

8284U

GOSNELL'S SPECIAL EFFORT - 1996

JAMES THE JUST

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #1: Servant of Grace

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15: 1-7

Well thank you, brother chairman and my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ and my dear young people.

Well, over the course, God willing, of this forthcoming week, we're going to study together the life of a man, of whom I suppose, it would be fair to say we know very little in the divine record. Because there's little spoken of him in the divine record, we probably only know a brief amount ourselves. Yet we believe, that the degree of information that's found in the record concerning James the Lord's brother, is sufficient for us to paint a story. We believe, there's a story written in the divine record about this particular man, and we believe, as with all good stories, it's a story with a moral. That there's a tremendous lesson that emerges from the story of James the Lord's brother, who was also known as James the Just.

Now we could do no better in beginning this study, than by reading from the opening paragraph of that which is found in the handbook, the program to the special effort. In the opening words of the front page of the special effort program it says, 'That this is at once the story of a man and an ecclesia. In studying the history of the Jerusalem ecclesia, the notable character of its preeminent mentor and guide looms large, and the story of James the Just is woven into the fabric of the ecclesia's own growth and turmoil and development. He appears in the midst of the ecclesia from it's very foundation and for the next 30 years became such an influential figure that his name became synonymous with the ecclesia itself, the seal of its authority and the mark of its approval'. That is, we believe, what we'll find as we traverse the divine record, and we consider the story of the life of James the Lord's brother, or as he came to be known in very history itself, James the Just.

Now as those opening words indicate, what we intend, God willing, in the course of this series of studies, is to actually move through history; we're going to go through 40 years

of history of the first century ecclesia. We're going to start in AD.30 with the formation of the Jerusalem ecclesia and we're going to go right through to AD.70, and what I'm going to do now just by way of introduction, is to just briefly traverse in the first instance, the circumstances that we hope to detail in the course of each study, over the next week. So we're going to cover the story of James and his involvement in this ecclesia over 30 years of time.

In our first study this afternoon, we're going to take the first 6 years of history from AD.30. In the course of each of these studies, we're going to cover 6 years of history of this ecclesia. So, therefore, in this study (#1) we're going to move from AD.30 to AD.35.

We're going to look first of all, at the circumstances of the background of James' family life, and how the family background that he came from, moulded his own character. That here was a man who was raised in a family that had a wonderful reverence for things divine; we're going to see how that in so many ways, the background of his family life shaped this man that he might be, a suitable guide for the Jerusalem ecclesia in which he lived.

Then we're going to look at the circumstances of James' own conversion; we're going to see what brought about the dramatic change in his life, in that he came from being one who did not believe in his brother, to one of the foremost pillars of the ecclesia of the day. We're going to see how, we believe, James was influential in not only being converted himself, but thereafter, in so influencing his family that they all joined the Jerusalem ecclesia everyone of them!

We're going to see the early years of that Jerusalem ecclesia, and the marvellous spirit of growth, that prevailed in those early years, and James himself rejoiced in the unity of that ecclesia, and in the marvellous spirit of development that they all walked together in, in those early years.

We're going to see how peculiarly Hebrew, the flavour and the character of this particular ecclesia was, and how perhaps because of that very Hebrew character, the man James was so especially suited to be an influence amongst this particular group of people.

Then, God willing, in the course of our study this evening (#2), we're going to take the next 6 years of history, which will take us from AD.36 to AD.41, and we're going to see how a controversy began which marred the unity that was once so enjoyed amongst the members of this ecclesia in its early formative years. We're going to see how there was a particular group within the ecclesia, an ecclesia within an ecclesia; a group who were intent on pressing their own spirit and their own style on the rest of the ecclesia. We're

going to see the way in which they enter so dramatically into the divine record of the Acts of the apostles.

We're going to find that shortly afterwards, the apostle Paul made his first visit to the Jerusalem ecclesia, and whilst he was only there for a short time, but one of the most important things that the apostle did, was he met with James. We believe that at that time, a friendship was forged between those two men, that would cause them to be fast and firm friends for the rest of their lives. We believe that James and Paul were at one on the key issues of the truth, and that that friendship was first begun, in a brief visit around about AD.39, when the apostle Paul first made a visit to the Jerusalem ecclesia, as a brother, and not as the persecutor of the brethren.

We're going to find that during that time, in fact, during that first 10 years of the ecclesia's history, that James was steadily increasing in influence within the ecclesia; not because he sought it, not because he aspired to it, but by virtue of his own character and wisdom, his influence was seen to grow and to grow within the Jerusalem ecclesia.

Then in the course of our next study (#3), which will, of course, take us to our exhortation tomorrow morning, we're going to look at the next 6 year of history that will take us from AD.42 to AD.47; and, we're going to see how James formally became the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia; and, how that circumstances seemed to be ratified in the divine record itself, whereby we receive confirmation that he was indeed, the pillar of the ecclesia. We're going to see how that, shortly afterwards, the apostle Paul delivered alms from the Antioch ecclesia and in so doing came to Jerusalem for the second time; and, whilst he was there on that particular visit, that a very, very important meeting was held with the brethren, the key brethren of the Jerusalem ecclesia. We're going to see how an agreement was made on the basis of justification by faith, and how that agreement became the absolute foundation stone of preaching to the Gentiles. Not only preaching to the Gentiles, but it became the very first article whereby the truth itself was to be emblazed abroad both to Jew and to Gentile; and, James was at that meeting, and no doubt, was influential in that meeting; as James and Paul reached a mightily significant conclusion, whereby they might walk together and work together in the truth.

You know, b&s, brother John Carter says concerning that meeting, 'that it was one of the most important meetings ever held in the history of the ecclesia'. He was right! and by the time we get to that meeting, you'll see why it was so desperately important, that James, particularly James, and Paul were seen to be at one. Then we're going to find that the very circumstance, the very moment, the very time that Paul was there engaged in private discussion with James, that further controversy arose with the circumcision group. So, yet again, there was unpleasantness and bitterness that flared within the ecclesia. We're going to see Paul's own conclusions on that matter as he recounts that story in his own writings.

We find that shortly after that, we believe, ever so shortly after that, that James wrote his epistle. The first of all the epistles and that it was written to Jewish brethren and that there are certain overtones in the epistle of James that reflect the circumstances and the under currents of the day and the spirit of the Jerusalem ecclesia, in which James lived and worked. We're going to see that the story he wrote in his own epistle, is indeed, a reflection of the circumstances that James experienced himself.

Then, God willing, in our next study (#4) we're going to go from AD.48 to 53, and we're going to see how further controversy erupted yet again, and this time the controversy was not limited to the Jerusalem ecclesia, but that it had now spread abroad, and that which began in the Jerusalem ecclesia was now being extended to other parts of the brotherhood; and, that this group within the ecclesia, not content to have controversy merely within their home ecclesia, had thought to agitate far and wide on the matter. So wide indeed that it brought forth the very expostulation of the apostle in the writing of the epistle to the Galatians, which we believe was penned at this time, as a matter of urgency, just prior to the apostle travelling south from Antioch, in order that he might engage in what we know, of course, as the Jerusalem conference. When we come to the Jerusalem conference and to a seething hot bed of discontented Jews, and an ecclesia about to erupt, we're going to see the wisdom of James; and we're going to see how the whole matter hung in the balance depending on what James would do and what James would say! The Jerusalem ecclesia depended ever so much on that critical vital day, on the skills of its leader! We're going to see what James decided at the Jerusalem ecclesia and why he decided what he did, and what scriptural basis he used, for coming to the conclusions that he did. We're going to see how a potential disaster in ecclesial life was avoided, because of the wisdom of this man. A few years later, Paul made yet another visit to Jerusalem, and we believe that during that visit his contact with James was extended and developed.

Then, in the course of our next study (#5) which, of course, will take us through the next 6 years of history, we're going to look at the years AD.54 to AD.59 and we're going to see how that really coincides with the time of the apostle's next visit to the Jerusalem ecclesia, particularly in AD.58, in order that he might bring forth the Jerusalem poor fund; that collection which he had taken amongst the Gentile ecclesias, that he now wished to present back in Jerusalem. We're going to see that as he came to Jerusalem to present the poor fund on that occasion, that there would be yet, further controversy again within the Jerusalem ecclesia. We're going to see how that James, fighting for the very survival of the ecclesia, sought and enlisted the help of the apostle Paul, that they might avoid an imminent schism within the ecclesia. We're going to see how they did that, we're going to see what their spirit was as they worked together in that matter. Then, again, we're going to see the leadership of James in the context of his home ecclesia.

Then in the next study (#6), we're going to go into the next few years of history, which will take us from AD.60 right through to AD.65, and we're going to find how that in those years, we have a set of political circumstances in the land of Israel, that lead to the tragic death of James, and not only his death, but the death of a man that at the time, the Jerusalem ecclesia could ill afford his death. We're going to see the difficulties that we believe were brought forth as a result of that, and we're going to show as we hope to do, how it is our personal belief that the epistle to the Hebrews, was at the very least drawn forth in part, because of the death of James. That the circumstances of James' death drew forth the writing of this epistle, and we're going to see how particularly relevant the epistle to the Hebrews was, in the very moment of time that it was written, by as we believe, and we're going to provide substantial evidence in that regard. We're going to say that, about that time, around about that same time, the apostle Peter wrote his epistles to the Jewish brethren before perishing, of course, in the circumstances of the fire in emperor Nero's time.

Then (#7), we're going to go right through to the end of time, as it were, as far as this ecclesia is concerned, and we're going to go to AD.70; we're going to go from AD.66 to AD.70 and to the end of the Jewish commonwealth, we're going to see how the circumstances were brought to bear whereby the Jerusalem ecclesia was given opportunity to withdraw from the city. We're going to see what they did do, and what some of them didn't do, and we're going to trace the ecclesia as they fled to Pella; and we're going to see the final end of the Jerusalem ecclesia, after James was dead.

Then, God willing, b&s, in our last study (#8), which will take us to the concluding word of exhortation, we will then have a look at the lessons, we believe, that should be drawn from the life of this man and from the story of his ecclesia. Yahweh's ecclesia, but the one in which he lived and moved.

Now let's go back then and begin, by looking at the circumstance of James' family background. So, where do we begin? Well, we begin with a very interesting phrase in the gospel of Matthew chapter 1 and, you see, I think this sets the scene for James' family life. It's only a little phrase but it's important in the context of the background to James. Now you'll notice in Matthew chapter 1, we're told concerning his father Joseph in the 19th verse it says, 'Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example'. So this is James' father, you see, and I want you to notice that he's described as a 'just man'; now the word 'just' here is the Greek 'didaktos' (1318) 'righteous' and if we want to understand what the word 'didaktos' really means, then we've got to look at some other passages to see what exactly that term meant to the Jew. To our English ear the word 'just' means, well, what do you think 'just' means to us? It really means that somebody is fair, a just man is someone who's fair, someone who's reasonable; that's not how the Jews saw it! If you come to Acts 10, let's have a

look at another example, in fact, two further examples of the word 'didaktos'. Now, what exactly did it mean when Matthew 1 said that Joseph was a 'just' man?

Well, first of all, Acts 10, now here's an example of the same word out of the life of Cornelius; in Acts 10 verse 22 it says, 'And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God'. Now I want you to compare that with the terms of verse 2, 'Cornelius a devout man, and one that feared God'; so, you see, the terms of his justice, verse 22, lay in his devotion to spiritual things, verse 2. When one said to the Jew that somebody was a 'just' man, what you really meant was someone who was devoted to the things of the truth, and Cornelius was! because you'll see that verse 2 says, 'he was a devout man, one that feared God, with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. Cornelius was a spiritually minded conformer to the requirements of the Law. He was a just man!

Come and have a look at Luke 1 and remember this phrase of the parents of John the Baptist. Luke 1 and verse 5 for connection: it says, 'There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both didaktos (just). Well Luke, what's your definition of 'just'? Well, they were both 'just' before God, 'walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless'. There's a just man! one who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Now, that's how a Jew understood what it was to be 'just'. A 'just' man was one who gave tithes, a 'just' man was one who went to the yearly feasts, a 'just' man was the one who kept the yearly fast, the one who scrupulously observed the Sabbath, who attended the synagogue, who used the prescribed prayers, who observed the rules of purification, who studied the Law, that was justice for the Jew; and Joseph, says Matthew 1 and verse 19, was a just man. Now that's James' father!

Do you want to see what their attitude to the Law was as a family? Come to Luke 2, you can see within the family circumstances, a high standard of adherence to the requirements of the Law in a godly way. Joseph was a man, and his wife also, who were meticulous in observing all the requirements of the Law. Now, look at Luke 2 reading from verse 21, just have a look at the standards of this family. 'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the LORD; As it is written in the Law of the LORD, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to Yahweh. Verse 24, 'And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law'. Verse 27, 'and he came by the Spirit in to the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the Law'. Oh, this was a godly family indeed! Now this is the family into which James was born!

If you come over the page to the feast time, to Luke 2 verse 41, we're told at the time of the feast that his parents 'Went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover; and when Christ was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. Now, you know, as well as I do, that to Mary were born several other children after the birth of Christ, at least 4 other boys, making five, and at least 2 daughters. So, in the course of these years, when Mary was travelling up to Jerusalem, she had 7 babies that she was bringing with her. The Law said in Deuteronomy 16 verse 16, 'three times a year shall every male present himself before Yahweh'. But there was no requirement for a female to come, in fact, Rabbi Hillel the leading rabbi of the day, had said that it wasn't necessary for a wife to accompany her husband on visiting Jerusalem for the feasts! But Mary went! and not only did she go, but they went every year, they never missed, they took the whole family, this was a dedicated family, they were scrupulous observers of the Law and thoroughly godly. Into that family was James born!

You know, b&s, in every Jewish household, a boy began his training in the scriptures at the age of 5. He started with the Torah, started with the books of the Law, that was the first thing they learnt and they learnt them so well they could recite them. Now, imagine being in the family and growing up in the family, in the same family as the Lord. Imagine doing the family readings, as it were, or the family discussions on things divine and having an older brother who asked such fascinating and penetrating questions about the Law and the true spirit of the Law. James grew up, you see, in that godly environment, lead by an older brother who was so eager in his questioning and discussions on the things of the truth. I'm sure that James' own character was strongly moulded by those principles! so much so that as he grew to maturity that James was given a title, a title that's recorded in history, he was known as James the Just. Now, you see, that's the same thing mentioned of his father, wasn't it? Joseph was a just man, well, this was a title given to James, James the Just, it's recorded in history that that was his title. I want to tell you something interesting: he was never called that by the believers of the ecclesia; he wasn't called James the Just by the members of the ecclesia, b&s, he received that title from the Jews of the synagogue. So meticulous was he, so outstanding was he in his personal holiness as an upholder of the Mosaic, that the very Jews themselves gave him the title, James the Just.

He was a very special man! We advance a number of years and all of a sudden the family's beginning to go grow up and back to the point where Jesus has now left, and the ministry of the Lord has begun and James is left at home with the rest of the family, but the Lord is now on his ministry, and all of a sudden there are stories coming back to the little family at Nazareth. You wonder what James thought, you see, of the rumours that started coming back into the family household. You see, whatever James might have known concerning the special character of Christ, he would be astounded at what he heard! Why he heard that when the Lord was in Jerusalem, He virtually usurped the

position of the priest; he heard that Christ had walked into Jerusalem and He swept clear the courts of the temple, what boldness was this by his older brother? What about the disregard of Jewish custom that James heard, in terms of the stories that began to come back about the ministry of the Lord. Why, they heard that Jesus had been consorting with the Samaritans; then they heard that Jesus had warned against the traditions of the fathers; then they heard that He had neglected the Levitical rules, and He had gone and touched a dead body! Then they heard that He had been handling lepers; they found out that He had ignored the ceremonial rules of defilement and that He had spoken with a harlot. He had begun to eat with unwashed hands, that He had annulled the distinction between clean and unclean meats, that He was not properly observing the Sabbath, and that worst of all, He had openly denounced the Pharisees and scribes, the glorious teachers of the Law. What right did Christ have to do that? You can see that James would be highly discomforted by the reports that he heard about his brother. Then, there was a highly embarrassing episode when Jesus came back and into the very home synagogue in Nazareth, He read the scripture for the day, then sat down and suggested that the scripture was fulfilled that very day and that He was the man of Isaiah. So enraged was the village of Nazareth, that they were going to destroy the Lord and throw Him over the brow of the hill, (how embarrassing for James!).

Now you know as well as I do, the story about how things grew to such a point, that eventually the brethren of the Lord decided that Jesus needed to be restrained, that He had gone too far, that His mind perhaps was unhinged, that the pressures and the circumstances of public life had gone to His head. The brethren of the Lord not only decided that they ought to do something, but they talked Mary into going with them. Now come and have a look at this because this is interesting, Matthew 12, just look at this! it reached this point, you see, and I'm sure that James was there; we'll tell you in a moment why we thought James was there, but just remember this episode in Matthew 12. It says in verse 46, 'While He yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto Him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But He answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother!'

You know, b&s, you've got to have imagination when you read the divine record; you've actually got to remember, you've got to see what this scene was! Now just see if you can picture this scene: here's the Lord with a crowd around Him and He's exhorting the multitude, and all of a sudden, the brethren of the Lord, James included as the next oldest brother, together with Mary, come to the outskirts of the crowd, they're right on the outside of the multitude. They want to speak with the Lord, you see; now, how do



they get to see Him? Well, they'll have to pass a message and so they do; so somebody steps forward and they tap someone on the shoulder, 'excuse me, could you pass a message along, the Lord's brethren and mother would like to have a word with him please! pass it on! tap, tap, tap tap! whisper, whisper, whisper, whisper, nudge, nudge!' can you see it going through the crowd? deeper, deeper into the crowd, then all of a sudden, one man at the front receives the message from behind him, hears the message and then steps forward. He's the one in verse 47, when it says, 'one said unto Him, 'behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without', and James standing on the outside, sees the man step forward right at the front, speaks to the Lord, he steps back. Then he sees the Lord hold his hands forth, and then a message starts from the very inside and comes back out. You can see it coming back out, person to person, person to person, until finally the person on the very outside turns around and speaks to James. James says, 'yes?' and the person says, 'well, there's a message from your brother! yes, 'ah, He says, whoever does the will of my Father, is my brother!'. How would James have liked that? You see, there was something awfully significant in this little story, wasn't there? Do you see that little telling phrase in verse 46, just one word, but it tells the whole story, you see, verse 46, 'While He yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without', and that was the whole problem. They were outside the circle of Christ! He could never come to them, they had to come to Him, they were outside the circle. You know, b&s, James on that day would never have realized how irreverent his approach was.

Now, come and have a look at Luke's record of the same story, Luke 8, because Luke puts it in a slightly different way and the moment you see what Luke says, you'll know that James was there. Just look at this! Verse 19, Luke's equivalent of the same story is, 'Then came to Him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at Him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these (now listen to these words, b&s) which hear the Word of God, and do it'. James never, ever, forgot those words! because in James 1 verse 22 he says, 'But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only', and he builds his whole epistle on that statement, b&s. He never forgot the words of the Lord on that occasion. 'Be ye doers of the Word, says James 1 verse 22, and not hearers only', that was a stinging rebuke from his brother and that hurt, but, he never forgot!

But he hasn't learnt yet, b&s, he's not a changed man yet! he's not convinced yet, and we know that because if you come to John 7, we find as the events lead up to the final week of the life of the Lord, that James is still not a man at one with his brother. We're told therefore, in John 7 reading from verse 1, 'After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judeae, that thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest'.

That's interesting really, notice that verse 3, 'His brethren therefore said, depart that thy disciples may see', so the obvious conclusion we draw from verse 3, is that the brethren and the disciples were two different groups, weren't they? Whoever the brethren are they certainly don't consider themselves to be part of the disciples of the Lord, so they say to Him, 'depart that thy disciples may see the works that Thou doest. Verse 4, For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things', so they don't really believe, do they? when they say, 'if Thou do these things', what they're really saying is that they're not convinced. Verse 5 says, 'For neither did His brethren believe in Him', the NIB says, 'for even His own brothers did not believe in Him'. Verse 6, 'Then Jesus said unto them (now just look at the personal pronouns here, that show the gulf that exists between James and the Lord, the personal pronouns tell the story in these verses) 'My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto the feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come'. You have a sense in this record, as personal pronoun calls to personal pronoun, that there's a gulf between James and his brother. One writer put it this way! he said, 'how unmistakably did the Lord's words imply that they belonged as yet to the world of Judaism and Pharisaism, to the world which hated Him, to the world in which they were in no thought of peril, but which was seeking to take His life. They were members of the religious world, they sided with the dominant parties, they walked in the odour of sanctity, they sided with the dominant parties and they were breathing the beatitude of Orthodox benediction. His was the isolation and persecution of the prophet. In the four gospels, we do not hear again of the brothers of the Lord; they were not with Him during the last scene, they were not at the Last Supper, they were not in the garden, they drew no sword for Him, they did not follow Him to the hall of Caiaphas, they did not defile themselves for the feast by entering the praetorium, they did not stand beside the cross, they did not, so far as we know, visit with sorrowing gifts His tomb'. As the curtain falls upon the gospel page, b&s, and upon the work of the Lord that lead to His death, there is still a gulf between James and his Lord. Therefore, there must have been something that brought about such a remarkable transformation that this brother of the Lord who did not believe Him, was one day to become the veritable pillar of the Jerusalem ecclesia.

We say, what was it? what was it that so transformed James, so completely turned his life around that he became a fervent supporter of the Lord? The answer lies in 3 words, epeita (1899), optomai (3700), Iakobos (2385)! Epeita (afterwards) optomai (He was seen) Iakobos (of James). Now whereabouts is that? well, that's in our reading, isn't it? from 1 Corinthians 15 and the circumstances that the apostle Paul relates concerning the appearances of the resurrected Christ. Just come and have a look at what 1 Corinthians 15 says, because here surely was the moment of truth for James, the moment that turned his life around. See what the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 4: he says concerning the Lord, 'That He was buried, and that He rose again the

third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, He was seen of above 500 brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all, says Paul, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time'. You know, the epistles to the Corinthians were, of course, written quite a lot later on, and at the time the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, there was only one man called James that Paul could refer to without any other identification, just simply say He was seen of James. There was no other James in the time that the apostle wrote that could fulfil this criteria other than James the Lord's brother who, by that time, was indeed the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, and had been so for some 15 years or more.

Now, do you see this word 'seen', the word 'seen' according to Strong's here, means 'to gaze at with wide open eyes, at something remarkable' (3700), that's a pretty good description when you look upon a dead man that's come to life again! But it means more than that, because you see, a number of other translations, RSV, Jerusalem bible, the NIV, and a number of other translations, translates the word 'optomai' not as 'seen' but as 'He appeared' to James. Now that's quite different you see, it doesn't sound a lot different but it is really quite different, because when we look at the word 'seen', James might be able to say, 'ah, yes, I have seen Christ, the Lord walking past, I've seen Him'. But that's not what the word means here, it means literally, He appeared to James, and what we're being told, of course, in those words is that they had a meeting, there was a specific meeting between the two brothers. This wasn't just a chance sighting of the Lord by James, the Lord appeared specifically and deliberately and intentionally to his brother. Now, can you imagine how dramatic that meeting would be, b&s, between the two half-brothers? All the doubts of James swept aside, all his concerns that the Lord had gone too far in disputing with the Pharisees, all his surprise at the attitude of the Lord to the Law, his personal feelings of embarrassment at some of the things that the Lord had said, he had seen Him! he had spoken with Him! he had fellowshiped with Him! he had been with the resurrected Lord! THIS WAS THE MESSIAH!

Now, you just imagine how James would feel meeting up with a man that he'd known all his life as his brother, and now he realizes for the first time, that He wasn't his brother, He wasn't just his brother, HE WAS THE LORD OF LIFE, HE WAS THE MESSIAH OF ISRAEL. Can you imagine how humbled James would feel, to appreciate that he shared a common mother with this One who stood before him? How small would James feel, b&s, after this particular appearance. If He was Messiah, if the Lord was Messiah then His teaching and His understanding on the Law must be right! of that, James would be convinced. Now we don't know the circumstances of the meeting, how we would love to know what these two brethren spoke about at this meeting, we don't know but we could imagine and one would like to think in the course of that discussion, that the Lord spoke of the work that James would have to do. In fact, we believe there are clues elsewhere

in the divine record, that we'll come to God willing in our next study, that would indicate that that the Lord did have a special work for his brother, and that He commissioned James to a special responsibility, because of James' own understanding. As to what that work was, we'll come to that shortly, of course, in the next study.

In a moment of time, in one moment of time, James' life was forever changed! Remember the words of Matthew 13, where these words about the family, the family background of the Lord. In Matthew 13 verse 55 near the end of the chapter, the record says, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?' So, you see, the implication of this verse, isn't it? is that James was the oldest brother after the Lord. As such one could imagine that having seen the Lord, he would go back to the family! Can you picture that scene as well? can you imagine James walking into his family and saying to his mother and to his brethren and to his sisters, 'I have seen the Lord'; He is risen indeed! He's alive, I've seen Him with my own eyes'. We believe that James would be instrumental in converting his family and in bringing them to the truth, that they might join with the ecclesia, with those who were believers in the resurrected Lord. Join they did, b&s, because if you come to Acts, we know that that is indeed what happened, because when the story lifts now upon the Acts of the apostles, and the beginnings of the first century ecclesia, we know in Acts 1, we're told specifically in verse 14, that James was there in the Jerusalem ecclesia as it began, from the very moments of its formation. Acts 1 verse 14 says, 'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren'. So, James was there from the very moment that the Jerusalem ecclesia began, James was there!

Now, in this chapter there's going to be an apostle appointed, and they didn't ask James to fulfil that function; they were going to replace Judas, an apostle was going to be elected and James was not the man. But despite the fact that he wasn't the apostle of Acts 1, we believe that he was to become an apostle in his own right, and the circumstances of his apostleship, we'll come to in the course of our next study. So now, James is there, he's a changed man, he's in the ecclesia and as such he would witness those first tremendous years of growth that occurred in the Jerusalem ecclesia. Now, I wanted to just close now with a brief review by means of an overhead, of exactly what did take place in the Jerusalem ecclesia in those earlier years. Just have a look at this! It's just wonderful!

The first thing we notice about the ecclesia, the Jerusalem ecclesia, was its amazing growth in those early years. There was just an unbelievable development in this ecclesia, like no other ecclesia - have a look at this. Acts 1 verse 15 says, 'The number of names together were about 120 (that's where we begun in Acts 1). But Acts 2 verse 41 says, 'The same day there were added unto to them about 3,000; Acts 2 verse 47

says, 'And the Lord added to the ecclesia daily such as should be saved; many which heard the Word believed and the number of the men was about 5,000', says Acts 4 verse 4. Acts 5 verse 14, 'Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women'; Acts 6 verse 1 says, 'In those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied; Acts 6 verse 7 says, 'The Word of God increased and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly'; and finally Acts 9 verse 31 says, 'The ecclesias had rest and were edified and were multiplied', and of all ecclesias, b&s, this one in particular, the one that James lived in, experienced this phenomenal growth. Absolutely phenomenal growth! there probably never was another ecclesia like this one! This ecclesia was unique in the history of ecclesial life, never, ever would there be another ecclesia grow just like this one.

You see, not only was there amazing growth in the ecclesia, but for all of that, there was also an amazing sense of unity in the ecclesia as well. In fact, we believe, that the unity of the ecclesia was the key to its growth. Now look at these key phrases, this is why this ecclesia grew as it did, it grew, b&s, because they were absolutely bound together in their understanding of the truth. They were absolutely united in their dedication and in their fervent belief concerning the truth, and the passion of that belief, caused that ecclesia to explode. Now, just look at the spirit that prevailed in this ecclesia, this is where James is, b&s, in these early years! 'These all continued, says Acts 1 verse 14, 'with one accord in prayers and supplication'; Acts 2 verse 1 says, 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place'; Acts 2 verses 44 to 46 says, 'All that believed were together, and they continued daily with one accord in the temple'; Acts 4 verse 24 says, 'When they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord'; Acts 4 verse 32 says, 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul'; Acts 5 verse 12 says, 'they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch and believers were the more added'.

NEVER WAS THERE AN ECCLESIA like this ecclesia, in terms of the spirit of unity that prevailed amongst its members. The key to that passion, the key to that unity, b&s, was in Acts 4 and verses 32 and 33 and here was the key, this is what bound them together! This is what made this ecclesia so special, and James was involved in all of these years of growth. Verse 32 says, 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all'. The great passion that united them together was the fervency of their belief, that they were witnesses of the resurrected Christ, and they lived their lives accordingly. You know what it's like, b&s, when you've been to a bible school and you've stood up together with 50 or 100 or 200 or 1,000 other brethren and sisters, and you've lifted up your voice in worship to God in the form of a hymn that absolutely captures the spirit of the study that you've just done, and you rejoice to sing that hymn. As you sing the words and the

strings of your heart are plucked, you feel the pricking of your eyes because you feel that you're standing shoulder to shoulder, and rank to rank with all those other people, and as one accord. You feel that moment, don't you? have you ever experienced that? Oh, it's precious! and it happens very rarely in ecclesial life; well, that's what this ecclesia was like and that's where James was! It was a marvellous place to be!

But there was one other thing that made this ecclesia unique! In this final unique aspect of the Jerusalem ecclesia, laid the seeds of the problem that James would fight against for all his life and that was this: that this ecclesia was not only amazing in its growth and amazing in its unity, but it did also have an amazing diversity within its members. There was within the Jerusalem ecclesia, such an incredible mix of people that you could just see how difficulties could arise as that ecclesia began to grow. It was an ecclesia that was very, very diverse; the members of this ecclesia were drawn from every aspect of Jewish society. So they should have been. The truth has the power to overcome any difference in life, and social or cultural or religious background that we might have. The one common element of this ecclesia was that they were all staunchly Hebrew in one way or another, or be it mixed.

Now just have a look at this! first of all, cultural groups - you see, we're told in Acts 2 verse 9, 'that there were Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia'. Now those are all Aramean Jews, and Aramean Jews spoke Aramaic, and they read from the Hebrew scriptures. But we're also told in Acts 2 verse 10, that other members of this ecclesia came from, 'Phrygia, and Pamphylia and Egypt and strangers of Rome', and these were all Hellenistic Jews and they spoke Greek and they read from the Septuagint translation. So, you see, although they were all Jews in this ecclesia they came from widely different cultural backgrounds.

Not only was there a difference in cultural backgrounds, but there was also a difference in terms of social status, because in Acts 4 verse 34, we're told that 'as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them'; so, there were wealthy members of the Jerusalem ecclesia; and yet, in Acts 6 verse 1, says, 'because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations', so, therefore, amongst the ecclesia were also those who were absolutely destitute of this world's possessions. There was a tremendous gulf in the social class of those who belonged to this ecclesia.

Not only were there cultural and social differences, there was also a difference in terms of the religious background, even though they were all Jews because Acts 6 verse 7 says, 'and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith', and they were Sadducees, and Acts 15 verse 5 says, 'But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed; so there were both Sadducees and Pharisees in the Jerusalem ecclesia.

Oh, this was a real melting pot! this is the ecclesia over which James is going to preside. He's not there yet, he's growing in stature, he's developing in his own knowledge but he also experienced those first marvellous years of unity when the ecclesia was truly of one heart, of one soul, of one accord. But it wasn't to last, b&s, and soon, so very soon, the unity that was special in that ecclesia was broken, and it was broken for ever; once shattered it would never ever be regained for the next 30 years. Already, b&s, even in the midst of that unity there was a group at work within the ecclesia, that were ready to do battle with others, and who would forever shatter that bond that once united them all. The circumstances of how that happened and how they burst upon the ecclesial scene, is the next part of our story.