly this was not a pleasant way to depart from this life. But, evidently, James, like the vast majority of the other Apostles and so many in the early church, lost his life because of His willingness to testify about the Lordship of Christ. He died simply because he was, in the words of verse 1, “*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*”.

And I don’t know about you, but every time I study the epistle of James I can’t help but be reminded of how far James had come since his skeptical boyhood days. The details of his childhood interactions with Christ are nonexistent, as are the particulars of his conversion. But his testimony is simple enough to grasp—he was a skeptic, who Christ transformed into a servant. He was a Christ-doubter turned devoted Christ-follower. And as such, he is truly a trophy of God’s grace, numbered among those who, in spite of their unbelief, and seemingly against all odds, God somehow convinced.

There is something especially encouraging about stories like these. It is not that their salvation experiences are somehow better than the experiences of those more easily swayed. Nor do I wish to imply that there is anything wrong with a childlike faith that never seems bent on resisting God’s grace. Quite to the contrary. Those are inspiring testimonies too! But different testimonies inspire in different ways.

To me, testimonies like James’ are encouraging *because I know doubters!* I know people who have spent their whole lives running from God. I know people who, despite multiple invitations, have never breached the doors of a church. I have friends and family who pity me because of my commitment to Christ. And I know people

who, at times, I have been tempted to give up on because, from an evangelistic standpoint, they seemed to be “lost causes.”

But then God reminds me of James. He reminds me of people like Paul, who adamantly opposed Christ, only to become some of His most passionate followers. He reminds me of “doubting” Thomas. He reminds me of the C. S. Lewis’, and the Josh McDowell’s, and the Lee Strobel’s, and the countless other doubters who God somehow reached and counted among His children. Then, He reminds me of my, so called, “lost causes.” You get the point. James was a “lost cause” to someone. But not to God.

And truth be told, we would all be “lost causes” were it not for God. Were it not for His initiative to seek and to save. Were it not for the sending of His Son to take on our full humanity, that He might bear our full depravity, upon that hill of Calvary.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

This is the heart of the Gospel, the good news. We have a Savior who lived a perfect life we failed to live, who died the death that we deserved to die, and who rose again, defeating death, that all who would call upon His name would be saved. We must come to the end of ourselves. We see our inability to make things right with the God we have sinned against. We must recognize the inadequacy of our good deeds to atone for our sin. We must acknowledge our spiritual poverty, our hopelessness before God, our inability to save ourselves. And when we do, by God’s grace, we can seek salvation in another. We can look to the Savior, the only Savior, and live. Jesus is that Savior. And He saves all who believe in Him, all who turn from their sins (repentance) and trust in Him alone to save (faith). That’s a salvation that no one can earn and no one deserves. But it is freely given, by grace, through faith.

James possessed such faith. Not the faith of demons. The faith that demonstrated a new life. A new life that could not be missed by those who knew James best and watched him transition from mocker to martyr. And while it’s impossible to pinpoint exactly where James came to faith, the New Testament tells us that “Jesus, after his resurrection, graciously appeared to James, either to instill or to seal his faith (1 Cor. 15:3-8).”²¹ It was the resurrection that changed this man. It was the resurrection that changed His view of Jesus. It was the resurrection that allowed James to look at Jesus, no longer as an embarrassment, but as the Lord of all. And it was the resurrection that took away the fear of death and allowed this man to live out the remainder of his days as a bold “*servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (1:1), even at the cost of his life. Because in the resurrected Christ, he saw the hope of glory. And He could say with Paul,

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.... What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:18, 31-39)

That’s what happens to a person when they grasp the significance of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. How else can we explain such a transformation in James’ life? How else do you explain his willingness to suffer and die when he, who grew up with Jesus, would have known if it all was a lie? Is it really reasonable to believe that

he would have suffered the costs of following Jesus, year after year, in the very city that publicly murdered Jesus, if he knew it all to be false? What was to be gained? Nothing. Nothing, that is, unless Christ had been raised!

To the skeptic listening, I say to you, you're not the first one who has doubted Jesus. You're not the first one who has called Him a liar or dismissed Him as crazy. In fact, you can easily find others who will join you in your cynicism. But I hope you have not landed at those convictions without first investigating it all. Have you read the Scriptures or merely heard what others have said about them? Have you investigated the evidence for Christ's resurrection or dismissed it as a claim not worthy of your time? Have you considered what it would mean for you, if it's all true?

You see, Christians believe that the resurrection is not just a neat miracle. We believe that it is the lynchpin of our faith. If Christ was not raised then all of Christianity crumbles. Even the Apostle Paul made this point to the Corinthians. He said in no uncertain terms that if Christ has not been raised, "*our preaching is in vain*" and so is our "*faith*" and we're still in our sin and we have no hope after death and "*we are of all people most to be pitied*" (1 Cor. 15:14-19). But do you know what Paul goes on to show in that chapter? That if Christ has been raised, then the opposite of all those things is true! And that's a glorious hope. That's a fear conquering hope. A death defeating hope. It is the definition of good news. We call it Gospel. So don't you owe it to yourself to look into it?

And to the Christians let me remind you that if the resurrection is true, then it should shape how we view and live all of life. How strange it would be for us to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday and then just go back to business as usual on Monday. It shouldn't be that way. Too many professing Christians are marked by that inconsistency. That hypocrisy. For the follower of Christ, the resurrection changes everything. "No matter when a believer came to faith, there's not a single thing in our lives that isn't impacted by the fact that Jesus rose from the grave and is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20)."22

So here are a few questions for you believers to contemplate as we make our way toward Easter: How is the fact that Christ is risen changing you? Has it impacted more than just your schedule on Sundays? How has it changed your outlook and priorities on Monday through Saturday? How has it shaped your perspective on this COVID-19 pandemic and the "shelter in place order" that was issued this weekend? Because, brothers and sisters, if it's true, it should change everything in your life. And the more you consider its reality and implications, the more it will. What a gift, then, that amid all this national unrest, we find ourselves in the Easter season. What grace.

I leave you with these words from Dean Inserra's book on "cultural Christianity," titled, *The Unsaved Christian*. He writes,

"The resurrection of Christ is the one event that turned the disciples from being dejected and ashamed of their association with Him (Luke 24:21) to willing to die as martyrs because they were convinced He was the Christ. Only one detail changed and that was an empty tomb three days after Jesus had died and was buried, because He had risen from the grave and was alive. The belief in the historical event of the resurrection is what led early Christians to their deaths by refusing to deny Jesus as the Christ and is the reason missionaries go to the ends of the earth to preach His gospel."23

And, as we've seen today, it's the reason we have the Epistle of James. God saved another skeptic. James saw the risen Lord. And when you come to know the Risen Lord, there's no going back. It changes everything. If that's not what first removed the cynicism of the man, it's certainly what ensured that he would never be the same again. Is that your story? It should be.

To be continued...Let's pray...

¹ Craig L. Blomberg, *James* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 43.

² Both Hebrews and James are among the “seven ‘general,’ or ‘catholic,’ letters in the NT, so named because they were viewed by some early Christians as addressing the universal church rather than particular local congregations.” Plummer, 221.

³ E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), 213. See also his more recent book, *Paul and First Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Compositions and Collection* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Mature: Growing Up in Christ* (Colorado Spring: Chariot Victor Publishing, 2008), 14-15.

⁵ Daniel M. Doriani, *James* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 8.

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 9.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ It was James who suggested that the letter be sent out (Acts 15:20a) and what the letter’s contents should be (15:20b-21). Though the text doesn’t say that he wrote the Acts 15 letter, it is very possible, even likely, that he did. If nothing else, he played a significant role in defining the contents of the letter.

¹⁰ Ibid., 10. For other connections see J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1913), iii-iv.

¹¹ Blomberg, 48.

¹² Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 728.

¹³ Robert Plummer, “James” in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 221.

¹⁴ The Orthodox Church has traditionally understood the “brothers of Jesus” to be sons of Joseph from a previous marriage, which means, of course, that they were nothing more than step-brothers. This view is known as the “Epiphanian” view. Roman Catholics have also denied that the “brothers” had any physical relationship to Jesus, by arguing that they must have been the sons of “Mary, wife of Clopas,” the sister of Jesus’ mother. This then would mean that James was nothing more than a first cousin to Jesus. This view is known as the “Hieronymian” view. However, the most natural reading of the text is that James was indeed the brother, or half-brother, of Jesus because they shared the same mother. This view is known as the “Helvidian” view, and is the opinion of the majority of Protestants, since they have not attempted to maintain that Mary remained a virgin her entire life. Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), 75.

¹⁵ Most have concluded with J. B. Lightfoot that it is probably best to translate the verse: “I saw none of the other apostles—except the James, the Lord’s brother.” J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, 10th ed. (1890; repr: London: Macmillan, 1986), 84-85. The NASB’s rendering is thus preferred because the NIV can be a bit misleading with its use of “other.” If this reading is accurate, then Paul was claiming that James was an apostle, though he was not part of the Twelve.

¹⁶ The fact that Paul mentioned James first among the “pillars,” is also noteworthy. Concerning this order, R. N. Longenecker noted: “The order, of course, differs from that given in 1:18-19, as well as that implied in vv 7-8 above. That is probably because in 1:18-19 Paul has in mind the apostles as canons of the truth, in which function Peter took precedence over James, while the statement of vv 7-8 concerns missionary outreach, which again was preeminently Peter’s domain (cf. Acts 2-12; 1 Peter 1:1). In matters of ecclesiastical polity and administration, however, James seems to have become increasingly influential—even dominant—in the Jerusalem congregation, as Paul’s reference to “certain ones from James” and Peter’s deference in 2:12 clearly suggest (cf. also Acts 15:13ff. and 21:18ff.)” Richard. N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990) 56.

¹⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 239.

¹⁸ At some point, James became known as “the Just” due to his immense piety. The historian Eusebius, reciting the testimony of Hegisippus, wrote the following about James: “James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed the Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the church with the apostles...he was in the habit of entering the temple alone and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camel’s, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety, he was called the Just, and Oblias (or Zaddick and Ozleam) which signifies justice and protection of the people.” Eusebius, 59-60 (2:23:4a, 6-7)

¹⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20:9:1. For an alternate, but later, account, see also Eusebius, 59-60 (2:23:1-25).

²⁰ Bryan Litfin, *After Acts: Exploring the Loves and Legends of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 122.

²¹ Doriani, 5.

²² Dean Inerra, *The Unsaved Christian: Reaching Cultural Christianity with the Gospel* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019),

97.

²³ Ibid., 101.