

**THE ANNOTATED BIBLE;
THE HOLY
SCRIPTURES ANALYSED
AND ANNOTATED**

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The Annotated Bible; The Holy Scriptures Analysed and Annotated by A. C. Gaebelein

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The Annotated Bible

The Holy Scriptures Analysed and Annotated

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THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

The Epistle of James

Introduction

The Epistles of James, First and Second Peter, the three Epistles of John and the Epistle of Jude constitute the so-called Catholic, or General Epistles. They were thus named in earliest days, and in the ancient manuscripts these seven Epistles are grouped together as we have them in our English version; however, they always follow the Book of Acts. It is claimed that they were named General Epistles because Christians in general are addressed in them, which does not hold good with the second and third Epistles of John, for these were addressed to individuals. The first Epistle in this group, following the Book of Acts in the manuscripts, is the Epistle of James.

Its Peculiar Character

That there is a great difference between the great Pauline Epistles and the Epistle of James is seen at a glance. If one reads even the Epistle to the Hebrews, addressed to the same class of people, believing Hebrews, to whom the Epistle of James is also addressed, and reads James immediately after, a great and notable change is seen at once. The character of the Epistle of James is essentially *Jewish*. In the second chapter the word *synagogue* is used as the place of their assembly, "If there come unto your *synagogue* a man, etc." They were then still in the synagogue. Nothing about the church, the body of Christ is mentioned in this Epistle, nor do we find here the great doctrines of Christianity and the corresponding Christian relationship. The law is also prominent; and there are other Jewish features which will be pointed out in the annotations. The character of the entire Epistle corresponds with those to whom the Epistle was originally addressed "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." It is evidently a document

written at an early date during the transition period and before the great doctrinal Epistles of the Apostle to the Gentiles had been produced, in which the fulness of redemption, the body of Christ, the church, and its unity and other cardinal doctrines of our faith are revealed.

What do we mean by "*transition period*"? That the beginning of Christianity had a decidedly Jewish cast is known to all Bible students. For years all the believers were Jews. There was a great Jewish-Christian assembly in Jerusalem and many more throughout Judea. As we learn from the Book of Acts there were many thousands of Jews who believed, but who were also zealous for the law; they still made use of the temple worship, went there at the accustomed hours of prayer. There were also many priests who at one time were obedient to the faith, believed that the Crucified One was the Messiah; they also continued undoubtedly in their priestly ministrations in the temple. They still had their great national hope of a restoration of the kingdom. That hope indeed was preached by Peter in Acts iii:19-20.

That the Epistle of James is put in all the ancient manuscripts next to the Book of Acts is therefore of significance. We breathe in this Epistle the same Jewish-Christian atmosphere which we find in the beginning of the Book of Acts.

James, the Author of the Epistle

What we have stated above identifies the author of this Epistle. Who is James (Greek: *Jacobos*—Jacob)? Certainly not James, the Apostle, the son of Zebedee. He was martyred in the year 44, as recorded in Acts xii:2. Nor can the author be James, the son of Alphaeus, another Apostle. His name is mentioned for the last time in the New Testament in Acts i:13. We hear nothing more about him, and it is inconceivable that he should have held a position of authority which belongs to the author of this Epistle. There is another James, who is designated as "the brother of the Lord." He has been generally accepted, even by critics, as the author of the Epistle.

The Apostle Paul speaks of him in Gal. i:19. Three years after his conversion he returned to Jerusalem to interview Peter, and Paul adds, "but of the other Apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother."

James, the brother of the Lord, belongs to those mentioned in John vii:5: "For neither did His brethren believe in Him." James and his brethren did not believe on Jesus, the Virgin-born Son of God, as the Messiah. But in the first chapter of Acts we find mentioned among those who waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father "Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brethren." They had been converted and were now believers. How were they convinced that Jesus was the Christ? There can be no question that the James mentioned, distinct from the Apostles, in 1 Cor. xv:7, to whom the risen Christ appeared, is the brother of the Lord. He saw the Lord risen from the dead; He had appeared to him and that became the great turning point in his life and he and his brethren believed.

He early held in Jerusalem the position as leader. When Peter had been miraculously led forth from prison and appeared in the midst of a company of believers, he said, "Go show these things unto James and to the brethren" (Acts xii:17). He was the acknowledged head of the Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem. He is the spokesman in the first council held in Jerusalem, in the language of our day "the presiding officer" (Acts xv:13). Through him the Holy Spirit gave a very important revelation. Years later when Paul undertook the fateful journey to Jerusalem and had reached the city, he called on James, and after salutation reported to him "what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." And James spoke the fatal words which enticed the Apostle Paul to conform to the keeping of the law, when James told him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous for the law" (Acts xxi:19-26).

According to ancient sources, like Eusebius, James was a godly man and a strong observer of the ceremonial law, and, though he was ready to see the hand of God in the