

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

by Peter Sarkis

THE Epistle of James has been dated between A.D. 45 and 49. The writer of The Epistle of James has been said to be James, the half brother of our Lord Jesus (Refer to Matt. 13:55 & Gal. 1:19). A half brother is related by one parent only. James was related to the Lord Jesus through Mary only since Jesus had no earthly father who begotten Him but He was begotten by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). The Jewish historian, Josephus describes James as a very holy man and says that James was martyred in A.D. 62 by the order of the high priest Ananias. He was stoned to death. The Epistle of James is one of the General Epistles in that it is written to Christians in general and not to specific individuals or congregations. The Epistle of James is very practical and very applicable for us today.

**Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from The New King James Version.*

James 1:1 (KJV)

I James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

James introduces himself as a “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for “servant” is “doulos” which literally means a “slave.” The New King James Version translates this Greek word as “Bondservant.” Noah Webster defines “slave” in his 1828 American Dictionary as “A person who is wholly subject to the will of another; one who has no will of his own, but whose person and services are wholly under the control of another.” Now isn’t that true of the Christian life? We are bondservants of God and of Christ. We read in 1 Cor. 6:19-20: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” To be a slave of God is to have true freedom. Which would you rather be – a slave of sin or a slave of God? Bondage to sin brings about “death” (Rom. 6:16) but bondage to God brings about “righteousness” (Rom. 6:16). The bible says:

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What

fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." (Rom. 6:16-22)

Christ is the one who saves out of the bondage of sin. Jesus said: "*...Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*" (John 8:34-36)

We read also that James calls himself "a servant of God *and of* the Lord Jesus Christ." Here we see how James sees God and Christ as being equal. Jesus said "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30) and "that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 10:23).