

## Introduction to NT Books

Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

### XVIII. The Book of James

#### A. The Authorship of James (Ἰάκωβος)

1. The External Evidence—Eastern Catholic fathers received the *Epistle* as James' work (Origen, Athanasius, Jerome, and Augustine). The Western Catholic church rejected the authorship of James and therefore the canonicity of it until 397 (Council of Carthage). Some thought James taught works salvation and questioned canonicity (e.g., Luther).

2. The Internal Evidence—Although the NT names several as “James,” the Lord's brother is the most plausible (Mt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19),<sup>1</sup> the pastor of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:31; 21:18).

#### B. The Audience of James

1. James wrote “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam. 1:1), or the *diaspora* (διασπορά) of the Jews.

2. Since he eventually became the pastor of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15), he wrote his concerns to the Jews that were scattered because of Saul of Tarsus' persecution (Acts 8:1 ff.).

3. The *diaspora* went to Judaea and Samaria and beyond planting NT assemblies (Acts 8:1 and Jam. 5:14).

C. The Date of James—James wrote from Jerusalem early (c. AD 45) to the Jews still meeting in synagogues on Sunday (2:2) and before his traditional date of martyrdom (c. AD 63).

#### D. The Purpose of James

1. He wrote to the *diaspora* about the expected trials that came, giving the biblical purpose and reaction to such trials.

a. Rejoice over trials because they are for one's good.

b. Be humbled by trials and tests because the Lord allows external testing and the old nature enhances internal temptations.

c. Trials lead to humility which helps the believer to have proper perspective towards others, showing no respect of persons but embracing the most disadvantaged and thereby manifesting the fruitful works of salvation.

2. He seemed to organize his *Epistle* around the third person singular imperative “Let [be]” (ἐστω): 1. Swift to hear; 2. Slow to speak;<sup>2</sup> 3. Slow to wrath (in times of trials).

---

<sup>1</sup>James became a believer after the resurrection (Jn. 7:1-5, Acts 1:14).

<sup>2</sup>Job remained silent for seven days (2:11-13), and the Lord did not complain (II Pet. 2:22-23).

3. He dealt specifically with the sin of the mouth since it reflects the heart (Lk. 6:45).
  - a. The tongue is powerful for evil (3:1-7)
  - b. The tongue is difficult to tame (3:8)
  - c. The tongue is hypocritical (3:9-12)
4. He condemned the rich of society and warned wealthy Christians (5:1-6).
5. He encouraged patience among the church members while waiting for the coming of the Lord (5:7-12).
6. He urged the prayer of faith for the sick as church pastors would anoint the infirm (5:13-15).
7. He appealed to confession of sins to help the church members in humble living and service (5:16-20).