

James Part One: Dive

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ONE MOMENT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Here I sit on my own contemplating the last couple of days. My family is shattered, my mother is distraught. My brother has been put to death as a criminal. I am trying to work out where it all went wrong. I mean, how can this be, how can we get through this? Lost in my memories, I reminisce of a time when we were a family. All of us together, our eldest brother a carpenter. We lived a quiet life, we were a good Jewish family. Every now and then, Mum would bring up the incredible miracle that was my brother's birth. There was that day that He stayed at the temple and Mum and Dad couldn't find Him, boy was He in trouble when He got home! And Dad would tell stories of how an angel came and gave him instructions. But here He was, a 30 year old man and His life was normal, nothing spectacular had happened.

And then one day He goes down to that crazy man and gets baptised. It all began at that point, the delusions of grandeur; He gathered a gang of people to follow Him, He was healing people, He was saying that He was the Son of God, the Messiah. For three years, our family had to endure the shame; our brother was the enemy of our Rabbi, our elders despised Him, wanted to kill Him. How we tried to reason with Him, we went to Him but He disowned us. And now, as a family, we have been given the ultimate shame, our brother has been put to death with all the other criminals. My mother wouldn't leave Him when He died, and now He has been in the tomb for three days and she hasn't stopped praying. This is too much humiliation for one family to bear, how are we going to recover from this? What will my future be, the brother of a criminal, who died a cursed man?

| **1 C 15:7** *'Then he appeared to James...'*

Jesus ... Oh my goodness, you're alive! It was all true!

Imagine the moment that James, the brother of Jesus, was visited by his dead brother. When you read the Bible, don't skip over the moments. Five words can change a life! Check out these five from 1 Corinthians.

Some scholars believe that this James was in fact, James the brother of Jesus. And this was the point at which James first believed that his brother was the Son of God. You can imagine the shock; you have just watched your brother die a criminal's death, your mother

is distraught, you don't believe in Him as the Messiah and then He rises from the dead and comes to visit you! This one moment changes your life forever.

James, from this point, becomes the greatest advocate for the Church. He ends up being the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. Now open up your Bible to James and read the first verse: *'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'* This significant statement is not to be overlooked. He is talking about his brother. Without his encounter with the risen Christ, this statement and this incredible book would have never been written. James has had such a revelation of Jesus that he can now say that the One he grew up with, the One who annoyed him when he was a child, the One who he wrestled with as a boy, was, in fact, Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, James had a huge obstacle to overcome, he had to overcome familiarity. He was familiar with Jesus, he lived with Him, grew up with Him, and seeing Jesus as a natural man for 30 years made it very hard for him to believe that He was, in fact, the Messiah, the Son of God. John touches briefly on this struggle.

| **J 7:5** *'For even his own brothers did not believe in him.'*

But this encounter with the risen Jesus changed everything! Sometimes, we have to get over the natural circumstances and see the impossibility that is the Kingdom of God. Don't let the natural stop you from believing in the supernatural power of God. Don't let familiarity stop you from seeing all that God is doing in and through you. Don't be so consumed by the natural world that you stop believing in miracles.

I love James. He has a way of writing that is so black and white, no wonder later in life he was called James the Just. Everything about James is fairness and truth, he has no middle ground. But he writes with so many incredible metaphors and imagery that we know he was super creative. Have you ever listened to a preacher and they are making you laugh, and entertaining you but then you come out and realise that you had heart surgery? You come out convicted and changed but you laughed the whole way through it. That is James; he is writing so that you can increase in maturity but it is with such beautiful imagery and creative elegance that you feel like you are being rocked into obedience not beaten.

| **J 1:11** *'For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.'*

This is one of the most creative rebukes of the rich I have ever seen.

Again, look at James Chapter 3: Taming the Tongue–this is the most incredible imagery with ships, horses, forests set on fire, taming of animals, birds and reptiles and praising. In the most incredible, beautiful and creative way James is rebuking our mouths for being evil

and full of deadly poison.

Throughout the letter he uses this incredible imagery to rebuke and train. One minute he is calling them '*brothers and sisters*' and the next he calls them '*you foolish person*'. This is a letter from a leader, one who is calling his church to a new level of maturity in Christ. He is writing to a church that has been scattered amongst the nations in Chapter 1:1 '*To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations*' and he is calling them to stand their ground, to be strong and mature and to keep going in the midst of suffering and trials.

Now I understand that the book of James is quite controversial because some feel that it contradicts the teaching of Paul and Ryan Kerrison is going to go deeper into this in our Deep Dive this week. I believe that the book of James is an essential step in the New Testament journey and complements Paul's writing not contradicts it. James is a leader that calls mature Christians to action. Once you are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, you have to do something with it. You can't sit on your salvation and say 'I'm good'. No! You have to have works, actions, deeds with your faith, go and do something with your freedom. Go and share this freedom with others, your salvation has to have legs! We are saved *for* good works!

Have a great time reading the book of James, you are going to love it! Read it as the brother of Jesus, read it as the head of the Church in Jerusalem calling his people to a life of action in the Kingdom. Read it as a leader calling his church to maturity. Journey through the incredible imagery and hear James say to you, '*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourself. Do what it says.*' (1:22)