

James 1:1

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

James identifies himself in verse 1 as a servant. Some use this to argue that it must have been James the brother of Jesus, since he does not identify himself as an apostle. The logic for this argument however is inconsistent, as the apostle John does not identify himself as an apostle in any of his three epistles.

Peter, in 2 Peter, 1:1, identifies himself first as a servant, and then as an apostle. So again, there is no definitive proof of authorship based upon this greeting.

The address of James 1:1 *To the twelve tribes which are scattered* has significance both historically and dispensationally. The fact that this letter is specifically addressed to the twelve tribes should give us pause for consideration.

Why didn't James just address it to the saints, or to the Church of God? If they are part of the body of Christ in which there is no Jew or Greek (**Gal. 3:28**), why were they never taught this? Why were they still making a distinction between Jews and gentiles? Why only minister to Israel, and why write letters specifically to them?

Even after Peter is forced to go to Cornelius in Acts chapter 10, the believing Jews are still only ministering to other Jews:

Acts 11:15-19

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

This group of believing Jews, even as late as Acts 21, are still not walking according to the doctrine that we find in Paul's epistles for the Body of Christ:

Acts 21:18-25

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

The ministry of Jesus and the twelve was specifically to the circumcision and relates to the promises and covenants made to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David):

Romans 15:8

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers...

Galatians 2:7-9

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

8 (*For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:*)

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Luke 1:68-75

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

People confuse this as an issue of ethnicity only; they say James is writing to the Jewish believers in Jesus, but that these believers have believed the same information that was given through the apostle Paul and are part of the Body of Christ. There is no evidence of this assertion however. Every indication is that they had only believed in the Name of Jesus as the Messiah and that they had an expectation of God fulfilling His promises to Abraham and David with them.

And so it's not actually an issue of *ethnicity*, but of the covenants made with that ethnicity, which gave them a promised future in a specific homeland and kingdom, and a privileged position with God Himself. This means it's a *dispensational* issue. It's not an issue of audience only, but an issue of *what God was doing*. And what He was doing *then* was fundamentally different than what God is doing *today* in the Body of Christ, through Jesus's heavenly ministry by the apostle Paul.

In order for God to send salvation to the nations *apart* from Israel and their covenants required their fall from that privileged position.

Romans 9:4-5

4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Romans 11:11-15

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

The twelve tribes still have a future based upon the Abrahamic covenant. Violation of the Mosaic covenant can't nullify the promise (**Gal. 3:17**), and they are a major subject of the New Testament writings. Consider Revelation chapter 7:

Revelation 7:3-8

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

So, why is the epistle of James written to the "twelve tribes?" Because the ministry being performed at that time is to Israel and relates to their covenants and promises.

The fact that they are scattered also has significance. The scattering of the Jews outside of the promised land is a part of their punishment for violating the terms of the Old Testament.

Leviticus 18:24-28

24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:

25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

26 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.

Leviticus 26:27-34

27 And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;

28 Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

34 Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

Deuteronomy 28:63-64

63 And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoyce over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.

64 And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.

All of the Old Testament prophetic books were recorded either right before or during Israel's last phase of judgment, per Leviticus 26, which involved them being cast out of their own land. The culmination of this last phase would end with the anointing of the Messiah as King, and would finish "the transgression" against the Old Testament:

Daniel 9:24

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

The subject of these prophetic books is Israel under the last phase of judgment per the Old Covenant terms, and the subsequent deliverance and restoration of the kingdom of Israel at the coming of Messiah.

This last portion of Levitical judgments, where the kingdom of Israel is made subject to their gentile enemies and cast out of their land, is what Jesus calls "the times of the Gentiles."

Luke 21:20-27

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

These "times of the gentiles" are described by Daniel's vision of the statue in Daniel chapter 2, and the vision of the beasts in Daniel chapter 7. These visions explain that there will be a succession of gentile kingdoms that Israel will be subject to before Messiah their Prince is anointed as King, and the kingdom of Israel is restored.

The Old Testament prophetic books began to be written during the initial phases of this last judgment, thus their subject matter reflects Israel being cast out of their land, and gives glimpses of hope for their future return.

Israel's transgression against the Old Testament and their subsequent exile from the land is the major subject of the Old Testament prophetic books. Here is a brief survey of passages in which God addresses this:

Isaiah 1:7

Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

Isaiah 9:19

Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

Isaiah 10:23

For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

Isaiah 27:12-13

12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 5:19

And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the Lord our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not your's.

Jeremiah 6:19 - Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

Jeremiah 9:13-16

13 And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

15 Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

16 I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.

Ezekiel 5:8-10

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

Ezekiel 20:23-24

23 I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries;

24 Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

Ezekiel 22:14-16

14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.

15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

Ezekiel 33:24-29

24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance.

25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

29 Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.