

JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JESUS

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:7

INTRO: One of the most interesting & influential Christians in the first century church was James, identified in Gal 1:19 as “the Lord’s brother.” Jesus’ appearance to James after the resurrection was, so far as the record shows, one of only 3 appearances to individuals. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, Mark 16:9. His next appearance was to Simon Peter, 1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34. Then He appeared to all the apostles, & to more than 500 other believers, But the appearance in our text to His half-brother James is the only recorded appearance to an unbeliever--except His much later appearance to Saul of Tarsus, who also became a disciple as a result of Jesus’ resurrection.

I. JESUS HONORED FAMILY TIES.

- A. Family relationships were secondary to Spiritual relationships. Matt 12:47-50.

- B. Nevertheless, family ties were important to Him.
 1. As a youngster, He honored His parents, LK 2:51.
 2. It is evident that He had tried to teach His brothers, but they had remained unconverted.
John 1:11; 7:1-5.

 3. As He was dying, He made provision for His mother to be taken care of by His cousin, John.
John 19:26-27.

 4. Some scholars believe it was his brothers, James, Joses, Simeon and Jude that Jesus meant when He asked the women at the tomb to go & tell His brothers that He was alive again.
John 20:17; Matt. 28:10.

 5. At any rate, Jesus did appear personally to James, and James, Joses, Simeon & Jude all became believers after Jesus’ resurrection.

II. MISSED OPPORTUNITIES.

- A. For approximately 30 years, James had had the opportunity to know Jesus intimately, to hear His words, to watch His deeds, to be moved by His influence, but most of the teaching & lessons had had little or no impact on James & his brothers. They weren't seeing & they weren't listening.
- B. Jesus was a Prophet without honor in His own country and among His own brothers. Matt 13:57; JN 1:11.
- C. One of the biographers of Abraham Lincoln had once lived near Lincoln for a time. Years later he wrote, "If I had known that Lincoln was such a great man, there are many things that he said that I might have set down."

III. JAMES & HIS BROTHERS GOT A SECOND CHANCE.

- A. When the disciples gathered to await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, James & his brothers were there, Acts 1:14.
- B. One of the earliest books of the New Testament, and the one that most closely parallels the teaching of Jesus in His personal ministry, was written by James. Another N.T. book was written by his brother Jude.
- C. When the problem arose re circumcision, James was there to help lay that problem to rest, Acts 15:4-29.

READ ACTS 15:13-21.

- D. When the letter was written, it is most likely that James, guided by the H.S. was the one primarily responsible for its wording. There are numerous similarities between that letter & the epistle that James had already written.
- E. Paul, in his Galatian letter referred to James as one of the "pillars" of the church in Jerusalem, Gal. 2:9.
- F. James was so influential that the secular historian Josephus mentions him favorably & records his death in 63 AD.

Albinus [successor of Festus] “assembled the sanhedrin of judges, & brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, & when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.” (Antiquities, book 20 ch 9, #1).

CONCLUSION: There is much we might learn from James, the brother of Jesus. I suspect that after becoming a believer, he could look back with many regrets on the opportunities he had missed. But more important, by far, was the second chance, the opportunity to redeem the time. He may never be what he could have been had he started earlier, but the potential was there to be a great follower, a great disciple of the Lord. In his epistle, James does not underscore his familial ties with Jesus, does not bill himself as Jesus’ brother, but with the utmost of humility and grace, refers to himself as simply “a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1). His brother Jude follows James’ example: “a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” (Jude, vs. 1).

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