

LimitLess- The Base Camp

James 1:1

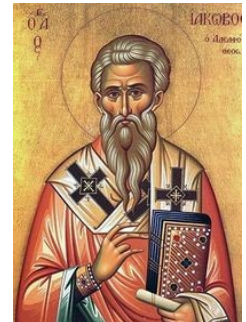
Purpose of series: The purpose of this series is to assist you in taking off the limits of God's expression through you and in your life and His blessing on your life. The book of James reveals many practical duties and activities of Christian, that is not heeded will hinder God's expression through them and blessings on them, especially during difficult seasons of our life. This series will provides us with a practical view of how to live a life of spiritual impact and personal fullness in a difficult world under pressure. We will learn to be limited less by the things that can distract us from our real purpose and our true potential as believers on this earth. Though James has only five chapters, it is jammed with many key insights and addresses important issues that we must address today. This, small, "general" *epistle*, (letter), packs a powerful punch and not without controversy...especially Martin Luther.

Purpose of this message: James wrote to Jewish Christians some time around 49 A.D., who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean world because of persecution. In their hostile surroundings they were challenged to settle for less of a relationship with God amidst difficult times. The limiting aspect of compromise would slowly but surly cancel out the potential of God in their lives. As we are thrown into a world that is ever developing, degenerating and discovering, we can hold on to truths that will cause us to become unlimited in our efforts to shine for Christ and live in His blessings. The study of the Epistle of James will only become a teaching of Christian disciplines if we don't realize that faith must be applied to all our efforts and love motivating each one, then we will only hear an endless performance list that will cause even the best to become weary and discouraged. But, this teaching placed in the right context, it will create a foundation for a future, difficult or surprisingly smooth. Today we want to look at the foundational questions, "Who is James?" "What should I know?" And "How does this apply to me?" I think you will enjoy this teaching as we become less limited in our faith and in our life!

James

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings."

James 1:1



1. James The Doubter

Jesus' Brother's Didn't Believe

James is the oldest sibling in the family except that of Jesus. Paul described him as "the brother of the Lord" in Galatians 1:19. The Gospel of John states that Jesus' brothers did not believe in him, because he wouldn't perform miracles with them at the Feast of Tabernacles.

"...when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. 4No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him."

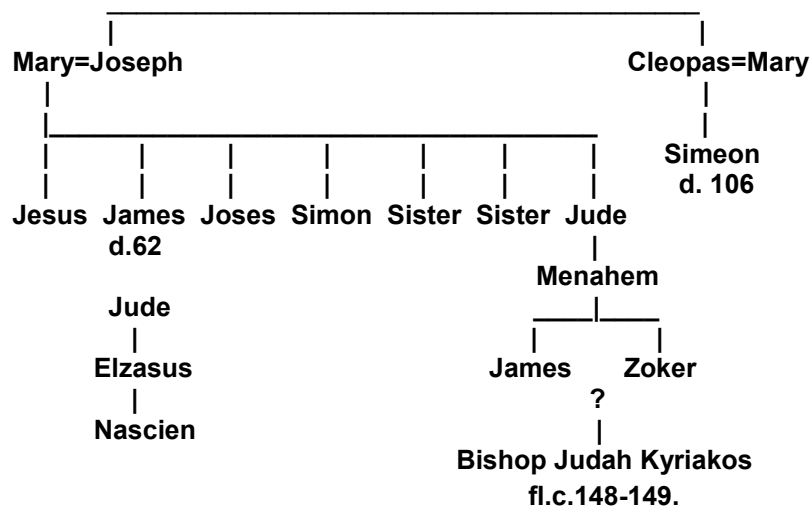
John 7:2-5

A Brother of Jesus

In Protestant Christian belief, the *desposyni*, [from Greek δεσπόσυνος (*desposynos*) "of or belonging to the master or lord"] is the term used to refer to Jesus being a half brother blood relative of others mentioned in Mark 3:21 and Mark 3:31. Of Jesus' blood relations, there was his mother Mary, his cousin John the Baptist (Luke 1:36); as well, his half-brothers named in the New Testament: James the Just, Joses, Simon and Jude.

There is much disagreement over whether the *brothers* referred to in Mark 3:21 & 31 are actual brothers or merely stepbrothers or cousins. For Protestants there is very little to lose either way since the focus is on the Biblical Christ and little attention is given toward Mary, keeping in step with scriptural references. But for Catholic's, it would be a devastating blow in most every aspect for them to discover fully that James and the others were half brothers of Jesus since it's focus is split and sometimes divided on the Messiah, Jesus Christ and His mother Mary.

Protestant Perspective of Christ's Family



2. James The Believer

Somewhere between Jesus' early ministry and possibly mid-way through it, James came to a realization of who Jesus was, the Christ. He is traditionally considered to have made his public confession as a follower of Christ as the first of the Seventy Disciples, found in Luke 10. He was not numbered among the Twelve Apostles, but is often mistaken as one of the James', James the Less whose father is Alphaeus and/or James the son of Zebedee. But Paul distinctly refers to James the brother of Jesus as one of the three pillars of the Church in Galatians 2:9.

3. James The Leader

Little more is said of James in the Gospels until he is mentioned as the bishop of the church in Jerusalem in Acts where he is considered the E. F. Hutton, when he spoke, people listened. (Acts 12:17; 15:13, 19; 21:18) **There are two characteristics that stand out about James the leader:**

1. **Personal Integrity: The Nazarite**
2. **Personal Passion: The Martyr**
1. **Personal Integrity: The Nazarite**

James is referred to as James the Just because of his commitment to the practices of one involved in taking the Nazarite vows. A Jew who took these vows, (these vows were also called the *ascetic* vows), were described in **Numbers 6:1-21**. **The term "nazirite" comes from the Hebrew word *nazir* meaning "consecrated" or "separated".**

The Nazarite vow requirements basically fell under three main rules:

1. **Abstain from wine, wine vinegar, grapes, raisins**, and according to some - alcohol and vinegar from alcohol
2. **Refrain from cutting the hair** on one's head- A nazirite can groom his hair with his hand or scratch his head and needn't be concerned if some hair falls out. However a nazirite cannot comb his hair since it is a near certainty to pull out some hair.
3. **Avoid corpses and graves**, even those of family members. This includes not being under the same roof as a corpse.

In general there are three types of nazirites:

1. **A nazirite for a set time**, a season- A person can specify the duration for any amount of days greater than or equal to 30 days. If a person does not specify, or specifies a time less than 30 days, the vow is for 30 days.
2. **A permanent nazirite**, a life choice
3. **A nazirite like Samson**, appointed by God and enforced by parents- An angel in Luke 1:13-15 announced the birth of John the Baptist and commanded that *"he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb"*, in other words, a nazirite from birth, the implication being that John had taken on a lifelong nazirite vow.

It's interesting that when we say, Jesus of..., that *Nazareth* naturally comes to mind. Actually, Jesus is referred to Jesus of Nazareth twenty-one times in all four gospels and in the book of Acts. Another interesting fact is If you recall at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22) Jesus is recorded as being "baptized" by his cousin John. And, at the end of His ministry, He sits down with His disciples in Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:15-18 and commits to never drink wine again...*"until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."*

When the requirements for a nazirite vow is fulfilled, the person would do two things:

1. **Brings three sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem**. The first is a **ewe** for a chatat (sin offering), the second is **lamb** for an olah (elevation offering), and finally a **ram** as a shelamim (peace offering) along with a

- basket of **matzah** and their **grain and drink offerings**.
2. After bringing the sacrifices the nazirite **shaves his or her head in the outer courtyard of the Temple**.

Immersion In A Mikvah

In the case that a ritually impure incident occurs, regulations specify that full immersion in water in a mikvah is required to regain ritual purity. A mikvah is a specific type of bath designed for the purpose of **ritual immersion** in Judaism. The word "mikvah", as used in the Hebrew Bible, literally means a "collection" - generally, a collection of water. It's interesting to know that the existence of a mikvah is considered so important in Orthodox Judaism, that an **Orthodox community is required to construct a mikvah before building a synagogue**.

According to the classical regulations, the mikvah must contain enough water to cover the entire body of an average-sized man and must come from a flowing, living water source. A nazirite who becomes defiled by a corpse is obligated to start the entire nazirite period over again. In the Mishna, Queen Helena vowed to be a nazirite for seven years, but became defiled twice near the end of her nazirite period, forcing her to start over. She was a nazirite for a total of 21 years.



1. **Personal Integrity: The Nazirite**
2. **Personal Passion: The Martyr**

James is called the first bishop in Jerusalem and because of James' persuasion, many people came to believe in Jerusalem. Many who did not believe in the resurrection and many who did not believe the coming again of Christ soon turned their hearts because of James' teaching. He became an important figure in the establishment of what we call the church today and because of his leadership he felt compelled of the Holy Spirit to write this little letter, epistle to the 12 tribes of Israel scattered throughout many countries because of persecution. The Epistle of James is thought to have been written in 49 A.D. prior to the Jerusalem council held in 50 A.d., (Acts 15).

One of the historical characteristics of James that there is much support for is that he would often be found in the local Temple, constantly kneeling on his knees, begging forgiveness for the people-so much that the skin of his knees became like that of a camel's. Again and again, constantly bending the knee in adoration to God, and begging forgiveness for the people.

In 62 A.D., during the feast of passover in Jerusalem, according to Hegesippus, the scribes and Pharisees, (the High Priest, Ananus ben Ananus who assembled a Sanhedrin, [an assembly of twenty-three judges placed in every city]) came to James for help in putting down Christian beliefs because the people who were

listening to him were believing that Jesus was the Christ. They admitted that James had a great persuasive story and that he was a **just man, finding no fault in him. It was said that James never had to use the Mikvah because his life was so pure he could always enter the temple.** In other words, there was no legal cause to condemn or kill him.

The Jewish leaders encouraged him to stand on the summit of the Temple, 50'-70' high, and proclaim to all who had come to attend the passover there in Jerusalem that Jesus was not what everyone was saying that He was and to not make much about it. When James stood before the people on the summit of the temple the scribes and Pharisees attempted to coerce him by asking,

"O just one, who are we obligated to obey, because these people are in error, and follows Jesus the crucified, so tell us what is the door of Jesus, the crucified."

In other words, what's going to happen if you go through that door? But James surprised them, as he stood boldly before the hundreds of people that day he testified and it is recorded that he said this:

"Jesus Himself is sitting in heaven, He is now at the right hand of the Great Power of God, and He is coming back on the clouds of heaven."

The scribes and Pharisees were so terrified they pushed him off the roof, falling 50'-70' to the ground, hoping people would fear ever giving this testimony. James landed on the ground, badly hurt but still alive, he struggles to his knees, and they could hear him cry out to God,

"I call upon you Lord God our Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do."

And as he was praying the hurled stones at him, striking him until he loss consciousness and eventually died. He was buried right there, in front of the temple and a monument was placed at the site. Now let's read this scripture again:

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings."

James 1:1

A Real Servant

I've noticed that you can either be a fan of Jesus or a servant of Jesus. A fan will talk and talk about Him. But a servant will become Him! James makes a bold and powerful statement in the first few words of his letter. He defines who he is, he is not a fan, he is a servant.

"...a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..."

James 1:1a

James says that he was a servant of and a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can we serve two masters? In developing this idea I've come to this conclusion:

- **In submitting to God I bow my knees to Christ and in submitting to Christ I bow**

my knee to Gods

Nothing really resounding in that statement, but let it settle in your spirit. Is it possible to submit to one and not the other? Absolutely, I can bow before Jesus as my savior, but ignore Him as my Lord. His Lordship is always representative of God. Jesus never acts outside of the will of God. He was a true servant of God. Jesus said:

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 9:23

This servant-hood has a high demand, and James was willing to live it and die for it. When passion kicks in, sacrifice is out the window. **As we read and study James, he will tell us many behavioral things that we must adjust, but it will only be a performance of behavior for those who are not a servant of God. The drivenness of a passionate believer causes them not to conform to the behavior of Christ, but to long to be like Him in every way!**

There can be no servant if there is no master. **This may be stating the obvious, but it is impossible to be a servant of God if He is not the Master of you! A true servant can only be defined in true obedience to His master.**

So here are some key thoughts to hold on to,

1. **The determination of what we do is in reflection of who He is, both God and Jesus.**

Components Of A True Disciple:

1. **Discover Him**
2. **Develop a relationship with Him**
3. **Define who He is**
4. **Determine He will stay prioritized in their life**
5. **Die to the cross**

2. **The determining of what we know is in reflection of who He is.**

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ."

Matthew 16:13-20

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Matthew 16:21

Did you notice it? After Peter was able to determine WHO Christ was, Jesus was able in verse 21 to explain to his disciples the details of His mission. Until this time His disciples could only blindly obey. But now they have been brought in closer to Him. And this is where He begins to talk gut level with them.

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

Matthew 16:24-27

We often think in terms of sacrifice, but Jesus wants us to think in terms of passion. When you are passionate for something there is no sacrifice!

Here is another key thought:

3. The determining of what we are rewarded is in reflection of who He is.

"Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?""

Matthew 19:27

"Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

Matthew 19:28-30

A servant is the highest call (Mark 10:43-45)

"Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:42-45

We must determine who our God and Jesus is because that will determine what we do, what we know and what our eternal rewards will be. James says,

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