

8176U

GOSNELL'S SPECIAL EFFORT - 1996

JAMES THE JUST

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #2: Ruler of Repute

Reading: Acts 11:1-18

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

Well, for those of you who weren't here this afternoon and have joined us tonight, the basis of our studies, God willing, over the course of this special effort, is on James the Lord's brother and his involvement with the Jerusalem ecclesia. We're going to see how the story of the man and the story of the ecclesia are bound together in the narrative. That to understand James, we really need to understand the ecclesia in which he lived and worked. By way of introduction over the course of our study this afternoon, what we did was, we looked briefly at the background of James' family life, the way in which he had grown up in such a godly family who revered the Law and all things divine, and how we believe that suitably qualified him for a work which his Lord and his brother was to commit into his trust, and God willing, in the course of our study this evening, we intend to cover that commitment in more detail.

Now I'm just going to go back then over the first study in terms of the material we covered time wise, so that we can just refresh our memories, as to what we actually looked at, in those years of time. You'll remember that we covered the first few years of the history of the Jerusalem ecclesia, we went from about AD.30 to AD.35, and we looked at those early years, remember, wherein there was a marvellous spirit of unity, such a wonderful accord, a single heart, and a single soul, that bound the ecclesia together in an unity, which probably has not seen the like since. An unique ecclesia in many respects, and James was there, we believe, right from the very beginning of that ecclesia in Acts chapter 1. He also likewise witnessed that marvellous growth and that marvellous spirit that bound the brethren together. In those years, James became a servant of the Lord, and a servant of grace. (By the way, all the titles for these studies you might think they're made up and so they are, but everyone of them has a scriptural background. If you can find the scriptural background for each title, I'd be delighted for

you to come and check them out with me, and I'll verify whether you're right or wrong! but everyone of them is drawn from a bible passage.) So James began as a servant of grace, a brother in the ecclesia, and witnessed in those early years that marvellous spirit.

Well, as we said at the conclusion of our study, that spirit wasn't to remain! There was going to come a development in the Jerusalem ecclesia, that would for ever shatter the whole heart of accord that had existed between the brethren. From the moment that spirit was changed, this ecclesia would never ever be the same again; an ecclesia that began so well, an ecclesia that had the very brethren of our Lord and the apostles themselves, as pillars of the ecclesia, an ecclesia that numbered several thousand, within 40 years, the heart and the soul of the ecclesia had been eaten out! by a spirit of controversy within its own midst. A spirit that had, as it were, eaten out the very vitals of ecclesial life, so that by AD.70 there was, as it were, nothing left of this once great ecclesia that had begun so well in the early chapters of the Acts of the apostles. Our study will trace the development of that spirit in the ecclesia, and how James stood against it.

So then, in the course of our study tonight, we're going to go forward now in time, to the next few years, and we're going to see as we saw how this controversy begins with a group that we've named here, THE CIRCUMCISION PARTY. We're going to come to that shortly, we're going to show you why we've given that title to that particular group. We're going to see that shortly after that controversy arose, that the apostle Paul visited Jerusalem for the first time, as a brother, and how we believe that he shared an accord of spirit with James in a bond that never would be broken in the next 25 years of their life together, in the truth. Then finally, we're going to spend a few moments looking at the way in which James increased in influence within the Jerusalem ecclesia, and finally assumed the role which we believed was marked out for him, by his own brother.

So, let's come to Acts 11 then, which is where our story begins tonight. So, in Acts 11 we're told in verse 1, it says, 'The apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God. When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them'. But you'll notice that verse 2 says, 'they that were of the circumcision', but the RSV renders that phrase and also the phrase in chapter 10 verse 45, it renders it as 'the circumcision party', and the reason why the RSV renders it in that way, is because that's exactly what they were. They were, in fact, a specific group in the ecclesia; they were an ecclesia, if you like, within the ecclesia. Now you stop and you think about this, b&s, because it's very unusual that they should be given this title, because this was a Jewish ecclesia, this was the Jerusalem ecclesia. Do you know, that the Jerusalem ecclesia was made up of Hebrew brethren, in fact, it was made up entirely of Hebrew brethren, and that being the case,

every brother in this ecclesia was circumcised. So, why would this particular group within the ecclesia be known as the 'circumcision party' when every member of the ecclesia had submitted to the rite? the answer is, because you see, this particular group were going to, not only have been circumcised themselves, but they were going to use this particular subject as their platform. They were going to insist on circumcision for both Jew and Gentile, as being an absolutely vital prerequisite for salvation. So, they're known as the circumcision party because this was to be the 'flag' that they waved, the 'banner' under which they ran! **They were the circumcision party!**

Now, I want you to notice their style! Now you see what happens, chapter 11 verse 2, 'When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision party contended with him', the NIV says, 'they criticized him'; the 20th Century New Testament translation says, 'they began to attack him'. Now, here's a brother who is an apostle, he's an apostle in the ecclesia: you see, this group didn't hesitate to attack Peter irrespective of his status. There was no respect for his apostleship! 'If we think Peter's wrong, we won't hesitate to put him on the map', that was the spirit of this group, and the spirit that they were really advancing was their own personal prejudice. You see, they were strongly Jewish and they had prejudice against the Gentiles and against sustaining fellowship with them.

Do you see verse 3? 'Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them', that was the ground of their complaint, that there should be no association with those who are uncircumcised. Now if you come back to chapter 10 for a moment and verse 45, (you know, it's all in the way we read our bibles, isn't it? but just look at the spirit of this group, you can see the Jewish prejudice here); now just read verse 45, I'm going to read it and try and give what I think is the right emphasis so you can see the spirit of this particular group. 'And they of the circumcision party which believed were **astonished**, as many as came with Peter, because that **on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit**'. You see, you can almost hear the incredulity of this group, can't you? what this group were really saying, not quite but almost, they were really saying, 'what does God think He's doing? to extend the Holy Spirit and the privileges of the truth, **to the Gentiles?**' Oh, there was strong Jewish prejudice here, wasn't there? and they felt very passionately about that; but you see what their tone was, b&s, as we saw in that 2nd verse. This was their tone, you see, their tone and their character was dogmatic and confrontational! they didn't hesitate to bring accusations against even a highly respected brother. You see, they didn't come to Peter and say, 'Look, Peter, we respect your position as an apostle, as an elder, we're not sure why you've done this with the Gentiles, we don't understand, there must be a scriptural basis for what you've done? Could you please explain what you've done, we're having trouble understanding?'. Oh no, the verse says, 'they **attacked him!**' and that was the style and the approach that this group would always use; and from the moment they appear in the record, you'll never see a different spirit with this group, it's always the same - **the truth**

must be fought for! it's got to be a battle, everything has to be a confrontation!

Now did Peter react that way? was that the spirit of the apostle? did he react in kind? Well, no he didn't really because do you see what Peter did? it was very wise what Peter did, verse 4, 'Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them saying, I was in the city of Joppa....' Now you might of well wondered in the past, why in Acts 11 verses 1 to 18, we have what seems to be a rather long-winded and labourious recitation of all the episode that we've already been given in chapter 10. Why does Peter go through all of that again in detail? and you see, I think there are 2 reasons:

- the first thing is that Peter is anxious to say **this wasn't mine initiative**; he could easily have claimed glory for being associated with the Gentiles, and having decided that they should be involved, but Peter's spirit is to say, this was a divine initiative, not mine! Now just have a look at the verses here, verse 5, 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and **in a trance I saw a vision**', verse 7, '**I heard a voice saying unto me**', verse 12, **the Spirit bade me go with them**', verse 17, 'forasmuch **as God gave them**', and so the endeavour of the apostle was to say, 'look, whatever has happened here, it's not because of my initiative; **this was a work of God!**'
- **The second thing I think he's trying to accomplish in this reciting in order of the circumstances is this: you see, along come these brethren, they're all agitated and they begin to attack him, and Peter says, 'just settle down, let me just go back over the circumstances of this whole episode, and I'm going to give it to you in detail, and in order, stage by stage, so that we can work these things through properly and quietly and come to what shall be best for the truth! Now brethren, let me tell you what happened!' and that's what he does, he's very patient, he spends the time to take them through the whole episode quietly; Peter is in control of his emotions.**

Now what was the result? Well, the result is verse 18, isn't it? 'When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life'. Now you see in verse 18 when it says, 'when they heard these things, they held their peace', the Jerusalem bible says, and I think this is a good translation, 'this account satisfied them', or as the NIV says, 'they had no further objections', so you see, Peter didn't respond in kind after the manner of the circumcision party. His tone was one of patience and kindly understanding, he didn't attribute any of the work to himself, he claimed it to be the initiative of the Father, he dealt with the matter gently, and the result was that the ecclesia had peace, and the objections were answered and everybody was satisfied, **and**, and isn't this the ultimate objective of ecclesial life, 'they glorified God and the purpose of the Father was

advanced, which after all, is the great transcendent objective of life in the truth.

Now you would imagine that once that explanation had been given, and once verse 18 had worked itself out, that there would be an end to the controversy. But what we're going to find in this story is that this controversy didn't stop here at all, in fact, it had only just begun. What happened, you see, was that this group was not convinced, and although the ecclesia had clearly made a majority decision, this group had no intention of abiding by that majority decision. Now it's bro. Roberts that says, doesn't he? in the Ecclesial Guide that there are all sorts of controversies that occur in ecclesial life; we wouldn't be ecclesias if there weren't differences. But bro. Roberts says, 'Once a difference has been discussed and debated, and discussed and debated, and finally a decision has been made, and the majority endorse that decision, **then there the matter should end!** and there is no further room to continue agitating on that matter, when an ecclesia has decided'. That's not the spirit of the truth, says bro. Roberts, but this group would have none of that! So, you see, this group was not convinced, they were not convinced of Peter's explanation and they remained, therefore, secretly committed to their own cause; and, instead of acquiescing to the spirit of the ecclesia, they continued to agitate for their own point of view when the matter should have been finished. That's not the way of the truth, b&s, and it's not the spirit of Christ.

So, you see, we now have a group in the ecclesia that have already begun to cause problems. Now, we need to know a little bit more about this group, we need to understand a little more about their spirit and their attitude, their approach, because this is the group remember? who are going to have such a profound influence on this particular ecclesia. So, what was the spirit of the 'circumcision party'? Well, it's another word for Judaism, isn't it? the circumcision party that we find in the Acts of the apostles, in the Jerusalem ecclesia, is really just the spirit of Judaism! Now you know what it's like, b&s, you say to people, 'Now the spirit of Judaism is bad, isn't it? Oh, yes! oh, yes, we don't want that spirit in the ecclesia. Well, what is Judaism? oh, what is it? Yes! what is it? Well, ah, Judaism!' It's not easy to define Judaism, is it, b&s? It's a sort of a many headed monster, it's got all sorts of different facets, and what we're going to find, therefore, over the course of these studies, is that we hope to analyse piece by piece, and item by item, what goes to make up that particular spirit that we classify as the spirit of Judaism. The spirit in this case of the circumcision party within the Jerusalem ecclesia, and I suppose we can start by saying, that it's to do with law keeping, isn't it? Judaism is something to do with law keeping, but it's not just law keeping, it's a **love of law keeping as an end in itself**; it's a concentration on externals; what we wear, what we say, what we see, what we do. It leads to the falsehood that imagines that if we can have enough rules in an ecclesia and insure that people conform to those standards, that **we must be righteous**. That as long as we're wearing the right clothes, and coming to the right meetings, and saying the right things, that we are a strong ecclesia! That may be true, but it might not be as well! because you see, it all depends on why

we are observing those rules.

You know, one of the hardest things in ecclesial life, and all arranging brethren will know the truth of this: one of the hardest things in ecclesial life for arranging brethren is trying to decide what shall best be done, in terms of upholding standards in the ecclesia. Because you see, the great problem is, if we simply **compel** people to keep standards by Law, then that cannot save! But if on the other hand we can **inspire** people to a standard because it is the truth and there's a divine principle involved that we love, then that is righteousness indeed. The great challenge of the truth is learning to see the difference between those two spirits; you see, an ecclesia can surround itself with rules and regulations and feel like they're right, and may I just say this, the answer never lies in **lowering standards**. You know, b&s, standards are not a righteousness within themselves. What standards of dress and behaviour and conduct, what they achieve within an ecclesia is not righteousness within itself, but what they do, is that they provide a godly environment, in which spiritual thinking and godly behaviour can flourish. Don't ever lower your standards, that's not the answer, but you can't compel people by Law, you must inspire them by grace!

That was the challenge that was going to face James and the other leaders of the Jerusalem ecclesia now, as they sought to combat this spirit that they now found in their ecclesia. The spirit of Judaism, the circumcision party as they are presented in this chapter. You see, the great danger of Judaism is that, firstly, it's very difficult to detect, and secondly, it has all the appearance of righteousness, because this party within this ecclesia, they were regarded as the strong ones! You see, the circumcision party in the Jerusalem ecclesia, they were the ones that said, '**we've got to make a stand for the truth, we've got to fight for the cause of the truth**, we've got to have strong standards, we've got to give it to people straight, there should be no mucking around with the things of the truth'. People thought they were marvellous! Oh, they're strong! but it wasn't faith, b&s, and it wasn't grace, it was actually and secretly the advancing of **self**; and, the great clue to spotting the spirit of the circumcision party at work within the ecclesia, is to look at the **fruits** and to look at the **style**, because the spirit of the circumcision party is not really motivated by advancing God, it's really motivated by advancing self. This party in the Jerusalem ecclesia were really there to advance their own prejudices but under the guise of righteousness and piety.

Now let's have a look at what the bible says about the 'circumcision party'. Here they are:

- **Their approach**, first of all, invariably dogmatic, combative, confrontational! **The truth must be fought for!** everything must be dealt with in that way, there's no room for gentle persuasion or peaceful entreaty; everything must be waged as a war in the truth, in fact, that's what the truth is, it's a war. If that involves warring with our brethren, then

so be it: 'The purity of the truth is at stake' is the cry of the circumcision party!

- If their approach is dogmatic then their tone tends to be vociferous, assertive, and zealous. Now, one of the funny things that you'll find in ecclesial life, is that often when this spirit is present, it frequently emanates from a minority viewpoint. Frequently within ecclesias it might only be a few that feel this way about a certain matter, but boy! do you hear them! their voices somehow are the loudest in the ecclesia, but they're not the majority. You see, they work on the principle that if you can agitate long enough and hard enough and loud enough, that in the end someone will believe you. But it's of the flesh, b&s, it's not of the truth.

- Their attitude is generally judgmental, negative and legalistic. They tend to be very, very quick at finding fault with brethren, and one of the most amazing things about people imbued with this spirit, is that often the very fault that they find in other brethren, which they are extremely critical of, they have in their own lives but they can't see it. One of the perversities of the flesh is that often those who are the most judgmental about fault in others, have exactly that fault in their own lives, in another form, but they're blind to the realities of that.

- Their reasoning is unbending, inflexible, unyielding. 'You want to have a discussion with us? fine, delighted to have a discussion with you, but you'll have to change your view, because I'm certainly not going to change mine! Alright?' It's a spirit that's impossible to reason with, impossible to entreat, impossible to deal with, and if that's what their tone and their approach and their attitude is like, then what will their effect be within the ecclesia? The answer is that their influence is inevitably divisive, inevitably disruptive, and inevitably destructive; there can be no other result, b&s, because this is the thinking of the flesh, advanced under the guise of the purity of the truth. But if you look at the fruits of it, you'll find the fruits are ashes, and the Jerusalem ecclesia fell prey to this party; and finally, that ecclesia divided and divided and divided yet again. We're going to come to that, God willing, at the end of our studies.

- **Their behaviour** is inconsistent, it tends to be biased, and it can be very hypercritical; as we said before, they often seemed to have problems or faults in their own life identical to the ones they find to criticize in others, one of the great weaknesses of the flesh that we all suffer from.

- And finally, **their spirit** is arrogant, proud and self-righteous; now that's all drawn from the scriptures, b&s, it's simply a set of bible passages about this party within the Jerusalem ecclesia and their spirit elsewhere within the first century ecclesia as a

whole. But, of course, we realize that the spirit of the circumcision party is still alive and well in ecclesial life today.

Now, you see, the thing is, b&s, that most arranging brethren would understand, in fact, I'm sure all arranging brethren understand that we don't have the answers in our ecclesias to all problems that face us, we understand that! and every ecclesia does have problems that they face, and difficulties that they come across. But I think the great lesson of this particular story, the great lesson is this, that you see, it's not just the issue that's important in these ecclesial controversies; it's the manner and the approach with which it is handled that determines the outcome. The grave problem of the circumcision party was not that they were just wrong on the issue, but **they were very, very wrong on the practice of how they went about their matters.** They might have been on occasions, right on the matter, but wrong on the manner of their approach. Now, you see, it's simple, b&s, if you really think that you're right on something, if you feel convinced that you've got the truth of a thing, and that you are passionate that you have the truth, **then incumbent upon you is the responsibility to also find the right approach**, that you might win people to that truth. If in your approach you become combative and confrontational and aggressive and heated and disruptive, then you have the greater sin, because you knew the right of the matter to begin with but you couldn't find the right approach.

You know, one thing that I've always found helpful in ecclesial life, in dealing with controversies, is just to think of this one phrase, and by the way, it doesn't give you the answer to anything, but it does perhaps give you the spirit with which to approach things, and that's to say this, whatever controversy, whatever difficulty we might face within ecclesial life, is to say this, **What will be truly best for the truth?** I think we should approach everything from that viewpoint, from that attitude, in other words, is what we're about to do advancing the Father's cause, truly advancing the Father's cause? Now that's not going to give us the answer to problems, not going to make many problems any easier at all. What it is going to do however, is to give us an approach that might at least cause us to think through how we handle the matter, and what our real objectives are in debating the cause or the issue that's there. We've got to be careful that we don't succumb to the spirit of the circumcision party! Brethren and sisters, if you see that spirit at work in the ecclesia, beware! because it will eat the heart out of your ecclesia, if you allow it to do so!

Now, shortly after that controversy arose in Acts 11, Paul came to the Jerusalem ecclesia. Now to find out about that we've got to go back to Acts 9, so we're going back in chapters but we're actually not going back chronologically, because it was shortly after the episode of Acts 11 that Paul turns up for his first visit to the ecclesia, and we're given the details of that in Acts 9 reading from verse 26: 'When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him,

and believed not that he was a disciple'. You know, this verse is very characteristic of the spirit of the apostle, you see, when he was a Pharisee, **he was 100% a Pharisee**, and when he became a brother in the truth, he was **100% committed to the truth**, at least with the apostle Paul, he was a committed man. You see what we're told here, verse 26, 'he assayed to join himself to the disciples. Do you know, the word 'join' there 'kollao' means 'to glue' (2853), he wanted to be glued to the disciples; he didn't just want to be with the disciples, he wanted to be glued to the disciples, such was the passion of the apostle Paul. Now, we're told there that they were all afraid of him. Why do you think they were afraid of him? Well, of course, because he had been a Pharisee; and, I think one of the reasons why the ecclesia in Jerusalem were afraid of the apostle at this time was because they suspected that he might be a secret agent for the Pharisees. They weren't convinced, you see, that he was genuinely a disciple of his own accord. Do you know what's really sad about that? what's sad about that, b&s, is that the secret agents of the Pharisees were already in the ecclesia before Paul even arrived. They belonged to the circumcision party, and they were committed already to taking the ecclesia back to the temple and back to the Law and back to the observance of Law as a righteousness in itself, and they were there before the apostle came.

Now, verse 27 says, 'That Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem'; actually that's an interesting phrase! Now, where does that come from, 'he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem', where does that phrase come from? anyone know? there's a bible echo there but where is it from? Rule #1, always read your marginal references, so where's the marginal reference? well, the reference is Numbers 27 verse 17 when Moses was told he was going to be relieved of his responsibilities, and he cried unto the God of the spirits of all flesh, that He would set a man over the congregation that might come in and go out before them, that the ecclesia be not as one having no shepherd. So, the spirit of this phrase 'coming in and going out' is about being a shepherd, so what it's saying is that Paul no sooner had come into the Jerusalem ecclesia, than he exercised a leadership responsibility in the ecclesia, he had a shepherd's care for the people. He wasn't the only man, he wasn't the only man in that ecclesia who had leadership potential at that time.

Now, verse 29 says, 'He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians, but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus'. So, what we're told in Acts 9, is that this visit wasn't for very long; no sooner had the apostle got there and begun his work amongst the ecclesia, than there was a difficulty whereby some were going to slay him, and when the brethren knew they brought him down to Caesarea, so he wasn't there for a long time. Now, Acts 22 tells us a little bit further about this

particular visit, there are 3 scriptural references about this visit of the apostle Paul, and Acts 22 adds a further detail. So, what we're told in Acts 22 is that Paul received **by vision** an instruction that he should leave Jerusalem hastily; Acts 9 tells us why, because Acts 9 says there were those intent on slaying him. So, Paul was warned directly by revelation that he needed to get out of Jerusalem urgently, so he wasn't there for very long. Anyone know how long he was there for? he was there for 15 days only, now how do we know that? it's not Acts 9! and it's not Acts 22, it's Galatians 1.

So, let's go and have a look at Galatians 1, because this now is the third reference to this first visit of the apostle Paul, and it's in Galatians that we're given the 15 days. But not only are we given the 15 days, we're given another matter of supreme interest to us, as far as our study is concerned. In Galatians 1 we're told in verse 18, 'Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him 15 days'. Now of course, when it says 'three years' here we assume that it means three years from the day of his conversion, which being about AD.36 means that this visit was about AD.39. It's the same visit as Acts 9 and Acts 22. So, he went up to see Peter, says the record, and he was there for only 15 days; of course, we know why, because Acts 9 says they sought to slay him and he was obliged to leave. But while he was there, says verse 19, 'Other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother'. Now you see, that's interesting because first of all it tells us that the apostle had contact with James from the earliest point of his contact with the Jerusalem ecclesia. He came to Jerusalem, he saw James, it was almost synonymous, you come to Jerusalem, you see James.

Now, here's a question out of Galatians 1 and verse 19, you see you could read this in two different ways, which way do you think it is? You see, we could read verse 19 as saying, 'But other of the apostles saw I none, but I did see James the Lord's brother', meaning that James was not an apostle; or we could read verse 19, 'But other of the apostles saw I none save James, the Lord's brother' meaning that James was an apostle. Now the question is, which of those readings do you think is correct? Well, a couple of thoughts in that regard! First of all, of course, we need to remember that the term 'apostles' was not used exclusively of the 12, there were other men who were called and considered to be apostles. Well, let's take a couple of obvious ones, first of all, if we come back to Romans 11, because here's perhaps the most famous one. In Romans 11 we have the apostleship of Paul, so remember this phrase in Romans 11 verse 13 he says, 'For I speak to you Gentiles in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles'. So here's a man who wasn't of the 12 but he was considered to be an apostle, what does the word 'apostle' mean? simply **'one sent'**, so here was a man who was sent on a mission, he was commissioned to go to the Gentiles, 'I **am** the apostle of the Gentiles' says Paul. He wasn't the only one who was given an apostleship outside the 12. If you come to Acts 14, you'll remember this episode on one of Paul's journeys; we're told in Acts 14 that Paul on one occasion, having healed a cripple, they thought he was one of the gods, we're told in verse 14 it says, 'Which when the apostles, Barnabas

and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes'. So, Barnabas also was an apostle says Acts 14 verse 14. Now what was the chief criteria for determining an apostle? anyone care to take a guess at that? Be careful now, be very careful! Now having put the jitters up you, what was the chief criteria for being an apostle? **They had to have seen the Lord, the risen Lord**, yes, you remember how at the beginning in Acts 1, remember when that apostle was going to be appointed to replace Judas, the definition in Acts 1 was someone who had gone in and gone out with them all during the course of the Lord's ministry. But that must have been amended later on, because Paul didn't do that, did he? yet Paul was an apostle. But, you'll remember the words of Acts 4 verse 33 which says, 'And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus', so the great criteria that determined one who should be an apostle, was not just that they would be sent on a mission, but **they must have seen the resurrected Christ**. Could James fulfil that criteria? Yes, he could! on the basis of 1 Corinthians 1 verse 15, 'He was seen of James'.

Now, I think there was a very good reason why in Acts 1, James wasn't chosen to be the 12th apostle! because **the 12 apostles, the 12** as they were known, were going to be commissioned by the Lord that they should go forth in the words of Act s 1, '**to all nations**', '**ye shall be My witnesses in Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth**'. The 12, you see, were going to spread abroad across the face of the earth; James wasn't going to be one of those 12 apostles who would scatter to the nations. The Lord had a different apostleship in mind for James! a man indeed, who was a witness of the risen Lord. I think you see that James was going to be sent by Christ to be an apostle to the **Hebrews**, an apostle, in fact, to the Jerusalem ecclesia, and whereas the other 12 would leave the Jerusalem ecclesia, this was the man that would stay there, who would preside over the Hebrew believers. Now, we know this for sure, b&s, one thing we can be certain of is, Christ would never have chosen James for this particular mission, if his understanding of the Law had been faulty or wrong. I was just saying to someone over tea, 'you know what it's like, you get 3 Jews together and you have 5 opinions'; you try being chairman over an ecclesia of several thousand passionate Jews who know the Law! How would you like to be chairman of this ecclesia? You see, James had to understand the Law upside down, inside out, back to front, and he did! He knew his subject, he had too, because here was the man who was going to have to cope with all the Jewish prejudices that would rise over the course of the next few years, and no doubt, they were matters that were discussed at the time of the meeting that he had, with the Lord Jesus Christ, because this man's understanding of the Law would be crucial to his apostleship, and I think the Lord picked the right man, and now with all traces of jealousy and envy between the brothers set aside, James would remember back to all of those childhood years where as a family they taught one another, they were instructed in things divine, and in the true spirit of the Law, and here was a man who was uniquely qualified to be an apostle to the Hebrews, and I think that's where the Lord sent him!

So, come back to Galatians 1 then, so when it says in Galatians 1 verse 19, 'But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother', I think that means that he saw none other apostle other than James, who was an apostle in his own right, ranked with all the other apostles, but this man would be an apostle to the Hebrews. 'One sent to the circumcision' and a man uniquely qualified to chair over the most tempestuous ecclesia of all time, so he's ranked there alongside them, and do you notice how it describes him? as James the Lord's brother. Now, why do you think he's called James the Lord's brother in this chapter? Why is he called James the Lord's brother when later on, in fact, in Galatians 2 he's going to be called simply James? any thoughts on that? You see, James ben-Zebedee is still alive in Galatians 1, and he also is an apostle and he also is in the Jerusalem ecclesia, so to distinguish him from James ben-Zebedee, we have James ben-Joseph, James the Lord's brother. But by the time that Galatians 2 occurs, AD.44 has past, which is the year in which James ben-Zebedee died and James the Lord's brother isn't called the Lord's brother anymore, he's simply called James because everyone knew who he was. But in Galatians 1 he's given that additional title to distinguish him from another apostle, who was in the Jerusalem ecclesia at the same time.

So he's an apostle! he's risen to that prominence in that sense, he's a ruler of some reputation. Now, of course, the one thing we also know for sure is this, that there was no way that James aspired to that apostleship, and certainly no way that he received that commission from the Lord because he was the Lord's brother! In fact, James would be absolutely opposed to that spirit, wouldn't he? of dynastic succession, I got the job because He was my brother! Oh, I can't see James agreeing to that! What is James' spirit about his association with the Lord? How does James the epistle begin? 'James a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ', oh, not His brother! No, James would never say that! and you see, whatever role of prominence therefore, that James enjoyed in the Jerusalem ecclesia, it wasn't because of his association with Christ, far from it, it was because, we believe, the power of his own example: his own dignity, his own skill, his own ability, he was a wonderful man! eminently suited !

Now, what I'm going to do now, is I'm going to ask you to come to the epistle of James and I'm going to paint a portrait for you of what this man was like! we're going to try and see what he was like as a man, and we're going to work it out simply by reading some of the things that he wrote. We're not going to expound the passages, we're simply going to read them to see if we can find or capture the spirit of the man himself. So in the epistle of James then we have a portrait of the man! Look at James 2 verses 5 to 7, now all I'm going to do here is read the verses, but you just see if you can't but see the things that are outlined here in terms of what this man was like, the Lord's own brother.

Now, look at James 2 verses 5 to 7, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren. Hath not God

chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they **blaspheme** that worthy name by the which ye are called?' So, here is a man who could be very **severe**, very **upright** when he wanted to be; he was a man of blunt **honesty**, he was **earnest** as he spoke and you can feel that earnestness in his words, and yet that same man as we come to chapter 4 (let's come and have a look at verses 5 to 8). It says there, 'Do you think that the scriptures saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God visiteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded'. Here is a man, you see, who although he may be severe and upright when he wants to be, he is also a man who can be humbled. A man who can exhibit the spirit of **meekness**, a man who has been chastened by the experiences of his own life.

Come and have a look at James 4 verses 1 to 3, and look at these words, oh, they're strong, look! 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts'. When occasion was called for, that direct and firm words be used, James was a man who had that spirit within him, and yet the same man in James 1 verses 26 and 27, is he who says, 'If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue; but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless, and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world'. Here are the practical words of a wise brother, balanced sensible, ever focussed on the living of the truth and not just the talking about it. You see, he's a man of many skills and many abilities is our James.

Come and have a look at chapter 3 verses 17 and 18, 'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace'. Here are the thoughtful words of a **patient** and **wise** man, who knew how to handle controversies in ecclesial life, that the true best interest of the truth itself might be served. Yet this same man when we come to James 3 and verses 8 to 12, is a man who can be **eloquent** and **perceptive** and **incisive** with his words when he wants to, 'But the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive

berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh'. When it calls for eloquence, James was a man who could burst forth with all the passion that was needed, in order to deal with something that was morally wrong and to do so with just cause.

And here's the man also who in chapter 5 can be so stern and so forthright and so abrupt he sounds verily like a Hebrew prophet, in fact, there's a reminiscence here from the very prophecy of Joel. Now listen to this! Oh, he sounds just like a Hebrew prophet himself; James 5 verse 1, 'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you'; you can almost hear him thundering from the prophecies of the past! And yet this same man, in chapter 5 verses 7 and 8 is warm, and sympathetic and caring when he says, 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for is, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh'. You see, here was a man of breadth, of wide variety, a man of great skill, a man who could rise to the challenge of dealing with all sorts of different issues in the ecclesia, and he would be sorely needed and sorely tested in exercising all of those skills in this ecclesia. But he was the right man, b&s, this apostle to the Hebrew believers, this James.

A few words extracted from a book about the suitability then of James, in terms of his role which I think sum up the spirit of this quite well. 'To James therefore, the Lord's brother, not only because he was the Lord's brother but because of the force of his character and influence, fell naturally and at once, the office of bishop at Jerusalem. The appointment was eminently wise, he became a pillar, and if it had been in the power to win over the people of the ancient covenant, even at the eleventh hour, he would have achieved the task. The shadow of an awful misery clung about him, as the earthly brother of the Son of God, in this awe of his personality, enhanced among the Jews by his Davidic descent, was increased by the stern sanctity of his character. Every indication with which we are furnished shows, that he was providentially fitted to give one last chance, to all who would accept salvation in the Jewish capital'. Such was the man, b&s, who now comes to prominence in the ecclesia and who will do his best to guide it with grace and with wisdom; that the best interests of the truth might be served.

Well, he's there now! and the first round with the circumcision party is over, and the ecclesia has held their peace. Was it to remain like that? The answer is, well, not for very long! Ere long, the spirit of the circumcision party would rear its head again! and again the ecclesia would be plunged into bitter controversy by the same group. That story and James's involvement in it is, God willing, our next study.