

JAMES - THE LORD'S BROTHER

“After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles”
(I Corinthians 15:7)

Four men in the New Testament were named James

1. James, the son of Zebedee.

Son of Zebedee, an apostle, and brother of the apostle John (commonly called *James the greater or elder*). He was slain with the sword by the command of king Herod Agrippa I (Act 12:2) (A.D. 44): Mt 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mk 1:19,29; 3:17; 5:37; 9:2; 10:35,41; 13:3; 14:33; Lk 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:28,54; Ac 1:13; 12:2.

2. James, the son of Alphaeus also called James the Less.

James (commonly called *the less*), an apostle, son of Alphaeus: Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Ac 1:13; apparently identical with *James the little (the less)*, the son of Mary, Mk 15:40 (Mt 27:56); 16:1, wife of Cleophas (Clopas or Alphaeus), Jn 19:25 cousin of Jesus.

3. James, the father of Judas.

An unknown *James*, father of the apostle Judas (or Jude): Lk 6:16; Ac 1:13.

4. James, the brother of Jesus.

James, the brother of our Lord: Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19; 2:9,12; Ac 15:13; 21:18; 1Co 15:7; Jas 1:1, the leader of the Jewish Christians, and by them surnamed *the Just*, the overseer (or bishop) of the church at Jerusalem down to the about AD 62 or 63 in which year he suffered martyrdom.

James first mentioned, Mt 13:55 parallel passage Mk 6:3

Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, Mk 6:1-6 siblings & home town

Mary (mother) and Joseph (stepfather) had children after the miraculous birth of Jesus, “*firstborn*” Lu 2:7, “had no martial relations” Mt 1:25, Joseph not mentioned during Jesus’ ministry

Jesus had four half brothers (James the oldest) and at least two half sisters, Mk 6:3, (Mt 12:46; 13:55, 56; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19; John 2:12; Acts 1:14; 1Corinthian 9:5; Galatians 1:19)

The Roman Catholic tradition is that these “brothers” were actually more distant relatives; hence their doctrine, that Mary remained a virgin throughout her lifetime.

In the Greek Scriptures where the account involved a nephew or cousin, the Greek word for cousin *a-del-phos*’ is not used. Rather, the relationship is explained; examples are Act 23:16 “the son of Paul’s sister” or Col 4:10 “Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas”

In Luke 21:16, the Greek words (ST 4773) *syg-ge-non*’ (denotes relatives, such as cousins) and (ST 80) *a-del-phon*’ (brothers) both occur, showing that the terms are not used loosely or indiscriminately in the Greek Scriptures.

Lk 21:16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers (ST80), by relatives (ST4773) and friends; and they will put some of you to death. NRSV

During Jesus’ ministry his brothers were not exercising faith in him, Jn 7:1-5-13. In (John 7:3-5) Jesus contrasted these fleshly brothers with his disciples, who believed in him and who were his spiritual brothers, (Mt 12:46-50; Mr 3:31-35; Lu 8:19-21). This lack of faith on the part of his fleshly brothers prohibits identifying them with apostles of the same names: James, Simon, Judas; they are explicitly distinguished from Jesus’ disciples as John 2:12 states.

Ps 69:8, 9 It was predicted that Mary would have additional children and that Jesus would have brothers and these siblings would not believe.

Jesus entrusts the care of his mother Mary to the apostle John, Jn 19:25-27 Jesus’ cousin, the apostle John, was a man who had proved his faith, he was the disciple, whom Jesus loved so dearly, and this spiritual relationship transcended that of the flesh; in fact, the most important reason John had been given the care of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is that there is no indication that his fleshly brothers were, as yet, disciples of Jesus.

After Jesus resurrection his brothers became believers

Act 1:14; Ac 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 1:19; Jas 1:1

Jesus' brother Jude penned the book bearing his name, Jude 1

Paul indicates that at least some of Jesus' brothers were married, 1Co 9:5

As we go through the New Testament, we learn three main things about this man, James, the brother of Jesus.

1. First, James was an unbeliever.

Mk 6:3-6 ³ Is not this the Carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here among us? And they took offense at Him and were hurt [that is, they disapproved of Him, and it hindered them from acknowledging His authority] and they were caused to stumble and fall. ⁴ But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor (deference, reverence) except in his [own] country and among [his] relatives and in his [own] house. ⁵ And He was not able to do even one work of power there, except that He laid His hands on a few sickly people [and] cured them. ⁶ And He marveled because of their unbelief (their lack of faith in Him). And He went about among the surrounding villages and continued teaching. AMP

Jn 7:5 (For not even his brothers believed in him.) NRSV

Mt 12:46 James "stood without" while Jesus preached inside
True Kindred of Jesus, Mt 12:46-50

2. Second, James was converted.

Ac 1:10-14 ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!" ¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in

prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. New Living Translation
1Cor 15:7 Paul indicates that James was a witness to the resurrection of Jesus, “Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.” NRSV

3. Third, James became the pastor of the church at Jerusalem.

Author of the epistle titled “James”

Gal 2:9 The Apostle Paul went to Jerusalem and met with James, Peter and John, 9 and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do. NRSV

Ac 21:18-19 these verses show that James had become the leader of the church at Jerusalem 18 The next day Paul went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. NRSV

Jas 1:1 James was a very humble man, 1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings. NASB

Act 15:20-30 James presided at the council of Jerusalem and proposed the compromise which saved a split in the church.

Act 21:19-26 The mission of James was evidently to stand in the breach between the synagogue and the church, and to lead the disciples of Moses gently to Christ.

The historic testimony of James, The Church History of Eusebius, Clement, The New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs, Hegesippus, Josephus Antiquities of the Jews, Jack Lewis Coffman's Bible Commentary, Ante-Nicene Fathers, and Schaff, History of the Christian Church.

Legends gather around the memory of great men, and reveal the deep impression they make upon their friends and followers. The character which shines through these James legends is that of a loyal, zealous, devout, a consistent Hebrew Christian, who by his personal purity and holiness secured the reverence and affection of all around him.