

Text: Jas 2.1

This week my wife and I were reading James. James 2.1 spoke to me very movingly as I read it, and it recalled a message I preached in 1999. I want to rework that message to impress on your heart the powerful message of our text.

Jas 2.1 ¶ My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

Our text gives us our title:

Our Glorious Lord Jesus Christ

I wonder how much you esteem our Lord Jesus Christ? We all, or most of us here today, profess faith in Jesus Christ. We gather every week to worship Jesus Christ. But think about these words, “our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is a lot of weight in these words. I hope to impress you with their weight as we go through the message. But I wonder if any of us fully applies them in our own hearts.

It is quite easy in our country to be culturally Christian and live a decent life, even attend church regularly, and yet not be “too zealous” or “too fanatical” about our Christian life.

The man who wrote the words of our text was one whose life was transformed by our Lord Jesus Christ. We don’t know a lot about him from the Bible, but we know enough to know that he was a highly esteemed leader in the early church.

Jas 1.1 ¶ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

Our message today focuses on the kind of devotion that produces the faithful description of Christ that James offers us in our text.

Proposition: The way you look at Jesus dictates the way you follow him.

I. The right view of Jesus Christ (2.1)

A. Our text in context

1. The subject of the verse (and the paragraph) is partiality

Read 2.1-4 (goes on to v. 13)

2. The designation of Christ is not the main point of the text
3. Nevertheless, the way you view Christ influences the way you treat others (in this context)

B. Our text understood

1. Literal rendering:

YLT Jam 2:1 ¶ My brethren, hold not, in respect of persons, the faith of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,

NAU "your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ"

"the faith of the Lord of us Jesus Christ of the glory"

2. Jesus Christ is the person we worship
 - a. Literally means "Jesus the anointed" or "Jesus the Messiah"
 - b. In the church becomes a name, a designation of a person
3. Jesus Christ is Lord
 - a. We can use "Lord Jesus Christ" as a kind of name or designation
 - b. But not here: "the Lord of us"
 - c. Meaning: "The primary mng. relates to possession of power or authority"¹
 - 1) Thus, one who has power over another, "an owner"
 - 2) Or, one who is in a position of authority, "a master"
 - 3) Or, one who possesses divine majesty, "the Lord of heaven"
 - a) God himself
 - b) Men acting for God ("lords")
 - c) Jesus Christ "the use of the word κ. raises Jesus above the human level"²

We mean to say, and James means to say, Jesus is this Lord, this God whom we serve

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

² Bauer.

d. And... he is the Lord of us

- 1) James himself submits to him as Lord and God
- 2) Compare Thomas when he confesses faith (Jn 20.27-28)

Jn 20.27-28 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

- 3) All who believe in him submit to him as God

4. Jesus Christ the glorious

- a. The phrase sits in apposition; it renames him

"Jesus Christ, the glory" or "Jesus Christ, the glorious One"

NAU – "glorious Lord Jesus Christ"

- b. In the OT, the word for "dwelling place" is connected to "shekinah"

- 1) The "shekinah" appeared in the luminous cloud that descending on tabernacle and temple
- 2) The "shekinah" is the visible manifestation of God dwelling with men

Lev 26.11 'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you.

- 3) At the end of the ages, God will dwell with men

Rev 21.3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

- 4) At the beginning of this age, God tabernacled among men

Jn 1.14 ¶ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- c. James attributes this glory, the shekinah glory, to our Lord Jesus Christ – this glory defines him

We will come back to this in a moment, but now let's talk about James

II. The human view of Jesus Christ

A. James is the author of this epistle, but which James?

1. Identified merely by the name “James” in 1.1

“Few persons with the name of James could succeed in identifying themselves merely by their first name. The writer must have been an important James.”³

2. Four names in NT

- a. **James, father of Judas (not Iscariot)** (Lk 6.16, Ac 1.13) – too obscure
- b. **James, son of Alphaeus** (Mt 10.3, Ac 1.13) – also too obscure
- c. **James, the brother of John** – died before this epistle could be written
- d. **James, the brother of Christ** – only other James left among NT mentions

B. James the brother of Jesus — growing up in Jesus' shadow

Mt 13.55 “Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”

1. Jesus was born first
2. Then came James (also note Judas [Jude] and his epistle)
3. The home was a “working class” home – not peasants, but not wealthy either: “the carpenter's son”
4. We see him with his brothers in company with Jesus at the wedding of Cana

Jn 2.12 ¶ After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

³ Thomas D. Lea, “The General Letters,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 628.

C. However, consider the relationship between James and Jesus

1. No record, but consider the one referenc we have about the childhood of Jesus

Lk 2.51-52 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart. ⁵² ¶ And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

- a. Jesus was in subjection to his parents
 - b. Jesus continually increased in wisdom and stature and favor
2. What about James as a boy and young man?
 - a. Would he have required correction? Would Jesus?
 - b. Would he have always loved his brothers? Would Jesus?
 3. When Jesus began his public ministry, what did James and his brothers do?

Mk 3.31-35 ¶ Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent *word* to Him and called Him. ³² A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." ³³ Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" ³⁴ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."

How would you react to that response, as a brother?

4. Little wonder that at the end of the Lord's ministry, James and the brothers "did not believe in him" (Jn7.2-5)

Jn 7.2-5 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. ³ Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. ⁴ "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." ⁵ For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

- a. About six months before the crucifixion
- b. Verse 5 contrasts with the attitude of the disciples (from the beginning of Jesus' ministry) (Jn 2.11)

Jn 2.11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

James knew *about* Jesus, but he didn't view Jesus as more than a man – his always perfect, now slightly mad, older brother.

- He knew Jesus as a person
- He knew about Jesus many mighty works
- He did not know Jesus as the Son of God, like the disciples did

Many people know about Jesus, but they know about him as an historical figure, or as a mythical figure, a mere man, and that's all.

III. The transformed view of Jesus Christ

- A. James was in the company of the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Ac 1.12)

Ac 1.12-14 ¶ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. ¹⁴ These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

- B. James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem

1. When Peter escapes Herod's prison, he references James as the leader (Ac 12.17)

Ac 12.17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the

prison. And he said, “Report these things to James and the brethren.” Then he left and went to another place.

2. When the Jerusalem Council occurs, James is the acknowledged leader of the Jerus. church (Ac 15.13)

Ac 15.13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, “Brethren, listen to me.

- a. James occupies the bulk of the Council time
- b. James proposes the solution of the Gentile problem
- c. We see Paul reporting to him at various times, referring to him as a leader in the church, deferring to his judgement on his last visit to Jerusalem

- C. James the author of the epistle (Jas 1.1)

Jas 1.1 ¶ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

1. The date of the epistle is usually considered to be about AD 45, one year after the death of James the brother of John (Ac 12.1)
2. He writes to the “twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” (*i.e.* Jewish Christians scattered from Jerusalem)
 - a. Much persecution in Jerusalem (see the martyrdom of Stephen, Ac 7)
 - b. Compare the fury of Saul (Paul) against the church (Ac 8, 9)
3. He writes to provide Christian instruction to the many “scattered abroad” – dispersed from the main church, the center of teaching

What we see in the life of James is a dramatic change. The contrast between a knowledgeable sceptic to a powerful minister of the gospel is striking. This is what happens when conversion is seen by others: ***There is a change in life, thought and deed.***

D. James, the penitent

1. Remember, before the crucifixion, James “was not believing in him”
2. Yet after the resurrection, James becomes a leader in the church: what changed? (1 Cor 15.3-7)

1 Cor 15.3-7 ¶ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;⁷ **then He appeared to James**, then to all the apostles;

3. In Jas 1.1 and 2.1, notice how James describes Jesus

Jas 1.1 ¶ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

Jas 2.1 ¶ My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

- a. Notice: he doesn't say “brother of Jesus,” he says “bond-servant”
- b. Notice: how does he view Jesus? “our glorious Lord Jesus Christ”

4. What does James call us to do?

- a. Practice true religion (Jas 1.26-27)
- b. Refrain from partiality (Jas 2.1-13)
- c. Prove our faith by our works (Jas 2.14-26)
- d. Get our tongue in subjection (Jas 3.1-12)
- e. Exhibit the wisdom from above (Jas 3.13-18)

etc.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The way you look at Jesus dictates the way you follow him.

Are you satisfied with the way you are following Jesus?

More important: Is Jesus satisfied with the way you are following him?

Remember, he is:

Our Glorious Lord Jesus Christ