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“...For whose sake heaven and earth came into being”:

James, the Brother of Jesus

and his Presence in

Christianity

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In October 2002, a group of archaeologists presented an object at a press conference in the nation's capital that caused shockwaves throughout the academic world. A stone box with an ancient-looking inscription was discovered that, belying its simple look, would make scholars, scientists, clergy, and the general public all stand at attention. The box was whisked away to Toronto for an exhibit, in which it was damaged. Accusations concerning its authenticity and the somewhat shadowy nature of the man who found it immediately surfaced before the box even made it to North American soil. This box was an ossuary, an ancient Judaic burial container that housed the bones of the deceased and was placed in a tomb. What made this ossuary special was the inscription. The line read "James, son of Joseph, Brother of Jesus".¹ Understandably, the mention of the name Jesus on an artifact was enough to throw Christendom into a frenzy. Most of the uproar surrounding this event was directed at the alleged connection with Jesus Christ.

What about the man whose ossuary it was purported to belong to? To many, this was the first knowledge of a "brother" to Jesus. To many, it was but a detail. However, to focus on this James for a moment is to discover a fascinating character in his own right. A martyr, a saint, an apostle, a priest, a teacher, and a mediator are all monikers that are attributed to him. He was the first bishop of the Church, the guiding hand that helped a foundling faith find its legs. James is revealed in more than just the New Testament. His presence has been seen throughout the last two thousand years of Christendom.

¹ Sam Jaffe, "Scientists puzzle over ancient Ossuary: experts say sensational find is a sophisticated fraud" *The Scientist* vol. 18, is. 7 (April 2004): 48-50.

The last decade has seen a great deal of scholarship (mostly good, but certainly not without some shortcomings) on the subject of James. This was a trend that seemed to coincide neatly with the ossuary discovery, and, also enhanced by its discovery, has spawned new research into the man who was the Lord's brother. The Frenchman Pierre-Antoine Bernheim, in his book simply titled *James, Brother of Jesus*, wrote a bibliography of James, giving the reader a scholarly overview of his life.² Much in the same vein, Ben Witherington and Hershel Shanks, who are both forceful personalities in the world of New Testaments scholarship, collaborated in a work titled *The Brother of Jesus* in 2003. The first part of the book is about the recently discovered ossuary mentioned earlier, and was written by Shanks. While it is a good account of the artifact, he unfortunately drew the wrong conclusions about its authenticity. Witherington did a superb job of presenting the life of James in the second half of the book. His writing is scholarly sound, but written so that a novice to the subject would have no problem understanding, making it a great introduction into the world of James.³ One of the most acclaimed pieces of scholarship concerning James was written by John Painter, titled *Just James*, and was published in 1997. Covering every ancient text concerning James, he put together a work that is organized by these ancient sources he used.⁴ Just published this year, Luke T. Johnson has devoted a very thorough examination in his work on the Epistle of James, titled *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God*. In particular, his chronicling of

² Pierre-Antoine Bernheim, *James, Brother of James*, Translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1997).

³ Hershel Shanks and Ben Witherington III, *The Brother of Jesus: The Dramatic Story and Meaning of the First Archaeological Link to Jesus and His Family* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003).

⁴ John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

the Epistles' journey into canonization and its acceptance in the early church is worthy of note.⁵

In 2003, Fred Lapham published a guide to New Testament Apocrypha, where all the important apocryphal texts concerning James are present and are wonderfully discussed and analyzed.⁶ When paired with the complete translation of these ancient texts that Evans, Wiebe, and Webb have collected, it provides a great combination of apocryphal literature concerning James.⁷ For a much more in-depth look at specific instances in the life of James, there are two books that deserve attention. *James the Just and Christian Origins* (1999) and *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and his Mission* (2001) are collections of essays written by professors and scholars of biblical history that shed light on many topics concerning James. Everything from his relationship with Paul and the Apostles, his relationship with Jesus, and his death, are treated exhaustively.⁸ Last, and perhaps least, is the lengthy work by Robert Eisenman. His two volume set titled *James, the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, is a rather extensive study. While his scholarship of ancient material is excellent, he largely ignores external evidence of James and any contemporary scholarship of him.⁹

⁵ Luke T. Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

⁶ Fred Lapham, *An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha* (London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2003).

⁷ Craig E. Evans, Robert Webb, and Richard Wiebe, eds., *Nag Hammadi texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index* (Leiden, New York: Brill Publishers, 1993).

⁸ Bruce Chilton and Craig E. Evans, eds., *James the Just and Christian Origins* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 1999) and Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, eds., *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and his Mission*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁹ Robert Eisenmann, *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1997).

Almost all of the research regarding James is limited to the area of ancient texts. The New Testament and the Pseudepigraphia have been explored time and again, as has the *Epistle of James*. However, the presence of James in other forms of Christian worship and scholarship has been largely ignored. The ancient texts are essential in understanding the history and personality of James, and, indeed, the author has included an overview of these texts. However, a complete view of his impact on Christianity can only be accomplished by tracing the imprints he has left over the last two thousand years.

To find the first records of James, one should start in an obvious place- The New Testament. There, we only catch glimpses of him and his actions, but there is just enough evidence to give a small picture of his career. Possibly, James is first mentioned in the Gospel of Mark 3:20. Jesus was apparently healing and exorcising demons to such a large extent that his family (whether or not James was included or not we do not know) believed Jesus to be insane, claiming, “He has gone out of his mind.”¹⁰ It would be fair to assume that James was one of the family members in attendance, considering that a few verses later, a messenger told Jesus that his mother and brothers were outside waiting for him, to which Jesus seemed to reject their familial ties. Still, it is not clear whether or not James was there.¹¹ James is mentioned by name for the first time a few chapters later in Mark. As Jesus was preaching at the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth one Sabbath, locals were amazed at his intellect and wisdom. These locals identified him by his family, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon...?”¹² Obviously the town knew of this family and their

¹⁰ Mark 3:21 All biblical verses and references were taken from the New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version

¹¹ Mark 3:20-34

¹² Mark 6:1-6

occupation. James appeared (not in name, but again as one of the brothers) next in the Gospel of John. Jesus's brothers began to goad him into going to the Feast of Tabernacles to perform his miracles in front of everyone, "for even his own brothers did not believe in him."¹³ Throughout the sparse number of verses in the Gospels, it is possible to believe that James (if indeed he was always present when the "brothers" were present) not only disbelieved in Jesus, but also perhaps even held him in scorn.

The next event in the life of James is described in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In a discussion of Christ's resurrection appearances, Paul mentions how Jesus appeared to James after appearing to Peter, the Twelve, and then to a crowd of five hundred followers.¹⁴ This manifestation to James is not recorded in the Gospels, and because of the lack of information regarding the nature of Jesus' visit to James, we have to assume it was of the utmost importance, for Christ only appeared to Peter, Mary Magdalene, and James in individual meetings.

Whatever was communicated between James and Jesus after the Resurrection seemed to be the force of conversion for James. When James is next encountered, it is shortly after the Ascension, and he was among a group of believers (along with his other brothers also) that assembled to pray.¹⁵ At some point, James must have accrued some influence in the new Christian community. King Herod had imprisoned the disciple Peter, and promptly after his jailbreak, the first person Peter thought to inform was James.¹⁶ Paul, during his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion on the road to Damascus, thought it important to see Peter and James, again implying to the stature of

¹³ John 7.1-10

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15.3-8

¹⁵ Acts 1.12-14

¹⁶ Acts 12.17

James.¹⁷ Fourteen years later, Paul would receive the “right hand of fellowship” from James, whom he called “a pillar” of the church, and was instructed to continue his Gentile ministry while James would stay in Jerusalem.¹⁸

The question of whether James wanted to stay in Jerusalem because he was too important there or because he preferred the Jewish roots of Christianity (perhaps both) is alluded to in the incident at Antioch. While Paul was in that city (in present day Syria), Peter came to visit him. During the communal meal there, Gentiles and Jews would eat together. However, “certain men came from James”, and Peter and other Jews then separated themselves from the Gentiles, apparently at the behest of these unknown men, which prompted a severe rebuke from Paul.¹⁹ James was powerful enough to send emissaries on a 300-mile journey to Antioch and still experience deference to his power. Also, the separation of Jews and Gentiles hints at his personal feeling regarding the mixing of the two in the context of the Church. Though James was not present, the whole incident occurred because of him.

The last two passages in the New Testament concerning James (chronologically, that is) occur in Acts, and reveal the most about the power James had attained. The Council at Jerusalem proved to be a singular event for James. The topic of discussion was concerning whether or not Gentiles should conform to Jewish laws. After many speeches from several other people, James finally rose up and, living up to his role as mediator, would make the final declaration concerning the issue, for the council closed afterwards.²⁰ Some time later, during another meeting between Paul and James, and in

¹⁷ Galatians 1.19

¹⁸ Galatians 2.9

¹⁹ Galatians 2.11-21

²⁰ Acts 15.1-19

the ongoing struggle over Gentile conversion, James compelled Paul to show his allegiance to the Jewish faith by asking him to perform a purification ritual at the temple, which Paul did.²¹ These last two events demonstrate the power of James in the early Church.

There is another text that gives information about James—the one titled *The Epistle of James*. The letter is the first of seven Epistles in the New Testament under the heading General Epistles. Much can be discovered about the context James was living in through this text, though, as Peter H. Davids proclaims, “The short (105-verse) letter known as the Epistle of James has suffered from neglect in both the church that generated it and the academy that has studied it...”²²

Several early church fathers alluded to this Epistle. Though these are some of the earliest mentions of the Epistle, the date it was actually composed may never be known. Eusebius mentioned the letter in his *History of the Church*, saying, “Such is the story of James, to whom is attributed the first of the ‘general’ Epistles. Admittedly its authenticity is doubted, since few early writers refer to it, any more than to ‘Jude’s’...But the fact remains that these two, like the others, have been regularly used in very many churches.”²³ St. Jerome also wrote, “He wrote a single Epistle...and even this is claimed by some to have been published by someone else under his name, and gradually as time went on to have gained authority.”²⁴ St. Augustine made use of some verses from the

²¹ Acts 21.17-26

²² Peter H. Davids, “James’s Message: The Literary Record,” in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and his Mission*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 66.

²³ Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, Translated by G.A. Williamson (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 61.

²⁴ St. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, Translated by Thomas B. Halton (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 7.

Epistle of James in his argument in *On Faith and Works*.²⁵ Though many Church councils had not officially recognized the Epistle as worthy of being in their canon at this point, two things are obvious from these statements. The first is that this letter must have been well known in the third and fourth centuries in a wide geographical area for these men to have known about it. The second is even that long ago, in an age rampant with fictitious apocryphal writings, it is easy to understand why caution would be exercised in regards to the authenticity of the Epistle.

The Epistle's authorship is one of the main arguments surrounding it. There are many theories as to who the true author is. It could have been written under the pseudonym of James, due to the fact that it was a practice during the early Christian period to write letters and claim they were from a famous apostle or saint (which was done with most of the Apocrypha, for example). Or it could be from a totally different man named James. Or, as put forth by Martin Luther, it is quite possible that someone saw James speaking a sermon and wrote down a recollection of it.²⁶ Whatever the doubts to its authenticity, the Council of Trent decided its unquestioned canonical entry into the New Testament in 1546.²⁷

Although the Epistle did come to be accepted into the Church, when the Renaissance and the subsequent Protestant Reformation came in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, a fresh view was taken towards the Bible and the writings therein. The *Epistle of James* did not, however, escape attention this time. Erasmus, in his *Annotationes* of 1516, wrote comments on the Epistle, leaving doctrine and theology

²⁵ St. Augustine, *On Faith and Works*, Translated by Gregory J. Lombardo (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 1988), 30.

²⁶ William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 35-38.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

alone, but raised general questions about its attribution and authenticity. John Calvin, in 1551, wrote a good review of the book. He scoffed at those who thought the book un-Apostolic and believed the teachings were quite valuable.²⁸

The biggest critic during this period was Martin Luther. In his German translation of the New Testament, Luther did not even include the Epistle. Instead, along with the books of Revelation, Jude, and Hebrews, he placed it in the back of the book under the section for “secondary” texts. In his *Preface to the New Testament*, he wrote, “In comparison with these (the writings of Paul and Peter), the Epistle of James is an *Epistle of straw*, because it contains nothing evangelical. But more about this in other prefaces.” Luther kept his word, for he did criticize even more in his *Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude*. He stated things like, “I do not hold it to be of apostolic authorship...He does violence to Scripture...how then shall this single and isolated writer count against Paul and all the rest of the Bible?” Concerning its authorship, Luther concluded that “some good and pious man assembled a few things said by disciples of the apostles...or perhaps the Epistle was written by someone else who made notes of a sermon of his.” Such a strong disapproval by a man as esteemed as Luther would put a black mark on this book for many centuries.²⁹

The contents of his Epistle show that James, or whoever the author, was definitely oriented toward the Jewish-Christian congregation. There are only two brief mentions of Christ in the short letter, and indeed this was one main reason Luther did not believe the letter to be of value. James used strong language to his audience, exhorting them about the evil powers of wealth and the wealthy (James 5:1-6), the taming of the poisonous

²⁸ Luke T. Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 41-42.

²⁹ Barclay, 7-9.

tongue (3:1-12), and his most important verses concerning faith and works (2:14-25) that so many scholars and theologians have argued about up to the present day, especially concerning Paul. The message seemed to have been written in a time of distress for the Jewish congregation, for James warned of temptation and trials that were imminently coming (1:1-17). It is very law-driven in its motivation and a very powerful message for the congregation to the signs of a coming age.³⁰

Though authentic primary accounts concerning James are in short supply, James still has quite a literary legacy. A small collection of writings has been either attributed to his authorship or have accounts of James that have been left out of the canon. These books, of which none are truly written by James, nevertheless are interesting for the perspectives that are shown of him. The fact that men would take time to write these accounts show the esteem and prestige that James still held for hundreds of years after his death.

One of the earliest works that claimed James as its author is entitled the *Protoevangelium of James*. This book, probably written around the second century, is supposed to be an infancy narrative of Jesus, but largely concerned itself with the life and holiness of Mary, while “answering” many details that the New Testament left out. The book was read quite avidly in Palestinian and Syrian churches, and made an impact on the growing worship of Mary.³¹ Another work from the second century supposedly written by James is the *Apocryphon of James*. Though we do not know the intended recipient, James was apparently writing to someone he could trust, for according to the

³⁰ William Patrick, *James, the Lord's Brother* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 277-288, 317, 324.

³¹ Lapham, 62-65.

letter, he was writing down the secrets that Jesus imparted to Peter and him before the Ascension.³²

Another curious collection of documents are titled the *First* and *Second Apocalypse of James*. Though both documents were found in the Nag Hammadi Library discoveries half a century ago, and both are quite Gnostic in character, they both deal with quite different things. The authorship is unclear in the *First Apocalypse*, but the discourse is a dialogue between Jesus and James, with Jesus telling James he will be persecuted, for he warns James, "...they will seize me tomorrow. But my redemption is near."³³ The *Second Apocalypse* was purported to be written by a relative of James named Mariem. It was written down in two parts, the first dealing with the imparting of knowledge to James from Jesus, for Jesus says, "You are the one to whom I say 'hear and understand', for a multitude, when they hear, will be slow witted."³⁴ The second part concerns his preaching and subsequent martyrdom. This section, emphasizing James' role as a redeemer, has James preaching at the top of the temple. Coinciding with the martyrdom stories mentioned by early church fathers, he was thrown from the top of the temple.³⁵ However, *The Second Apocalypse* reveals even more gruesome details:

They seized him and struck him as they dragged him upon the ground. They stretched him out, and placed a stone upon his abdomen. They all placed their feet on him saying 'You have erred!' Again they raised him up, since he was alive, and made him dig a hole. They made him stand in it. After having covered him up to his abdomen, they stoned him in this manner.³⁶

³² Ibid., 50-54.

³³ Evans, et al., 241

³⁴ Ibid, 245.

³⁵ Ibid., 54-61.

³⁶ Evans et al., 251.

Two other books that mention a special relationship between James and Jesus are the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. *The Gospel of Thomas*, another of the Nag Hammadi texts and of strong Gnostic persuasion, puts the message of Jesus placing the responsibility of church leadership upon James that each *Apocalypse* alludes to in rather frank terms.³⁷ In Saying Twelve, the disciples talked to Jesus saying, “We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?” Jesus replied, “Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being”.³⁸ That is a powerful statement not only about heaven and earth, but for the fact that Jesus was giving direct authority to James. *The Gospel of the Hebrews* is lost to us as a work, and only lives on in quotations from early Christian writers, mainly from Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Jerome. This seemed to have been a work of great renown and is referred to in a quotation by Jerome.³⁹ In his book *On Illustrious Men*, the quotation tells us once again of the post-resurrection experience between Jesus and James. According to this gospel:

The Lord, however, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James, for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from those that sleep. ‘Bring a table and bread’ said the Lord...He brought bread and blessed and broke it and gave to James the Just and said to him, “My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among those that sleep”.⁴⁰

What is special about all these books is the fact that they describe James with much more spiritual power, holiness, and responsibility than the passages in the New Testament writings do. These documents have been proven to be much later in origin

³⁷ Lapham, 114, 120

³⁸ Evans et al., 97.

³⁹ Lapham, 159.

⁴⁰ St. Jerome, 8.

than the time of the life of James and to have possibly been embellishments of earlier writings. The point is, however, that at a certain time in early Christian history, certain scholars felt it necessary to augment the legacy of James with works that celebrated his special status in the Christian world.

There is one more body of work that features James as a major element of its theme. These are the writings classified under the broad heading of the *Clementina*. Called the *Clementina* due to the authorship being attributed to Clement of Rome, this body consists of three parts: the *Recognitions*, the *Homilies*, and the *Epitome*. Probably written around the second half of the third century (to conclude an absolute date is impossible), these writings were clearly in sympathy with Jewish-Christian origins, simply due to the exaltation of James and the lack of mention of Paul within the texts. The *Epitome* is a tiny collection of letters between James, Peter, and Clement.⁴¹ The *Recognitions* and *Homilies* are the more compelling writings in the group. Both works show remarkable similarities to the other, either both being based on the same source, or the *Recognitions* upon the *Homilies*, or vice versa. Regardless, both are described as, “a kind of philosophical and theological romance...choosing the disciples of Christ and their followers as his principle characters he has...woven the whole together by a thread of fictitious narrative.”⁴² Both are filled with accounts of mission work, fight with wizards, and riots of the people, and of course, the passing of secret teachings. A section of the *Recognitions* (Book 1, chapters 33-71) called the *Ascents of James* is of special note, for it is a seemingly isolated story that culminates with James being pushed down a flight of

⁴¹ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 8, *The Pseudo-Clementina*, Translated by Thomas Smith (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 69-71.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 73.

steps of the temple (though curiously we do not find out if he died or what happened next).⁴³

Though this seems like quite a bit of information about James in the New Testament and Apocrypha, all of this comes from but a little more than a handful of verses, letters, and a very small epistle. In relation to the information in the New Testament about Peter, Paul, and others, James is treated much less equally. In cases like this, corroborating accounts are crucial for evidence. This is where the writings of Flavius Josephus are extremely important. Originally named Joseph ben Mattathias, Josephus was a Jewish-Roman citizen who wrote a few large bodies of work, of which his twenty-book collection called *Jewish Antiquities* mentions James. Josephus was a contemporary of the period (circa 37-100 C.E.). Josephus did not write of James till the very end of his work, in Book Twenty. The brief account has nothing to do with his life, but concerns his martyrdom, of which the New Testament makes no mention. A high Priest named Ananus, taking advantage of some political chaos, convened the Sanhedrin (a Jewish administrative and judicial council) and had James “and certain others” sentenced to death. After he was stoned, many in the city were outraged, appealing to higher powers over Ananus, even traveling to see King Agrippa to air grievances.⁴⁴ This demonstrates that there was a lot of support and love for James to have people, in such an ancient age, travel far from home for his sake. Regardless, Josephus’ narrative is the only non-biblical source we have of James that is contemporary with his life.

⁴³ For a detailed work on the *Ascents*, see Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

⁴⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Translated by Louis Feldman. Vol. 9, *Books XVIII-XX*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 495-497.

James was, however, written about quite frequently in the subsequent centuries of the new Church. The most authoritative and comprehensive account came from the 4th century Christian historian Eusebius. In his work *The History of the Church (Ecclesiae Historiae)*, he mainly talked about the death of James, and he relied heavily upon works from earlier writers. For instance, the first mention of James is in Book I, chapter 2, from quotations of a book by a man named Clement of Alexandria. The book, titled *Outlines*, is lost to us, but is quoted by Eusebius as saying how Peter and John chose James to become the first bishop because of his virtue. It also mentions how the three men received secret, higher knowledge, and in turn passed it on to the apostles. Whether or not this secret knowledge was passed to James during the Resurrection experience was explored in other apocryphal texts during the same period. Clement also mentioned the martyrdom of James. In his account however, he was not stoned like Josephus said, but thrown from a parapet of the temple and beaten to death with a fullers club.⁴⁵ We also encounter the name of James in these passages with the surname “The Righteous” or “The Just”, a title that would follow him throughout history. The most detailed account of James by Eusebius concerned his martyrdom, this time largely quoted from a man named Hegesippus. Eusebius claims that he had copies of a set of books by Hegesippus (which, like the previous books by Clement, are also lost to us) from which he derived most of his information on James. Perhaps the best description of the holiness of James is excerpted from Hegesippus:

But this one was holy from his birth; he drank no wine or intoxicating Liquor and ate no animal food; no razor came near his head; he did no smear himself with oil, and took no baths. He alone was permitted to enter the Holy Place, for his garments were not of wool but of linen.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, 35-36.

He used to enter the Sanctuary alone, and was often found on his knees beseeching forgiveness for the people so that his knees grew hard like a camel's from his continual bending them in worship of God. Because of his unsurpassable righteousness he was called the Righteous and *Oblias*-in our own language 'Bulwark of the People, and Righteous'-fulfilling the declarations of the prophets regarding him.⁴⁶

Hegesippus then went on to describe how certain scribes and Pharisees asked James to go to the top of the Temple to dispel rumors in the city that Jesus was the Christ. James took the opportunity instead to preach for his brother, which angered the Pharisees. They promptly pushed him off the Temple and killed him just as Clement described earlier. He was buried on the spot and it apparently became a pilgrimage site.⁴⁷ There are also a few more small references to James throughout the book that speak of the respect given to him and his role as the first bishop.⁴⁸

Writing a little less than a century later, St. Jerome in his work *On Illustrious Men*, made a brief character sketch of James. Writing about James in the second chapter, Jerome added little new information, apart from the previous quote from the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. St. Jerome also corroborated James' burial on his martyrdom spot, but noted it was destroyed after the siege of Titus.⁴⁹ Curiously, Jerome believed that Josephus wrote that the Siege of Jerusalem that occurred in 70 C.E. was a direct result of the killing of the righteous James. Though Josephus made no mention of this in his writing, it seemed that St. Jerome either misread the passage or he truly believed that because of James' sanctity, this was the just punishment given to the city for his

⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 59-61.

⁴⁸ See Book 3, Chapter 11; Book 6, Chapter 5; Book 7, Chapter 19, for examples.

⁴⁹ St. Jerome, 7-9.

martyrdom.⁵⁰ Even more curious, a Christian scholar named Origen made the same mistake several hundred years earlier. Writing about 245 c.e., both the works *Contra Celsum* and *Commentary on Matthew* mention Josephus as having said the same thing.⁵¹ Writing almost the same time as Jerome (early 5th century), St. Augustine of Hippo wrote of James not in a historical sense, but in a theological one. In his work *On Faith and Works*, Augustine makes an argument about issues concerning the complex nature existing between faith and deeds, and the verse James 2.19 took St. Augustine's attention. The verse states, "You believe that God is one; You do well. Even the demons believe, and shudder".⁵² This prompted St. Augustine to claim, "Could he (James) have said anything more concise, more true, more forceful, since, as we read in the Gospels, this is what the devils professed when they acknowledged that Christ is the Son of God."⁵³

Apart from the writings of the Church fathers, James has been memorialized through the institution of the Church. Icons and Liturgy are two of the most prominent examples. However, attention should be brought to the differing views in the Christian community on the blood relationship between Jesus and James in order to place James in a mental context. The New Testament alludes to the personal relationship between James and Jesus, but there is no definitive verse or passage that affirms their actual blood relationship. In the faithfuls' mind, this can make quite a difference as to how James is received and perceived. Of course, this problem is not an easy one. The sentiments of one theologian put the problem quite nicely, "You will ask me-'How do you know that James was the brother of Jesus?'-I am quite frank about it:-I don't know that he was.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁵¹ Painter, 200-206.

⁵² James 2.19

⁵³ St. Augustine, 30.

While we are on the subject, let me say just as frankly:-You don't know that he wasn't."⁵⁴
 However, there are four theories that have developed concerning this matter.

The first argument is that they were actually brothers in the physical sense, therefore denying the divinity of Christ. An early Christian group called the Ebionites and various strains of Gnostics took this position.⁵⁵ The second theory was one advocated by a man named Helvidius who wrote around the close of the 4th century. His view seemed to be "the most natural interpretation of the New Testament texts."⁵⁶ This view claimed Jesus and James to be half-brothers, sharing Mary as a mother. According to certain verses (specifically Matthew 1:24-25 and Luke 2:7), and indeed throughout the Gospels, there is no language to specifically dissuade the readers from believing otherwise, and the use of the Greek "adelphos" certainly means brother almost always in a literal sense. This, of course, posed (and still poses) a tremendous problem for Catholics and the notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary. This may explain one reason why James disappeared from the list of biblical figures that were especially revered by the Catholic Church over time.⁵⁷ The next theory is titled the *Heironymian* view, and was championed by Jerome. In his work *On Illustrious Men*, Jerome asserted, "James...the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary, the sister of the mother of the lord..."⁵⁸ The purpose of that view was to state that James was only a cousin through Mary. There are major weaknesses, however, in that Jerome appeared to be very concerned with maintaining the ideal of the perpetual

⁵⁴ Arthur Barber, *The Everyday Philosophy of Jesus and His Brother James*, (Boston: Richard Badger Publishing, 1927), 121.

⁵⁵ John Painter, "Who was James?" in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and his Mission*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 12.

⁵⁶ Bernheim, 16.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 16-19.

⁵⁸ St. Jerome, 7.

virginity of Mary. Also, he relied strongly on tying together complicated strands of genealogy concerning people named Mary and James in the New Testament, these names being the most common names of the period. Also, he appeals to no other histories or traditions (which was a very important aspect in early Christian scholarship during that period), making him the lone author of this theory.⁵⁹

A fourth argument is titled the *Epiphonian* view, aptly named after the scholar Epiphanius. Also writing at the close of the 4th century, this view (supported widely by Origen, but hotly contested by Jerome) stated that James and the other brothers and sisters of Jesus were from a previous marriage of Joseph's, and no blood relation existed at all, making them step-brothers. The problem with this theory is that all the evidence that Epiphanius and Origen drew upon was non-canonical, apocryphal texts, namely *The Gospel of Peter* and the aforementioned *Protoevangelium of James*. That, in and of itself, is the main problem, but it gained popularity, much like the *Heironymian* view, on the basis that it preserved the perpetual virginity of Mary.⁶⁰

Icons represent a material way for the memory of James to be preserved. Icons are extremely important in the Orthodox faith. As one bishop states:

The icons that fill the church serve as a point of meeting between heaven and earth. As each local congregation prays, Sunday by Sunday, surrounded by the figures of Christ, the angels and the saints, these visible images remind the faithful unceasingly of the invisible presence of the whole company of Heaven at the Liturgy. The faithful can feel that the walls of the church are open out upon eternity...The multitudinous icons express visibly the sense of "heaven on earth".⁶¹

Icons themselves have a very storied history, and did not always play the role that they do today. Icons gradually outdistanced the veneration of relics around the sixth and

⁵⁹ Painter, "Who Was James?", 16-20.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 13-16.

⁶¹ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 271-272.

seventh centuries (though relics continued on) and were almost eradicated in the Iconoclast movement that ended in 843 C.E. These images were thought (and still are thought) to contain the grace of the subject only through a faithful rendering of the subject, since the picture was the copy of the now celestial being. That explains why iconography has evolved so little in the last 1500 years.⁶² One medieval icon of James can be found in a church in Kastoria, Greece. This icon dates from the first half of the thirteenth century and is a depiction of the Dormition of the Virgin. Upon the deathbed is Mary and there are apostles gathered around. There are also three bishops flanking her deathbed, one being James. He (and the other two bishops as well) appears markedly different than the apostles. The bishops are not in a sorrowful pose, but “appear as disembodied presences, as floating spectators rather than fully engaged participants in the drama” (fig.1).⁶³ This conflicts with the traditional story of the Dormition, as another icon dated about half a century earlier in the Monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai does not show James or the other bishops at all (Fig. 2).⁶⁴

One can also find an ancient icon of James dating around the middle of the thirteenth century. This one, located at the Monastery of St. John the Evangelist at Patmos, shows James in a quite serene and stately manner, with brightly painted clothes. There is also a little figure of Jesus in the corner, looking down on him (fig. 3).⁶⁵ Icons have not lost any of their importance in the modern day. To see new icons of James, one

⁶² Manolis Chatzidakis, Svetozar Radojcic, and Kurt Wietzmann, *Icons* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1980), 5-6.

⁶³ Brendan Cassidy, ed., *Iconography at the Crossroads* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 80.

⁶⁴ Chatzidakis, 24, 57, 60.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 67, 69, 135.

can simply go on the Internet and view recently hand painted icons of James (attachment 4).⁶⁶ There are also icons of James available for purchase over the Internet.⁶⁷

The institution of the church also represents James in the form of liturgy. The study of the early origins of liturgy in the Christian church is varied and complex. Many forms of public worship were alive and well in the first several centuries after Christ's death. Due to geographic isolation and the promulgation of many local traditions, many cities and regions had different ideas as to how to perform rituals like the Eucharist. Many similarities, obviously, were drawn from the rites used in the Jewish liturgy.⁶⁸ By about the 4th century, four main liturgies had absorbed the countless forms. These consisted of the Antiochene, Alexandrian, Roman, and Gallican. The liturgy of St. James belonged to the Antiochene family. This liturgy was prevalent in the churches of Syria and Jerusalem and was supposed to have been composed by James himself.⁶⁹ Gradually, liturgies composed by St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil (which were also in the Antiochene family and basically shortened and modified form of James liturgy) became the preferred liturgy, The Byzantine Rite of Constantinople, and as cultural imperialism is wont to do, supplanted all other liturgies in the eastern churches during the Middle Ages.⁷⁰ The result was that the Liturgy of St. James was in use in only a handful of places for a handful of times. Only on the island of Zykanthos on October 23rd (his saints day) and in Jerusalem the Sunday after Christmas was it celebrated. It is not until

⁶⁶ "Holy Apostle James, the Brother of the Lord, Bishop of Jerusalem," n.d., <http://www.comeandseeicons.com/pha15.htm> (20 September 2004).

⁶⁷ "Apostles Orthodox Icons," n.d., <http://www.greekorthodoxicons.net/apostles/index4.htm> (20 September 2004).

⁶⁸ Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 10-12, 17.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, L.L. "Liturgy," n.d., <http://mb-soft.com/believe/text/liturgy.htm> (20 September 2004).

⁷⁰ Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 16-17.

recently that the Liturgy of St. James has been celebrated in Catholic and Orthodox churches worldwide. Now, every October 23rd his liturgy is recited and his memory and liturgy are not lost to history. There are still some places, like the Syrian Oriental Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of India that this specific liturgy is still the main liturgy used.⁷¹ The liturgy of James, due to the fact it was one of the earliest recorded liturgies, was very important in the development of modern liturgy. The monks of the Monastery of St. Mark of Ephesus remind us that even though John Chrysostom and Basil modified and shortened it “for the sake of human weakness...the Liturgies of Chrysostom and especially of Basil have one foundation, which is the Liturgy of Saint James, the Brother of God”.⁷²

James has experienced a bit of a renaissance in modern times which has manifested itself in a variety of ways. There have been articles written about him in magazines and journal, for instance, giving general overviews of him, and helping readers get acquainted with his character.⁷³ Some universities have even taught courses about him, such as the one Dr. James Tabor put together in the spring of 2000 at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.⁷⁴ However, and as can already be observed in the course of his past, James seemed to remain alive mainly because of his frequent friction with Paul. Most of the New Testament verses concerning James have Paul involved in the plot also. Theologians and scholars have been trying to reconcile their

⁷¹ Archmandrite Ephrem. “The Liturgy of St. James,” 10 February 2001.
<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/ephrem/lit-james.htm> (20 September 2004)

⁷² *The Divine Liturgy of the Holy Glorious Apostle James, Brother of God, First Hierarch of Jerusalem: Set to Melodies of the Russian Orthodox Church* (Basking Ridge, N.J.: Monastery of St. Mark of Ephesus, 1978), iii-iv.

⁷³ A good example is the article Ben Witherington III, “Bringing James out of the shadows: Jesus’ brother led Jerusalem Church” *Bible Review* vol.19, is. 3 (June 2003): 28-51

⁷⁴ James D. Tabor, “Essays on James, the Brother of Jesus,” 1999,
<http://www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu/jdtabor/jamesessay.html> (20 September 2004).

beliefs (especially about faith and works) since the time of St. Augustine. Protestant reformers, we have already seen, questioned the Epistle of James and whether or not it coincided with Paul's teachings. For instance, a sermon given in 1742 to a church in Massachusetts concerned just this subject. While the pastor was attempting to reconcile the issue of faith and works between James and Paul, the pastor regards James as having the incorrect view of faith. This pastor says, "And in the Text, where he is moft oppofite to the Apofle Paul, 'tis impoffible to underftand him (James), as fpeaking of the Juftification of our Faith in the Sight of Men, and make Senfe and Truth of what he says".⁷⁵ And indeed, most modern scholarship of James has to include Paul and other figures as central characters:

Any evaluation of James is fraught with the basic difficulty that his perspective and personality are not represented directly within the New Testament... Although this problem of the quality and perspectives of the sources can never be wholly overcome (absent a fresh discovery), there is a way of getting at James's own orientation and influence. That is through his relationships with people and perspectives that are well characterized in the sources (Paul, Peter, etc.).⁷⁶

Paul was one of the most integral parts of the James story, no matter how much separation is put between the two.

Another type of modern study about James borders on something resembling a character study. This new characterization seemed to have been popular in the early part of the twentieth century. A book entitled *The Everyday Philosophy of Jesus and his Brother James* gave a chapter on James in a very colloquial manner, showing his manner

⁷⁵ William Balch, *The Apostles St. Paul and St. James* (Printed by D. Fowle for J. Edwards in Boston, 1743), 6.

⁷⁶ Bruce Chilton, "James in Relation to Peter, Paul, and the Remembrance of Jesus," in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and his Mission*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 138.

and message in practice as if it were just a regular day.⁷⁷ Taking this literary device a level further is a book by William Barton. In it, he wrote four “new gospels” that are character studies written like personal memoirs by the respective person. The chapter on James makes for quite interesting reading, as James discussed things like growing up with Jesus and his new role in the church. Written in very plain language and in story form, this makes for an interesting chapter in the history of James interpretation, but nonetheless makes James apologetic about his previous disbelief of Christ, a trend that still continues in most churches today and will probably never go away.⁷⁸

James also makes his presence known in the form of sermons, or at the very least, in the form of pedagogical instructions. Apart from the sermon previously mentioned, and probably the countless times James has been recounted in minister’s preachings for hundreds of years, the sermons about James always tend to be focused on that same problem of James being an unbeliever at first, then coming around to find the faith. Revival speaker C.M. Ward, writing a study of James based upon his own preaching, show James as the scoffer who sees the light of the true faith of Christ. This makes a good analogy in preaching for issues dealing with unconverted loved ones, but unfortunately this view is too simplistic of James and his mission. The tone is always very sympathetic of James, but will still point out his errors in faith.⁷⁹ Another example is a sermon by Clarence Macartney titled “An Autumn Blooming”, which by its very title suggests the late “blooming” of James faith. Much in the same vein as Ward’s sermon, this one stresses familial relations and to “cherish what is dear to you while it is near.

⁷⁷ Barber, 121-132.

⁷⁸ William E. Barton, *Four Hitherto Unpublished Gospels* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920), 123-149.

⁷⁹ C.M. Ward, *James the Brother of Jesus* (Springfield, Missouri: Assemblies of God, 1962).

Beautiful souls are not far from you”.⁸⁰ Even though these messages may not be based heavily in documentation (apart from a few easily misunderstood verses in the Gospels), they do bring about a good sense of the love, respect, and wisdom James conveyed.

As with any subject dealing with religious matters or people, there are going to be people who like to place James in “alternate theory” contexts. Robert Eisenmann does this to an extent when he tries to link James with prophecies and teachings put forth in the Dead Sea Scrolls. His main argument places James in the role as the Teacher of Righteousness, a prominent figure in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and as a Zealot. However, his theories come across as quite sound when compared to others in this genre, and hesitation is needed when placing him into this category, for his research is superb and the idea of James in the Dead Sea scrolls is not a new one to scholars. For example, the authors Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas have some rather bizarre theories as to the legacy of James. According to them, James is the leader of the Qumran community (much like Eisenmann says) and knew the true nature of Christ. He was also the member of a tradition dating back from King Solomon that manifested itself in different ways, like the Knight Templars and the present day Freemasons. Using the primary sources in a very convoluted way, the theories sound very convincing and interesting at first read.⁸¹

The twenty-first century has now placed James in the forefront of popular Christianity. The discovery of the ossuary has brought out the fascination of ancient and biblical times in many people. Even though the Israel Antiquities Authority has pronounced part of the inscription to be a fraud and the work of a most clever forger, it

⁸⁰ Clarence Edward Macartney, *The Man who Forgot and other Sermons on Bible Characters* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon press, 1956), 53-63.

⁸¹ For the complete theory read Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, *The Hiram Key* (New York: Barnes and Nobles Books, 1998); idem, *The Second Messiah*. (Gloucester, Mass.: Fair Winds Press, 2001).

has still brought with it a whirlwind of excitement.⁸² Scholars, priests, evangelicals, and the general public are still deeply divided as to its authenticity. Accusations continue to be thrown from all directions concerning the handling of the ossuary, with many Christians claiming its authenticity. Some scientific groups have claimed it is for real, while others agencies (like the IAA) are claiming it is a forgery.⁸³ What is important, however, is that James and his presence is still all around us. One can simply study him in all the ways mentioned earlier, for study of James is important on a great many levels. To study James is to study an interesting figure of history from a biographical standpoint. His life, death, and encounters with early Christian figures are interesting enough in their own right. Also, to study James is to study early Church history. The early divisions among the faithful, the tumult of a newborn faith, and the veneration of James and his work are all present. To study James is to study texts. Not just the Bible, but it is an entrance in to the world of Apocrypha and non-canonical writings that can be as fascinating as it is confusing. To study James is also to study the Church. Icons, liturgy, and hagiography all come into focus when tracing his path throughout Christendom. Lastly, by watching the world (not just the academic world, but the general public as well) react to the ossuary finding a few years ago, we still see an excitement manifest in ourselves concerning Biblical matters. By studying James and his impact on the Judeo-Christian world, we not only encounter him, but a fascinating era that James helped create and in turn created him.

⁸² Jaffe, 48.

⁸³ Gordon Govier "Biblical Archaeology's dusty little secret: the James Bone Box controversy reveals the politics beneath the science" *Christianity Today* vol. 47, is. 10 (Oct. 2003): 36-42.

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