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James for the Practical Messianic

J.K. McKee

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The letter of James the Just, the half-brother of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, is not without its controversy. Often considered to have the most Jewish character of among all the books of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament), James' epistle sits between two extremes: those who deny his message, and those who give his message a weight that it was never intended to have. James' letter has a distinctive emphasis on the works of the individual, and so many have viewed what he has to say as actually annulling the grace of God in the process of salvation. Some have denied James' place in the Biblical canon, and others have forgotten who James was as a humble, kind, and patient servant of the Lord. James' epistle has a universal moral message for all of humanity, and especially the Messianic community today. Written at the emergence of First Century Messianic faith, James was observing some of the controversies and issues creeping in as the gospel message went beyond the Land of Israel, and God's Kingdom was in the process of being restored. Some were causing discord and forgetting the ethics that God requires His people to have in the Torah. When you add to this the early persecutions that the Believers faced, coupled with the fact that corrupt rich people were being shown favor in the assembly, you have a letter that deals with a great deal of practical faith, holy living, and consideration for others. James' admonitions must be heeded, in order for people to find themselves in the will and purpose of the Lord. In the commentary James for the Practical Messianic, Messianic Apologetics editor J.K. McKee addresses what we need to learn as Messianic Believers today from James' epistle. He takes into account the distinct Jewish character of James, considering various passages in the letter with statements made in the Torah and Tanach, the Apocrypha, Philo, Josephus, the Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, and also the Mishnah and Talmud. He also considers the First Century history behind James' letter, and also parallels that exist between statements in James and remarks made in Greco-Roman classicism. Most importantly, various important theological opinions that have existed over the centuries regarding James are addressed, especially as to whether or not the Epistle of James at all contradicts the theology of the letters of Paul. Some of the current scholastic trends in examination of James are also considered, both enriching and challenging the diligent student who is looking for a distinctive Messianic perspective of this letter.

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