

Subj: Character study

Text: Mat. 13:53-56

Meth: Topical

Titl: James, the Brother of the Lord

G.Pp: Examine James to glean insight into discipleship

S.Pp: To be further equipped for Christian life and service by examining the biblical development of James.

Thesis: James reflects the progress, the ups and downs, that many people must make in their lives in order to come to fullness of faith in Christ.

Introduction:

- A. James is a common NT name, the one under consideration not to be confused with James, the son of Alphaeus, or James, the son of Zebedee (Mat. 10:2-3)
- B. Neither of these could have been the Lord's brother because the scripture states emphatically that Jesus had brothers who did not believe on Him during His earthly ministry (Jn. 7:3-5)
- C. Neither was this James with whom Paul counseled (Gal. 1:19; 2:9) one of the twelve, but is referred to by Paul as an apostle only in the sense that Barnabas was (Acts 14:14)

I. James was a brother of the Lord

- A. Gal. 1:19 - *"But of the other apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother"* (Paul relates regarding his visit to Jerusalem some three years after his conversion.)
 1. Matthew and Mark give us the family among whom Jesus lived during the first thirty years of His life (Mat. 13:55-56) *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?* (Mk. 6:3) *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*
 2. Some think these were children of Joseph by a previous marriage
 3. Some hold they were cousins, children of Mary, the wife of Alphaeus, brother here implying kinship in the sense of Gen. 13:8 where Abraham calls himself and his nephew Lot "brethren," or Gen. 29:15 where Laban calls Jacob (also his nephew) his brother
- B. Roman Catholic tradition teaches that Mary was a perpetual virgin, having never married and never born children other than Jesus
 1. Lk. 2:7 refers to Jesus as Mary's "firstborn son" (*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*) (Rome states this should be translated "only son.")
 2. There is no inference that these assumptions are true

- C. What a blessed family this must have been! Jesus was subject to his mother and foster-father, and as such set an holy example for the younger children to imitate.

II. James, an adversary of the Lord

- A. One would think that as Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Lk. 2:53), that his intimate association with his brothers and sisters would have led them into a holy life
 - 1. (Jn. 7:3-5)
 - a. They sneered at Him and sought to drive Him away
 - b. They did not believe on Him
 - 2. Could this treatment have, at least in part, prompted the statement of Lk. 8:21? *"And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it."*
 - 3. There remains no trace, even in tradition, that his sisters ever embraced the faith
- B. Why did they reject Him as Messiah?
 - 1. Perhaps because of the high standard of life that He set (total commitment to God; no compromise with evil; opposition to every form and appearance of sin; self-denial)
 - 2. Perhaps because of their familiarity with him
 - 3. Perhaps because sometimes it seems that the most ungodly children come from the most godly homes (rebellion)
 - 4. It seems that they remained in unbelief right up until the cross

III. James, a convert of the Lord

- A. Acts 1:14 - *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*
 - 1. Were any of his sisters among the women? We can only hope, but we do not know.
 - 2. It seems the events of Calvary won His brothers to the faith
- B. James was blessed with a special manifestation of his risen brother, the Lord (1 Cor. 15:7)
 - 1. He became one of the earliest witnesses of the resurrection
 - 2. James would have been above all able to tell if the risen Jesus was the same man he had know so well
 - 3. Thus convince, he repented of his unbelief and became a believer
 - 4. Joses, Simon and Judas are implied in Acts 1:14 with James, perhaps he influenced them as well, at least it is evident that they were converted as well
 - 5. From this time on James stands out from his brothers
 - 6. 1 Cor 9:5 implies that James and Jesus' other brothers were married

IV. James, an apostle of the Lord

- A. Acts 12:17 - At the death of James the brother of John, Peter was imprisoned and miraculously release, requesting that word be sent to James, the Lord's brother, implying that by this time he had risen to prominence in the Jerusalem church
 - 1. Gal. 1:18-19 - Paul went to Jerusalem to speak to Peter and saw no one else save James, implying an influence nearing Peter's
 - 2. 14 years later Paul returned to Jerusalem (Acts 15:14-34) regarding the terms for admitting gentiles into the church: James's role is prominent in his speech and in its general acceptance
- B. (Acts 21:17-21) It was to James and the elders at Jerusalem that Paul reported to following his third evangelistic journey and whose counsel he followed to assuage the hurt feelings of Asian Jews

V. James, a scribe of the Lord

- A. The writer of the epistle that bears his name
 - 1. *Doulos*: bond servant (Jas. 1:1) James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.
 - 2. A mark of humility to style himself as a servant rather than a brother
 - 3. It has been said that (although James did not believe in Jesus while in the flesh) James says less about the Lord than any other writer in the NT, but also that he sounds more like the Lord than any other.
 - a. At least 10 parallels to Sermon on the Mount in Jas epistle
 - b. The remainder hearkens back to sayings which might have suggested them
 - 4. Though doubt once ruled, now twice he uses his brother's full title (1:1 & 2:1) the Lord Jesus Christ, then several more times uses "Lord"
- B. James provides these eloquent expressions of the Lord:
 - 1. The Lord of Glory (2:1)
 - 2. The promiser and giver of eternal life (1:12; 2:5)
 - 3. The Lord of providence "If the Lord wills..." (4:15)
 - 4. The hearer of prayer and restorer of the sick (1:5; 5:15)
 - 5. The coming Lord (5:7)
 - 6. The righteous Judge (5:9)
 - 7. The authority behind the prophets (5:10)

Conclusion:

- A. Though James was a brother of the Lord, he was not always a friend
- B. It took the crucifixion and resurrection to bring him around
- C. He quickly rose to leadership among the church at Jerusalem
- D. He became a preacher of practical morality and faithful dependence upon the Lord Jesus

- E. He penned the epistle that bears his name (c. 45-53 AD) in words that sound more like Jesus than any other
1. He Magnifies Jesus as the central object of Christian faith
 2. The key words of his epistle are: “works” (13x); faith (12x); doer (5x)
 3. The key verse: (2:26) *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

Mini Outline of Epistle of James:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1:1 | Salutation |
| 1:2-21 | Faith tested by temptation and illustrated in overcoming it |
| 1:22-2:26 | Faith shown by our works |
| 3 | Faith shown by our words |
| 4 | Faith shown by non-conformity to worldly living |
| 5:1-12 | Faith shown by patience, even under intense persecution and wrong |
| 5:13-20 | Faith shown by effectual prayer and concern for the erring |

Randall F. Matheny
PO Box 911, Warren, PA 16365-0911