

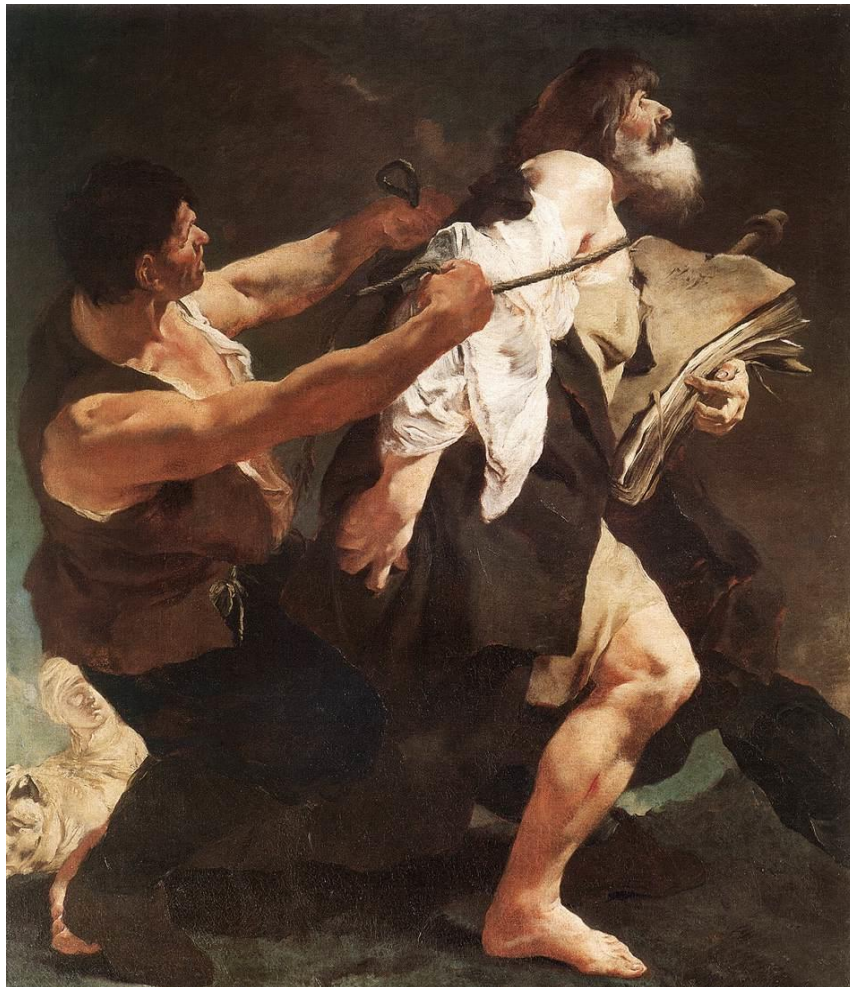
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# THE HOLY BIBLE NKJV REFERENCE GUIDE

NEW TESTAMENT

BOOK 59

JAMES



**Saint James Brought to Martyrdom**

**by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta**

## SUMMARY

While James did not specifically identify himself as to which James he was, the author is widely thought to be James the half-brother of Jesus.

James was not a follower of Jesus during the Savior's time on earth but eventually became an apostle in the vein of Paul, as one who had seen and believed the Lord post-resurrection. After witnessing the Lord's resurrected body, James became one of the leaders of the church at Jerusalem.

Peter singled him out among the other Christians there following Peter's miraculous release from prison. James made the deciding speech at the Jerusalem Council, and Paul called James one of the pillars of the church.

As one of the chief leaders in the church at Jerusalem, James wrote from that city prior to the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, which Luke recorded in Acts 15. At that council, James, along with Peter and Paul, affirmed the decision to take the gospel message to the Gentiles.

This council met in AD 49, meaning James likely wrote his letter in AD 45–48. Such a significant event as the Jerusalem Council warranted comment from James, as he was writing to a Jewish Christian audience.

But James made no mention of Gentile Christians at all, making an early date for the letter most likely. In fact, it was likely the first New Testament book written. The book of James looks a bit like the Old Testament book of Proverbs dressed up in New Testament clothes.

Its consistent focus on practical action in the life of faith is reminiscent of the Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament, encouraging God's people to act like God's people. The pages of James are filled with direct commands to pursue a life of holiness.

He makes no excuses for those who do not measure up. In the mind of this early church leader, Christians evidence their faith by walking in certain ways and not others. For James, a faith that does not produce real life change is a faith that is worthless.

In the opening of his letter, James called himself a bond-servant of God, an appropriate name given the practical, servant-oriented emphasis of the book. Throughout the book, James contended that faith produces authentic deeds.

In other words, if those who call themselves God's people truly belong to Him, their lives will produce deeds or fruit. In language and themes that sound similar to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, James rails against the hypocritical believer who says one thing but does another.

For James, faith was no abstract proposition but had effects in the real world. James offered numerous practical examples to illustrate his point: faith endures in the midst of trials, calls on God for wisdom, bridles the tongue, sets aside wickedness, visits orphans and widows, and does not play favorites.

He stressed that the life of faith is comprehensive, impacting every area of our lives and driving us to truly engage in the lives of other people in the world.

## SUMMARY Continued

While James recognized that even believers stumble, he also knew that faith should not coexist with people who roll their eyes at the less fortunate, ignore the plight of others, or curse those in their paths.

More than any other book in the New Testament, James places the spotlight on the necessity for believers to act in accordance with our faith. How well do your actions mirror the faith that you proclaim?

This is a question that we all struggle to answer well. We would like to point to all the ways our faith and works overlap but too often see only gaps and crevices. As you read the letter from James, focus on those areas that he mentioned.

Your actions during trials, your treatment of those less fortunate, the way you speak and relate to others, and the role that money plays in how you live your life. Allow James to encourage you to do good, according to the faith you proclaim.

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:1** James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.
- 1:2** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,
- 1:3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.
- 1:4** But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
- 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- 1:6** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.
- 1:7** For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
- 1:8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
- 1:13** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.
- 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
- 1:18** Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.
- 1:19** So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
- 1:20** for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.
- 1:21** Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
- 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- 2:26** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
- 3:2** For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

**NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued**

- 3:6** And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.
- 3:10** Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.
- 3:16** For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.
- 3:17** But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.
- 3:18** Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
- 4:3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.
- 4:7** Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- 4:8** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- 4:9** Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.
- 4:10** Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.
- 4:11** Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.
- 4:12** There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?
- 4:13** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";
- 4:14** whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.
- 4:15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."
- 4:16** But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.
- 4:17** Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.
- 5:8** You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
- 5:9** Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!
- 5:10** My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.
- 5:11** Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.
- 5:15** And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
- 5:16** Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- 5:19** Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

## NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

**5:20** let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

45 AD

James Writes his Letter

James 1 - 5

## CHARACTER Definitions

**JAMES** - James was a son of Mary and Joseph and therefore a half-brother to Jesus and brother to Joseph, Simon, Judas, and their sisters. In the Gospels, James is mentioned a couple of times, but at that time he misunderstood Jesus' ministry and was not a believer.

James becomes one of the earliest witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. He then stays in Jerusalem and forms part of the group of believers who pray in the upper room. From that time forward, James' status within the Jerusalem church begins to grow.

James is still in Jerusalem when the recently converted Saul arrives to meet with him and Peter. Several years later, when Peter escapes from prison, he reports to James about the miraculous manner of the escape.

When the Jerusalem Council convenes, James is the apparent chairman. He is also an elder of the church, called a pillar in Galatians 2:9. Later, James again presides over a meeting in Jerusalem, this time after Paul's third missionary journey.

It is believed that James was martyred about A.D. 62, although there is no biblical record of his death. James is the author of the epistle of James, which he wrote somewhere between A.D. 50 and A.D. 60.

James identifies himself by name but simply describes himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. His letter deals more with Christian ethics than Christian theology. Its theme is the outworking of faith—the external evidence of internal conversion.

A study of James' life provides some important lessons for us. His conversion gives testimony to the overwhelming power that came from being a witness of Jesus' resurrection: James turned from being a skeptic to a leader in the church based on his meeting the resurrected Christ.

James' speech at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:14-21 reveals his reliance on Scripture, his desire for peace within the church, his emphasis of grace over the law, and his care for Gentile believers, although he himself ministered almost exclusively to Jewish Christians.

Also worthy of note is James' humility—he never uses his position as Jesus' blood relative as a basis for authority. Rather, James portrays himself as a servant of Jesus, nothing more. In short, James was a gracious leader through whom the church was richly blessed.

## CHARACTERS Continued

From his early years James was a Nazarene, a man especially dedicated to God. The Nazarenes vowed to preserve their virginity, to abstain from wine, to refrain from eating meat, and not to cut their hair.

The vow of the Nazarenes symbolized a life of holiness and purity, commanded formerly by the Lord for all Israel. When the Savior began to teach the nation about the Kingdom of God, Saint James believed in Christ and became His apostle. He was chosen as the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

Saint James presided over the Council of Jerusalem and his word was decisive. In his thirty years as bishop, Saint James converted many of the Jews to Christianity. Annoyed by this, the Pharisees and the Scribes plotted together to kill Saint James.

They led the saint up on the pinnacle of the Jerusalem Temple and asked what he thought of Jesus. The holy Apostle began to bear witness that Christ is the Messiah, which was not the response the Pharisees were expecting.

Greatly angered, the Jewish teachers threw him off the roof. The saint did not die immediately, but gathering his final strength, he prayed to the Lord for his enemies while they were stoning him. Saint James' martyrdom occurred about 63 A.D.

## MAP REFERENCES

### APOSTLE DEATH LOCATIONS (+)

