

JAMES – LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

1. VIDEO – “LETTER OF JAMES HISTORICAL BACKGROUND”

2. BACKGROUND

A. THE BIBLICAL BOOK OF JAMES DEALS WITH THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF FAITH... WHICH MEANS TRUSTING GOD EVEN IN HARD TIMES.

B. AUTHOR

1. JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS.

a. Matthew 13:55 (NASB) "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"

2. DURING JESUS' MINISTRY, IT IS CLEAR THAT HIS BROTHERS DID NOT UNDERSTAND HIS MINISTRY OR SYMPATHIZE WITH HIM.

a. John 7:3-5 (NASB) His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold Your works which You are doing. "For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

3. THAT CHANGED AFTER JESUS' DEATH AND RESSURECTION.

a. Acts 1:12-14 (NASB) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

b. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NASB) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins

JAMES – LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; **then He appeared to James**, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

4. FROM THAT POINT FORWARD IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT JAMES BECAME THE LEADER OF THE JERUSALEM CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

a. IT IS TO JAMES THAT PETER SENDS THE NEWS OF HIS ESCAPE FROM PRISON.

- 1) **Acts 12:17 (NASB)** But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "**Report these things to James** and the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

b. IT IS JAMES WHO PRESIDES OVER THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM WHICH AGREED TO THE ADMISSION OF GENTILES INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

- 1) **Acts 15:1-2;6;13;19 (NASB)** Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should **go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue....** The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. After they had stopped speaking, **James** answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me.... "Therefore it is **my judgment** that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,

c. PAUL BROUGHT THE COLLECTION FROM THE GENTILE CHURCHES TO JAMES.

- 1) **Acts 21:15-18 (NASB)** After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. *Some* of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of

JAMES – LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

long standing with whom we were to lodge. After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to **James**, and all the elders were present.

5. FROM **SCRIPTURE**, IT IS CLEAR THAT **JAMES** WAS THE **HEAD** (BISHOP) OF THE **JERUSALEM CHRISTIAN CHURCH**.
6. **HEGESIPPUS**, A HISTORIAN WHO **LIVED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE APOSTLES**, GIVES THE **MOST ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF JAMES** IN HIS “BOOK OF MEMOIRS” HE WROTE: “**JAMES**, THE **BROTHER OF THE LORD**, **SUCCEEDED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH** (THE FIRST BISHOP OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH) IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE APOSTLES. HE HAS BEEN CALLED **THE JUST** BY ALL FROM THE TIME OF OUR SAVIOUS TO THE PRESENT DAY, FOR THERE WERE MANY WHO BORE THE NAME OF JAMES. HE ALONE WAS ALLOWED TO ENTER THE HOLY PLACE, FOR HE WORE NOT WOOLEN BUT LINEN GARMENTS. AND HE WAS IN THE HABIT OF ENTERING ALONE INTO THE TEMPLE, AND WAS **FREQUENTLY FOUND UPON HIS KNEES** BEGGING FORGIVENESS FOR THE PEOPLE, SO THAT HIS **KNEES BECAME LIKE THOSE OF A CAMEL**, IN CONSEQUENCE OF HIS CONSTANTLY BENDING THEM IN WORSHIP OF GOD, AND ASKING FORGIVENESS FOR THE PEOPLE. BECAUSE OF HIS EXCEEDING GREAT JUSTICE, HE WAS CALLED “**THE JUST**”, “**BULWARK OF THE PEOPLE**”, AND “**JUSTICE**”...

- EUSEBIUS “THE CHURCH HISTORY”

7. ACCORDING TO THE JEWISH HISTORIAN **JOSEPHUS** (ANTIQUITIES 20:9:1), **JAMES** DIED A **MARTYR’S DEATH**.
 - a. “So Ananus, being that kind of man, and thinking that he had got a good opportunity because Festus was dead and Albinus not yet arrived, holds a judicial council; and he brought before it **the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ – James** was his name – and some others, and on the charge of violating the law he gave them over to be **stoned**”.
8. **DISCUSS “OLD CAMEL KNEES”**
3. **INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES**
 - A. **DISCUSSION WHAT TOOL IS MOST OFTEN USED BY CARPENTERS?**
 1. **GOD IS A CARPENTER** AND HE IS **BUILDING** CHRISTIANS INTO THE PEOPLE HE WANTS US TO BE USING **JESUS CHRIST** AS THE **STANDARD**.

JAMES – LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

- a. THE THEOLOGICAL TERM FOR THAT P R O C E S S IS SANCTIFICATION.
 - 1) SANCTIFICATION (CHRIST-FORMATION) IS GOD'S PRIMARY GOAL FOR OUR LIVES.
 - i. GOD WANTS EACH ONE OF US TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON.
 - ii. THEN SLOWLY, OVER TIME, WE WILL BEGIN TO:
 1. THINK LIKE JESUS.
 2. SEE THINGS LIKE JESUS WOULD SEE THEM.
 3. TREAT PEOPLE LIKE JESUS WOULD TREAT THEM.
 2. QUESTION IF GOD WANTS US TO BECOME MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS... HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?
 - a. ANSWER... SCRIPTURE... GOD USES SCRIPTURE AS THE TAPE MEASURE FOR THE CHRIST-FORMATION P R O C E S S.
 - b. Romans 12:2 (NASB) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is (= BECOMING MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS), that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - 1) IT IS INTERESTING THAT PAUL ASSUMES THAT WE ARE CONFORMING TO THE PATTERNS OF THIS WORLD, SO HE TELLS US TO STOP CONFORMING!
 - i. SO WE CAN BE TRANSFORMED TO BE MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS.
 - c. IT WOULD NOT BE SENSIBLE FOR PAUL TO TELL US TO DO SOMETHING THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR US TO DO.
 - 1) THEREFORE, THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WE ARE ABLE TO DO TO THAT FACILITATES THE CHRIST-FORMATION (SANCTIFICATION) P R O C E S S.
 - 2) WHAT IS IT?...
 - i. ANSWER... STUDY, MEDITATE, MEMORIZE, AND APPLY GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIVES.
 3. STUDYING THE BIBLE IS SOMEWHAT LIKE GOING TO THE GYM TO EXERCISE BY WORKING OUT.
 - a. WHEN WE STUDY THE BIBLE WE ARE EXERCISING SPIRITUALLY.
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:7 (TLB) "Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit."

JAMES – LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

- c. **SPIRITUAL EXERCISE** NEED **NOT** BE **LIMITED** TO **BIBLE STUDY ALONE**, IT CAN ALSO **INCLUDE**:
 - 1) **PRAYER**
 - 2) **FASTING**
 - 3) **CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**
 - d. **BUT...** THE **PRIMARY ACTIVITY** FOR **TRANSFORMING OUR MIND** IS **TIME SPENT IN GOD'S WORD**.
 - e. **IF...** YOU WANT TO BE MORE AND **MORE LIKE JESUS CHRIST**, **STUDY, MEDITATE, MEMORIZE, AND APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE!**
 - f. **WHEN WE TAKE THE INITIATIVE** FOR THIS **CHRIST-FORMATION PROCESS**, WE WILL **KNOW** YOU ARE ON THE ROAD TO **SPIRITUAL MATURITY**.
4. **QUESTION WHAT DOES ALL THAT INFORMATION HAVE TO DO WITH THE BOOK OF JAMES?**
- A. THIS IS IT... THE **CENTRAL THEME** OF THE BOOK OF **JAMES** IS **SPIRITUAL MATURITY!**
 - 1. **GOD WANTS US TO GROW UP (MATURE) IN OUR FAITH... AND JAMES TELLS US HOW TO DO IT!**
 - B. AS WE **GROW AND MATURE** IN OUR **FAITH** BY **STUDYING AND APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIFE** THAT **WILL** HAVE THE **EFFECT OF TRANSFORMING US** TO BE MORE AND **MORE LIKE JESUS CHRIST (GODLINESS)**.
 - C. AS WE **STUDY** THROUGH THE BOOK OF **JAMES** TOGETHER IN THIS CLASS IT WILL BECOME THE **TAPE MEASURE** WE CAN **USE** TO **MAKE CUTS AND CHANGES** IN OUR LIVES AS WE ARE **TRANSFORMED** TO BECOME **MORE LIKE JESUS AND LESS LIKE THE WORLD AROUND US**.
 - 1. OUR **SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION** WILL ALSO **GIVE OUR CHILDREN A PATTERN OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY FOR THEIR OWN LIVES!**
 - 2. **REMEMBER... THE BEST LESSONS ARE CAUGHT, NOT TAUGHT!**
 - 3. **WHAT A CONCEPT!!!**
5. **CONCLUSION**
- A. **NOT EVERY CHRISTIAN WHO GROWS OLD... GROWS UP!**
 - 1. MOST OF THE PROBLEMS IN OUR **PERSONAL LIVES, IN OUR HOMES, AND IN OUR CHURCHES** ARE **CAUSED** BY **SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE**.

JAMES – LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

- B. **IF CHRISTIANS WOULD JUST CHOOSE TO GROW UP (MATURE SPIRITUALLY)
WE CAN MORE OFTEN BECOME VICTORS INSTEAD OF VICTIMS!**
- C. DONNA AND I HOPE YOU ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR STUDY OF THE
BOOK OF **JANES**!