

“Introducing James (Part 2)” – James 1:1

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com]

Good morning church. Let me invite you to take your Bible and meet me in James, chapter 1...

Today is Palm Sunday, the day that commemorates Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem the week of His crucifixion. It launches Holy Week for Christians, which means, if you can believe it, Easter Sunday is just a week away. I hope you can join us next Sunday, even under these unique circumstances. And unique circumstances they are.

You cannot turn on the news without being immersed in coronavirus coverage. It's all anyone seems to talk about. But a couple nights ago I saw an interesting segment on a big tobacco company beginning pre-clinical testing for a plant-based coronavirus vaccine. Try to wrap your mind around that. Tobacco, a plant that has caused countless respiratory diseases and deaths, may prove useful in curing or preventing a respiratory virus.

Evidently, the plant can be injected with certain proteins and then it works like a factory to reproduce that substance—in this case an antigen or a potential antigen—almost like a copy machine. One doctor claimed that, “the tobacco plant is very fast and rapidly replicates it. Then we can isolate it, purify it, and see if it works.” If it those tests prove successful, then this big tobacco company “claims that, once operational, its tobacco-based production could crank out 1 million to 3 million vaccine doses weekly.”¹

Now, of course, we don't know if this will pan out like the company is hoping and there are, no doubt, thousands of other alternative means being pursued to produce a vaccine or treatment. But wouldn't that be ironic if God used big tobacco to help stave off this pandemic? I'm not sure any of us would have seen that coming. It would be a shocking development.

In some ways, the epistle of James is a shocking development as well, given its author. You will recall that last Sunday we considered two matters of introduction. First,

The Identification of James

We sorted through the various proposals and arrived at the conclusion that James, the brother of Jesus, is the most likely candidate for authorship by far. But James, the Bible tells us, was a skeptic of Jesus prior to His resurrection. He didn't believe. He was embarrassed by Jesus. But God eventually changed His mind and, as we saw last time, He likely used the resurrection to do it. And when God changed the man, He did it in a big way.

After identifying the man, we considered...

The Reputation of James

He went from being a cynic to the leader of the Jerusalem church. He went from skeptic to shepherd. From being ashamed of Christ to someone willing to lose his life to bear witness to Christ. And he did lose his life for that testimony.

If you knew James growing up, you never would have seen that coming. You wouldn't have believed it when you ran into James at the reunion. It would be like someone telling you that in the future tobacco would be the key to treating a respiratory pandemic. It would be hard to believe. But when we are considering the transformation of people, it's just like our God. It shouldn't surprise us one bit. But it always does.

As we turn attention to this opening verse, there are three more introductory matters I would like for us to reflect on. So follow along as I read verse 1. And I remind you, 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)

Having considered the biography of James under the headings of identification and reputation, let's turn our attention now to...

The Intention of James

Obviously, since this is a letter, the intention is to communicate with a group of people that he doesn't have personal access to. In a wonderful book called *Grasping God's Word*, the authors make this exact point when discussing how to interpret the letters of the New Testament

"People in the ancient world wrote letters for much the same reason that we do today. We want to be with the people we care about but are unable to be there, so we write a letter (or send an e-mail) as a substitute for our personal presence....When these apostles and other leaders were unable to address a problem or deal with a situation in person, they did the next best thing. They wrote a letter. The letter provided a way for early Christian leaders to express their views and minister from a distance."²

Therefore, a couple new questions emerge: Who did James intend to communicate with and why did he intend to communicate with them in particular? These questions relate to the original audience, the first recipients of this letter.

In the opening verse he does identify them, but he does it in a somewhat cryptic way. He calls them "*the twelve tribes in the Dispersion*" (1:1). Most English translations describe the people as those "scattered among the nations" (NIV) or "scattered/dispersed abroad" (e.g., NLT; KJV; NASB; CSB). That's not very specific, is it? "If James were to post his letter today it would be marked 'Return to sender' on the ground of being insufficiently addressed."³ However you render it in English, we're left with the sense that the audience is not limited to one city or even one geographical region.

Indeed, this is the reason James is included among the so-called "general" epistles of the New Testament (along with Jude, the letters of John and Peter, and, depending on who you ask, perhaps even Hebrews).⁴ These are referred to as "general" because they are not explicitly addressed to a specific church or group of churches. But calling James a "general epistle" can be a bit misleading because it can give the impression that the letter must have been written to the Church at large, rather than a specific group of Christians. To be sure, the letter is part of God's Word and, as such, has enduring relevance for the people of God ever since it was first written. Yet, having said that, the circumstances described in the letter are not necessarily those of just any Christian community. They are the specific circumstances of a specific group of people.

But since the description of these people is so “general” it is challenging to reconstruct decisively their situation and identity. I do believe, however, the text does reveal hints internally about the original audience. For example, I think it’s pretty safe to say, first, that...

They Were Christian

In 2:1, James refers to them as those who “*hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.*” In the same verse he calls them “*brothers,*” a common designation for Christians in the early church and the designation of choice in James for the readers. They are his “*brothers*” (and sisters) because they share his “*faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*”. They’re believers.⁵

Second,

They Were Also Jewish

Meaning they had a Jewish background. If there’s something that pretty much all the scholars agree on, it’s this point. The evidence abounds. He suggests that his audience met in a synagogue, which the first-century Jews and the earliest Christians did (2:2).⁶ He uses common Old Testament titles for God, like the Lord Almighty (5:4). He assumes that his readers are familiar with the Old Testament image of marriage to represent God’s relationship with His people (4:4). He assumes the readers were monotheists—worshippers of a single God—which was not the norm in the Roman world, except among the Jews. And on and on we could go.

But even the first verse has a distinctly Jewish feel to it when it refers to them as “*the twelve tribes*”, which is certainly meant call to mind the twelve tribes of Israel.⁷ This is the kind of language we would expect for readers who come from a Jewish background. So like the book of Hebrews, which we just finished studying, the audience seems to be Jewish Christians. Their background was in Judaism, but unlike most of their kinsmen, they recognized Jesus to be the Messiah, the Christ, so they followed Him.

But I think we can say even more. They were Christians. They were also Jewish. And, third...

They Were Not Home

Notice the word “*Dispersion*” (1:1). The Greek word is *diaspora*. It’s related to a term that means “to scatter,” and hence translations like “scattered among the nations” (NIV). But in Jewish literature *diaspora* became a technical term referring to either those Jews who had been scattered from their Palestinian homeland or the regions that they were scattered to. Because of the frequency of this technical term the ESV simply translates it “*Dispersion*” (with a capital “D”).

Jews had been displaced on many occasions, over many years, and for many different reasons. In 722 B.C. the Assyrians deported the Northern Kingdom, which essentially marked the end of ten of Israel’s tribes. Later, in 586 B.C. the Southern Kingdom suffered a similar fate when they were taken captive by the Babylonians. Then in 63 B.C., Pompey conquered the Jews in Jerusalem and took many of them back to Rome as slaves. These three events alone positioned Jewish remnants all over Mesopotamia, throughout the Mediterranean world, and into Asia Minor, Europe, and beyond, which (by the way) paved the way for the future spread of the Gospel. Concerning this, William Barclay noted:

“This dispersal of Jews throughout the world was of the very greatest importance for the spread of Christianity, because it meant that all over the world there were synagogues, from which the Christian preachers could make a beginning, and it meant that all over the world there were groups of men and women who themselves already knew the Old Testament and who had persuaded others among the

Gentiles at least to be interested in their faith... There was no greater factor in the spread of Christianity.”⁸

Having said all that though, it was probably a different set of scattered people that compelled James to write his epistle. More recently Christian persecution had been driving many Jewish-Christians away from their homes. This is described in the book of Acts. Here’s a couple examples:

“And there arose on that day [i.e., the day of Stephen’s murder] a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” (Acts 8:1b)

*“Now those who were scattered [from the verb *diaspeirō*] because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch...”* (Acts 11:19a)

So because of persecution targeting Christians in Jerusalem, these believers were displaced from their homeland and scattered abroad. But James, who you remember became the leader of the church in Jerusalem, stayed in Jerusalem. He would have known many of these people. They may have been his congregation, his flock. And many people, including myself, believe he is taking this Jewish language—“the twelve tribes of the diaspora”—and employing it in a new way to refer to these Christians scattered by persecution (similar to how Peter uses the *diaspora* language at the start his first epistle, though he uses it for Christians who likely did not have a Jewish background).

And, by the way, there is something quite clever in the introduction that gets lost in English. You see, technically the author’s name is not “James,” but “Jacob.” We will keep calling him “James” in the series for the sake of simplicity, but in reality the Greek term is *Iakōbos*, which derives from the Hebrew name “Jacob.” So why on earth do most English versions translate it as “James”? I think it owes primarily to Latin. You see “in Latin the alternate rendering *Jacomus* developed alongside *Jacobus*, so that a number of modern European languages now have two male names from the same linguistic root.”⁹ For example, in Italian the name comes down as “Giacomo.”¹⁰ And, similarly, after “centuries of transmission through various languages, the name *Iakōbos* came to be rendered as ‘James’ in English.”¹¹

But what happens if you translate it more literally as “Jacob”? You detect a play on words. We have Jacob addressing twelve tribes, which calls to mind the Old Testament Jacob addressing his children in Genesis 49. You may remember that Jacob was also called Israel and it was Jacob’s offspring who become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. The names of those tribes are derived from the names of Jacob’s offspring. So Jacob addressing twelve tribes has a different ring to it than some guy name James addressing twelve tribes, in the minds of a Jewish reader. This is by design. Our author is clever. And this move may also reinforce his fatherly affection for these Christians.

James cared deeply for these people and it makes sense that he would take an interest in their wellbeing and spiritual progress. These believers were living in new and unfamiliar lands, trying to re-establish themselves, and encountering the various financial, physical, and spiritual challenges that their relocation would have naturally generated. And this persecution scenario fits very well with the types of spiritual issues that James raises in his letter, and his opening discussion about trials may also confirm this conclusion (see 1:2-12). It was only natural that James, their pastor in Jerusalem, would want to tend to his scattered flock by addressing the various spiritual issues their scattering had raised. He can’t administer pastoral care in person any longer, but he could at least write a letter. And, as we shall see, his letter, then, has a very pastoral flavor to it.

And this, church, is why we are studying James now. For months I had been telling the staff that when we finished our last sermon series we would start a series on a section from Matthew’s Gospel. In fact, on March 15th, just a couple weeks ago, I sent an outline to the staff detailing how I wanted to proceed in that series, and they were making predictions about how many sermons it was going to take. But then COVID-19 happened in

Smith County. The following Sunday, we were no longer able to gather together for worship. We were unexpectedly separated. In a sense, scattered.

And the more the reality weighed on me—knowing that it could be a long time before I would get to see most of you face to face—the more my mind kept thinking of James. Here’s a man who must have grieved his separation from his flock and was forced to engage them in a new way, in a new setting, as they faced new challenges. He wrestled with what to say and how to encourage his people in the new world that was thrust upon them due to circumstances outside of their control. And the more I reflected on what James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had to say to such a people—the kinds of topics he addresses in this letter—the more I realized that these are exactly the kinds of subjects that people like us, in times like this, would do well to take to heart.

Like what? Like what we should think and do amid trials and what God is doing in and through them. Like how we should pursue and acquire wisdom to navigate the challenges of the day. How we should think about the future, particularly as it relates to our employment. How to navigate the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, ensuring that the former doesn’t exploit the latter. The destructive power of our words (a subject that is likely a bit closer to home when you find yourself confined with the same people sheltering in place). The way God views true religion as looking after people in their affliction, including ministering to the most vulnerable and the sick. These are just a few examples, but they are enough to show how relevant this book is to our present-day situation.

Yes, of course, the cause of our separation is quite different. They were dispersed because of persecution and we are because of pandemic. But, nevertheless, if James had been a pastor during the COVID-19 outbreak, we could easily imagine him wanting to offer similar counsel and perspective to his scattered flock. And this, friends, is why we are studying James and why we are studying James now.

Now then, having considered James intention in writing and our intention for this series, let me add a brief word on...

The Assumption of James

Since James is writing to Jewish-Christians, he is going to assume a lot along the way. This is not an evangelistic letter aiming for conversion. It is written by one who is taking for granted that his readers understand the Gospel, have embraced it, and need instruction not so much in its content as in its application. There are around 60 commands in this letter, situated in just over a hundred verses. He’s aiming to encourage maturity and as such he assumes some spiritual life owing to their regeneration, by grace, through faith. But he’s not going to talk about these things much. He’s going to assume them.

While that is appropriate for his first audience, we run a risk of misunderstanding his instructions today if we are not careful to situate them in the broader context of the Bible and the broader story of the Gospel. If we don’t, then we may inadvertently misconstrue James as promoting a kind of works-based salvation when nothing could be further from the truth.

This is why the following qualification and caution from Robert Plummer will serve as a drum that I will be constantly beating throughout this series:

“James’s letter should be thought of primarily as instruction to persons who are born again and are now seeking to live as faithful disciples of Christ.... In expounding the text, the preacher should regularly remind the congregation that the letter’s exhortations assume the finished work of Christ. So, e.g., as a parishioner listens to a sermon on James 3:1-12, he may become convicted of how wickedly he has spoken of a coworker. Yet the sermon should not simply call the Christian to ‘do better’ but should urge

him to repent. Perhaps the hearer needs to confess his sin to the maligned party or to other believers (5:16). He certainly needs to look to Jesus' perfect life and atoning death for his justification and to resolve, by the power of the Spirit, to slander no longer."¹²

That's going to be our approach in the sermon. James doesn't pull his punches. It reads a lot like Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and, in fact, some interpreters believe the letter was intended as commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. But texts like those can convict you to the core. They expose how short we fall from God's standard. But where do we turn when we are exposed? We can turn to ourselves and resolve to try harder so we can live righteously. But that approach is a dead end that will lead you right back to frustration. Instead, we must turn to Christ. We much preach the Gospel to ourselves. We must forsake self-loathing and embrace Christ's sufficiency. That's where we will find strength to follow Jesus and to grow in Christian maturity. When you are feeling conviction (and you will), don't turn from Christ. Turn to Christ. He is sympathetic with your weaknesses and He has promised help (Hebrews 4:14-16). It's like the hymn says,

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heav'n He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless Righteousness
The great unchangeable I AM
The King of glory and of grace
One with Himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Savior and my God

This is the glorious good news. This is the Gospel's truth and hope. And we will have to keep it ever before us we study James, lest we turn this wonderful epistle into a club to bludgeon ourselves for immaturity when it was meant as a guide to foster a faith-filled maturity.

The fifth and final point of emphasis from our introduction to James that I want to emphasize relates to...

The Description of James

What's the first thing that James wants his audience to know about him? We see the answer in James' self-description in verse 1. He is "*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*".¹³ There's a lot that could be said of this description, but time will allow for me to highlight two matters that I don't want you to miss. First of all...

Don't Miss the Humility

I've already mentioned that James uses the word for "brother" again and again in this letter, but I'd be remiss not to add that the one place we might have expected him to use the word is in his self-description since he was the younger brother of Jesus and yet it is curiously absent.¹⁴ When he refers to Jesus, he doesn't say my "brother," he says my "Lord."¹⁵ James calls Him "*the Lord Jesus Christ*," which is, by the way, "the fullest of the many combinations of the name Jesus with various titles or appellations in the NT."¹⁶

And since Jesus is Lord, James sees himself as merely a "servant" or "slave." He doesn't try to get kudos because he grew up in the same household as His Lord. He doesn't draw attention to that connection in the slightest. If Jesus is Lord, then James, like the rest of us, is merely His servant. And while from a biblical perspective it is an honor to be numbered among those called "servant of God," it doesn't change the humble disposition the description should embody.

Humility is not really a virtue in our day. We don't see it on display much in the public arena or the political sphere. And despite our best intentions, sometimes we live as though humility is a liability. No one likes to be underestimated. We hate it when people don't take us seriously. We don't like being lectured by people less qualified than ourselves. And most of all, we absolutely despise it when people don't give us the respect that, we think, we deserve.

The root of all this is pride. The result of this pride is that we do things to ensure that we are not underestimated, and that we are taken seriously, and treated with the respect we feel entitled to. What kinds of things? Arrogant things. We brag, though often subtly, about our experiences. We catalogue our accomplishments in conversations. We introduce ourselves to new acquaintances as "Doctor" in casual conversations. We seem to consistently find a way to flaunt our resume.

This was a huge struggle for me early on in ministry. I began pastoring my first church before I turned twenty. I can remember going to associational meetings, pastor conventions, and minister luncheons, with this huge chip on my shoulder. I felt like I had something to prove to the other ministers, who in most cases were two or three times my age. On one occasion, I was asked to leave a gathering of ministers by a man who mistook me for a youth. That's what happens when I shave my beard. But deep down, I was livid. "Who does this guy think he is? How could he have mistaken me for a youth? After all I was at least a year or two older than most of those kids."

In time, the Lord helped me to see the source of my frustration—pride. I wish I could say that these prideful inclinations have completely disappeared, but the truth is that they have a tendency to resurface regularly. I can remember writing an email to a preacher that I had never met and finding myself engaged in an internal struggle to figure out how exactly to introduce myself. I felt a huge temptation to slip in some words on my credentials and degrees and experiences, because I wanted this guy to take me seriously and give me the time of day. Yet the only thing, in this case, that would have justified introducing myself with more than just my name was my own pride. Temptations like this abound, if for no other reason than the fact that we live in a prideful culture that constantly pressures us to conform to its arrogance. Surely I'm not the only one of us who has struggled with this.

Perhaps, then, we could learn a thing or two from James' simple and humble introduction. We have already established that he had a pretty extensive resume from which he could have pulled out bragging material. He could have introduced himself as, "James the Just, from the sacred womb of Mary, congenital sibling of Christ his brother, confidant of the Messiah."¹⁷ He could have made sure his audience realized how influential he had become in the church, or his relationship to the other apostles, or his leadership role in Jerusalem. Surely, most people, if they had his background, would have introduced themselves in such terms, or at least informed the audience of these things before wrapping up the epistle.

But James, strangely enough, does not. For all of his prominence in the early church, the most distinguished thing that he could say about himself was that he was a "*servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Period. His humility shines both in what he said and in what he did not say. It is a humility that I fear is far too foreign in the lives of many Christians. I know it is in mine. May it not be in yours.

If Jesus is our Lord, then may we be content to be known merely as His servants. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

In that context, he's speaking of Christian leaders, but in principle it applies to all Christians. But leadership should strive to model it (albeit imperfectly) for, as one commentator put it, "If Jesus' own brother and chief elder of the Jerusalem church refused to exploit his office and his relationships, how much more ought Christian leaders in other times and places view themselves and behave as mere slaves."¹⁸ How can any of us do differently when we consider how Christ has served us.

Chad Barnes preached for me a couple weeks ago and made this point from Philippians 2. There Paul tells us,

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:3-8)

Christ humbled Himself and became a servant, willing to die in our place and for our sins on the cross. He sacrificed for our well-being. And we are called to do likewise. We are called to have the mind of Christ. We are called to serve, not be served. If the Son of God stooped to serve unworthy you, then why would you ever count yourself too superior to do likewise?

James understood this. He would boast in nothing, but his relationship to "*the Lord Jesus Christ,*" whom he served. May we have the same boast—that we are numbered among the servants of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. If we can say that with integrity—because we have turned from our sin and self-sufficiency and turned to Christ alone in faith to save—then everything else will be okay.

Of course, there is one other implication of James' self-description that is important to see...

Don't Miss the Exclusivity

What do I mean by that? Well, we'll have to find out next week, Lord willing, as we gather again remotely to celebrate the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

I love you church. Let's pray...

¹ See <https://video.foxnews.com/v/6146719108001#sp=show-clips>.

² J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 229.

³ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James* (BST; Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1985), 23.

⁴ Historically, these were more frequently called the “catholic” epistles, but not in the sense of Roman Catholicism. The word “catholic” just means “universal” or “general.”

⁵ Additionally, there are characteristics of the letter that are distinctly Christian and that James does not, therefore, attempt to convince his audience to accept, including the following: the Lordship of Jesus (1:2; 2:2), the fact that Jesus is the coming Judge (5:7, 9), the tension between the ‘already’ (1:18) and the ‘not yet/fully’ of salvation (1:21; 2:14; 5:20), spiritual leaders of the local church being “elders” (5:14), and the extensive parallels with the traditional teaching of Jesus (especially the Sermon on the Mount). See (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 11.

⁶ It should be noted that some translate the Greek word *synagogue* as “gathering” or “assembly,” but, if my accounting of the books background is correct, a first-century synagogue is almost certainly the setting the author has in mind.

⁷ Indeed, the unmodified use of “tribes” (1:1) in Greek is always used in connection with historical Israel. David Nystrom, *James* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 38; cf. Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1988), 9.

⁸ William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, *The New Daily Study Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 41, 45.

⁹ Craig L. Blomberg and Miriam Karmell, *James* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 47.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *James*, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 57.

¹¹ Robert Plummer, “James” in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 221.

¹² *Ibid.*, 222-223.

¹³ “Because ‘slave’ is anarthrous, ‘God’ and ‘Lord’ follow suit, which means that Granville Sharp’s rule, in which two singular, personal, nonproper nouns joined by a coordinating conjunction and governed by a single article refer to the identical entity, does not come into play. But except for the article, all of the necessary elements are present, so this *could* be an early equation of Jesus with God.” Blomberg, 47. Cf. Motyer, 27.

¹⁴ “James loves the word *brother*. He writes to *my brethren* (1:2; 2:1, 14; 3:1; 5:12, 19), to *brethren* (4:11; 5:7, 9, 10) and to *my beloved brethren* (1:16, 19; 2:5). He expects Christians to think of each other as brothers and sisters (1:9; 2:15; 4:11). But when he writes of one who was in fact a brother within his own family, he calls him *the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:1). Seeing the verse this way sharpens our awareness of what early believers thought about the Lord Jesus, and this point can be made irrespective of the identity of the writer.” Motyer, 26.

¹⁵ “James’s silence regarding his familial relationship with Jesus reminds us that the early church did not follow a hereditary leadership pattern but rather a leadership structure grounded upon submission to Christ Jesus as Lord.” Plummer, 225.

¹⁶ Blomberg and Karmell, 47. See also Craig L. Blomberg, “Messiah in the New Testament,” in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 111-141.

¹⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *James*, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 17. Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell also point out: “Commentators have often marveled that James does not refer to himself either as an apostle (cf. Gal 1:19) or as Jesus’ brother, and some have used these omissions as an argument for pseudonymity. Most likely, however, James is implying that his familial relationship to Jesus gives him no extra authority, while his addressees would have already known of his role as chief elder in Jerusalem. Instead, he wants to stress that he is a fellow slave to God in Christ, just like his readers. Indeed, it seems less likely that a pseudepigrapher would have used so nonauthoritative a descriptor.” Blomberg and Karmell, 48.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-59. Plummer rightly remarks, “The identification of himself—not as the half brother of Jesus but as ‘a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’—challenges leaders to remember that their authority and teaching are valid only insofar as they submit to Jesus as our sovereign Lord, looking to him as the Messiah (‘Christ’) who fulfills God’s promises.” Plummer, 226.