

The author's name: James was a Jewish man, so his actual name was not James but Jacob, which comes from his Hebrew name Yaakov (even in Greek it's transliterated as Jacob: *Iakobos*). *James* doesn't come from the Greek but the Latin, which is similar to Greek: *Iacobus*, which evolved to *Jacobus*, which evolved to *Jacomus*, and from *Jacomus* somehow we got our English *James*.

Which James wrote James? There were two James (Jacobs) among the Twelve Disciples, Mark 3:16-19. But according to tradition, it wasn't either of these, it was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus, Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19. During the entire life and ministry of Jesus, James was an unbeliever, John 7:2-5. He became a believer after Jesus' resurrection when He appeared to James, 1 Corinthians 15:7. He was an apostle (as Paul was) since he'd seen the resurrected Christ, Galatians 1:19. He was the first pastor and leader of the Jerusalem church, Acts 15:13-21; 21:17-26.

James' prominence: when Peter is released from prison, he tells the group gathered at Mark's house to tell James, since he's the head of Jerusalem church, Acts 12:17. He renders the verdict and helps author the letter to the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council, Acts 15:13-21, 22-29. When Paul went to Jerusalem for the last time before his arrest, the one he reported to was James, Acts 21:17-26. The Judaizers in Antioch likely used his name to tell the Jewish believers not to eat with uncircumcised Gentile believers, Galatians 2:12 (he was also likely married, 1 Corinthians 9:5).

His death: Acts doesn't record James' death, but other ancient sources do, e.g., Jewish historian Josephus tells us that in 61 AD, Procurator Festus (the one in the book of Acts) died and Albinus took over but didn't arrive until 62 AD. So there's no procurator ruling the land for several months. Ananus was the high priest, son of high priest Anus (who's mentioned in the Gospels; he was present at one of Jesus' trials). Ananus accused James of violating the Law and had him stoned. Two other ancient sources tell us further about James: he was known even among the unbelieving Jews as *James the Just*. Ananus told James that if he stood on the walls of Jerusalem and renounced his faith, Ananus would spare his life. James agreed. But when he stood atop the walls, he proceeded to preach Gospel to the Jewish crowd below, which angered Ananus and he pushed him off the wall and he was then stoned to death.

James' character: he's said to have spent a lot of time praying on his knees so much so that he was known as "camel knees." The Jerusalem church went through some rough times: famine, poverty, and persecution by Israel's leaders. James was a pillar of this church through it all; he led with wisdom and courage and was known as a peacemaker.

Audience: the Twelve Tribes of "The Dispersion," which is a technical term referring to all Jews living outside of the Promise Land. However, James is only addressing Jewish Christians outside the Land. The tone of the letter reveals that James as the first head of Hebrew Christianity is exercising his headship and authority over Jewish believers outside Land.

Date: it had to be written before 62 AD, the year James was killed. Most think it was written between 45-50 AD. Since James doesn't mention anything after Acts 9 or Gentile Christianity, some think it may've been written much earlier, perhaps 34-35 AD. If so, it was the first New Testament writing.

Purpose: his audience was driven out of the Land of Israel due to persecution after Stephen's death, Acts 8:1-3. And those who were scattered now faced persecution where they now lived in the Gentile world, especially from their own Jewish brethren who were wealthy. James wants his audience to see their persecution and trials differently, as opportunities for God to perfect them, i.e., to turn them into individuals who absolutely and completely live by what they believe. As children of God, whom the Lord has taught, whom the Lord has equipped with His wisdom, and who therefore trust Him implicitly these believers will be doers of God's Word not hearers only. They will be quick to hear God's voice, but slow to speak and slow to wrath. James is not a theological discussion but a call to godly practical living, which is why this small letter contains 54 commands.