

## **A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE LETTER OF JAMES**

### **THE LETTER OF JAMES - THE AUTHOR AND RECIPIENTS**

James 1:1 “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.”

When studying the Holy Scriptures, reference is usually made to its sixty-six books. In reality, what is often referred to as, for example, the book of James, is in fact, to be more accurate a letter. James, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote a letter, indeed a lengthy one, to Christians scattered throughout the Roman world.

You will note as you read verse 1, James began his letter differently than you are accustomed. He first stated that he was the author (writer) of the letter. As was the custom of that day, he then briefly gives information as to who he is, “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

As a side-note, James’ description of himself demonstrates he was a humble man. Most Bible scholars believe James was the half-brother of Jesus and the leader (head) of the infant Christian church (the mother church of Christianity) in Jerusalem. The recipients of his letter, at least many of them, would know this about James, yet it is interesting he describes himself as a “servant.” The Greek word used by him can also be translated “slave.”

He next indicates who he wants to read the letter, “. . .the twelve tribes in the Dispersion.” One would think with his reference to the twelve tribes the readers are Jewish. Most Bible scholars believe the readers are predominantly Jewish but some are also Gentiles. What they have in common is they no longer live in Jerusalem and all share a common faith in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The word “Dispersion” is key to understanding the purpose of James’ letter. He is sending it to fellow Christians who are scattered throughout the Roman Empire. They are hated and many are being persecuted by both Roman citizens and also Jews such as a man by the name of Saul (who would be converted by Jesus to become a believer and renamed Paul.) They are in need of encouragement and support.

The purpose for writing a series of devotions based on James’ letter is you have much in common with the original recipients. For most of your life, you have enjoyed great freedom in your worship of Jesus. Probably you have lived in a community where you felt, as a Christian, you were in the majority. As you know,

that is no longer as common as it once was. Christianity is not as tolerated as in the past. You may have experienced verbal attacks because of your Christian beliefs. You may have been called a “bigot,” “narrowed minded,” “intolerant” and declared to be out of the mainstream of society. I am therefore sharing devotional thoughts based on this letter for your encouragement and praying the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in your Christian faith journey.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, grant your blessings upon me as I meditate upon James’ letter that my faith be strengthened and I be encouraged in my faith journey. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

No saint on earth lives life to self alone  
Or dies alone, for we with Christ are one.  
So if we live, for Christ alone we live,  
And if we die, to Christ our dying give.  
In living and in dying this confess:  
We are the Lord’s safe in God’s faithfulness.

For to this end our Lord by death was slain,  
That to new life He might arise again.  
Through sorrow on to triumph Christ has led,  
And reigns o’er all: the living and the dead.  
In living and in dying, Him we bless;  
We are the Lord’s safe in God’s faithfulness.  
(LSB 747)