

KINGS NORTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Sunday 24th April 2022 10 am

James the Lord's brother (People Jesus met series)

Welcome to all

Opening Scripture

Hymn MP 708 To God be the Glory

Scripture Ps 63 (page 579)

Prayer

Children's talk A big view of God

Chorus MP My God is so big

Notices Bible study after the service, Fellowship lunch next week (1st May) bring for picnic, eat in if wet. Coffee morning, Wednesday Bible study and Prayer.

Prayer- time

Reading John 7:1-13 (p.1072)

Hymn MP 387 Jesus we celebrate your victory

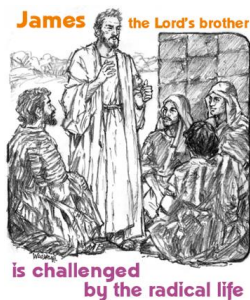
Sermon James is challenged by a radical life

Hymn MP 1072 in Christ alone

Closing Prayer:

Close

MP 264 the creed hymn



Exordium - Welcome and pray

- **Undercover boss** is a TV series where the chief Exec. or company owner take on the role of a humble employee on the shop floor dressing in a way that those around do not recognise him.

Maybe you have failed to recognise someone's true identity, it could be embarrassing. To fail to recognise Jesus Christ's true identity is disastrous.

This failure to recognise someone is the issue here as we return to look at those the Lord knew. Today it is James, the English form of Jacob.

- Just as Aston Hall is an example of Jacobean architecture; that is it is from the times of King James.

There are at least three James's in the NT - so which James?

1. **James** the son of Zebedee the brother of John. Originally fishermen they together with Peter enjoyed a special position among the disciples. After Jesus ascension to heaven James appears to have remained at Jerusalem. He was put to death by Herod about A. D. 44, the first martyr among the apostles as Acts 12:2 records, "**He had James, - the brother of John, - put to death with the sword.**"
2. **James** another apostle the son of Alphaeus or Cleophas. He is called **James the less** to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee.
3. It is **James** the Lord's brother we are going to look at this morning. He is described as such in Gal 1:19. Actually to be more precise he is the Lord's half-brother.

Jesus, the first born of Mary had brothers and sisters... Mat 13:55 "**Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?**" Presumably in order of age.

Again in Mark 6:3 "**Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?**" Different order for last two.

There are a number of references to this James scattered throughout the NT (17??) and there may well be other James', it is hard to tell.

Growing up in the home

The first thirty years of James's life must have been fascinating. Who wouldn't be absolutely captivated and enthralled, both in imagination and in heart, at the thought of holding James's relationship to Jesus Christ! For nigh on thirty years eating every meal at the same table with Him; working six days of the week in the same workshop with Him; going up on the seventh

day to the same synagogue with Him; and once every year going up to Jerusalem to the same Passover with Him. For James was, actually, the Lord's brother. Not in a figure of speech. Not mystically and spiritually. But literally and actually - he was James the Lord's brother. Jesus was Mary's first-born son, and James was her second son. And the child James would be the daily delight of his elder Brother; James would be His continual charge and joy; like any two such brothers in a family home.

The privilege of the older brother watching over him, what a strong influence older brothers and sisters are to those of us who follow - and you?

We know that Mary was a godly woman and Joseph a righteous man. So the children would have been brought up to know the scriptures well, they would be well versed in the Law of Moses - and in Judaism generally.

As they gazed up at their elder brother, they must have tried to square all that he did with what they knew of the Scriptures. It must have been enthralling to watch the law enacted from the heart. Who was doing that? This was radical! What James and the others were observing at close quarters was radical Christianity. A, no The, The Godly life lived out!

There were some things they did - that Jesus didn't do - such as the ceremonial washing which the Pharisees insisted was necessary. James was perplexed, "how does this square with Judaism & the many traditions people observed?"

What James and the others were observing was the fruit of a Spirit lead, Spirit filled life. Jesus was the ultimate Spirit filled man.

Everyone else, no matter how well brought up did not live like this. Jesus not only obeyed the law fully he lived single-mindedly and enthusiastically for His Lord and Father. Jesus himself said: "**Zeal for your house consumes me**"

This fulfilled OT prediction showed that the only real motivation for living a Godly life is not academic, head knowledge of God - but to have a zeal borne out of knowing God, to know God, to know his Spirit and to know His power. It's knowing Him and beholding his Glory that transforms a life!

Is that you? x2 - To know only about him – and not to know Him - means you don't understand those who do. Their experience is alien to you.

There are some like that here this morning.

This is all you know, you think this is it, you do not know that there is more, when you see others desiring to love and serve God you are confused, you

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don't see how they could be like that – it is not something YOU know. Maybe you even envy them. Maybe you admire them thinking they have some moral kudos,

The JW's do a good trade among nominal Christians. Often those of an Anglican or RC persuasion who have been brought up to be religious, but that is all, their heart has never been in it. They get on with their lives until one day a keen and enthusiast couple turn up at your door to challenge you.

Or more likely you just think it is all so unnecessary.

Because your horizon is limited you see the zeal of some others as excessive, even obsessive. You think "You don't have to be like that to live the Christian life". Oh but you do! – It is necessary to be like that. That zeal for the Lord - and that love for others is the defining mark of a true believer.

I suggest to you this is what was going on with the brothers. There was some push back as we might say, the brothers concluded he had gone OTT! He was far too zealous, he had allowed things to run away with Himself.

✚ We are all wary in case someone becomes a 'hot head'

That seems to be what is behind the times we read: **While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."** Matthew 12:46,47

They are saying: "*You've gone too far!*" x2 – and they came to reign him in, to take him in hand, - out of concern - but also out of ignorance.

How often the work of God is hindered by well meaning people who don't understand. James and the brothers acted in unbelief, disbelief.

Disbelief

The passage we read in John 7 gives some insight into how the brothers and most likely James in particular as the one closest to him thought of him.

"Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No-one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." John 7:3-4

They are saying: "If you are to live this radical life then leave this Galilean backwater and go to the City. To remain in Galilee is time thrown away and wasted. The city is where you can be of influence, - there you will find 'the royal seat' you are looking for!"

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There the people will see your miracles. There your *disciples*, all of them gathered in Jerusalem for the feast, will see your miracles. “Don’t work amongst ones and twos here - go to where the crowds are”.

They had a fleshly view, one of outward show thinking of Jesus as one of the great men who should thrust himself onto the stage of public action in the capitol city – he should not sneak and skulk in a corner!

They took it for granted that Christ sought to make himself known, **Since you are doing these things**, these miracles, then gain the applause of the people. In fact, don’t stop there, go abroad, and *show yourself to the world*.

✚ **With your credentials, you cannot fail but to become great.”**

This all sounds reasonable and plausible, one would not think there was any harm in this advice, and yet John notes it is evidence of their unbelief, **For even his own brothers did not believe in him**.” John 7:5 x2 - their comments are the fruit of unbelief.

This is how those who do not see Jesus clearly, think. They look to hierarchy. I have a bit of that when some people address me as ‘Pastor’. For some they see this as an elevated position, - “Pastor!”. Large churches have “senior Pastors and senior leadership teams”.

Jesus’s life was radical, radically different from the world around. This is why Jesus challenges the rich young ruler to **“Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”** That is a radical demand on this young man’s priorities. No, he wouldn’t.

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. That is radical. That is the difference between the crowd and a disciple, a follower of Jesus, who goes on to say: **Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”** Luke 14:25-27 That is radical.

Obedience to the word of God is the mark of saving faith. When we read **Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord**, 1 Cor 15:58. You and I are to do just that - that is radical! But that is what a true disciple of Jesus does. Are you?

It was a great honour to be Jesus’ brother, but it is no *saving* honour. Didn’t Jesus say when his family came: **"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."** Luke 11:28 There is the answer. Obeying the word of God means being a radical! A true self-denying love for God is radical!

Do you think there is merit for you because your father or mother is or was a Christian? Do you think there is some merit because you have a friend who is a Christian or you come to church? Do you think there is merit because you know Tim, or Ina or Chris?

Here James and the others show they do not understand Him otherwise they would not be telling him what he should be doing. Here is a sign that they *did not believe him* for if they recognised him as who he really was they would know he was sufficient to guide himself. - It would be they falling before Him – that he might to guide them!

A sign of unbelief is that a person misses Christ’s humility.

Likely it is ‘self’ which was at the bottom of all of this; they hoped that if he would make himself great, then some of that honour and glory would rub off on them his close relatives. They liked any respect given to them - for his sake.

Some worldly minded people come to church, to public worship but it is only to make an *appearance*, - it is only to *show themselves*.

Just as someone pushes their child to become a doctor – why? for their own prestige. So some want their children to be a missionary or something that they can feel elevated in the eyes of others.

■ Many trot up to the Anglican church to see their new-born child christened – Why? because they were - and to please the grandparents. Same with baptism.

✚ **May no-one here appear to seek Christ’s honour, - when really trying to seek your own!**

✚ **Jesus was not accepted in his home town – nor in his own household.**

It was a while before Mary believed. When Jesus at 12 was at the temple it says his parents did not understand. What about James?

Post crucifixion

Things became too hot up as the cross approached. When the crunch time came - along with others all his brothers deserted him. This was to fulfil what was written before in the OT showing he would carry the weight of guilt alone.

However when Jesus returns to life and appeared to Mary Madgalene it is noted that: **After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.** 1 Cor 15:7

Signs of belief

Is this the time he became a follower? Did he now do something he had never done when in the family - fall down before him and like Thomas declare "my Lord and my God"

Did he now see clearly, and faced with Christ risen from the grave realised that this resurrection power had motivated and vitalised Christ's extraordinary radical life all along?

Was it now that he realised the poverty of his own life? He had not given himself fully to the work of the Lord because he had no life with the Lord. - - but now he had it!

✚ Do you know Christ's Spirit working like a fire in your bones...

If you do not know this radical life changing power - > GOSPEL

The first mention of the Lord's brothers being with the apostles is in Acts 1:14 just before Pentecost when they were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem. "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." Ac 1:14

Paul having been converted on the Damascus Road some time later went up to Jerusalem. He said: "I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother." Gal 1:19. He went to meet the church leaders and said: "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, Gal 2:9 (I agree with John Eadie that this is the Lord's brother not son of Alphaeus)

We can see James had become a key figure in Jerusalem

Peter in his release from prison said "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left..." Acts 12:17

Again when there is serious issue about how to reach the gentiles they go to Jerusalem with the problem: **When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me** Ac 15:13 and the dispute was amicably settled.

This is the James who wrote the letter that bears his name.

His brother Judas wrote the letter we know as Jude. 1:1 says: **Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James**, Jude whose name is really Judas but is known as Jude to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot the traitor.

Before we end there is another important thing to learn from James....

James influenced Peter the Jew in avoiding gentile company Gal 2:12. He also told Paul to make purification vows, = legal ceremonialism. Ac 21:17-24

In other words, James never properly let go of his Judaism. He is saying:

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1. Jewish believers are to keep the law of Moses
2. Gentile believers do not need to but must keep other laws

✚ **Hegesippus a Jewish Christian in the middle of the second century, in speaking of James said: he drank no strong drink, nor had a razor upon his head, nor wore woolen clothes, but only linen, so that he alone might go into the holy place; in short he was a rigid Nazarite ascetic, following after legal righteousness, so that the Jews regarded him as possessing priestly sanctity. The Jews, called him "the just one," 'James the just'**

What to make of that? James never fully put his old life behind him.

What is there in your Christian life which is a legacy from your old life?

Did you have a religious background? Once in a cult? Or Heathenism? New Age spiritism? Atheism? Or was it immoral conduct that had left its hook in you? The chances are you cannot see it. It is your Achilles heal.

Ask yourself "what is it that now hinders my walk with the Lord?"

This tendency towards legalism – so clearly displayed in James - became the main weakness of the early church. How much we affect one another!

What happened to James?

The Apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews (non-Biblical literature) recalls that the preaching of James led him to be made bishop of Jerusalem.

Hegesippus writes that because of James preaching Ananus inflamed the Jews against James, and they hurled him down from off the pinnacle of the temple. James was martyred about 62 or 63 AD. (Hegesippus quoted by Eusebius (Historia Ecclesiastica, II, 23), and Josephus (Ant., XX, ix, 1), testify to the general truth of this.

Peroration

Jesus was James' older brother. James had not only observed Godliness at close quarters but he now knew the radical effect of Jesus as his Saviour.

You and I we should be radical too. And we too like James can have Jesus as our older brother. **Both the one who makes men holy - and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.** Heb 2:11

Jesus is our brother in Adam, as the hymn writer says "he came to save Adam's helpless race". But if he has cleansed you from your sins and God is now your father then he is also your brother in God's everlasting family.

Isn't this what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene after he rose from the dead "Go to my brothers – that is all his disciples - and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Joh 20:17 END

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