

James
“What Use Am I?”
January 4, 2026

Which James wrote *The Epistle of James*?

There are three James's of which we know anything about.

1. James the brother of John, one of the twelve

Matthew 4:21 “. . . James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them,”

Acts 12:1,2 “. . . Herod the king . . . killed James the brother of John with the sword.”

James, brother of John, one of the twelve disciples, died a martyr's death early on. He is not considered a high probability for the authorship of *James*.

2. James the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve

Matthew 10:2 “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these. . . James the son of Alphaeus. . .”

This is virtually all we know of this particular James.

3. James, the half-brother of Jesus. He was recognized by the early church as the author of the epistle that carries his name.

Mark 6:3 “Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James...?”

John 7:5 “For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”

1 Corinthians 15:6 “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”

It's interesting that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was an unbelieving adult, who got saved when He saw the resurrected Christ, and James, Jesus's own half-brother, who would be the church leader in Jerusalem, was unbelieving, then he saw the resurrected Christ.

What is the likelihood that either of these men, or any of the apostles, ever doubted their eternal salvation? They had seen the resurrected Jesus.

James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Galatians 2:9 “and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars...”

At the Jerusalem council, **Acts 15:13** “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me...”

It is very likely that James wrote this letter before the Jerusalem council, in **Acts 15**, which we believe took place in AD 49. That would mean James was the first NT book written.

A brief timeline of the written Words from the Holy Spirit:

450 BC Malachi “Behold, He is coming,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”

~5 BC Jesus born in Bethlehem

AD 33 Jesus crucified

AD 33 James meets resurrected Jesus

~AD 45 James writes *Epistle of James*

~ AD48 Paul writes *Galatians*

~ AD57 Paul writes *Romans*

AD 62 James killed by Jews in Jerusalem

~AD 68 Paul and Peter killed by Nero in Rome

AD 70 Titus, son of Vespasian, destroys the temple

James was writing to Jewish believers scattered from Jerusalem, an audience which had been following the Law for over 1,000 years, and which was grappling with the fact that Salvation had come by faith, not by the works of the Law.

The theme of his epistle is making the Word implanted profitable. The world in which the believer lives should be a better place because of it; those individuals in our sphere should be able to say of us, “That person looks like a believer.”