

# James – What Was It Like To Be The Brother Of Jesus Christ?

This is **not** pure speculation for there is a Biblical account of a man who was Christ's brother.

His story is full of lessons for us.

James the author of the Book of James, is very clearly called "*the Lord's brother*" [**Galatians 1:19**].

James' mother was Mary, so let us briefly examine his story and see for ourselves what it was like to be the brother of Jesus Christ.

When the brothers of Jesus Christ are listed, James' name appears first, which may well indicate that he was the eldest of Jesus' younger brothers, [**Matthew 13:55**].

After Jesus was born, both His mother Mary and His stepfather Joseph knew that God would be well pleased for them to have children of their own. Soon the expansion of their family was under way. In time, James was born.

James grew up in the town of Nazareth and had continuous and profound contact with Jesus until Jesus was thirty years of age.

James had seen Jesus in every conceivable situation.

**James was able to observe from childhood the epitome of the Christian way of life.**

So after his conversion in later life, James would know, perhaps better than any human alive then, what it means to be a **real** Christian!

James and Jesus sat at a common table for family meals and rehashed the day's events in dinner conversation.

As they both grew older, perhaps they talked over the problems, aspirations, frustrations and desires of youth as they spent time together.

They sat next to each other in the synagogue on the Sabbath and travelled together along the road with their parents to keep the annual Feasts.

After a hard day's work in their father's construction business, they perhaps "*talked shop*" as they scrubbed off the grime and sweat.

**James probably had many discussions with his older brother, who displayed unusual wisdom at a very early age, [Luke 2:40].**

Although James could **not** have realised it at the time, he was having set for him the perfect example of obedience to God, living faith, honouring one's parents, for example, [**Luke 2:51**].

**Later, this constant, lifelong example would act as a guide to James in ministering to the Christian Church.**

James must have found Jesus easy to get along with, even when Jesus was going through His teenage years and then His early twenties. They must have shared many enjoyable moments, [**Luke 2:52**].

Yet, of course, James must have sometimes got quite angry with his older brother and thought Jesus was wrong, even when Jesus was living perfectly.

At times James must have thought that his older brother's actions just did **not** make sense.

Jesus was an important example to James in another way.

Indications are that Jesus became the head of the family while still young, even a teenager, as we do **not** read of His stepfather Joseph after the family's journey to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old, [Luke 2:41-51].

**If so, Jesus set an important example for James as the family leader.**

Also, Jesus set the example of right management of the family construction business. The Greek word translated "carpenter," [Matthew 13:55], is "tektōn" meaning builder of houses, both woodworker and stoneworker.

**Yet there was the element of familiarity that is always present when two people spend a great deal of time together.**

**Matthew 13:53-58** [New King James] *"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?' So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house.' Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."*

James respected and deeply admired his older brother as long as Jesus remained just his brother, and never the Christ.

When Jesus became thirty, family events took a dramatic turn.

**James must have been concerned when his older brother and leader of the family went wandering off into the wilderness away from home for a forty-day fast preparation to starting His ministry, [Matthew 4:1-2].**

**Jesus must have left someone in charge of the family, most likely James.**

However Jesus prepared for and explained His departure, it must have seemed a little odd to James at the time.

**John 2:1-2, 12** [New King James] *"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding." ... "After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days."*

James must have been relieved to see his brother again and was filled with many questions.

What happened when Jesus turned water to wine may **not** have registered in James' mind how his brother could do something like that.

**After the wedding, James went to Capernaum with Jesus and His new disciples [verse 12]. This gave James a chance to talk with the men who would now be his older brother's constant companions and who believed in Jesus enough to follow Him in His work, [verse 11].**

Jesus would **not** be spending many more days at home, because from here on, He would be devoting His life to proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God, [**Matthew 4:17**].

Jesus was making many statements that must have troubled James.

Some teachings like “*the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*” [**Mark 2:27-28; Mark 3:11**], eventually caused a group of Jesus’ former friends to attempt to cart Jesus off out of the public eye, as they thought He had gone berserk, [**Mark 3:21**] perhaps even James was among this group.

As late as the autumn preceding Christ’s death, James still did **not** believe that his brother was who He claimed to be.

**John 7:2-9** [New King James] “*Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no-one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.’ For even His brothers did not believe in Him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.’ When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.*”

Jesus’ reply to the Jews and His brothers must have really set James thinking.

James’ attitude of unbelief was **not** going to last much longer.

After Jesus Christ’s death, James experienced something that would act as the driving force for the remainder of his life.

James must have had his brother’s murder constantly dominating his thoughts and must have been considering the strange stories about the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ death.

**So it was quite a moving experience for James to see his supposedly dead brother suddenly appear and then say words to this effect.**

*“James, remember all those things that I told you about myself, about the fact I am the Christ? James my brother, they were all true, and now you are seeing first-hand evidence of them.”* [**1 Corinthians 15:7**]

**James was absolutely convinced! What else could he have been?**

James now searched out Jesus’ disciples, the very men he had previously shaken his head over, [**Acts 1:13-14**].

From this point on, James was on the “*grass roots*” foundation of the Christian Church, receiving the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost in 31AD.

**Now the constant contact that James had had with Jesus could be used by God.**

**True, James had not spent a great deal of time with Jesus during His three-and-a-half year ministry, but think of all the thousands of hours he had spent with Jesus when he was so young and so impressionable.**

Even Peter and John and the other apostles, though many had been childhood friends, had **not** had so much contact with Jesus at such an early age and for such a long time.

**In many cases in James’ life, after his conversion, when there was a decision to be made, all he had to do was to think back and ask himself how did my brother do it?**

James now grew powerfully under the direction of the Holy Spirit and in a few years later he is shown as an apostle in the Church, [**Galatians 1:19**].

**James' powerful writing style is preserved for all time in his epistle, and the influence of Jesus is obvious in this epistle.**

It should be called an epistle of living faith!

**So James who wanted nothing to do with his brother's message at the beginning, died as a martyr [according to tradition] for that same message at the end.**

James will forever, from the time of his resurrection, at his brother's Second Coming to the earth, remain as a real brother of Jesus Christ in the fullest sense of that word, in the created family of God, the Kingdom of God.