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THE IDENTITY AND ROLE OF JAMES IN ACTS – A HISTORICAL AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION: JAMES IN ACTS

Acts 12:17

κατασείας δὲ αὐτοῖς τῇ χειρὶ σιγάν διηγήσατο [αὐτοῖς] πῶς ὁ κύριος αὐτὸν ἐξήγαγεν ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς, εἰπέν τε, Ἀπαγγείλατε Ἰακώβῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ταύτα. καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἐτερὸν τόπον.

“He [Peter] motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, ‘Tell this [these things] to James and to the believers [brothers].’ Then he left and went to another place.”

These brief words from Acts 12:17 conclude the story of Peter’s miraculous release from the prison of “King Herod” (12:1) in Jerusalem (12:1–17). In this passage, Peter, after being escorted by an angel to the street outside the prison, finds some believers at the house of “Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark” (12:12) and recounts the events that had transpired. He concludes by instructing those present to go and tell “this to James and the brothers.” He then “left and went to another place.” Acts 12:17 raises at least two questions that have been much debated in commentaries on Acts and in writings on the figure of James (Gr. Ἰακώβος, “Jacob”): (1) Why were James and the brothers to be told “these things”? (2) Where did Peter go? Most important for this investigation, however, is a third question: Who is the James mentioned here? Most interpreters of Acts 12:17 assume that the James mentioned here is to be identified with the James Paul calls “the brother of the Lord [i.e., Jesus]” in Gal 1:19 (cf. Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). But the author of Acts does not explicitly identify the James mentioned in Acts 12:17 as the brother of Jesus, nor does he do so in the other two passages mentioning “James” (15:13; 21:18), if we may assume that Luke is referring to one and the same person in all three passages. The main research question that this dissertation seeks to answer is the following: Who exactly is the James mentioned in Acts 12:17, and then again in 15:13 and 21:18? More precisely: Who does Luke, the author of Acts, think this James is?

There are two other Jameses mentioned in Acts and elsewhere in the NT with whom the James of Acts 12:17 could in principle be identified: According to Acts 1:13, two of Jesus’ twelve original disciples were named James (cf. Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16). One of them is James the son of Zebedee (cf. Matt 4:21; 10:2; 17:01; Mark 1:19, 29; 5:37; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 5:10; 8:51; 9:28, 54). In the lists of the Twelve found in the Gospels he is named either second after Simon Peter who is always listed first (Mark 3:17), or third after Peter’s brother Andrew (Matt 10:2; Luke 6:13). In Acts 1:13, he is listed third, after Peter and John and

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1 In this dissertation, English translations of the NT are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated. As in the case of this verse, square brackets will be used to add clarifications (i.e. “Peter”) and closer English equivalents for the underlying Greek (i.e. “brothers” rather than “believers” for Gr. ἀδελφοί).  
2 Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, is meant. He died in 44 CE (cf. Acts 12:20–23).  
3 See Section 1.6 later in this Introduction for an overview. A critical assessment will follow in later chs.  
4 The brothers of Jesus are mentioned as a group in a few more NT passages, but without being separately identified by name (John 2:12; 7:3–6; Acts 1:13; 1 Cor 9:5)  
5 The name “Luke” will be used in this dissertation as a reference to the narrator of Acts for the sake of convenience; it does not indicate a position that Luke, the companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phil 24), was the historical author of Acts and the Third Gospel. See Introduction to Part One.
before Andrew: “Peter and John and James and Andrew.” His prominence in these lists of disciples, who are also called “apostles” in some cases (Matt 10:2; Luke 6:13), including Acts (cf. 1:26), may suggest his relative importance among the Twelve, or at least recall the fact that the sons of Zebedee were, after Peter and Andrew, among the first disciples of Jesus (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20, 29; Luke 5:1–11). Because James is usually listed before John in the Gospels, he is probably the older of the two. In Acts 1:13, however, he is listed third, after John, probably because in Acts John functions prominently as the missionary partner of Peter (cf. Acts 3:1, 3, 4, 11; 4:1, 3, 7, 14, 19, 23; 8:14, 17, 25). Together with Peter, Andrew, and John, James the son of Zebedee formed part of the inner circle of Jesus’s Twelve disciples in that they accompanied Jesus on some significant occasions to the exclusion of the other members of the Twelve. These are (1) the event of the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28), (2) the miraculous resuscitation of Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51); (3) Jesus’s discussion regarding the destruction of the Temple (Mark 13:3); and (4) Jesus’s prayers at Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). The sons of Zebedee may have over-estimated their significance among the Twelve as they unsuccessfully asked Jesus for the two privileged “seats” in his glory (Matt 20:20; Mark 10:35–41). Yet James the son of Zebedee cannot be the James referred to in Acts 12:17 since, according to Acts 12:2, Herod had already killed James son of Zebedee when Peter escaped from Herod’s prison. The James mentioned in Acts 12:17 must be some other James.

The second of the Twelve named James is identified as “the son of Alphaeus.” He is always mentioned in the lists of the Twelve (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 14:15), including the one provided in Acts 1:13, but in contrast to James the son of Zebedee, his individual role receives no further mention in the Gospels. He also does not appear in the remainder of Acts, unless of course he can be identified with the James mentioned in 12:17 and further in 15:13 and 21:18. This dissertation will investigate that possibility.

Aside from the three instances in Acts, there are four other passages in the NT which mention a James without either an indication of a family relation (“brother of . . .” or “son of . . .”) or inclusion in a list of the Twelve, namely 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 2:9, 12; and James 1:1. In addition, Jude 1:1 identifies the author, “Jude,” as a “brother of James.” It will be necessary to investigate whether the identity of the James (or Jameses?) referred to in these passages may be relevant to finding an answer to our primary research question about the identity of James in Acts.

The primary aim of this dissertation, therefore, is to understand Luke’s intended depiction of “James” as a character in the narrative of Acts (Part One), and a secondary aim is to examine whether this literary portrayal is historically plausible in light of other NT and second century Christian literature (Part Two).

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6 This inner circle is sometimes reduced to Peter, James, and John, Andrew being omitted, as in Matt 10:2; 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:32; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28
7 Mark here emphasizes that Jesus brought only Peter, James, and John, and not the others (κατ’ ἱδίᾳν μόνον).
8 Two other Jameses are mentioned in the NT (excluding the patriarch Jacob). In Luke’s lists of the Twelve, the father of the apostle Judas (but not Iscariot) is named James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Also, one of the NT Marys who witness Jesus after his resurrection is identified as being the mother of a James (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; Luke 24:10). In Matt 27:56, he is listed alongside James the son of Zebedee’s mother and therefore is not the same person; however, it is possible—although not necessary—that she is the mother of James of Alphaeus.
Methodology and Critical Orientation

Part One of this dissertation is exclusively aimed at the portrait of James in the Acts of the Apostles. The relevant texts in Acts will be subject to a fresh and rigorous exegetical examination—in dialogue with the strengths and weaknesses of previous interpretations. The purpose of exegesis is to give any particular text its own voice, to listen to it on its own terms, i.e., to read it as the author intended his original audience to read and understand it. For this reason, exegesis begins with a “close reading” of the final text. Luke’s choice of words with respect to James and his relation to Peter in Acts 12:17 will be given primary consideration and evaluated within the scope of Luke-Acts itself. Other suggested “elements” of the verse will be compared to similar “elements” elsewhere in Luke-Acts. For example, because Acts 12:17 is seen by some scholars as a leadership transition (from Peter to James), it will be weighed against other instances of leadership transition in Luke-Acts (ch. 2). Because some scholars hold that Peter leaves Jerusalem at Acts 12:17, thereby supposedly leaving James behind and in charge, the travels of Peter and other characters will be evaluated (ch. 1). One more example: because Acts 12:17 may mark the introduction of James as a new character in Acts, all of the introductions of new characters in Luke-Acts will be taken into consideration (ch. 4). The main goal of these investigations is to determine how consistent the various interpretations given for Acts 12:17 are with regard to Luke’s narrative methods as they become visible elsewhere in his double work.

Many commentaries explain Acts 12:17, at least partially, in light of the Pauline corpus and especially the letter to the Galatians (see below, chs. 1–5). Part One of this dissertation will purposefully avoid reading Acts with reference to Paul’s letters for the following four reasons: First, Luke does not portray Paul in Acts as a letter writer, nor does Acts overtly depend on the letters of Paul for content. Second, Luke does not identify the James of Acts 12:17 as the brother of the Lord as does Paul in Gal 1:19. It is possible that his audiences did not have the same information about James, or did not think of him in the same way as did Paul’s Galatian audience. Third, the role of the “brother of the Lord” in the Jerusalem church is not altogether clear in Galatians (see ch. 7). Fourth, it is possible that Luke wanted to give his own portrayal of James, one that was not intended to cohere with Paul’s.

Part One assumes that the data of Acts should not be harmonized with other writings found in the NT or elsewhere if this would require downplaying Luke’s emphases or playing up

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11 See Introduction to Part One.

12 On the audiences of Acts, see Introduction to Part One.
aspects that he did not highlight. By harmonizing we mean explaining the data of Acts in a way that makes them conform to the data of other writings. Of course there are correspondences between Luke-Acts and the Pauline corpus, but it is in principle possible that Luke may give an account of a matter, a person, or an event that differs from comparable information to be found in Paul’s letters. In such instances harmonizing may distort Luke’s original intent, or introduce meanings to a passage that were not intended by Luke and thus could not have been so understood by the original, intended audience/readers of Luke-Acts. Correspondences between Acts and the Pauline letters or other writings should only be evaluated after the utmost care has been given to understand Acts in particular on its own terms.\(^3\)

Exegesis should always begin with observations based on the given text before any historical conclusions are drawn. That is the goal of Part One, to provide critical observations based on the textual data to be found in Luke-Acts. Each chapter of Part One begins with a review of literature in which various scholarly explanations given for James’s role in Acts 12:17;\(^4\) 15:13–21; and 21:18–25 will be critically evaluated. This approach is warranted—even necessitated—by the fact that many conflicting interpretations have been given for James’s role in these verses. The work of scholars who have contributed most significantly to the various interpretations will be given special attention.

If Part One is concerned to describe James as a character\(^5\) in the narrative of Acts, Part Two of this dissertation will determine whether the literary profile established in Part One is historically plausible in light of information to be derived from other early Christian documents. For this reason, Part Two will examine the Gospels (ch. 6), the remaining NT evidence (ch. 7), and extra-biblical second and early third century Christian literature (ch. 8) for evidence regarding the Jameses and will compare these findings to those established in Part One.

In order to justify Part Two of this dissertation, we wish to briefly argue that the author of Acts was a historian of some sort, capacity and capability, and that—although it is perhaps not possible to pinpoint Acts within any one specific genre—the information of Acts is on the whole portrayed (to the original audience) as historically reliable.\(^6\) The following two primary reasons for this conclusion are offered:

First, in the introduction to Luke’s Gospel (1:1–4), the author makes claims to historical accuracy. Or to phrase this more conservatively, a simple, surface reading of Luke 1:1–4

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\(^3\) Some of John Painter’s first remarks in his treatment of James in Acts 12:17 illustrate how a hasty appeal to Galatians can rob Luke of his distinctive voice. With regard to the identification of James in Acts 12:17 he writes: “That this refers to James the brother of Jesus, not James the son of Alphaeus, is confirmed by Paul. He identifies James the brother of the Lord as one of the apostles and the first of the three pillars of the Jerusalem church (Gal 1:18–19; 2:9).” Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 43. Painter bypasses the significant issue of James of Alphaeus, which is a potential problem for his thesis, simply by referring the reader to Galatians. Resultantly, at this point Paul becomes the authority of Luke and Acts is not permitted to portray James on its own terms.

\(^4\) The emphasis is on Acts 12:17 (chs. 1–4) because it is the first instance where James is named in Acts and therefore is often taken as invaluable information regarding Luke’s portrayal of James in the Jerusalem church.

\(^5\) With regard to the Gospel of John, R. Alan Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 105, defines “characterization as the art and techniques by which an author fashions a convincing portrait of a person within a more or less unified piece of writing. Even if one is disposed to see real, historical persons behind every character in John and actual events in every episode, the question of how the author chose to portray the person still arises … It is, therefore, for our present purposes, immaterial whether the literary character has its origin in historical tradition, memory, or imagination. The writer has a distinct understanding of a person and his or her role in a significant sequence of events.”

\(^6\) Cf. Darrell L. Bock, Acts (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 3
suggests that the implied author intended to portray the work as historically reliable to the original primary audience, Theophilus.\(^\text{17}\) The introduction of Acts (1:1–2) is not independent, but ties the book of Acts to the enterprise begun in Luke’s Gospel\(^\text{18}\), therefore “priming” Theophilus to expect a similar line of historical inquiry.\(^\text{19}\) The value of these introductions for understanding Luke’s intentions in writing his two-volume work cannot be overstated because they were the main clues given to the original primary audience regarding what sort of literary communication (i.e. “genre” of writing) was about to take place.\(^\text{20}\)

Second, dozens of pieces of historical information found in Acts regarding various places, events, times and persons are historically verifiable from outside sources.\(^\text{21}\) That Luke was at least knowledgeable of many historical details of the events and surroundings he describes is undeniable. In light of the implied author’s stated purposes for writing Luke and Acts, those historical facts in Luke-Acts that are verifiable would seem to confirm that some kind of historiography was intended by the author. Or, at least the implied author went to significant lengths to present Luke-Acts in this manner.

Yet, there are also historical inconsistencies between Luke-Acts and other sources. Richard Pervo rejects Acts as historiographical; he regards it as one of fiction—an ancient

\(^{17}\) Luke 1:1–4: “Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed” (Ἐπειδὴ δὲ πολλοὶ ἐπεξείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληρωμένων ἐν ἡμῖν παραγμάτων, καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς αὐτότατα καὶ ὑπήρτα γενόμενον τοῦ λόγου, ἐδοξε καί παρηκολούθηκαν ἰσχυρῶς αὐτὴς σοι γράψας, κράτιστος Ἑθόδος, ἵνα ἑπιγνοῦσί περὶ ὧν κατηχήθησεν λόγον τὴν ἄφελεν). It does not appear that the implied author means this introduction in jest or parody.


\(^{20}\) It appears that modern authors wish to pinpoint the genre of Luke, Acts, or Luke-Acts more precisely than Theophilus could have prior to his first reading of the work(s). Can we assume that Theophilus had more to work with than the brief introductions, or that more than them were necessary for Theophilus to have a correct understanding of the sort of literary communication that was to take place?

novel. Pervo draws attention to the many details in Acts that seem fantastic and, for example, questions the historicity of Acts 19 in length. However, we must ask whether the primary audience could have considered such events to have been historical. With reference to Acts we are dealing with a kind of “history” in which the author and audience apparently share a unique, theologically-oriented, sectarian worldview that may be difficult to compare with the more secular histories of the Greco-Roman world. It must also be kept in mind that the author of Acts is attempting to introduce or, more likely, reinforce an understanding of God’s activity among people, Jesus’s identity and role in this activity, and the spreading of the knowledge of all this among the Greek and Roman world (Acts 1:8). Any comparison with secular historiography will therefore be difficult. Some of Luke’s primary concerns and motifs—and actors (God, the Holy Spirit, angels etc.)—are intangible and this inevitably complicates the evaluation of Luke’s success as a historian.

In any case, it is a non sequitur to state that historical inaccuracy on part of the author of Acts indicates that the work was not intended as historiography in the first place. To paraphrase Pervo’s evaluation of the Apocryphal Acts, “Popular history, however abominable, remains history.”


23 Profit, 9–10.


25 Cf. Pervo, Profit, 7, “Those who wished to record the wondrous origins of a cult employed one of the poetic genres, and their readers would not cavil at the presence of the supernatural within such contexts. Luke thus has no real classical prose model for his work because his subject was not suitable for historians.” Here lies the dilemma: on the basis of his subject material alone, Luke would not be considered alongside other Greek histories; however, the author still wished to portray a history of sorts that included such subject matter!

26 Stanley E. Porter, “The ‘We’ Passages,” in The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting (ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf; vol. 2 of The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting. ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 545–74, states, “The Possible explanations for the supposed historical flaws in Acts are several. For example, Luke could be a historian but a bad one. There were many in the ancient world, but simply because they were bad historians does not mean that they were automatically writing novels” (p. 551). Joel B. Green, “Internal Repetition in Luke-Acts: Contemporary Narratology and Lucan Historiography,” in History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts (ed. Ben Witherington III; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 283–99, states, “An attempt to present material in the generic framework of historiography is not the same thing as a guarantee of historical veracity; choice of genre and quality of performance are separate issues” (p. 285). This assessment can also be applied to Luke’s historically unverifiable reports of miracles, angelic beings, and other divine activity which may lend to the (modern) conclusion that Luke is an altogether unreliable historian; that is, if every instance of such events in Luke-Acts is counted as a “minus” for Luke, then he quickly racks up a negative tally and his historical believability plummets. However, this sort of evaluation does not prove the point that Luke was not serious as a chronicler of such supernatural events also. There is nothing in Luke-Acts to suggest that Luke did not believe these sorts of divine interventions to have happened in actual history; rather, the author apparently assumes that his primary audience would treat them also as real events (cf. Luke 1:1–4 again). If Theophilus was also a first century Christian, then he may have shared a similar worldview where such divine activity could also be considered historically plausible (and the same is true for many Christians in various denominations today). Modern (secular) historians may deem such a historian less than credible, but such a conclusion cannot negate the genre of Acts as a history of some sort.

27 Pervo, Profit, 123
It is nevertheless important to keep in mind that Acts is not history in the form of chronicles, but in the form of a coherent, edited narrative. It is clear both intrinsically from Luke-Acts as well as extrinsically in comparison with Mark\textsuperscript{28} that often narrative interests override historical concerns for the author of the works. For example, what narrative critics would call the “psychological point of view” in Luke 7:36–50, that is, the narrator’s insight into the thoughts of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:39), illustrates a concern more for narrative coherence and plot (i.e. the “why” of the story)\textsuperscript{29} than for empirical historiography. The same could be said of Luke’s record of private discussions regarding which it is unclear how he would have exact knowledge (e.g. Acts 4:15–17). Extrinsically, when Luke’s Gospel is compared to one of his sources, Mark, it is clear that the order of events has at times been changed, apparently for narrative purposes. Such reworking of source material may result in some gains for the author in terms of the internal design and coherence of the story of Luke-Acts, but inevitably results in some historical “loss” (when evaluated from our modern perspective) in the sense that Luke’s version is in some degree further from historical reality than was his source.

Pervo\textsuperscript{30} pays attention to several of the narrative or “novelistic” features of Acts and argues on their basis that Acts is not intended as historiography in the first place, but rather as entertainment.\textsuperscript{31} Arguably, the evidence that Pervo cites does not lead necessarily to the conclusions he draws. For example, many of the “novelistic” motifs found in Acts are found also in Paul’s letters where he claims them as historically factual events in his own life.\textsuperscript{32} It is of course probable that Luke understood the entertainment value of many of the suspenseful, ironic and humorous situations described; however, this does not negate that he portrays them to Theophilus as historical events. It is not unlikely that Luke’s primary audience was favorable to Luke and understood this “negotiation” between historical and narrative concerns, or at least Luke displays no need to hide accounts that might be questioned by other audiences, or to cite sources.

The point of view assumed in this dissertation is that (1a) the narrative and literary features of Luke-Acts have at times been undervalued in historical-critical commentaries of Acts (see chs. 1–5), and (1b) that Pervo’s \textit{Profit with Delight} has been a useful corrective to overlooking some of the narrative features of Acts that resulted from identifying the genre of Acts simply as history. Therefore, (2a) an interpreter must be careful to appreciate both the historical goals of Acts as well as its narrative coherence and artistry, recognizing that (2b) at times the aims of narrative coherence and artistry infringe upon or override purely historical concerns. However, this does not negate the fact that as a coherent narrative, (3) Acts is also intended as a historical source (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–2).

Therefore, taking as a working hypothesis that Acts \textit{presents itself} as a historically reliable document, yet in a narrative and often entertaining form, this dissertation can examine one aspect of the accuracy of Luke as a historian. That is, the portrait of the character James will be compared to extrinsic sources for verification or contrast in terms of its historical value.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{28} Which we take to be one of Luke’s sources.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Resseguie, \textit{Narrative Criticism}, 190–1.
\textsuperscript{30} Pervo, \textit{Profit}, 12–85.
\textsuperscript{31} Although he moderates this viewpoint now and then; e.g. “Description of Acts as a historical novel does not imply that the author concocted it from thin air. Reconsideration of the question of genre does not eliminate the possibility of sources” (p. 137).
\textsuperscript{32} Cf. 2 Cor 11:23–28.
\textsuperscript{33} Regarding the viewpoint that Acts is to be seen as a collective biography, see Burridge, “Genre” in \textit{Reading Acts}. However, the introduction for Luke’s Gospel does not call attention to Jesus only, but to the “things” that have
Structure of Dissertation

As indicated, this dissertation consists of two main parts. The first is “a close reading” of the role of James as a character in the narrative of Acts (chs. 1–5), whereas the second is an investigation of other Christian works from the first, second and early third centuries also mentioning someone called James, i.e. the NT Gospels, other NT literature (1 Corinthians, Galatians, James, Jude, and Revelation), and extra-biblical second and early-third century Christian literature (chs. 6–8).

Each chapter in Part One concerns itself with a primary question and begins with a review of literature pertinent to the question at hand:

Chapter 1: Does Peter Leave Jerusalem in Acts 12:17?  
Chapter 2: Is Leadership Transferred from Peter to James in Acts 12:17?  
Chapter 3: Is James the Leader of the Church Since Its Inception?  
Chapter 4: How Is James Identified in Acts?  

Part Two consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 6: The Brothers of Jesus and the Twelve in the New Testament Gospels  
Chapter 7: The Brothers of Jesus and the Twelve in the Epistles and book of Revelation  
Chapter 8: The Identity of “James” in Second and Early Third Century Christian Literature

Academic Motivation and Scholarly Relevance

James the brother of the Lord finds himself at the intersection of several historical, theological, and ideological currents. First, James figures prominently in debates regarding the earliest authority figures of Christianity. He is often associated with a form of Christianity that continued to advocate obervance of the Law among Jewish Christians and thus he could be described as a “counter-weight” to Paul’s stance of a Law-free Christianity among the non-Jewish world. Recently, several scholars have claimed that the form of Christianity truer to Jesus, and represented by James, was later suppressed: “It was James, the brother of Jesus, who carried on the vision of Jesus in its most consistent form and it is from the Jacobite tradition, as happened among us. That is, more than just Jesus is in view. Also, the introduction to Acts does not call attention to any of the disciples per se—even collectively. As David Peterson, Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 12, points out, the ending of Acts calls attention to “the word of God increasing and spreading, despite the opposition or difficulties encountered . . . Acts 28 is a significant indicator of Luke’s purpose in writing, and it suggests that his interest is historical and theological rather than strictly biographical.”

34 The Didache will not be specifically examined in this dissertation because it does not mention any of the brothers of Jesus or the Twelve either as individuals or groups. A version of the title refers to the twelve apostles, but is not necessarily original. Cf. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zangenberg (eds.), Matthew, James and Didache: Three Related Documents in their Jewish and Christian Settings (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 46–48; Aaron Milavec, The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2003), 55; Jonathan A. Draper (ed.), The Didache in Modern Research (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 4.

35 As we shall see below, the answer to this question plays a crucial role in finding an answer to the question concerning the role of James in Acts 12:17 and elsewhere in Acts.
compared with the Pauline tradition, that we gain glimpses of the Jesus tradition in retrospect.”

Jeffrey Bütz concurs:

Regrettably, the memory of James, his relationship to his brother Jesus, and his significant contributions to the early church became lost in the official history and teaching of Christianity for reasons both benign and malignant. James’s story is thus a tragic one. Because the knowledge we have of Jesus’s siblings is threatening to those with vested theological and ecclesiastical interest, James was forgotten, downplayed, and even intentionally suppressed.

With regard to James, then, there has been a growing sense of a far-reaching cover-up of the original forms of Jesus’s teaching by Pauline Christianity.

There is much more to this debate about the cover-up of James in the NT than meets the eye. Its significance for our contemporary scholarship and Christianity in general has to do with perceptions about the canon. If it is indeed true that James’s “school” was closest to the Jesus tradition and that this form of Christianity was all but ousted from the canon, then the validity of the NT canon for the Christian church comes under question. Doubtless, this debate needs to be grounded firmly on evidence rather than sentiments and accusations. This dissertation may be able to contribute to this discussion in some important ways.

Second, Acts—and especially 12:17—provides information about Peter’s (continuing?) role in the Jerusalem church. Where Peter went at this point is not a neutral or inconsequential matter, for the Roman Catholic church argued for a long time that Peter made his way to Rome. Many scholars have disagreed.

Third, Acts 12:17 and ch. 15 have been interpreted as revealing something of the leadership structure of the Jerusalem church—or changes therein. Most Christian denominations owe their ecclesiastical polities to the NT in some way or another. This is evidenced in the contemporary use of titles such as “pastor,” “bishop” or “apostle,” which have virtually no meaning outside of the Christian church, and which only have meaning for Christians because of their usage in the NT. Fresh generations of Christians will undoubtedly comb the NT in order to make a case for a “biblical” church polity. Since James was an influential and somewhat enigmatic figure in the Jerusalem church leadership, his role will continue in the center of these debates.

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38 For this viewpoint see also Robert Eisenman’s James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Penguin, 1997).

39 Insofar as the validity of the NT is seen to depend on its correspondence with historical reality.

Fourth, the identity of the brothers of Jesus and the NT information regarding them informs the debate regarding Mary, the mother of Jesus. The doctrine of her perpetual virginity is largely based on an interpretation of what sort of “brothers” the brothers of Jesus were to him.

It is clear, therefore, that the study of James has implications for many related avenues of inquiry. James is at the center of many continuing debates that have not only exegetical, but theological and ecclesiological ramifications, and so study of the character is both exciting and challenging. Nevertheless, the aims of this dissertation are exegetical and historical. Although its findings may indirectly contribute to these aforementioned issues of ongoing discussion, it is not the purpose of this dissertation to answer any such questions.

**Overview of Current Research**

This brief survey of literature does not describe the various arguments and justifications of the scholars because this will be done in the beginning of each chapter. Rather, common interpretations given especially for Acts 12:17, and also for 15:13–21 and 21:18–25 are simply charted. The interpretations are as follows:

1. That in Acts 12:17 Peter left Jerusalem primarily to work elsewhere.
2. That in Acts 12:17 the leadership role of the twelve apostles in Jerusalem diminished or ended.
3. That in Acts 12:17 James succeeded Peter as the main leader of the Jerusalem church.
4. That James was already the main leader of the church before Acts 12:17.
5. That this James was the half-brother of Jesus, not one of the twelve apostles.
6. That Luke did not explain that it was the brother of Jesus because he trusted his audience to have this information.
7. That this James was the apostle, son of Alphaeus.
8. That in Acts 15:13–21 James the brother of the Lord is the primary leader of the Jerusalem church.41

The following tables chart a sampling of which scholars give the above interpretations for James’s role in Acts. The tables are separated into three categories: (1) critical commentaries on Acts, (2) works focusing on Peter, and (3) works focusing on James. The numbers of the interpretations (listed above) correspond to the numbers on the top row of the table. In the table “yes” indicates a clearly made assertion for the view; “(yes)” indicates an implied agreement without clear assertion; “no” indicates that the author does not hold this view; “maybe” means that the author entertains the viewpoint, but takes no clear position on the matter; and “—” means that the author does not address the point.

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41 Virtually all commentators agree that by Acts 21:18 James was the primary leader of the Jerusalem Church.
Acts Commentaries

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42 Bock does not claim this for Acts 15, but with regard to 21:18 writes, “It is clear that James functions as the leader of this community” (645).

43 This commentary is constructed by Ben Witherington III and Todd D. Still on the basis of J.B. Lightfoot’s over a century old study and lecture notes.
What is significant is that not one of these interpreted meanings is stated outright in the text. They are theories, or attempts by scholars to explain the departure of Peter in Acts 12:17 and the reference to James, as well as the role of both in Acts 15. This, in itself, does not disqualify or invalidate the theories, but their merits must be carefully put to the test.

Furthermore, all of the interpretations that do not identify James as the son of Alphaeus rely on the conjecture that Luke expected his audience to hold and to supply information about James that he himself does not give (no. 6). If this presupposition should be found untenable, then many of the other interpretations given for Acts 12:17 fall apart.

Some of the interpretations are interrelated in other ways as well: Interpretation 2 (that Peter’s leadership in Jerusalem ended) obviously depends on interpretation 1 (that Peter left Jerusalem to primarily work elsewhere). Furthermore, interpretation 3 (that James became the primary leader at Acts 12:17) depends on interpretation 2 (that the leadership of the apostles

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ended). These connections will become apparent as the various views are discussed more thoroughly below.
INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

In Part One, we will examine the various explanations given for James’s sudden appearance in Acts 12:17, as well as for his role in Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25. Several of these explanations are mutually exclusive; however, what all of the prevailing viewpoints share in common is that the audience of Acts already knew (1) the identity of the James mentioned in Acts 12:17, and (2) of his prominent leadership role in the Jerusalem church. We do not disagree with the viewpoint that the audience of Acts had some prior knowledge regarding the narrative-historical events of Luke-Acts, given Luke 1:4 (“... so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed”). However, we are cautious as to determining what the audience knew or did not know about the persons mentioned in the narratives of Acts for the following reasons:

First, the author of Luke-Acts is not identified in the introductions of either book (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–2). Authorship has traditionally, and unanimously, been assigned to Luke, a companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phil 24). However, the value of this unanimous tradition is weakened in that it first appears only c. 160–80 C.E.—about 100 years after the end of the narrative events of Acts. In this dissertation, the name “Luke” will be used as a reference to the narrator of Acts for the sake of convenience; it does not indicate a position that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the historical author of Acts and the Third Gospel. Judging from the author’s emphasis on Paul’s Gentile mission one would be inclined to think that the author was a Gentile. On the other hand, the author is versed in the LXX and therefore likely had prior contact with Judaism.

Second, the precise audience of Luke-Acts is also unknown. Although both Luke and Acts are addressed to “Theophilus” (Luke 1:3; Acts1:1), no further information about his identity is provided in either book. Philip Esler states, “The relation of author and addressee was usually


47 However, we do not see a need to doubt the *prima facie* import of the “we” sections—that the author of Acts was a sometime companion of Paul (Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, 4). Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings*, 2:414: “When a ‘we’ without further explanation appears and vanishes again in a document dedicated personally to Theophilus, the natural interpretation is that the author is modestly pointing out the experiences and deeds of Paul in which he personally had a share.” Analyses of the style and vocabulary of the “we” sections indicate their consistency with the rest of Luke-Acts, so as to suggest a single author (Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings*, 2:305). It has been suggested that a later author may have “reworked” the “we” source to make it consistent—but then why retain the blatantly inconsistent first person plural? (Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, 5). Cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 15. The author did not claim to be an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus (Luke 1:1–4); cf. Bock, *Acts*, 15; David Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2


formal and rarely affected the contents of the work.\textsuperscript{50} Whereas the precise audience may be unknown, the text of Luke-Acts gives hints about what kind or sort of audience or community the author assumes (i.e. “authorial” or “intended audience”).\textsuperscript{51} According to Esler,

A number of considerations militate against any part of Luke’s audience’s having been outright pagans. The chief of these is that Luke plunges his readers into the atmosphere of Judaism and the Old Testament at the very beginning of his Gospel and leaves them there until the end of Acts. He often alludes to the Greek Old Testament in a way which would have been opaque, even unintelligible, to someone unfamiliar with its language and contents.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite this familiarity with the OT, few scholars have suggested that the audience of Luke-Acts was primarily Jewish.\textsuperscript{53} One important reason for this is the universalist theme found in Luke-Acts.\textsuperscript{54} That is, the author is interested in the work of Christ outside of Israel. This theme is foreshadowed already in the infancy narratives of the Gospel of Luke (2:31–32), but made most plain in the Gentile mission that is so prominent in the second half of Acts (chs. 13–28).\textsuperscript{55} Paul’s last speech in Acts is addressed to Jewish leaders (Acts 28:23; cf. vv. 17–22) who end up disagreeing among themselves about Paul’s preaching (28:25). Paul tells them, “Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen” (Acts 28:28).\textsuperscript{56}

Joseph B. Tyson also gives a portrait of the “implied readers” of Luke-Acts.\textsuperscript{57} He concludes that the implied reader is a God-fearer, as exemplified intratextually by two centurions (Luke 7:1–12 and Acts 10:1–11:18), and by the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:26–40.\textsuperscript{58} “Theophilus” (i.e. “Lover of God”) “should be understood as a Gentile who is favorably disposed toward Jewish religious life. In addition, Theophilus must know something about Christianity, as Luke 1:4 shows.”\textsuperscript{59} Keener suggests a “mainstream Greco-Roman audience in Macedonia and Achaia, with Jewish founders (not least Paul), a mixture of Gentile and Jewish members, and considerable Jewish and God-fearing didactic input.”\textsuperscript{60}

We wish to draw attention to an important discrepancy among Acts commentators regarding the audience of Acts and its possible knowledge regarding the identity of the James (Acts 12:17). On the one hand, commentators of Luke-Acts commonly acknowledge that the actual (real, or historical) audience of Luke-Acts is, apart from the name Theophilus, unknown to

\textsuperscript{52} Esler, \textit{Community}, 31.
\textsuperscript{54} Esler, \textit{Community}, 31.
\textsuperscript{55} Esler, \textit{Community}, 32–33.
\textsuperscript{57} Tyson, \textit{Images}, 19–41.
\textsuperscript{60} Keener, \textit{Acts}, 1:428.
us and therefore we primarily know the audience of Luke-Acts through the intratextual construct of “implied readers.”

On the other hand, it is common for commentators to claim or assume that the audience of Luke-Acts knew the identity of “James” in Acts 12:17 (cf. chart above on Acts Scholarship in General Introduction, esp. column no. 6).

To illustrate, regarding the audience of Acts C.K. Barrett writes, “Of the actual readers of Acts . . . we know little.” However, with regard to Acts 12:17, he writes, “Luke apparently assumes that his readers will know, without any explanation, who James is.” The word “apparently” is significant in this quotation because Barrett relies on Tyson’s treatment of the “implied reader.” Tyson, in turn, singles out James as the only character in Luke-Acts who was previously known to the implied audience—and so unlike Peter, Paul, or even Jesus! Tyson comes to this conclusion because, in marked contrast with “Luke’s normal habit,” James is not identified in Acts 12:17. And this is precisely the point we wish to emphasize: the idea that James (Acts 12:17) is previously known to the audience does not arise from a scholarly consensus regarding the actual (historical, real) audience of Luke-Acts. Rather, the idea that James is previously known to the audience hails from Acts 12:17 itself, and specifically from the fact that James is not identified there as the brother of the Lord (i.e., the implied audience must have this knowledge). However, in this dissertation we will propose an entirely different solution as to why James is not introduced in Acts 12:17 as the brother of the Lord (see ch. 4)—one that actually matches with “Luke’s normal habit.”

Third, a wide spectrum of opinion is found among scholars as to the dating of Acts—dates have been proposed from c. 60 C.E. to as late as c. 135 C.E. and dozens of issues bearing some significance on the matter have been put forth. We are inclined to date Acts c. 70–80 C.E. for the following reasons: (1) The detailed parts of Acts devoted to the imprisonment of Paul, it appears, would have been most pertinent to the audience at a date closer to Paul’s trial (c. 62–70). (2) However, a date for Luke-Acts after 70 C.E. is suggested by the author’s apparent knowledge of some of the historical details of the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem.

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64 Barrett, *Acts*, 2:LXXIX.
68 Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (ed. Conrad H. Gempf; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 367–70. Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, Ca.: Polebridge, 2006), 23, argues first for a terminus ante quem of 175 C.E.: “Irenaeus (c. 180) remains as the earliest certain witness to the existence of Acts. Polycarp (c. 130) is a tenuous possibility, while Justin (c. 160) remains problematic . . . Acts cannot be later than c. 175 CE; it is highly probable that the work was in use not long after 150.” However, without additional explanation, Pervo states a few pages later, “Acts cannot be later than c. 150; c. 130 is not improbable” (*Dating Acts*, 26).
70 In fact, all other things aside, the ending of Acts after the specified two years of Paul’s house arrest (Acts 28:30; c. 60–61 C.E.; Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, 9) without further conclusion, and without mention of Paul’s death, could well be explained in that Acts was written at that time (Bock, *Acts*, 5). Strictly speaking, however, this is a non sequitur; the author may have ended Acts at this point because he had finished his story—the spread of the Gospel to Rome (Marshall, *Acts*, 47). But again, why then specify “two years”?

(3) If the “We” passages (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) are taken at face value and the implied author of Acts was a sometime companion of Paul already in the 50’s C.E., then a date of writing after c. 90 C.E. would be increasingly unlikely.  

(4) To us, the inconsistencies between the characterization of Paul in Acts in comparison with Paul’s own letters do not nullify the option that the author of Acts may have been a sometime companion of Paul.  

Rather, the inconsistencies may indicate a chosen variant depiction by the author.  

We wish to emphasize, however, that the dating of Acts is not by any means a settled issue and that our own estimate is just that.

Fourth, as mentioned just above, the author of Acts does not present Paul as a letter writer, nor does he clearly reference any of Paul’s letters. This could be explained as a conscious decision on the part of the author—perhaps he did not wish to bring up the controversies evident in Paul’s letters. On the other hand, this silence in Acts regarding Paul’s

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71 Jackson and Lake, Beginnings, 2:310. Several scholars have counter-argued that a Roman siege may have been anticipated by those knowledgeable of the religious-political situation in Jerusalem during the 60’s C.E. (Marshall, Acts, 47, and 47n1). Bock suggests that “Luke might even be writing when he can sense the approach of Jerusalem’s defeat by Rome” (Bock, Acts, 27). In Acts the destruction of Jerusalem is not mentioned, nor are there any overt clues to it (Jackson and Lake, Beginnings, 2:310–1). However, according to Bruce (Acts: Greek Text, 16) the destruction may be suggested by Paul’s exclusion from the temple in Acts 21:30. Furthermore, Luke’s depiction of the moderation of Roman officials, might suggest that the destruction of Jerusalem (and the martyrdom of Paul at the hands of Romans) had not occurred. Cf. Bruce (Acts: Greek Text, 14–15), who in his 1990 version reverses his stance on these issues as compared to the original publication in 1951.

72 The simplest explanation for the “We” passages remains that the implied author intentionally portrayed himself as a sometime traveling companion of Paul to the original implied audience, Theophilus. Whether this portrayal is historically true is a matter of debate—but difficult to disprove. For the view that the author was not himself a companion of Paul, but employed a “We” source, cf. Stanley E. Porter, “The ‘We’ Passages,” in The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting (ed. David W.J. Gill and Conrad H.Gempf; vol. 2 of The book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 545–74.


74 i.e. if the author did not himself pen the “We” sections, but relied on a “We” source (i.e. from a prior companion of Paul), then this might suggest a later date of writing.

75 It is apparent also, from a comparison with Paul’s epistles, that the author of Acts did know a great deal of accurate information about him. Cf. David Wenham, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus—II. The Evidence of Parallels,” in The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; vol. 1 of The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 215–58. To point out inconsistencies between Acts and Paul is somewhat of a non sequitur in terms of its support of a late date. That is, the differences between Paul’s epistles and Acts do not necessarily indicate what “Luke” knew or did not know of Paul. Rather, they may indicate the way in which the author chose to portray Paul to the particular audience to which he was writing. Cf. Bock, Acts, 18–19. Although Paul’s conciliatory attitude toward the Law is difficult to reconcile with e.g Gal 3–5 it is also a stance that Paul himself alludes to on occasion (1 Cor 9:19–23). Cf. Wenham, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus”, in The Book of Acts, 1:257.

76 Jackson and Lake, Beginnings, 2:308 state that, “Acts is on the whole independent of the Epistles, and its narrative is only intelligible if its author did not know them.” Pervo (Dating Acts, 51–146) has argued, however, that Luke did know the epistles of Paul (esp. pp. 139–43), although he does not overtly reference them (p. 146). This opens the possibility that Acts could have been composed on the basis of Paul’s letters (and perhaps some other sources) at a significantly later date. This argument is difficult to disprove because much of the information regarding Paul that is given in Acts, but that is not found in Paul’s own letters, cannot be historically verified from any other sources either—it may simply be the invention of the author. On the other hand, even if the author of Acts did utilize (without acknowledgment) Paul’s epistles, this in and of itself would not require a terminus post quem much later than c. 60 C.E.

letters recommends similar caution in interpreting the identity and role of James—or any other character in Acts—on the basis of information found in Paul’s letters. At the least, one should not assume that Luke’s audience already knew all of the information contained in Paul’s letters.

For these reasons, we will in Part One of this dissertation focus on a close reading of the literary evidence of Acts. What is Luke’s portrayal of James in Acts 12:17; 15:13–21 an 21:18–25, and what is the relation of this portrayal to that of Peter and the Twelve?
CHAPTER ONE

DOES PETER LEAVE JERUSALEM AT ACTS 12:17?

The interpretation of a succession of leadership at Acts 12:17 from Peter to James has a long standing. It has been expressed in various ways and qualifications, but it is inevitably tied to, and explained by, the departure of Peter from Jerusalem. Therefore the question regarding Peter’s geographical movements in Acts deserves careful attention: does Peter flee Jerusalem because of Herod Agrippa’s persecution in Acts 12:17? The answer to this question will shed light on the possible continuation or cessation of the apostles’ leadership in Jerusalem as well as the leadership role of James.

In addition to a survey of literature on the geographical whereabouts of Peter after Acts 12:17, this chapter consists of five sections: The first examines the wording of Acts 12:17b in light of Luke-Acts. The second asks whether Herod conducted a search for Peter. The third investigates the narrative purpose of Peter’s departure. The fourth examines the departure of Peter within the larger, but unified whole of Acts 12:1–24, and the last describes Luke’s descriptions of the geographical whereabouts of his characters and evaluates Acts 12:17 in this light.

1.1 Survey of Literature

A longstanding Roman Catholic tradition locates Peter in Rome subsequent to his departure during Herod’s persecution. This tradition may be based on Eusebius who mentions a trip of Peter to Rome during the reign of Claudius (Hist. eccl. 2.14.6). Such a journey has been called into question by scholars who thought it very unlikely that Peter went to Rome at such an early date. Because the evidence that Peter went to Rome is largely based on later traditions, other cities have been proposed as his possible destination: Antioch, Lydda, Joppa and Babylon. In any case, that Peter did depart from Jerusalem is a common viewpoint.

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79 (cf. references in n.40).
Others question the departure of Peter from Jerusalem at Acts 12:17, suggesting that he may have remained in the city, or at least in Judea. On the other hand, other scholars do not even appear to consider this an option.

It is also a common viewpoint that Acts 12:17 necessitated a leadership transition to take place in Jerusalem. With the main apostle gone, James now takes over. Most scholars opine that the James referred to here is the brother of Jesus mentioned in Gal 1:19 and not James of Alphaeus (Acts 1:13).

Richard Bauckham and others have recognized that after Acts 12 Paul becomes a more central character in Acts. Acts 12:17 is seen as a sort of “exit” for Peter from the “stage.” It is Luke’s way of showing that Peter will no longer be the main character of the Acts narrative. Thus, Peter’s departure to “another place” does not concern essentially his geographical travels, but is a convenient way for Luke to end Peter’s story in Acts. Arguably, however, Peter’s story in Acts does not quite end at 12:17 since he reappears as a major player at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (see ch. 5 below).

### 1.2 The Wording: Does Peter Flee Jerusalem?

A primary reason why conflicting interpretations have been given for Peter’s whereabouts after Acts 12:17 is that the wording of his departure is so vague: καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἄλλο τόπον, “and departing he went to another place.” Nevertheless, a new investigation of the wording of this phrase in light of Luke-Acts may give clues to Luke’s meaning in the verse.

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87 My translation.
1.2.1 ἔξελθον ἐπορεύθη

The use of ἐξέρχομαι naturally raises the question, from where? Did Luke mean that Peter departed from the house of Mary (12:12–17), or that Peter departed from Jerusalem, or that Peter departed from Judea altogether? Within the preceding verses of the same pericope ἐξέρχομαι is used for Peter’s departure from the prison cell (12:9), and then from the prison itself (12:10). In all of these instances (vv. 9, 10, 17), Luke uses the aorist participle for ἐξέρχομαι followed by the main verb. As Peter’s departure in verses 9 and 10 were from a “local” place, it is possible that ἔξελθον in verse 17 simply means that Peter departed from his immediate and stated location (comparable to the prison cell in v. 9 and the prison itself in v. 10). This would commend the meaning, “departing from the courtyard of Mary’s house,” rather than, “departing from Jerusalem” or, “departing from Judea.”

The term πορεύομαι likewise does not give much clarity to the verse because it is used so diversely in Acts: to denote geographical movement to an unspecified place (Acts 8:39), travel from one specified location to another (Acts 8:26), movement from one place within a city to another (Acts 5:20, 41; 9:11), “going” to heaven or hell (Acts 1:10, 25), or used abstractly, as in, “From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6). Because the term is used in such a versatile way, the best way to translate it in English is simply by the word “go,” or in this case as, “went.” The word in itself does not reveal whether Peter travelled out of Jerusalem or not.

Luke uses a combination of the aorist participle of ἐξέρχομαι followed by a finite πορεύομαι an additional five times in Luke-Acts (Luke 4:42; 13:31; 22:39; Acts 16:36; 21:5). From the perspective of the English language, the mention of leaving in connection with going is somewhat redundant for the former is implied in the latter. Yet, it is a not uncommon expression for Luke. The combination of the words by their nature always imply a “change in scenery,” but whether this simply meant that Peter left Mary’s house or that he left Jerusalem altogether cannot be determined on the basis of this phrase alone.

1.2.2 ἕτερος τόπος

Luke says that Peter went εἰς ἕτερον τόπον, “(in)to another place” and this vague terminology is at the root of the conflicting interpretations regarding Peter’s and James’s leadership at the Jerusalem church. One wishes Luke had expressed himself a little more clearly at this point. By ἕτερος τόπος did Luke mean “another house in Jerusalem” or “another city somewhere in the Roman empire” or “another region” or “another country”?

As mentioned above, several scholars have interpreted ἕτερος τόπος to refer to some city other than Jerusalem. However, this proves an unlikely conclusion when the following data is considered: First, of the thirty-seven instances of τόπος in Luke-Acts, it is not once best interpreted—and thus translated—as a “city” per se. It is often a reference to a place outside of the city or to some place within a city. The closest the term comes to the semantic range of πόλις in Luke-Acts is in Luke 4:37 where Jesus’s fame is said to have spread εἰς πάντα τόπον τῆς

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88 According to H.A.W Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles (Trans. Paton J. Gloag; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1877), 310, “From the words it is not even distinctly apparent that the ἕτερος τόπος is to be placed outside of Jerusalem (although this is probable in itself); for the common explanation of ἔξελθον, relicta urbe, is entirely at variance with the context (ver. 16), which requires the meaning, relicta domo (into which he was admitted).”


90 “τόπος,” BDAG 1011.
περιχώρου, “to every place in the surrounding area,” i.e., of Capernaum, called “a city (πόλις) of Galilee” earlier in the passage (Luke 4:31).

Second, there are two instances in Luke-Acts in which τόπος and πόλις are used in the same sentence and in both of these it is clear that τόπος carries for Luke a connotation of something other than a city. The first is in Luke 10:1 where Jesus sends his disciples, εἰς πάσαν πόλιν καὶ τόπον, “into all the cities and places,” to which he himself was planning later to go. τόπος would be redundant in this verse unless Luke used it to refer to places that were not exactly cities; nevertheless, it must refer to inhabited places in this verse. The second instance is in Acts 27:8, where Paul and his companions come to τόπον τινά καλούμενον Κάλυψις Λιμενας, ὁ ἐγγύς πόλις ἤν Λασαία, “A certain place called Fair Havens, close to which was the city Lasea.” Fair Havens was a port of sorts, but not a city.

Third, as a reference to cities, Luke uses πόλις 39 times in Luke and 43 times in Acts. Luke refers to Jerusalem with πόλις no less than 10 times (Luke 19:41; 22:10; 23:19; 24:49; Acts 7:58; 12:10; 21:29; 21:30; 22:3; 24:12), but never with τόπος. In light of these observations, it is very unlikely that by ἔτερος τόπος in Acts 12:17 Luke meant to convey the idea of another city as Peter’s destination. Had Luke wanted to emphasize that Peter left Jerusalem for another city he would have used the word πόλις—which he was by no means shy of using.

Similar observations can be made with regard to the suggestion that Peter traveled to another geographical region. As a reference to identifiable geographical regions, Luke uses χώρα 8 times (Luke 3:1; 8:26; Acts 8:1; 10:39; 12:20; 16:6; 18:23; 26:20). Jesus uses it in his parables to refer to distant countries (Luke 15:13, 14, 15; 19:12; 21:21). Often, however, Luke simply names the region to which a character travels without using χώρα or any other word. Luke refers to Judea with χώρα twice (Acts 8:1 and 26:20) and also uses the expression τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, “land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39), but does not refer to Judea with τόπος. If Luke wanted to emphasize that Peter left Judea for another geographical region which he did not want to name, he would probably have used the word χώρα, not τόπος.

This brief study of Luke’s wording in Acts 12:17 cannot rule out the possibility that, historically speaking, Peter left Jerusalem for another city or region. However, Luke’s wording suggests that such interregional travel was at least not emphasized by Luke. If Luke knew Peter to have left Jerusalem, it appears that he downplayed this in his wording to the extent that the reader could easily envision Peter to have remained in Jerusalem. To interpret Luke’s vague phrase as an indication that Peter left Jerusalem for another city or country gives Luke’s wording a more specific meaning than he intended it to carry. At the very least, nothing in the wording of Acts 12:17 demands the interpretation that Peter left Jerusalem behind and therefore such an interpretation must rely on other evidence for Peter’s departure.

1.2.3 Απαγγείλατε Ἰακώβῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ταῦτα

One possible indication that Peter did, in fact, go into at least a brief time of hiding is that he ordered the believers at Mary’s house to circulate the report of his miraculous release (ταῦτα) among the rest of the church. This could be taken to mean that, for the time being, Peter would be in some place inaccessible to the wider church and so unable to tell the story to the “brothers” himself. This would amount to evidence that Peter would not be in Jerusalem himself at this time to tell others.

However, in light of the way in which the narrator has described the wider church up to the time of the events of ch. 12, another interpretation of the report is more plausible. That is, the
report may function to end what the narrator has stated in 12:5 was taking place until this time—that the “church” (ἐκκλησία) was praying for Peter. It is not specified that the Jerusalem church only is meant, although Jerusalem is clearly the focus of attention. But even the Jerusalem church is depicted of consisting of large numbers of believers (cf. Acts 4:4) and so the group that is meeting at Mary’s house is likely just one of many gatherings. It appears that the majority of the “brothers” (cf. Acts 12:17) are not at that location. If the church at large was praying for Peter in multiple locations at least within Jerusalem, but possibly also elsewhere, then it would be expedient for Peter to ask others to let the “brothers” know (by whatever implied means of communication) that their prayers had already been answered—they could cease praying. This would mean that Peter could go “to another place” while the news of his release would be circulated by others (we will argue below in section 2.7 that “these things” (ταῦτα) refers to the news of Peter’s miraculous release from prison).

1.3 Verse 19: Does Herod Conduct a Search for Peter?

Verse 19a reads, Ἡρῴδης δὲ ἐπιζητήσας αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ εὑρὼν ἀνακρίνας τοὺς φύλακας ἐκέλευσεν ἀπαχθῆναι. The NIV translates this as, “After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed” (emphasis added). However, the RSV translates, “And when Herod had sought for him and could not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death” (emphasis added). The NRSV reads, “When Herod had searched for him and could not find him . . . ” In order to determine whether Peter (in Luke’s portrayal) left Jerusalem, it is worthwhile to examine what sort of enquiry or search Herod made for Peter. Naturally, if the king was conducting a search of the city, it would have been unwise for Peter to stay within Jerusalem (to be clear, we mean this in terms of the narrative consistency within Luke-Acts).

The term ἐπιζητέω does not necessarily mean “search” in the sense of an organized house-by-house exploration to find the missing captive. Rather, it may simply be translated “seek.”91 The word in this instance may refer to the act of Herod in seeking Peter at the prison, not knowing yet that he had escaped. In verse 18 the soldiers had woken up to Peter’s escape, but it is only when the king seeks for his prisoner to be brought before the people (cf. v. 4) that he comes to know that Peter cannot be “found”—that is, fetched (v. 19).

The term μὴ εὑρὼν, lit., “not having found” (v. 19), need not refer to the result of a search per se. The same word is used three times in the similar prison escape story of Acts 5:22–23, where it clearly does not imply that a search took place: the guards go to the prison to fetch the apostles, thinking that they are still there, but since “they did not find them” (οὐχ εὑρὼν αὐτούς), that is, since they did not encounter the apostles at the expected place, the guards go back and tell this to their superiors (v. 23; cf. also Luke 24:23).

That ἐπιζητήσας αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ εὑρὼν is best interpreted as Herod’s unaware and futile act of seeking Peter at his prison is supported in that the guards are questioned only after Peter is not found. Were Herod to have commenced a city-wide search of his escapee, it would surely have benefitted him to interrogate his guards beforehand. Thus, the suggested sequence of events in Acts 12:18–19 is as follows: The morning comes and the guards are frantic about what happened to Peter. Herod seeks for Peter at the prison so as to bring him out before the people (cf. vv. 4, 6), but finds out that Peter is no longer there. Herod then examines the guards to find out what

91 “ἐπιζητέω,” LSI 633; “ἐπιζητέω,” BDAG 371, has, “search for, seek after.”
happened and (apparently because they are unable to give an answer) orders them to be led away for punishment. Herod leaves Judea for Caesarea.

To envision a search of Jerusalem at Acts 12:19 makes Herod’s persecution seem much greater than Luke lets on. It may also contribute to the perception among scholars that Peter must have left Herod’s jurisdiction in order not to be found.\(^{92}\) How could he stay in Judea if the king was pursuing him?

In comparison with the persecution of Acts 8:1, which caused all but the apostles to flee from Jerusalem, Luke says restrainedly in 12:1 that “King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church” (ἐπέβαλεν Ἦρωδς ὁ βασιλεὺς τὰς χεῖρας κακῶσαι τινας τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας). This action is portrayed as limited and selective, and Herod’s plan to capture and kill Peter is painted by Luke as an opportunistic reaction to the popularity afforded Herod from killing James (v. 3).\(^{93}\) When Herod was incapable of making a public spectacle of Peter, he made the guards atone for the escapee (12:18–19ab) and then moved on with his (short) life (12:19c–23).

Even if Herod did not begin a search for Peter, this does not answer where Peter went at Acts 12:17. But certainly it does deflate the notion that Peter and the apostles were forced to leave Herod’s jurisdiction and to abandon their leadership roles in Jerusalem. This sort of conclusion is not warranted by what Luke says.

1.4 The Narrative Function of καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕτερον τόπον

It is possible that Peter’s departure “off the scene” at 12:17 was simply a narrative feature that enabled Luke to continue with the rest of the narrative. That is, perhaps the sentence καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕτερον τόπον, “He left and went to another place,” was not intended to be geographically informative (for it is not), nor to mark the end of Peter’s leadership in Jerusalem, but simply to function as a transition sentence in the immediate story. In order to finish his narrative about the miraculous prison escape, and of Herod’s demise in 12:18–25, it is very suitable—in terms of narrative technique—for Luke to transfer Peter to some unknown location. The sentence ends Peter’s appearance at Mary’s house and removes him from there, but does not follow him where he goes. The readers are then ready to return to the jailhouse in Jerusalem (12:18–19) where the soldiers awake to their horror to realize that Peter had left and gone to some “other place” (v.17).

Here a correct division of the narrative is particularly important. Robert Wall,\(^{94}\) for example, treats Acts 12:1–17 as a unit without justifying why verses 18 and 19 are excluded from his treatment. Treating verse 17 as the end of a section that begins with v. 1 certainly aids Wall’s argument about leadership transfer in Jerusalem, but it is not easily justified; the conclusion of the prison escape story is only told in verses 18 and 19. This sort of division whereby verse 17 is taken as the last verse of the section (vv. 1–17) forces the sentence καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕτερον τόπον to be read as the last sentence of the story—but it is not. The (for the readers) satisfactory conclusion of the tale comes only in verses 18 and 19 and so the division at v. 17 is artificial. It is plausible, then, that the sentence καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕτερον τόπον is simply a convenient way for Luke to make a transition to the conclusion of the

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\(^{93}\) Cf. Gibson, Peter, 135.

narrative. In verse 17 Peter is taken out of the readers’ sight and immediately the guards wake up to find Peter gone (v. 18).

To ascribe to the sentence such a narrative function is simpler than many other interpretations—it has to assume less. The problem with viewing the sentence as informative about Peter’s subsequent whereabouts is that it does not actually inform the reader of Peter’s subsequent whereabouts! All of this information that the sentence does not give has to be provided by commentators who speculate what Luke meant by what he did not say. But on a simple, storytelling level, the sentence functions well. It simply ends the scene at Mary’s house—Peter got away. This interpretation does not push a deliberately vague reference for more historical (or ecclesiastical) information than it was intended to give.

1.5 Peter’s Departure within Acts 12:1–25

Though Acts 12:1–25\(^{95}\) consists of two separate stories (vv. 1–19 and 20–24), it is constructed by Luke as a unified whole. Several motifs unify the narrative. The most obvious is the character of Herod Agrippa who is of no interest to Luke elsewhere, but who is the main actor in verses 1–4 and 19–23 of Acts 12. Herod provides the “setting” of all of ch. 12. Other, more specific unifying motifs are “Herod’s desire for popularity” (vv. 3 and 22), “Herod’s failed publicity stunts” (vv. 4 and 21), “Herod’s anger and cruelty” (vv. 1–4, 19, 20), “death by execution” (vv. 1, 4, 19, 23), “the angel of the Lord” (vv. 7–10, 23) and “petition for help” (vv. 5 and 20). The various characters in verses 1–24, with their contrasting value-systems, loyalties, beliefs, actions and outcomes make for entertaining and thought-provoking theological narrative. One more indication that Acts 12:1–24 was designed as a unified whole is that the section is intentionally bracketed by two mentions of the visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem (11:30 and 12:25).\(^{96}\) All of the intervening events—including Herod’s death—are portrayed as taking place within the duration of this trip.\(^{97}\)

The narration of 1–24 as a unified whole, as well as its placement within Barnabas’s and Saul’s trip to Jerusalem from Antioch (cf. Acts 11:30; 12:25) has three significant effects on the identification of the geographical location of Peter at Acts 12:17; First, the outcome of 12:24 should be seen as applicable to the entirety of 1–24. The antagonist introduced at 12:1 is eaten by worms in 12:23, and the word of God can grow again (v. 24). Herod’s death in Caesarea brings relief to the Christians of the whole region—and this includes Peter (Acts 12:24). Second, “bracketing” the story within Barnabas and Saul’s trip to Judea focuses—geographically—the attention there. Herod is the king of Judea. All of the action takes place in Judea. Third, that all of 12:1–24 is bracketed within Barnabas and Saul’s trip suggests that Luke wanted to portray the

\(^{95}\) The most widely used division in the majority of Greek mss. (kephalaia) treats 12:1–25 (= no. 18 in the inner margin of NA28) as a continuous narrative.

\(^{96}\) i.e. The famine relief visit is a “framing narrative”; cf. James L. Resseguie, Narrative Criticism of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 54–55.

\(^{97}\) Richard Bauckham takes Κατ’ ἐκαίνον δὲ τῶν καρπῶν in 12:1 as a vague reference, “about that time,” by which “Luke certainly does not mean that the events of 12:1–24 happened while Barnabas and Saul were in Jerusalem” (“James,” in Acts [ed. Bauckham], 4:433). He offers no evidence for this view, but it is necessary for his later argument that includes changing the chronological order of Acts 12:17 and Acts 11:30 (p. 436). While it may be true that—historically speaking—the events did not coincide, it is incorrect to say that Luke does not portray them as coinciding. Because the entirety of Acts 12:1–24 is narrated after Barnabas and Saul have arrived in Judea (Acts 11:30), but before they leave (Acts 12:25), the most natural way to translate Κατ’ ἐκαίνον δὲ τῶν καρπῶν in this context is “at that time,” or even, “during that time.”
events as occurring within a rather short time.98 The trouble that began in 12:1 is quickly resolved by 12:23, 24—all within their trip.99

These facets of Acts 12 speak against the notion that Peter left Jerusalem for some far-away land at verse 17. If Luke knew that Peter traveled elsewhere at the time, then his vague “another place” downplays—even hides—this fact. It appears that Luke wanted the readers’ attention to remain in Judea throughout Acts 12:1–24.

1.6 Evidence from the Geographical Movements of Characters in Acts

This section examines the geographical movements of several characters in Acts by listing their whereabouts as fully as possible from the text of Acts. Two features of the data are particularly significant as evidence for the possible whereabouts of Peter after Acts 12:17. First, Luke is very “geographical.” He is interested in places and lists lots of them in Acts.100 Second, Acts is internally consistent and complete with regard to the geographical locations of its characters. This internal consistency should not be confused with the actual historical whereabouts of, for example, Peter. In other NT books he is found in places where Acts never places him.101 But our interest here is Acts and what it says: where, in Luke’s presentation, did Peter go at Acts 12:17?

Particular attention should be paid to those instances where Luke momentarily leaves the story of one character to concentrate on others (labeled “intervening material” below). These are of particular significance to our topic because this is what happens to Peter after Acts 12:17—he is not mentioned again until ch. 15. Peter’s travels are purposefully listed last and are followed by some observations.

1.6.1 Barnabas

Introduced in Jerusalem (4:36)
Intervening material (4:37–9:26)
Jerusalem (9:27)
Intervening material (9:28–11:21)
Jerusalem—Antioch (11:22–23)
Antioch—Tarsus (11:25)
Tarsus—Antioch (11:26)
Antioch—Judea (11:30)
Intervening material (12:1–24)
Jerusalem (in Judea)—Antioch (12:25)

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98 Conzelmann suggests another indication for this as per the ending of v. 19: “The statement here gives the impression that Agrippa went immediately to Caesarea” (Acts, 95).
99 Quick resolutions are characteristic of Luke’s style. Cf. Acts 5:1–5, 18–19; 6:1–7; 11:1–18; 15: 16:22–26. Paul’s imprisonment in Jerusalem and Caesarea is a notable exception in that it drags on for a long time; there is no quick solution. This imprisonment also takes up a very large space in the narrative.
101 Cf. section 2.6.8
Antioch—Seleucia—Cyprus (13:1–4)
Salamis in Cyprus—Paphos in Cyprus (13:5–6)
Paphos in Cyprus—Perga in Pamphylia (13:7–13)
Perga—Antioch in Pisidia (13:14)
Antioch in Pisidia—Iconium (13:15–51)
Iconium—Lystra and Derbe in Iconium (14:1–6)
Lystra—Derbe (14:7–20)
Derbe—Lystra—Iconium—Antioch in Pisidia (14:21)
Pisidia—Pamphylia (14:24)
Perga in Pamphylia—Attalia (14:25)
Attalia—Antioch (14:26–28)
Antioch—Phoenicia—Samaria—Jerusalem (15:1–4)
Jerusalem—Antioch (15:30)
Antioch—Cyprus (15:39)

1.6.2 Philip

Introduced in Jerusalem (6:5)
Jerusalem—Samaria (8:5)
Samaria—Road between Jerusalem and Gaza (8:26)
Road between Jerusalem and Gaza—Azotus—Caesarea (8:39–40)
Intervening material (9:1–21:7)
Still in Caesarea (21:8)

1.6.3 Paul

Introduced in Jerusalem (7:58; 8:1–4)
Intervening material (Acts 8:5–40)
Jerusalem—Damascus (9:1–25)
Damascus—Jerusalem (9:25–29)
Jerusalem—Caesarea—Tarsus (9:30)
Intervening material (9:31–11:24)
Tarsus—Antioch (11:25–29)
Antioch—Judea (11:30)
Intervening material (12:1–24)
Jerusalem (in Judea)—Antioch (12:25)
Antioch—Seleucia—Cyprus (13:1–4)
Salamis in Cyprus—Paphos in Cyprus (13:5–6)
Paphos in Cyprus—Perga in Pamphylia (13:7–13)
Perga—Antioch in Pisidia (13:14)
Antioch in Pisidia—Iconium (13:15–51)
Iconium—Lystra and Derbe in Iconium (14:1–6)
Lystra—Derbe (14:7–20)
Derbe—Lystra—Iconium—Antioch in Pisidia (14:21)
Pisidia—Pamphylia (14:24)
Perga in Pamphylia—Attalia (14:25)
Attalia—Antioch (14:26–28)
Antioch—Phoenicia—Samaria—Jerusalem (15:1–4)
Jerusalem—Antioch (15:30)
Antioch—Syria—Cilicia (15:40)
Derbe—Lystra (16:1)
Lystra—Phrygia—Galatia—Mysia (16:6–7)
Mysia—Troas (16:8)
Troas—Samothrace—Neapolis—Philippi (16:11–12)
Philippi—Amphipolis—Apollonia—Thessalonica (17:1)
Thessalonica—Berea in Macedonia (17:10)
Berea—Athens (17:13–14)
Athens—Corinth (18:1)
Corinth—Ephesus (18:18–19)
Ephesus—Caesarea—Jerusalem—Antioch (18:21–22)
Antioch—Galatia—Phrygia (18:23)
Intervening material (18:24–9:1)
Phrygia102—Ephesus (19:1)
No more intervening material

1.6.4 John Mark103

Introduced in Jerusalem (12:12)
Intervening material (12:13–24)
Jerusalem—Antioch (12:25)
Antioch—Seleucia—Cyprus (13:1–4)
Salamis in Cyprus—Paphos in Cyprus (13:5–6)
Paphos in Cyprus—Perga in Pamphylia (13:7–13)
Pamphylia—Jerusalem (13:13)
Intervening material (13:14–15:36)
Antioch—Cyprus (13:39)

1.6.5 Timothy

Introduced in Lystra (16:1)
Lystra—Phrygia—Galatia—Mysia (16:6–7)
Mysia—Troas (16:8)
Troas—Samothrace—Neapolis—Philippi (16:11–12)
Philippi—Amphipolis—Apollonia—Thessalonica (17:1)
Thessalonica—Berea in Macedonia (17:10)

102 At this point Luke does not restate that Paul was in Phrygia, but states that Paul, (after) traveling through the upper parts came to Ephesus. This is consistent with the earlier “dropping off” of Paul in Phrygia (18:23).
103 John Mark and Timothy are subordinate characters in Acts. They act as Paul’s and Barnabas’ assistants and so at times Luke says that “Paul and Barnabas went…” or “Paul and Silas went…” even though Mark or Timothy was with them. Nevertheless, even though Luke does not always list Timothy and Mark with Paul and Barnabas, he assumes that they tag along. This makes studying their geographical movements a little more difficult. Nevertheless, the primary interest of this study is what happens when Luke explicitly “leaves” Timothy or Mark in a certain place. That is, are they found in the same place when Luke resumes his narrative?
Intervening material (17:11–18:5)
Macedonia—Corinth (18:5)
Corinth— Ephesus (18:18–19)
Ephesus—Caesarea—Jerusalem—Antioch (18:20–22)
Antioch—Galatia—Phrygia (18:23)
Phrygia— Ephesus (19:1)
Ephesus— Macedon ia (19:22)
Intervening material (19:23–20:4)
Macedonia— Troas (20:5)
No longer mentioned by name

1.6.6 Silas

Introduced in Jerusalem (15:22)
Jerusalem—Antioch (15:30)
Antioch—Jerusalem (15:33)
Intervening material (15:34–39)
Antioch—Syria and Cilicia (15:40)
Derbe and Lystra (16:1)
Lystra—Phrygia—Galatia—Mysia (16:6–7)
Mysia—Troas (16:8)
Troas—Samothrace—Neapolis—Philippi (16:11–12)
Philippi— Amphipolis—Apollonia—Thessalonica (17:1)
Thessalonica—Berea in Macedonia (17:10)
Intervening material (17:16–18:5)
Macedonia—Corinth (18:5)

1.6.7 Peter

Jerusalem (Acts 1–8:1)
Intervening material (8:2–9:26)
Jerusalem (9:27)
Intervening material (9:28–31)
Jerusalem—Lydda (9:32)
Lydda—Joppa (9:39)
Joppa—Caesarea (10:23–24)
Caesarea—Jerusalem (11:2)
Intervening material (11:19–30)
Jerusalem— WHERE? (Acts 12:17)
Intervening material (12:18–15:3)
Jerusalem 15:4–29

Silas as an Acts character is something in between a Barnabas and a John Mark. At times he is treated as a partner like Barnabas was earlier (Acts 16:16–40), but at other times he disappears into Paul’s shadow (Acts 16:1, 6) and eventually is dropped from the narrative altogether. The last time he is mentioned is in Acts 18:5.
1.6.8 Application to Acts 12:17

Of particular interest in this data is what happens to a character’s geographical location when his or her story is resumed after intervening material about other characters. This is what happens to Peter after Acts 12:17 as he is not mentioned again until ch. 15. Of the 18 such instances in the above lists, 15 find the characters in the same location where Luke left them and one of these is the instance under scrutiny. The two remaining instances occur in Acts 15:39–41 where Barnabas takes John Mark with him to Cyprus and Paul takes Silas with him to Syria and Cilicia. Previously, both Mark and Silas are said to have returned to Jerusalem (13:13 and 15:33 respectively). Luke does not recount that John Mark and Silas came first from Jerusalem to Antioch before they went with Barnabas and Paul, but this would have been redundant. This exception proves the rule that Luke is quite consistent as to describing and keeping track of the geographical whereabouts of his characters.

Significantly, the next time Peter plays a part in Acts after 12:17, his geographical location is Jerusalem (Acts 15:7). Because Acts 12:17 does not state that Peter left Jerusalem and because he is found there next in Acts 15, it is likely—in light of Luke’s consistency as to the whereabouts of his characters—that he, in Luke’s perception, did not leave Jerusalem or Judea at Acts 12:17. In Acts 15 Luke treats Peter’s presence at the Council as obvious. No mention is made of him until he stands up to speak in Acts 15:7. If Luke had communicated to his audience at Acts 12:17 that Peter was to remove himself from Jerusalem and minister elsewhere, then why does he take for granted Peter’s presence at Jerusalem on this later occasion? Oscar Cullman and F. F. Bruce suggest that Peter has temporarily returned to Jerusalem from his travels for the Council, but nothing in Luke’s wording supports this notion. It is based on the view that he left to dwell elsewhere at Acts 12:17—that the ἕτερος τόπος was some place away from Jerusalem.

This is not to say that, from a historical perspective, Peter stayed in Jerusalem through the entire time of the events described in chs. 13 and 14. The Peter of history must be differentiated from Peter the character in Acts. Peter is known from Galatians to have been in Antioch (Gal 2:11–14), but Peter the Acts character never goes there. As a writer and historian, Luke may have even known that Peter went to Antioch at some point—we do not know. However, as the narrator of Acts, Luke never says such a thing to the readers.

Yet, one instance where Luke is a little flexible with the named locations of his characters should be mentioned: In Acts 11:30 Paul and Barnabas go to visit Judea, but at the conclusion of their trip they are said to return from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25). This is not a contradiction, of course, because Jerusalem is located within Judea, but it opens the possibility that even though Peter is still in Jerusalem at Acts 15, that the range of meaning of ἕτερος τόπος in Acts 12:17 might include Judea. In any case, the notion that Peter as a character in the narrative of Acts had to leave Judea appears a little less likely in light of Luke’s usual precision with regard to the locations of his characters.

1.7 Summary of Chapter One

The wording of Acts 12:17 is inconclusive with regard to whether Peter left Jerusalem. However, Luke’s choice of the word τόπος suggests that he was not trying to communicate the idea of another city to his readers. From a historical perspective, the persecution of Herod was

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selective and in Luke’s portrayal Herod gave up on Peter after he miraculously escaped from prison. Herod left Jerusalem, as Luke unambiguously says in 12:19c (“he went down from Judea to Caesarea”) but there is no clear indication that Peter did so. In fact, much speaks against such an assumption. The sentence about Peter’s departure is best explained within the narrative in which it appears; Peter steps out of narrative focus so that Luke can finish the story about the prison escape, and to tell another one of Herod.

Luke is quite consistent in keeping track of the geographical whereabouts of his characters. With the exception of Acts 15:37–41, characters are “picked up” where they were last “dropped off” in the narrative. That Peter is next found in Jerusalem at the Council of ch. 15 without any further explanation suggests that he never left the city, as far as Luke’s narrative is concerned.
CHAPTER TWO

IS LEADERSHIP TRANSFERRED FROM PETER AND THE APOSTLES TO JAMES AND THE ELDERS AT ACTS 12:17?

This chapter critically examines some of the arguments given in favor of the view that James takes over as the church’s leader in Acts 12:17. This interpretation shares the same difficulty as all other interpretations of Acts 12:17 in that Luke does not clearly explain exactly what he means. This is worth mentioning again at this point because this particular interpretation regarding the transference of leadership in Acts 12:17 has such a long history that it is sometimes asserted as if it were the plain meaning of the verse. In the previous chapter we argued that Peter is not depicted as fleeing Jerusalem in Acts 12:17 by the Acts narrator. The present chapter will concentrate on the content of the report to be given James, the leadership of the apostles and Peter’s role among them, as well as on the larger narrative context. In short, does the leadership transition explanation for Acts 12:17 fit the wider context of Acts?

2.1 Survey of Literature

The interpretation of the cessation of the (twelve) apostles leadership in Jerusalem at Acts 12:17 is closely tied to the departure from Jerusalem of Peter, who is one of the Twelve and functions as their spokesman (see Acts 1:15; 2:14; 5:29): when Peter left, James became the main leader, supported by the elders. Alfons Weiser puts it thus, “Im Sinn des Lukas dürfte das Nebeneinander der erstmaligen Erwähnung des Jakobus und der kurzen Notiz über das Fortgehen des Petrus den Führungswechsel in der Jerusalemer Gemeinde andeuten.” Similarly Oscar Cullman emphasizes the leadership change from Peter to James, but does not expound on what he thinks happened to the remainder of the twelve apostles. Based on Galatians, he sees James as having held a “somewhat leading role” beside Peter up to this point. Rather than claiming a full-fledged departure of all the apostles from Jerusalem at Acts 12:17, Cullmann emphasizes the change of headship from Peter to James.

For others, Peter’s departure marks the end of the leadership of the apostolic group altogether. This is emphasized by Richard Bauckham for whom it seems unlikely that a non-

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108 Alfons Weiser, Die Apostelgeschichte: Kap. 1–12 (Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 5; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1981), 291. Weiser, however, makes the point that Peter’s role in Jerusalem is not altogether finished, as he appears there in ch. 15 (p. 291).
110 Cullmann, Peter, 42.
111 Rackham, Acts, 180; Jacob Jervell declares, “Wenn die Meldung jetzt an ihn und die Gemeinde geht, zeigt das, dass die Zeit der zwölf Apostel vorüber ist” (Apostelgeschichte, 335).
apostle would become the leader while the apostles were still around. Foakes-Jackson stretches the evidence a little too far to make this same point. He considers it “strange that none of the Twelve is mentioned as being in the house of Mary . . . and we do not again hear of the college of the Apostles in Acts, nor is there any explanation of its disappearance” (emphasis added). Of course this claim is incorrect because the apostles figure prominently again in the very next Jerusalem narrative (Acts 15). Nevertheless, in his comments on Acts 15:6–12 Foakes-Jackson maintains his stance: “It is noteworthy that we hear nothing of the Twelve as the ruling body of the Church. The apostles are grouped with the elders, and when the church of Jerusalem meets in Acts xxii. they have been supplanted by ‘James and the elders.’”

2.1.1 The Arguments of Richard Bauckham

A thorough argument for the view that James and the elders succeeded Peter and the apostles as the church’s leaders at Acts 12:17 has been made by Richard Bauckham in a chapter titled “James and the Jerusalem Church” in The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting. Bauckham has written about James on several occasions and his position regarding Acts 12:17 appears not to have changed in his 2007 chapter “James and the Jerusalem Community” in Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries. Bauckham’s arguments are, therefore, addressed here at length. The evidence Bauckham gives for his position is examined below in four parts.

2.1.1.1 That Peter’s Destination Is Unnamed Indicates That Luke Has Finished Telling His Story

Bauckham recognizes that Luke is quite precise as to the geographical locations of his characters. However, he draws an interesting conclusion from the fact that Peter’s destination is not named in Acts 12:17:

The deliberately vague phrase “to another place” signals the fact that Peter’s story, though unfinished is of no further concern to the readers of Acts. Had we been told where Peter went, we might have expected to encounter him there again later in the narrative. This is what happens with Saul, left at Tarsus in 9:30 until Barnabas finds him there in 11:25–26. It is what happens with Philip, left at Caesarea in 8:40 until Paul meets him there in 21:8. By contrast, Peter’s destination in 12:17 is unnamed because his story is not going to be resumed.

Bauckham, having noted Luke’s consistency as to the geographical whereabouts of his characters draws the opposite conclusions as those suggested in ch. 1 of this dissertation. As argued there, it would appear that the “other place” where Peter went was somewhere within or

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114 Foakes-Jackson, Acts, 137.
near Jerusalem because he is found there again the next time he appears in the narrative (Acts 15:7). Nevertheless, Bauckham interprets the fact Luke does not name Peter’s destination in Acts 12:17 as a narrative convention whereby Luke signals to the readers that he is finished telling Peter’s story.

Bauckham does not seem to consider the possibility that Peter remained in Jerusalem or Judea, and that for this reason Luke did not name another destination for him. This is remarkable, for after concluding from the non-naming of Peter’s destination in Acts 12:17 that Luke is finished telling Peter’s story, Bauckham immediately continues, “It is true that he does reappear in 15:7–11, at the Jerusalem council, but he does so only in order to recall his earlier role in the conversion of Cornelius and his household.” Bauckham thus recognizes Luke’s usual precision as to the geographical locations of his characters, and the fact that Peter is still in Jerusalem at Acts 15, but does not permit the possibility that Peter remained in Jerusalem after Herod’s foiled attempt to kill him.

But regardless of Peter’s whereabouts after Acts 12:17, is there any evidence that the non-naming of Peter’s destination was a narrative convention whereby Luke signaled to his audience that he was finished with Peter’s story? Certainly Luke does not use such a narrative convention to end, for example, Philip’s or Barnabas’ or Mark’s roles in Acts because for all of them a “final destination” is mentioned (21:8 and 15:39). The same can be said for Paul, who arrives in Rome (28:14). Because Luke does not end the story of any other Acts character with a similar “convention,” the only evidence that the non-naming of Peter’s destination in 12:17 signaled to the audience that Peter’s story would not be resumed is the very verse itself.

Luke is generally uninterested in “ending” his character’s stories—that is, unless they die (or ascend to heaven). Acts is not a story about its characters per se; rather, Luke’s story is about the spread of the proclamation of Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome and many characters contribute to this story. When these characters have made their contribution they are simply henceforth neglected. No grand exits for anyone besides Jesus and Stephen. Peter is also dropped from the narrative, not at Acts 12:17. He is dropped from the narrative after making a brief but crucially important speech at the Jerusalem Council (15:7–15). Only then is Luke finished with Peter’s story as also that of “the apostles” as a group (15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). The latter are mentioned for the last time in 16:4, a verse that looks back at the events recounted in ch. 15.

2.1.1.2 Peter Is No Longer a Main Character in Acts after 12:17

According to Bauckham,

After 12:17 Peter is no longer the key figure at the forefront of the [sic] Luke’s story of the church’s mission. The section 12:1–24 is so placed as to indicate that Peter’s leading role—which has hitherto been seen both in his leadership in Jerusalem (chs. 1–5) and in his pioneering role in the mission out from Jerusalem . . . passes not merely to one successor, but to two: James (12:17) in Jerusalem, and Paul (13:2) in the mission to the Gentiles.  

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118 Bauckham himself observes this for Barnabas and Mark, but does not allow this to sway his conclusions (“James,” in Acts [ed. Bauckham], 4:435 n.65).
Bauckham correctly points out that after Acts 12 Luke concentrates on Barnabas and Saul’s missionary journeys and so Peter’s work is no longer in focus. But after this Bauckham’s argumentation becomes somewhat confusing. On the one hand, he uses this shift in narrative focus as evidence of a leadership transition (“succession”) from Peter and the apostles to James and the elders.\(^{120}\) A little later, however, Bauckham acknowledges that Acts 12:17 is only a narrative shift for Luke and that Peter’s role—at least as a missionary—does not end: “Peter certainly did not pass the torch of missionary leadership over to Paul, and may well have become even more important as a travelling missionary . . . arguably among Gentiles as well as Jews.”\(^{121}\) Yet Bauckham fails to apply this same logic to Peter’s role in the Jerusalem church. That is, Luke’s narrative focus on Paul after ch. 12 cannot be used to determine Peter’s future role in the Jerusalem church either.

2.1.1.3 In the Narrative, James Becomes the Primary Leader in the Jerusalem Church

Bauckham writes,

> In chapter 12 the narrative has reached the point where leadership at the centre in Jerusalem can no longer be combined with personal leadership in the missionary movement out from the centre. Peter, who had combined these roles, steps out of the narrative. James steps in, as the wise and statesmanlike leader at the centre, while Paul assumes the leading role in at least one movement of the gospel further and further from the centre.\(^{122}\)

This position, that James takes over Peter’s role in the Acts narrative after Acts 12:17, is not well founded. Certainly by Acts 15 James has not replaced Peter, for at the Jerusalem Council both men speak. James’s no doubt important speech agrees with Peter’s and builds on it (15:14). The change from Acts 15 to Acts 21:18, where James alone is named alongside the elders of the Jerusalem church, may be more significant. Yet, Bauckham’s claim is that Peter “steps out” at Acts 12 whereas James “steps in,” and this is unwarranted, given ch. 15.

2.1.1.4 The Apostles No Longer Lead the Jerusalem Church after Acts 12:17

For Bauckham, “the issue in chapter 12 is not only the succession to Peter himself.”\(^{123}\) Rather, “This persecution put an end to the leadership role of the Twelve as such.”\(^{124}\) Bauckham provides several pieces of evidence in support of this view: First, “the reader must notice that in 12:17 Peter does not ask the news to be given to the other apostles; he or she must presume that they too are in prison of have fled from Jerusalem.”\(^{125}\) This argument from silence would be legitimate only if Bauckham could demonstrate that Luke should have mentioned the other apostles at Acts 12:17. But the apostles do not figure at all as a group in Acts 12 because the

\(^{120}\) Particularly p. 436 (“James,” in Acts [ed. Bauckham]).
\(^{121}\) Bauckham, “James,” in Acts (ed. Bauckham), 4:439. This statement appears to negate what Bauckham wrote earlier, “[Peter’s] pioneering role in the mission out from Jerusalem…passes…to…Paul” (p. 435).
narrative is about Peter and Herod. Herod’s persecution was selective and not all of the apostles were targeted (cf. Acts 12:1).

Second, Bauckham compares Acts 12:17 and 8:1, noting that with regard to the prior persecution Luke mentions that the apostles remained in Jerusalem, whereas with regard to the latter he does not. He concludes that the apostles were not able to remain in Jerusalem at 12:17 as they were at 8:1. The comparison fails, however, due to the fact that in Acts 8:1 a “great persecution” (διωγμὸς μέγας) is described that causes the church to be dispersed throughout Judea and Samaria. That the apostles stayed in Jerusalem at 8:1 communicates to the reader that the church in Jerusalem did not cease altogether. In contrast, there is in Acts 12 no indication that Herod’s persecution targeted the wider church or even the whole leadership. The believers are still gathered at Mary’s house and there is no indication that a single believer had left Jerusalem. Only James Zebedee and Peter are named as having been persecuted. Because in Acts 12 the believers do not flee Jerusalem as they did in 8:1, there is no need for Luke to make a point that the apostles remain.

Third, Bauckham argues that “the reason Barnabas and Saul deliver the famine relief to the elders [in 11:30] is that the apostles had not survived, as a constitutional body of leaders in Jerusalem, the recent persecution by Herod Agrippa.” Bauckham dates Acts 12:1–18 at an earlier time than Acts 11:30, and then explains the silence regarding the apostles in 11:30 in that they had to flee Jerusalem in 12:17. Bauckham continues, “Peter could not refer to ‘James and the elders’ in 12:17, since presumably the reconstitution of the Jerusalem leadership as a body of elders is envisaged as occurring only subsequently to Peter’s departure.” To clarify Bauckham’s position: The apostles are not mentioned in 11:30 because they no longer form the leading body in Jerusalem—the elders do. The elders are not mentioned in 12:17 because they do not yet form the leading body in Jerusalem—the apostles only now leave.

But if James became the leader of the church at Acts 12:17, then why is he not mentioned in 11:30 which, according to Bauckham, occurred later? He has an answer for this also, “Luke could have introduced James, along with the elders, in 11:30. But leaving reference to James to 12:17 suggests more effectively that he was to succeed to the specially pre-eminent position of Peter, while also perhaps allowing his unique preeminence to emerge over a rather longer period than the narrative has yet reached in 11:30” (emphasis added). And so Bauckham’s revised chronology of Acts 11 and 12 leads him into some contradiction between history and narrative: the events of 11:30 take place after 12:17, but a “longer period” elapses before 12:17 than before 11:30.

Fourth, Bauckham notes that Peter’s leadership does not fully end at 12:17—obviously he is still among the leaders of the church at Acts 15. Nevertheless, he concludes that “it is historically very credible that the persecution of Agrippa 1 (AD 43 or 44) was the point at which the Twelve ceased to be the leadership of the Jerusalem church.” According to Bauckham, “It would be very difficult to envisage James’ rise to preeminence while the Twelve as a body were still in Jerusalem. The constitutional role of the latter must have been unchallengeable and unsurpassable within the Jerusalem church.” This particular argument is circular: The

evidence that James becomes the leader of the Jerusalem church at Acts 12:17 is that the apostles leave. The evidence that the apostles leave Jerusalem at Acts 12:17 is that James becomes the leader.

In the end, Bauckham’s theory of a leadership transfer from Peter and the apostles to James and the elders at Acts 12:17 depends quite heavily on his view of Herod’s persecution. He considers it historically probable that the apostles had to leave Jerusalem at that time. At first it seems a reasonable hypothesis. However, a close examination of the Acts data as well as the evidence provided by Bauckham reveals that the theory does not well match what is actually said in Acts 12:17 and elsewhere in the book of Acts.

2.1.2 The Arguments of Robert Wall

In an article titled, “Successors to ‘The Twelve’ According to Acts 12:1–17,” Robert Wall gives a novel argument for the view that James succeeded Peter as the leader of the Jerusalem church at Acts 12:17. Wall’s thesis is that Acts 12:1–17 is patterned after the arrest, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. As the apostles succeeded Jesus as the leaders of the church before his ascension, so now James succeeds Peter as the leader of the church prior to Peter’s departure to “another place.”

The brunt of Wall’s paper is concerned with establishing parallels between the latter experiences of Jesus, and those of Peter in Acts 12. Wall’s case is the strongest with regard to the circumstances of the arrest: as Herod’s uncle had captured Jesus with the aim of putting him to death to please the Jews, so now Herod sought to put Peter to death to please the Jews. In both cases, this took place in Jerusalem during the feast of unleavened bread.

Wall attempts in many ways to make the case that Peter’s imprisonment was similar to Jesus’s death, and that his escape from prison was akin to Jesus’s resurrection. Upon closer examination, however, these parallels prove capricious or contrived. For example, Wall seeks to show that, for Luke, the prison was “a metaphor of death itself.” The evidence he gives for this is threefold: First, after Lukan redaction, Luke 22:33 has a coupling of “prison” and “death.” Second, Wall argues that “elsewhere” in the NT, φυλακή carries a “more metaphorical meaning as a place of the dead or of angelic forces of death.” He refers the reader to 1 Peter 3:19. However, of the forty-odd uses of φυλακή in the NT, 1 Peter 3:19 is, in fact, the only verse in which the word is used as a metaphor for death.

Third, two details about Peter’s prison “echo” Jesus’s tomb and therefore “link Jesus’s passion to Peter’s imprisonment”. The iron door (Acts 12:10) is similar to the stone blocking Jesus’s grave, and both the prison and the grave were guarded by soldiers. For both of these parallels, Wall refers the reader to Matthew’s Gospel (Matt 27:65–66 and 28:2), but fails to emphasize that in Luke’s Gospel there is no reference to guards watching Jesus’s tomb, or any indication that the stone would have made the stealing of Jesus’s body impossible (cf. Luke 24:1–2)! As far as Luke is concerned, these parallels are simply not there.

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The main weakness of Walls’ thesis lies in the point he actually wishes to demonstrate—that Jesus’s commission of Peter and the Twelve was similar to Peter’s commission of James in Acts 12:17. In his own words:

In the Gospel tradition, Jesus’s commentary on his resurrection is followed by his commission to proclaim his resurrection to all nations, since the disciples are “witnesses of these things” ( martyres toutōn [Luke 24:48]). In the evangelists’ mind, the proper conclusion to the appearance of the risen Jesus is to declare what God has done. More significant, however, is the purpose of commission itself, which is to designate his successors as those to whom he appeared—the martyres, the carriers of God’s promised salvation “beginning in Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

The most fundamental problem with Wall’s argument is that if a parallel were to be found between Acts 12:17 and Luke 24:48, then the martyres of Peter’s “resurrection” were the disciples praying at Mary’s house rather than James. The apostles became the leaders of the church because they were commissioned by the risen Lord (Luke 24:47). In Acts 12 the believers at Mary’s house encountered the freed Peter, but James did not. If a parallel were to exist between the events prior to Jesus’s ascension and Acts 12, then James would correspond to those who would be the recipients of the preaching of the witnesses, “all the nations” (Luke 24:47).

Furthermore, James is not the only one to be told the report; the whole church is to receive it (v. 17). If transmitting the story to James signified that he became the leader of the church, then what did the transmission of the story to the rest of the brethren signify? The whole church was to be told the story about Peter’s release, and yet Wall argues that only James became the primary leader.

Wall’s thesis necessitates the end of Peter’s leadership in Jerusalem at Acts 12:17. He asserts this confidently “since [Peter’s] subsequent appearance in Acts 15 only rehearses an earlier episode.” Such an evaluation, however, does not appreciate the important role of the apostles, and Peter in particular, at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. There Peter is not merely recalling an earlier event, but acting in a leadership role at the Jerusalem church and arguing forcefully against the circumcision of Gentiles. The parallel between Peter’s departure to “another place” and Jesus’s ascension fails because Peter is found in Jerusalem again in the very next section that concerns the locale (Acts 15).

Wall’s article is noted by several scholars after him, but it has not found support among Acts scholars. Not even Richard Bauckham, who arrives at similar conclusions (but via different means) agrees with Wall’s thesis about intentional parallels between Jesus/Peter and Peter/James. The conclusion that Wall proposes has been asserted for centuries, but Wall’s arguments for it are unprecedented. This raises suspicions as to the “direction” of Wall’s argumentation: does the end justify the means? Why is this conclusion of the “succession” from Peter to James at Acts 12:17 so important that it must be affirmed even through novel exegesis?

2.2 Peter and the Twelve: Can Peter Alone Appoint Their Successor?

As shown above, several commentators are comfortable with the idea that Peter appoints a successor to the apostles in Acts 12:17. But in light of the collegial leadership of the apostles elsewhere in Acts, this is an unnatural interpretation. In certain respects, Peter is in Acts the most significant and influential of the Twelve. He is the central character until Paul becomes the focus from ch. 13 onwards. In spite of this prominence, Acts nevertheless depicts him as accountable to the other apostles. The apostles as a group—and not Peter alone—lead the believers (Acts 2:42–43; 4:35; 5:42; 6:2–4), particularly when consequential decision are made (1:15–26; 5:27–29; 6:2–4; 15:2–29).¹⁴⁰

An exception to this rule is Peter’s visit to Cornelius (Acts 10:25) prior to which he does not consult with the other apostles. However, the aftermath of the Cornelius incident gives a valuable glimpse into the inner dynamics of the apostolic group (as presented by Luke) and into Peter’s role within it. When Peter returns to Jerusalem, the other apostles criticize him (11:1–3) and Peter has to account for his actions (Acts 11:4–18). The others relent only after Peter cites proof of the leading of God in the matter: Peter’s vision (vv. 5–10), the “synchronized” arrival of Cornelius’ messengers (ἐξαυτῆς, v. 11), the angelic visit to Cornelius (vv. 13–14), the gifting of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles (vv. 15, 17), the recollection of the words of Jesus (v. 16), and the similarity of the Gentiles’ experience to that of Jewish believers (v. 17). That Peter so thoroughly justifies his actions to the other apostles suggests that he was not the sort of leader among the Twelve who could act as he wished on the basis of his own personality or position; Peter answered to the others.

Furthermore, in Acts 8:14 the apostles send (ἀπέστειλαν) Peter and John to Samaria.¹⁴¹ The importance of this verse should not be overlooked, for in every instance of ἀποστέλλω in Luke-Acts the term implies the authority of the sender over the sent ones; the sent ones accomplish the sender’s will and thus in whatever capacity serve the sender.¹⁴² That Peter and John were sent by the apostles to Samaria reveals Luke’s conception of authority within the apostolic group.¹⁴³ The twelve apostles were inheritors of Jesus’s kingdom (Luke 22:29–30) and individual apostles—even Peter—were subject to this college. For this reason also, Peter is never in Acts a personification of the whole group. His individual identity is never confused with that of the apostles as a whole. Luke keeps this distinction in instances where Peter is the chief speaker of the group (Acts 2:14; 2:37; 5:29).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Gibson, Peter, 233.
¹⁴³ Cullmann draws quite the opposite conclusions from the fact that Peter was sent to Samaria (Peter, 37). He sees in the account the leadership of Peter highlighted and uses this to further his thesis about the importance of Peter in the Jerusalem church. According to Cullmann, Peter stood at the “head” of the early church (Peter, 38). As we have argued, the use of ἀποστέλλω here does not support this conclusion.
¹⁴⁴ Cf. Gibson, Peter, 233.
Perhaps Luke’s descriptions of collegial leadership in Acts are intended to validate the stability of the church—this new movement is not just a corporate expression of uncontrolled charismatic individuals. In any case, it would be uncharacteristic of Luke’s description of Peter’s role within the apostolic group in the preceding Acts narratives if Peter in 12:17 individually and unilaterally appointed a successor to the Twelve. This observation lessens the likelihood that leadership transition from Peter (and the apostles) to James (and the elders) is in view in Acts 12:17.

2.3 The Appointment of New Leaders in Acts

To discern whether Acts 12:17 is an instance of the appointment of new leadership in Jerusalem, it is profitable to examine earlier instances in Acts where such appointment is clearly in view. Luke is not indifferent about explaining who the church’s leaders were in Acts. In the first chapter, he lists again the names of the eleven apostles and gives a detailed account of how Matthias was added to the group of apostles (1:12–26). Luke portrays the leadership of the church to remain unchanged until ch. 6, for the apostles lead the church without any further justifications or doubts as to their role.

There are several similarities between the appointment of Matthias in ch. 1 and the Seven in ch. 6: The whole church takes part in the appointment of new leaders (1:15; 6:2, 5); the necessity of appointing the new leaders is explained (1:16–22; 6:1–4); the qualifications for the leadership candidates are laid out (1:21–22; 6:3); the selection procedure is mentioned (1:23–26; 6:3–6); the new leader(s) are named (1:26; 6:5); God blesses the appointment (1:20, 24–26; 6:7); the apostles pray (1:24; 6:6) and the appointment is thus “finalized.” The introduction of new leaders in the Jerusalem church was not in these two instances either unimportant or inconsequential for Luke; these are depicted as occasions of thoughtfulness, consultation and prayer.

These two accounts are similar in some important ways to the “choosing” of the apostles in Luke 6:12–16. Luke’s emphases become clear when compared with Mark’s version of the story (3:13–19). First, in Mark’s version there is no mention of prayer, but Luke emphatically inserts prayer into Jesus’ time at the mountain: “he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God” (ἐξελθὼν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ ὄρος προσεύχασθαι, καὶ ἦν διανυκτερεύων ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ; 6:12). Second, in Luke Jesus publicly chooses the apostles from a wider group of disciples (6:13). In Mark, other disciples are not present. Third, Luke changes Mark’s ἐποίησαν, “he appointed” (3:14) to ἐκλέξαμεν ἂν αὐτῶν, lit. “having chosen from [the disciples].” The word emphasizes the public separation of the apostles from other disciples. Moreover, ἐκλέγομαι is Luke’s choice word for the appointment of persons to specific leadership tasks (Acts 1:2, 24; 6:5; 15:7; 22, 25). It is used more for this purpose in Luke-Acts than for all others combined.

Acts 13:1–3 also shares some of these characteristics. The prophets and teachers spend time in prayer and the Holy Spirit initiates the “separation” of Barnabas and Saul for a new

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145 Rackham holds that Peter was the last apostle to leave Jerusalem at Acts 12:17 (Acts, 180). This would certainly validate the ability of Peter alone to hand over the baton of leadership to someone outside the apostolic group. However, Rackham admits in a footnote that he comes to the conclusion that the other apostles had left Jerusalem from “the expression in verse 17” (Acts, 180n2). He does not explain why he derives that conclusion from Acts 12:17; the other apostles are not mentioned in that verse.


missionary task (13:2). Characteristically, they are chosen by God from a wider pool of persons who are present (13:2; cf. again Luke 6:13; Acts 1:23; 6:3). The occasion is public, that is, it is not merely a private commission from God. Prayer is again emphasized (13:3) and hands are laid on the two missionaries (cf. 6:6).

The event of Acts 12:17 could hardly be more different from these. If Peter did there transfer his leadership to James, then he made a momentous decision regarding the future of the church in the middle of the night while standing in somebody’s courtyard. Furthermore, the new leader was not present to accept the position; he was merely to be told by someone that he was now the new head of the church! No prayer, no guidance of God, no “choosing” from among persons, no affirmation by the wider church.

As has been shown, Luke had the ability to elaborate on the addition of new leaders in the narrative, and he does so on several occasions. These instances share several characteristics in common. But according to the view in question, Acts 12:17 is not merely an occasion of adding leaders to help the existing ones; rather, this is the occasion where the leadership of the apostles ceases and James becomes the primary leader of the church. If this should be the intended meaning of Acts 12:17, then in light of these other narratives where new leaders are assigned (Luke 6:12–16; Acts 1:15–26; 6:1–6; 13: 1–3), one might expect Luke to have given a little more explanation and justification for this momentous occasion. Simply put, this explanation for Acts 12:17 does not match other instances in Luke and Acts where leaders are appointed for new tasks and is therefore most likely incorrect.  

2.4 The Point of the Narrative—Peter Wins, Herod Loses

The “moral of the story” in Acts 12 is certainly not that Herod is able to bring Peter’s ministry in Jerusalem to an untimely end. The very opposite is true: Peter’s persecutor is embarrassed and put to death by the angel of the Lord (12:23) while Peter goes free and the word of God is multiplied (v. 24). Acts 12 contains many typically Lukan motifs and literary techniques that would be undermined by the interpretation that Herod succeeds in ending the leadership of the apostles in Jerusalem.

The whole tenor of the chapter (with regard to the church) is comedic. James the son of Zebedee’s death is not glorified as in the case of Stephen, but provides a little background to the narrative. From Peter’s incredulous escape (12:9) to the believers’ unbelief (12:15), and from Rhoda’s excitement (12:14) to the commotion of the guards (12:18), the narrative plays around with serious matters. All of this works to Luke’s theological advantage: Luke can write humorously of weighty topics because everything turns out well.


149 O. Wesley Allen (The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts [SB LDS158; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 92) writes, “Through the conflict(s), therefore, the reader is given a chance to recognize the power of the Lord. In the same manner that other characters have served as a lens through which to view Herod, Herod serves the narrator as a tool for characterizing God. The power of persecutors is illusory, but the power of the Lord is real. When the two powers come into conflict with the church caught in the middle, the Lord is victorious, the tyrant is destroyed, and the Word of God prospers.”

A unifying motif throughout the narratives is the reversal of fortunes. The captive is set free, the guards are themselves “led away” (12:19), the “mad” slave-girl speaks the truth (12:15), the praying Christians get their apostle back (12:12), the cruel king is slain by an angel—his humanity exposed while accepting praise as God (12:22–23). Those who exalted him as deity became witnesses of his death (12:20–23). For Luke and his church, this is a happy story (12:24). The foes are defeated and the heroes go free.

In light of this, it is unconvincing that Bauckham and others insert the cessation of the apostles’ leadership within such a victorious story, and especially at the joyous moment of Acts 12:17 where Peter charges the believers at Mary’s house to circulate the miracle story! It is unlikely that Luke’s audience would have grasped such a surprising and negative (and unstated!) meaning at v. 17 immediately after the supernatural rescue of the protagonist. For Luke, this is a happy story and the victorious moment of verse 17 is surely the wrong place to claim that here the leadership of the apostles came to an end. Acts 12:24 provides Luke’s summary of the whole affair: after the evil king is dead, the word of God in Judea continues to grow.

2.5 In Acts, the Apostles as a Whole Never Leave Jerusalem

The apostles as a group are not mentioned in Acts 12:17. Not all of the church or its leadership was targeted by Herod’s persecutions (12:1–4). Yet, for Acts 12:17 to indicate a leadership transfer from Peter to James and the elders, the other apostles must also have left Jerusalem. So much is confirmed also by Richard Bauckham who states, “It would be very difficult to envisage James’ rise to preeminence while the Twelve as a body were still in Jerusalem. The constitutional role of the latter must have been unchallengeable and unsurpassable within the Jerusalem church.”

Jesus’s remarks in Acts 1:8 seem to predict for the disciples some extensive travels: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea, Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.” Interestingly, however, Luke never describes that the Twelve fulfill these words. Rather, the apostles as a whole are only found in Jerusalem. The “witness” to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth is accomplished mainly by non-apostles and of the Twelve, only Peter and John are said to have traveled around Samaria (8:14–25), and Peter in Judea (9:32–11:48). Peter travels the furthest of any of the apostles in Acts when he goes to Caesarea (10:24), but even this was only a two or three day’s distance from Jerusalem.

The apostles are repeatedly referred to as “the apostles in Jerusalem” (8:14; 15:2; 16:4; cf. also 8:1; 9:27–28; 15:4). This emphasis occurs particularly after the church is dispersed from Jerusalem in Acts 8; before that point all of the action has occurred in Jerusalem and so there was no need to separately emphasize that the apostles were there. This repeated connection between the apostles and Jerusalem, the most important city for Jews, is likely related to the unique place that Jesus afforded the Twelve within Israel (Luke 22:29–30). Luke does not describe the departure of the apostolic group from there. Jesus’s promise to the apostles regarding the ends of the earth (1:8) is, in Acts, carried out by other disciples, including Paul (cf. 13:47, an echo of 1:8).

152 This inference is based on Acts 10:23–24 where Peter leaves from Joppa and arrives at Caesarea sometime the following day. The distance between Joppa and Caesarea was about 50 km. The distance between Jerusalem and Caesarea was about 80 km.
The apostles in Acts do not leave Jerusalem even for violent persecution. In Acts 4:18—21, Peter and John were commanded and threatened by the Sanhedrin not to preach, but were not swayed (4:31). Again, they were beaten and commanded by the Sanhedrin not to preach in Acts 5:40. Their immediate, telling response was to teach and preach Jesus Christ in the temple and in every house (Acts 5:42). During the “great persecution” of Acts 8:1 the apostles remained in Jerusalem. In Luke’s portrayal, the Twelve simply did not give into the threats of their persecutors, even if their lives were at stake (12:2–4). Clearly, the apostles’ fearlessness was not an inconsequential matter; it was highlighted and paraded by Luke. In their insubordination to their persecutors, Luke exhibited the strength of the church.

If Luke’s point in Acts 12:17 would be that Herod scares Peter and the other apostles to run away, then this would be a dramatic change in Luke’s presentation of the apostles’ previous fearlessness. That the apostles had risked their lives before but now were unwilling to do so would have been an unprecedented show of weakness on their part. Furthermore, this would make no sense because God had just saved Peter from his persecutor. It is far more likely that Peter’s command to tell James and the other brethren of his miraculous escape was to encourage the church, rather than to have the “brethren” told that the apostles were now going to leave their post and run away! Surely this is not what Luke meant to communicate.

Acts’ portrayal of the Twelve as residing in Jerusalem is not contradicted by other NT writings. Peter is found in Antioch once (Gal 2:11), as well as in “Babylon” (1 Pet 5:12). He is known to the Corinthians—although his physical presence in Corinth has not been proven. It is even less established based on NT evidence that John the apostle had traveled to Asia. Therefore the notion that the twelve became travelers to this or that part of the world does not arise from the NT, but from later traditions. It remains, of course, a historical possibility that the apostles did eventually disperse from Jerusalem, but the point being made here is that Luke nowhere indicates this to be the case. And so to find in Acts 12:17 the time when the apostles left for their missionary work is to conclude without Acts and NT witness that there ever was such a time.

2.6 The Leadership of Peter and the Apostles at the Jerusalem Council

The interpretation of a leadership transition at Acts 12:17 takes place in a larger scheme whereby James and the elders have surpassed the apostles in leadership of the Jerusalem church by the Council of Acts 15. According to this view the apostles (and not only Peter) left Jerusalem by Acts 12:17. Gottfried Schille exemplifies this position, “Die Apostel fehlen nach 12,17 naturgemäß, weil die Gemeindeleitung in Jerusalem an Jakobus übergegangen war.” However, after the intervening material of chs. 13 and 14, Luke describes the decision of the Antioch congregation to send Barnabas and Paul “to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem” (my translation; πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους ἐἰς Ἰεροσολύμων; 15:2) regarding the circumcision question. This would be a most peculiar statement if Luke had earlier communicated to his audience that the apostles had left Jerusalem and that their leadership had

154 In 1 Cor 1:12 Paul mentions a Corinthian party that follows Cephas. This may indicate that Peter had visited the city. However, another party is “of Christ” and Jesus certainly did not visit Corinth. In 1 Cor 3:5–9, only Paul and Apollos are mentioned as the significant laborers in Corinth: Paul planted the seed and Apollos watered it (v. 6). Cephas is not mentioned in this connection, but his name pops up again in 3:22. It is safe to say that Peter had influenced the church of Corinth, but whether he had visited the city is unclear.

155 Gottfried Schille, Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas (2d ed.;THKNT 5; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1984), 413.
ended. Yet, Luke gives no explanation for the presence of the apostles in Jerusalem at Acts 15. He treats it as obvious. There is no mention of them returning to the city for this occasion—they are simply there.

2.6.1 The Apostles Are Consistently Named Before the Elders

Unless Acts 12:17 is interpreted as the end of the apostles’ leadership in Jerusalem, Luke has not communicated to his readers by Acts 15 that the leadership of the apostles has ended or in any way diminished (aside from the death of James Zebedee in 12:2). Peter and the apostles have been the church’s leaders from the beginning and at the Jerusalem Council the continuing leadership of the apostles is emphasized in that they are named no less than five times before the elders (15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). Conversely, the elders are not once named before the apostles. Furthermore, sometime later in Acts 16:4, Paul and Silas travel to previously founded churches and, “delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem” (παρεδόθησαν αὐτοῖς φιλάσσειν τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων τῶν ἐν Ἰεροσολύμοις).

Luke elsewhere accentuates certain characters by listing them before others. Thus, Peter is named first, followed by James and John in Luke’s list of the apostles (Acts 1:13). Of the apostles, Peter is the most significant for Luke. Stephen and Philip are—surely not by chance—the two first mentioned of the Seven (Acts 6:5). Barnabas and Saul are named mainly in that order when they first travel together (11:30; 12:25; 13:2; 13:7). As Paul becomes the main actor, Luke tends to name him first (13:43, 46, 50; 15:2, 22, 35). It may be significant that when the two of them address the Jerusalem leaders, Barnabas is named first (15:12). Barnabas was better known among the Jerusalem Christians (cf. Acts 9:27) and this is also reflected in the order of their names in the letter written by the apostles and elders (15:25).

Thus, Luke’s repeated and consistent mention of the apostles before the elders in connection with the Jerusalem Council speaks against the view that the elders had surpassed the apostles in leadership at this time. Certainly Luke did not emphasize this. In fact, nothing in Acts 15 supports this view, other than the claim that James there led the church, with the connected assumption that he was not one of the apostles.

Jacob Jervell and Ben Witherington point out that Luke does not call James an elder. This is technically correct but it is only half of the truth. It is clear from Acts 15:2, 6 and 23 that the apostles and elders gathered to debate and decide about the matter of circumcision, and since James spoke at the Council it must be assumed that he was either one of the apostles (the son of

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156 In Acts 21:25 the elders recollect what “we wrote” to the Gentiles. This is an interesting statement in light of the fact that both the apostles and elders wrote to the Gentiles of the churches (Acts 15:22). Did Luke here use the term “elders” collectively to suggest (at least some) of the apostles’ presence at this meeting also, or was he, rather, just referring to one of the two groups that composed the letter?
157 According to Ernst Haenchen, the alternation of whether Paul (15:2, 22, 35) or Barnabas (15:12, 25) is named first in ch. 15 can be explained in that “Lukas variiert gern.” Die Apostelgeschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1959), 388 n.2. However, there is arguably a closer connection with Antioch each time Paul is named first (15:2, 22, 35), and with Jerusalem when Barnabas is named first (15:12, 25)—although v. 22 has a little bit of both. Nevertheless, Haenchen maintains, “Ob Barnabas in Jerusalem mehr Vertrauen genoß, ist noch gar nicht ausgemacht.”
Alphaeus) or one of the elders.\textsuperscript{159} If James was one of the apostles, then the view that a transmission of leadership had occurred from the apostles (Peter) to the elders (James) is void. On the other hand, if James was one of the elders, then the fact that the apostles are consistently named before the elders undermines the view that James is portrayed in Acts 15 as the church’s primary leader, or that James had the authority to decide the matter on behalf of the church.

2.6.2 Collegial Leadership

The collegial leadership of the apostles has been discussed above (sect 3.2). Luke highlighted such harmonious decision-making whereby many leaders (and never just one) agreed upon a solution, to which the entire congregation gave their consent (1:15–26; 6:1–6).\textsuperscript{160} Acts 15 is no exception and it is the apostles and elders with the whole church who decide to send a letter to the Gentiles via Judas and Silas (v. 22).

It may be in vain, then, that one looks to find one main “decider” at the Jerusalem Council for in Luke’s harmonious presentation decisions were made by many leaders—indeed by the congregation as a whole (Acts 15:22).\textsuperscript{161} The corporate nature of the Jerusalem decree is affirmed also in hindsight in 16:4, but especially in Acts 21:25, where the elders recollect that “as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that . . . ” (περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἐθνῶν ἡμεῖς ἐπεστείλαμεν κρίναντες . . . ). Thus, James’s “judgment” (15:19–20) needs to be understood in relation to this larger body consisting of the apostles and elders, in that order.

We will give this matter of James’s leadership role at the Council more attention in ch. 5 of this dissertation. The primary reason for this brief examination of Acts 15 was to determine whether there the elders had surpassed the apostles as the leaders of the Jerusalem church. To this we can give a confident negative answer; Luke gives no indication that the apostles’ leadership in the Jerusalem church had diminished or ended. The apostles are without fail named before the elders in no less than six instances. Peter still figures prominently in the narrative, his speech silencing the crowd (15:22). The primary evidence that the elders had become the main leaders of the church by Acts 15 is that James’s viewpoint was accepted by the entire congregation, with the problematic assumption that James himself was an elder.

2.7 What Is James to Be Told?

It appears that Bauckham, Wall and other supporters of the leadership change explanation take the communication between Peter and James as an act of informing James that Peter is leaving and that James is to assume the leadership role previously held by Peter. But this is not what Luke describes as the content of the communication. Acts 12:17 reads: “[He] described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, ‘Tell this to James and to the believers’” (διηγήσατο [αὐτοῖς] πῶς ὁ κύριος αὐτὸν ἐξήγαγεν ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς, εἶπεν τε, . . . ).

\textsuperscript{159} This latter option is supported by Mikeal C. Parsons, who considers James to be the “representative of the Jerusalem elders” (\textit{Acts} [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 212).

\textsuperscript{160} Cf. Haenchen, \textit{Apostelgeschichte}, 389 n.5 and 392 n.1; Gibson, \textit{Peter}, 233.

\textsuperscript{161} According to Hans Conzelmann, “‘to judge,’ does not refer to the ‘decision’ (the whole assembly makes that, vs 22), but rather to the proposal.” \textit{Acts of the Apostles} (trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel; Hermeneia 58; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 117.
Ἀπαγγέλατε Ἰακώβῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ταύτα.162 In this context, the ταύτα, “this”, or “these things,” that is to be told James and the brethren can only refer to πῶς ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐξῆγαγεν ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς, “How the Lord had brought him out of the prison” and so this forms the content of the “report.” It is a miracle story that James and the brethren will hear when the report reaches them.

For the leadership transition explanation to work, it must envision important content in the ταύτα that Luke does not inform his readers of. There is no information about leadership changes, not even about Peter’s going away, for it is only after Peter orders the miracle story to be circulated that Luke has him leave Mary’s house. Thus, the theory of leadership transfer at Acts 12:17 has to assume that the content of the communication between Peter and James, via the believers at Mary’s house, contained elements that Luke does not describe. Such meaning has to be discovered “between the lines” for it is not stated within them.

One might counter-argue that it is not the specific content of the report that indicates James’s (new) important leadership status, but rather the fact that he alone is named from among the recipients of the report. Why should James be named here as the (only) outstanding person among the “brethren” if he is not now the main leader?

We gladly agree that the “pinpointing,” or singling out of James by name by Peter must carry some sort of significance within the narrative. The narrator does not throw around names without reason. The attention of the reader is purposefully drawn on the character James—even if only for a brief moment (We will take up this issue in ch. 5). Nevertheless, we maintain that the naming of James by Peter simply cannot bear the heavy weight of a theory of leadership transition that is placed on it—especially when the circumstantial evidence mounted in its favor is not credible (per the findings of this chapter). Some other explanation must be found for the naming of James in Acts 12:17 (See chs. 4 and 5).

2.8 Summary of Chapter Two

The view that James becomes the primary leader of the Jerusalem church at Acts 12:17 is related to the end of the apostles’ leadership. There is no indication in Acts 12 that the leadership of the apostles ends. Herod’s persecution did not affect the whole church or all of its leadership. The apostles as a whole are not mentioned in Acts 12. Moreover, God miraculously delivered Peter from prison and killed Herod. The church overcomes Herod’s persecution. It would be uncharacteristic of the corporate leadership of the Twelve in Acts if Peter alone appointed their successor at Acts 12:17. In addition, the verse does not have the common characteristics of other instances where the appointment of leaders to new tasks is clearly in view (Luke 6:12–16; Acts 1:15–26; 6:1–6; 13: 1–3). The apostles appear again as the church’s leaders in Acts 15. In Acts, the apostles as a whole do not leave Jerusalem. At other instances also they remain despite threats to their lives. At the Jerusalem Council the apostles are consistently named before the elders and the decision is said to have been made foremost by them (Acts 15:22, 25, 28; 16:4).

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CHAPTER THREE

IS JAMES THE MAIN LEADER OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH FROM ITS INCEPTION?

John Painter, Ben Witherington and some others argue that James the brother of the Lord was already the primary leader of the Jerusalem church prior to Acts 12:17. These scholars do not consider a leadership transition at Acts 12:17 to be a good explanation for the verse. Rather, they take the naming of James at Acts 12:17 to indicate that at that time he was already the preeminent leader of the Jerusalem church. John Painter writes, “We should understand Peter’s message in the context of his report back to James, the leader of the Jerusalem church. Nothing is more natural than that Peter should report to the leader.” Therefore, according to this view Peter’s departure from Jerusalem does not result in a significant change in the local leadership.

It is illustrative of the confusion still surrounding Acts 12:17 that scholars can come to such opposite conclusions regarding the meaning and purpose of the “report” that was to be transmitted to James:

1. Peter wanted the report of his escape to be told to James. This indicates that James was already the main leader of the church.
2. Peter wanted the report of his escape to be told to James. This indicates that James now became the main leader of the church.

That two conflicting conclusions are justified by the same premise suggests that the connection between the reporting act and leadership has not been sufficiently justified. What is clear regarding this point of view (that James was already the leader) is that it approaches Acts from the vantage point of other writings, namely Galatians. We conclude thus for the simple reason that in Luke-Acts, James the brother of the Lord has not (at least until this point) been described as the church’s leader. Therefore, this view takes a primarily historical approach to the position of James in the Jerusalem church (as opposed to a literary reading) and attempts to draw a coherent, harmonized picture of James from the various NT tidbits about him, as well as from later writings.

All of this, it will be argued below, is done at the expense of exegesis of Acts. Luke’s account of James, the apostles, and Jerusalem church leadership is not heard on its own terms, but read through other references. Luke’s portrayal of James in Acts is not allowed to speak with its own voice—it has to be supplemented from other sources of information.

This chapter will survey some of the contributors to this field, but mainly John Painter, who is its chief proponent. The apostles’ leadership as described in Luke-Acts will be

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164 Painter, “Who Was James”? in Brother (ed. Chilton and Neusner), 31. Painter had expressed the same views earlier in Just James, 44.
investigated and compared to the role of James. Furthermore, inquiry will be made to the term “brethren” (Acts 12:17) and what sort of persons it refers to.

3.1 Survey of Literature

3.1.1 Arguments of John Painter and Ben Witherington III

One of the most significant “James books” of the last two decades has been *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* by John Painter. Painter’s views concerning Acts 12:17 and the early leadership of James in the Jerusalem community are repeated in the chapter “Who Was James”? in the multi-author volume *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission*. Painter recounts, in general terms, the view that Acts 12:17 is an indication of leadership transfer from Peter to James. However, Painter interprets the roles of Peter and James in the Jerusalem church very differently: Acts 12:17 does not indicate a leadership transition from Peter to James because Peter is portrayed in Acts as a missionary rather than as the “leader of a settled community.” To help grasp Painter’s argument, it is worthwhile to quote him here in his own words:

Acts explicitly names no single leader of the Jerusalem church. The conclusion that Peter was the leader at first is the consequence of the influence of an interpretive tradition that has no support in relation to Jerusalem. Nothing in Acts supports this view. Peter’s prominence is in terms of his missionary activity in relation to the community at large rather than as leader of the church community. Indeed, the notion that Peter was the leader runs contrary to tradition concerning the Jerusalem church. That tradition names James as the first leader (“bishop”). The nomenclature is anachronistic, but the leadership of James is supported by the way in which James is portrayed in Acts 15 and 21 as well as in Paul’s letter to the Galatians . . . James was one of a group of leaders among whom he stood out, *from the beginning*, as the leading figure and dominant influence.

Painter’s case for the leadership of James in the Jerusalem church “from the beginning” is essentially an argument from silence, as far as Luke-Acts goes. He argues that Peter was not the main leader, and because he was not, James was. Painter “swaps” James into the position that other scholars thought Peter had, but without any positive evidence. James is not mentioned in Acts until 12:17 and Painter offers no proof from Acts that James led the church, except the negation of the view that Peter did. To say that Peter was not the church’s foremost leader in the beginning of Acts does not constitute as positive evidence that James did lead the Jerusalem church. All we are left with is Painter’s assertion that this was the case.

Furthermore, in negating the local leadership of Peter in the early church, Painter does not sufficiently address the collective role of the “Twelve.” This gives Painter’s case the appearance of a “straw man” argument. Painter is correct in stating that Peter is not in Acts

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165 Painter’s descriptions of the view that Acts 12:17 indicates a leadership transition in the Jerusalem church are reminiscent of Bauckham’s chapter cited above. Painter does not agree with Bauckham’s views.
166 Painter, *Just James*, 44.
167 Painter, *Just James*, 44.
168 I am describing Painter’s own viewpoint that the James of Acts 12:17 is not the son of Alphaeus, but a new James (to the narrative).
presented as the sole leader of the Jerusalem church, but it is unclear whether he intends to deny the leadership of the Twelve altogether. If Painter is referring to Peter only, and not the other eleven, then his argument is weakened in that James’s relationship to the apostles as a group of leaders in Jerusalem is not addressed. If Painter, in negating the local leadership of Peter in Jerusalem implies that the same applies to the other apostles also, then he has tackled a “straw man,” for claiming that Peter was not a local leader in Jerusalem can not negate the leadership of the Twelve in Jerusalem altogether.

In any case, the most problematic argument in Painter’s case is that Peter at no point acted as a leader of the Jerusalem church:

The prominence of Peter in Acts has been interpreted in terms of his leadership [and this is mistaken, in Painter’s view]. But that prominence is described more in terms of his activity in relation to those outside the believing community than in terms of leadership of the community. Peter, like Paul, is portrayed as a “missionary” rather than as the leader of a settled community.\footnote{Painter, Just James, 44.}

Unfortunately, Painter does not describe what this “leadership of the community” entails and what differentiates it from “missionary activity.” Whatever the differences may be, it is very difficult to envisage that “leadership of the community” entailed something other than what Peter and the other apostles are described as doing in Acts: They preach and are able to persuade new converts (2:41), they teach the disciples (2:42), they lead the church in prayer (2:42; 4:23–31), they handle church finances (4:34–37), they exercise church discipline (5:1–11), they ensure that the material needs of church members are taken care of (4:34–37; 6:1–6), they resolve disputes among the congregation (6:1–6; 15:1–29), and they appoint new leaders (1:26; 6:5–6). Painter is, therefore, on thin ice in claiming that Peter is not in Acts portrayed as a leader of the Jerusalem community of Christians. If these activities ascribed to Peter and the apostles in Acts are not elements of church leadership, then what is?

Despite the weaknesses in Painter’s position, the view that James was the leader of the Jerusalem community from the beginning has gained some supporters.\footnote{Scot McKnight cautiously accepts Painter’s thesis that James was “a (perhaps the) dominant leader of the Jerusalem church and the spokesman for the earliest form of Jerusalem-based Christian Judaism” (“Jesus and James” in James [ed. Chilton and Evans], 99).} In his 1998 Acts commentary, Ben Witherington concluded also against Bauckham that James was already before Acts 12:17 a significant leader in the Jerusalem church and “did not need to be commissioned by Peter as he left.”\footnote{Witherington, Acts, 388.}

Witherington maintains this view in his 2003 The Brother of Jesus.\footnote{It should be noted that this work is written on a popular level.} Strangely, Witherington there misrepresents John Painter’s position by claiming that Painter “suggested that Acts 12 should be read as a flashback indicating how James the brother of Jesus came to leadership in the Jerusalem church, namely because Peter had to go elsewhere and the other James had been executed.”\footnote{Witherington and Shanks, Brother, 117. Witherington refers the reader to p. 43 of Painter’s Just James. There Painter cites this view as having been suggested by unspecified others, but he personally is skeptical of it. As discussed above, Painter claims in Just James that James was the outstanding leader of the Jerusalem congregation “from the beginning.”}

\footnotetext[169]{Painter, Just James, 44.}
(which was not actually the view that Painter advocated) Witherington goes on to suggest that James may have actually become the “bishop” of the Jerusalem church already after Jesus’s ascension—which is actually Painter’s view also!

Two features are shared by the advocates of this view that James led the church of Jerusalem already prior to Acts 12:17—perhaps as early as immediately after the ascension: First, they have a high regard for extra-biblical sources, Eusebius in particular. It appears that any legitimate interpretation of James in the NT, but especially in Acts must be illuminated and informed by these later—sometimes much later—sources.

Second, this weight given to later sources is justified by the claim that James’s importance in the early church was downplayed by other forms of Christianity. According to Witherington, history is written by the “winners” (Petrine/Catholic and Pauline/Protestant forms of Christianity) and that these groups neglected the importance of James in the early church. Others apply this criticism even to the NT: James’s supremacy in the Jerusalem church is not fairly represented in the canonical writings. Painter explains:

> It is clear that James was the leading figure in the Jerusalem church. In spite of this fact, Luke mentions him on only three occasions (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:28). This is puzzling . . . It is as if Luke has pushed James into the background, but, because of his prominence, has been unable to obscure totally his leading role. He sought to minimize the role of James because he was aware that James represented a hard-line position on the place of circumcision and the keeping of the law, a position that Luke himself did not wish to maintain.

This quote from the end of Painter’s chapter on James in Acts is contradicted by the first sentence that introduces the very same chapter: “In Acts the family of Jesus appears among his followers, and James is portrayed as the leader of the Jerusalem church.” He takes the simple introduction of James by name only in Acts 12:17 as an indication that Luke assumes James to be widely known.

It appears that Painter wants it both ways: on the one hand, James’s leading role is “obscured in the New Testament” but, on the other hand, if the NT is read without “certain presuppositions” these same documents exhibit James’s primacy in the Jerusalem church. Summarized, the claim is that Luke both presents James as the leader of the Jerusalem church from the beginning and attempts to hide this fact. Advocates of the early leadership of James in Acts need this almost-successful-cover-up clause because it allows them to utilize some portions of Acts to advance their thesis, but also to explain-away those (much larger) portions that render their thesis implausible.

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175 Painter, *Just James*, 56.
176 Painter, *Just James*, 42.
177 Painter, *Just James*, 42.
180 Robert Eisenman, in his *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), is even more skeptical of virtually everything that is said of James in Acts. Eisenman holds the viewpoint that James was, in fact, the real successor of Jesus, but that this was obscured by the author of Acts (*James*, 118–9). Regarding Acts 12 Eisenman argues that James the son of

Since John Painter’s view regarding the leadership of James from the inception of the Jerusalem Church necessitates that the apostles were not its main leaders, it is proper to briefly examine Luke’s presentation of the apostles in Luke-Acts. The role of the apostles needs to be understood on Luke’s own terms—how did he think of them? It will become clear that Luke esteemed the role of the apostles highly and that they were not primarily missionaries in Luke’s mind. Rather, they were closely associated with Jerusalem.

3.2.1 The Apostles as Witnesses to Jesus’s Life

The importance of the apostles in Acts hails from their unique relationship to Jesus, explained in Luke’s Gospel. Luke 6:12–16 describes the separation of twelve disciples from other disciples to a unique role as Jesus’s followers. Only these twelve, named in verses 15 and 16 are called “apostles.” This title is not insignificant for, as Luke Timothy Johnson notes, “Luke has already made clear his understanding of [ἀποστέλλω] as ‘sending with a commission’ in 1:19, 26; 4:18, 24. Now the noun formed from this verb designates Jesus’s chosen Twelve.” The connection that, on the one hand, Jesus’s describes himself (in the words of Isaiah) as the one sent by the Holy Spirit and, on the other hand, that the apostles are permanently labeled by Jesus as the “sent ones” should not be overlooked. According to Luke Timothy Johnson, “Jesus will also ‘send them out’ (11:49) not only during his ministry (9:1) but also, through the Spirit, as his prophetic successors in the narrative of Acts. (1:2, 26, 35, 36, 37; 5:2, 12, 18, 29, 40; 6:6; 8:1, 14, 18; 9:27; 11:1; 14:3, 14; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 16:4).” The reader may also immediately understand in the context of Jewish history that the number of twelve apostles is not insignificant for Luke (or Jesus, in Luke’s presentation), as will be made more clear in Luke 22:30. After Luke 6, the apostles are sometimes referred to simply as “the twelve” (8:1; 9:12; 18:31; 22:3, 47), or after Judas’ betrayal, as “the eleven” (24:33).

3.2.2 Luke 22:29–30: The Apostles as Inheritors of the Kingdom

According to Luke, Jesus gave the twelve apostles significant leadership positions in his kingdom. Luke 22:29–30 literally reads “And I covenant with you as the father covenanted with me, a kingdom so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (καγὼ διατίθεμαι ὑμῖν καθός διέθετό μοι ὁ πατήρ Zebedee was either “confused for or written over” James the brother of the Lord (James, 123). That is, James the son of Zebedee probably did not exist. Furthermore, the name associated with the house to which Peter goes in Acts 12:13—“Mary the mother of John Mark”—was an “enigmatic substitution” for the real occupant—Mary the mother of Jesus and James (James, 121). The message that Peter left was for James and the other “brothers” of Jesus, at their house (James, 121). Eisenman also considers the stoning of Stephen as a substitution for Paul’s attack on James the brother of the Lord, as mentioned in the Pseudoclementine Recognitions (James, 606–12). Eisenman is clearly more interested in the reconstruction of a historical reality behind the text of Acts, rather than the portrayal of the events given by the narrator of Acts (i.e. exegesis).
μοι βασιλείαν ἵνα ἔσθητε καὶ πίνητε ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης μου ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ μου, καὶ καθήσεσθε ἐπὶ θρόνον τὰς δύο δεκαφιλάς κρίνοντες τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.

Matthew’s version of the saying does not take place in the context of a covenant (Matt 19:28). There Jesus says to the disciples, Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, “True I tell you . . . ” In Luke 22:20, the saying occurs at the Passover meal (Luke 22:8), after which Jesus takes the “cup” (22:20) and tells the disciples that the cup is (i.e. represents) “the new covenant in my blood” (ἡ κατην διαθήκη ἐν τῷ ἀιματί μου; Luke 22:20). However, he does not immediately explain what this “new covenant” entails. The discussion momentarily turns to the questions regarding who will betray Jesus (vv. 21–23) and who is the greatest among the disciples (vv. 24–27). Jesus then acknowledges the faithfulness of his disciples (v. 28) and “covenants” to them a kingdom (vv. 29–30).

In this context, it appears that “the kingdom” is the content of the new covenant made in Jesus’s blood (v. 20). That is, although the new covenant is mentioned already in v. 20, its significance, or content, is only revealed in vv. 29–30.184 This is all the more likely in that in Luke Jesus does not speak of his blood being poured forth ὑπὲρ πολλῶν (Mark 14:24) or περὶ πολλῶν (Matt 26:28). Rather, Luke’s Jesus says he will pour out his blood ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, “on your behalf,” when speaking only to the twelve (Luke 22:20). Thus, the “last supper” is a transaction of sorts; the kingdom of God that had been revealed in Christ (cf. Luke 4:43; 8:1; 10:9) is given to the Twelve.185

Significantly, διατίθημα occurs only one other time in Luke-Acts (Acts 3:25) as a reference to the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants.186 That Luke intends this covenant to the apostles to be in some way comparable to the covenant God made with Abraham is, in addition to the use of the word, suggested by the reference to the twelve tribes of Israel (22:30). The twelve apostles are to be the new leaders of Israel.

However, there is some disagreement among scholars regarding the time at which this promise to the Twelve would be fulfilled. That is, although the promise itself is in the present tense (διατίθημα), its fulfillment may be in the future. But how far in the future is Jesus referring to? Some scholars see that the promise will be realized in the eschaton—the time when Jesus will return to earth as the king of Israel (Acts 1:6, 11).187 Others take the leadership of the apostles as either fully, or at least partially, fulfilled already in their church leadership roles in Acts.188

There are two primary issues of debate: The first is the meaning and significance of Jesus’s terminology regarding dining with him in his kingdom as well as of the thrones (v. 30). For Fitzmyer, Jesus’s words are a reference to “the banquet of the kingdom of God, to be

184 Peter K. Nelson, Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24–30 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 204, holds that διατίθημα has the kingdom in view (v. 29), rather than the “new covenant” of v. 20. We would suggest that grammatically διατίθημα is indeed related to the kingdom (v. 29), but that this kingdom is the content of the “new covenant” which is mentioned, but not yet explained, in v. 20. If the kingdom (v. 29) is not the content of the covenant of v. 20, then what is?


inherited by Jesus” and he refers the reader to Luke 13:29. Similarly, although C. F. Evans entertains the possibility that “judging should be given the meaning of ‘ruling over’ (cf. the book of Judges),” he nevertheless takes this eschatologically and makes no connection between this promise and the role of the Twelve in Acts: “The thought is of the apostles ruling for ever over the true Israel of Jesus’s disciples.”

On the other hand, Charles Talbert interprets “dining” and “thrones” more metaphorically: In Luke-Acts, what is Jesus’s rule/kingdom? Acts 2:34–36 indicates that it is his session at God’s right hand (cf. Luke 22:69; 1 Cor 15:20–28) . . . What does it mean to eat at the king’s table? The expression comes from the Jewish Scriptures (e.g., 1 Sam 20:29b; 2 Sam 9:7, 9, 11—‘ate at the king’s table like one of the king’s sons’; 2 Sam 19:28; 1 Kings 2:7; 4:27; 18:19). It means to be accorded a place of honor within the king’s house such as the king’s sons have.”

Talbert interprets 22:29–30 “as referring to the apostles’ role in Jesus’s reign from his exaltation to his parousia. It is one of honor.” He sees this as a description of the activities of the apostles in Acts. Similarly Darrell L. Bock: “The present tense in this context means that they are joining the task now, not later. Jesus’s authority, given by the Father, is extended to the Eleven. [sic] They will mediate for him. Jesus rules and so will the Eleven. This emphasis on present authority fits Luke’s emphasis on the kingdom’s present form.”

The second decisive issue is whether the role of the apostles in Acts can be seen as corresponding to Jesus’s promise in Luke 22:29–30. From a narrative perspective, Robert Tannehill makes two very important observations, (1) “Luke associates Jesus’s royal power especially with his coming to Jerusalem and with the events which take place there (see 19:38; 23:38, 42–43), including Jesus’s exaltation to the right hand of God (20:17, 42–43; 22:69), which fulfills the promise to David to seat a descendant on David’s throne (Acts 2:30–36). Jesus has already been exalted to God’s right hand by the time that the apostles begin their mission in Acts. At that point, it is already possible for the apostles to share in Jesus’s new power.”

Furthermore, (2) Tannehill also points out that other parts of the farewell discourse are clearly applicable to the apostles’ leadership role in Acts, such as the instruction on servant leadership (vv. 24–27) as well as Peter’s return to strengthen his brethren (vv. 31–32).

Our position is that the leadership role of Jesus and the Twelve—which will eventually find an eschatological fulfillment (cf. Luke 1:6)—are already a reality for the followers of Jesus in Luke-Acts. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as the rightful king of Israel already during his time of ministry in Israel (Luke 9:20; 22:29). Neither the rejection of Jesus by the rulers of Israel (Luke 23:2) nor his death negate that he is already the Messiah of Israel: “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day” (Luke 24:46. Cf. Acts 2:36; 17:3).

However, the only ones to accurately recognize the messianic identity of Jesus are his followers (Luke 9:20; Acts 2:36) and those who, because of their preaching, come to believe

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194 Bock, *Acts*, 1740. To be precise, the promise is given to all Twelve—although Jesus has already anticipated Judas’s defection (cf. Luke 22:21–23).
(Acts 2:37, 41). Therefore, the reign of Jesus is a present reality for the believers in Acts (2:34–36)—although it also awaits a future, more complete, fulfillment at the time of Jesus’s return to earth (Acts 1:6, 11). For the believers, the parousia of Jesus is not the time at which Jesus will become the Messiah—he is that already—but presumably this is when the rest of Israel will finally recognize it.

We would suggest that the authority role of the Twelve (Luke 22:29–30) should be understood similarly. As Jesus has already been appointed the Messiah (v. 29), they are presently appointed to be Twelve “judges” (vv. 29–30). Whereas this appointment of the Twelve is not recognized (if even heard of) by the leaders of Israel in Acts (e.g. 4:1–21; 5:27–40), it seems to be accepted by the believers (Acts 1:26; 2:42; 6:2; 15:2; cf. sect. 3.1.1 above).

Therefore the significance of Luke 22:29–30 should not be underestimated for this present study. Since Luke-Acts is a two-part work, Luke expects the reader of Acts to have the information he has already supplied about Jesus and the apostles in his Gospel, and to read Acts in its light. The role of the Twelve (as we have interpreted it in this section) is decidedly contrary to Painter’s viewpoint regarding Peter and James in Acts, especially when it is recognized that the Twelve remain in Jerusalem in Acts and lead the church in and from there.

3.2.3 The Apostles as Witnesses of Jesus’s Resurrection

In Luke and Acts, the twelve apostles have a unique role as witnesses to Jesus’s resurrection. Paul records a tradition that the resurrected Christ was seen by over five hundred people (1 Cor 15:5–8), but Luke says no such thing. Quite the opposite, Luke is very conservative as to who gets to see Jesus after the resurrection. Unlike Matthew and John, Luke does not allow the women to see Jesus first. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus see Jesus (Luke 24:13–32) as well as the eleven apostles (Luke 24:36–53) “and those with them” (Luke 24:33).

Acts 1:1–11 describes only the eleven disciples as witnessing the resurrected Lord during a period of forty days (v. 3). This recapitulation does not mention anyone else and so even though Luke does include the vague “those with the eleven” in Luke 24:33, their role is in the background there and fully diminished in Acts. According to Arie W. Zwiep, “Luke’s periodisation has to do with the origin and authenticity of the Christian kerygma. For Luke, the Jerusalem apostles are the authentic and legitimate custodians of the faith.”

In Acts, Peter and the Twelve repeatedly testify to the “raising” (ἀνίστημι, ἐγείρω) of Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40–41 and 13:30, 34).  

3.2.4 The Apostles as Leaders of the Church in Jerusalem

There is a smooth transition in the role of the apostles in Luke’s Gospel to Acts. Their role in Acts has been fully prepared in Luke’s Gospel. In Luke’s Gospel, they were with Jesus, witnessing his life, death, resurrection and ascension. In Acts they proclaim that which they had witnessed (1:22; 4:33). In Acts, Luke assumes that the readers know what has been said in the Gospel, and so what is said of the apostles in the previous work is assumed in Acts. Therefore

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197 Though it is slightly inaccurate to say that the two see Jesus, for just as they recognize who he is, he disappears from their sight.
198 The antecedent of οὐς in v. 3 is clearly and only τοῖς ἀποστόλοις from v. 2.
the reader of Acts already has the preunderstanding from Luke that the apostles have been appointed by Jesus to become the twelve leaders of his kingdom, all the way to the eschaton (Luke 22:29–30). As listed in section 3.1.1 above, the evidence of the leadership of the apostles, mainly within the Jerusalem church, rather than as traveling missionaries, is abundant.

3.2.5 James’s Leadership in Contrast to That of the Apostles

As we have argued, the leadership of the apostles is clearly indicated in Luke-Acts and, therefore, it is wholly unpersuasive that Luke meant in Acts 12:17 that James the brother of Jesus—and not the apostles—had been leading the Jerusalem church all along. Even more surprising is how little evidence Painter even attempts to give for this position. His argument is that this is the most natural way to interpret the fact that the report in 12:17 goes from Peter to James and not to someone else. But the fact that this interpretation of the verse is in such contrast with the widespread evidence elsewhere in Acts of the importance of the apostles within the Jerusalem community of believers—as well as among the church in general—should raise a “red flag” with regard to its correctness. Certainly in terms of narrative coherence it would be nothing but a blunder on the author’s part. Perhaps the author had another reason for the naming of James in Acts 12:17.

It is worth repeating that Acts does not provide any other suggestion (until the point of Acts 12:17) that James the brother of Jesus would have led the Jerusalem church from its inception. All evidence for this position must be found from outside sources.200 Therefore, from an exegetical perspective the claim that Luke presents James as the main leader of the Jerusalem church in Acts 12:17 is without foundation. Whatever the historical role of James in Jerusalem was is open to debate, but Luke-Acts certainly presents the apostles—and not the brother of Jesus—as the central leaders of the Jerusalem church in the beginning.

3.3 The Meaning and Purpose of ἀδελφοί in Acts 12:17

F. F. Bruce believes that by the time of the events of Acts 12:17 (which he dates at 44 C.E.) James was a leader of the church and the “brethren” (ἀδελφοί) were his fellow-leaders, the elders.201 If ἀδελφός is used elsewhere in Luke-Acts to refer to a leadership role (i.e. eldership; cf. Acts 15 where the elders join the apostles in decision-making), then this would certainly bolster the position that James is mentioned in this verse as the main elder. A study of the term in

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200 In his study of the relationship of Peter and James in Jerusalem and Antioch, Jack J. Gibson similarly concludes, “Though Painter insists that Acts 12:17 indicates that James was already the leader of the church when Peter requested that his miraculous escape from prison be reported to ‘James and the brethren,’ the fact that James plays absolutely no role in Acts prior to 12:17 makes this a very difficult argument to substantiate. In every instance in which a leadership decision is made, it is Peter and/or the Twelve who are depicted at the forefront (Acts 1:15; 5:3–9; 6:2; 8:14). This does not mean that James was entirely unimportant in these early years of the church. But the fact that there is no record of him acting in an authoritative position over the Twelve prior to the arrest of Peter in Acts 12:17, or in any other early Christian source including the Gospel of Thomas, makes Painter’s thesis very tenuous” (Peter Between Jerusalem and Antioch: Peter, James, and the Gentiles [WUNT 345; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 229).

Acts reveals why few scholars have followed the lead of Rackham and Bruce in identifying the “brethren” of Acts 12:17 as elders of the Jerusalem church.


3.3.1 ἀδελφός/ἀδελφοί Is Not a Leadership Term in Acts

Significantly, in none of these instances does ἀδελφός (or the plural ἀδελφοί) in and of itself denote a leadership role. Actually, in five instances where Luke refers to church leaders or to leadership, the plural “brethren” refers to the “others”—those who are not leaders: First, in Acts 6:3, seven men are separated from the brethren for an oversight function: “Therefore, friends [brethren], select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task” (ἐπισκέψασθε δὲ, ἀδελφοί, ἀνδρας ἐξ ὑμῶν μαρτυρομένους ἐπὶ πλῆρες πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας, οὓς καταστήσουμεν ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης). The ἀδελφοί here are the Christians in general, of whom the seven are separated for a leadership task.

Second, Acts 11:1 reads, “Now the apostles and the believers [brethren] who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God” (Ἦκουσαν δὲ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ οἱ ὀνείς κατὰ τὴν Ἑωθίαν ὅτι καὶ τοῖς ἐξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). Since the apostles have been portrayed as the leaders of the church until Acts 11, οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί must mean the apostles, and the other believers. That is, ἀδελφοί refers to those believers who are not leaders of the church. Third, in Acts 15:22, Judas and Silas are called “leaders among the brothers” (Ἀνδρας ἡγομένους ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς). This is one of the clearest indications that ἀδελφοί was not in itself a reference to a leadership group.

Fourth, in Acts 15:23, a letter is sent to Gentile Christians, addressed from Οἱ ἄπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἀδελφοί, literally, “The apostles and the elders brethren.” This phrase has been rendered in different ways: “The apostles and elders and brothers” (KJV); “The apostles and elder brothers (i.e. brothers who are elders)” (NASB); “The apostles and elders, your brothers” (NAB, NIV); and “The brethren [NRSV: the brothers], both apostles and elders” (RSV 2nd ed.). In none of these cases, does ἀδελφοί function as a synonym for πρεσβύτεροι, for if that were the case its use would be superfluous.

Fifth, in Acts 21:17, Paul is greeted by “the brethren” in Jerusalem. On the following day, he meets with “all the elders” (Acts 21:18). The latter are leaders, the former are not.

On the basis of this evidence, it is safe to say that when Luke writes specifically about church leaders, he uses πρεσβύτερος or ἀπόστολος, but not ἀδελφός/ἀδελφοί. For Luke ἀδελφός/ἀδελφοί in and of itself referred not to leadership, but was a familial word used to emphasize some kind of connection between persons or peoples.

202 ἀδελφός, BDAG 18–19.
3.3.2 Is ἀδελφοί a Reference to Jesus’s Brothers?

John Painter suggests that the ἀδελφοί of Acts 12:17 could be a reference to Jesus’s brothers who may be functioning as leaders in the Jerusalem church.²⁰³ Jesus’s brothers are mentioned as a group in Acts 1:14, though none of them are named either in Luke or Acts. However, if the James of Acts 12:17 is seen as the brother of Jesus, then this opens the possibility that Luke referred to the rest of Jesus’s brothers in Acts 12:17 and that “James and the brethren” in Acts 12:17 denoted a recognized leadership group within the Jerusalem church, of whom James—the oldest—was chief.

This is an unlikely interpretation for several reasons: First, in Acts 1:14, τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς is qualified by the pronoun αὐτοῦ, which in the context refers to Jesus. In the three clear examples of ἀδελφοί in Acts in which a biological relationship is implied (Acts 1:14; 7:13; 12:2), the genitive substantive always expresses whose brother is in view (Jesus in 1:14; Joseph in 7:13 and John in 12:2). Thus even in Acts 1:14, where the brothers of Jesus are in view, there is no indication of ἀδελφοί being understood as a term for a leadership group consisting of the brothers of Jesus.

Second, between Acts 1:14 and 12:17 Luke uses ἀδελφός 20 times (1:15, 16; 2:29, 37; 3:17, 22; 6:3; 7:2, 13, 23, 25, 26, 37; 9:17, 30; 10:23; 11:1, 12, 29; 12:2).²⁰⁴ Only one of these 19 instances could possibly be a reference to Jesus’s brothers (11:1), but there is no reason to interpret it as such. Furthermore, of the 35 uses of ἀδελφός in Acts after 12:17 (13:15, 26, 38; 14:2; 15:1, 3, 7, 13, 22, 23, 32, 33, 36, 40; 16:2, 40; Acts 17:6, 10, 14; 18:18, 27; 20:32; 21:7, 17, 20; 22:1, 5, 13; 23:1, 5, 6; 28:14, 15, 17, 21), not one has the brothers of Jesus specifically in view.

In light of this data, it is highly unlikely that the narrator of Acts was referring to the brothers of Jesus at Acts 12:17 or that the audience would have recognized this as a reference to them. Even slighter is the chance that Luke’s readers would have understood the term as a reference to an established leadership group of Jesus’s brothers. In Acts 12:17 ἀδελφοί is most likely a reference to the church of Jerusalem at large. The whole church was to be told the report of Peter’s miraculous release from prison.

3.3.3 James and oἱ ἀδελφοί

That oἱ ἀδελφοί is not a leadership term in Acts, nor a reference to the elders, nor a reference to Jesus’s brothers in Acts 12:17 weakens the argument that James is mentioned in the verse alongside his co-leaders. It is nevertheless unsurprising that advocates of James’s leadership in the Jerusalem church already prior to Acts 12:17 have alluded to this possibility, for their interpretation would benefit from such conclusions. Conversely, because such arguments for the meaning of oἱ ἀδελφοί must be rejected, the view that James already led the church at Acts 12:17 is weakened as well.

²⁰³ Painter, Just James, 44. On this point Painter is not conclusive.
²⁰⁴ We include both singular (only 19:17 and 12:2) and plural instances.
3.4 Does the Naming of James in Acts 12:17 Signify His Leadership over the Twelve?

Painter’s position recognizes (correctly, in our view) that the report from Peter to James in Acts 12:17 does not contain information about Peter’s departure or about a leadership transfer. The report is, rather, that of Peter’s miraculous release. On the other hand, this view takes the fact that James is the only named recipient of the report as an indication that he was already the primary leader of the Jerusalem church. According to Painter, it is most natural to understand the report as that to a leader.

If 12:17 were to be studied in isolation from the narrative that has preceded it, then this would appear to be a suitable explanation for the verse. However, this interpretation is clearly at odds with the information regarding the leadership of the Twelve that has pervaded chs. 1–11 of Acts. It is simply not possible to negate the leadership of the Twelve in Jerusalem (all along) on the basis of Acts 12:17 alone.

Painter suggests that James’s leadership was hidden by Luke (cf. again sect. 3.1.1) and this would, for Painter, explain why it is only at 12:17 that the true nature of the Jerusalem church leadership slips out. However, if Luke was trying to cover up James’s leadership in the Jerusalem church, then why would he allow it to be exposed here? Certainly Acts 12:17 would have been the easiest of places for Luke to downplay James; Luke could simply have left James unmentioned. Painter claims that Luke could not cover-up James because of his prominence, but certainly at least at Acts 12:17 he could have left out James altogether had he so wished. But that he does not indicates that Luke chooses to name James here. He is not trying to cover-up James’s name, but to bring it up.

Returning to the issue at hand, does the naming of James as the recipient of the report indicate that he was now the leader of the community? It is characteristic of Lukan style to conclude an episode by mention of a report being told to others.205 This occurs in Luke 24:9 (the women report the empty tomb and the angelic encounter to the eleven); 24:35 (the two disciples who walk with Jesus to Emmaus go back and tell the apostles), Acts 4:23 (Peter and John go back to the others and report the threats of the chief priests); 9:27 (Barnabas reports Saul’s experiences to the Jerusalem apostles); 11:4 (Peter explains to the apostles and disciples of Judea why he went to Cornelius’ house; and 12:17 (The church is to be told of Peter’s miraculous escape from prison).206

What is common to all of these instances is that some characters have experiences that would naturally not have been known to the others due to the simple fact that the others were not present. Either important events occur out in the open or, if they do not, Luke clarifies to the readers that the rest of the church was told. It is as if Luke wants to make sure that everyone is “on the same page.” This reporting is no doubt an important way for Luke to emphasize the unity and solidarity of the church.

In none of these instances of reporting is there any indication that leaders specifically are to be told what has transpired. Acts 12:17 is the only instance of these reports in which one recipient (James) is singled out from the others (the brethren). Therefore, to argue that the naming of James there is an indication that he was now the main leader is an argument from Acts

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206 See also Luke 8:34, 36, 47; 24:9.
12:17 alone and not from any established convention in Luke-Acts. Being as it is that Peter, and not James, has been the most prominent leader of the Jerusalem church up to this point, it is highly unlikely that Luke’s readers would have taken the simple mention of James’s name to indicate that James, in fact, was Peter’s leader. Another reason must be found for the naming of James.

3.5 Summary of Chapter Three

Luke presents the twelve apostles as the principal witnesses to Jesus’s life and resurrection and, consequently, as the central characters around which the church in Jerusalem is built. Peter and the apostles are not missionaries only, but clearly leaders of the believers in Jerusalem. In contradistinction, James is not portrayed as a leader of the Jerusalem church in any capacity until Acts 12:17. That is, unless the reference there is to the apostle, son of Alphaeus.

The thesis advanced mainly by John Painter, that James was the local leader of the Jerusalem church from its inception, does not fit the Acts data. Clearly it is not the picture which Luke attempts to communicate to his audience. Such an explanation for Acts 12:17 can only be achieved if Acts is made to conform with other documents.
CHAPTER FOUR

WHICH JAMES IS LUKE REFERRING TO?

The majority of Acts commentators and James scholars base their interpretation of James’s role in Acts 12:17; 15:13–21 and 21:18–25 on the surmise that the James mentioned in these verses was not one of the apostles, the son of Alphaeus (Acts 1:13), but James the “brother of the Lord” mentioned in Gal 1:19.207 This conclusion cannot be reached from Luke-Acts for though Luke mentions the brothers of Jesus once in passing in Luke 8:19–20 and lists them among the early disciples in Acts 1:14,208 he does not name any of them anywhere. Since Luke had the names of the brothers of Jesus available at Mark 6:3, it appears that leaving them unnamed was a willful decision of the author of Luke-Acts.

It is the purpose of this chapter to critically examine the evidence given for this common identification of the James in Acts 12:17 as the brother of the Lord. The remainder of the chapter will pay attention to Luke’s treatment of his characters. How does Luke distinguish between characters of similar names? How does Luke introduce new names into his narrative? What clues does Luke’s wider narrative give to the identity of James? Finally, a reason for the naming of James in Acts 12:17 will be proposed.

4.1 Survey of Literature

Two primary arguments lead scholars to identify the James of Acts 12:17 and later as the brother of Jesus. The first is the fact that Luke refers to James without further qualification in Acts 12:17. The absence of any explanation as to his identity is interpreted as an assumption on

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208 Luke had the names of the brothers of Jesus available at Mark 6:3.
Luke’s part that his audience would have known which James he was speaking of. Samuel Brandon’s remarks are illustrative:

This first unqualified reference to James is surely significant, and it must undoubtedly be interpreted as indicating that the author was so conscious of the fame of James that he naturally assumed that his readers would immediately understand his unheralded and unexplained appearance here as a preeminent personage in the primitive community.

So similarly Jacob Jervell: “Wenn Lukas seine Personen introduziert, gilt dies meist solchen, die umstritten und nicht von allen anerkannt sind, so vor allem Paulus, dessen Bekehrung dreimal erzählt wird, Apg 9, 22 und 26. Jakobus ist aber eine solche Autorität, dass eine Introduktion überflüssig ist.” Charles Williams also considers it “significant that Luke can assume that his readers did not need to be told when or why James succeeded Peter,” and C.K. Barrett writes, “Luke apparently assumes that his readers will know, without any explanation, who James is.”

In principle the inference that Luke expects his audience to know which James he is referring to is likely correct; James is mentioned in the verse in passing as if it were obvious which James is in question. However, in terms of identifying which James is meant, this argument is a non sequitur. Two apostles named James have been mentioned in Acts previously and one of them has just died (Acts 12:2). Did Luke expect his audience to know that he was referring to a new character, a brother of Jesus, or did he expect them to recall the other apostle named James, the son of Alphaeus? Given this question, it is quite surprising that some commentators at Acts 12:17 simply inform their readers that this was the “brother of Jesus” without even noting that Luke himself does not identify him as such or without confronting the problems of this identification.

The second argument to identify the James of Acts 12:17; 15:13–21; and 21:18–25 as the brother of Jesus is based on a comparison of Acts 15 and Gal 2:1–10. Both sections contain an account in which Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem regarding the question whether Gentile converts should be circumcised. Both accounts also mention a James as one of the key decision-makers. However, in terms of identifying which James is meant, this argument is a non sequitur. Two apostles named James have been mentioned in Acts previously and one of them has just died (Acts 12:2). Did Luke expect his audience to know that he was referring to a new character, a brother of Jesus, or did he expect them to recall the other apostle named James, the son of Alphaeus? Given this question, it is quite surprising that some commentators at Acts 12:17 simply inform their readers that this was the “brother of Jesus” without even noting that Luke himself does not identify him as such or without confronting the problems of this identification.

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makers (Gal 2:9; Acts 15:13–21). The reference is apparently to the same James.\textsuperscript{216} Furthermore, this James of Gal 2:9 and 12 is usually identified as James the brother of the Lord, mentioned earlier in 1:19.\textsuperscript{217}

Luke does not in Acts 12:17 or at any point afterward indicate that he is referring to James the brother of Jesus, but the conjecture that this James is meant is made possible in that Luke does not spell out which James he is referring to. But this last statement is only a half-truth, for Luke does have conventions for (a) identifying his characters and (b) for separating characters with similar names from each other. The question is whether it is most natural, on the basis of Acts, and on the basis of Luke’s literary conventions, to identify the James of Acts 12:17 and afterward as a new character in the narrative, or as the previously named son of Alphaeus.

Perhaps because the identification of James as the brother of the Lord both in Acts and Galatians has been taken to be secure, few scholars portray any sense of need to form an argument in its defense on the basis of Acts itself. In fact, Jamesian and Acts scholars have occasionally noted that, as Jervell writes, “An uninformed reader might naturally identify the James who appears in the second part of Acts with the second apostle, James the son of Alphaeus.”\textsuperscript{218} Richard Bauckham concurs. “A reader of Acts who did not know who James was, on reading 12:17 could only assume, incorrectly, that the reference is to James the son of Alphaeus.”\textsuperscript{219} The comments of Jervell and Bauckham admit the problem—that Luke nowhere speaks of James the brother of Jesus as such. However, they apparently solve it by attributing a lack of clarity to the author at Acts 12:17.\textsuperscript{220}

However, Bauckham makes his own explanation for the identity of James in Acts 12:17 quite a bit more difficult when he, in his Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church, states:

> The preservation of all four names of the brothers of Jesus in Matthew and Mark indicates that all four brothers were well-known figures in the early church . . . I regard it as a good general rule — not without exceptions — that where the early Gospel tradition preserves the names of characters in the Gospel story (other than those of public figures


\textsuperscript{218} Jervell, People, 199 n.1.

\textsuperscript{219} Bauckham, James, 434 n.63

\textsuperscript{220} This solution to the question is quite old. Over a century and a half ago Michael Baumgarten (The Acts of the Apostles [Trans. A.J.W. Morrison; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1854]), wrote: “As James, the brother of John, had been removed from the number of the Apostles, then in a different combination things it would have been the most obvious course to look upon the James thus brought before us without any further description as being the other James who, in distinction from the son Zebedee, is usually described as the son of Alphaeus. Especially as from other passages of the New Testament besides the one now before us, it appears that after the decease of James, the son of Zebedee, one James alone is in anyway remarkable in the times of the Apostles. Now with the ideas usually entertained of the efficiency of [Luke’s] labours, it becomes almost necessary to hold that this James was the second Apostle of that name. However, in the course of our narrative we have found it more than once necessary to correct these ideas, and essentially to modify them . . . “ (1:326). Baumgarten goes on to explain why, in light of his interpretation of history, the most likely candidate for this James is the brother of the Lord (1:326).
such as Pilate and Caiaphas), these named people were Christians well known in the early church. In circles where they ceased to be known, their names often dropped out of the tradition (e.g. the name Bartimaeus, given in Mark 10:46, is dropped in Luke 18:35, doubtless because Luke’s readers would not have known the name.\textsuperscript{221}

Similarly, with regard to the variations of named women present at the cross and tomb of Jesus in the different Gospels (cf. Matt 27:55–56; Mark 15:40–41; Luke 23:49), Bauckham states, “It is natural to suppose that the evangelists name different women, who for some reason were prominent in their own traditions, as representative of the group of women disciples. Thus Luke names Joanna, who features in his special tradition at Luke 8:3. Salome appears only in Mark . . . evidently she was not well-known in Matthew’s church, and so he drops her name and at 27:56 substitutes ‘the mother of the sons of Zebedee.’\textsuperscript{222}

The obvious trouble especially with Bauckham using Luke’s Gospel as an example here is that the author of Luke-Acts also omits entirely from his source (Mark 6:3) the names of the brothers of the Lord. If anything, this line of argumentation would suggest that the brothers of the Lord may not have been well-known among the addressees of Luke-Acts. When the name James does appear in Acts 12:17, this character is not identified as a brother of Jesus.

This brings us to one further explanation given for the non-identification of James by V. George Shillington, who writes, “The assumption that this James was so well known that Luke did not have to identify him is flawed. An important figure in the tradition would be more likely to be identified as such to distinguish him from all the other James figures that might come to mind.”\textsuperscript{223} According to Shillington, “Luke knew very well the pedigree of this James: he is the brother of the Lord Jesus, and son of Mary.”\textsuperscript{224} The reason Shillington proposes for Luke’s silence as to the identity of James the brother of the Lord is that “Paul must increase, but James must decrease.”\textsuperscript{225} That is, for Luke to reveal to the audience that James was Jesus’s brother “would give him an identity of such proportion that Paul’s stature would be diminished.”\textsuperscript{226}

Shillington’s argument works only if the audience of Acts did not know who this James was.\textsuperscript{227} Yet Shillington himself is certain that the James meant is the brother of the Lord.\textsuperscript{228} Therefore the narrator of Acts hid this information from his audience. It appears that Shillington’s perspective would entail the following: (1) \textit{exegetically speaking} James is not in Acts portrayed as the brother of the Lord, but (2) \textit{historically speaking} he is nevertheless the brother of the Lord. However, if the first point is indeed true, then the (remaining) evidence for the second point must also be critically reevaluated.

We turn now to the evidence of the named characters in Luke-Acts. The following sections evaluate the likelihood that Luke was unclear at Acts 12:17 as to which James he was

\textsuperscript{222} Bauckham, \textit{Jude and the Relatives}, 12.
\textsuperscript{223} V. George Shillington, \textit{James and Paul: The Politics of Identity at the Turn of the Ages} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 56.
\textsuperscript{224} James and Paul, 56–57.
\textsuperscript{225} James and Paul, 57.
\textsuperscript{226} James and Paul, 61.
\textsuperscript{227} Although at one point he suggests that Theophilus “possibly” knew James’s identity (James and Paul, 55).
\textsuperscript{228} James and Paul, 56–57.
referring to. Perhaps the “natural” identification of James in Acts 12:17 as James of Alphaeus was the one intended by the author.


This section displays some of the results of a read-through and listing of all the characters in Luke-Acts. The purpose of this examination was to find characters that share names with each other and to discover if and how Luke makes distinctions between characters. The names from Luke-Acts that are shared by more than one character are listed below, with the exception of the Jameses. These are followed by some observations as to Luke’s treatment of characters with shared names.

Herod
- Herod the Great (Luke 1:5)
- Herod Antipas (Luke 3:1, 19, 20; 9:7, 9; 13:1; 23:7, 8, 11, 12, 15)
- Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1, 6, 11, 19, 21, 23)

John
- John from high priestly family (Acts 4:6)

Joseph
- Joseph, member of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:50, 55)
- Joseph called Barsabbas, also called Justus (Acts 1:23)

Mary
- Mary, mother of Jesus (Luke 1:27, 29, 30, 34, 38, 39, 46, 56; 2:5, 16, 19, 22, 34, 39)
- Mary called Magdalene (Luke 8:2; 24:10)
- Mary, Martha’s sister (Luke 10:39, 42)
- Mary of James (Luke 24:10)
- Mary, mother of John called Mark (Acts 12:12)
Simon/Simeon
Simon, at temple when Jesus was baby (Luke 2:25, 28, 34)
22:7, 31, 34, 54, 55, 58, 60, 61; 24:34; Acts 1:13, 15, 20; 2:14, 37, 38; 3:1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12;
4:1, 3, 7, 8, 13, 19, 23; 5:15, 29; 8:14, 17, 20; 9:32, 34, 38, 40; 10:5, 9, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19,
21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32, 34, 44, 45, 46, 48; 11:2, 4, 13; 12:3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17,
18; 15:7, 14229)
Simon Zealot (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)
Simon, a Pharisee (Luke 7:40, 43, 44)
Simon from Cyrene (Luke 23:26)
Simon, a sorcerer (Acts 8:9, 12, 13, 18, 24)
Simon, a tanner (Acts 9:43; 10:6, 17, 32)
Simeon called Niger (Acts 13:1)

Philip
Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (Luke 3:1)
Philip the apostle (Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13)
Philip of the Seven (Luke 6:5; 8:5, 6, 13, 26, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40; 21:8)

Judas
Judas of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13)
Judas, at whose house Paul was (Acts 9:11)
Judas called Barsabbas (Acts 15:22, 27, 32)

Ananias
Ananias the liar (Acts 5:1, 3, 5)
Ananias, a disciple (Acts 9:10, 12, 13, 15, 17; 22:12)
Ananias, high priest (Acts 23:2, 4, 5, 6; 24:1)

Barsabbas
Joseph called Barsabbas, also called Justus (Acts 1:23)
Judas called Barsabbas (Acts 15:22, 27, 32)

An examination of these characters in Luke-Acts reveals that despite the many similar
names, it is virtually impossible to confuse any of them with each other. This does not happen
without effort and so Luke adds necessary information to ensure that such confusion does not
occur. His primary way of doing this is to provide the reader with a second name for characters
who share a name with others. For this he uses the passive forms of καλέω (Luke 6:15; 8:2; Acts
15:22).

What is most significant for this thesis is that Luke only gives additional names for
characters who share one or more of their names with other characters. Conversely, Luke does
not provide additional names for any characters in his narrative, unless they share at least one

229 James refers to Peter in this verse as Simeon.
name with other characters within Luke-Acts. This suggests that Luke was not concerned to distinguish the characters of Luke-Acts from persons outside of his writings that the readers may have known. It appears that Luke’s sole purpose in providing additional names for his characters was to ensure that they were not confused with each other.


It is also noteworthy that characters that have previously been identified by an additional name or by some other detail to distinguish from other characters are referred to by a single name if it is clear that the reference can only be to that particular character. John Mark, for example, is named by two names in three instances (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:7) in which he could be confused with others of the same name. However, in three instances where such confusion is impossible and calling him by two names would be superfluous, Luke refers to him by a single name only (Acts 13:9; 15:35). This suggests that Luke is not determined to use two names for certain characters as a matter of course, but that he does so when confusion with other characters might be possible (compare also Luke 22:3 with Luke 22:4, 47, 48; Acts 15:22 with Acts 15:27, 32). When confusion is not possible, Luke does not provide the additional name(s).

Acts 12 itself gives evidence of Luke’s interest in keeping his characters distinguished from one another. Had he simply referred to “James” in Acts 12:2, one might have surmised that the brother of John was in view, for he had been the most prominent James in Luke-Acts until this point. But two Jameses have been mentioned and so Luke clarifies which one he is referring to in Acts 12:2, namely, James the son of Zebedee. Also Luke’s reference to “the house of Mary mother of John called Mark” (τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς Μαρίας τῆς μητρὸς ᾿Ιωάννου τοῦ ἐπικαλομένου Μάρκου) in Acts 12:12 indicates Luke’s ability to distinguish between the many Marys in Luke-Acts, on the one hand, and between this John and the apostle, on the other.

In light of these observations, it stands to reason that Luke had both the ability and will to distinguish between James of Alphaeus, mentioned in Acts 1:13, and the James of Acts 12:17 if he saw the need for it. Yet he does not. The most natural conclusion based on this analysis is that the reference is to the same character, the apostle, the son of Alphaeus. The only other character of the same name had died in Acts 12:2 and so no (internal) confusion would ensue if Peter were to refer to a fellow apostle by name only.\(^\text{230}\)

\(^{230}\)This is also our response to Shillington who makes much of the non-identification of James (according to Shillington, the brother of the Lord) in Acts 12:17. For Shillington the contrast that James the brother of John is identified in Acts 12:2, but that James the brother of the Lord is not in 12:17, indicates that Luke intentionally withheld the identity of the latter from his readers (James and Paul, 54–56). In truth, only two Jameses have been mentioned in the narrative up to this point and neither of them is the brother of the Lord. After James the son of Zebedee dies (Acts 12:2), there is no need to distinguish James of Alphaeus from other Jameses in 12:17. He is the only “James” to remain in Luke’s narrative. Others might argue that the brother of the Lord would be known to the readers of Acts from elsewhere and that therefore to identify him would be unnecessary (see sect. 4.1); however, Shillington has called this “assumption . . . flawed” (James and Paul, 56).

To help determine whether James in Acts 12:17 should be viewed as a new character, it is worthwhile to examine the author’s conventions of introducing other named characters in Luke-Acts. To be sure, Luke does usually introduce his characters; that is, he acknowledges with some measure of formality at the appearance of a previously unmentioned character that—indeed—a new character is in view. He does this by expressing at each character’s first appearance what “type” of person this is (man, disciple, Jew, prophetess etc.). Thus, for example, at Acts 5:1 Luke does not speak simply of “Ananias and Zaphira,” even though it is clear that characters with these names have not appeared before. Rather, Luke first refers to them as “a certain man named Ananias with Zaphira his wife,” which amounts to a simple introduction. Below are quoted all the instances in Luke-Acts where named (human) characters are introduced, as well as the information given about them at their introduction:

Luke 1:5 ἐν ταῖς ἡμέρασιν Ἰθρόδου βασιλέως τῆς Ἰουδαίας
“In the days of King Herod of Judea”

Luke 1:5 ἰερεύς τις ὁ ὄνομα Ζαχαρίας ἐξ ἑφραμικῶν Ἀβία, καὶ γυνὴ αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν θυγατέρων Ἀρων, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς Ἐλισαβέτ
“A priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth”

Luke 1:13 ἡ γυνὴ σου Ἐλισαβέτ γεννήσει υἱὸν σοι, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννην
“Our wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John” (introduction/prophecy continues through v. 17)

Luke 1:27 ἄνδρι ὃ ὄνομα Ἰωσήφ ἐξ οἴκου Δαυίδ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς παρθένου Μαρίαμ
“To a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary”

Luke 1:31 συλλήψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν
“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus” (introduction/prophecy continues through v. 33)

Luke 2:1 Καίσαρος Ἄυγούστου
“Emperor Augustus”

Luke 2:2 ἦγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρινίου:
“While Quirinius was governor of Syria”

Luke 2:25 ἄνθρωπος ἦν ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ ὃ ὄνομα Σιμεών, καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος δίκαιος καὶ ἑυλαβής
“There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout”
Luke 2:36 ἦν Ἀννα προφήτις, θυγάτηρ Φανουήλ, ἐκ φυλῆς Ασήρ: αὕτη προβεβηκὼν ἐν ἡμέραις πολλαῖς, ζῆσασα μετὰ ἀνδρὸς ἐτῆς ἐπτα ἀπὸ τῆς παρθενίας αὐτῆς.

“There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage.”

Luke 3:1–2 Ἐν ἔτει δὲ πεντεκαϊδεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ἡγεμονεύόντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ τεταραρχοῦντος τῆς Γαλιλαίας Ηρῴδου, Φιλίππου δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ τεταραρχοῦντος τῆς Ἰτουραίας καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας, καὶ Λυσανίου τῆς Ἀβιληνῆς τεταραρχοῦντος, ἐπὶ ἄρχερεσις Ἀννα καὶ Καίαρα.

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas”


“Of Herodias, his brother’s [Herod the tetrarch’s] wife”


“He [Jesus] entered Simon’s house”

Luke 5:10 Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην υἱῶν Ζεβεδαίου, οἱ ἔστησαν κοινοὶ τῷ Σίμωνι.

“James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon”


“A tax-collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth”

Luke 6:13–16 προσεφώνησεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκλεξέμενος ἀπ’ αὐτῶν δώδεκα, οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὄνομασεν, Σίμωνα, ὅν καὶ ὄνομασεν Πέτρον, καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην καὶ Φιλίππον καὶ Βαρθολομαίον καὶ Ματθαῖον καὶ Θωμᾶν καὶ Ἰάκωβον Ἀλφαίου καὶ Σίμωνα τὸν καλοῦμεν Ζήλωτὴν καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώτη, δὲ ἐγένετο προδότης: “He [Jesus] called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor”

Luke 7:36 τις . . . τῶν Φαρισαίων.

“One of the Pharisees” (named Simon later in v. 40)
Luke 8:2–3  καὶ γυναῖκές τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενείας. Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή, ἀφ’ ἡς δαιμόνια εἰπτὰ εξεληλύθει, καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου καὶ Σουσάννα καὶ ἑτεροί πολλαί, αἵτινες διηκόνοντο αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν υπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.

Luke 8:41  ἀνήρ ὁ ὄνομα Ιάρος, καὶ ὅποις ἄρχον τῆς συναγωγῆς ὑπῆρχεν  “A man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue”

Luke 10:38–39  γυνὴ δὲ τις ὄνομα Μάρθα . . . καὶ τῇδε ἦν ἄδελφη καλουμένη Μαρία  “A woman named Martha . . . she had a sister called Mary”

Luke 19:2  ἀνήρ ὄνοματι καλουμένος Ζακχαῖος, καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ἄρχιτον καὶ αὐτὸς πλοῦσιος  “A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich”

Luke 23:18–19  Ἄρα Βαραββᾶς: ὅστις ἦν διὰ στάσιν τινὰ γενομένην ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ φόνον βληθείς ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ  “Barabbas . . . (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder)”

Luke 23:26  Σίμων τινα Κυρηναίον ἐρχόμενον ἀπὸ ἀγροῦ  “A man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country”


Luke 24:13  δύο εἰς αὐτῶν  “two of them” (i.e. of the disciples; cf. v. 9; one is named Cleopas later in v. 18)

Acts 1:21–23  δεῖ συνελθόντων ἦμιν ἄνδρῶν ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ὃς εἰςῆλθεν καὶ εξῆλθεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς, ἀρξάμενος ἀπότομοι βαπτισματος Ἰωάννου ἐως τῆς ἡμέρας ἢς ἀνελήμφθη ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, μάρτυρα τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ σὺν ἦμῖν γενέσθαι ἕνα τοῦτον. καὶ ἔστησαν δύο, Ἰωσὴφ τὸν καλουμένον Βαρσαββᾶν, ὁς ἐπεκλήθη Ἰούστος, καὶ Μαθθαῖον.

“‘So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.’ So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.”
Acts 4:5–6 ἐπὶ τὴν αὔριον συναχθῆναι αὐτῶν τοὺς ἀρχοντας καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους καὶ τοὺς γραμματεῖς ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ {καὶ Αννᾶς ὁ ἀρχιερεύς καὶ Καίαφας καὶ Ἰωάννης καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ ὁ Σίμων ἐκ γένους ἀρχιερατικοῦ} “The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family”

Acts 4:36 Ἰωσήφ δὲ ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Βαρναβᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων . . . Λευιτῆς, Κύπριος τῇ γένει “There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas”

Acts 5:1 Ἀνήρ δὲ τις Ἀνανίας ὄνοματι σὸν Σαπφίρην τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ “A man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira”

Acts 5:34 τις ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ Φαρισαῖος ὄνοματι Γαμαλιήλ, νομοδιδάσκαλος τίμιος παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, “A Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people”

Acts 6:3, 5 ἐπισκέψασθε δὲ, ἀδελφοί, ἀνδράς ἐξ ὑμῶν μαρτυρουμένους ἐπὶ πλήρεις πνεῦματος καὶ σοφίας . . . καὶ ἐξελέξαντο Στέφανον, ἀνδρα πλήρης πίστεως καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ Φίλιππον καὶ Πρόχορον καὶ Νικάνορα καὶ Τίμωνα καὶ Παρμενᾶν καὶ Νικόλαον προσήλυτον Ἀντιοχα “Friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom . . . they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch”

Acts 7:58 νεανίου καλουμένου Σαῦλου “A young man named Saul”

Acts 8:9 Ἀνήρ δὲ τις ὄνοματι Σίμων προϊσπήρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ἐξηστάνων τῷ έθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας, λέγων ἔνας τόσον μέγαν “A certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great”

Acts 9:10 τις μαθητής ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὄνοματι Ανανίας “A disciple in Damascus named Ananias”

Acts 9:11 ἐν οἰκίᾳ Ἰουδᾶ “At the house of Judas”
Acts 9:33 ἄνθρωπον τινα ὄνοματι Αἰνέαν ἐξ ἔτον ὀκτὼ κατακείμενον ἐπὶ κραβάττου, ὃς ἦν παραλελυμένο
“A man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed”

Acts 9:36 Ἐν Ἰόππῃ δέ τις ἦν μαθήτρια ὄνοματι Ταβιθά
“In Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha”

Acts 9:43 τινι Σίμωνι βυρσεί
“A certain Simon, a tanner”

Acts 10:1 Ανήρ δέ τις ἐν Κασαρείᾳ ὄνοματι Κορνήλιος, ἐκατοντάρχης ἐκ σπείρης τῆς καλουμένης Ἰταλικῆς
“In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called”

Acts 11:27–28 Ἐπὶ Ιεροσολύμων προφῆται . . . εἷς ἐξ ἀυτῶν ὄνοματι Ἀγαβος
“Prophets came down from Jerusalem . . . One of them named Agabus”

Acts 11:28 ἐπὶ Κλαυδίου
“During the reign of Claudius”

Acts 12:1 Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεὺς
“King Herod”

Acts 12:12 τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς Μαρίας τῆς μητρὸς Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου Μάρκου
“The house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark”

Acts 12:13 παιδίσκη . . . ὄνοματι Ῥόδη
“A maid named Rhoda”

Acts 12:20 Βλάστων τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶν τοῦ βασιλέως
“Blastus, the king’s chamberlain”

Acts 13:1 ἤσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὔσαν ἐκκλησίαν προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι ὃ τε Βαρναβᾶς καὶ Συμεὼν ὁ καλούμενος Νίγερ, καὶ Λούκιος ὁ Κυρηναῖος, Μαναήν τε Ἡρώδου τοῦ τετραάρχου σύντροφος καὶ Σαῦλος:
“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul”

Acts 13:6–7 ἄνδρα τινα μάγον ψευδοπροφητὴν Ἰουδαῖον ὃ ὄνομα Βαρησσοῦ, ὃς ἦν σὺν τῷ ἀνθυπάτῳ Σεργίῳ Παύλῳ, ἄνδρι συνετῷ
“A certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man”
Acts 15:22 Ἰούδαν τὸν καλούμενον Βαρσαββᾶν καὶ Σιλᾶν, ἄνδρας ἡγομένους ἐν τοῖς ἀδέλφοις

"Judas called Barsabbes, and Silas, leaders among the brothers"

Acts 16:1 μαθητής τις . . . ὄνοματι Τιμόθεος, ὦ ὄνομας Ἰουδαίας πιστῆς πατρὸς δὲ Ἐλληνος

"A disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek"

Acts 16:14 τις γυνὴ ὄνοματι Λυδία, πορφυρόπωλης πόλεως Θυατείρων

"A certain woman named Lydia . . . from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth"

Acts 17:5 τῇ οἰκίᾳ Ἰάσονος

"Jason’s house"

Acts 17:34 τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπιστευσαν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπάγιτς καὶ γυνὴ ὄνοματι Δαμαρίς

"Some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris"

Acts 18:2 τινὰ Ἰουδαίαν ὄνοματι Ἀκύλαν, Ποντικὸν τῷ γένει, προσφάτως ἐληλυθότα ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας καὶ Πρίσκηλαν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ

"A Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla"

Acts 18:7 τινὸς ὄνοματι Τίτου Ἰουστοῦ σεβομένου τὸν θεόν, οὔ ἡ οἰκία ἦν συνομοροῦσα τῇ συναγωγῇ

"A man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue"

Acts 18:8 Κρίσπος δὲ ὁ ἀρχισυνάγωγος

"Crispus, the official of the synagogue"

Acts 18:12 Γαλλίσσων δὲ ἀνθυπάτου ὄντος τῆς Ἀχαίας

"When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia"

Acts 18:17 Σωσθένην τὸν ἀρχισυνάγωγον

"Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue"

Acts 18:24 Ἰουδαῖος δὲ τῆς Ἀπολλῶν ὄνοματι, Ἀλεξανδρεύς τῷ γένει, ἀνήρ λόγιος

"A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures"
Acts 19:14  a Jewish high priest named Sceva”

Acts 19:22  “Two of his [Paul’s] helpers, Timothy and Erastus”

Acts 19:24  “. . . A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis”

Acts 19:29  “Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s travel companions”

Acts 20:4  “He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Beroea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia”

Acts 20:9  “A young man named Eutychus”

Acts 21:16  “Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple”

Acts 21:31  “the tribune of the cohort” (named Claudias Lysias later in 23:26)

Acts 23:2  “High priest Ananias”

Acts 23:24  “Felix the governor”

Acts 24:1  “An attorney, a certain Tertullus”

Acts 24:24  “His [Felix’s] wife Drusilla, who was Jewish”
Acts 24:27  Διετίας δὲ πληρωθεὶς ἔλαβεν διάδοχον ὁ Φῆλις Πόρκιον Φήστον
“After two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus”

Acts 25:13  Ἀγρίππας ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ Βερνίκη
“King Agrippa and Bernice”

Acts 27:1  ἐκατοντάρχη ὁνόματι Ἰουλίῳ σπείρης Σεβαστῆς
“A centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius”

Acts 28:7  τῷ πρῶτῳ τῆς νήσου ὄνοματι Ποπλῖῳ
“The leading man of the island, named Publius”

The small, but important, observation to be made here is that at the first appearance of 111 of these 117 named characters Luke introduces them to the audience by means of some brief description (sometimes as simple as “a certain one”). In this way the entry of a new character into the narrative is clearly marked for the benefit of Luke’s audience.\(^{231}\)

The amount of biographical information given at the introduction of new characters seems to be dictated by necessity. Luke gives enough information about each new character in order for their role in the narrative to make sense. It is necessary, for example, to describe the condition of a sick or dead person before accounting for their healing. However, Luke’s tendency is to keep this information as brief as possible and so what is known of Rhoda (Acts 12:13), or of Alexander, that he was a Jew (Acts 19:33). No more is needed to understand their very limited roles in Acts. Nevertheless, the information that is provided indicates care on Luke’s part to ensure that the roles that his characters play are comprehensible from the start.

Only six named characters (excluding “James” in Acts 12:17) make their first appearance in the narrative without any additional information being provided to indicate what “type” of person they are. These are Simon (Luke 4:38), Judas (Acts 10:11), Claudius (Acts 11:28), John Mark (Acts 12:12), Jason (Acts 17:5–9), and Bernice (Acts 25:13). The names of four of these (Simon, Judas, John Mark and Jason) first appear to identify a house at which some part of the narrative occurred. When three of these (Simon, John Mark and Jason) later become actors in the narrative (i.e. more than just addresses), Luke does not re-introduce them. Furthermore, with respect to Claudius, since it was common to use the duration of an emperor’s reign to indicate the time at which some event occurred, Luke does not in Acts 11:28 emphasize the obvious—that the Claudius he is referring to is the emperor. We are left with the clear exception of Bernice (Acts 25:13) whom Luke does not introduce. However, the pairing of her name with that of King Agrippa would without further elaboration suggest that she is his companion.\(^{232}\)

On the other hand, it is normal for Luke to refer to characters by name only after they have been introduced into the narrative (e.g. Ananias is not continuously referred to as “a certain

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\(^{231}\) When characters within Acts introduce others to their audience, they do so (as one might expect) in a similar way. For example, Paul introduces Ananias to his hostile Jerusalem audience in Acts 22:12. Ἀνανίας δὲ τις, ἀνήρ ἐνλαβής κατὰ τὸν νόμον, μαρτυρούμενος ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν κατοικοῦντων Ἰουδαίων, “A certain Ananias, a pious man according to the Law, witnessed to by all the Jews living there” (cf. Acts 2:22; 9:11; 25:14, 19).

\(^{232}\) In light of this evidence, it is also difficult to accept Jacob Jervell’s explanation as to why James is not introduced in Acts 12:17: “Wenn Lukas seine Personen introduziert, gilt dies meist solchen, die umstritten und nicht von allen anerkannt sind, so vor allem Paulus, dessen Bekehrung dreimal erzählt wird, Apg 9, 22 und 26” (Apostelgeschichte, 335).
A disciple in Damascus named Ananias”). Two examples from Acts may suffice to establish this practice: First, Barnabas is introduced as “a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas” in 4:36, but he is subsequently referred to twenty-five times by his name “Barnabas” alone (cf. 9:27; 11:22, 25, 26, 30; 12:25; 13:1, 2, 7, 42, 43, 46, 50; 14:1, 3, 12, 14, 20, 23; 15:2 [twice], 12, 22, 25, 35). Second, Timothy is introduced as “a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek” in 16:1, but is subsequently referred to simply by his name (17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4)

Thus, aside from the six special instances mentioned above, a character in Luke-Acts referred to by name only has always been introduced into the narrative earlier. This rule holds true for the dozens of instances where the author refers to characters by name. Furthermore, this rule holds true even after named characters have been absent from the narrative spotlight for some time. For example, after his brief introduction at Acts 4:36–37, Barnabas is not mentioned until 9:27, but there by name only. Similarly, though John has last been mentioned in 4:23, he is mentioned by name only in 8:14. In these instances, and in general, Luke expects his readers to remember that when he refers to someone by name only, the character will have been mentioned earlier. On the whole, then, it is uncommon for Luke to introduce new characters into his narrative without some additional information, however brief. Luke’s common “a certain man named . . . ” is a way of acknowledging what would otherwise be obvious to a reader keeping track of names—that a new character is in view.

With reference to James in Acts 12:17, who is mentioned there only by name, these findings favor the viewpoint that James is not a new character. Certainly Luke does not make it obvious in any way, as he does at the introduction of almost all of his characters. Nevertheless, the exceptions mentioned above suggest that this possibility cannot be ruled out altogether. However, it is important to note that in contrast to the six “exceptions,” the issue with James in Acts 12:17 is compounded by the fact that James of Alphaeus is already in the pool of previously named characters. For this reason, Luke would have had all the more reason to indicate in some way that a new character was meant—but he does not. It is likely, then, that Luke intends the reader to understand that he is referring to James of Alphaeus in Acts 12:17.

An objection may be raised to the findings of this section in that James is in Acts 12:17 referred to by Peter, another Acts character, and for Peter to introduce James to the audience at this point would be unfitting and unnatural. That is, although James may be a new character, the reason why he is not properly introduced is that Peter, and not the narrator, is speaking. This notion suffers from the fact that this would be the only such occasion where a character first appears into the narrative in the speech of another character. Therefore, within Luke-Acts, there is no further evidence to suggest that this is how Peter’s reference to James should be understood. On the other hand, Acts characters do, on occasion, refer to previously introduced characters by name and in the third person, as in Acts 12:17 (15:14; 19:13; 23:18; 25:19). For this reason, the fact that Peter refers to James by name actually favors the viewpoint that a previously introduced character is in view, and not a new one.

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233 I am aware of only two exceptions to this rule: first, the high priest (ἀρχιερεύς) Annas who is referred to as such in Luke 3:2, and again as such the next time he is mentioned in Acts 4:6. Second, Aristarchus whom the author introduces again (i.e. reminds the audience whom he was) in Acts 27:2, although he has been mentioned previously (19:29; 20:4).

234 Aside from the angelic prophecies regarding John the Baptist (Luke 1:13) and Jesus (Luke 1:31).

235 It is more common for characters to directly address others by name (Luke 7:40; 22:31, 34; Acts 5:3; 9:34, 40; 26:24, 25).
The argument of this section (4.3) also suggests that the James mentioned in Acts 15:13 and 21:18 is the same as this James of 12:17. In all of these instances James is referred to by name only because confusion with the one other character with the same name is no longer possible (cf. Acts 12:2).

4.4 James of Alphaeus as a Character in the Acts Narrative

The above sections expounded on the “technical” issues related to Luke’s naming new characters and separating characters with the same names. A crucial experiment for the thesis presented thus far is the “narrative” test. That is, does the identification of James in Acts 12:17 and later as one of the apostles fit naturally into the story that Luke is telling about the early church? This section contains two parts: First, James of Alphaeus in relation to Peter and the other apostles. Second, Luke’s legitimization of significant Acts characters with special focus on the James of Acts 12:17 and later. The more detailed investigation of whether the identification of James as the brother of the Lord or as James of Alphaeus better fits the narrative of Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25 will be undertaken in the next chapter.

4.4.1 Peter and James of Alphaeus

It was mentioned above that James is in Acts 12:17 referred to not directly by the implied narrator, but by Peter—another Acts character. This fact is important from a narrative point of view as well. Based on what the narrator has communicated thus far regarding Peter and his acquaintances, there really is only one plausible choice for which James Peter could have meant. Luke has depicted Peter’s acquaintance with James of Alphaeus already from the time when the two of them were among the twelve disciples of Jesus—which from the viewpoint of Acts means that Peter has known James of Alphaeus for quite some time. Both of them belonged to the special Twelve who received the promises of Jesus regarding the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29–30). Together they witnessed Jesus’s resurrection and subsequently led the Jerusalem church (Acts 1). There is no indication that Peter’s concern for the group of “twelve” expressed in the beginning of Acts (1:15–26) diminishes in any way through the narrative. Luke depicts the apostles in Acts as a close group working in unison (Acts 5:12, 18; 6:2; 8:1, 14; 11:1–2).

James of Alphaeus has not been explicitly named since 1:13, but has been included in Luke’s “apostles” or “the twelve” (6:2). He has been a continuous actor in Acts alongside Peter, not individually but as part of a larger group. Obviously it was much more convenient for Luke to refer to a group, “the apostles,” rather than to name all twelve members at every reference. Yet, this literary convention should not hide the fact that in Luke’s portrayal Peter and James of Alphaeus have been coworkers in the Jerusalem church for close to a decade. In light of this, if consistent storytelling is to be expected from Luke at this point, then it is most natural that the reference from Peter’s mouth in Acts 12:17 is to his coworker, the son of Alphaeus. Again, this is the only conclusion that can be reached on the basis of what Luke has communicated to his readers of Peter’s acquaintances in Luke-Acts.236

236 In a similar vein, Simon J. Kistemaker finds an indication of closeness between James and Peter in James’s reference to Peter by his Jewish name Simeon at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:14). In his own words, “Probably the use of this typical Jewish name denotes a close relationship between James and Peter” (Acts [NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 550). Although Kistemaker identifies James as the brother of the Lord, it is arguable that such
Another line of argumentation can be added as to why the identification of the James in Acts 12:17 and afterward as the son of Alphaeus makes good narrative sense. All of the main characters of Acts—Peter and the Twelve, Barnabas, Stephen, Philip and Paul—have certain legitimizing characteristics in common. First, they are verbally approved of by previous leaders—the apostles by Jesus (Luke 22:28–30) and subsequent leaders by the apostles (6:5; 9:27–28; 11:22). Even Jesus was first approved by God to legitimize his ministry (Luke 3:22). Luke tries to make a case for a continuous chain of approval from God to Jesus to the apostles to other leaders. In the case of Paul this approval by the apostles takes place in two or three steps. First, subsequent to his conversion he is permitted to go “in and out” among the apostles (Acts 9:27–28). This does not yet fully validate his leadership role in the movement. Second, Barnabas’ act of fetching Saul from Tarsus is a significant sign of trust because Barnabas had been sent as a representative of the Jerusalem church to investigate and approve of the Gentile mission in Antioch (Acts 11:23–26). Thus, Barnabas’ trust in Paul signified the Jerusalem church’s approval of him. Most significantly, however, Acts 15 indicates the unanimous approval of all the apostles and elders of the mission of Paul.

Luke prescribes other legitimizing characteristics to his primary characters: They are all personally said to be, or to do some action “full of the Spirit” (πλήρης πνεύματος; Peter in 4:8; Stephen and Philip in 6:3, 8; Barnabas in 11:24; and Paul in 13:9). For Luke, the fullness of the Spirit empowers persons prophetically and so Luke wants to emphasize that these church leaders, who are also the central characters of Acts, act in prophetic capacity. Jesus—who was filled with the Spirit (cf. Luke 3:32; 4:1, 14)—was a prophet in many ways similar to OT prophets, as are the apostles and other church leaders in Acts. Similarly, Luke points out that Silas was also a prophet (Acts 15:32) just before Silas becomes Paul’s missionary companion (Acts 15:40). Luke considered it appropriate that the church be led by such Spirit-filled—prophetic—characters.

These prophetic leaders also work miracles (Jesus; Peter and the apostles in 5:12–16; Stephen in 6:8; Philip in 8:6; Paul and Barnabas in 14:3). For Luke, miracles were God’s way of validating the message or character of some person (Acts 2:22; 14:3). If the James of Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 is not the son of Alphaeus, it would be uncharacteristic for Luke to afford him an influential role at the Jerusalem Council—and thus in the Jerusalem church—without in any way legitimizing the role he plays. There is no indication of previous approval by the apostles of this (new?) character or of how he became a church leader.
leader (unless Acts 12:17 is thus interpreted). James is not said to be full of the Holy Spirit or working miracles. In short, Luke sees no need to legitimize James whatsoever, as he does other church leaders. This is especially peculiar since his ‘judgment’ is accepted at the Jerusalem Council by the apostles and elders (Acts 15:19, 22).

Conversely, this issue is not problematic if the James of Acts 12:17 and later is identified as James of Alphaeus. The apostles as a group have been approved by Jesus (Luke 22:29–30; Acts 1:1), have been said to be full of the Spirit (Acts 2:1–4) and have worked miracles in Jerusalem (Acts 2:43; 5.12). If James is identified as the son of Alphaeus, there would be no need for Luke to further legitimize his role at the Council. Though he has not individually acted in Acts previously, his legitimacy would not be questioned because he is one of the Twelve.

4.5 The Purpose of the Naming of James of Alphaeus in Acts 12:17

If the James mentioned in Acts 12:17 is James of Alphaeus, and if he is not (therefore) named in the verse for the purpose of introduction, then why does Peter refer to James at all? Based on the above observations and Luke’s literary methods, we propose a solution that has more to do with Luke’s literary conventions than with the history of the leadership of the Jerusalem church.

Luke has a tendency to prepare for later narratives early on. He sometimes includes details in earlier narratives that will only make more sense later. For instance, Luke sometimes names a character in a narrative section previous to the one(s) in which he will play a major role although the identification in the earlier narrative is, strictly speaking, unnecessary. Thus Barnabas is mentioned by name in Acts 4:36–37 in connection with the sale and sharing of property, but his precise identity at this conjunction benefits that narrative very little. It appears that Luke mentions him there to prepare for his more important role later on. Similarly, Stephen and Philip are mentioned in 6:5 as part of a financial assistance team in the Jerusalem church, but Luke does not seem to be interested in this ministry at all; rather, he is preparing for Stephen’s and Philip’s ministries in chs. 7 and 8 respectively.

Furthermore, what is the reader to make of this seemingly random comment interjected into the account of the stoning of Stephen, “The witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul” (καὶ οἱ μάρτυρες ἀπέθεντο τὰ ἰμάτια αὐτῶν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας νεανίου καλουμένου Σαύλου; Acts 7:58). The naming of Saul in this context adds little to the present account; actually, it rather distracts from what is happening with the main character, Stephen. Though Saul is only a curious side note in 7:58, Luke was preparing already for the later narratives in which he would play a more important role.

Another example is found in Acts 12 itself. The name of John Mark is included in an almost distracting manner when Luke writes, “[Peter] went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying” (Acts 12:12). Why does Luke mention at this point the names of John Mark, whose identity adds little or nothing to the present account? Luke included this detail in all likelihood because John Mark would soon become more of an actor in Acts (12:25; 15:37, 39).

Similarly Luke includes the curious detail in Acts 18:18 that before Paul left for Syria, he had his head shaved because of a vow (κειράμενος ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς τὴν κεφαλήν, εἶχεν γὰρ εὐχήν). In its present context, the detail appears unnecessary and one may well wonder why Luke included it there. However, later in the narrative this information is helpful because we find Paul


It is our suggestion that the passing reference to James of Alphaeus in Acts 12:17 may be for the purpose of preparing for the more important personal role he will play in Acts 15. Up to this time, James has not played an individual role in Acts, but he has only been included in the group of apostles. It appears that Luke simply chooses to “pull him out of the pack” at 12:17. This is the last suitable occasion before Acts 15 to do so because the intervening chs. 13 and 14 concern the travels of Paul and Barnabas and take place elsewhere.

This modest proposal conforms with the obvious—that Luke only mentions James in passing in Acts 12:17 and that Luke does not there explain why he chooses to highlight James specifically. On the one hand, the narrator wants to bring up the name and person of James and, on the other hand, does not yet explain for what reason. Obviously the reader is thus reminded of James’s importance in the Jerusalem church. But moreover, in terms of narrative technique, the passing reference to James prepares the reader for what is to come later—the Jerusalem Council.

This proposition can also be supported in that at the Jerusalem Council, Peter and James are the only two Jerusalem apostles who speak. As mentioned earlier, Acts 12:17 would have been an easy place not to mention James. But that James is (somewhat artificially) inserted into the narrative on the lips of Peter makes more sense when at the Council the two are found collaborating. In Acts 12:17 Peter refers to James; in Acts 15:14 James refers to Peter. These are the only two instances in Luke-Acts where members of the Twelve speak of each other by name. It appears to us the best explanation that Luke intentionally hints in 12:17 at some sort of specific significance for James in relation to Peter and the Jerusalem church, but does not yet expound on it. The reader must wait to find out.

Exegetically this explanation for the naming of James at Acts 12:17 is—if not very exciting—much less problematic than the others discussed in this thesis. It would certainly be in line with Luke’s literary methods in Luke-Acts at large. We readily concede that—like other explanations for the naming of James in Acts 12:17—this one cannot be proven to be the correct one. However, we propose it here as the one that is to us the most plausible.

4.6 Summary of Chapter Four

Although the majority of modern scholars identify the James of Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 as James the brother of Jesus, this conclusion does not arise inherently from Acts. It is, rather, an interpretation imported mainly from the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. Some scholars have acknowledged that it is more natural to identify the James of Acts 12:17 as James of Alphaeus; however, this possibility has not, it appears, been given much serious consideration.

The findings of this chapter demonstrate the difficulty (if not impossibility) of identifying the James of Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 as the brother of Jesus in light of Luke’s literary methods. In light of Luke’s methods of distinguishing characters with the same name from each other, of introducing named characters, and of keeping track of previously named characters, James of Alphaeus is most likely the person meant by Luke in Acts 12:17 and afterward. This identification fits well with what is indicated of James’s relationship to Peter prior to Acts 12:17, as well as in ch. 15. Moreover, this identification fits very well with the depiction of James as one of the “apostles and elders” at the Jerusalem Council who has the authority to offer a “judgment” on the matter of Gentile circumcision.
This would also explain why Luke omits from his source (Mark 6:3) the names of the brothers of the Lord. The brothers do not play any central role individually or collectively in Luke’s narrative and therefore to name them is unnecessary.

The ramifications of this conclusion for Acts scholarship are obviously far-reaching. The identification of James in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 as the brother of the Lord has led to much discussion and speculation about the role of the family of Jesus as leaders of the Jerusalem church. It has contributed to an understanding of a leadership transition from the Twelve to James and the elders, only to name one token matter of discussion.

In chs. 6–8 this finding mainly, alongside our other findings regarding James of Alphaeus in Acts, will be compared and contrasted with what is said of the Jameses of the Jerusalem church in other NT—and later—literature. With regard to Acts itself, this identification is, as we have sought to demonstrate, exegetically sound. However, from a historical-critical perspective, a crucial test for this thesis is whether it can find any support in other writings that refer to the Jameses.
CHAPTER FIVE

IS JAMES THE PRIMARY LEADER OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTS 15:13–21 AND 21:18–25?

A number of scholars take James the brother of the Lord to be the primary leader of the Jerusalem church at Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25. It is the purpose of this chapter to critically examine this viewpoint and to contrast it with the preceding findings of this dissertation. Beginning with a survey of literature, the chapter consists of two additional main parts: first, the wording of James’s “judgment” (Acts 15:19–20) and, second, contextual issues that illuminate James’s role at the Council. Special attention will be given to the interpretive import of the identification of James as the son of Alphaeus rather than as the brother of the Lord.

It should be kept in mind that the evidence of other NT books regarding the Jameses is intentionally bracketed out from this chapter. Luke’s narrative—and the character James—is examined first on its own terms and then this portrayal will be compared with other NT literature (ch. 7).

5.1 Survey of Literature

A wide spectrum of opinion can be found in commentaries on Acts, in literature about James, as well as in literature that examines leadership in the early church, regarding James’s role at the Jerusalem Council. For simplicity’s sake, this survey of literature divides the perspectives of various authors into two primary viewpoints: First, scholars who emphasize James’s primacy in the Jerusalem Church (i.e., that he was the main leader at the Jerusalem Council, and probably in the Jerusalem church altogether). Second, scholars who recognize James’s leadership position at the Council, but who relate this to the leadership of the apostles, or to some other factors (i.e. scholars who hesitate to ascribe to James outright leadership at the Council and in the Jerusalem church).

5.1.1 Scholars Who Emphasize the Primacy of James

Among Acts’ commentaries and literature written about James, the prevailing interpretation of Acts 15 is that James was the main decision-maker at the Jerusalem Council. Scholars refer to his leadership position in various terms. Some conclude that James was the primary leader of the Jerusalem church and, by extension, of all Christians at large. Others

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242 The arguments of chapter 3, section 7 are very pertinent to this chapter, but will not be repeated here.


244 Paul Barnett comments: “According to Paul, by c. 47, James’s name appears as the leading “pillar” of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:7–9; cf. Gal 2:11–14). This is confirmed by the book of Acts where James is the head not only of the Jerusalem members at the assembly but also of all who attended, including the Antiochene delegates.
who maintain the continuing leadership of Peter also, suggest that Peter may have been primarily a missionary, whereas James was more of a leader in practical matters. Others refrain from extrapolation, but maintain that James, at least, acted as the chairman of the Jerusalem council.

The two most common exegetical reasons given for this viewpoint are (1) that the requirements that James would have the Gentiles observe are accepted by the church as a whole, and (2) the emphatic terminology which James employs in Acts 15:19 (ἐγὼ κρίνω). We must differentiate between “exegetical” reasons and others, for it is not uncommon to find the leadership role of James at the Council to be explained in terms of his kinship with Jesus. But this is decidedly not an exegetical reason arising from Acts itself, for in Acts James is never identified as a brother of Jesus.

Jeffrey Bütz illustrates the first (exegetical) reasoning as to the foremost leadership role of James at the Council by focusing on the fact that James’s decree was accepted by the entire church:

James’s leadership is plainly demonstrated, which ironically suggests that it is more trustworthy than less. Luke is widely accepted as an advocate of Pauline doctrine, meaning that he had no reason to invent a situation where James had the final say and where his arguments carried the day. And James does indeed issue the final word on the matter in the so-called apostolic decree.”

Thus similarly Simon Kistemaker comments: “When Peter, Paul, and Barnabas have spoken, the leader of the Jerusalem church assumes the task of addressing the assembly and formulating a decision that meets the approval of the entire council. This person is James, the half-brother of Jesus, who succeeded Peter as head of the church (12:17) and who was highly respected for his authority (compare 21:17–19). When he speaks to the assembly, he literally has the last word.”

The second main reason why James is often seen as the primary leader of the Jerusalem church in Acts 15 is based on James’s own terminology in v. 19—more precisely, his words ἐγὼ κρίνω. Kistemaker comments on v. 19, “In the council, all eyes are fixed on James, who serves as the chairman. Everyone expects him to set forth a ruling to which they can agree (v. 28). James, then, summarizes the proceedings of the council and states emphatically: ‘I judge.’

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248 Bütz, *Brother*, 76 (emphasis mine).
250 Adamson, *James*, 21–22
He as their leader gives his audience a concise recommendation: ‘Do not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God.’

Kirsopp Lake and Henry Cadbury translate James’s ἐγὼ κρίνω as “I decree” and explain, “In the context this seems the probable meaning. It is the definite sentence of a judge, and the ἐγὼ implies that he is acting by an authority which is personal. For κρίνω cf. Lk. 6:37; 19:22; 22:30; Acts 3:13; 13:27; 16:4; 22:16; 21:25. It must, however, be admitted that the translation of ‘decree’ does not leave room for the possibility that κρίνω means no more than recommend, for it is certainly used with a less formal sense in Acts 13:46, 16:15, and 26:8.”

Paul Walaskay emphasizes the connection between James’s judgment and his leadership role: “After Peter, Paul, and Barnabas have finished speaking, James responded with a definitive judgment. This action suggests that he possessed singular authority in the Christian community.”

5.1.2 Scholars Who Relativize the Leadership Role of James

Other scholars hesitate to describe the leadership role of James in such straightforward terms. There are four main reasons for this. First, James’s role is related to that of the other leaders also depicted as present. Second, the nuance and authority of James’s ἐγὼ κρίνω are not immediately clear from the words themselves. That is, their meaning relies on the context, as Lake and Cadbury also recognized. Third, James could act as the chairman at this particular meeting without necessarily being the main leader of the Jerusalem church altogether. Fourth, James’s influence at this particular meeting may be indicative of his standing among Law-observant Christians.

F. F. Bruce exemplifies the first position in that, while not negating the importance of James at the Council, he relates James’s role to that of the other leaders depicted as being present. Thus, he does not refer to the “judgment” of James; rather, he refers to the instructions that James would want to be given to the Gentiles as “his considered opinion” and repeatedly as a “proposal.” Furthermore, Bruce does not appear to find James’s leadership role so singular as do other scholars. He writes, “James’s proposal commended itself to the Jerusalem leaders, and won the acquiescence at least of the Jerusalem church as a whole.”

C.K. Barrett, similarly, accentuates the importance of the other leaders at the Jerusalem Council, but especially that of Peter. With regard to v. 7, he writes:

Peter has a special right to be heard in this debate because, as all are aware, it was through him that the word of the Gospel . . . was first communicated to the Gentiles . . .

251 Kistemaker, Acts, 555.
252 Lake and Cadbury, Beginnings 4:177; Adamson translates κρίνω “as often, meaning to give judgment, decide, not merely vote” (James, 22); “decision” in F. Scott Spencer, The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 228;
255 Bruce, Acts, 312.
256 Bruce, Acts, 313.
The verse affirms the absolute priority if not the primacy of Peter in the Gentile mission. Luke, through Peter, makes clear that the Law-free Gentile mission originated within the apostolic tradition. Peter speaks first; it is not so clear as some think that James was now head of the Jerusalem church.\footnote{Barrett, Acts, 2:714–5.}

Second, Barrett would not agree with Lake and Cadbury’s translation of James’s ἐγὼ κρίνω. When commenting on v. 19, Barrett concludes somewhat moderately: “There is no further discussion after James’s speech, and though ‘I decree’ (Begs. 4.177) is too strong and perhaps does not catch the context correctly James is at least acting as a chairman and expressing in his own words the sense of the meeting. If Luke is right in the picture at which he hints James occupies in the assembly a position if not of pre-eminence at least of great prominence.”\footnote{Barrett, Acts, 2:729.} At question here is not only the meaning of κρίνω, but also of the significance of the personal pronoun ἐγὼ. As noted above, Lake and Cadbury identify its significance as follows, “the ἐγὼ implies that [James] is acting by an authority which is personal.”\footnote{Lake and Cadbury, Beginnings, 4:177.} However, F. F. Bruce translates ἐγὼ κρίνω, “I for my part judge.”\footnote{F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 299.} The purpose of the emphatic ἐγὼ would be to accentuate the fact that this was the way James (personally) saw that the matter should be decided—i.e. “this is my vote.”\footnote{Bruce, Acts: Greek Text, 299, emphasis added.} R.B. Rackham would agree: “It was really S. James’ own personal opinion or vote (sententia—the proper meaning of the AV sentence), important because he was chairman.”\footnote{R. B. Rackham, Acts (London: Methuen, 1910), 254 n.3.}

Third, it is quite common for scholars to use the term “chairman” to explain James’s role at the Council. This is an important difference with that viewpoint which sees James as the main leader of the church; James could be chairman of this particular meeting without being the primary leader of the church overall. But why the former without the latter? Why would James be honored as the chairman if he was not the main leader?

Fourth, R.B. Rackham explains why, in his view, James’s opinion was decisive: “He alone was able to carry the Hebraic majority with him.”\footnote{Rackham, Acts, 254; Similarly Zmijewski, Apostelgeschichte, 567.} This viewpoint would take James to be the leader, not necessarily of the entire Jerusalem church at this time, but rather of a more Law-observant branch of Jerusalem Christianity.\footnote{Darrell L. Bock states that “James . . . represents the Jewish Christian contingent in Jerusalem” (Acts, 502).} James would have had the authority to settle the matter because the believers who were Pharisees and thus Law-observant (15:5) would have acquiesced to him.

5.2 The Wordings of James’s “Judgment”/”Opinion” (Acts 15:19–20)

A chief piece of evidence for the view that James was the primary leader of the Jerusalem church at the Council is that his “judgment,” or “opinion,” is accepted by the whole congregation and put into effect in a letter sent to the believing Gentiles.\footnote{Cf. Barrett, Acts, 2:729; Luke Timothy Johnson, The Acts of the Apostles (ed. Daniel Harrington; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical: 1992), 264.} The key verses are Acts 15:19–20:

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\item \footnote{Barrett, Acts, 2:714–5.}
\item \footnote{Barrett, Acts, 2:729.}
\item \footnote{Lake and Cadbury, Beginnings, 4:177.}
\item \footnote{F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 299.}
\item \footnote{Bruce, Acts: Greek Text, 299, emphasis added.}
\item \footnote{R. B. Rackham, Acts (London: Methuen, 1910), 254 n.3.}
\item \footnote{Rackham, Acts, 254; Similarly Zmijewski, Apostelgeschichte, 567.}
\item \footnote{Darrell L. Bock states that “James . . . represents the Jewish Christian contingent in Jerusalem” (Acts, 502).}
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διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω μὴ παρενοχλεῖν τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐπιστρέφουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεύλαι αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀπέξεσθαι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ . . . Literally translated these verses read: “Therefore I judge (decide) not to trouble (to go on troubling) those from the Gentiles who are turning to God, but to command them to abstain from the pollution of idols . . . ” As far as the grammar goes, the two elements of v. 19 that have been most often debated about with regard to James’s role are the significance of the personal pronoun ἐγὼ, as well as the connotation of κρίνω, at the beginning of v. 19. Both of these will be examined in this section. However, a third element, not so often noted is that James pronounces his entire judgment/opinion in the first person singular.

5.2.1 The Meaning of κρίνω

κρίνω appears five times in Luke (6:37; 7:43; 12:57; 19:22; 22:30) and 22 times in Acts (3:13; 4:19; 7:7; 13:27, 46; 15:19; 16:4, 15; 17:31; 20:16; 21:25; 23:3; 23:6; 24:6, 21; 25:9, 10; 25:20, 25; 26:6, 8; 27:1). The essential meaning is to make a decision or verdict about something, but the nature of the matters to be decided, as well as the capacity in which the decision is made, have to be discerned case by case from the context.266 That is to say, to “judge” is not the ability of a judge or leader only, but can be a personal opinion of a matter.267 For example, Jesus teaches his disciples not to “judge” lest they be “judged” also (Luke 6:37). In this case, κρίνω most likely means to hold a negative personal opinion about another person. Also, Peter correctly “judges,” that is, solves and answers a question related to one of Jesus’s parables (Luke 7:43).

It is important to acknowledge the variety of the meanings of the verb κρίνω, if only for the sake of recognizing that the word alone cannot determine what sort of role James played at the council. The semantic range of κρίνω could mean that James was pronouncing a “judgment” that would be binding on others as well or, perhaps, that he was laying out a personal “opinion/solution” to the problem at hand. The context becomes determinative.

5.2.2 The Function of the Personal Pronoun ἐγὼ

As noted above, scholars differ on the purpose of the ἐγὼ in Acts 15:19. Lake and Cadbury take the force of the word to accentuate the authoritative leadership role that James (alone) had at this meeting, and in the Jerusalem church in general. So also Jervell: “Das vorangestellte ἐγὼ zeigt, dass hier die höchste Autorität der Gemeinde redet.”268 As has been noted above, Bruce, on the other hand, takes it to indicate that James is speaking on his own behalf, and thus expressing his “vote”: “I for my part judge” (emphasis added).269 It appears that Lake and Cadbury, on the one hand, and Bruce, on the other, draw polar opposite conclusions from James’s usage of ἐγὼ. Apparently Lake and Cadbury mean James to be stating something like, “Now that all others have been heard, I decide . . . ” whereas Bruce appears to mean James to say, “The way I would solve this issue is . . . ” In the first case, ἐγὼ would emphasize James’s authority in the matter over and above that of others; in the second, it would emphasize the

268 Jacob Jervell, Die Apostelgeschichte übersetzt und erklärt (Göttingen: Vandenhoec & Ruprecht, 1998), 396.
269 Bruce, Acts: Greek Text, 299
personal nature of what James is about to say—James recognized that the matter was not up to him only. Once again, the context must be carefully considered where the grammar itself can lead to varying conclusions.

It is worthwhile to note that James’s ἐγὼ κρίνω is part of his larger speech and a viable theory for the function of the emphatic ἐγὼ can be formulated when taken in context within the entire speech. That is, after calling for everyone’s attention in v. 13, James reiterates what Peter has said in v. 14. He then quotes the “prophets” in vv. 15–18, only to follow with, “I therefore judge/opine.” The effect is as follows, “Peter has recounted . . . the prophets agree with him . . . and therefore my judgment/opinion is.” By his use of διό, James indicates that his judgment derives from what he has stated about Peter and the prophets just prior.

This does not bring us much closer to discovering the capacity in which James pronounced his judgment/opinion, but it would suitably explain the purpose of the emphatic ἐγὼ as a transition from what Peter and the prophets had said to what James (“I”) now wishes to say. Furthermore, the use of ἐγὼ would imply that this was not merely some impersonal suggestion for others to think about, but a personal conviction or conclusion that James had come to. Whether or not James was able to decide the matter on behalf of everyone else, he would at least state clearly what he himself believed.

5.2.3 The First-Person Singular Wording of James’s “Judgment”/”Opinion”

Many English translations mask two exegetically significant facets of Acts 15:19: First, that James actually uses the first person singular form of κρίνω, and not the corresponding noun (i.e. not “my judgment is,” but rather “I judge/opine”). Second, that, strictly speaking, James speaks of the decision only in reference to himself and does not portray this as a suggestion to others (i.e. not “we should not trouble . . .,” but rather “I judge/opine not to trouble . . .”).

AV: “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them . . .”
NIV: “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult . . .”
ESV: “Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble . . .”
NASB: “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble . . .”
NRSV: “Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble . . .”

A more precise translation would be, then: “Therefore I judge/opine not to trouble [or “to go on troubling”] those from the Gentiles who are turning to God.” In fact, if vv. 19–20 were to be read without consideration for context, one might get the impression that James individually faced the opportunity to “trouble” (or to continue to trouble) the Gentiles, but that he now decided not to do so! Strictly speaking, he only makes the statement about himself.

But this also does not bring us much closer to determining James’s role at the Council because it could be interpreted in two ways: First, that because James was the primary decision maker (head?) at the Council, whatever he decided for himself would go for all; or, second, that James was expressing a personal judgment/opinion about the issue to be solved—this was the course of action that James personally had resolved to take.

In any case, it is clear from the grammar of Acts 15:19–20 why various interpretations have been drawn regarding James’s role at the Jerusalem Council. As noted above, the best chance of accurately understanding the emphasis of James’s wording is in the interplay with the context of the pronouncement. However, the most significant contextual oversight, from the
viewpoint of this dissertation, is to misidentify James as the brother of the Lord since there is no basis in the text of Acts for such an identification. If we are correct in that Luke identifies James as one of the Twelve, as we have argued in ch. 5 above, then this may better explain his “judgment” and why he pronounces it in the way that he does.

5.3 Contextual Considerations

The terminology of James’s speech does not, in isolation, indicate exactly what sort of leadership James exercised at the Jerusalem Council and church. Therefore, in this section various contextual clues will be examined: first, the kind of conference that Luke intends to display; second, the role of Peter at the Council; third, the possibility that James is leader of a more strictly Law-observant branch of Jerusalem Christianity; fourth, the identification of James in Acts as the son of Alphaeus, rather than as the brother of the Lord.

5.3.1 What Type of Meeting is the Jerusalem “Council”?  

In Acts 15:2, Paul and Barnabas are appointed by the church in Antioch to go up to Jerusalem to confer with “the apostles and the elders” about the matter of the circumcision of Gentile believers. The gathering which ensues in 15:6 and the following verses of Acts 15 is commonly and traditionally referred to as “the Jerusalem (or the Apostolic) Council.” This term is not used by Luke to describe the event and so we will refer to the occasion henceforth as the “Jerusalem Meeting” (or simply “Meeting”). So the question arises about Luke’s conception of this meeting or conference between the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and the two delegates from Antioch. The traditional label assumes a rather formal gathering but is that how Luke conceives of the gathering? What sort of meeting was it for Luke and what was James’s role in it?

An interpreter’s idea regarding the role of James at this meeting is inevitably related to the type of gathering that is envisioned. Here will be addressed especially the fairly common viewpoint that James acted as the “chairman” of the gathering. This position seems to be held by scholars who are hesitant to think of James straightforwardly as the main leader of the Jerusalem church, but who nevertheless attempt to account for the fact that James’s “judgment” is accepted. Therefore, if James did not render a “judgment” because he was the (continuing) leader of the church, then perhaps he was, at least, the main decider at this meeting—the chairman.

This hypothetical chairmanship of James is a detail that the reader would have to find “between the lines,” as Luke does not introduce James as the chairman or in any other clear way hint that he—or anyone, for that matter—held such a position at the Meeting. It is evident that James speaks last and that his “judgment” is accepted, but what this reveals about James is not clear. That he is chairman is only one possible explanation, and not a necessary one on the basis of the data. These details can be explained otherwise.

The idea of James as chairman illustrates that scholars have varying views with regard to the extent of the structure of the event. The very presence of a designated chairman would necessitate a measure of formality or organization to which those present would have agreed.

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Perhaps at the extreme of this line of thinking is Carsten Thiede who goes so far as to suggest structure to the level of “committees and/or sub-committees . . . to sift all the arguments.”

It may be somewhat anachronistic to find such formality at the Jerusalem Meeting so as to think that a chairman would have been selected to sum up the findings and to draw a conclusion. Several aspects of Luke’s portrayal of the Meeting arguably paint more of an ad hoc event without much organization or planning: First, according to Luke, Peter spoke only “after there had been much debate” (πολλῆς ὑμῖν ρήματος λαμβάνεις; Acts 15:7).272 The word ζήτησις is used earlier in v. 2 and paired there with στάσις to describe the original debate that Paul and Barnabas had with those who came from Judea to Antioch and posited that Gentiles could not be saved apart from the Law of Moses (v. 1). Luke’s comment that after Peter’s speech “the whole assembly kept silence” (Εσήκησαν δὲ πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος; Acts 15:12) enforces the image of the discussion that preceded Peter’s speech as not quiet—there was much debate.

Second, Luke continues to depict the gathering as a quite lively debate in that, after Paul and Barnabas finish their account (v. 13a), James must ask for the attention of his fellows, “My brothers, listen to me” (Ἀνδρεῖς ἀδέλφοι, ἀκοὐσάτε μου; v. 13b). On this basis, one could argue that Luke is not painting a picture of a well-organized event, but rather a moment-by-moment debate that could take many different forms. Both Peter and James must stand up and get the attention of the others in order to speak.

Third, the Meeting ends when the viewpoints of Peter and James have won the approval of those gathered together (v. 22). In the words of Tannehill: “The whole assembly’ participates in the decision in v. 22. Peter and James play important roles in the decision, but the scene gives the impression that their authority is informal—resting on the respect they have gained and lasting as long as they can persuade their fellow apostles and elders, and the assembly as a whole, to follow. The speeches in 15:7–21 are the necessary means of persuasion.”273 In Luke’s depiction, the Meeting does not end because the chairman sums up the findings and draws a conclusion, but rather because James renders his personal judgment/opinion on the matter, and one that “seems good” to the rest of the church (v.22, 25, 28). But this matter deserves closer attention:

5.3.1.1 James’s Decision, or the Decision of the Apostles and Elders?

As noted above, that James’s judgment/opinion was accepted by the entire congregation is sometimes taken to signify that he was the chief authority at the Council. However, this neat picture of one-person leadership is complicated in that already in Acts 15:2 the Antiochian church decided to take the matter to the “apostles and elders” in Jerusalem. The church was seeking a corporate decision and not that of an individual only. Accordingly, in v. 6 Luke reports that the “apostles and elders” gathered together to “look into” this matter.

Moreover after the speeches of Peter and James, Luke records that the “apostles and elders” as a group reached their decision (vv. 22–25). To express this, Luke repeatedly uses the word δοκεῖσθαι with dative, “to seem (good)” in reference to the “apostles and elders”: verse 22 (ἐδοξέω τοῖς ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις σύν ὅλῃ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ), verse 25 (ἐδοξέων ἡμῖν), and verse 28 (ἐδοξέων γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν). According to LSJ, this construction is used

in public resolutions and decrees, and therefore the sense of this use of δοκέω may be that the apostles and elders “resolved,” or “decided.”

In Luke’s depiction, we find the apostles and elders corporately gathering together to look into the matter (v. 6) and afterward, in conjunction with the whole church, coming to agreement (vv. 22, 25, 28). That James’s “judgment” appears in this context undermines the viewpoint that James alone had the authority to make a decision on the matter. If we leave verses 19–20 aside, this is not at all how Luke depicts the situation. Therefore James’s authoritative-sounding διὸ εἴγος κρίνω in v. 19 must be contrasted with Luke’s general portrayal of the Meeting as a corporate decision-making event. It seems that Luke wishes to emphasize plurality of leadership and solidarity in the making of this decision (cf. also Acts 21:25).

In his study of Peter and his role at the Jerusalem Meeting, Jack Gibson makes an important observation regarding the letter sent out afterward:

It is the apostles, brethren, and elders which sent out the decree to the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (15:23), noting that they do so unanimously (ὁμοθυμαδόν; 15:25). It is important to note here that none of the recipients of the decree outside of Jerusalem would have any notion from the wording of the decree itself that James had any more to do with this decree than the other apostles and elders. Rather, the recipients of the decree were to follow its stipulations because of the authority of the apostles and elders as a group, and not because of the judgment of any single individual.

This conclusion is ratified later in Acts 16:4 and 21:25 when Luke refers twice more to the Jerusalem Meeting. These “hindsight” illuminates how Luke wished to portray the decision-makers there. In 16:4, Paul and Silas travel through Phrygian and Galatian cities, and “they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem” (παρεδόθησαν αὐτοῖς φυλάσσειν τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων τῶν ἐν Ἰεροσολύμοις). James’s individual role is not emphasized, but rather the corporate “apostles and elders.”

This detail is demonstrated again in 21:25 where, after giving Paul some advice about how to alleviate Jewish skepticism regarding his respect for the Law, James and the elders recall their former advice to the Gentiles: “As for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols . . .” (περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἠθνῶν ἡμεῖς ἐπεστέλλαμεν κρίνοντες φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτούς τὸ τὰ εἰδωλολήθην . . .). This recollection is spoken in the first person plural; James and all the elders are portrayed as the speakers—and not James alone.

Therefore, Luke repeatedly emphasizes the corporate decision-making by the apostles and elders before (Acts 15:2), during (Acts 15:6) and after (15:22–28; 16:4; 21:25) the Jerusalem Meeting. Whereas it is true that James’s personal “judgment” regarding the Gentiles did indeed become the corporate “judgment” of the entire Jerusalem church, it would be exegetically imprecise to draw the conclusion that James was therefore the “head” of the Jerusalem church at this time, or that the decree sent to the Gentiles was “the decree of James.”

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275 Gibson, Peter, 233.
276 Contra Barnett, Jesus, 214.
277 e.g. Bruce Chilton and Deirdre Joy Good, Studying the New Testament: A Fortress Introduction (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), 68
Luke’s portrayal, James’s take on the matter was accepted because his solution “seemed good” to the larger group of leaders (cf. Acts 15:22–28).

We have argued that Luke gives so little information about the structure of the Jerusalem Meeting that various scholarly depictions of the event are possible. Luke simply states that various church leaders—and indeed, the church as a whole—gather to “look into” the matters (v. 6). There is much debate (v. 7) and the assembly is eventually persuaded by Peter and James (vv. 11, 19). The Meeting ends only after the church as a whole (v. 22) has found a suitable solution. In light of this, the exegetical evidence for James being the chairman is lacking. Luke certainly gives no clear indication that he occupied such a position. Both the authoritative tone of James’s “judgment” and the fact that James spoke last can be explained in terms other than that of chairmanship.

5.3.2 The Importance of Peter’s Speech in Luke’s Portrayal

The extent of the authority of James’s “judgment” in Acts 15:19 should also be contrasted with the role of Peter at the Jerusalem Meeting. As noted in ch. 2, several scholars have opined that by the time of the Meeting James had surpassed Peter’s leadership role at the Meeting.

However, in Luke’s portrayal of the events of ch. 15, Peter’s role at the Jerusalem Meeting is of vital importance. There are several reasons for this: First, Luke has up to this point portrayed Peter in Acts as Jesus’s first and foremost disciple, as well as the most prominent of the Twelve. Thus, from the literary standpoint of Acts as a presumably cohesive narrative, Peter certainly would be an appropriate person to be a key decider at the Meeting. Peter himself is aware of this, stating: “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers” (Acts 15:7). Regarding this verse, Barrett concludes: “The verse affirms the absolute priority if not the primacy of Peter in the Gentile mission . . . Luke, through Peter, makes clear that the law-free Gentile mission originated within the apostolic tradition.”

Barrett remarks also, “Peter speaks first; it is not so clear as some . . . think that James was now head of the Jerusalem church.”

Second, it is Peter’s speech that silences the objectors. Before Peter’s speech, there was much discussion (verse 7), but after his speech, “the whole assembly kept silence” (v. 12). A.T. Robertson points out that it was not only after Peter’s speech that the crowd was silenced, but because of it. Similarly Joseph Fitzmyer observes that “[Peter’s] speech is neither missionary nor kerygmatic, but rather a judicial or constitutive discourse, addressed to Christians, which enables the assembly to come to a doctrinal decision . . . Peter’s words still the debate; the silent acquiescence of the assembly conveys their decision.” In effect, then, Peter also offers a

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278 See again chapter 3, section 3 regarding the importance of corporate leadership to Luke.


judgment on the matter. The outcome of Peter’s speech in Acts 15 is similar to that of Acts 11:18, which reads, “When they [the Jewish believers] heard this, they were silenced . . .”

Third, the content of Peter’s speech is of utmost importance to Luke. For the narrator of Acts, the Cornelius incident was proof supreme that Gentiles could be saved through Christ (Acts 11:18) and that this salvation was given apart from Law observance (Acts 15:7–12). In fact, the salvation of Cornelius’ household has already been recounted to the reader twice in Acts 10:1–48 and 11:1–16. That Luke described the same event twice in short sequence, followed by a third time in Acts 15:7–11—and again as a reminder (by James) in Acts 15:13—indicates that the evidence given by Peter was very significant for the author of Acts.

Furthermore, Robert Tannehill observes that Luke develops here further the theme of salvation by grace (χάρις), a term that occurs in 15:11 where Peter concludes his speech with the words: “we believe that we will be saved through the grace (τῆς χάριτος) of the Lord Jesus, just as they [the Gentiles] will”:

The issue at hand leads Peter to draw a far-reaching conclusion about the basis of salvation. This conclusion applies to Jews as well as Gentiles. God has taught Peter through his experience with Cornelius that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by grace received in faith . . . The closest previous parallel is the end of Paul’s synagogue speech, where Paul speaks of the inadequacy of the law and says that in Jesus “everyone who believes is justified” (13:38–39). The thinking of the historical Paul about the law survives only in a much weakened form in Acts, but . . . the narrator intends to preserve Paul’s message of justification by grace through faith in these two passages. It is not a minor point, for 15:11 is the epitome of what Peter has been taught by God through his experience with Cornelius. It is also the central insight that should guide the Jerusalem church in its decision.²⁸³

Fourth, James relies on Peter’s speech to make his own verdict. He states, “My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets . . .” (Ἀνδρεὶς ἁδελφοί, ἀκούσατε μοι. Συμεὼν ἔχεικς τῷ πατρὶ τὸ θεὸς ἐπεσκέψατο λαβεῖν ἐξ ἐθνῶν λαὸν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. καὶ τούτῳ σωμαφώνουσιν οἱ λόγοι τῶν προφητῶν: Acts 15:13b–15a).

James first repeats Peter’s argument (verse 14) and then cites Scripture in Peter’s support (verses 15–18). Whatever James’s role was at the Meeting, his “judgment” agrees with what Peter had already demanded of the conferees.

Patrick J. Hartin places considerable weight on this detail just noted:

Many scholars have tried to argue that because James is the one to make the decision he has assumed Peter’s role in the Christian community. That cannot be inferred from this passage. James refers to Peter’s experience to justify the decision he has reached . . .

James acknowledges Peter’s position, especially if Peter is seen to be the apostle to the

circumcised as Paul acknowledges . . . Peter’s argument is the one to which the party of those demanding circumcision would more likely give attention. This supports the view presented here that Peter continues to enjoy his position of leadership as missionary to the Jews. As we have argued, he did not abrogate his position of leadership to James.²⁸⁴

Fifth, the general tenor of Peter’s speech is authoritative. Peter makes several comparisons between “us” (Jewish believers) and “them” (Gentile believers): That God gave both the holy Spirit (v. 8); that God cleansed the hearts of both (v. 9); that neither would be able to bear the yoke of the Law (v. 10); and that both would be saved by the grace of Jesus (v. 11). Peter himself clearly assumes these matters to be true and expresses no hesitation in expecting that everyone see his point of view. Especially in verse 10 he goes on the offensive, faulting the Pharisees (v. 5) with attempting to put a burden on the Gentiles that they themselves could not carry. Luke does not let on that Peter’s leadership role in the church has in any way diminished, much less ended.

5.3.3 James as Leader of Law-Observant Christians?

James is sometimes portrayed in scholarship as the “leader of the Law-observant faction” in the Jerusalem church.²⁸⁵ According to Gerhard Krodel, “In James . . . the Jerusalem church found a leader for the next two decades whose piety and fidelity toward the Law were acknowledged by everyone, and who enabled the Jewish Christian community to survive in Jerusalem.”²⁸⁶ From this viewpoint, James’s judgment would be effective because the Law-observant Pharisees would succumb to his decision.²⁸⁷

This viewpoint is built on two premises. First, that Jerusalem Christianity was segmented into more and less stringently Law-observant camps, and, second, that James is to be associated with the more strictly Law-observant viewpoint.

5.3.3.1 Hellenists and Hebrews in Luke’s Narrative

With regard to Luke-Acts, the common origin of this discussion is in Acts 6:1, where Luke for the first time refers to Hellenist (Ἑλληνισταί) and Hebrew (Ἑβραῖοι) Jews. This may simply be a reference to Greek-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Jewish believers. However, Walther Schmithals explores the significance of these terms a little further:

In the New Testament period ‘Ebraios is the name of the genuine Jew who is aware of his intimate bond with the traditions of his fathers, his national and his Palestinian home, even though he speaks the Greek language. ‘Ebraios is a “pure-blooded Jew” . . . Corresponding to this, a ‘Ellenistes is a man who knows that he is committed to the

²⁸⁴ Hartin, James, 66. Although we do not agree with Hartin’s division of labor whereby James is the organizational leader and Peter is the missionary, his observations regarding Peter’s significance at the Council are important.
²⁸⁶ Gerhard Krodel, Acts (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 216. Krodel justifies this view mainly on the basis of second century traditions (Hegesippus).
²⁸⁷ According to I. Howard Marshall, James “was regarded as a champion of a conservative Jewish outlook” (Acts, 251).
Greek way of life, whether he is a Jew by birth or even an Aramaic-speaking Jew. The word is derived from ‘ellenizein = to live like a Greek.’

Furthermore, “it seems probable that the men appointed [to care for the poor] were drawn from the Greek-speaking part of the church” and therefore Stephen also would have been a “Hellenist.” The reason for this observation here is that in Acts 7 Stephen is found making comments that appear critical of the Temple and of the Law. If he is representative of the “Hellenist” attitude in general, then this would suggest that some division existed among more and less Law-observant groups in the Jerusalem church.

However, Ben Witherington III has argued that Luke’s Hellenists did not denote a group that had fully or overtly accepted a “Gentile” way of life. In fact, Paul’s opposition in Acts 9:29 consists of Hellenist Jews, indicating that many of them were quite conservative in their Judaism. It is also not clear that Luke intended Stephen’s speech before the Sanhedrin to be indicative of the theology of a “Hellenist” faction in the Jerusalem church, especially in contrast to a supposedly more stringently Law-observant Hebrew faction. At least he does not overtly claim such.

Whether or not Luke knew such factions to exist in the Jerusalem church can be speculated about; however, this is arguably not what Luke wishes to emphasize—it is not the way in which Luke attempts to portray the Jerusalem church. Luke is keen to accentuate the unity of the church and so also this issue regarding the poor was rapidly solved with the appointment of the Seven. Peace was restored to the church (Acts 6:7).

Returning to Luke’s usage of the terms: Schmithals’ depiction for the Hellenists finds more support in Luke’s use of the term than his depiction of the “Hebrews.” That is, it is often difficult to discern whether by “Hellenist,” Luke means simply to describe the language spoken by the group (e.g. 9:29), or rather a Greek way of life (or ethnic identity). The latter seems to be a more reasonable meaning in several instances (cf. Acts 11:20; 16:1; 3; 17:4). On the other hand, Schmithals’ arguments with regard to the “Hebrews” does not find much support in Acts because for Luke the term “Hebrew” is clearly, and only, the “Hebrew dialect” in the other three instances in which he uses it in Acts (21:40; 22:02; 26:14). Given that these two terms occur together in Acts 6:1, it seems best to interpret Luke’s meaning simply as a reference to two languages in that verse. At this point in the narrative, Gentiles had not yet joined the group of believers and therefore the “Hellenists” were most likely Greek-speaking Jewish believers (cf. Acts 9:29).

In our view, Luke does not intend to portray the Jerusalem church as being divided

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288 Walther Schmithals, *Paul and James* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1963), 26–27; Greek culture had a significant influence on Palestine of the early first century. In fact, the area where Jesus and—probably—some of His disciples hailed was sometimes called “Galilee of the Gentiles,” [Matt 4:15] supposedly because of the predominance of non-Jewish elements there” (Albert A. Bell, *Exploring the New Testament World* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998], 28). In Jerusalem itself, the Greek way of life was gaining popularity: “Greek institutions like the wrestling schools and baths sprung up in Jerusalem itself. The wrestling school was built on the very temple hill (1 Macc. 1:14–15). And the Jews seem to have attended the places regularly. Some were so eager to blend in with their Greek overlords and neighbors that they resorted to surgery to remove the evidence of circumcision, which they could no longer hide when they stripped to exercise or bathe, as the Greeks always did” (Bell, *Exploring*, 27).


into various theological camps for a protracted period of time, but rather always portrays the church as united, after brief episodes of conflict, skepticism, or trouble (cf. Acts 5:1–11; 6:1–7; 11:1–18; 15:1–31).

5.3.3.2 Is James a Leader of a Law-observant Party in Acts?

In contrast to Peter or Paul, the narrator describes the individual leadership of James on two occasions only (Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25) and both of these are related to the Law. In both of these James shows a high concern for “Moses” (15:21; 18:21) and helps solve issues regarding the application of the Law (with regard to Gentiles in 15:13–21; with regard to Jews in 21:18–25). In this sense James is, in literary terms, a “flat” character.

However, the point we wish to make is that, as a Law-observant believer in Jesus, James personifies the norm of the Jerusalem church in Luke’s portrayal. In Acts 15:22, James’s viewpoint of the Law and Gentiles is accepted by the whole church. In Acts 21:18–25, James and the elders corporately encourage Paul to demonstrate his commitment to the Law (vv. 21–24). Not only are James and the elders advocates of the Law, but the multitudes of Jerusalem Christians are zealous for it (21:20). Therefore, in his stance on the Law, James appears to represent the Jerusalem church in general (as depicted by the narrator of Acts) and not only one faction.

5.3.4 The “Judgment” of James in Light of His Apostolic Identity

An argument has been presented above that James’s phrase, ἐγὼ κρίνω (v. 19) can carry various connotations and that its emphasis must be decided on the basis of the context. One part of the context which to our knowledge has not adequately been explored is the identification of James as one of the Twelve.

Modern commentators identify James as the brother of the Lord. If James is not one of the apostles, then there really is no prior context in Luke-Acts for this character (other than the brief mention in Acts 12:17). So whatever is determined of James must be done on the basis of his brief speech in Acts 15. Since James is found pronouncing a judgment regarding Gentile believers, and one that is accepted by the whole church, his role immediately appears very significant. But two more corollaries logically follow: First, if James is not identified as one of the apostles or elders, then this makes his powerful voice at the Meeting all the more remarkable—because it would be individual in nature. Second, if James exercises such powerful individual authority at this crucial event, then what is there to suggest that he does not hold a preeminent authority position in the church per se? Notice this line of argumentation in Jacob Jervell’s commentary on Acts 15:13:

Nach dem Bericht folgt eine Rede des Jakobus. Seine Person wird nirgends in der Apg introduziert. 12,17 erfahren wir nur seinen Namen und seine nicht näher definierte Rolle in der Gemeinde. So auch 21,18ff., wo er den wichtigen Vorschlag für die Anerkennung des Paulus in der Jerusalemer Gemeinde macht. Es ist für Lukas auch völlig überflüssig, Jakobus näher vorzustellen; es wird nicht einmal gesagt, dass er der Bruder des Herrn ist.

of attention to their widows in the provision made by the church for the poor; it has been noted that many widows came from the Dispersion to end their days in Jerusalem. They would not be able to work to keep themselves, and, if they had exhausted or given away their capital, they could be in real want” (Acts, 126).
Denn er ist der unbestrittene Leiter der Urgemeinde mit einer nicht anfechtbaren Autorität. So tritt er auch für Lukas hervor. Jakobus ist wie Paulus nicht den Zwölfen untergeordnet, sondern hat eine grösseere Autorität als sie. Und eben dieser Jakobus stellt den Antrag auf eine Entschliessung der Gemeinde.\(^{292}\)

As described in ch. 4, however, the fact that James is not introduced as the brother of the Lord can also be interpreted simply in that—in Luke’s depiction—he is not the brother of the Lord, but rather James of Alphaeus. If this identification be accepted, a markedly different interpretation of his role at the Meeting emerges. It is here suggested that this identification better fits (1) James’s very attendance at the Meeting (2) the relation of James’s speech to that of Peter, (3) the ability of James to “judge” on this sort of matter. Let us elaborate on these claims:

5.3.4.1 Who Is James and Why Is He Here?

As noted earlier, scholars have variously attempted to explain the presence of James at the Meeting for the reason that, if he is the brother of the Lord, his appearance at the Meeting is somewhat of a surprise. According to Mikeal C. Parsons, James is “the representative of the Jerusalem elders” (presumably on the basis of Acts 21:18).\(^{293}\) However, Witherington and Jervell point out that James is never in Acts identified as an elder.\(^{294}\) Perhaps for this reason, C. K. Barrett goes so far as to suggest that, at the Meeting James “seems to be merged with the apostolic group.”\(^{295}\)

Furthermore, the identification of James as the chief elder brings a discrepancy with his presumed foremost leadership role at the Meeting because in Luke’s portrayal, the apostles are consistently listed before the elders as the chief decision-makers (cf. 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4). From this viewpoint, one must assume a level of imprecision on Luke’s part in describing the persons and groups at the Meeting; however, Luke’s internal consistency in naming the apostles before the elders (i.e. never the other way around) speaks against this.

This interpretation depends, of course, on the identification of the term “apostle” in Luke-Acts with the Twelve and not some larger group. There appears no reason to think that for Luke the group of “apostles” ever included anyone except the Twelve, as he defines the term in Luke 6:13. There Jesus chose the Twelve, whom he also named apostles (Acts 1:2, 12, 26; 5:29). Only Matthias is said to be added to this group and no one else (Acts 1:26).

However, Kirsopp Lake argues that the term is consistently used of the Twelve in chs. 1–5 of Acts, but later the term includes others as well. But note his reasoning: “In Acts, after the beginning of chapter vi. the Twelve are not mentioned. The leaders of the Church are the ‘Apostles,’ but their head is James the brother of the Lord, not one of the ‘Twelve’”\(^{296}\). Thus, the only evidence that Lake gives for a different meaning for the term “apostles” in Acts 15 in

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\(^{292}\) *Apostelgeschichte*, 393–4.

\(^{293}\) Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 212. But note, for example, C. K. Barrett according to whom “There is no record of any contribution from the elders [at the Jerusalem Council]; the apostles (in Luke’s view) were the decision makers” (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Shorter Commentary* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002], 228.


\(^{295}\) Barrett, *Acts*, 2:712. According to Barrett, “Here [Luke] assumes the church order that he knows [i.e. that of the elders; cf. p. 712], adding in the apostles as, while they lived, the highest authority. It may be said that Luke, though he quotes only Peter, regarded them as the real decision makers; the elders listen and agree.”

\(^{296}\) Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings*, 5:40.
contradistinction to its earlier repeated and consistent use in reference to the Twelve is that James appears to be one of the apostles at the Jerusalem Meeting! Arguably, the identification of James as the son of Alphaeus explains this phenomenon better; James appears in Acts 15 as one of the “apostles” because he is one of the Twelve. This would also resolve Lake’s later apparent self-contradiction when he writes in the same commentary, “Was [James] an ‘Apostle’? According to Paul he certainly was . . . But he was not one according to Acts, which normally regards ‘Apostle’ as synonymous with the ‘Twelve.’”

We suggest that James’s presence at the Meeting is much better as one of the Twelve. Indeed Barrett is accurate in stating that James “seems to be merged with the apostolic group” because in Luke’s depiction he is one of the twelve apostles. According to Luke, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to seek the counsel of the apostles first and foremost, alongside the elders (Acts 15:2). If James is one of the Twelve, then his presence at the Meeting is not at all abrupt or surprising, but merely expected. And this is just the way Luke treats it. This also resolves any discrepancies between Luke’s repeated emphasis on the apostles as the chief decision-makers at the Meeting (cf. 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4) and James’s important speech. As one of the Twelve, James was one whose judgment Paul and Barnabas were sent to seek.

5.3.4.2 The Relation of James’s Speech (and Leadership Role) to that of Peter’s

As noted in the first section of this chapter, several commentators argue that James (identified as the brother of the Lord) has become the main leader of the Jerusalem church by the time of the Meeting. This would be indicated by the fact that James’s “judgment” is accepted by the whole church. But where does this leave Peter? He is no longer the main leader, it is argued. However, this is not at all apparent from Peter’s speech, as other scholars have noted. As noted above, the tenor of Peter’s speech could be described as authoritative and it causes the conference to become quiet (15:12). Indeed, James bases his judgment largely on Peter’s words (15:14–15).

These apparent inconsistencies are eased if both Peter and James are seen as members of the Twelve. If so, then Luke is not here interested in who is the (one) main leader because both of them are already members of that group of “apostles” which Luke consistently depicts as being the foremost leadership of the Jerusalem church (cf. Luke 6:13–16; 22:29–30; Acts 1:2, 8, 13–14, 17, 21–26; 2:14, 41–43; 4:3–4, 33–35; 5:2, 12, 18, 21, 28, 32, 42; 6:2, 4, 6; 8:1, 14, 25; 9:27; 11:1). This would well explain why both Peter and James can make such authoritative speeches at the same Meeting. Not surprisingly (for Luke), the two apostles agree with each other. James supports the position of Peter and offers some further practical solutions.

In this way a three-way harmony appears in Luke’s description of (1) the apostles, (2) Peter, and (3) James—that is, if James is identified as one of the apostles. Arguably, each of these better fits with Luke’s portrayal than alternate explanations: First, the apostles continue as the foremost decision-makers at the Meeting and their role has not been replaced. Second, Peter can still exercise his apostolic leadership role at the Meeting, as he has not been replaced by James. Third, as one of the Twelve, James can make his authoritative judgment without contradicting Luke’s portrayal of the foremost leadership of the apostles, on the one hand, and the continuing significance of Peter, on the other.

297 Beginnings, 5:55. An exception to this rule can be found in Acts 14:4, 14.
5.3.4.3 The Ability of James to Judge on the Matter

What is common to many commentators who take James to be the brother of the Lord is that they have to explain to their reader why James was the one to offer a judgment at the Meeting, but there simply is no inherent explanation found in Luke-Acts as to why the brother of the Lord should suddenly appear as such a “judge” at the Meeting. Conjectures are formed on the basis of outside sources. Jacob Jervell’s explanation, for example, as quoted above in section 5.3.4, is entirely without any basis in Acts.

The explanation offered here for James’s role at the Meeting relies on the identification of James as the son of Alphaeus. This identification carries with it a significant amount of pre-knowledge about James because he is one of the Twelve. The Twelve were appointed as apostles by Jesus (Luke 6:13–16), were given authority and power by Jesus (Luke 9:1–2), but, moreover, were “appointed” (διατίθημι) to “judge” (from κρίνω; 22:29–30) over all of Israel in Jesus’s kingdom. Note here the clear verbal link between Jesus’s promise, κἀγὼ διατίθημι ὑμῖν...καθήσεσθε ἐπὶ θρόνον τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς κρίνοντες τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, and James’s terminology at the Meeting, ἐγώ κρίνω μὴ παρενοχλεῖν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνων ἐπιστρέφουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν (Acts 15:19).

We have argued above (sect. 3.2.2), that the leadership role of the apostles (Luke 22:29–30) is a present reality among the believers—much like the messianic identity of Jesus. Therefore, in our view, the “judgment” of James of Alphaeus can be seen as a partial fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to the Twelve in Luke 22:29–30.

In contrast, Peter K. Nelson, in his in-depth study of Luke 22:24–30 rejects the correspondence between the terminology of Luke 22:30 and Acts 15:19 (κρίνοντες, κρίνω). However, the basis of his argument is that James is the brother of the Lord and not one of the Twelve:

It is true that the apostles in Acts deliver a “judgment” (from κρίνω) for the church in Syrian Antioch (15:1–35), and that Paul then applies this ruling in other cities as well (16:4). But there are two problems with seeing in the Jerusalem Council a fulfillment of Luke 22:30b: 1) The decision was not made by the apostles alone, but together with “the elders” (15:6, 22); 2) Strictly speaking, though Peter’s testimony in vv 7–11 would have been influential, it was James who delivered the decision (v 19, διό ἐγώ κρίνω) and he was not an apostle (cf. 12:2). It is acknowledged that Luke describes the apostles as recognized leaders in the Jerusalem church (4:35), respected teachers (2:42), and as having unusual power for their ministry (v 43). Nevertheless, it is only on this general level that a correspondence between Luke 22:29–30 and the church-age role of the apostles as described in Acts is seen. If Luke had intended vv 29–30 to correlate with the church age, a far stronger correspondence with the content of Acts could be expected. 299

Nelson’s “two problems” could be answered as follows on the basis of the interpretations offered thus far in this chapter: First, although the elders (and the whole church) join with the apostles in the decision-making, they are consistently portrayed by the narrator as having a secondary place to the apostles (cf. ch. 2.6.1). The narrator does not give place for the notion that

they are equal in their leadership role with the Twelve. Second, if James is the son of Alpheus, then the fact that he offers the judgment is no longer a “problem,” but, instead, an important piece of positive evidence for the viewpoint that James (and the Twelve) are in Acts 15:19 exercising (at least in some measure) the authority given them by Jesus in Luke 22:29–30.

5.3.4.3.1 James and the Tent of David

The present reality of Jesus’s reign among believers can be recognized in another part of James’s speech at the Meeting—the reference to the rebuilding of the “tent of David” (σκήνη Δαυίδ; Acts 15:16). According to the prophecy which James cites from Amos LXX 9:11–12 (in modified form), this “tent,” that had previously “fallen” to ruin would be “rebuilt,” “so that” (ὅπως) the remnant of mankind—the Gentiles—would seek God. But what does this “tent of David” symbolize?

Two prominent explanations recur in commentaries as to the symbolic significance of the “hut” or “tent”: First, that the “fallen” and “rebuilt” “tent” refers to Jesus’s death and resurrection and the resultant seeking of God by the Gentiles.300 This interpretation would be in line with Acts 2:30–31, 34–36 where David predicts that his descendant will be raised from the dead by God. However, the emphasis on this passage is not only on the resurrection of Jesus (the descendant of David) from the dead, but also on God raising the Davidic descendant to the right hand of God (2:33) as the Lord and Christ (v. 36) until his enemies be made his footstool (v. 36). Furthermore, as Tannehill points out, “Although the Septuagint twice uses the verb ἀναστήσω (‘I will raise up’), this verb does not appear in the version of Amos 9:11 in Acts. It is a verb used repeatedly in Acts of God’s resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:26; 13:33, 34; 17:31). The absence of this verb weakens the case of those who interpret the rebuilding of the hut of David as primarily a reference to Jesus’s resurrection.”301 A bodily resurrection on earth is clearly not only in view.

Second, a number of scholars take the “rebuilt” “tent” as a reference to a restored Davidic kingdom, the kingdom of Israel.302 The evidence for this would be as follows: First, according to F. F. Bruce, “The literal reference of the prophecy in Amos is to the restoration of the undivided kingdom of Israel, as in the reign of David.”303 Second, as Jakob Jervell emphasizes, the restoration of the Davidic kingdom is important and recurrent in both Luke and Acts: “Die Wiederaufrichtung der ‘zerfallenen Hütte Davids’ kann sich nur auf das davidische Königstum

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300 Talbert, Reading Acts, 131. It is not clear whether Talbert views the bodily resurrection as the complete fulfillment of the promise, or rather as the crucial point at which that restoration begins.

301 Tannehill, Narrative Unity 2:188. An objection might be raised here—that the judgment of James (Acts 15:19) regards the Gentiles, and not Israel, and therefore is outside the purview of Jesus’s covenant with the Twelve in Luke 22:29–30. However, the question brought originally to the Twelve and the elders regarded the potential subjection of Gentile believers to Circumcision—i.e. the Law of Israel (Acts 15:1,2; cf. Luke 22: 29–30). As one of the judges of Israel, James decides not to burden the Gentiles with Israel’s Law (Acts 15:19). However, James’s further proposed instructions to the Gentiles (Acts 15:20–21) do, arguably, venture a little outside of the sphere of judgment granted in Luke 22:29–30. Although it is true that James would impose these requirements on Gentiles (outside the sphere of Luke 22:29–30), the requirements themselves reflect Jewish concerns (inside the sphere of Luke 22:29–30).

302 Cf. Bruce, Acts, 310; Rackham, Acts, 253; Tannehill, Narrative Unity, 2:188–9; Peterson, Acts, 431. According to Darrell L. Bock, “The reconstructed booth of David, for James, portrays the place of the rule and benefits that come through the messiah, Jesus” and, “The passage [from Amos] declares the rebuilding of the dynasty of David” (Acts, 504).

303 Bruce, Acts: Greek Text, 296.
und das wahre Israel beziehen. Das ist für Lukas entscheidend schon von Luke 1–2 an und gibt auch den Auftakt zur Apostelgeschichte, 1,6.15–26; 2,29ff. Tannehill elaborates on this theme:

In major scenes in Luke-Acts Jesus is proclaimed as the fulfillment of the promise of a restored Davidic kingdom. This central theme cannot be ignored when James speaks of the rebuilding of the hut of David. This theme is repeated in the birth narrative (Luke 1:32–33, 69; 2:10–11) and is highlighted by Peter (Acts 2:30–36) and Paul (13:22–23, 32–34) in their sermons to Jews. The seating of Jesus on David’s throne and installation as royal Son of God have already taken place through Jesus’s resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God . . . However, the question of whether Israel has already been sufficiently incorporated into the messiah’s kingdom is not being discussed by James. The Scripture has been fulfilled because the Davidic heir has been installed as reigning Lord at God’s right hand. That is the primary point of Acts 15:16.

What is significant regarding this for the present study is that, in James’s depiction, the “rebuilding” (from ἀνοικοδομέω) of this “tent” has already taken place, or is at least presently occurring. This is logically true because the result of that rebuilding (that is, the seeking of God by the Gentiles, v. 17) is now taking place, according to James. From James’s point of view, then, the Davidic kingdom of Jesus has already been re-established in some real sense—even though Jesus has not returned to reign as the Davidic king (cf. Acts 1:6, 11). In light of Luke 22:29 this is important because there Jesus promises to the apostles, “I confer on [covenant to] you, just as my Father has conferred on [covenanted to] me, a kingdom” (dioptiēsmai ὑμῖν καθὸς διέθετό μοι ὁ πατήρ μου βασιλεῖαν). If James, as one of the Twelve, envisions in Acts 15 that the kingdom of David (given to Jesus by God; Luke 22:29) has already been rebuilt (or is in the process of being rebuilt), then would this not mean that the apostles also can assume their roles as “judges” within this kingdom (cf. Luke 22:30)?

Therefore the identification of James as one of the Twelve explains well why James can assume for himself the capacity to render a decision on the matter of circumcision, and also why the church accepted the judgment of James. In Luke’s depiction, two apostles had agreed on the matter and therefore it is perfectly fitting that the decision reached by these two apostles became accepted by the entire church (Acts 15:22). To sum up, if James is identified as the son of Alphaeus, then from a narrative perspective there is nothing surprising about James appearing at the Meeting in the first place and, moreover, from pronouncing an important “judgment” regarding the applicability of the Law of Israel to Gentile Christians.

304 Jervell, Apostelgeschichte, 395
306 Keener, Acts, 3:2257, proposes what might be called a “middle ground” view on the timing of the “raising” of David’s tent. That is, “Jesus’s enthronement as the raising of David’s house implies Israel’s restoration,” but the completion of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom is, according to Keener, eschatological. We have proposed a similar view of the rule of the apostles in sect. 3.2.2.
5.3.4.4 Chart of Identity, and James’s Role at the Jerusalem Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why Is James Present at Meeting?</td>
<td>Luke does not explain</td>
<td>He is one of the twelve main leaders of Church (Acts 15:2, 4, 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why can James “judge”?</td>
<td>Luke does not explain</td>
<td>This capacity is part of his apostolic role (Luke 22:29–30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is James’s Relationship with Peter?</td>
<td>Luke does not explain</td>
<td>Both are apostles, co-leaders (Acts 1:13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this chart is to illustrate why, from the perspective of this dissertation, the identification of James as the son of Alphaeus provides essentially an interpretive key to recognizing the role in which Luke wished to portray James at the Meeting. This identification results in an interpretation that is grounded in what Luke actually says about James, rather than on speculations regarding the brother of the Lord that are based on outside sources.

On the one hand, if the brother of the Lord is in view, then Luke leaves out much important information about this character. His readers would have had to know quite a bit about this person from outside the text in order to understand “correctly” what Luke intended to communicate about him. If so, then this would be inconsistent with the narrator’s treatment of virtually all other characters, regarding whom the narrator gives all necessary information to understand their roles in the narrative. On the other hand, if James of Alphaeus is in view, then Luke does just this—he provides all necessary information to understand James’s role at the Meeting. There is no need to consult outside sources to understand Luke’s narrative.

5.4 The Leadership of James in Acts 21:18–25

James is again mentioned by name in Acts 21:18. As noted above in this chapter, a significant number of scholars take James (the brother of the Lord) to be the primary decision maker at the Meeting, over and against the apostles and elders. Josef Zmijewski, somewhat contrastingly, sees James’s leadership role as emerging especially after the Jerusalem Meeting. In reference to Acts 12:17, he comments,

Da Petrus beim ‘Apostelkonzil’ . . . wieder in Jerusalem anwesend ist, denkt Lukas hier wohl erst noch an eine vorläufige und vorübergehende Ablösung des Petrus durch Jakobus in der Leitung der Urgemeinde. Erst nach dem ‘Apostelkonzil,’ mit dem nach Lukas die apostolische Zeit endgültig zu Ende geht . . . erlangt Jakobus in der lukanischen Darstellung die endgültige Führungsstellen in Jerusalem (vgl. 21,18), die er in der Tat wohl bis zu seinem Märtyrertod (62 n. Chr.) innegehabt hat. \(^{307}\)

\(^{307}\) *Apostelgeschichte*, 465.
Regardless of whether or not James is viewed as the main leader already during or before the Meeting, with regard to Acts 21:18–25 it is normal to find commentators portraying James there as the main leader of the Jerusalem church.308 Therefore, the “ascent to leadership” of James the brother of the Lord in Acts has been presented in three different varieties: (1) James was leader since the inception of the church, rather than the Twelve (Painter); (2) James became the primary leader in Acts 12:17 after the Twelve (Bauckham); or (3) James became the primary leader after the Jerusalem Meeting (Zmijewski).

Naturally, the identification of James as the son of Alphaeus, rather than as the brother of the Lord, changes significantly the interpretation of the role of the Twelve in the Jerusalem church after the Jerusalem Meeting. This would add a “fourth option” in terms of understanding the relative leadership standings of the brother of the Lord and the Twelve in the Jerusalem church. That is, James the brother of the Lord never (in the Acts narrative) becomes the primary leader of the Jerusalem church. The brothers of the Lord are mentioned only once as a group in the Acts narrative (1:14), but none of them are named. Therefore, James the brother of the Lord plays no individual role in either Luke or Acts. If Bauckham’s “good general rule” with regard to named and non-named characters (cf. ch. 4.1) is applied to James, then it is possible that James the brother of the Lord was not known by name to the audience of Luke-Acts.

Although the Apostles as a group are mentioned for the last time in Acts 16:4 with reference to the Jerusalem Meeting, the mention of one of them (James of Alphaeus) in Acts 21:18–25 suggests that the narrator of Acts is not concerned at any point to highlight their (potential) departure from Jerusalem, or the end of their leadership in the city. A reader may, of course, surmise this from the lack of mention of them in 21:18–25 and the inversely correlating emphasis on “all the elders.” Nevertheless, there is a difference between what the narrator of Acts overtly states and what readers may imply from the silence of the narrator on a certain matter. Exegetically speaking, the latter is, although not invalid, less secure than the former.

With regard to the identity of James, there is no new information about him to be found in Acts 21:18–25. The Twelve as a group are not mentioned and James is mentioned alongside the elders. Acts 21:18 reads, “The next day Paul went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present” (τῇ δὲ ἐπίσκεψις εἰσήγη ὁ Παῦλος σὺν ἡμῖν πρὸς Ἰάκωβον, πάντες τε παρεγένοντο οἱ πρεσβύτεροι). The verse does not clarify whether or not James should be seen at this time as grouped with the elders, perhaps as the main elder. However, in his study of the conjunctive τε in Acts, Stephen Levinsohn writes. “The elders (v 18b) are additional leaders to James, who was the goal of Paul’s visit of v18a. Paul (subject of v 18a) thus meets James plus (τε) elders.”309 Certainly the sentence does not demand that James is an elder (i.e. as opposed to being an apostle), which fact is significant in that nowhere in Acts prior to 21:18 has James been identified as such.310 Therefore Luke’s previous identification of James is not problematic for this verse.

308 Jervell, Apostelgeschichte, 523; Bruce, Acts: Greek Text, 391; Lake and Cadbury, Beginnings 4:270.
310 Richard Bauckham agrees: “In that verse [21:18] it is not clear whether James himself is one of the elders or not, but in any case he evidently occupies a position of distinctive importance” (Bauckham, “James,” in Acts [ed. Bauckham], 4:437).
5.4.1 Why is James Singled Out?

The most common interpretation for the singling out of James by name is that he is now the most important leader of the Jerusalem church. Jacob Jervell writes,

Wie sich Lukas das Verhältnis zwischen Jakobus und den Ältesten vorstellt, ist nicht leicht zu sehen. Jakobus scheint der absolute Leiter zu sein, und die Ältesten treten möglicherweise mehr als Ratskollegium an der Seite des Jakobus hervor. In der folgenden Erzählung redet ein Kollektiv, aber V 18 zeigt, dass Jakobus der Wortführer ist. Seine Autorität kommt klar zum Ausdruck. 311

This verdict is likely not only based on the singular naming of James, but also on the lack of mention of any of the apostles (that is, from the viewpoint that James is not one of the Twelve). F. F. Bruce writes, “James occupies a leading place in the Jerusalem church. From the absence of all mention of the Twelve, it is safe to infer that none of them was in Jerusalem at this time.” 312 But if James is one of the Twelve, then this view regarding their discontinued leadership role must be adjusted. Furthermore, if the naming of James here is approached from a narrative perspective (i.e. what benefit to the narrative is there to naming James here?) rather than from a purely historical perspective (what sort of leader was James in the Jerusalem church at this time?), the interpretation of the naming of James may change somewhat. In addition to the apostolic identity of James, three exegetical issues will be highlighted with regard to Acts 21:18–25, two of which caution against far-reaching interpretations regarding James in the passage, and one of which offers a narrative benefit to the naming of James:

First, the name of James appears first and foremost as the address at which the meeting of 21:18–25 takes place. The term εἰσείμι is used elsewhere in Acts only as a reference to physically entering a building (3:3; 21:26) and so εἰσήγη . . . πρὸς Ἰάκωβον probably means that Paul and his companions went to James’s home. The “we” character has in ch. 21 named two others whom “we” visited: In v. 8 Philip the evangelist (εἰσελθόντες εἰς τὸν Οἶκον Φιλίππου τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ) and in v. 16 Mnason (ἀγοντες παρ’ ὧν εξενισθόμεν Μνάσωνί . . . ).

Therefore it is technically possible that James is named in Acts 21:18 primarily for the historical/narrative reason that Paul went to visit him at his home. Of course this implies that to visit James was important for Paul. But even this could be explained in various ways: first, it is an indication that James was the primary leader of the church and for this reason Paul wished to visit him or, second, did Paul wish to visit James for the reason that James had been favorable toward Paul’s mission previously (cf. Acts 15:19) and Paul hoped to gain from this member of the Twelve another favorable audience? Both of these are unstated, and therefore only potentially correct, implied, meanings.

Second, although it is true that the meeting is portrayed as a somewhat official church gathering because “all” the elders are present, this does not negate the first argument above. That is, after the narrator has described that the meeting takes place in James’s home, James is dissolved into the larger crowd and does not play an individual role. The entire discussion is depicted as taking place between Paul and the plural “they”—i.e. all the elders (and James). James is not singled out as a speaker, in contrast with Acts 15:13–20.

311 Jervell, Apostelgeschichte, 523.
312 Bruce, Acts: Greek Text, 391.
Third, there is some useful narrative “added value” to naming James on this occasion. Luke obviously intends Acts 21:18–25 to be read in light of the previous Jerusalem narrative in Acts—the Jerusalem Meeting. This is indicated by the fact that in their instructions to Paul to alleviate his predicament with the Jews, James and the elders partly rehearse the requirements given to the Gentiles at the Meeting (v. 25). Obviously James was the originator of these ideas in Acts 15:19 and therefore naming him in this connection again is suitable. If in Acts 15 James (and the other apostles) and elders formulated an agreement regarding freedom from the Law for the Gentiles, now the same (aside from the other apostles) formulate a recommendation for Paul that indicates the continuing validity of the Law for Jews.

These three points presented here regard the extent of meaning that can be drawn from Acts 21:18–25 itself regarding the leadership role of James. These cautions aside, from a wider Acts perspective, it is not unlikely that James of Alphaeus may have been the most important leader of the Jerusalem church at the time of Paul’s visit—the preceding is not an attempt to disprove this. Certainly it was important for Paul to go and visit him, as Luke makes plain, and this fact alone speaks of his importance. Furthermore, since he appears to be the only of the Twelve present at this meeting (in contrast with the presence of “all” the elders), then, for the reason that the Twelve have been depicted as the foremost leaders of the church thus far, it would certainly fit Luke’s wider narrative that (in the absence of the other members of the Twelve) James was now the main leader.

5.5 Summary of Chapter Five

The role of James in the Jerusalem church cannot be decided solely on the basis of the content and wording of his speech at the Meeting. His “judgment” must be read in light of contextual considerations—but first and foremost on the basis of a correct identification of the literary character as the son of Alphaeus. This identification “rehabilitates” James into the larger narrative framework of Luke-Acts. If James is the brother of the Lord, then his appearance at the Meeting is surprising and must be carefully explained to (modern) readers by commentators. However, if he is James of Alphaeus, then both ancient and modern (ideal) readers would immediately recognize why he is present at the Meeting and why he is able to offer a judgment regarding this question. Furthermore, James is the only named member of the Twelve in Acts 21:18–25 and this highlights his importance in the Jerusalem church during that time.
INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO OF DISSERTATION

The preceding chapters consisted of an investigation of those passages in Acts where a James is mentioned (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13–21; Acts 21:18–25; but excluding Acts 12:2 because the reference there is clearly to James the son of Zebedee). The most far-reaching finding was that the author in all likelihood intended James in these passages to be identified as the son of Alpheus, who is mentioned explicitly in the list of apostles in 1:13 (cf. Luke 6:15; Mark 3:18; Matt 10:3). This would imply that, according to Luke, the well-known and important church leader named James was not the brother of Jesus, but rather one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus.

This finding obviously makes for a rather different reading of James in Acts than that reading which identifies James as the brother of the Lord, known to us from Gal 1:19. According to this latter viewpoint, James of Alpheus is one of whom nothing is known other than his membership among the Twelve, whereas the brother of the Lord is the primary church leader in Jerusalem until his death in the year 62, as reported by Josephus (Ant. 20.200). Furthermore, all passages in the Pauline epistles that mention the name James are thought to refer to the brother of the Lord; he is either actually or pseudonymically the author of the epistle of James; and he is referred to in the epistle of Jude.

For the reason that our findings regarding James of Alphaeus in Acts are in such stark contrast with this viewpoint, the second part of this dissertation will re-examine the data regarding the Twelve, the brothers of Jesus, and the Jameses in particular in the remainder of the NT. The option that James of Alpheus might be in view in some Pauline epistles, for example, should be given adequate reconsideration. To illustrate, the notion that James of Alpheus might be meant by Paul in 1 Cor 15:7 has sometimes been dismissed simply by the assertion that James of Alpheus was not well-known. However, in light of our findings with regard to Luke-Acts, such argumentation must be called into question. We find in Acts sufficient evidence to contradict such claims and for this reason, a thorough re-examination of the NT evidence is necessary.

If it be accepted that the purpose of exegesis is to understand and appreciate an author’s intended meaning, then such exegetical inquiry may find itself at odds with historical inquiry. That is, an exegete is searching for the intended meaning of a given author, but it is possible that such an ancient author as Luke was confused about historical issues and persons, or was intentionally giving a misleading depiction of the same. In fact, it is not uncommon for such historical “confusion” to be attributed to Luke; of course, Luke’s integrity as a historian has also been vigorously defended. In any case, with regard to the Jameses in Luke-Acts this means that, from a narrative and exegetical point of view, the most natural identification of James in Acts is that he is James of Alpheaus. But is this historically plausible?

313 See chapter 7, section 1.
Our approach to the NT and later evidence regarding the brothers of the Lord, the Twelve, and the Jameses in particular will be as follows: We will attempt to (1) examine the relevant data on its own terms, but (2) take as one possible explanation for the data that, especially in those instances where a James is mentioned by name only, that James of Alphaeus may be in view. In short, the aim of this second part is to ask whether Luke’s depiction of James of Alphaeus could be historical.

As we have seen in Part One, to be able to identify the James mentioned in Acts 12:17 (and thereafter in 15:13 and 21:18) as the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve apostles (Acts 1:13, 26; 6:2), instead of as “the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19), it was necessary to take into consideration what was said regarding the brothers of Jesus and the Twelve collectively both prior to and after Acts 12:17 (cf. e.g. sect. 3.4.2). For the same reason, to be able to identify the Jameses mentioned in the remainder of the NT, i.e., to determine whether the brother of the Lord or the son of Alphaeus (or perhaps some other James) is in view, it will be necessary to take into consideration collective references to the brothers of the Lord and the Twelve.
CHAPTER SIX

THE BROTHERS OF JESUS AND THE TWELVE APOSTLES IN THE GOSPELS

The Gospels depict the life and ministry of Jesus and the latest event which any of them describe is Jesus’s ascension. Acts is the only work of its kind in the NT that in a narrative form describes the lives of some of Jesus’s followers after the ascension. For this reason the Gospels cannot overtly confirm in description any of the information of Acts because they concern themselves with an earlier time. However, in the Gospels we find programmatic information regarding the role of Peter, for example. His importance as a leader among Jesus’s followers became obvious after Jesus’s ascension (cf. Acts 1–2; Gal 1:18; 2:9), but there is ample evidence in the Gospels that this role was already anticipated and prepared for by Jesus (i.e. Jesus as depicted in the Gospels).

Furthermore, the fact of the existence of multiple Christian accounts of the ministry of Jesus indicates the pursuit of early Christian authors to give their own (more or less variant) depiction of the beginnings of the Jesus movement. This is clear from the preface to Luke’s Gospel (1:1–4); he was aware of other accounts, but nevertheless composed his own, utilizing those other sources. This urgency to write several Gospels even if much of the material is recycled may be explained in part by varying theological and historical viewpoints between the Gospel writers and/or their communities. These variations are especially visible in those instances in which the same historical events from the life of Jesus are described. Therefore, later developments that are of concern to the author and/or the readership of the Gospels influenced the depiction of Jesus and his followers as well.316

The bulk of this sort of research seems to have been directed at describing the varying theological and/or christological emphases of the communities that produced the various Gospels. An obvious example would be the “higher” Christology found in the Gospel of John. However, the same rationale can be applied toward persons and leaders described in the Gospels. For example, when compared with other Gospels, it may be suspected that the elevated depiction of Peter in the Gospel of Matthew (16:13–19) is not so much a dispassionate historical account, but probably reflects to some extent the high regard in which the author/editor of Matthew, as well as his community, held the apostle. Therefore theories may be developed—and have been—regarding the special importance of Peter for Matthew and his community.317

In this line of thinking, the Gospels may provide “clues” as to the importance (at the later time of writing) of certain characters who, perhaps, at the time of the events described were not yet significant. Such “clues” are not necessarily overt, but may include a certain way of portraying a given character. Such investigative work has been applied to the later importance of the brothers of Jesus in the church.318 Similarly, theories have been developed about Mark’s critical attitude toward the Twelve (see below). Whereas he promotes them on the one hand, he seems to be portraying them negatively in other passages. But what is the purpose of such

negativity? Is Mark, while describing the Twelve and their relationship to Jesus, simultaneously making the case for a post-ascension abandoning of their authority by him and/or his community.\textsuperscript{319}

6.1 The Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark contains two passages in which the brothers of Jesus are mentioned (3:20–35; 6:1–6). John Painter argues against a reading of Mark that takes the family to be portrayed in a negative light. For this reason, his comments will receive special attention in the study of the passages to follow. Furthermore, the portrayal of the Twelve in Mark will be examined.

6.1.1 Mark 3:20–35

Mark 3:20–21 and 3:31–35 contain a pericope in which members of Jesus’s family (οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ) seek to restrain him because they think that he is “out of his mind” (ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη). The two parts of the pericope “sandwich” an appearance by the scribes from Jerusalem who argue in a similar vein that Jesus operated by the power of Beelzebul (vv. 22–30). William L. Lane summarizes the majority interpretation regarding the family of Jesus in Mark 3:

The insertion of the incident involving the scribes from Jerusalem between the earlier and later phases of the family narrative is deliberate. It suggests that those in Jesus’s family who declare that he is mad (ch. 3:21) are not unlike the scribes who attribute his extraordinary powers to an alliance with Beelzebul, the prince of the demons (ch. 3:22). The parallel is sharply emphasized by Mark’s formulation of the charges against Jesus in verses 21 and 30:

Verse 21 “for they [his family] said, He is beside himself.”
Verse 30 “for they [the scribes] said, “He has an unclean spirit.”\textsuperscript{320}

\textsuperscript{319}Goulder, “Those Outside.”

John Painter argues that the reference to οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ is to the Twelve, and not to the family of Jesus (\textit{Just James}, 23). His strongest point, in our opinion, is that the family of Jesus has not been mentioned until this point and therefore a reader might confuse the οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ with the disciples who were with Jesus in the previous pericope. Yet, at least three crucial weaknesses undermine his case: First, one of the main arguments for identifying οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ with the family of Jesus is that it would make a typically Markan “sandwich” out of 3:20–21 and 3:31–35, with the intervening vv. 22–30 as “filler.” Painter quotes three authors (Guelich, Gundry and Cranfield) who recognize the sandwiching, but then argues against them: “The notion of the sandwich structure implied that 3:20–21 introduces 3:31–35; that without 3:20–21, 3:31–35 is introduced abruptly and without adequate preparation...the notion that the abrupt introduction of the family in 3:31 is overcome by 3:20–21 is strange” (\textit{Just James}, 23). Yet, in none of the quotations do the authors suggest what Painter here argues against as the specific function for the first part of the “sandwich” (3:20–21) (i.e. that it serves as an introduction for the family so that they are not abruptly introduced in 3:30–35), but these authors all recognize more generally that (1) 3:20–21 is typically Markan and (2) that it would identify the family of Jesus (3:31–35) as the οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ.
Robert H. Stein concludes similarly,

Mark makes no attempt to explain whether the action of Jesus’s family is due to sincere but misguided concern or whether it is hostile in nature. Regardless, Mark portrays the family of Jesus in this verse as outside the fellowship of Jesus’s followers. The unbelieving status of Jesus’s family will be developed more fully in 3:31–35 and by its association in this Markan sandwich with 3:22–30.321

These findings are significant with regard to the later role of James of Alphaeus and James the brother of Jesus as church leaders. With regard to the brother of Jesus, Roy B. Ward claims, “What also emerges after the writing of Paul are two trajectories, one which provides the basis for James’s leadership in the early church (Luke-Acts) and one which provides no such basis (Mark, Matt) or even polemicizes against it (John).”322 We wish to draw attention here to Ward’s acknowledgments regarding Matthew, Mark and John, having already countered his evaluation of Luke-Acts above. James or any other members of Jesus’s family simply do not appear as leaders in Matthew or Mark, nor is any indication given that they might become such later on. In this matter, Mark and Matthew are in agreement with Luke-Acts (contra Ward).

6.1.2 Mark 6:3–4

The family of Jesus is mentioned again when Jesus goes to visit his hometown (Mark 6:1–6). His family and acquaintances there are initially impacted by Jesus’s wisdom and stories of his miracles; however, they are distracted by the fact that they know Jesus in terms of his earthly family ties—he grew up there (v. 3). They respond: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of

Second, according to Painter, it is the crowds who are saying that Jesus is “beside himself” and as a reaction to the crowds, the οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ (i.e. the Twelve) attempt to restrain Jesus (Just James, 27–28). But Painter cannot make any significant argument that the crowds were the ones evaluating Jesus negatively (Just James, 26). Furthermore, the text itself gives no reason to think that those evaluating Jesus negatively and those going to restrain him were different groups.

Third, that the crowds suddenly would have a negative attitude toward Jesus is another weakness in Painter’s argument. In the preceding narrative the crowds had gathered to Jesus because he was performing miracles (cf. especially 3:8) and surely they collect around him for that reason again. At this point in the narrative the crowds are a positive sign of Jesus’s ability. The οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ who decide that Jesus must be restrained must be another group altogether—his natural family.

322 Ward, “James of Jerusalem,” 180. Ward suggests from W. Marxsen an explanation for the unsympathetic attitude of Jesus’s brothers in the Gospel of Mark: “The tradition of the primitive community shifts its focus from Jerusalem to Galilee and that at the stage of Mark’s Gospel this orientation to Galilee is already a present fact. Prior to Mark’s Gospel the Jerusalem community abandoned that city. Does this shift facilitate a new and somewhat different view of the Jerusalem community and its leader, James”? Ward noticeably presents this suggestion only as a question and does not, therefore, appear himself too sure of the answer.

However, the reference to the family of Jesus in Mark 3 does not seem to fit with the historical reconstruction which Ward implies. Let us suppose that James (and the other brothers of Jesus) had been the foremost leaders of Palestinian Christians for some twenty years in the intervening time between the writing of Mark and the time of Jesus described. If this had been the case, no doubt the community of Mark would well have been aware of this fact. Is it realistic that Mark would have thought he could negate the importance of James by such an insertion as is Mark 3? It does not seem likely. If the perspective regarding the Twelve and the brothers of Jesus which has been argued for above on the basis of Luke-Acts is accepted, the data of Mark regarding the family of Jesus does not require any difficult hypothetical explanations.
Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not her sisters here with us? And they took offense at him” (οὐχ οὐτὸς ἑστιν ὁ τέκτων, ὁ οἶχος τῆς Μαρίας καὶ ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσήφου καὶ Ἰούδα καὶ Σίμωνος; καὶ οὐκ εἰσίν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ αὐτοῦ ὅδε πρὸς ἡμᾶς; καὶ ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ).

Jesus then responds: “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house” (Οὐκ ἑστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίῳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῖσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ; Mark 6:4). Of primary interest to us is the meaning of οἰκία here. The word occurs sixteen times in Mark. The most common meaning is a physical building; however, at least in Mark 3:25 and probably also in 6:4 the reference is more properly to the occupants of a house—i.e. to the “household.” It appears, then, that in Mark 6:4 there is a narrowing concentric structure of hometown, relatives, immediate family; the last is part of each of the preceding. Therefore, according to Jesus, even members of his own household did not honor him as a prophet as they should have. If this interpretation is correct, then Mark 3:20–35 and 6:3–4 paint a uniform picture of Jesus’s immediate family as being outside of the circle of his followers.

6.1.2.1 John Painter and Mark 6:3–4

With regard to this passage, John Painter asserts,

While Mark records the rejection of Jesus in his home country without excluding the family from this response, he does not involve them in this action either. The proverb . . . was used to reinforce that rejection. Mention of the family in the proverb should not be taken to mean that the family was opposed to Jesus. Mark’s own antipathy to the family meant that he had no concern to exclude them from any possible blame.”

Painter further explains,

The Markan form of the proverb includes Jesus’s family among those who give him no honor, but there is no specific reference to the mother, brothers, and sisters of Jesus in the proverb, and they are not named as unbelievers. Reference to the family is made by those who belonged to his own country as a way of identifying Jesus in relation to them. It would be risky to assert, on the basis of the proverb, that the family of Jesus did not believe in him, especially as Mark has a tendency to play down the roles of the family.

Several issues need to be addressed in Painter’s explanation: First, Painter wishes to make a distinction between the “people of Jesus’s own country” who were “scandalized” or “displeased with” Jesus (ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ) and the members of Jesus’s household who were not themselves “scandalized” by him. Initially this may appear plausible in that the “multitude” (πολλοί) of v. 2 refer to the mother, brothers and sisters of Jesus in the third person.

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324 “οἰκία,” BDAG 695, lists Mark 6:4 and Matt 13:57 as examples where the meaning of οἰκία is “family”; “οἰκία,” LSJ 1203, has as one meaning the “house of family from which one is descended.”
325 Painter, Just James, 32–33.
326 Painter, Just James, 33.
327 Painter, Just James, 32.
It is the πολλοί who are scandalized by Jesus. However, it would disrupt the construction of the pericope to wholly disconnect those who were scandalized by Jesus from those mentioned in Jesus’s proverb-reply. After all, according to verse 4, Jesus’s reply is aimed at “them” (αὕτοῖς) and the antecedent of this pronoun can only be the πολλοί. Yet, in his reply he enumerates the constituents of this multitude more precisely; they are his townspeople, his relatives and his immediate family.

Second, Painter is at pains to exclude the mother and brothers of Jesus from the proverb: “there is no specific reference to the mother, brothers, and sisters . . . in the proverb.” Yet, in the same breath he acknowledges that “the proverb includes Jesus’s family,” and earlier that there is “mention of the family in the proverb” and that Mark had “no concern to exclude [the family] from any possible blame.” On the one hand, then, Painter clearly acknowledges that Mark means Jesus’s family in the proverb; on the other hand he claims that the mother and brothers are not meant.

Of course, James the brother of Jesus is Painter’s main concern in his Just James, and so he writes:

The inclination to take the proverb as indicating in detail the groups who rejected Jesus is strengthened for those who take 3:21 as a reference to the family . . . Both of these conclusions are incorrect in our view. Further, Mary the mother of Jesus is commonly excluded from this evaluation of the family. If the proverb is not applicable in her case, then there is no good reason to think that it applies to James either.328

But who can Painter conceivably mean by Jesus’s “family” other than his mother and brothers? The mother, brothers and sisters of Jesus are included in the proverb in the collective term οἰκία αὐτοῦ (cf. v. 3) and that they are not referred to in some other manner does not change anything. The brothers of Jesus, then, are among those who, according to Jesus, do not appropriately honor him. And of these, James is one.

Furthermore, Painter has repeatedly asserted that “Mark has a negative view of the family,”329 that Mark criticizes the natural family,330 that “Mark is not positively inclined to the leadership role of the family of Jesus in the early church,”331 that Mark has “antipathy” for the family,332 and that “Mark leaves the reader with a negative view of the family.”333 It appears that Painter wants to have it both ways. He uses Mark’s alleged negativity toward Jesus’s family partly as an explanation as to why Mark altered traditional material that supposedly was not antipathetic toward Jesus’s family.334 This enables Painter to question and to negate the historical value of the “negative” depiction of the family of Jesus in Mark—the historian is biased.

However, Painter is not content to leave the matter on such a note and attempts a more positive reading of 3:20–35 and 6:1–4 to virtually absolve the mother and brothers from any

328 Painter, Just James, 33.
329 Painter, Just James, 20, 27.
330 Painter, Just James, 28.
331 Painter, Just James, 30.
332 Painter, Just James, 33.
333 Painter, Just James, 34.
334 “Attention needs to be given to evidence of underlying tradition as distinct from the meaning of these passages within the Markan framework” (Just James, 20). Because Mark 3:20–21 is redactional, according to Painter, “Even if [3:20–21] refers to the family…the most that could be drawn from it is that Mark had a negative view of the family” (Just James, 27).
negative dealings with Jesus. But then one must ask, where in Mark is that previously
acknowledged negativity toward Jesus’s brothers to be found (cf. Painter’s citations in previous
paragraph)? To wit, only two pericopes in Mark mention the brothers of Jesus (3:20–35 and 6:1–
4) and therefore Mark’s negativity toward the family of Jesus must be found in them and only
them. The same two pieces of evidence cannot support contradictory claims—that (1) in them,
Mark’s negativity toward the family of Jesus is evident and that (2) in them, there is no clear
indication of any negative relationship between Jesus and his family.

Third, as mentioned above, Painter alludes to a disconnect between a historical reality in
which the family of Jesus probably did not reject Jesus, and the depiction of Mark who had a
negative attitude toward the family of Jesus and so did not mind portraying them as among those
who rejected Jesus. It is therefore “risky,” according to Painter, to conclude that Jesus’s family
did not believe in him, or that they were opposed to him. Painter acknowledges that the proverb
appears in “comparable incidents” in Matthew and Luke (4:24), and in a “somewhat different
context” in John 4:44. On this basis he draws the conclusion: “The proverb is probably
traditional and, because it is known in other contexts, it may have been Mark who located it in
the context of the rejection at Nazareth. It should carry no weight in an argument about whether
the family of Jesus rejected him during his ministry.”

Yet, since Matthew and Luke follow Mark in placing the proverb in a scene of rejection
in his hometown, the only “other” context in which the proverb is found is in John 4:44, where
the author seems to imply that Jesus’s home country is Judea (vv. 45, 47). John, however,
mentions the proverb in passing and does not attempt to place it in a specific situation. Therefore
John’s reference to the proverb does little to discredit the more precise historical situation in
which Mark (and Matthew and Luke) place it. Therefore, according to the NT data, our best
guess for a historical situation where this “traditional” proverb of Jesus was spoken would be in
his hometown. It is in this setting also that the content of the proverb makes the best sense.

Therefore, Painter fails to demonstrate that Mark’s negative depiction of Jesus’s family is
entirely his own, or that it has no precedent in the tradition that was available to Mark. However,
for our present purposes there is no need here to draw any further conclusions than that
according to Mark, Jesus spoke this proverb about his brothers, among others.

Fourth, according to Painter, the family members of Jesus are not in the proverb “named
as unbelievers.” Yet, immediately after Jesus speaks the proverb (v. 4), the narrator mentions
that due to the negative response of his townspeople and family Jesus could not work many
miracles in the town (v. 5) and that Jesus “was amazed at their unbelief” (ἐθαμαζόμεν διὰ τὴν
ἀπίστιαν αὐτῶν; v. 6). Again, the antecedent of αὐτοί is most likely the “multitude” of verse 3
(as in v. 4), but now Jesus has in his proverb made it more plain whom this “multitude” consisted
of. Therefore, Jesus’s bewilderment regarding the unbelief of his hometown also has his
immediate family in view.

Fifth, as already mentioned above, Painter attempts to argue that if the proverb is not
applicable to Mary—as she is “commonly excluded from this evaluation of the family”—then
the proverb should not apply to James either. This appears to be an appeal to Marian sentiments
among some interpreters and, if so, it is by no means a sound exegetical argument.

335 Painter, Just James, 33.
336 Painter, Just James, 33.
337 Painter, Just James, 33.
338 Painter, Just James, 33.
6.1.3 Mark and the Family of Jesus: Polemical or Indifferent?

John Painter concedes that Mark has a negative stance toward the family of Jesus. In an article entitled “Those Outside (Mark 4:10–12),” Michael D. Goulder argues that Mark 3:20–21, 30–35, as well as 4:10–12 are aimed as a polemic against the family of Jesus who continued to hold power in the Jerusalem church. Theologically, Mark is on the “Pauline side” and resists the control of Jesus’s family from Jerusalem. 339

A significant problem for Goulder’s thesis is that it is built entirely on the assertion that, “The family of Jesus had been the leaders of the Jerusalem church since the 40s. Everybody in Mark’s community knew that James had been its most influential figure (Gal 1:18 [sic]; 2:9; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18); that other brothers shared in his influence (1 Cor 9:5); and that the dynasty had now continued in Jesus’s cousin Simeon ben Clopas.” 340 Because this was the case, according to Goulder, Mark’s depiction of the family of Jesus can only be understood as intentionally undermining their leadership. “It is really unimaginable that continuously adverse comments on so well-known a group of Christian leaders should not be significant.” 341 Goulder is here one step further than us. Having already learned that the brothers of Jesus became the foremost leaders of the Jerusalem church, he explains the data of Mark in this light.

Yet, with regard to Mark and other NT evidence, we are still dealing with the preliminary question: are there any indications (either overt or indirect) in Mark’s Gospel itself that the brothers of Jesus became leaders in the post-ascension church? It does not appear to be the case. After 6:1–4 Mark does not mention the brothers of Jesus again and so in a narrative sense they are “left” in this state of thinking that Jesus is beside himself (3:21), of not honoring him (6:4), and of unbelief (6:6). 342

6.1.3.1 Is Mark “Negative” or “Antipathetic” Toward the Family of Jesus?

When John Painter states that “Mark has a negative view of the family,” 343 he is essentially in agreement with Goulder in that Mark has “antipathy” 344 toward them at the time of writing. But neither Goulder nor Painter seem to entertain the possibility that Mark’s portrayal of Jesus’s family was simply grounded in historical situations during the lifetime of Jesus. Is it possible that Mark did not have antipathy toward Jesus’s natural family at the time of writing, but chose to portray the family as he knew them to be at the time of Jesus’s ministry from his sources or experience? Granted, Mark would not have been obligated to portray the family in this light as we can see from Luke’s Gospel, for example. But that Mark does portray them in this light may not indicate so much an active antipathy toward the family of Jesus at the time of writing, but rather a lack of concern to portray their relationship to Jesus in more positive terms than what Mark knew it to be in the past—regardless of the standing of the family later on.

In any case, the purpose of this section is to mine the text of Mark for any clues that the brothers of Jesus may have become leaders in the church at some point in time before or during

340 “Those Outside,” 293 (italics in original).
341 “Those Outside,” 293.
342 The likelihood that this portrayal is a polemic against the brothers depends on the historical question whether the brothers of Jesus acquired such a leadership role over Mark’s community so as to warrant polemic against them. Based on our findings thus far, this does not seem to be the case (and see next chapter with regard to remaining NT).
343 Painter, Just James, 20, 27.
344 Painter, Just James, 33.
the formation of the Gospel. Such evidence seems to be utterly lacking in Mark: the family appears only in two instances and in both of these their response to Jesus—and his response to them—is not favorable.

6.1.4 The Twelve Disciples in the Gospel of Mark

The depiction of the twelve disciples in Mark has been widely debated because several passages portray them also in an arguably negative light. The disciples fail to understand Jesus’s parables (Mark 3:10, 13), his predictions that he will be killed (9:32), and, as some have argued, the very nature of his suffering Messiahship. In 1901 William Wrede argued that the blindness of the disciples was connected to the motif of the messianic secret which was Mark’s way of explaining why Jesus was only preached as the Messiah after his death and resurrection. Others have argued that Mark is involved in a polemic against the Jerusalem leaders—the family of Jesus on the one hand, and the Twelve, on the other. According to Joseph B. Tyson, “Mark is not . . . saying that the disciples understood that Jesus was Messiah and were commanded not to broadcast it; rather he is saying that they completely misunderstood the nature of Jesus’s Messiahship, not understanding it as a suffering Messiahship, but as a royal Messiahship which would issue in benefits for themselves.” The abrupt ending of Mark may be explained in that “one of Mark’s chief purposes was to call attention to the ways in which the disciples fell short in their understanding and proclamation of the Christian gospel.” Be that as it may, this polemical interpretation of the “blindness” or “failure” of the disciples in Mark has sometimes been connected with the notion that Mark is a Pauline Gospel; that is, Mark seeks to promote the theological positions of Paul over and against those of Jerusalem Christianity.

Robert Stein who does not, in the end, deem Mark’s evaluation of the disciples as polemical against them nevertheless recognizes that Mark at times portrays the Twelve unfavorably. One key question, of course, is whether the negative elements in Mark were primarily his own creation or, rather, if they were already present in the preceding tradition. Ernest Best has argued with regard to Peter that in Mark’s redaction Peter appeared in a more favorable light than in the preceding tradition: “Our evidence shows that Mark is not the high point in an attack on Peter, nor, since we have produced no actual evidence of an attack on him, the high point in which Peter appears in a bad light. This point must lie in the tradition behind Mark.”

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348 Tyson, “Blindness,” 262.
349 Tyson, “Blindness,” 268. A significant weakness in Tyson’s article is that he does not explain what the purpose would be for Jesus to command his disciples to be quiet regarding his Messiahship if Mark’s focus is to polemicize against the disciples’ failure to understand. For the opposite viewpoint (although not a direct answer to Tyson) see Stein, *Mark*, 26–32.
351 Stein, *Mark*, 31: “That Mark at times purposely portrays the disciples in a negative light cannot be denied.”
Mark is also not consistent on the supposed “attack” on the disciples. In some ways the Twelve are depicted in a favorable light. A very useful overview of the various positions regarding the disciples in Mark that have been offered in the last few decades can be found in C. Clifton Black’s *The Disciples According to Mark*.353 This present study need not venture too far into these debates because regardless of how the depiction of the disciples is interpreted from the Gospel of Mark, it appears that the various sides of the debate would agree on some sort of importance for Peter and the Twelve among Jesus’s post-resurrection followers. Even the viewpoint that Mark is a polemic against the Twelve depends on this, for only in this historical reconstruction does the “polemical” explanation make sense.

The difference between the Twelve and the family of Jesus in this regard is that the later importance of the Twelve is quite clearly indicated in Mark (see next section) whereas the future importance of the brothers of Jesus is not suggested in Mark in any way. Therefore, the viewpoint that Mark’s negative attitude toward the family of Jesus is polemical in nature must argue for their later leadership role from sources other than Mark because Mark does not clearly allude to such in any way.

6.1.4.1 Indications in Mark of the Later Importance of the Twelve in the Church

On the basis of Mark it is easiest to argue for the later leadership role of Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, and John. This is quite clearly indicated in Mark 13:3–37 where Jesus has a private discussion with the four disciples. Jesus predicts a future time period during which he would not be with his disciples, but in which they would be expecting “the son of man” (i.e. Jesus) to return (Mark 13:26–27), and during which the four disciples would have to bear witness to Jesus amidst persecution (vv. 9, 11–13). The gospel would be preached to all nations (Mark 13:10), although Mark’s phrasing does not require that this would be accomplished by the four. Although these predictions are spoken in the narrative to the four, “all” disciples are to some extent included in the last words of v. 37.

No doubt these predictions are an extension of Jesus’s original call/promise to the four, that he would make them fishers of men (Mark 1:16–20).354 Three of the four, with the exception of Andrew, also observe Jesus at the event of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–10). That Jesus commands them not to tell of this event until after his resurrection (Mark 9:9) implies that the recounting of this event had some sort of significance after Jesus’s resurrection. The four are also the first listed among the Twelve whom are called to be with Jesus and to preach (Mark 3:14–18a).

Whereas the larger group of the Twelve is given a significant role during the narrative timeframe of Mark (i.e. during Jesus’s ministry), it is more difficult to argue for their later importance on the basis of Mark. That is, Jesus clearly predicts that during a later time when Jesus would no longer be with them (i.e. after the resurrection) the four will witness about Jesus before “governors and kings” (ἐπὶ ἰγμιοντων καὶ βασιλέων; 13:9b). However, no such promise regarding a future preaching role after Jesus’s resurrection is made to the other members of the Twelve.

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354 Strictly speaking the call/promise is only pronounced by Jesus to Peter and Andrew but the parallelism with the sons of Zebedee implies that Jesus’s call of them also implied a similar significance, or purpose.
Yet, the inclusion of the four in the Twelve suggests that this is what the author nevertheless envisioned. That is, all Twelve are called to be with Jesus, to be sent to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons (Mark 3:14–15). Mark does not clarify when the preaching of the Twelve would take place—i.e. only during Jesus ministry (6:7–13, 30) or after his resurrection as well. However, since the Four will clearly continue to preach after Jesus’s resurrection (Mark 13:9–13), there is no reason to think that the remaining eight would not do the same also. There is nothing to indicate that the preaching role of the Twelve would finish after the resurrection and that only that of the Four would continue.

Furthermore, in Mark 14:28 Jesus predicts a resurrection appearance in Galilee to the Twelve. In 14:27 Jesus speaks to “them” (λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς) and promises in 14:28 to go before them to Galilee after he is raised up. The people addressed are those who accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Olives at the conclusion of the Last Supper in v. 26 and in v. 20 are identified as “the Twelve.” This is confirmed by the (angelic) young man sitting in Jesus’s empty tomb (Mark 16:5–6). The angel says to the women at the tomb: “go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you” (16:7). That the Twelve would get to see the resurrected Jesus could be seen as an implication of some later importance for them in the community of Jesus’s followers. It is not a long step from the actual data of Mark to envision that the Twelve would play an important role in the preaching of the “gospel” to all nations (Mark 13:10). If this is not “spelled out,” it may well be assumed.

6.1.5 Summary of Mark

Individually, James of Alphaeus is not of importance in the Gospel of Mark. However, as a member of the Twelve (Mark 3:18), he is arguably among the notables among Jesus’s followers. The most that can be said on the basis of Mark is that the author suggests the possibility of a future importance for James of Alphaeus among Jesus’s followers after the resurrection because he is numbered among the Twelve. The same does not hold true for James or the other brothers of Jesus who are not found among the disciples of Jesus (Mark 3:20–35) and who Jesus implicates as not honoring him properly (Mark 6:3–4).

6.2 The Gospel of Matthew

Mark is Matthew’s most important source and so the depiction of the Twelve, and of the family of Jesus, in Matthew has many similarities to Mark. With regard to the family of Jesus, the Gospel of Matthew retains the two instances in which the family of Jesus is mentioned in the Gospel of Mark. In addition, Matthew contains the infancy narratives in which Mary and Joseph obviously play an important part. This creates a positive initial picture of the family of Jesus—or at least of Joseph in particular.

6.2.1 Matthew 1:1–2:23

The infancy narratives of Jesus could be said to form an initially favorable picture of Jesus with his family. However, two facets of these narratives should be noted: First, the brothers of Jesus are not present in the infancy narratives, suggesting that they are not yet born. With regard to Mary this is obviously the case because she was a virgin (Matt 1:23). However, the
When Mary visits Elizabeth, the latter says to Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Eυλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν, καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου; 1:42). She also calls Mary "the mother of my Lord" (ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου; v. 43). In response, Mary praises God in a hymn (1:46–55) and mentions herself in v. 48:

ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ. ἵδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πάσαι αἱ γενεαὶ

“He has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed.”

This emphasis on Joseph in Matthew becomes clearer when compared to the infancy narratives in the Gospel of Luke. There the angel Gabriel appears directly to Mary (1:26–27), calls her “favored one” (κέχαριτομένη; v. 28) and tells her, “The Lord is with you” (ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ). The angel gives a prediction to Mary regarding the royal and divine identity of Jesus (1:30–33). Mary’s relative Elizabeth supernaturally bears John the Baptist (1:5–25, 67–80). When Mary visits Elizabeth, the latter says to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν, καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου; 1:42). She also calls Mary “the mother of my Lord” (ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου; v. 43). In response, Mary praises God in a hymn (1:46–55) and mentions herself in v. 48:

ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ. ἵδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πάσαι αἱ γενεαὶ

“He has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed.”

6.2.1.1. Joseph and Mary in Matthew’s and Luke’s Infancy Narratives

This emphasis on Joseph in Matthew becomes clearer when compared to the infancy narratives in the Gospel of Luke. There the angel Gabriel appears directly to Mary (1:26–27), calls her “favored one” (κέχαριτομένη; v. 28) and tells her, “The Lord is with you” (ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ). The angel gives a prediction to Mary regarding the royal and divine identity of Jesus (1:30–33). Mary’s relative Elizabeth supernaturally bears John the Baptist (1:5–25, 67–80). When Mary visits Elizabeth, the latter says to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν, καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου; 1:42). She also calls Mary “the mother of my Lord” (ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου; v. 43). In response, Mary praises God in a hymn (1:46–55) and mentions herself in v. 48:

ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ. ἵδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πάσαι αἱ γενεαὶ

“He has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed.”

When the time of Jesus’s birth is at hand, Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem (2:4–5) where Mary gives birth to Jesus (2:6–7). It may be significant that in Luke’s version, Mary and Joseph are not yet married at the time of Jesus’s birth (2:5) as they were in Matthew (1:24). After some shepherds are led by angels to visit Mary and Joseph and Jesus (Luke 2:16), and after they recount the angelic prophecy regarding Jesus’s messianic identity (2:10–14), Mary (and not Joseph) “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart (πάντα συνετήρα τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα συμβάλλουσα ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς; 2:19). Joseph and Mary together take Jesus to Jerusalem (2:22) and to the Temple (2:27), unlike in Matthew where Joseph takes his baby and the baby’s mother along wherever he goes. At the Temple, Mary (specifically) receives a prophecy from Simeon (2:34–35).

It is clear, therefore, that in Luke’s account, Mary is the main actor whereas Joseph is subsidiary and almost in the shadows. For Matthew, the reverse is true. In Luke, Mary is celebrated, whereas in Matthew her role is very simplified and unembellished. This is an important feature to note especially in relation to Matt 12:46–50 where the mother and brothers—but not Joseph—go to visit Jesus, and where Jesus makes a pronouncement regarding sisters, mothers and brothers (Matt 12:50).

6.2.2 Matthew 12:46–50

In the first instance during Jesus’s public ministry in which the family of Jesus is mentioned, the mother and brothers of Jesus come to a house in which Jesus is speaking to a crowd (Matt 12:46–50). They send for him to come outside and speak with them, although the author does not provide any information regarding what they wish to speak to him about. In fact, this setting seems only to provide the backdrop for a saying of Jesus in which he confirms his disciples as his “mother and brothers” (Matt 12:49).

As far as this episode is concerned the mother and brothers of Jesus are not included among Jesus’s followers. One might argue that Jesus’s words are not so much directed negatively at his natural family as positively at his disciples, i.e., as a compliment for them. Jesus wants to affirm that his disciples who do the will of God are closer to him than his natural family (Matt 12:50). The natural mother and brothers of Jesus serve as a foil for Jesus’s new family of disciples—they provide a momentary narrative contrast.

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356 Is the father intentionally excluded from this? Note that, in Matt 13:55 Joseph is mentioned alongside the rest of the family.

357 According to Craig S. Keener, “[The family's] opposition to or disbelief in Jesus is less clear in Matthew than in Mark, perhaps because of the shame of the family’s unbelief . . . Whether or not Matthew has intentionally toned down the offense of Jesus’s family, Jesus’s refusal to place his physical family first is no less clear here than in Mark” (A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 370). According to Donald Senior, the “preference for discipleship ties over blood or family ties is found in several New Testament passages and will reappear in Matthew (4:18–22; 19:27–30; 23:9) . . . Such teaching was important for the early community to free it from the constraints of a patriarchal familial model” (Matthew [ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998], 144–5).
6.2.2.1 The Notion of “Being” with Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew

Matt 12:46–50 includes the element of “being” with Jesus which is important to Matthew, and the recognition of which illuminates the role of the family of Jesus in the Gospel. In an article which analyses the figure of Peter in Matthew’s Gospel, J. D. Kingsbury highlights the importance for Matthew of the concept of Jesus being “with” his disciples (Μεθ’ ὑμῶν, see below). He submits that Matt 1:23, where Jesus’s identity is revealed as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Μεθ’ ὑμῶν ὁ θεός), and Matt 28:20, where the risen Jesus’s promises his continuing presence with his disciples (ἐγὼ μεθ’ υμῶν), structurally “enclose the entire Gospel.” Furthermore: “The disciples, in obeying the call of Jesus, follow after him (4:18, 22; 9:9; 19:27–28). As they do so, they are ‘with him’ and he is ‘with them.’ The concept of being with Jesus is important to Matthew’s ecclesiology.”

Of specific significance to the present study is Kingsbury’s observation:

Matthew, in comparison with Mark, circumscribes sharply the range of persons who are described as being “with Jesus” (or he “with them”). Except for Mary his mother (2:11) and tax-collectors and sinners (9:11), the list extends only to Peter (26:69, 71; cf. 26:40), one of Jesus’s followers (26:51), Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (26:37–38), and the twelve or eleven disciples (26:18, 20, 36; 28:20). Noticeably absent from this list are such as the “crowd” . . . or their “leaders” or even “Jairus” (cf. Mark 5:22, 24) . . .

Consequently, Matthew virtually restricts the number of those who are “with Jesus” (or he “with them”) to the disciples.

It should be noted that nowhere in Matthew are the brothers of Jesus found “with Jesus.” Matthew softens somewhat Mark’s account of the visit of Jesus’s family (Matt 12:46–50; cf. Mark 3:20–35); he avoids the parallelism between his family’s charge that he was “beside himself” and that of the scribes, who accused him of operating in the power of Beelzebul. As a result, in Matt 12:46–50, Jesus’s family is found, rather inexplicably and without further context, “outside” waiting for him. Yet, because the concept of “being with Jesus” is so important for Matthew, the natural family of Jesus is not portrayed in a much more positive light in this instance as it is in Mark. They are outside, while he is inside with his disciples—those who do the will of God.

This idea of the presence of Jesus with his disciples takes on an even greater significance in the last words of Matthew’s Gospel. There the eleven disciples have gathered at a mountain in Galilee where they see the risen Jesus (Matt 28:16–17). Jesus commissions them to make disciples of all nations and then promises to be “with them” (ἐγὼ μεθ’ υμῶν) until the end of the age (v. 20). R. T. France notes the variance here with the OT traditions in which God’s presence

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359 Kingsbury, “Peter,” 76
360 Kingsbury, “Peter,” 77
361 According to Grant R. Osborne, Matthew (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 493, “There is no mention here of the fact that Jesus’s brothers were unbelievers at this stage (see John 7:5 for this), but the implicit outside/inside (with emphasis in vv. 46–47 on their situation outside . . . Jesus’s orbit and ministry) setting would fit this.” Cf. Frederick Dale Bruner, Matthew 1–12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 472.
was often promised to his servants in commissioning scenes. The difference here is that Jesus himself would be with his servants. But of importance to our argument is that the promise of Jesus’s continuing presence is, strictly speaking, only given to the eleven disciples. We may assume that Matthew envisions that those who will be made disciples by the Twelve will partake also in the promise of Jesus’s presence—after all, the promise extends “to the ends of the age” (v. 20). However, the Eleven are nevertheless the original recipients and those to whom the promise is primarily entrusted.

6.2.3 Matthew 13:55–57

This passage describes the visit of Jesus to his hometown, which is not named in Matthew. The townspeople recognize his prophetic attributes, but “stumble” over the fact that they happen to know who he actually is. Of importance is Jesus’s statement regarding himself that “prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house,” i.e. that “prophets are honored everywhere except in their . . . own house” ( hứng ἐστὶν προφήτης ἁτιμὸς εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατριδί καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ (Matt 13:57).

In contrast to Mark, Matthew drops the reference to “relatives” in Jesus’s proverb. Consequently, the editors of Mary in the New Testament suggest that “since Matthew has omitted the earlier reference [that Jesus’s relatives said that he was beside himself], it is not surprising to find him omitting Jesus’s relatives from the list of those who do not honor him. Once again, it would be difficult to imagine that a mother who had conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit would not honor him.” The editors then mention quite unsatisfactorily in a footnote that “it is difficult to be certain how Matthew interpreted the lack of honor ‘in his own house (οἰκία),’ read in sequence to ‘his own country.’ If it means ‘household,’ is it less personal than Mark’s ‘among his own relatives’?”

Of the uses of οἰκία in Matthew, the majority of course signifies a physical building, but a minority refers to the occupants of that building—i.e. the household, or family (10:36; 12:25; 13:57). That according to Jesus a prophet—that is, himself—is not honored in οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ most likely has the same meaning as in Mark—that Jesus was not honored by his own immediate family. In the immediate context the townspeople have just referred to Jesus’s father and mother (v. 55), his brothers by name (v. 55), as well as his sisters (v. 56). In this context, what else could the term refer to other than those of Jesus’s “household”—i.e. his natural family? Therefore, the family of Jesus, with the whole town, is depicted as not honoring Jesus, the prophet.

The notion of fighting and betrayal among one’s natural relatives has already been mentioned by Jesus in ch. 10. According to Jesus, a brother would hand over (betray) his brother to death, and a father his child, and children their parents (10:21). Furthermore, Jesus states: “For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household” (ἡ λύθην γὰρ διὰ χάσας ἄνθρωπον κατὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ θυγατέρα κατὰ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτῆς καὶ

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364 Brown, Mary, 100.
366 “Jesus’s own earthly family” in Leon Morris, Matthew, 366; “family” in Osborne, Matthew, 551; BDAG 695, lists Matt 13:57 as an instance of οἰκία where the meaning would be “in his family.”
Although Jesus’s family is not in 13:57 represented as his enemies, they do not honor him as they should. The rejection of Jesus by his own natural family is not so unexpected in light of his earlier teaching about family betrayals (10:35–36), as well as his teachings regarding who is his true family (12:46–50).

6.2.4 Indications of Later Church Leadership in the Gospel of Matthew

On the basis of the above evidence, we may comfortably argue that there is no hint in Matthew’s Gospel that the brothers of Jesus would at any time become leaders among Jesus’s followers. With regard to the Twelve (or eleven), quite the opposite is true. Jesus selects them as a special and enclosed group among his followers (Matt 10:1–4), promises to them a future leadership over all of Israel (19:27–30), and charges (only) them with the task of making disciples of all nations (28:16–20). Furthermore, the promise of Jesus’s continuing presence among his followers is first and foremost to them (28:20).

With regard to the role of the Twelve among the community of believers, Matthew so closely agrees with the Gospel of Luke that Acts could just as well have been written as a sequel to the Gospel of Matthew. That is, as far as this issue of the leadership of the Twelve is concerned. On the other hand, Matthew is as silent as to any leadership role in the church for the brothers of Jesus as is Luke—Acts.

As mentioned earlier, none of the Gospels provide any direct evidence that could be compared with Acts 12:17; 15:13 or 21:18 to identify the James in question—whether he is the brother of the Lord or one of the Twelve. Yet, Matthew’s Gospel—alongside the other Gospels—can provide circumstantial evidence regarding who would later become the most influential leaders among the followers of Jesus. For Matthew, it is clearly the Twelve.

Therefore, Matthew’s Gospel supports the historicity of the reading of Acts given above regarding the continuing leadership of the Twelve in the Jerusalem church after Jesus’s ascension. Among the Twelve was also James of Alphaeus.

6.2.5 Material Unique to Matthew (M) and Its Possible Relationship to James

In 1924, B. H. Streeter argued on the basis of the material unique to Matthew’s Gospel only, that Matthew utilized a third source in addition to Mark and Q, which could be labeled M. He connected this M source with Jerusalem:

The material peculiar to Matthew, in sharp contrast to Luke’s, is characterised by a conspicuously Jewish atmosphere; and, though rich in anti-Pharisaic polemic, it asserts the obligation of obeying not only the Law but “the tradition of the scribes,” and it has a distinctly anti-Gentile bias. It reflects the spirit and outlook with which in the New Testament the name of James is associated; though James himself, like most leaders, was

367 With regard to Matthew 12:46–50 Craig S. Keener makes the following observations: “Given the role of ‘James the Lord’s brother’ in the later church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9; Jude 1), one would rather expect the early Christian to have emphasized his virtues and so avoid the charge of nepotism . . . The stark portrayal here is not apt to reflect an invention of the early Jewish Christians who honored James and provided the bulk of the Matthean community” (Matthew, 369). Arguably, the data of Matthew supports our findings regarding James of Alphaeus in Acts much better than the idea that James the brother of Jesus became the foremost leader of the Jerusalem church—which viewpoint Keener, nevertheless, espouses.
doubtless far less extreme than his professed followers. The source M will naturally be connected with Jerusalem, the headquarters of the James party.\textsuperscript{368}

In Streeter’s view, “The resident head of the Jerusalem Church was, not one of the Twelve, but James the brother of the Lord.”\textsuperscript{369}

In his \textit{Just James}, John Painter builds on Streeter’s viewpoints. He writes, “The M tradition was produced in Jerusalem, expressing the authority of James the Just, the brother of Jesus. James was the leader of the ‘Palestinian’ Christians who zealously observed the law and worshipped in the Temple.”\textsuperscript{370} To Painter, M can simply be labeled the “James tradition.”\textsuperscript{371} Furthermore, “Matthew preserves more adequately than any other source the way James interpreted the teaching of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{372}

Streeter and Painter’s viewpoints seem to be based on a historical reconstruction in which (1) the evidence for the foremost leadership of James in the Jerusalem church is secure, (2) James is understood as holding to the continuing validity of the Law, and (3) therefore those passages in Matthew that advocate the importance of the Law must in some way derive from James the brother of Jesus.

Yet what is immediately clear from Matthew—and at once problematic for Painter’s point of view—is that the authority of James is not in any way invoked, or even hinted at, in Matthew. The brother of Jesus is a person of no consequence in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{373} Painter himself acknowledges that in its final form “Matthew sets the authority of Peter and the twelve over the authority of the family of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{374} But we would argue that there is no hint in Matthew that the brother of Jesus would hold \textit{any authority} among Jesus’s followers.


\textsuperscript{369} Streeter, \textit{Four Gospels}, 232.

\textsuperscript{370} Painter, \textit{Just James}, 87.

\textsuperscript{371} Painter, \textit{Just James}, 87.

\textsuperscript{372} Painter, \textit{Just James}, 90.

\textsuperscript{373} From this point of view, David C. Sim’s stance also appears untenable: “Matthew apparently accepted the superiority of James over Peter. Had he not done so, we would expect him to follow more closely Mark’s rather unflattering depiction of Jesus’s brother” (\textit{The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 199. Sim forms his understanding of James on the basis of other sources, but does not pay enough attention to the fact that there is no positive evidence for James’s importance in the Gospel of Matthew itself. Jürgen Zangenberg, “Matthew and James,” in \textit{Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries} (eds. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 104–22, explores several motifs and outlooks that are shared by the Gospel of Matthew and the epistle of James. He concludes, “Despite many individual features, a common theological outlook and a common pool of semantic tools to express it clearly bind Matthew and James together. Matthew and James represent a type of Christianity that sees itself as a perfect way to fulfil the Law, in a way as ‘perfect Judaism’” (p. 120). However, Zangenberg also recognizes that “While the Epistle is connected to James, the brother of Jesus, Matthew clearly favours Peter as the focal character . . . James, the brother of Jesus, however, plays a very marginal role in Matthew” (p. 108). Zangenberg takes this as a warning “not to see ‘Christian Judaism’ or ‘Judaeo-Christianity’ as a monolithic block despite all the apparent similarities.” (p. 109). It should be left open as a possibility that James the brother of the Lord did not represent, for the author of Matthew, the theological outlook reflected in the Gospel.

\textsuperscript{374} Painter, \textit{Just James}, 90. He also states, “The role of James [the brother of Jesus] in the earliest Jerusalem church has been obscured because none of the authors of New Testament documents, except for the writer of the epistle of James, takes anything like a Jamesian point of view” (p. 97). In a footnote, however, Painter reinstates that “while M emanates from James it has been shaped to conform to the point of view of a Petrine Gospel by Matthew” (p. 97 n.27).
Painter’s argument is difficult and the data of Matthew can be explained in a far more consistent way: (1) Matthew believed in the continuing validity of the Law. (2) Matthew thought that Peter and/or other members of the Twelve represented this point of view and therefore (3) he did not shy from accentuating the authority of Peter and the Twelve. To repeat, it is misleading to assert that Matthew emphasizes the authority of the Twelve over and against the family of Jesus for the reason that Matthew does not suggest any leadership role for the brothers of Jesus. In this regard, the two groups are in entirely different categories. In our view, Matthew depicts the Twelve as future leaders among Jesus followers, but does not depict the brothers of Jesus as such.

It should be pointed out that most modern commentators tend to disbelieve in the historical actuality of an M source. Ulrich Luz, for example, does not consider an additional Matthean source (M) credible. Rather, the material unique to Matthew is almost entirely his own composition (although he may be dependent on oral tradition and in the case of some parables only, on another written source). The summary and verdict of William Davies and Dale Allison appears sound and is therefore here quoted at length:

It has, from time to time, been argued that, in addition to Mark and Q, Matthew also had at his disposal a third written document, ‘M.’ Streeter, in fact, thought he could both date this hypothetical source and pin down its place of origin (ca. A.D. 60, in Jerusalem). Of late, however, his conjectures on this matter have not had much of a following—and rightly so, in our judgment. There is no good reason to think of M as a unified composition. Streeter and like-minded scholars were moved to their position in part because they gravely underestimated the extent of the Matthean redaction. For them there was a vast amount of pre-Matthean, non-Markan, non-Q material in the First Gospel, and it was natural to suppose that much or most of it came from a common (written) source. But contemporary interpreters rightly perceive a much larger contribution from Matthew’s own hand, so that the amount of material available for incorporation into a hypothetical M source is accordingly much less than it was for Streeter. When to this it is added that the sayings peculiar to Matthew do not readily fall together so as to create a homogeneous and coherent whole, the dismissal of an M document seems to recommend itself.

If the material unique to Matthew is to a large extent his own redaction, it is all the more significant that while advocating his “conservative” viewpoints with regard to the continuing validity of the Law, he simultaneously advocates the authority of the Twelve. It does not seem credible that Matthew himself would advocate such a position with regard to the Law, on the one hand, and the authority of the Twelve, on the other, if he did not think the two to be compatible.

6.2.6 Summary of Matthew

Matthew’s Gospel lends some indirect support to our findings from Acts 15. In Acts 15, James of Alphaeus, the Twelve, and the elders, maintain both the continuing validity of the Law and the Gentile mission—just as Matthew does. In Acts 15 the authority of Peter, James of


Alphaeus, and the Twelve is maintained; in Matthew the authority of Peter and the Twelve is maintained. In Acts James the brother of Jesus plays no role; in Matthew James the brother of Jesus plays no significant role and there is no hint of any later importance for him.

### 6.3 The Gospel of John

In the Gospel of John, the brothers of Jesus are referred to twice—in 2:12 and 7:3–9. Their absence may also be intentionally significant in 19:25–27 when Mary, Jesus’s mother, is commended to the care of the beloved disciple. In 2:12 the brothers are mentioned in passing, “He went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples” (κατέβη εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ ματὴρ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ). The mother and brothers accompany Jesus, but they are distinguished from his disciples here as well as later in 7:3–9. In fact, in 7:3–9, which is the only other reference to the brothers in the Gospel of John, the differentiation between the brothers and the disciples is accentuated.

In John 7:3–9 Jesus’s brothers urge him to go to the feast of Tabernacles in Judea so that he might do some mighty works before the crowds in order to become well-known. The author explains that they speak in this manner because “not even his brothers believed in him” (οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν; v. 5). Jesus explains that his “appointed time” is not yet and therefore he will not go, but encourages his brothers to go to the feast. In contrast to himself, his brothers are not hated by the world (v. 7) and so they can come and go freely. We wish to draw attention to four issues in this passage in order to form a more solid comment as to John’s depiction of the brothers of Jesus: (1) the fact that Jesus’s brothers speak with Jesus; (2) the fact that the brothers distinguish themselves from the disciples; (3) the fact that the brothers do not believe in him; and (4) the fact that Jesus insinuates that his brothers are of the world.

#### 6.3.1 The Fact That Jesus’s Brothers Speak with Him

This is the only passage in the Gospels where the brothers of Jesus actually speak. In Mark 3:30–35 and Matt 12:46–50 the mother and brothers wish to speak with Jesus, but in each case the narrative focuses on Jesus’s saying and ends without further mention of the family. In Mark 6:3–4 and Matt 13:55–57 they are named by the townspeople, but they are not actors. In John 2:12 the brothers are mentioned alongside their mother, but distinguished from the disciples. Aside from John 7:3–9, it is difficult to form any sort of opinion about the brothers of Jesus on the basis of the Gospels. In fact, because they always appear with Jesus’s mother and never speak, one might form the impression that they were juveniles.

Thus, John 7:3–9 is the only passage in the Gospels that indicates that already during Jesus’s ministry the brothers of Jesus were grown men, able to offer reasoned advice to Jesus about his ministry, and to travel to Jerusalem at their own initiative. Were it not for this passage, hardly any impression could be formed about the brothers of Jesus on the basis of the Gospels—other than that they existed and that they, on at least one occasion, accompanied Jesus and his disciples in travel (John 2:12).

#### 6.3.2 The Fact That the Brothers Distinguish Themselves from the Disciples

It is surely important that in the Johannine depiction the brothers of Jesus verbally disassociate themselves from Jesus’s disciples. They encourage Jesus to go and perform
(miraculous) works at the feast, “so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing” (Ἰνα καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ σου θεωρήσουσιν σοῦ τὰ ἐργα ἀ ποιές; John 7:4). That the brothers speak of the disciples in third person suggests that they do not number themselves among his disciples. It is this fact, coupled with the fact that the brothers try to advise Jesus that culminates in the author’s explanatory comment—that the brothers also did not believe in him. It seems that the author has subtly put the brothers’ unbelief on their own lips in that they do not number themselves among Jesus’s disciples.

The separation of Jesus’s brothers from the disciples agrees with the only other instance in which they are mentioned in John 2:12. There also the brothers and disciples are mentioned as separate groups. Given that these are the only references to the brothers in the Fourth Gospel, it seems that the author quite intentionally and consistently chose to depict the brothers as not among Jesus’s disciples. Furthermore, in contrast to the mother of Jesus who is present at Jesus’s crucifixion—and therefore appears to be part of the community of believers—the brothers of Jesus are not mentioned again and are therefore left outside the group of disciples in the Fourth Gospel.

6.3.3 The Fact That the Brothers Do Not Believe in Jesus

In this passage, the brothers apparently do acknowledge that Jesus has worked signs, although according to Francis Moloney, “The brothers’ conditioned statement about Jesus’s miracle-working activity, ‘if you do these things’ (v. 4b) indicates doubt.” However, the brothers’ unbelief is not necessarily directed toward Jesus’s miraculous “works.” They recognize that he is a miracle-worker and thus encourage him to go and work such miracles more publicly in Jerusalem.

Ironically the brothers’ unbelief is suggested in that, while recognizing Jesus as a miracle-worker, they apparently do not acknowledge what Jesus has previously stated that his miracles prove—that he is sent from the Father (John 5:36). That they offer him advice—peppered with some critique (v. 4)—indicates that they do not take his self-identification seriously. They simply think of him as someone who would want to make himself known to the world by way of miracles (John 7:4).

John’s terminology as to belief and unbelief is not very nuanced. Belief seems to be either “on” or “off,” present or absent. For John, the fact that the brothers recognized Jesus as some sort of miracle worker does not count as belief. But the apparently simple terminology masks the fact that the issue of belief is quite complicated in the Fourth Gospel. For example, in John 8:31–59 Jesus directs some words to those Jews who are said to believe in him (8:30, 31).

377 Brown, Mary, 200. Both the mother and brothers of Jesus are thus mentioned twice in John: first together in 2:12; then the brothers but not the mother in John 7; then the mother, but not the brothers at the crucifixion. As far as the Fourth Gospel is concerned, the story ends more favorably for the mother of Jesus than for his brothers (Brown, Mary, 200).

378 Francis J. Moloney, The Gospel of John (SP 4; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical), 237.


Yet during the course of the sermon these “believing” Jews first question Jesus (v. 33), then begin to disagree with him (v. 41), then accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed (vv. 48, 52), and finally attempt to stone Jesus (v. 59). It almost seems that the author wishes to claim that they believe in Jesus only to prove that this is not the case!

The unbelief of Jesus’s brothers should also be considered in its narrative context. In the immediately preceding section (John 6:60–71), Jesus reveals that among his disciples are some who do not believe in him (6:64). After this statement, but due to Jesus’s difficult teachings, many of his disciples withdraw and no longer journey with him (6:60, 66). From Jesus’s perspective the reason for this is that the Father has not allowed them to come to him (6:65). Only the Twelve stay with Jesus because—from their perspective—they have recognized that Jesus is the holy one of God (John 6:68) and because—from Jesus’s perspective—he has chosen them (6:70).

It is surely in the light of this recent, apparently quite large-scale defection that the author’s comment regarding the unbelief “even” of the brothers should be understood. The connection of these two instances suggests that the “belief” of the brothers in Jesus’s miracles was comparable to that of the multitudes who followed Jesus because they had been miraculously fed (6:26), but who deserted him when he further revealed his heavenly identity and purpose to them (6:32–58, esp. vv. 51, 58). Granted, the author does not elaborate on this matter with regard to the brothers, but he nevertheless clearly hints at it by placing the unbelief of the brothers in the same category as that of those who had just deserted Jesus. Therefore, it is probably not insignificant that the brothers of Jesus are no longer mentioned after 7:8. They disappear from the narrative and are thus left in this state of unbelief.

6.3.4 The Fact That the World Cannot Hate the Brothers of Jesus

In John 7:7, Jesus says to his brothers: “The world cannot hate you.” The “world” (κόσμος) is an important and multifaceted concept in the Gospel of John.381 The term is used in several different senses; as a reference to the realm of humanity in contradistinction to the realm of God; to all people; to an earthly “order” or mindset as opposed to a heavenly mindset.382 It is unnecessary here to expand on this topic much further than to point out the following: It would be possible to take Jesus’s mention that the world cannot hate the brothers of Jesus as a benign contrast between himself as a heavenly figure and them as humans, were it not for Jesus’s statements to his disciples in John 15:18–19, and in 17:14–16. John 15:18–19 reads:

Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσθηκεν. εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἦτε, ὁ κόσμος ἂν τὸ ἱδίον ἐφίλη: ὅτι δὲ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ ἔστε, ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, διὰ τούτο μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος.

“If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.

Whereas in John 7:5, 7 the brothers of Jesus are depicted as unbelievers who cannot be hated by the world, here the remaining disciples (i.e., the Twelve mainly after 6:68–70) who are believers (6:69) are said to be hated by the world. The contrast cannot be coincidental.

This is repeated again in John 17:14–16:

ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοίς τὸν λόγον σου, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ἐμίσησεν αὐτούς, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκτού κόσμου. οὐκ ἔρωτό ἦν ἡ ἁρχή αὐτούς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἀλλ’ ἦν τηρήσεις αὐτούς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσίν καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου.

“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.”

Because for John the idea of the “world” is theologically significant, and because he clearly states that the (Twelve) disciples are not of the world, it is surely significant that in John 7:7 the brothers of Jesus are implicitly depicted as being of the world.

6.3.5 The Twelve in the Gospel of John

John does not introduce the company of twelve apostles as such, or list all the names of the persons included. Only three persons are overtly numbered among the Twelve (see below). At the first instance where the group is referred to (John 6:67), its existence is simply assumed. In said verse, after many of Jesus’s followers depart due to his strange teachings, Jesus asks the Twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” (εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς δώδεκα, Μὴ καὶ ὑμεῖς θέλετε ὑπάσχειν). The narrator does not explain to the readers the significance of the otherwise peculiar number twelve; i.e., knowledge of the group seems to be assumed. Such an assumed preknowledge is probably also indicated in John 6:70. After Peter assures Jesus, on behalf of all the Twelve, that they will stay with him (6:68–69), Jesus replies, “Did I not choose you, the twelve . . .” (Οὐκ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς δώδεκα ἐξελεξάμην; v. 70). Again, although Jesus does in various ways invite members of the Twelve to himself in John 1:39–51, there is no passage in John that describes a specific choosing of twelve disciples.

But what about James of Alphaeus? Is he to be counted among the Twelve in the Gospel of John? In the Fourth Gospel, the names of three characters only are clearly connected with the Twelve: Judas, the son of Iscariot and Thomas are clearly numbered among them (6:71 and 20:24 respectively). Furthermore, on one occasion when Jesus addresses the Twelve (John 6:67), Simon Peter gives the reply (6:68–69) and this strongly implies that Peter is one of the Twelve also (cf. Jesus’s reply in v. 70). That these three characters who are numbered among the Twelve in the Gospel of John are also found listed among the Twelve in the Synoptics (Mark 3:13–19; Matt 10:1–4; Luke 6:12–16) suggests that by the Twelve, John means a similar group of names as that found in the Synoptics. This is all the more likely in that other names that are found among the Twelve in the Synoptics appear as notable characters in John: Andrew (John 1:10); Philip (1:43); “the sons of Zebedee” (21:2). Therefore, there does not seem to be any clear reason why we should assume that by the Twelve John means a significantly different group as that mentioned in the Synoptics. As James of Alphaeus is numbered among the Twelve in all of the
lists in the Synoptics (Mark 3:13–19; Matt 10:1–4; Luke 6:12–16), we may assume that what is said of the Twelve in the Fourth Gospel applies to James of Alphaeus as well. That John assumes that his readers will understand his references to the Twelve suggests that in John’s Gospel also the Twelve hold a special position. Again, they have been specifically chosen by Jesus (6:70) and they continue to “be with” Jesus even when other disciples depart (6:67–70). Thus a clear distinction is made between this special group and the rest of Jesus’s disciples. Furthermore, the Twelve are not of the world (15:18–19; 17:14–16), whereas the brothers of Jesus are of the world (7:5,7). All in all, the depiction of the “twelve” in the Gospel of John is more positive than that of the the brothers of Jesus.

6.3.5.1 Nathanael and James of Alphaeus

In an article titled “The Identity of John’s Nathanael,” C. E. Hill suggests that the character Nathanael in John’s Gospel should be identified with James of Alphaeus. Hill’s argument is based, first, on the fact that this appears to be the earliest identification made by later Christians between Nathanael and another person known from the NT. The author or later editor of the Epistula Apostolorum (c. 2nd century C.E.) seems to intentionally substitute Nathanael in his list of apostles in the place of James of Alphaeus, who is absent. Identification of Nathanael and Bartholomew, or of Nathanael and other disciples are attested only centuries later.

Hill combines this datum with the fact that at the introduction of Nathanael to John’s narrative, there are several allusions to the OT story of Jacob. Hill finds three: (1) Jesus’s prediction regarding the open heavens and angels “ascending and descending upon the son of man” (John 1:51; cf. Gen. 28:12); (2) that Nathanael is without “deceit” could be seen as a contrast to Jacob (John 1:47; cf. Gen 27:35); (3) Jesus’s use of Jacob’s new name “Israel” in reference to Nathanael (John 1:47).

Arguably, all of these references to the OT Jacob might make better sense of Jesus’s conversation with Nathanael—that is, if John’s audience knew that Nathanael was also known as James, i.e. Jacob. In the words of Hill,

Jesus’s opening salutation “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile” . . . would already be an indication that Jesus not only knows Nathanael’s character, but knows his other name as well . . . The play on Nathanael’s other name would also better explain Nathanael’s immediate response, “How do you know me”? And as such this verse would deepen what some have observed to be a theme in John, Jesus’s

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383 Again, in our view, unlike the synoptists who identify the members of the Twelve, the author of the Fourth Gospel assumes that his audience will know the Twelve and this comes close to an invitation to refer to outside sources. In the lists of the Twelve in the Synoptics, James of Alphaeus is always present.


388 With regard to this, Hill gives some examples in the Gospel of John where the author clearly expected the audience to know some information about some characters which he mentions (page 59).
foreknowledge of people’s hearts, lives or even names, as seen with Simon Peter (1.42), the Samaritan woman (4.17–19) and, indeed, all men (2.24).

There are a couple of weaknesses in Hill’s argument. First, Hill acknowledges that John does not at any point clarify that which Hill’s case rests on—that Nathanael was also called James. As noted, the audience would have had to have this information; however, this cannot be assumed. Second, Hill himself recognizes that there is little evidence for persons bearing two Hebrew names, although he cites a couple of examples.389

This second issue is sufficient evidence for Richard Bauckham to dismiss Hill’s argument.390 Bauckham argues for the fact that persons could have two names if one was a nickname, but not “two Hebrew personal names both in ordinary use, as Nathanael and James would be.” 391 Bauckham does not seem to entertain the possibility that, due to the meaning of Nathanael’s name (“given of God” or “gift of God”), Jesus (or John) might have preferred it over the name James as a nickname of sorts.

The arguments of Hill are certainly very interesting, but insufficient to solidify the identification of Nathanael and James of Alphaeus. However, Hill’s suggestion is worth mentioning here for the reason that if the arguments advanced in this dissertation with regard to James of Alphaeus are correct, then he would have been a more central individual among the followers of Jesus than just a name on the list of the Twelve. That this figure would also appear individually in John’s Gospel—even if by another name—is made a little more plausible.392 However, for the time being, we will not take John’s references to Nathanael as evidence either way in our ongoing investigation into James the brother of Jesus and James of Alphaeus.393

6.3.6 Summary of John

We have argued in this section that based on the Gospel of John it is not possible to paint a picture of the brothers of Jesus as believers after John 7. Much less can any case be made about any possible later leadership role for the brothers in the Christian community. That they accompanied Jesus in John 2:12 suggests that they are comparable to that multitude of believers who were initially interested in his ministry (John 6:22–25) but who did not accept Jesus for whom he said he was (John 6:64–66). The author himself draws this comparison as he states that

391 Bauckham, Eyewitnesses, 110.
392 Furthermore, in ch. 9 the possibility of identifying James of Alphaeus as the “Just’ is explored. Such an identification would provide an interesting point of comparison with what Jesus says of Nathanael in John 1:47.
393 A further argument in favor of seeing Nathanael as one of the Twelve is that he is introduced in the Gospel immediately after Andrew (1:40), Peter (1:41), and Philip (1:43), all whom we know from outside sources to be members of the Twelve. In John 6:67 the author simply assumes the existence of the group of Twelve without ever clarifying all of which persons were meant (except Judas in 6:71 and Thomas in 20:24). It is apparent in the context, however, that the Twelve were the closest disciples of Jesus (i.e. the last that would depart from him; 6:67) and that Jesus had chosen them (6:70). Arguably Jesus’s prophetic encounter with Nathanael by which he convinced Nathanael of his heavenly identity was such an act of choosing (1:47–51; compare with Jesus’s first interactions with Andrew, Peter and Philip). Furthermore, the pericope in which Jesus gains his first disciples ends in 1:51 where Jesus addresses them all in the plural. Thus, these first four disciples as a group receive the promise of seeing Jesus under open heavens.
the brothers “also” did not believe (7:5), and by indicating that they were not among Jesus’s disciples (7:3).

It is quite clear from Paul that at least some of the brothers of Jesus did become believers after the resurrection of Jesus (Gal 1:19). However, it is a completely valid question to ask whether the author of John knew about their later conversion and possible leadership role. Based on the evidence of the Fourth Gospel, it is quite possible that he did not. This seems to be suggested also by John 19:25–27 where Jesus commends his mother to the care of the “beloved disciple.”

6.4 Summary of Chapter Six

The depictions of the Twelve and of the brothers of Jesus in the Gospels appear to support our findings regarding James of Alphaeus in Acts. That is, there is no hint in the Gospels that the brothers of Jesus would later become church leaders whereas the importance of the Twelve, to which group James of Alphaeus belonged, is apparent in all Gospels.

The brothers of Jesus appear mainly in passages which contrast their unbelieving and earthly response to him with Jesus’s positive relationship to his new family—his disciples. Whatever became of the brothers of Jesus afterward in terms of involvement with the church and of its leadership must therefore be decided on the basis of sources other than the Gospels. Furthermore, James the brother of Jesus is never mentioned aside from the rest of the brothers in the Gospels. If one is named, all are named. The naming of James first in Mark 6:3 (and Matt 13:55) probably means that he was the oldest of Jesus’s brothers. Other than this, there is no allusion to any special pre-eminence for James, the brother of Jesus, in the Gospels. 394

The information found regarding James of Alphaeus in the Gospels is similar in the sense that he does not stand out as a prominent individual. The greatest difference between James of Alphaeus and James the brother of the Lord with regard to the information of the Gospels is that the son of Alphaeus belongs to the group of Twelve. We have argued in this chapter that all of the Gospels portray the Twelve as the most important group among Jesus’s disciples. In the presentation of Acts (Part One), it is only later in the history of the early church (Acts 12:17ff.) that James of Alphaeus begins to stand out among the Twelve also.

394 James of Alphaeus does not individually stand out as a significant person in the Gospels. The only possible suggestion for his importance within the group of Twelve may be in that he is always listed in the same position (#9) in the various lists of the Twelve (James D. G. Dunn, Jesus Remembered [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 508). According to M. J. Wilkins, “Within the Twelve is a recognizable division of groups of four. The first name of each of the groups remains the same in all of the lists (the first, fifth and ninth place is occupied, respectively, by Peter, Philip and James of Alphaeus). The order of the names within the groups varies, except for the first name. The sequence of the groups is the same in each list. This grouping suggests that the Twelve were organized into smaller units, each with a leader” (M. J. Wilkins, “Disciples” in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship [eds. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992], 172). This phenomenon, however, could also be explained by the theory that Matthew and Luke copied Mark’s list of the Twelve and made only a few modifications. The lists are not independent.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE BROTHERS OF THE LORD AND THE TWELVE IN THE EPISTLES, IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION, AND IN JOSEPHUS

What is initially striking about the data regarding James in the epistles of the New Testament is how limited it is. In the letters of Paul, aside from the reference to “James, the brother of the Lord” in Gal 1:19, the name “James” occurs only three times (Gal 2:9, 12; 1 Cor 15:7) and only once are Jesus’s brothers referred to as a group (in 1 Cor 9:5), the only reference to the brothers of Jesus as a group outside the Gospels and Acts. There are only two further references to someone specifically called “James” in the remainder of the NT: the author of the epistle of James identifies himself by this name (Jas 1:1) and the author of the epistle of Jude identifies himself as the brother of “James” (Jude 1.1). The question is: Which James is being referred to in these passages?

It is important to note that, with regard to these passages, a number of commentators refer to Acts as a source of information. The James mentioned in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 is (1) commonly understood to be the brother of Jesus, and therefore (2) utilized to further acquaint the readers (of the commentaries) with the brother of Jesus. On this basis, many claim that James the brother of Jesus was a very prominent church leader c. 40–60 C.E.

The obvious difficulty with the use of this information from Acts is that, as we have argued in Part One of this dissertation, *Acts says nothing about the brother of Jesus in those passages so often cited* (12:17; 15:13–21; 21:18). Furthermore, we have argued that Acts most probably assumes that the James mentioned in these passages is James of Alphaeus and therefore that *this data from Acts should be discounted as giving information about James the brother of Jesus*. Based on the Gospels and Acts we cannot ascertain that James the brother of Jesus ever became a prominent church leader. Therefore, whether or not he did become such must be established on the basis of the remaining NT evidence. Conversely, based on Acts, a strong case can be made that James of Alphaeus became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13–21; 21:18–25) and the (future) leadership of the Twelve is amply testified to by all of the Gospels.

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This situation calls, of course, for a fresh reexamination of the data in the remainder of the NT mentioning “James” and the Twelve. We will concentrate on what the Epistles (and Revelation) state in and of themselves regarding people called “James” (as well as regarding the Twelve and the brothers as groups), but we shall keep an eye on the possibility that James of Alphaeus may be in view in passages where someone called “James” is not otherwise identified.

7.1 First Corinthians

7.1.1 First Corinthians 9:5

The brothers of the Lord are mentioned as such only twice in the NT outside of the Gospels and Acts—as a plurality in 1 Cor 9:5 and James as an individual in Gal 1:19. 1 Cor 9:5 reads:

μὴ οὖκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα περιάγειν, ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ Κηφᾶς;

“Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?”

What is significant about this reference to “the brothers of the Lord” for our study is that Paul refers to them as apparently well-known persons who took their wives with them when they traveled, just like “the rest of the apostles” and “Cephas.” Christian missionary travels of the brothers of the Lord are probably meant because the others mentioned in the same breath are the rest of the apostles and Cephas. This is the earliest indication that the brothers of the Lord held any prominent role in the early churches. This is a very important piece of evidence because, as pointed out above, neither the Gospels nor Acts provide evidence for such.

The brothers of the Lord are in the present verse separated from “the other apostles” (οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι), which might suggest that the brothers were not considered by Paul to be apostles. However, Cephas is also mentioned individually and we know that he was an apostle (assuming that Peter is meant). As Cephas/Peter is mentioned as an outstanding example from among the larger group of apostles, so the brothers of the Lord may also be highlighted by Paul as a group from within the rest of the apostles. After all, in 1 Cor 9:1–13 the issue is apostleship.

Be this as it may, it is clear that Paul thought that it would help his case to refer to the brothers of Jesus on this occasion. Paul’s reference to them implies that (1) the audience knew of the brothers of the Lord and that (2) the audience considered them to be exemplary for the issue at hand, which is that apostles may be accompanied by their wives. If the brothers of the Lord could take their wives along, then so should Paul be permitted to.

James is not individually named among the brothers of the Lord in this verse and his personal example is therefore not evoked. It should be kept in mind that Paul does not clarify whom he knew the brothers of the Lord to be (their names), where they were located, or how the Corinthians had come to know of them. He also does not clarify whether all of them traveled or only some. Had some of them perhaps visited Corinth, along with their wives? This would

398 Cf. John 1:42.
399 Cf. David E. Garland, First Corinthians (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 408.
certainly explain Paul’s reference to them, but it is speculation. Nevertheless, one should be cautious about drawing general conclusions from this passage about the leadership role(s) of the brothers of Jesus in the wider church of Paul’s time because 1 Cor 9:5 does not clarify whether the Corinthians’ knowledge of the travel-habits of the brothers of Jesus was personal or general. It also does not say that they were church leaders, only that they traveled, apparently as missionaries. At any rate, for the church in Corinth the brothers of the Lord were, as a group, significant enough for Paul to compare his own conduct with.

7.1.2 First Corinthians 15:5–8

1 Cor 15:5–8 is the only passage outside of the epistle to the Galatians where the name James occurs. The passage reads:

καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ, εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα: ἐπείτα ὄφθη ἑπάνω πεντακόσιοι ἀδελφοὶ ἔφασα, ἐξ ὑμνίους μὲνονισιν ἔως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ ἐκοιμήθησαν: ἐπείτα ὄφθη Ἰακώβῳ, εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν: ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡςπερεὶ τὸ ἐκτρόμωτο πάθος ἡμεῖς ἴσθαν.

“And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”

What is notable about this passage is that Paul does not identify which James he is referring to. He says only that Christ “appeared to James.” As Charles Hodge observes, “Which James is here intended cannot be determined, as the event is not elsewhere recorded.”

However, the majority viewpoint takes the James to be the brother of the Lord without much argumentation in favor of this identification. Hans Conzelmann, for example, addresses the issue frankly: “Jakobus ist natürlich der Bruder Jesu (Gal 1:19).” Similarly Anthony Thiselton bypasses the whole issue simply by stating, “Most writers consider it virtually certain that the James in question is James the brother of Jesus.” Others do not address the question at all, but simply take the James to be the brother of the Lord.

400 Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 316. Hodge nevertheless entertains the possibility that James the brother of the Lord might be meant; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer also state similarly that “Nothing is known of this appearance, or as to which James is meant” (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1950], 337). Having conceded this, they nonetheless continue, “But there is little doubt that the James is the Lord’s brother, who became president of the Church in Jerusalem, and that he is placed here among the chief witnesses because of his high position at Jerusalem.”


402 Anthony C. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1207. Cf. also H.A.W. Meyer, Der erste Brief an die Korinther (ed. C. F. Georg Heinrici; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1896), 451; Richard Oster (1 Corinthians [Joplin, Mo.: College Press], 355), who states without further explanation that: “It is quite likely that the James referred to here is James the brother of the Lord.”; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians (AB 34; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 551; F. W. Grosheide (Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians [London: Marshall, Morgan &
In light of the previous findings of this dissertation regarding the portrayal of the Jameses in Luke-Acts, as well as in the Gospels, this “automatic” identification of James as the brother of the Lord in 1 Cor 15:7 must be called into question. Is there sufficient warrant for it?

7.1.2.1 Grammar

Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner argue that the James in view is most likely James the brother of Jesus by ruling out James son of Zebedee. They explain that the “Twelve” mentioned in v. 5 would have already included the son of Zebedee and so Paul would have said, “appeared to James again” in v. 7, if he was in mind. Ciampa and Rosner do not mention James of Alphaeus in this discussion, but presumably they would discount him on the same grounds as they do the son of Zebedee.

This argument, however, is not strong because it is an argument from silence. In short, Paul would have had no need to add the word “again” even if he was referring to one of the Twelve. In fact, this individual appearance to James was a unique, unrepeated event which Paul wished to enumerate in its own right. Apparently Paul only knew of one resurrection appearance to James as an individual and therefore the addition of “again” might have distorted this fact. According to Paul, Jesus appeared to the Twelve on one occasion and then to James individually on another. Paul apparently seeks to distinguish (temporally) between the various resurrection appearances because the point he wishes prove—that Jesus was resurrected—is made more secure by the larger number of separate resurrection appearances to various individuals and groups.

Furthermore, it appears unreasonable to assert that there was no overlap between the various individuals and groups mentioned by Paul as witnesses to the resurrected Jesus. Cephas, for example, may have received a resurrection appearance a total of four times: first alone, then with the Twelve (presuming that Peter is meant), then with the five hundred, and finally with “all the apostles.” Yet this is not Paul’s emphasis. The emphasis is on the chronology of the appearances, as indicated by the repeated usage of ἐἶτα and ἐπετα, and by Paul’s ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων of verse 8. By this chronological structure Paul seeks to establish that these post-resurrection appearances were separate historical occasions, with the purpose of proving that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead.

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404 When Paul refers to James the brother of the Lord in Gal 1:19, he specifies which “James” he means. This would suggest that a name-only reference to “James” would not have led the Galatian audience to think of the brother of the Lord. Cf. sect. 7.2.2.1.

405 The First Letter to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 750.
In addition, one wonders whether Ciampa and Rosner would be willing to follow through with their line of argumentation with regard to the five hundred brethren also. That is, their argument demands that the James of v. 7 was not among the five hundred brethren of verse 6 because if he had been, Paul should have said “again” in verse 7. Clearly it would be grammatically irresponsible to assert that the James of v. 7 must not have been among the five hundred brethren of v. 6 simply because the word “again” is not used of him. But the same holds true for his possible inclusion among the Twelve of verse 5. Therefore, there is nothing in the grammar of 1 Cor 15:5–8 that would exclude James son of Zebedee or James of Alphaeus as plausible candidates to have been the “James” of verse 7.

Ciampa and Rosner’s arguments also draw attention away from the fact that there is still no positive evidence in 1 Cor 15:7 to identify James as the brother of the Lord. The brothers of the Lord as a group do not figure in any way in the present passage. And so we are left to attempt to identify James on the basis of outside evidence.

7.1.2.2 Which James?

We have argued that in light of 1 Cor 15:6–8 it is impossible to form any secure identification regarding which James Paul means, or to rule out which James Paul probably did not mean. The only meager conclusion that can be drawn from the present passage is that, because Paul does not identify Cephas or James, these persons were probably known by name only to his Corinthian audience. Indeed, with regard to Cephas, this is demonstrated in 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22 and 9:5, in which verses Paul refers to Cephas as a person clearly known to the Corinthians, but without additional explanation as to who he was. It is probably not too far-fetched to assume that James was similarly well-known to Paul’s audience because he refers to him also by name only.

This notion is made more secure in that Paul states that he had communicated the present facts regarding Christ’s death, resurrection, and appearances to the audience previously: “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received” (παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρῶτος, ὁ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν; 1 Cor 15:3a). Since Paul had preached the resurrected Jesus to the Corinthians, the question of witnesses would have been pertinent. It is likely, then, that Paul had previously identified this James to the audience and so now he could refer to him by name only.

It is also not a far stretch to assume that this “tradition” which Paul recounted to the Corinthians was part of his preaching elsewhere as well. In this way this particular James—whoever he was—would have been made known to Paul’s audiences. But again, this does not reveal to us which James was meant.

7.1.2.3 Conflicting “First” Resurrection Appearances in 1 Corinthians 15?

It has been suggested that two conflicting groups claimed that their respective leaders (i.e. Peter on the one side and James the brother of Jesus on the other) had seen the resurrected Lord first. This view can be traced back to Adolf von Harnack. The initial problem with this

view is that if 1 Cor 15:7 is left “undecided” for the moment (i.e. that it is not taken as a reference to James the Lord’s brother), then there is no indication anywhere in the NT that the brother of the Lord ever witnessed the resurrected Christ. In fact, one has to wait several hundred years until Jerome’s reference to the Hebrew Gospel to find another independent source claiming that the brother of the Lord saw the risen Jesus.\footnote{407} There is simply no NT evidence to confirm this claim regarding 1 Cor 15:7.

But even from the viewpoint that James the brother of the Lord is meant in the verse, it is arguably not Paul’s intent to portray the appearances to Peter and James as two competing traditions. Because Paul lists the appearances in order with the use of εἶπα and ἐπείπα, Paul’s “final product” depicts the appearance to Cephas to have occurred first, followed by the appearances to the other groups and James. Therefore, the idea of two competing “first” resurrection appearances, claimed by different groups, does not naturally arise from what Paul says in 1 Cor 15:5–8 itself. Whatever Paul’s sources may have held is open to speculation. However, in Paul’s portrayal, the resurrection appearances are sequential. William T. Kessler argues for this in more length:

In the determination of what can be said with certainty, internal evidence alone can not lead us to say that 1Cor 15 proves that some early Christians thought that James was the first to see the risen Lord. This conclusion is possible only if the careful structure of Paul’s list of witnesses is accounted for by a rivalry theory. Such a theory, however, depends on what is known about the divisions of the early church. We do not dismiss the possibility that the few later explicit mentions of James as the first to see the risen Lord were creative expansions of 15:7. This would affirm the importance, not the priority, of the appearance to James. If such weight is to be given to the temporal adverb εἶπα (“then”) between the appearance to James and that to all the apostles that it is to be interpreted as indicating that James saw the risen Lord before all the apostles did, similar weight must be given the other temporal ἐπείπα (“afterward”) which similarly indicates that the appearance to James came after those to Peter, the Twelve, and the more than 500 brethren. Clearly, internal evidence alone will not suffice for building up theories about rivalry which present James as one group’s claimant to have been first to have seen the risen Lord. The later non-canonical evidence is the only source for saying that James was thought by some early church group(s) to have had a rival claim to this primacy.\footnote{408}

7.1.2.4 The “Missing Link”: The Importance of a Resurrection Appearance for the Brother of the Lord

A resurrection appearance by Jesus to his brother James has been used to explain the change from the “cool” relationship between Jesus and his brothers in the Gospels (i.e. during Jesus’s lifetime; cf. ch. 6) and the foremost leadership of James in the Jerusalem church soon after Jesus’s ascension. Dale C. Allison explains:

\footnotetext{407}{On this document, see sect. 8.6}  
\footnotetext{408}{Kessler, Peter, 55–56.}
Much . . . has often been made of [the resurrection appearance to James]. Given the plain statement of John 7:5 (‘For not even his brothers believed in him) as well as the tension between Jesus and his family reflected in Mark 3:21, 31–34 and implicit in other texts (e.g., Matt 10:34–36 = Luke 12:51–53), many have inferred that the appearance to James was, like the appearance to Paul, a sort of conversion. Reginald Fuller wrote: ‘It might be said that if there were no record of an appearance to James the Lord’s brother in the New Testament we should have to invent one in order to account for his post-resurrection conversion and rapid advance.’ Apologists for the resurrection have often emphasized that it must have been a christophany that changed James from an outsider to an insider.‘\(^{409}\)

It is significant for the purposes of this dissertation that this idea of a resurrection appearance to James the brother of Jesus can sometimes be found also in Acts research as a suggested explanation as to why he became the foremost leader of the Jerusalem church (1).\(^{410}\)

If the Gospels and Acts be consulted for clues regarding which James might be meant in 1 Cor 15:7, then it soon becomes apparent that all of these emphasize the Twelve as the primary recipients of the resurrection appearances of Jesus (Matt 28:16; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:34–36; Acts 1:1–3). It is true that none of these describe an appearance to James alone, but given that Cephas saw the risen Jesus first alone (1 Cor 15:5a) and then with the Twelve (1 Cor 15:5b), it is not at all impossible that James the son of Zebedee (or the son of Alphaeus) received an individual resurrection appearance after seeing Jesus alongside the other Twelve. Just as Cephas was one of the Twelve, so could the James here referred to have been. This cannot be proven, but based on the available circumstantial evidence in the Gospels and Acts, it is at least a little more likely than that James the brother of the Lord is in view in 1 Cor 15:7.

### 7.2 Galatians

The only epistle in the NT to unequivocally refer to James the brother of the Lord is Paul’s epistle to the Galatians. It is therefore of the utmost importance in determining the historical plausibility of our findings regarding Luke-Acts. Three times Paul refers in this letter to someone called “James” (Gal 1:19; 2:9, and 2:12), but only in the first instance is James referred to as “the brother of the Lord.” Can it be assumed that the brother of the Lord is also in view in 2:9 and 2:12? We treat each verse in turn.

\(^{409}\) Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 262. Allison does not himself stake so much on the appearance to James, although he holds that the brother of Jesus is in view (p. 263); cf. also James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 170; McCartney, *James*, 13; This viewpoint is understandably rejected by John Painter who does not view James as an unbeliever before Jesus’s resurrection (John Painter, “Who Was James?” in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* [ed. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 30.

7.2.1 Galatians 1:19

The earliest reference to a “James” in the available Pauline writings is in Gal 1:19 and in this verse this James is specifically called “the brother of the Lord [i.e., Jesus],” as we have seen. The instance occurs in a context in which Paul is outlining the limited nature of his contact with the leaders of the Jerusalem church. He attempts to make the point that the gospel which he preached to the Galatians was not received from human beings, but directly from God (Gal 1:1, 12). Gal 1:18–19 reads:

"Ἐπείτα μετὰ ἑτη τριάν ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα ἱστορήσας Κηφᾶν, καὶ ἐπέμενα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἠμέρας δεκαπέντε: ἔτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον, εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφόν του κυρίου.

“Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother.”

James, then, is mentioned in 1:19 as a notable person whom Paul met in addition to Peter. It is Peter and not James whom Paul primarily went to Jerusalem to “get to know.”

Arguments have been advanced both in favor of and against the view that James is in 1:19 counted among the apostles.411 The question centers on whether the statement regarding James, which follows εἰ μὴ in v.19, is an exception to Paul’s previous negative statement, that he did not see any other apostles. If it is, then Paul appears to count James as an apostle. For the present study the apostolic status of James would be of much more significance if for Paul “apostle” meant one of the Twelve. In such a case, whether or not the brother of the Lord was numbered among them would be very significant.412 However, for Paul the apostolic group was much wider, so as to include himself—a later convert—as well (1:1, 17; cf. 1 Cor 15:8–10).413 The brother of Jesus could have been one of the larger group of “apostles” in the Jerusalem church whom had seen the risen Lord (the appearances mentioned in 1 Cor 15:5–8 involved several hundred people). Yet, it is nowhere in the NT overtly claimed that any of the brothers of Jesus saw the risen Jesus (cf. sect. 7.1.2 with regard to 1 Cor 15:5–8).

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411 Cf. Ronald Y. K. Fung, The Epistle to the Galatians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 78; Matera, Galatians, 66; de Boer, Galatians, 98. Interestingly, all of these authors find support for the apostolic identity of the brother of the Lord in 1 Cor 15:7 (perhaps together with 1 Cor 9:5). However, whether the same James is referred to there is questionable. James of Alphaeus or James the son of Zebedee might also be meant.

412 This is where our argument differs from that of Karl Georg Wieseler, Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Galater (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1859), 78. Wieseler argues that for Paul the term “apostle” normally meant himself and the Twelve only and that, therefore, James the brother of the Lord was not counted among the apostles in this verse.

413 The syntax is perhaps pressed too hard if made to demand that James was an apostle, although it certainly permits the possibility. One must ask that if James was not an apostle, then what was he? If James was not an apostle, then Paul’s point in 1:19 would be that of the apostles he met Peter and no others, and of the non-apostles he only met James. It is doubtful that Paul could have so well avoided all of the non-apostles (i.e. the rest of the people) of Jerusalem so as only to meet one (James)! Yet, the fact that Paul specifies that James is a brother of the Lord may change the intent of 1:18–19 as follows: Peter was the only apostle I met and then I also met James, who was one of the brothers of the Lord. This latter option is a possibility given that in 1 Corinthians 9:5 it is also not clear whether the brothers of Jesus should be seen as outstanding among the apostles mentioned before them, or rather as a distinct group from the apostles mentioned before them.
In any case, Paul’s encounter with James in 1:19 is clearly subsidiary to the stated purpose of his two-week trip to Jerusalem—to “get to know” (ἰστορέω) Peter.\(^{414}\) He gives this as the only reason for the trip and offers as proof the fact that he did not meet with any of the other apostles (except for James the Lord’s brother). According to Ronald Fung, “The way in which the reference to James is attached as an afterthought, as it were, may indicate that he had only a subsidiary part to play in Paul’s meeting with the two Jerusalem leaders, if not indeed that his meeting with Paul was almost accidental.”\(^{415}\) The negative construction (“I did not see . . . except”) certainly does not make James appear prominent. For Martinus C. de Boer, the fact that Paul “only ‘saw’ James” implies that “the contact was minimal and without real significance.”\(^{416}\) Paul’s focus is first on the visit with Peter (1:18), second on the fact that no other apostles were met (1:19a), and third, on the exception of James (1:19b).

### 7.2.2 Galatians 2:9, 12

The James of Gal 1:19 is commonly identified with the “pillar” James of Gal 2:9.\(^{417}\) Indeed, due to the recurrence of the same name this is obviously a plausible conclusion. However, the identifying information attached to “James” in 1:19 on the one hand and to the one mentioned in 2:9 on the other hand differ significantly. It is therefore possible that two different persons are in view. Certainly there is nothing in these verses to necessitate that the same person must be in view.\(^{418}\) In fact, there are at least three reasons—intrinsic to Galatians itself—that recommend caution in identifying the James of 1:19 and the James of 2:9 as the same person:

#### 7.2.2.1 In Galatians 1:19 Paul Clarifies Which James He Means

In Gal 1:19 Paul clarifies that in this instance he is referring to James, the brother of the Lord. That such clarification is necessary confirms what is known to us from elsewhere in the NT also, that there were several notable Jameses in the Jerusalem church. Therefore, Paul could not refer to the brother of the Lord by name only lest he run the risk of confusing his readers as to which James was meant. This simple, but significant, detail cautions against a “minimalist” approach whereby the James of Gal 1:19 and 2:9 are equated simply because both are named James.

This elaboration with regard to the brother of the Lord was all the more necessary, given that there were two Jameses in the Jerusalem church who were numbered among the Twelve. After all, Paul mentions James in 1:19 immediately after recounting his visit with Peter who was himself one of the Twelve. Had Paul not further identified this James as the brother of the Lord,

\(^{414}\) “ἰστορέω,” *BDAG* 483, suggests “visit (for the purpose of coming to know someone . . . ).” With regard to Gal 1:18, *BDAG* translates “to make the acquaintance of Cephas.” With reference to Cephas in Gal 1:18, under “ἰστορέω,” *LSJ* 842, suggests, “visit a person for the purpose of inquiry.”

\(^{415}\) Fung, *Galatians*, 75.

\(^{416}\) de Boer, *Galatians*, 99.


\(^{418}\) That in both instances James is mentioned alongside Peter is a non sequitur because all of the NT Jameses would have been known to Peter. Also, Gal 1:19 does not imply that Paul met James the brother of Jesus while in the immediate company of Peter. Paul spent “fifteen days” (two weeks by modern reckoning of time) in Jerusalem.
some readers might well have confused this James with one of the two Jameses among Jesus’s original Twelve."

7.2.2.2 Paul Does Not Refer to James in 2:9 by Name Only

In Gal 2:9, Paul refers to the three persons that were “acknowledged [esteemed as] pillars” (οἱ δόκοιντες στῦλοι εἶναι) in Jerusalem, and with whom he had conferred about the legitimacy of his gospel—James, Cephas and John. De Boer notes that the initial identification of James as the brother of the Lord (1:19) is “no longer necessary when he is mentioned again in 2:9.” This line of interpretation implies that what Paul says of James in 1:19 functions as introduction (or identification) whereas what Paul says about James in 2:9 would be elaboration. This line of argumentation assumes that referring to James again in 2:9 as the brother of the Lord would be unnecessarily repetitive.

We have argued above at length with regard to Luke-Acts that “name only” references to previously introduced characters indicates that the author expected the readers to link the name with that previously more thoroughly introduced or identified character. Although there is not enough data in Galatians to demonstrate this matter, we consider it safe to assume that such a “name only” reference to a previously named character would imply that the same person is meant also in Galatians. However, the fact that Paul does not refer to James as the brother of the Lord again in 2:9 can be explained in other ways, namely, that Paul is referring to another James altogether who is not the brother of the Lord. This means that the information given about this James (and the other esteemed ones) is not to be taken as elaborative of a previously introduced character but rather as introductive of a new James.

The argument for this view is as follows: In Gal 2:1–10, Paul recounts his visit to Jerusalem to submit his gospel to some Jerusalem authorities. He does not name them at first, but refers to them twice with the somewhat ambivalent term οἱ δόκοιντες, “the esteemed ones” (vv. 2, 6c). In 2:6a, he refers to them with a touch of irony as, lit., “those esteemed as something” (οἱ δόκοιντες εἶναι τι), adding in 2:6b, “What they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality” (ὁποίοι ποτε ἦσαν οὐδὲν μοι διαφέρει: πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεός ἀνθρώπου

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419 de Boer, Galatians, 99.
420 de Boer, Galatians, 99.
421 The word is usually translated “men of repute” (“δόκοιντες,” LSJ 442); Burton, Galatians, 72; Richard Longenecker, Acts [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 48. Richard Longenecker explains that οἱ δόκοιντες was part of the political rhetoric of the day, being used both positively and derogatorily or ironically” (49). Similarly, C.K. Barrett and John Schutz conclude that, though οἱ δόκοιντες at times referred to esteemed persons whose reputation was undoubted (C.K. Barrett, Studia Paulina: In Honorem Johannis Zwaan Septuagenarii [Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1953], 2; John Howard Schutz, Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975] 141–2), “The word is used more commonly and characteristically with the suggestion of appearance devoid of underlying reality” (Barrett, Studia, 2). Barrett cites an example: “The use of dokein in Plato . . . is particularly clear and striking. The Apology alone yields a rich crop of examples. Immediately upon learning that the Delphic oracle had pronounced him to be the wisest of men Socrates, incredulous, came to some of those who were reputed to be wise (dokounton sofon einaí, 21 B), but was astonished to find that the first of them, though to others and especially to himself he seemed to be wise (dokein men einaí sofos), yet in fact was not (einaí d’ ou, 21 C) (2).” Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.), Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (3 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:341, explain the use of οἱ δόκοιντες. “This designation for the Jerusalemites appears to have an accent that is for Paul, who is struggling for the unity of the Church in the freedom of faith, if not negative, at least relativizing.” According to de Boer, Galatians, 107, “In Paul’s repeated use of the term [‘δόκοιντες’], it does seem to have an ironic flavor . . . especially discernible in 2:6, where he relativizes the importance and the stature of the men involved, at least in the eyes of the new preachers.”
οὐ λαμβάνει). Then, in v. 9 he refers to them as οἱ δοκοῦντες στῆλοι εἰς νᾶ, lit., “those esteemed as pillars.” Although Paul has in mind the names of the three persons with whom he met in private (cf. v. 2), he apparently holds off naming them until he can make some qualifications as to his perception of their role with regard to himself. As in Gal 1, Paul is at pains in Gal 2:1–10 to demonstrate his independence from Jerusalem in spite of the fact that this meeting did take place.\footnote{Given that Paul claims independence from Jerusalem and Judea, this particular meeting would have been somewhat problematic for Paul to explain. Paul’s difficulty is not with the acceptance of his mission by the Jerusalem authorities—he is able to report that they accepted it (v. 10). The tension seems to be that, on the one hand, Paul wishes to claim that these authorities accepted Paul’s gospel, but on the other hand that this nevertheless did not signify that they were the authors or authorities of his gospel. Paul’s mission originated from God, and not from these men (Gal 1). James D. G. Dunn argues that the phrase μὴ ποὺς εἰς κανόν τρέχο (Gal 2:2) indicates “a genuine concern on Paul’s part for the success or failure of his missionary work among the Gentiles” (Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1990], 115). However, according to Dunn Paul was concerned for the effectiveness of his mission without the approval of the pillars (Dunn, Jesus, Paul, 115).}

So while recounting the meeting, Paul seeks to indicate in various ways that it does not signify his dependence on these Jerusalem leaders: First, Paul claims that he did not go to Jerusalem by human compulsion, but because of a revelation (v. 2). Second, Paul asserts that he went because some false brethren were causing harm to his law-free mission (v. 5) and this would count as another reason why Paul himself would have chosen to go to Jerusalem (i.e. in contrast to the notion that the meeting was called for by the Jerusalem leaders). Third, as noted above, Paul’s repeated use of οἱ δοκοῦντες for these leaders (vv. 2, 6a, 6b, 9) quite well summarizes his ambivalent attitude toward them. Fourth, Paul clearly pronounces his dependence on these persons in v. 6b. and states that they actually “contributed nothing to him” (v. 6c). They recognized the “grace” given to Paul for a ministry to the Gentiles (v. 9), and requested only that he “remember” the poor (v. 10).

It seems that Paul holds off naming these οἱ δοκοῦντες until after he gets a chance to “prime” the readers with a certain perception of them. Therefore, when the three are finally named in 2:9, they have already been introduced to the reader quite elaborately as esteemed ones (vv. 2, 6) in Jerusalem, of whose standing Paul was unsure (v. 6a), but whom were regarded as pillars (v. 9),\footnote{It is worth noting that Paul does not specify who exactly esteemed these men as “pillars” (v. 9). We may certainly assume at least the believers of Jerusalem. Furthermore, since Paul expected his visit to the “pillars” to somehow solve the issue with the “false brethren” who were harming his mission (v. 5), we may assume that their leadership influence was wider than just Jerusalem. Their influence was felt (in one way or another) also abroad.} namely, James, Cephas and John.\footnote{Bart Ehrman, “Cephas and Peter,” JBL 109/3 (1990): 463–74, has argued that Cephas and Peter are two different persons, basing his case mainly on Galatians 2:7–8. However, the name Κηφᾶς is derived from the Aramaic and means the same as the Greek Πέτρος “Rock” or “Rocky.” See Matt 16:18; John 1:42. Cf. Dale C. Allison, “Peter and Cephas: One and the Same.” JBL 111.3 (1992): 489–95.}

What is significant for our study is that there is no similarity between Paul’s description of James the brother of the Lord in 1:19 and this James in 2:9. On the one hand, there is no similarity of information; that is, none of Paul’s descriptions regarding the James of 2:9 are applied to the James of 1:19. Conversely, the James of 2:9 is not referred to as the brother of the Lord.\footnote{One might argue that repeating the fact that this was the brother of the Lord was now unnecessary for Paul; however, this would be begging the question.}
On the other hand, there is also no similarity of significance. Paul mentions the brother of the Lord in 1:19 almost as an afterthought, which does not suggest that he was a person of much consequence to Paul. To rehearse the point, after recounting his visit to Jerusalem in order to get to know Peter in 1:18, Paul states that he met with no other apostles there, only to mention the Lord’s brother as an exception to this negative statement. This sort of mention does not make the Lord’s brother seem very consequential to Paul or important among the apostles. In contrast, in 2:9 James is mentioned before Cephas (Peter).

Given the dissimilar treatment of the James of Gal 1:19 and that of Gal 2:1–10, it is not impossible and, in our view, is quite plausible that Paul was writing about two different persons named James. As Paul himself seems to imply in 1:19, there was more than one notable James in the Jerusalem church and, therefore, it is quite likely—given the dissimilar descriptions—that Paul was referring to one James in 1:19 and to another in 2:1–10. One was the “brother of the Lord,” the other was one of “the pillars” of the Jerusalem church.

7.2.2.3 John, Who Is Previously Unmentioned, Appears (Also) as a New Named Person in 2:9

If one were still to question whether the information Paul gives of James in Gal 2:1–10 suffices as an introduction of a second James, we wish to draw attention to John, whose name appears for the first and only time in 2:9. As argued above with regard to James, John’s appearance is not spontaneous, but Paul gradually introduces these ὁι δοκεῖτες to his audience before naming them in 2:9. Our point here is simple: What is clearly true in the case of John—that he is a new named person in 2:9—may also be true for James in the same verse. The only possible source of confusion is that the name James has appeared earlier in 1:19. However, as mentioned, (1) there was more than one “James” in the Jerusalem church and (2) these two references to “James” are dissimilar in content and most likely therefore point to different persons. If so, then the James of 2:9 would be a new named person, as John clearly is.

These arguments caution against an automatic identification of the James of 2:9 with James the brother of the Lord in 1:19. Paul himself had to clarify to his audience in 1:19 that he meant the brother of the Lord. Did he do so in order that his audience would not confuse him with the better-known “pillar” of 2:9? It is true that they share the (quite common) name, but that is all they share in Paul’s account of his dealings with Jerusalem. Paul’s description of them does not match in terms of either the information given about them or of the significance given to them. One appears almost as an afterthought (Gal 1:19) while the other is the first on the list of Jerusalem pillars (Gal 2:9). Therefore, on the basis of the above considerations, we conclude that the data of Galatians are certainly not conclusive in terms of identifying the James of 2:9 with the James previously mentioned in 1:19 and identified there as “the brother of the Lord.”

7.2.3 Which James in Galatians 2:11–14?

The single “name only” reference to any James in Galatians occurs in 2:12. Cephas had been eating with Gentiles “until certain people came from James” (πρὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἐλθείν τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου), but subsequently he withdrew from table fellowship because he was afraid of “those of the circumcision” (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς). Here the name James occurs in passing, for the purpose

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426 Fung, Galatians, 75; de Boer, Galatians, 99.
of identifying who these men were, and so it appears that at this point Paul already expected his audience to know which James he was referring to.

This datum cannot really sway the debate in either direction. On the one hand, the viewpoint that identifies the James of 1:19 with that of 2:1–10 would take this as yet another reference to the brother of the Lord. On the other hand, our suggestion that two different Jameses are meant would simply identify the James of 2:12 with the James of 2:1–10. We come to this conclusion in part because 2:11–14 (with its reference to Cephas and James) follows immediately after 2:1–10 (with its references to Cephas and James). But mainly we come to this conclusion because the description of James’s leadership role in Jerusalem in 2:1–10 seems to match the authority he holds in 2:12. The same connection cannot be made with regard to the leadership role of the brother of the Lord who did not appear to be a person of much consequence to Paul (1:19). 427

7.2.4 James of Alphaeus in Galatians 2:9?

We have finished the “internal” investigation of the data of Galatians with regard to the identities of the Jameses in that letter. We have come to the conclusion that it is quite plausible on the basis of the evidence of Galatians itself that two different Jameses are in view in Galatians, one the brother of the Lord (1:19), the other another James (2:9, 12). To be sure, this conclusion is not necessary on the basis of the data of Galatians, but, by the same token, neither is the conclusion that only one James is meant.

In this section, these findings will be compared with evidence external to Galatians, mainly Acts. Three “attributes” of the James mentioned in Gal 2:9 and 12 will be highlighted to suggest that, when compared to other NT evidence, James of Alphaeus better matches the description of this “pillar” James than does the brother of Jesus.

7.2.4.1 First Attribute: James is Described as a “Pillar”

It is worth repeating that several commentators on the epistle to Galatians refer to Acts as supporting the identification of James in Gal 2:9 and 12 as the brother of Jesus. 428 However, insofar as the findings of this dissertation with regard to the identity of James in Luke-Acts are correct, Acts certainly does not support this identification. 429 On the contrary, the only possible correspondence in Acts to the James in Gal 2:9 and 12 would be James of Alphaeus. He would be the most natural person to be described alongside Peter and John as a “pillar” of the Jerusalem church.

James of Alphaeus is one of the Twelve apostles whose leadership is attested to by all the Synoptic Gospels and, most unequivocally, Acts (see ch. 4 above). In Acts 15:13–21, James of Alphaeus (again, if our previous argument is convincing) appears as one of the chief decision makers at the Jerusalem church—and one whose “judgment” other church leaders choose to adhere to. It is true that Acts does not use “pillar” terminology to describe church leaders, but the

427 But one might, of course, argue that the meeting mentioned in 1:19 occurred earlier and that the brother of the Lord had not yet acquired such a high position of leadership in Jerusalem as he later would (2:9).
428 Bruce, Galatians: Greek Text, 100; Witherington, Grace in Galatia, 120; Cole, Galatians, 108–9; Hansen, Galatians, 49, 59; Schreiner, Galatians, 110, 111; de Boer, Galatians, 99, 123.
429 Furthermore, as argued in chapter 5 above, the main reason Acts scholars find the brother of Jesus in 12:17 is because they take it to better accord with the evidence of Galatians! There seems to be a degree of circular reasoning between Acts and Galatians as to the identification of James.
only clear choice of a leader named James in Acts whom Paul might refer to as a “pillar” would be the James mentioned in Acts 15 and we have identified him as James of Alphaeus (1:13).

Whereas church leaders are not referred to as “pillars” in Acts, comparable “foundation” terminology is used in a couple of instances in the NT with reference to the Twelve. The clearest example is Matt 16:18, where Peter is described as the rock on which Jesus would build his church. In Rev 21:14, the foundations of the walls of the heavenly city have the names of the Twelve written on them. Therefore, in light of the widespread NT evidence for the foremost leadership of the Twelve apostles in the Jerusalem church, and in light of comparable “foundation” language that is used in reference to the Twelve in the NT, it would be quite natural that James of Alphaeus, one of the Twelve, would be meant by Paul in Gal 2:8.

Conversely, there is no evidence whatsoever in the NT that James the brother of Jesus was ever thought of as a foundational leader—or a “pillar”—of the Jerusalem church. Gal 1:19 certainly does not give that impression and to argue for such on the basis of 1 Cor 15:7 would beg the question. The closest instance in Paul to suggest such an idea is Paul’s reference to the brothers of Jesus as a notable example of Christian missionary conduct in 1 Cor 9:5. But nowhere from the Gospels or Acts can one form an argument that James—or the other brothers of Jesus—was considered a foundational leader of the Jerusalem church (See on the epistles of James and Jude below).

7.2.4.2 Second Attribute: James is Closely Associated with Peter and John

That Peter and John were members of the Twelve, and that James is—without any distinction—listed alongside them in Gal 2:9 further suggests that this James may also have been one of the Twelve. This is not a “smoking gun” piece of evidence, to be sure, but one may question whether Paul would have taken the chance of referring to James in such a manner, and in “one breath” with two other members of the Twelve, if he did not, in fact, mean James of Alphaeus. Although the evidence for the Galatian audience is lacking, there is ample evidence that other early Christian communities held the twelve original disciples in the highest regard (Gospels, Acts, Revelation). That Paul referred to James alongside Cephas and John, and without distinguishing between them in any way, certainly suggests—even if it does not prove—that James of Alphaeus was meant (assuming that James the son of Zebedee was no longer alive; cf. Acts 12:2).

Furthermore, Acts makes more of a connection between Peter and James of Alphaeus than just the fact that both were members of the Twelve. They are the only members of the Twelve mentioned by name in Acts 12:17 and in Acts 15. The evidence of Acts suggests a close cooperation between the two men in that Peter wished James to know what was happening to him after his release from Herod’s prison (Acts 12:17), and James relied on Peter’s opinion to render his judgment on the circumcision question (Acts 15:14).

A similar kind of cooperation is evident between Cephas/Peter and the “James” of Gal 2. That is, both agree that Paul may conduct a circumcision free mission to the Gentiles (2:9). Also, in Gal 2:1–13, Cephas/Peter seems to be concerned to stay on good terms with the “certain people from James” (Gal 2:12). These similarities between Peter and James in Acts, and Peter

430 However, in Rev 3:12, the Philadelphian believer who “overcomes” (ὁ νικῶν) is promised by the ascended Christ to be made a “pillar” (στήλης) in the temple of God. Also, in Ephesians 2:20 the temple of God (the church) is being built on the foundation of “apostles and prophets.” It is not likely that “apostles” here mean the Twelve only because “Paul” also calls himself an “apostle” in Eph 1:1.
and James in Galatians, suggest that the same James is probably meant. Based on our identification of the James in Acts, the James in Gal 2:9 and 12 would be James of Alphaeus.

7.2.4.3 Third Attribute: James Is Intimately Connected with the Question of Circumcision and the Legal Requirements on Gentiles

In Acts, James of Alphaeus appears individually as a significant leader at the Jerusalem Meeting (Acts 15:13–21), where acceptance of Gentile Christians without circumcision is in view, as well as in Acts 21:18–25, where Gentiles, Jews, and the Law are again at issue, here with respect to the missionary work of Paul. Therefore, in Acts James stands out as an individual leader almost entirely in relation to this one issue only—the (continuing) application of the Law in the church. The same is true for the James of Gal 2:1–14. Although the similarities and differences between Acts and Galatians with regard to the Jerusalem Meeting are well-known, the person and role of James has many similarities. In Acts 15, James of Alphaeus is arguably the key person at the Meeting because he offers a solution acceptable to all, but in favor of Paul. Again, if Acts is consulted regarding the probable identity of the “pillar” James who, alongside two (other) members of the Twelve, offers his right hand of fellowship to Paul affirming his circumcision-free gospel, only one possible answer emerges: he is James of Alphaeus.

This issue deserves a little more attention still: In Gal 2:9, Paul reports the agreement which he reached with the “pillars”: “that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised” (ἢ ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομὴν). All three are therefore characterized by Paul as leaders of Jewish Christians in particular (and not so much of all Christians). Paul accentuates this matter with regard to Peter in Gal 2:7–8.

Now it may be that Paul is trying to give his own ministry among the Gentiles some space by specifically connecting these leaders with Jewish Christianity, rather than with all Christianity. And Gal 2:12–14 suggests that such a “limitation” was not quite so clear to the other party. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence connecting the Twelve especially strongly with Jerusalem while neglecting their influence elsewhere among Gentile Christians. In the tradition behind Matt 19:27–30 and Luke 22:28–30 (Q), Jesus promises the Twelve significant leadership positions among the Twelve tribes of Israel. In Acts, the Twelve as a whole never leave Jerusalem and Peter travels only in Palestine. In Acts 21:18–25 James and the elders are looking out for the interests of the multitudes of Jewish Christians who are all zealous for the Law. The Book of Revelation also connects the Twelve closely with the eschatological New Jerusalem (21:14).

The point being made here is that the Twelve are mainly depicted in the NT as the foremost leaders of Jewish Christianity in Jerusalem and therefore would best match Paul’s description of the Jerusalem leaders in Gal 2:1–10 who were esteemed as “pillars” by the Jerusalem church. In light of this NT evidence, therefore, it is not surprising that two of these three foremost leaders of the Jerusalem church to whom Paul would go to confer about circumcision are members of the Twelve—Cephas and John. But on the same token, this evidence strongly suggests—all other things being equal—that the James meant in Gal 2:9 (and thus also 2:12) was also one of the Twelve.

If this interpretation of Gal 2:9 (and 12) is correct, the role of “James the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19) as an advocate for the Law is not attested to in the NT. The idea of the brother of the Lord as the ideal Jew may be found in some second century Christian literature, but it is
decidedly absent from the NT. (For the second century literature, as well as the epistles of James and Jude, see below).

### 7.2.5 Preliminary Conclusions and the Importance of the Jameses in Galatians

When Galatians is read on its own terms and in isolation from the information of Acts, it is possible to identify the James of 1:19 and 2:9 and 12 as the same person. However, this identification is not the only possible explanation of the data. There are several indications within Galatians itself to suggest that the James Paul identifies as “the brother of the Lord” in 1:19 is not the James he identifies as one of the three “pillars” of the Jerusalem church in 2:1–14. That is, Paul identifies these Jameses differently and the identifications do not overlap. The first is not of much importance to Paul (he mentions him merely in passing) whereas the other is presented as a vital decision maker regarding the circumcision question.

This way of identifying the Jameses in Galatians is by far preferable when the material in Galatians is compared to the evidence of Acts and other NT documents concerning the Jameses. The coherence that arises between our reading of the role of James of Alphaeus in Acts and that of James in Gal 2:1–14 is remarkable. Alongside Peter, someone named “James” stands out in both Acts and in Gal 2 as a chief decision-maker in the Jerusalem church, especially with regard to the question of the (non-)circumcision of Gentile Christians that was so important to Paul. If the James mentioned in Acts is James of Alphaeus, as we have argued, then the James mentioned in Gal 2 is probably also James of Alphaeus and not “James, the brother of the Lord” mentioned in Gal 1:19.

### 7.3 The Epistle of James

The author of the epistle of James identifies himself as, “James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ και κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος; Jas 1:1). This identification could be applied to any of the three well-known Jameses of the NT and for this reason it is not easy to make any secure identification of the writer of the epistle. According to Peter H. Davids:

The traditional position on the authorship and date of James definitely appeared by AD 253 (the death of Origen) and established itself firmly by the end of the fourth century (Jerome, Augustine, and the Council of Carthage). From then until the sixteenth century James was generally accepted as coming from the hand of James the Just while he presided over the church in Jerusalem (roughly AD 40–62, the lower limit being the less clear).\(^{431}\)

There are two main arguments for attributing the epistle of James to the brother of Jesus: First, and most importantly, is the argument from *jame*—that the brother of Jesus was the only James who would have been able to refer to himself by name without being confused with other Jameses, and to carry the authority to write such a letter to the twelve tribes of Israel (the son of

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\(^{431}\) Davids, *James*, 2. It should be noted that Davids does not grapple with the issue of the precise meaning of the reference to “James the Just”; Jerome, for example, identified James the Just as not a literal brother of the Lord, but as James of Alphaeus whom he thought of as a cousin of Jesus (more on this in the next chapter). With “James the Just,” Davids means James the brother of Jesus (Davids, *James*, 6).
Zebedee having already died). On the same grounds James of Alphaeus is discounted—he was not well-known enough to have written such a letter. In the words of Charles F. Sleeper: “Within the New Testament there are several unlikely candidates for the authorship of the letter. One does appear in the list of the twelve, James son of Alphaeus . . . We know nothing else about him . . . ” Similarly, Dan G. McCartney writes, “Two of the twelve disciples were named ‘James.’ The better known of these was James the son of Zebedee, brother of John, but this James was killed by Herod . . . James the son of Alphaeus also was one of the Twelve, but nothing is known of him after the earliest days of the church, and if he had authored the letter, he would have needed further identification than just “James.” Douglas Moo would agree, “James the son of Alphaeus is rather obscure, mentioned only in lists of apostles such as [Acts 1:13] . . . He was probably not well known enough to have written an authoritative letter to Christians under his own name alone.”

The primary argument for the identification of the writer of the epistle of James as the brother of the Lord is therefore that he was the most well-known living James of the time, being the primary leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13–21; 21:18–25; Gal 1:19; 2:1–14). However, in this dissertation it has been argued that the references in Acts 12:17, 15:13–21 and 21:18–25 are not to the brother of the Lord, but to James of Alphaeus, and that it is questionable that the James in view in Gal 2:1–14 is the brother of the Lord either. If these findings are correct, then this chief argument for the identification of the author of the epistle of James as the brother of Jesus is turned on its head and James of Alphaeus becomes the most likely candidate.

A second, but quite similar, argument for the authorship by the brother of Jesus is that of similarity—that the primitive theology and Jewish characteristics of the letter accord with what is known of the brother of Jesus from elsewhere in the NT. Let us consider the arguments of Douglas J. Moo here. Moo begins also with the argument from fame by stating,

None of the other Jameses mentioned in the NT lived long enough or was prominent enough to write the letter we have before us without identifying himself any further than he does. Of course, it is always possible that a James not mentioned in the NT was the author of the letter. But we would have expected that so important a person would have left traces of himself in early Christian tradition . . . The case for authorship to this point is inferential: a well-known James must have written the letter, and the brother of the Lord is the only James we know of who fits the profile.

Whereas Moo acknowledges that this case cannot be proved, he goes on to list some “circumstances” that “corroborate” his conclusion. For this he uses the argument from similarity: First, there are some similarities between the epistle of James and the speech and letter of James

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Second, “the circumstances reflected in the letter fit the date and situation in which James of Jerusalem would be writing.”

Third, the theology reflected in the epistle of James is “just the kind of theology we might associate with James as we know him from the NT.”

The problem with all of these arguments on the basis of similarities is that they rely on NT passages that do not, in our view, refer to the brother of Jesus. For example, if any similarities between the James of Acts 15 and the author of the epistle of James can be maintained, then this would be a strong argument against authorship by the brother of the Lord, and simultaneously for authorship by James of Alphaeus, who is in view in Acts 15. Similarly, the theological emphases of James that Moo finds in the NT are (apparently) based on those passages in Acts and Galatians that we have argued are better taken to refer to James of Alphaeus and not the brother of the Lord.

7.3.1 Pseudepigraphic Author

Proponents of pseudepigraphic authorship for the epistle of James have questioned whether the nature and character of the epistle of James matches with what is known from elsewhere regarding James the brother of the Lord. In the words of Elian Cuvillier, “Pour les partisans de l’hypothèse pseudépigraphique, cela ne plaide évidemment pas pour un auteur galiléen (i.e. Jacques “frère du Seigneur”).” One of the key questions is whether the brother of the Lord would have been able to write such refined Greek as is found in the epistle. Cuvillier summarizes well the two sides of this debate:

Les tenants de l’authenticité soulignent que le premier point—la maîtrise de la langue grecque—n’est pas un argument décisif, dans la mesure où l’on sait, en particulier par les fouilles archéologiques, qu’au premier siècle de notre ère Jérusalem est une ville bilingue. Quant à la qualité du grec et l’utilisation de figures rhétoriques, elles conduisent à postuler l’hypothèse de l’utilisation d’un secrétaire ou à supposer que Jacques est un jérusalémite éduqué ayant même, de l’avis de tel exégète, occupé la fonction de grand prêtre. Tout cela est-il compatible avec le milieu galiléen de la famille de Jésus? La question reste ouverte.

This argument for pseudepigraphy on the basis of language would not be possible in the same way if James of Alphaeus would be considered as a possibility to be the author. Nothing is really known about where he hailed from or his educational background and so forth.

Another issue raised is that the Jerusalem decree or some other Judeo-Christian theological concerns that are commonly associated with James are not highlighted in the letter.

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439 It is incorrect—or at least very imprecise—to state that the letter sent to the Gentiles after the Jerusalem Council was “sent by him [James]” (Moo, James, 10). Acts depicts the letter to have been sent by the apostles, elders, and the whole church.

440 Moo, James, 10.

441 Moo, James, 11.

442 The assumption appears to be that James the brother of the Lord—and not another James—is the character in whose name the pseudepigraphic author writes.


However, proponents of genuine authorship can counter that the element of concern for the poor that is clearly evident in the letter (Jas 2:1–9; 5:1–6) is associated elsewhere with James (Gal 2:10). Furthermore, James’s interaction with Pauline theology (Jas 2:14–26) can be explained either as conversation between the real James and the real Paul (i.e. their writings), or by the proponents of pseudepigraphical authorship as debate between later generations of “Jamesian” and “Pauline” groups and/or their respective writings.\footnote{Cuvillier, “‘Jacques’ et ‘Paul,’” 276–8.}

What is interesting is that James does not identify himself as a brother of the Lord. For S. R. Llewelyn this is evidence that the letter is pseudepigraphical.\footnote{S. R. Llewelyn, “The Prescript of James,” NovT 39.4 (1997): 385–93, 386 n.5.} But would it not be more likely for a pseudepigraphical author writing in another’s name to attempt to clarify under whose name he is writing? Yet, this lack of reference to any kinship with Jesus may indicate simply that the James in view is not the brother of the Lord, but rather another James altogether.

7.3.2 James’s Own Perceived Authority as a Clue

Perhaps one minor correspondence can be mentioned in favor of an identification of the author of the epistle of James as one of the Twelve apostles. The letter is addressed to the twelve tribes in the diaspora (ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαίς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ; 1:1) and (perhaps a little surprisingly) the author considers it his right to exhort such a wide audience. In the NT, only the twelve apostles are described as having such a wide sphere of influence. In Matt 19:28 Jesus promises that his apostles will καθίσσεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους κρίνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, “sit (also) on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Luke repeats this promise (22:30), referring again to τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς, “the twelve tribes” (cf. the exact correspondence in Jas 1:1: τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς).

A similar connection between the foundational role of the twelve apostles within Israel is made also in the book of Revelation (20:14). Granted, in Revelation the apostles’ reign is to occur primarily at Jesus’s return, but that does not diminish the fact that, if these promises of Jesus regarding the Twelve were accepted among Jesus’s followers (and why would they not be?), then the twelve apostles were appreciated within the early Christian movement as those to whom the twelve tribes of Israel were to be entrusted. No similar promises are recorded as having been made to other persons among the followers of Jesus, and therefore not to the brother of Jesus.

7.3.3 Correspondence Between the James of Acts 15 And the Author of the Epistle of James

Simon J. Kistemaker points out a similar expression of the James of the Jerusalem Meeting (Acts 15) and the author of the epistle of James: “His opening remarks [at the Council] are, ‘Men and brothers, listen to me.’ [ Ἀνδρεῖς ἀδελφοί, ἀκούσατε ἀγαπητοί] The similarity between these words and those of the Epistle of James is remarkable. In his epistle James writes, ‘Listen my beloved brothers’ [Ἀκούσατε ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί] (2:5).”\footnote{Simon J. Kistemaker, Acts (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 550.} James B. Adamson elaborates on the close connection he sees between the identity of the writer of the epistle of James and of the James of Acts 15:
To me at least, it seems obvious that not only is the Epistle of James by James the Lord’s brother but equally, and partly on the same grounds, the letter in Acts 15:23–29 . . . J. B. Mayor emphasizes the “remarkable agreements” between the 230 words of James’s speech in Acts 15:23–29 and the Epistle of James . . . Yet such evidence is cumulative, for though these parallels in themselves do not prove the identity of the two speakers, they do have “a certain force when added to the other favourable arguments.” [quoting Mitton] Among other things we may note a similar fondness for the OT, plus several significant verbal parallels . . . We are quite prepared to concede that Luke may have composed the version of the speech James doubtless made on that occasion; but we think the style is that of James himself. In the substance of the speech in Acts we definitely see *the* James of the Epistle of James.449

As Kistemaker and Adamson (and others)450 emphasize the similarities—that is, the connection—between the speech of the James of Acts 15 and the author of the epistle of James, they rely heavily on Acts to determine the authorship of the epistle of James. This illustrates the issue that the author of the epistle of James does not himself identify which James he is and this matter must be determined from outside sources. Although Adamson may be correct in his conclusion regarding the same James behind the speech of Acts 15 and the words of the Epistle, he is certainly incorrect in his identification of James in Acts 15 as the brother of the Lord—and consequently in the ramifications of this as to the identity of the writer of the Epistle of James. That is, the more secure the link between Acts 15 and the epistle, the more secure is the identity of the author of the epistle of James as James of Alphaeus.

### 7.4 The Epistle of Jude

The author of the epistle of Jude (*Ἰούδας, Judas*) identifies himself as, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James” (*Ἰούδας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δούλος ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου; Jude 1:1*). As far as NT persons are concerned, there is only one set of brothers that have these names; Mark 6:3 (and Matt 13:55) list the names of the brothers of Jesus as “James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon.”451 In Matthew’s list, Simon is listed before Jude and Jude is, therefore, last. If the order of names is indicative of birth-order,452 then James would be the oldest of Jesus’s brothers, whereas Jude would be the third brother. But the fact that Matthew changes the order of the last two might suggest that either he did not think of the order of the names to signify birth order, or then that he thought of Mark’s birth-order as incorrect. Or perhaps he had another reason altogether for changing the order of the names. However, both Mark and Matthew name James first and therefore it is quite likely that James was the oldest brother of Jesus.

This birth order would fit the self-identification of the author of the epistle of Jude as a brother of James; that is, if we presume it more likely that a younger brother would identify himself by an older one than vice versa. We would have, then, not only a match in the names of

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450 Scot McKnight lists five similarities between the epistle of James and the letter of Acts 15: “(1) The letters have similar beginnings; (2) The letters each express the need to ‘keep’ oneself from sins; (3) The letters each connect ‘listen’ to ‘brothers’; (4) The letters each use the name invoked upon the believers; (5) The letters use some distinctive vocabulary” (*James*, 22); also McCartney, *James*, 25–27.
451 Donald P. Senior and Daniel J. Harrington, *1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter* (SP; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2008), 182.
the two brothers when compared with Mark (and Matthew), but also a match with regard to their relative birth-order.

But why would Jude identify himself by the name of his brother, rather than by the name of his father, as was more common? The simplest answer may be that the brother of Jude, James, was very well-known to the particular audience to which Jude writes. Although this appears to be the simplest solution, it is difficult to establish that it is, indeed, the correct one. But if it is, then there is no longer any need to posit that James was older than Jude—for a younger brother may also be more well-known to one particular audience than an older one. Therefore, the only link between these two brothers and the brothers of Jesus would be the names Jude and James.  

This identification would fit quite well with those NT texts that mention the brothers of the Lord as somewhat well-known figures (for better or worse) in the early church: They are named in Mark (6:3) and Matthew (13:55); John mentions that they accompanied Jesus on some of his early travels (John 2:12), although they were not clearly believers during his lifetime (John 7:5); According to Luke, they were among the Jerusalem believers soon after Jesus’s resurrection (1:14), although he does not mention them again; Paul mentions that he had encountered James the brother of the Lord during his fifteen day visit with Peter (Gal 1:19), and refers to the brothers of Jesus as examples of Christian missionary conduct with regard to taking wives along on trips (1 Cor 9:5). This last reference is the only one in the NT that clearly indicates that at least some of the brothers of Jesus were known as traveling preachers (in some way similar to Paul) within the Christian movement.

The datum provided by Paul in 1 Cor 9:5, that the brothers of Jesus traveled, would certainly seem to fit with the context of the epistle of Jude in which the author writes to a group of Christians with whom he had previously become acquainted (by visiting them?), but with whom he was currently not present. The naming of James in Jude would also correspond with the fact that Paul in 1 Cor 9:5 spoke of the (plural) brothers of the Lord and not only one. It is at least possible that some of the brothers travelled together. Might Jude have accompanied his older brother James on a missionary visit to the locale of this particular audience, and was James the more influential leader among this particular group of Christians? Such a scenario would correspond with the information found elsewhere in the NT regarding the brothers of Jesus, and would explain the reference to James in the introduction of the letter.

7.4.1 Challenges to the Identification of Jude as the Brother of Jesus

There are some reasons to question this identification of the author of the epistle of Jude as the brother of Jesus: First, the names James and Jude were not uncommon among first century Jews (hence the need for this dissertation!). It is not implausible that there was another set of brothers with the names Judas and James who were influential among this particular group of 

\[\text{453} \] This reference to James secures the identity of Jude as one of the Lord’s brothers for some because in common opinion James was so well-known that a reference to a “James” without further qualification would have been a reference to James the brother of the Lord (e.g. Gene Green, Jude, 2). This line of reasoning has been called to question in this dissertation; however, we maintain that James the brother of the Lord may well be meant and that he may have been better known than Jude to the particular audience (however wide or small it was) to which Jude was addressed.

believers. The problem here is that we do not know much about the audience to which Jude addressed his letter. As Michael Green summarizes, “We have, unfortunately, no means of knowing to whom Jude addressed himself. His was not a general letter, but written to people he knew in a particular situation (vv. 3–5, 17–18, 20). He is clearly a Jew himself, but that does not mean his readers are.” Green argues for the probability that Jude’s audience was also Jewish based on Jude’s apparent assumption that they knew of the Jewish intertestamental and apocryphal literature to which he referred and alluded—and these reasons seem valid.

However, Green also suggests a likely Jewish audience on the basis of a perceived ministry sphere of James the brother of the Lord, “If Jude the brother of James was indeed the author, it is probable that, like his brother, he would have made himself particularly responsible for the Jewish Christian mission.” In this dissertation, we have widely disagreed with this understanding of the ministry of the brother of the Lord. That is, there is no evidence in the NT that James or any of the brothers of the Lord ministered primarily to Jews—that is, if the above findings with regard to James of Alphaeus in Acts and Paul are accepted. There is ample evidence that the Twelve addressed themselves primarily to Jews, but the only clear indication of the ministry of the brothers of the Lord (1 Cor 9:5) is written by Paul to the Corinthian church. This text would seem to indicate that the brothers were active outside of Jerusalem, as missionaries, whereas James of Alphaeus (we have argued) was a leader of the Jerusalem church. There is no indication that James of Alphaeus was himself active outside of Jerusalem, although his influence was felt abroad (cf. Gal 2:12; Jas 1:1).

Green goes on to suggest a location such as Antioch as a possible destination of the epistle, but acknowledges that “Certainty is, of course, impossible; there is inadequate evidence on which to base a considered judgment.” And as noted, this complicates the matter of identifying the author of the epistle as the brother of the Lord; if we do not know to whom the letter was addressed—or when—then we have only the names of the two brothers to go by. That these brothers were James and Judas, brothers of Jesus, is possible, but not necessary.

A second caution for identifying Judas as a brother of Jesus is the fact that in his self-identification he refers to Jesus on the one hand, and to James as his brother on the other hand, but does not refer to himself as a brother of Jesus! It is, of course possible that the author did not want to accentuate this fact due to humility or some other reason. However, this is only guesswork and not very persuasive for the reason that every other NT author that does refer to the brothers of Jesus identifies them as such (Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul). It was no secret that Jesus had brothers and, as far as the NT evidence is concerned, it appears to have been perfectly normal for Christians in various places (from Palestine to Galatia to Corinth) to refer to the brothers of Jesus as such (or similarly as the “brothers of the Lord”).

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457 Michael Green, Jude, 56.
458 Michael Green, Jude, 56. Schreiner (First, Second Peter, Jude, 410) writes, “We must admit that we really have no way of knowing the letter’s destination. Nothing in the interpretation of the letter is based on its destination, nor do we know whether Jude wrote to one church or churches.”
459 Donelson points out that “Jude has been dated anywhere from 50 to 120 C.E.. It has been located from Egypt to Palestine to Asia Minor to Greece” (Jude, 164).
So, again, why would Judas not simply mention that he was a brother of Jesus if he wished to clarify his identity to the audience? Even the suggestion that Jude may have wanted to emphasize his servant role with regard to Jesus is not convincing as James is referred to in Gal 1:19, not as the brother of “Jesus,” but as the brother of “the Lord” and the brothers collectively in 1 Cor 9:5 as the brothers of “the Lord.” The Christian admiration for Jesus as Lord was not contradictory to the fact that these persons were his brothers.

Third, the question has been raised regarding whether Jude the brother of Jesus—a Galilean—would have achieved the level of Greek proficiency exhibited in the epistle. Gene Green would conclude that it would be unlikely—but not impossible—for a Galilean Jew to achieve the level of proficiency in Greek exhibited in the epistle of Jude. However, where Jude’s own hand might have lacked the skill to pen such an epistle, the extensive use of secretaries in the first century could have made up for any deficiency.

These facts are not presented here as decisive evidence against authorship of the epistle by Jude the Lord’s brother. Indeed, Jude the brother of Jesus is the only possible identification of the author of the epistle of Jude that can be made on the basis of the very limited information available in the NT.

7.4.2 The Relationship of the Author of the Epistle of Jude to the Apostles

One other piece of evidence is somewhat significant for the identification of the author of the epistle. In v. 17 Jude asks his audience to remember (μνησόθητε) the words “of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ” (τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ κυρίου ήμῶν Χριστοῦ). In his comment on Gal 1:1, de Boer argues that Paul distinguishes between two kinds of apostles—those commissioned by the Lord, i.e., by the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1–6; 15:3–9), and those commissioned by other people, or churches (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). Paul considers himself part of the first group and refers to himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; cf. Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; cf. 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). Jude’s formulation (“the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”) indicates that he probably also has the former group of apostles in view. This group was for Paul larger than the Twelve since it includes himself and others (cf. 1 Cor 9:1–6; 15:5–9; Gal 1:1, 19; 2:8). In the Synoptics, Acts and Revelation, however, the word “apostle” normally refers to members of the Twelve (for Acts and the Synoptics, see chs. 1–4 and 5 above; for Revelation, see below).

It is not wholly clear whether Jude has a larger group of “apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ” in view, as Paul does, or the Twelve only. However, three items seem to be true on the basis of Jude v. 17: (1) Jude does not consider himself an “apostle of Jesus Christ.” In contrast,

461 John Painter and David A. deSilva, James and Jude (Paideia CNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 179. Cf. Richard Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter (WBC 50; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 15. With regard to the language of the epistle of Jude, Bauckham concludes, “Since there are no other reasons for denying the authenticity of the letter, it would be unwise to consider this extremely uncertain question of language an insuperable obstacle” (pp. 15–16).

462 Gene Green, Jude, 7–8.

463 Galatians, 21–23.

464 In Acts 14:4, 14, Paul and Barnabas are referred to as “apostles” in the sense that they were commissioned as missionaries by the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1–3) to which they are to return and make a report, as they do (Acts 14:26–28). The word is here being used as in 2 Cor 8:3 and Phil 2:25, to designate those commissioned by churches for specific tasks. That may also be the case in Rev 2:2 (“those calling themselves apostles but are not”), though there, as in Did. 11:3–6, the issue may be itinerant Christian preachers acting without a church commission. Cf. also John 13:16b where the term is used in a general sense. In Heb. 3:1, Jesus is referred to as an apostle.
Gal 1:19 and 1 Cor 9:5 seem to suggest that Paul counted the brothers of the Lord as apostles in the same sense that he was. (2) Jude’s audience has previously been instructed by such “apostles,” but they are not currently. (3) Such “apostles” hold an especially important role among the believers here addressed.

If Jude is the brother of the Lord and if the term “apostles” in Jude does refer specifically to the Twelve, then this picture of Jude in contrast to the “apostles” can be harmonized with other NT evidence. The Twelve are the most important leaders of the early church for Jude (cf. Matt 10:1–4; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13) while he and the other brothers of the Lord, including James, though active in some way in the early Christian communities (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19), are not among them.

### 7.5 The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation does not refer to James the brother of the Lord or any other James by name. The brothers of the Lord are not mentioned either. However, mention is made in Rev 21:14 of the Twelve apostles:

καὶ τὸ τείχος τῆς πόλεως ἔχων θεμελίους δώδεκα, καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτῶν δώδεκα ὄνόματα τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῦ ἀρνίου

“And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The author’s favorite title for the exalted Christ is ἀρνίον, a “lamb” or “little lamb.” He uses the term as a reference for Christ almost thirty times; however, outside of the Book of Revelation it is only found once in the NT, in John 21:15.

The twelve apostles thus described as having their names inscribed on the foundation stones of the heavenly city are doubtless the twelve original (pre-Easter) disciples of Jesus. Regarding this, H.A. Ironside comments,

The wall, we are told, had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This fact accords strikingly with our Lord’s promise to the Twelve that, inasmuch as they had followed Him in His rejection, when the day of the earth’s regeneration comes they will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Just as in Ephesians 2 the church is pictured as a holy temple, built upon the foundation

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466 Cf. Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005), 550; Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 243. Roloff argues that “the idea of the ‘twelve apostles,’ which limits the apostolate de facto to the circle of the twelve around the pre-Easter Jesus and thus excludes Paul, only developed in the second Christian generation, possibly under the influence of the Jesus logion in Matt 19:28, and is clearly attested elsewhere in the New Testament only in Luke (Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 26).” The “tables can be turned” on this argument; to wit, the idea of a larger apostolate than that of the Twelve can only be found in Paul! However, the author of Revelation is not necessarily stating that there are no more apostles than the Twelve (cf. 2:2; 18:20). By specifying the number twelve and by connecting them with the Lamb (Jesus), the author makes amply clear which particular apostles he means. It is possible, therefore, that the author of Revelation did consider other persons to have been apostles also; however, based on the limited data in Revelation, this is not necessarily so.
of the apostles and prophets, so here the Holy City rests upon the chosen messengers, who are to be the representatives of that authority in the age to come.  

Although it is easy to agree with Ironside regarding a similar level of importance given to the Twelve at the eschaton both in the tradition behind Matt 19:28 and Luke 21:29–30 (Q), on the one hand, and in Revelation, on the other, the descriptions in these instances vary considerably. To wit, in Luke 22:30 (and Matt 19:28), Jesus’s promise is that the Twelve would sit on thrones to judge, whereas in Revelation, their names are inscribed on the foundations of the city. A closer connection with this latter imagery can be made, therefore, with Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Cor 3:10, or perhaps, as has been suggested above, with the “pillar” terminology of Gal 2:9. In all these instances, the apostles are in various ways described as “foundational” insofar as they support the larger “structure,” that is, the church.

Pilchan Lee takes the fact that the names of the twelve apostles are on the foundation stones simply to mean that “the church has been founded by the apostles.” Doubtless this forms a large part of the meaning. However, it must be kept in mind that in the description of the New Jerusalem the author of Revelation is not merely describing a historical situation, but a future, perfect, God-willed establishment. It appears, therefore, that the author did not only consider the Twelve to have been important in the past, historical (“earthly”) events of the church, but depicts them here as ageless, almost cosmic figures of importance comparable to the heads of the Twelve tribes of Israel. Their renown in the age to come would be world-wide (to the extent that the New Jerusalem would be the epicenter of the future world) and endless. No other “saints” were to be honored in such a way. Due to this glorified description it is difficult to overstate the importance and reverence that the author of Revelation had for the Twelve.

As Ironside noted, it is natural to make the connection between the picture of the Twelve in Rev 21:14 and Jesus’s promise of authority in the age to come in Luke (22:30) and Matthew (19:28). Indeed, Jesus’s promises to the Twelve are probably the most likely explanation as to why the Twelve are honored in such a way in the New Jerusalem. That is, the author of Revelation doubtless knew of many other significant church leaders, but that only the Twelve are honored in such a way can best be explained in that they were the only ones (as far as the NT data informs us) who received such promises from Jesus.

### 7.5.1 The Twelve Apostles among the Twenty-Four Elders in Revelation 4:4?

There may be a closer connection yet to be made with Jesus’s promise to the Twelve in the tradition behind Matt 19:28 and Luke 22:30, and the book of Revelation. In Matt 19:28, Jesus promises to the Twelve: “At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ, ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ υἱός τοῦ άνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ, καθήσονται καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους κρίνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ). Some thematic similarities can be found in Rev 4:4 where John describes a facet of the heavenly throne-room: “Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads” (καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνους εἶκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἔπὶ τοὺς θρόνους εἶκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους

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467 Henry A. Ironside, Revelation: An Ironside Expository Commentary (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 204.

καθημένους περιβεβλημένους ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς).

These “elders” have been interpreted in many ways—as angels or as human or angelic representatives of Israel and the Church. Several modern commentators mention the possibility that the twenty four elders could be identified as the twelve patriarchs conjoined with the twelve apostles; however, few of the most modern commentators wholly subscribe to this viewpoint. Beale comments that the elders are “angels . . . identified with the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles.” Thus, they would be the heavenly counterparts of these human individuals.

However, there are several strengths to the viewpoint that the elders are human rather than angelic, and more specifically that they consist of the twelve heads of Israel’s tribes and the twelve apostles of Christ. The reasons are as follows: First, in the book of Revelation, white garments are solely (and repeatedly) associated with faithful believers who conduct themselves in a right manner (Rev 3:4, 5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13, 14; 19:14). Importantly, excepting 4:4, John never describes angels as having white garments and therefore in this particular matter does not follow other NT authors (e.g. John 20:12; Acts 1:10). This is certainly a pattern that favors the viewpoint that the elders are also humans who have conducted themselves in a manner worthy enough to be honored with the wearing of white (cf. again Rev 3:5).

Second, in both the Jewish Scriptures and in NT literature, the term “elder” is repeatedly connected with humans and not once clearly with angelic figures. πρεσβύτερος is the comparative of πρέσβυς, or “old man,” thus meaning “older,” or “an older man.” It is used in this plain sense in Luke 15:25, John 8:9, and probably in Acts 2:17. Furthermore, in some cases, the word is a reference to the ancestors of Israel (Heb. 11:2, Matt 15:2; Mark 7:3,5). However, the word is also a common reference to leaders, both Jewish and Christian. In the NT, there are 28 references to Jewish elders (Matt 16:21; 21:23; 26:3, 47, 57, 59; 27:1, 3, 12, 20, 41; 28:12; Mark 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1; Luke 7:3; 9:22; 20:1; 22:52; Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15) and 16 to elders of the church (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; Jam. 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5). The last reference, 1 Peter 5:1 is especially relevant to the present discussion because in this verse the apostle Peter is also depicted as an elder. In this regard, the NT data overwhelmingly supports the notion that the term “elder,” if not otherwise clarified, would refer to human leaders, and not to angelic beings.

Third, as to the precise identity of the twenty-four elders, it should be noted that the twelve patriarchs of Israel and the twelve apostles are described in close connection to each other in Rev 21. It is clear from the author’s description of the New Jerusalem that he held both sets of twelve in high regard. Although they are not here called “elders,” these twenty four individuals clearly hold honorable and prestigious roles in the New Jerusalem—the future city of God. It is

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470 Wall and Witherington are open to the possibility, whereas Hendriksen clearly supports it.


472 Isaiah 24:23 may be a reference to angels, but it can just as well be taken as a reference to humans.

473 “πρεσβύτερος,” BDAG 862.
certainly not impossible that John was describing the same “two twelves” in 4:4 which he clearly and overtly recognizes as honorable figures in Rev 21:12–14.  

Fourth, this is the simplest, and only obvious way, to account for the specific number of the elders—twenty-four. In fact, within the book of Revelation there is no other match as far as the specific number of “elders” is concerned. This specific number of elders seems to argue especially against the view that angelic beings are meant because then we are left without any reason as to why there should be twenty-four of them. With regard to the book of Revelation itself, if the explanation regarding the patriarchs and apostles is rejected, then there is no other explanation that can be given as to the specific number of twenty-four. 

Fifth, the idea that the twenty-four elders would be accounted for by the heads of the twelve tribes as well as the apostles would fit very well with Jesus’s final promise to the Twelve regarding their future leadership role in his kingdom. The author of Revelation indicates his “high view” regarding the twelve apostles in Rev 21:14—the future heavenly city of God is founded on them! It is not impossible, therefore, that the author was also aware of a promise of Jesus to the Twelve regarding their sitting on thrones (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30).

What accentuates the correspondence is that Jesus promised the Twelve that they would judge over the Twelve tribes (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30). Although this is conjecture, it may be that the author of Revelation was aware, on the one hand, of Jesus’s promise to the Twelve regarding authority over the tribes. On the other hand, he did not see this promise as a full replacement of the roles of the twelve patriarchs whom he continued to admire (Rev 21:12–13). Therefore, it is possible that John envisioned that all twenty-four of them would sit on thrones before the Lamb. All twenty-four of them would be honored in the New Jerusalem. This sort of “solution” would have been consistent with Jesus’s promise to the twelve without “dethroning” the patriarchs.

It will be admitted that, although this appears to be a satisfactory solution as to the identity of the twenty-four elders, it cannot be proven because John does not explicitly identify them. Furthermore, it is somewhat problematic in terms of chronology that the twenty-four elders are already seated before the throne of God upon the introduction of Jesus, “the Lamb”, to the scene (comp. Rev. 4:4 with 5:6). However, the entire scene is preceded by the comment of Jesus in 4:21 (to the church at Laodicea), that he is already seated on the throne of his Father, and therefore the narrative order of the elders sitting before Jesus in the scene of 4:1–5:14 should not be pressed too far.

Nevertheless, if this interpretation regarding the identity of the twenty-four elders is correct then this would reinforce what the author of Revelation indicates regarding his high esteem for the twelve apostles in Rev 21:14. Furthermore, this would provide evidence that Jesus’s promise to the Twelve in Matt 19:28 (Luke 22:30) regarding their future thrones was widely known among the communities to which these Gospels were addressed, as well as to the recipients of Revelation. This is significant for the present dissertation for the reason that what applies to the Twelve as a group would then apply to each member of the group, including James

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475 This is especially noteworthy for the following reason: “Since no other early Jewish or early Christian composition depicts God in his heavenly court surrounded by twenty-four elders, it is probable that John himself has created the twenty-four elders for this scene (Aune, Revelation, 1:288, emphasis added). If the author of Revelation did indeed create the “twenty-four elders,” then it appears to us that the origin, or meaning, of that number should be sought within the book itself.
of Alphaeus. In the view of the book of Revelation, James of Alphaeus was a person of great importance.

7.6 Josephus

Josephus is not a NT writer; however, we wish to include him here because he writes in the first century C.E. and mentions James, the brother of Jesus. In his *Antiquities of the Jews* (20.200), he writes about a certain Ananus (son of another Ananus) who was high priest for only three months, but who during that time had James, the brother of the Lord killed. The instance reads:

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.

Josephus goes on to explain how this upset some of the citizens of Jerusalem; they contacted king Agrippa and the procurator Albinus on the premise that it was unlawful (according to Rome) for the high priest to assemble the Sanhedrin without the procurator’s permission. This incident, as far as can be gathered from Josephus, is the reason the high priesthood of Ananus ended so abruptly.

It is important to recognize that Josephus does not show any interest in James the brother of Jesus as such, but only mentions his death to illustrate the type of person Ananus was, as well as to explain his short tenure as high priest. However, this also makes the account regarding the death of James all the more historically reliable because Josephus does not seem to have any motivation to “color” the death of James—that is, to add any extra theological or religious significance to it (as compared e.g. to the account in Hegesippus in the next chapter). Josephus does not comment on the standing of James in the Jerusalem church; however, both the fact that he was targeted by Ananus and that Josephus mentions him by name suggest that he was well-known. Historians calculate that the death of James the brother of the Lord occurred in the year 62 C. E.

7.7 Summary of Chapter Seven

The viewpoint that James the brother of the Lord is meant in 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 2:1–14 and James 1:1 cannot be secured on the basis of any of those texts themselves either individually or collectively. The “pillar” James of Gal 2:1–14 has usually been identified as the brother of the Lord because of Gal 1:19—but the connection is not inevitable. In truth, the interpretation of all these texts relies heavily on a larger historical reconstruction which finds the brother of the Lord as the main leader of the Jerusalem church in Acts. Therefore, when this James of Acts is identified as the son of Alphaeus, the tables are turned on the identification of James in the aforementioned instances also. The evidence of Acts regarding James is the most thorough and systematic.

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According to this interpretation of the references to someone called “James” in various passages of the NT outside the Gospels and Acts, James the brother of the Lord would be in view only in Gal 1:19 and (indirectly) in Jude 1:1. The brothers of the Lord are mentioned corporately only in 1 Cor 9:5. These passages suggest that James and the other brothers were also somewhat well-known persons in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 1:14) and that they may have traveled elsewhere as well (1 Cor 9:5). Ironically, Paul’s passing reference to James in Gal 1:19 simultaneously confirms that the brother of Jesus was noteworthy, as well as that he was not of great importance to Paul! Similarly the death of James, the brother of the Lord, is mentioned only in passing in Josephus (Ant. 20.200).

Therefore, the NT evidence regarding the Jameses does not seem to clearly contradict our findings regarding James of Alphaeus in Acts. On the contrary, it can be claimed, for example, that the recognition of James in Gal 2:1–14 as the son of Alphaeus would better explain his close connection with Peter and John, as well as his high standing in Jerusalem—he was one of the Twelve. Furthermore, identifying the author of the epistle of James as the son of Alphaeus would fit well with the promise of Jesus given to the Twelve, that they would exercise authority over the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Luke 22:30 and Jas 1:1). Even the book of Revelation and the letter of Jude provide circumstantial evidence that the Twelve were widely respected as the foundational and—in some sense—continuing leaders of the early churches. And James of Alphaeus was, according to the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, one of the Twelve.
CHAPTER EIGHT
SECOND AND EARLY THIRD CENTURY EVIDENCE REGARDING THE JAMESES

The arguments presented above regarding James of Alphaeus and James the brother of Jesus in the NT call for a new examination of later Christian sources regarding the Jameses of the Jerusalem church. The sources discussed in this chapter are as follows: first, sources utilized by Eusebius (Clement of Alexandria and Hegesippus); second, the sources found in the Nag Hammadi library (The Gospel of Thomas, The Apocryphon of James, the First Apocalypse of James, the Second Apocalypse of James); third, The Gospel of the Hebrews (as found in Jerome); and finally the Protevangelium of James.

As will become clear, past investigations have largely excluded the possibility that James of Alphaeus is meant in any of the references to James in later sources, even if these sources do not explicitly refer to the brother of Jesus. This approach can be found in John Painter’s James the Just in which he argues with regard to several sources that mention a James, but without further identification, that the reference must be to the brother of Jesus for the reason that he was the only notable James left in Jerusalem after James the son of Zebedee. That is, if the son of Zebedee is not in view, then inevitably the reference must concern the brother of Jesus and not another James. It appears that James of Alphaeus is excluded altogether from the list of possible candidates when the sources are investigated.

Painter thus exemplifies the scholarly consensus which identifies James the brother of Jesus as “James the Just” (an epithet used in several second century sources and afterward) and as the bishop of Jerusalem. Yet, as I will argue below, it is not always clear that all second century sources that refer to “James the Just” have the brother of Jesus in view, although some clearly do. Neither is it clear that all sources that refer to the primary leadership of one James in the Jerusalem church have the brother of Jesus in view, although some clearly do. Our investigations regarding James of Alphaeus in Acts suggest that the possibility that this James might also be in view in later sources should not be ruled out a priori.

8.0.1 The Possibility that James is Presented as Both a Brother of Jesus and as One of the Twelve

An issue that must also be confronted when examining the identity of James in second century references is that in some instances two or more different Jameses may “blend” together so that their identities are confused. It is possible that at times the brother of Jesus is conceived of as one of the apostles. The identification of “the brother of the Lord” as James of Alphaeus is commonly attributed to Jerome (see below) and to no writers prior to his time. However, even a cursory glance at some second century sources such as the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Apocryphon of James, or Hegesippus suggests that it is not always self-evident that the James in

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480 See further on this document below.
view (whom modern scholars usually identify—uncritically, in our view—as the brother of the Lord) is to be distinguished from the Twelve apostles. Below, it will be argued that, in fact, identifying James as one of the Twelve in several of these sources is quite natural.

The possibility that at least some second century sources may identify the brother of the Lord as one of the Twelve (i.e. as either James the son of Zebedee or as James the son of Alphaeus) is analogously suggested in the character of “Didymos Judas Thomas,” the implied author of the Gospel of Thomas. One of the Twelve disciples is identified in the Synoptics as “Thomas” (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 6:3; Luke 6:14–16). The Gospel of John indicates that this Thomas was also called “Didymus”: Ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Διόνυσος, Ἰωάννης ὁ Θωμᾶς ὁ Διόνυσος (John 20:24). Furthermore, Marvin Meyer clarifies that “among Syrian Christians this apostle was called Judas Thomas and was presented as the twin brother of Jesus.”

A straightforward reading of the NT evidence suggests that none of the Twelve were among those known as the brothers of Jesus (cf. Acts 1:13, 14) and that the appearance of similar names can be explained as a coincidence, for names such as Judas and James were common. Yet, this was apparently not the way in which the second century editors of the Gospel of Thomas viewed these persons. To them, the apostle Thomas and Judas the brother of Jesus were one and the same.

This analogy regarding Thomas is presented here to further argue for the possibility that James may on occasion be presented as both a brother of Jesus and as one of the Twelve apostles in the sources to be discussed. The “either—or” approach exhibited in much of the scholarship on these writings may reflect more a modern, NT based understanding of the persons than a second-century portrayal of the Jameses of the first century. To be emphatic, what is suggested at this point is merely the possibility of such double identification. Therefore, the question, “which James is this?”, may be misleading because it leaves no room for the possibility of the “blending” of historical characters together either intentionally or unintentionally.
8.1 Clement of Alexandria (in Eusebius)

The first instance in which Eusebius refers to James is in *Historia Ecclesiæ* 2.1.2–5. The passage reads as follows:

> Ἰσαάκος καὶ Ἰάκωβος, τὸν τοῦ κυρίου λεγόμενον ἀδελφὸν, ὅτι δὴ καὶ οὗτος τοῦ Ἰουσήφ ὄνομαστο παῖς, τὸν δὲ Χριστοῦ πατήρ ὅνομαστο Ἰουσήφ, ὃς μνηστευθέσαι ἢ παρθένος, πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτούς, εὑρήθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, ὡς ἢ ιερὰ τὸν εὐαγγελιῶν διδάσκει γραφή: τοῦτον δὴ σὺν αὐτῶν Ἰάκωβον, ὃν καὶ δίκαιον ἐπίκλην οἱ πάλαι δὲ ἄρτης ἐκάλον προτερήματα, πρῶτον ἱστοροῦσιν τῆς ἐν Ἰεροσολύμων ἐκκλησίας τοῦ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἐγχειρίσθηνα διόνον: Κλήμης ἐν ἐκτὸ τῶν Ὑποτυπώσεων γράφων ἀδὲ παρίστησιν Ἰούστριν γάρ φησιν καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰοαννήν μετὰ τὴν ἀνάληψιν τοῦ σωτῆρος, ὡς καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ σωτῆρος προτετευμημένοι, μὴ ἐπιδικαζόμεθαι δόξης, ἀλλὰ Ἰάκωβον τὸν δίκαιον ἐπίσκοπον τῶν Ἰεροσολύμων ἔλεσθαι. ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς ἐν ἐβδόμῳ τῆς αὐτῆς ὑπόθεσεως ἐτι καὶ ταῦτα περὶ αὐτοῦ φησιν Ἰάκωβον τὸ δικαίον καὶ Ἰοαννὴν καὶ Πέτρῳ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν παρέδωκεν τὴν γνώσιν ὁ κύριος, οὕτω τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀποστόλοις παρέδωκαν, οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι τοῖς ἐβδομήκοντι: ἡν εἰς ἱν καὶ Βαρναβᾶς. δός δὲ γεγονασιν Ἰάκωβοι, εἰς ὁ δίκαιος, ὁ κατὰ τοῦ πεντηκόντα βληθεις καὶ ὑπὸ γναφέας ζύλῳ πληγεις εἰς θάνατον, ἔτερος δὲ ὑκαραστομηθείς. Ἀντοῦ δὲ τοῦ δικαίου καὶ ὁ Παύλος μνημονεύει γράφων ἐτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον, εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου. ⁴⁸⁶

At that same time also James, who was called brother of the Lord, inasmuch as the latter too was styled the child of Joseph, and Joseph was called the father of Christ, for the virgin was betrothed to him when, before they came together, she was discovered to have conceived by the Holy Spirit, as the sacred writing of the Gospels teaches—this same James, to whom the men of old also had given the surname of Just for his excellence of virtue, is narrated to have been the first elected to the throne of the bishopric of the Church in Jerusalem. Clement in the sixth book of the *Hypotyposes* adduces the following: “For,” he says, “Peter and James and John after the Ascension of the Saviour did not struggle for glory, because they had previously been given honour by the Saviour, but chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem.” The same writer in the seventh book of the same work says addition about him, “After the Resurrection the Lord gave the tradition of knowledge to James the Just and John and Peter, these gave it to the other Apostles and the other Apostles to the seventy, of whom Barnabas also was one. Now there were two Jameses, one James the Just, who was thrown down from the pinnacle of

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the temple and beaten to death with a fuller’s club, and the other he who was beheaded.”
Paul also mentions the same James the Just when he writes, “And I saw none other of the
Apostles save James the brother of the Lord.”

8.1.1 Date of Writing

The Hypotyposes are now lost and only fragments of them remain in the works of other
writers (Eusebius). Dating them is therefore a matter of educated guesses. A date toward the end
of Clement’s life, c. 204–10, has been suggested. However, this is not certain.

8.1.2 The Identity of James in Clement of Alexandria

When examining this account, one must differentiate between the information provided
by Eusebius and that found in Clement. Before turning to Clement, a quick note on Eusebius’
treatment of the brother of the Lord is in order. John Painter writes:

Eusebius tends to qualify statements about James being the brother of Jesus or Josef
being Jesus’s father by using such expressions as “said to be,” “named,” “alleged.” When
he is quoting a source he generally reproduces without qualification “James the brother of
the Lord” (2.1.5), but he has no compunction about adding his qualification concerning
the “alleged brother of Jesus” (1.12.5), reading one source in the light of his own reading
of others.

Painter here acknowledges that Eusebius’s sources may not have been in complete
agreement regarding James and what his relationship to Jesus was. Therefore it is necessary to
examine what, precisely, the quotation from Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius states with
regard to James.

Clement identifies James as Ἰάκωβος ὁ δίκαιος, “James the righteous,” or “just.” Clement
does not identify James as the brother of the Lord; this connection is made by Eusebius. Since
Clement does not identify James the Just with James the brother of Jesus, it is prima facie
possible that for Clement “James the Just” could have been someone other than the brother of
Jesus.

The quotation from book six of the Hypotyposes does not identify James the Just in any
further way. Clement’s view is that Jesus had especially honored Peter and the brothers Zebedee.
This may be a reference to those instances in the NT when only the three accompany Jesus on
several occasions, the most significant surely being the transfiguration (Mark 5:37 [Luke 8:51];
9:2 [Matt 17:1; Luke 9:28]; 14:33). That these three chose James the Just to become the first
bishop suggests that James was well-known to the three, but nothing more can be concluded.

8.1.2.1 Who are the Apostles in Clement’s Quotation?

The quotation from book seven of the Hypotyposes provides us with more information.
There Clement speaks of “knowledge” (γνῶσις) that was imparted to James the Just and to John

487 Eric Osborn, Clement of Alexandria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1; Carl P. Cosaert, The
Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 18
and Peter, who then imparted this to the “rest of the apostles,” who in turn imparted it to the seventy. The key question with regard to this present study is in what sense Clement referred to “the apostles.” Did he mean the Twelve only, or a larger group? Paul, in his epistles, clearly refers to “apostles” in a sense that included more than just the Twelve (1 Cor 15:7) and Clement was aware of this wider usage of the term (e.g. Strom. 4.7 and 4.15). Also, in both the Paedagogus (Paed.) and Stromata (Strom.), Clement refers to the apostle Paul routinely simply as “the apostle.” That is, unless he specifies by name that another apostle is in view, Paul is meant. Therefore, when Clement refers to plural “apostles,” he may sometimes have a larger group including Paul in view, as in Strom. 6.8, where he refers to “James, Peter, John, Paul,” and “the rest of the apostles” (cf. also Strom. 7.7; 2.7 Barnabas an apostle; 4.17 Clement an apostle). However, at other times he refers to “apostles” and, based on context, can only mean the Twelve (Paed. 1.5; Strom. 5.1; 5.12; 6.7; 6.15). For example, in a context where Clement compares the perfect gnostic to the apostles, he notes:

Not that they became apostles through being chosen for some distinguished peculiarity of nature, since also Judas was chosen along with them. But they were capable of becoming apostles on being chosen by Him who foresees even ultimate issues. Matthias, accordingly, who was not chosen along with them, on showing himself worthy of becoming an apostle, is substituted for Judas (Strom. 6.13 [ANF 2:504]; the reference is clearly to Acts 1:15–26).

Similarly, a passage in Strom. 6.6 (ANF 2:491) reads,

Accordingly, in the Preaching of Peter, the Lord says to the disciples after the resurrection, “I have chosen you twelve disciples, judging you worthy of me,” whom the Lord wished to be apostles, having judged them faithful, sending them into the world to the men on the earth, that they may know that there is one God, showing clearly what would take place by the faith of Christ.

Therefore, when speaking of “apostles,” Clement mainly refers to members of the Twelve and to Paul—although, as noted above, a couple of others are also referred to as such.

The use of “apostle” in Eusebius is similar; he reserves the term especially for the Twelve and for Paul. For example, he writes in Hist. eccl. 1.10.5: “Our Lord and Saviour called the twelve apostles not long after the beginning of his preaching and to them alone of all his disciples did he give the name of apostles as a special privilege. Afterwards he appointed seventy others, and them also he sent out in advance of him, two by two, to every place and city where he was to come himself.” The Seventy were not, for Eusebius, apostles. Again, in 2.1.1 he refers to Matthias, who was one of the Seventy, being added to the “apostolate.” To be added to the “apostolate” meant, for Eusebius, to be added to the Twelve. Eusebius acknowledges what Paul says in 1 Cor 9:5, that there were more apostles than the twelve (Hist. eccl. 1.12.4), but he himself does not normally use the term in this sense and qualifies that these additional apostles were only apostles κατὰ μίμησιν τῶν δώδεκα, “on the model of the twelve” (Hist. eccl. 1.12.4; Kirsopp Lake’s translation).

What is interesting from the perspective of the present study is that Clement also makes reference to the Twelve in Acts on two occasions. One we already mentioned—Strom. 6.13,
where the appointment of Matthias is in view. The second occurs in a section in Paed. 2.7 in which Clement is expounding on table manners:

"The twelve, having called together the multitude of the disciples, said, "It is not meet for us to leave the word of God and serve tables." If they avoided this, much more did they shun gluttony. And the apostles themselves, writing to the brethren at Antioch, and in Syria and Cilicia, said: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us . . ." (ANF 2:252)

Roberts and Donaldson translate the phrase ὸ δὲ αὐτοὶ ὸ υτοὶ ἀπόστολοι as, "And the apostles themselves . . ." This translation may not indicate clearly enough that the reference is to these (ὸ υτοὶ) apostles—i.e. the ones just mentioned, namely, the Twelve. LSJ notes that ὰ υτος with the article means "the same" or "the very one." Similarly the combination of ὰ υτος and ὸ υτος often carries the connotation of "this very one," or "this same one." The context clearly indicates what "this very (thing)" refers to, and usually the referent has immediately preceded in the context (e.g. the ὰ υτο ολο in Rom 13:6 is explained in the preceding five verses). Therefore, we would propose the translation, "And these same (i.e. aforementioned) apostles, writing . . ."

It would be, of course, accurate for Clement to state that the apostles were the (primary) authors of the "apostolic decree," for this is clearly stated in Acts 15:23. However, what is significant is that, in this reference to Acts, Clement equates the "apostles" with the Twelve. This is an important detail for two reasons: First, it suggests the possibility that in the quotation from Hypotyposes (Hist. eccl. 2.1.2–5), Clement may also mean "the Twelve" when he refers to "the apostles." Second, Clement emphasizes the role of the Twelve with regard to the "apostolic decree." It is James who proposes the content of the "apostolic degree" (Acts 15:19–21); however, Clement emphasizes the role of the Twelve at the Meeting rather than James. These two items, taken in combination, support the possibility (but not the necessity) that Clement numbered James—the proponent of the "decree"—among the Twelve.

Returning to the quotation from Hypotyposes found in Hist. eccl. 2.1.2–5 (cited above), two arguments can be made as to why the most natural referents for "apostles" are the Twelve only and not a wider group: First, Clement distinguishes the "apostles" from the "seventy." Moreover, Barnabas is in this quotation one of the Seventy, but not one of the apostles. This last detail is significant because on another occasion, Clement refers to Barnabas as an apostle (Strom. 2.7). Clement also quotes from 1 Cor 9:5, in which connection Barnabas is portrayed as

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489 Greek Text from Otto Stählin (1905), 191.
490 "ὰ υτος," LSJ 283.
491 cf. LSJ entry for "ὸ υτος" B.II.5; See Rom 9:17; 13:6; 2 Cor 5:5; 7:11; Eph 6:22; Fil. 1:6; Col 4:8; 2 Pet 1:5; also Acts 24:15, 20.
492 Cf. explanation of “ὰ υτο τὸ ολο” under “ ὰ υτος,” BDAG 153.
an apostle by Paul (Strom. 4.15). Yet, in Eusebius’ quotation from Hypotyposes, Barnabas is not counted among the apostles, but among the Seventy, suggesting a more limited use for “the apostles” on this occasion. During Jesus’s ministry, only the Twelve were named apostles, as Clement is well-aware from having read the Synoptic Gospels. Therefore, (from the viewpoint of the Gospels and Acts) immediately after the ascension, the group of “apostles” included only the Twelve and this would explain why Clement would not have included Barnabas among them.

Second, in the same quotation Clement clarifies that “there were two Jameses.” This statement is awkward if we have in mind all the persons of the Jerusalem church, for there were more than two who were named James. As mentioned above, Painter resolves this issue by asserting that there were only two Jameses in the Jerusalem church that were notable enough to be counted. Therefore, the brother of Jesus must be the second James here because he was the only other notable James in Jerusalem alongside James the son of Zebedee. Arguably, this line of reasoning merely begs the question. However, this statement regarding the two Jameses makes perfect sense if Clement is referring only to the two Jameses numbered among the Twelve. This is not at all improbable because in the immediate context, members of the Twelve (Peter and John) and the Twelve as a group are mainly in focus. There were indeed two apostles named James. Clement was familiar with all four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and several of Paul’s epistles, quoting from them often. Surely he was aware that there were more than two Jameses in the Jerusalem church. Therefore Clement’s reference to two Jameses only is best explained in that on this occasion he was only describing the two Jameses who belonged to the Twelve.

We consider it the best solution, therefore, that in referring to “the apostles,” Clement on this occasion means the Twelve. This is a historically suitable use of the title, for at the time after Jesus’s resurrection which Clement describes, only the Twelve were known as Jesus’s apostles—as the Gospels and Acts attest.

8.1.2.2 James the Just One of the Twelve in Clement

That the apostles in this quotation from Clement are probably the Twelve is significant for our study because Clement clearly indicates that James the Just was one of the apostles—and

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493 When writing about his unused rights as an apostle in 1 Cor 9, Paul alternates between the first person singular and plural. Verse 6 confirms that when he writes of “us,” he most likely refers to Barnabas in addition to himself. Barnabas is therefore portrayed as an apostle alongside Paul in 1 Cor 9. Note especially verse 5, where Paul contrasts the first person plural (us) to the rest of the apostles, oi λοιποί ἀπόστολοι. Whoever Paul included in the “us”—and Barnabas was one of them—was an apostle as were “the rest of the apostles.”

494 In the canonical Gospels, a reference simply to “apostles” means the Twelve (cf. Matt 10:2; cf. Mark 6:7 with 6:30 and Luke 6:13; cf. Luke 9:1 with 9:10). In Luke 10:1 seventy others are “sent” (using the verb ἀποστῆλω) by Jesus to proclaim the kingdom of God; however, they are not termed “apostles” (ἀπόστολοι). Clement appears to be well aware of this usage. Carl P. Cosaert, Text, 22, refers to Otto Stählin’s index of NT references found in Clement’s writings; according to Stählin, Clement referenced the canonical Gospels some 1579 times.

495 Painter, Just James, 116. Painter’s solution is very similar to that of J.B. Lightfoot (Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians [London: MacMillan, 1910]): “Owing to an extract preserved in Eusebius, [Clement’s] authority is generally claimed for the Hieronymian view…This passage however proves nothing. Clement says that there were two of the name of James, but neither states nor implies that there were two only. His sole object was to distinguish the son of Zebedee from the Lord’s brother; and the son of Alphaeus, of whom he knew nothing and could tell nothing, did not occur to his mind when he penned this sentence” (280–1).

thus, one of the Twelve.497 Clement states that “The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the apostles (τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀποστόλοις), and the rest of the apostles to the seventy.” The use of “the rest” implies that James the Just—along with John and Peter—is being regarded as one of the (twelve) apostles. Therefore for Clement, James the Just was one of the Twelve. Furthermore, since he is differentiated from James the son of Zebedee by the manner of his death (James the Just was thrown from the Temple and clubbed to death whereas James the son of Zebedee was beheaded), he can only be James of Alphaeus. In other words, in contrast to Eusebius, Clement seems to assume that “James the Just” is “James the son of Alphaeus” (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), not “James the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:17).498

8.1.2.3 The death of James the Just in Clement of Alexandria

Another piece of evidence may be arrayed in defense of the identification of “James the Just” as James of Alphaeus in Clement; that is, the dissimilarity of the manner of death of James the brother of Jesus as related by Josephus, and that of this “James the Just” in Clement. The most reliable account regarding the death of James the brother of Jesus is found in a passing reference in Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews 20.200. According to this passage, James and “certain others” are put to death by stoning. However, in Clement’s account, James the Just is thrown off a roof and struck to death by a laundryman’s club. There is no similarity whatsoever between Josephus’ description of the manner of the brother of Jesus’s death, and that of the James described by Clement.

This fact becomes all the more significant upon the recognition that Clement was knowledgeable of both the Jewish War, as well as the Antiquities of the Jews.499 In a passage in Stromata 1.21.147, Clement, relying on Josephus, writes about the intervals of time that elapsed between Moses, David, Vespasian and Antonius. According to Michael E. Hardwick, Clement compiles this information from several passages in Josephus.500 This suggests that Clement had studied the works of Josephus—at least with regard to the particular matter that he cites. It is therefore quite possible that Clement was also aware of the record of the death of James the brother of the Lord as found in Antiquities 20.200. In light of this, the fact that Clement nevertheless does not describe the death of “James the Just” as does Josephus the death of “James the brother of Jesus,” is surely significant. It certainly favors the view that different Jameses are meant by these writers. It adds to the evidence presented above, that Clement of Alexandria did not equate “James the Just” with James the brother of the Lord, but rather with a member of the Twelve—the son of Alphaeus.501

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497 Karl Georg Wieseler, Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Galater (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1859), 82.
498 Wilhelm Pratscher, Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und die Jakobustradition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 159, suggests that a combination (“Vermischung”) of James the son of Zebedee and James the brother of the Lord may be meant here by Clement.
501 By contrast, Hegesippus, who identifies James the Just as the brother of Jesus, also includes the stoning as one part of the multifaceted slaying of James. See on this in sect. 8.2 below.
8.1.3 Scholarly Attestation to Above Identification

To argue that James of Alphaeus well fits the description given of “James the Just” in Clement is neither new nor novel. However, the debates regarding these passages have mainly taken place in another context—that of the question of the perpetual virginity of Mary. This issue has been debated several times throughout Christian history, and most significantly during the time of Jerome, when he wrote his Against Helvidius in defense of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Since Jerome, the Western Church has held that James the brother of Jesus and James of Alphaeus were one and the same. However, Jerome did not himself refer to Clement in defense of his viewpoint as he attempted to base it, rather, on NT evidence.

In the 19th century, the issue came to life again and several scholars of that time argued that the passages of Clement examined above might favor the interpretation that James of Alphaeus is in view. For example, the Schaff-Herzog encyclopedia reads, “It is quite possible that Clement of Alexandria identifies James the brother of the Lord with James the son of Alphaeus for he speaks of only two men by this name, — the one thrown from a tower, the other executed with the sword (Euseb HE ii 1).”502 It appears that the otherwise very natural identification of James as the son of Alphaeus in Clement has mainly been advanced in connection with the Hieronymian theory (i.e. Jerome’s viewpoint that James of Alphaeus was indeed the brother of Jesus). Thus, with reference to Clement, we find these two alternatives in past scholarship: a) that James the Just is the brother of Jesus, or b) that James the Just is both the brother of Jesus and the apostle, James of Alphaeus. As the latter has become quite untenable in modern NT study, it seems that the first option—that by “James the Just” Clement means James the brother of the Lord—is the only one left standing.

This (false) dichotomy is undoubtedly attributable to the consensus that James of Alphaeus was not well-known in the early church. However, the findings of this dissertation to this point have challenged this consensus and therefore with regard to Clement of Alexandria also, a third alternative for the identity of “James the Just” may be suggested: that “James the Just” was, to Clement of Alexandria and perhaps to some other ancient authors, not the brother of Jesus but the second member of the Twelve named James—the son of Alphaeus. If we do not make an automatic connection between the title “James the Just” and James the brother of Jesus (for this is one of the questions presently under study), then there is nothing in Clement to suggest that the James in view is the brother of Jesus. James the Just is in Clement’s Hypotyposes portrayed as one of the apostles, but not as James the son of Zebedee. The most natural explanation is that James of Alphaeus is meant.

But the question remains: Why does Eusebius identify Clement’s “James the Just” with the brother of the Lord (Gal 1:19)?

8.2 Hegesippus

The second source regarding “James the Just” for Eusebius is Hegesippus. Eusebius states that Hegesippus had written memoirs of the church in five parts. Eusebius refers to

Hegesippus in several instances, but by far the longest quotation from Hegesippus has to do with James the brother of Jesus (Hist. eccl. 2.23.4–18).503

The charge of the Church passed to James the brother of the Lord, together with the Apostles (Διάδεχται τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μετὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων ὁ ἄδελφος τοῦ κυρίου Ἰάκωβος). He was called the ‘Just’ by all men (ὁ ὀνομασθεὶς ὑπὸ πάντων δίκαιος) from the Lord’s time to ours, since many are called James (ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ Ἰάκωβοι ἐκαλοῦντο), but he was holy from his mother’s womb. He drank no wine or strong drink, nor did he eat flesh; no razor went upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not go to the baths. He alone was allowed to enter into the sanctuary, for he did not wear wool or linen, and he used to enter alone into the temple and be found kneeling and praying for forgiveness for the people, so that his knees grew hard like a camel’s because of his constant worship of God, kneeling and asking forgiveness for the people. So from his excessive righteousness he was called the Just and Oblias, that is in Greek, “Rampart of the people and righteousness,” as the prophets declare concerning him. Thus some of the Seven sects among the people, who were described before by me (in the Commentaries), inquired of him what was the “gate of Jesus,” and he said that he was the Saviour. Owing to this some believed that Jesus was the Christ. The sects mentioned above did not believe either in the resurrection or in one who shall come to reward each according to his deeds, but as many as believed did so because of James. Now, since many even of the rulers believed, there was a tumult of the Jews and the Scribes and Pharisees saying that the whole people was in danger of looking for Jesus as the Christ. So they assembled and said to James, “We beseech you to restrain the people since they are straying after Jesus as though he were the Messiah. We beseech you to persuade concerning Jesus all who come for the day of the Passover, for all obey you. For we and the whole people testify to you that you are righteous and do not respect persons. So do you persuade the crowd not to err concerning Jesus, for the whole people and we all obey you. Therefore stand on the battlement of the temple that you may be clearly visible on high, and that your words may be audible to all the people, for because of the Passover all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, have come together.” So the Scribes and Pharisees mentioned before made James stand on the battlement of the temple, and they cried out to him and said, “Oh, just one, to whom we all owe obedience, since the people are straying after Jesus who was crucified, tell us what is the gate of Jesus”? And he answered with a loud voice, “Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great power, and he will come on the clouds of heaven.” And many were convinced and confessed at the testimony of James and said, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” Then again the same Scribes and Pharisees said to one another, “We did wrong to provide Jesus with such a testimony, but let us go up and throw him down that they may be afraid and not believe him.” And they cried out saying, “Oh, oh, even the Just one erred.” And they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah, “Let us take the just man for he is unprofitable to us. Yet they shall eat the fruit of their works.” So they went up and threw down the Just, and they said to one another, “Let us stone James the Just,” and they began to stone him since the fall had not killed him, but he turned and knelt saying, “I beseech thee, O Lord, God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And while they were thusstoning him one of the priests of the son of Rechab, the son of

503 This translation (as well as Greek) from Lake, Eusebius, 171–5.
Rechabim, to whom Jeremiah the prophet bore witness, cried out saying, “Stop! what are you doing? The Just is praying for you.” And a certain man among them, one of the laundrymen, took the club with which he used to beat out the clothes, and hit the Just on the head, and so he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot by the temple, and his gravestone still remains by the temple. He became a true witness both to Jews and to Greeks that Jesus is the Christ, and at once Vespasian began to besiege them.”

8.2.1 Date of writing

Eusebius claims that Hegesippus wrote immediately after the time of the apostles (Hist. eccl. 2.23.3). In this particular reference, Eusebius does not clarify how he knows of the time at which Hegesippus wrote. In fact, another remark in Hist. eccl. 4.8 suggests that Eusebius was not sure of the exact times at which Hegesippus lived, but rather inferred this from clues in Hegesippus’ writings. Regarding Hegesippus, Eusebius states:

He collected his material in five books, giving in the simplest style of writing the unerring tradition of the apostolic preaching. He indicates the time in which he flourished by writing thus about those who had made idols: “To them they made cenotaphs and shrines until now, and among them is Antinous, a slave of the emperor Hadrian, in whose honour the Antinoian games are held, though he was our contemporary. For he also built a city called after Antinous, and instituted prophets for him” (Hist. eccl. 4.8.1–2).

Hegesippus states that the Antinoian games were established during his time in honor of a slave of Emperor Hadrian, named Antinous. Antinous died c. 130, but it is not clear from the above quotation that the games in Antinous’ honor were established by Hadrian. The city was built by Hadrian, but the games may have been established later. Therefore, Hegesippus’ reference to “in our time” does not necessarily refer to the time of Hadrian’s reign (117–138).

Elsewhere, Hegesippus states that he was in Rome during the bishopric of Anicetus and remained there until the episcopate of Eleutherus (Hist. eccl. 4.22.3). However, the exact dates of Anicetus’ bishoprics are, in turn, difficult to establish. They must be dated, in large part, by reference to Polycarp who, according to Irenaeus (Haer. 3.4.3), visited Rome in the time of Anicetus. Polycarp’s death is recorded by Eusebius (Hist. eccl. 4.14.10–4.15.1) and Jerome (Lives 17) to have occurred in the reign of Marcus Aurelius Verus. This emperor reigned from 161–180. Therefore, the reign of Anicetus must be dated before 180 C.E. John Painter suggests that Anicetus died circa 168, but does not elaborate on how he comes to this particular date.

Painter suggests a date between 150 and 180 for the work of Hegesippus. However, Hegesippus names two more bishops after Anicetus—Soter and Eleutherus (in Hist. eccl. 4.22.1–3). Although we do not know exactly how long their bishoprics lasted, it is not improbable, even if Anicetus died c. 168 C.E., and not c. 180, that Hegesippus wrote the memoirs c. 180–190 C.E. This would place his time of writing very close to that of Clement of Alexandria and rather far away from the time of the events he describes.

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504 Lake, Eusebius, 321.
505 John Painter, Just James, 119.
506 John Painter, Just James, 119.
8.2.2 Hegesippus’ Identification of James

In the long quotation from Hegesippus as found in Hist. eccl. 2.23., James is identified as follows:

‘Διαδέχεται τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μετὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ κυρίου Ἰάκωβος, ὁ ὄνομασθεὶς ὑπὸ πάντων δίκαιος ἀπὸ τῶν τοῦ κυρίου χρόνων μέχρι καὶ ἡμᾶς, ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ Ἰάκωβοι ἐκαλοῦντο, οὗτος δὲ ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ ἅγιος ἦν.

The charge of the Church passed to James the brother of the Lord, together with the Apostles. He was called the ‘Just’ by all men from the Lord’s time to ours, since many are called James, but he was holy from his mother’s womb.

The two primary ways by which Hegesippus identifies James are, first, as the brother of the Lord (ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ κυρίου Ἰάκωβος) and, second, labeling him as the one known to everyone since the apostles’ time as “the Just” (ὁ ὄνομασθεὶς ὑπὸ πάντων δίκαιος ἀπὸ τῶν τοῦ κυρίου χρόνων μέχρι καὶ ἡμῶν). There were many Jameses, but this one is distinguished from the others as having been holy from his mother’s womb. That Hegesippus refers to James without qualification as ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ κυρίου, “the Lord’s brother,” gives the initial impression that Hegesippus meant this in the most natural sense—James and Jesus shared parents, or at least one parent.

8.2.2.1 Hegesippus and the Exact Relationship of James to Jesus

Roy Bowen Ward has argued that Hegesippus may actually have considered James to have been a cousin of Jesus. In Hist. eccl. 3.32.5, Eusebius quotes from Hegesippus a passage in which Hegesippus refers to Judas as “one of the so-called brothers of the Savior” (ἐνὸς τῶν φερομένων ἀδελφῶν τοῦ σωτῆρος). It is possible that this qualification was added by Eusebius, but its origin in Hegesippus should not be ruled out a priori. According to Mark 6:3 (Matt 13:55), one of the brothers of Jesus was named Judas. If Hegesippus did view Judas as only a “so-called” brother, then it is possible that he viewed James in the same way. It became common in later Christian writers to understand James’s relationship to Jesus as not of one born to the same parent(s), even though he is called Jesus’s “brother.” However, this view is not usually found as far back as Hegesippus.

Ward further illustrates that “in four citations he [Hegesippus] refers to Symeon or Simon as the son of Clopas who was the brother of Joseph (HE III.11) and the uncle (θείος) of the Lord (HE III.32.6; IV.22.4). Thus Hegesippus calls Symeon/Simon the cousin (ἀνεψιός) of the Savior (HE III.11).” This identification of Symeon as Jesus’s cousin is important in reference to another passage in which Eusebius again quotes from Hegesippus:

καὶ μετὰ τὸ μαρτυρῆσαι Ἰάκωβον τὸν δίκαιον, ὡς καὶ ὁ κύριος, ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ, πάλιν ἐκ θείου αὐτοῦ Συμεών ὁ τοῦ Κλωπᾶ καθίσταται ἐπίσκοπος, ὃν προέθετο πάντες, ὥντα ἀνεψιόν τοῦ κυρίου δεύτερον. (Hist. eccl. 4.22.4)

507 Lake, Eusebius, 171
After James the Just had suffered martyrdom for the same reason as the Lord, Symeon, his cousin, the son of Clopas was appointed bishop, who they all proposed because he was another cousin of the Lord.⁵⁰⁹

Of significance to our study is the last part, ὃν προέθεντο πάντες, ὃντα ἄνεψιν τοῦ κυρίου δεύτερον, which can be translated in two ways: First, if δεύτερος modifies ἄνεψιν, then, “Whom all proposed [as bishop] because he was a second [i.e. another] cousin of the Lord.”⁵¹⁰ This is how Ward and Kirsopp Lake take the connotation of δεύτερος; Lake translates, “Symeon . . . was appointed bishop, whom they all proposed because he was another cousin of the Lord.”⁵¹¹ This would imply that Hegesippus considered James, who preceded Symeon, also to be a cousin of Jesus.⁵¹²

Second, if δεύτερος is taken to modify an implied ἐπίσκοπος, then, “Symeon . . . was appointed bishop, whom all proposed, being [since he was] a cousin of the Lord, as second [bishop].”⁵¹³ The latter translation is preferred by Painter who points out that in the account of the martyrdom of Symeon, he is described as the second (δεύτερος) bishop of Jerusalem (Hist. eccl. 3.32.1; also Hist. eccl. 4.5.3). Yet, this is somewhat of a moot point in terms of deciding the intended meaning of Hegesippus because δεύτερος, being an ordinal, would be the necessary word for both references—to another (second) cousin, or to a second bishop. Another reason Painter offers for his rejection of the first reading is that “Jerome nowhere appeals to this passage in Hegesippus to justify his view that the so-called brothers were actually cousins.”⁵¹⁴ This, however, is a fallacious argument because Jerome actually claimed in Contra Helvidius 19 that all the ancient writers were in support of his views on this matter. However, Jerome does not base his argument against Helvidius on other writers, only NT texts.

Against Painter on this point, and especially against his appeal to Jerome, is the more immediate fact that Eusebius does not identify James straightforwardly as a brother of Jesus. As Painter himself notes,

Eusebius tends to qualify statements about James being the brother of Jesus or Joseph being Jesus’s father by using such expressions as “said to be,” “named,” “alleged.” When he is quoting a source he generally reproduces without qualification “James the brother of the Lord” (2.1.5), but he had no compunction about adding his qualification concerning the “alleged brother of Jesus” (1.12.5), reading one source in the light of his own reading of others.⁵¹⁵

The question we would pose to Painter is: from which source did Eusebius derive his understanding that James may not have been a straightforward brother of Jesus? Did he derive it from Hegesippus? On the one hand, it is possible that Eusebius rejected Hegesippus’ record of the relationship of James to Jesus as a natural brother. On the other hand, in light of the inconclusive evidence examined above, the secondary option should not be ruled out—that Eusebius’ interpretation that the “brothers of Jesus” were not born to Jesus’s parent(s) was

⁵⁰⁹ Lake, Eusebius, 375.
⁵¹⁰ Similarly Ward, “James,” 801, who translates δεύτερος as “another.”
⁵¹¹ Lake, Eusebius 1:375.
⁵¹² Ward, “James,” 801; Painter, Just James, 153.
⁵¹³ Painter, Just James, 153; Bauckham, Jude and the Relatives, 23–24.
⁵¹⁴ Painter, Just James, 153; Painter’s viewpoint here is very similar to that of Lightfoot in Galatians, 252–3.
⁵¹⁵ Painter, Just James, 111.
actually found by Eusebius in Hegesippus. Even though Hegesippus refers to James as the “the brother of the Lord” in the account of his martyrdom, the evidence from other references in Hegesippus suggests that his understanding of the family of Jesus may have been more complicated.

8.2.2.2 Did Hegesippus Combine Two Jameses into One?

Clement of Alexandria, when writing of James the Just, does not identify him as the brother of the Lord, and relates that he died after being thrown down from the Temple and being clubbed to death. Meanwhile, Josephus mentions “James the brother of the Lord,” but does not call him “the Just,” and describes his death as the result of stoning. These two persons, based on their identifications and manners of death, appear to be separate individuals.

It is a remarkable coincidence, however, that Hegesippus refers to “James the Just” also as “the brother of the Lord” and describes the manner of the death of this (one) person both by stoning (as in Josephus) and by being thrown down from the temple and being clubbed to death (as in Clement of Alexandria).

John Painter asserts the following:

That [Hegesippus] used more than one source is indicated by the portrayal of the opponents of James as Jewish sectarian in one place and scribes and Pharisees in another (HE 2.23.8–10); and the combination of three acts of violence against James (the casting down from the Temple, stoning, and the blow from the fuller’s club) is a bringing together of irreconcilable motifs, perhaps achieved by Hegesippus, although they could have been combined in the tradition he used.516

This finding may be supported by the fact that the tradition about James in Hegesippus is essentially about “James the Righteous” (or “Just”), with the exception of a couple of details. The term δίκαιος and its cognates (“righteous,” “just”) occur 11 times in Hegesippus’ account, either as a nickname or a descriptor of James. In contrast, the detail that “James the Righteous” is also the brother of the Lord is mentioned only once in the beginning of the story. This fact, in combination with the additional detail that “James the Just” was also stoned (in addition to being thrown from the temple and finally killed with a fuller’s club), make it quite plausible that, as Painter observed, Hegesippus was combining traditions.517 Although unproven, it is not unlikely that Hegesippus was quoting a tradition regarding James the Just, to which he, or someone before him, combined the two details regarding James the brother of the Lord that are also found in Josephus. In turn, Eusebius, who considers Hegesippus’ account the most “accurate” (ἀκριβέστατα γε μην τα κατ’ αυτὸν ὁ Ἡγεσίππος; Hist. eccl. 2.23.3), accepts this assimilation of the two Jameses and this becomes part of his church history.

8.2.2.3 James and the Apostles in Hegesippus

Hegesippus begins his introduction of James with the words, ‘Διαδέχεται τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μετὰ τῶν ἁποστόλων ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ κυρίου Ἰάκωβος, which literally translated means: “The brother of the Lord, James, takes over the church with the apostles.” The verb (from διαδέχομαι)
is a historical present implying some form of succession. The Greek sentence is translated most commonly with the sense that “James the brother of the Lord succeeded to the government of the church in conjunction with the apostles” or, “Control of the Church passed together with the apostles to the brother of the Lord James.” These translations may convey the notion that James was not himself one of the apostles, but became a leader alongside them. However, this is not so clear in the Greek. According to LSJ, μετά with genitive plural nouns often carries the connotation of “in the midst of” or “among.” According to LSJ, it implies “a closer union than σύν.” If we do not preclude the possibility that James was one of the apostles, the sentence may quite naturally be understood with the sense: “Control of the church passed together with the [other] apostles to the brother of the Lord James.” James is thus singled out from among the apostles because he is to be the subject of what follows—yet he may well belong to the group of apostles.

This understanding of the text also has the following merit: As Painter has pointed out, the historical situation implied by Hegesippus is the time immediately after Jesus’s ascension. After all, not only James, but the “apostles” in general assume leadership at the time described by Hegesippus. All first-century textual evidence regarding this time agrees that the twelve apostles, or at least members of the group of Twelve, assumed leadership of the church after Jesus’s ascension (Matt 20:16–20; Acts 1–12; 15; Gal 2:7–9). Though the Gospels do not contain a specific text regarding post-ascension times, this much is also apparent in the way that Jesus’s special relationship to the Twelve is expounded on in all of them.

In light of Hegesippus’ choice of words (μετά with plural genitive) as well as the historical situation he describes, it is possible that Hegesippus takes this James to be one of the twelve apostles. This depends, of course, on whether by “apostles” Hegesippus would have meant the Twelve. The data is limited and thus inconclusive; however, if Hegesippus shared the viewpoint of the Gospels and Acts—that primarily members of the Twelve led the church after Jesus’s ascension—then it is not unlikely that he meant the Twelve. If so, then, the accounts of Clement and Hegesippus would match in terms of describing “James the Just” as being numbered among Jesus’s twelve apostles. Yet, as noted, Clement does not identify “James the Just” as a brother of Jesus as Hegesippus does.

In the long quotation of Hist. eccl. 2.23, Hegesippus does not refer to James as a bishop, as Clement does. In Hegesippus’ introduction, James is singled out among the apostles, but, according to Painter, “this might be because he is the subject of the discussion rather than the dominant leader of the group mentioned.” That Hegesippus considered James to be a bishop can be gleaned from Hist. eccl. 4.22.4, discussed above, where after the death of James Symeon is appointed the bishop of Jerusalem. In this instance also James is not referred to as a bishop, but the fact that his death brings about the appointment of Symeon—whom Hegesippus does label a bishop—suggests that Hegesippus considered James to have been the bishop prior to this.

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518 “διαδέχομαι,” LSJ 392
520 Painter, Just James, 122.
521 “μετά,” LSJ 1108; “μετά,” BDAG 636.
522 Painter, Just James, 122.
523 Painter, Just James, 124.
8.2.4 The Extent of Knowledge Regarding “James the Just” by the time of Eusebius

Compared to the description of Peter or Paul’s ministry in Acts, for example, Hegesippus’ account regarding James is quite brief and concerns almost entirely the one event of James’s martyrdom. Given that Hegesippus introduces James to the audience at this point, it is probable that he has not done so previously in the Hypotyposes. The elements of the introduction—James’s piety as a Jew, his being allowed to enter the sanctuary, his being a Nazirite—all seem to prepare the reader for one thing: the account of James’s martyrdom. That is to say, Hegesippus apparently introduces James the brother of Jesus to his audience not so much to speak about his life, but to prepare for the story of his martyrdom as the “Just One.”

It is equally significant that Eusebius does not claim to have any other sources regarding James the Just at his disposal. It is quite possible, then, that the brief references in Clement and the story regarding his martyrdom in Hegesippus represent all the information that Eusebius had regarding “James the Just.” Given that other sources do not add much to what is found in Eusebius (with the possible exception of some details in the Gospel to the Hebrews; see below), it may be that the extent of knowledge regarding this person (or persons) was very limited by the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E.

8.3 The Apocryphon of James

The following four texts to be discussed, and containing information about “James,” are all found in the Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC). They are the Apocryphon of James (Ap. Jas. [I.2])\(^ {524}\), the Gospel of Thomas (Gos. Thom. [II.2]), the First Apocalypse of James (1 Apoc. Jas. [V.3]), and the Second Apocalypse of James (2 Apoc. Jas. [V.4]). The NHC is a collection of 52 Christian texts written in Coptic. They were buried in Egypt probably around the year 367 and recovered in 1945 near the town of Nag Hammadi.\(^ {525}\)

It should be noted that although the texts were found together in a collection, they are nevertheless disparate—they do not agree on all matters, including some that are pertinent to our study. For example, several Nag Hammadi texts emphasize the leadership of Peter and the Twelve after Jesus’s ascension (Apocryphon of John; Gospel of Philip; Book of Thomas the Contender; Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles; Apocalypse of Peter; Letter of Peter to Philip), whereas others emphasize the leadership of James the brother of the Lord over and against the Twelve (First and Second Apocalypse of James). Furthermore, in the Gospel of Mary, Mary of Magdalene is given special treatment by Jesus.

The beginning of Ap. Jas. reads:

James writes to [. . . ]: Peace be with you from Peace, love from Love, grace from Grace, faith from Faith, life from Holy Life!

Since you asked that I send you a secret book which was revealed to me and Peter by the Lord, I could not turn you away or gainsay (?) you; but I have written it in the Hebrew alphabet and sent it to you, and you alone. But since you are a minister of the salvation of

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\(^{524}\) The numbers in square brackets indicate the codex number (roman numeral), followed by the treatise number of each text as found in the NHC.

\(^{525}\) Painter, Just James, 159–60. It is speculated that the texts were buried in response to the Paschal letter of Athanasius (367 C.E.), which banned heretical books.
the saints, endeavor earnestly and take care not to rehearse this text to many—this that
the Savior did not wish to tell to all of us, his twelve disciples. But blessed will they be
who will be saved through the faith of this discourse.

I also sent you, ten months ago, another secret book which the Savior had revealed to me.
Under the circumstances, however, regard that one as revealed to me, James; but this one
. . . [untranslatable fragments]

. . . the twelve disciples were all sitting together and recalling what the Savior had said to
each one of them, whether in secret or openly, and putting it in books—But I was writing
that which was in my book—lo, the Savior appeared, after departing from us while we
gazed after him. And five hundred and fifty days since he had risen from the dead, we
said to him, “Have you departed and removed yourself from us”? But Jesus said, “No, but
I shall go to the place from whence I came. If you wish to come with me, come!”
They all answered and said, “If you bid us, we come.”

He said, “Verily I say unto you, no one will ever enter the kingdom of heaven at my
bidding, but (only) because you yourselves are full. Leave James and Peter to me, that I
may fill them.” And having called these two, he drew them aside and bade the rest
occupy themselves with that which they were about . . . 526

The Apocryphon of James (Ap. Jas.) may be dated around the middle of the second
century and is cast in the form of a letter from “James.”527 In this document, Jesus appears to the
Twelve disciples 550 days after his resurrection, but draws only James and Peter aside to teach
them. After Jesus has instructed the two, he ascends to heaven, and James and Peter follow in
ascension. Their ascension is interrupted by the other apostles and so they remain on earth. The
letter ends as James dispatches the other apostles in mission while he himself remains in
Jerusalem.

8.3.1 The Identity of James in the Apocryphon of James

The narrator refers to himself simply as “James” but does not clarify which James he is.
In the words of Roy B. Ward, “It is to be noted that the ‘James’ of the Coptic EpJas is not
expressly identified—neither as the brother of the Lord nor as the Just. It would certainly appear
that he is James of Jerusalem, although he also appears to be numbered among the Twelve.”528
Despite this, most commentators hold that the narrator is James the brother of Jesus.529 However,
the narrator is not referred to as the brother of Jesus, nor identified in any way that would specifically limit him to be the brother of Jesus. He is also not called “the Just.” Rather, “James appears, like Peter, as one of the twelve disciples.”

This identification of James as one of the Twelve is explicit from the beginning of Ap. Jas. The author appeals to the recipient (whose name is illegible due to damage to the text) not to let many others know of this secret book, and justifies this request in that the Savior did not even wish to “disclose [it] to all of us, his twelve disciples” (1.24–25). James is thus included among the Twelve, but he received special instructions from the Lord that not all of the other Twelve were aware of. The author then describes (in the third person) the twelve disciples writing down memories of Jesus’s words after his resurrection, and James (in the first person) also writing in his own book (2.7–17). No other disciples in addition to the Twelve are portrayed as being present. The third person reference to the twelve disciples here does not contradict the implied author’s inclusion among them, for he soon speaks of himself also in the third person, “And when he called these two [James and Peter], he took them aside, and commanded the rest to carry on with what they had been doing” (2.36–39).

W.C. van Unnik has suggested that James the son of Zebedee may have been in view, since he was among the closest of Jesus’s disciples in the canonical gospels. John Painter, while acknowledging that James is here “associated with Peter and the twelve,” argues against van Unnik’s suggestion as follows:

The leadership of James the son of Zebedee in the early church is unknown elsewhere, but the leadership of James the Lord’s brother is widely attested [referring in a footnote to “Acts, Clement of Alexandria, The Gospel of Thomas, Pseudo-Clementines, and so forth”]. The notion of secret or restricted revelation to James the son of Zebedee after the resurrection of Jesus is also unknown, but it is affirmed to James the Lord’s brother [Painter refers here in a footnote to “Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius”].

James of Alphaeus does not even come into consideration in Painter’s refutation of van Unnik. Francis E. Williams similarly counters the most natural identification of James as one of the Twelve in Ap. Jas. by the following argument:

As the ‘James’ of our document is placed at Jerusalem (16:8–9), and dispatches the other disciples on their mission (16:6–8), we may presume that he is meant for James the Just, that is, James the Lord’s brother. (His identification as one of the Twelve disciples need not contradict this; it would merely show that the author did not distinguish clearly between this James and James the son of Zebedee).”

It is unclear whether Williams means that the author could not distinguish between the two Jameses or, rather, that he chose not to distinguish between the two in his portrayal. Either

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530 Helmut Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1990), 188; Pratscher, Der Herrenbruder, 159.
532 Painter, Just James, 164
way, the arguments of Painter and Williams would be more valid if there was any internal indication in Ap. Jas. that the brother of Jesus is meant. It appears that their arguments are based on the historical presupposition (which we are here scrutinizing) that the brother of Jesus—who was not one of the Twelve—became the primary leader of the church of Jerusalem after Jesus’s ascension. However, the claim that the brother of Jesus became the most prominent leader of the Jerusalem church has been called into question throughout this dissertation. Furthermore, given that any internal indication is lacking in Ap. Jas. that the brother of Jesus is meant, and given that James is quite clearly portrayed as one of the Twelve, the arguments of Williams and Painter in favor of identifying the James of Ap. Jas. as the brother of Jesus are not strong. One of the Twelve apostles is in view.

Furthermore, Williams’ observation that James is placed in Jerusalem is a non sequitur as far as using it as evidence that the brother of Jesus is in view. After all, in the NT all three Jameses are found only in Jerusalem after Jesus’s ascension (Acts 1:13, 14; 12.1; 15; Gal 1:19)! Therefore, that the James of Ap. Jas. goes to Jerusalem certainly does not disqualify him from being identified as one of the Twelve apostles.

Williams’ claim that the brother of Jesus is meant because the narrator dispatches the other apostles on their mission is also weak. First, it is somewhat incorrect to say that James here sends the others on a mission, for there is no mention of mission. Yet, James does seem to possess the authority to send the other apostles away. This implies some sort of leadership of James among the others, as does, indeed, his primacy as the recipient of Jesus’s revelation in the work under scrutiny, as well as the portrayal of him as the author of the work. However, there is no corresponding evidence in the NT to indicate that any of the three Jameses occupied such a sending role among the apostles. In the NT, it is clearly Jesus who sends the Twelve on their mission (e.g. Matt 28:19; Acts 1). Therefore, one cannot conclude that James the brother of Jesus is meant.

As indicated above, the James mentioned in Ap. Jas. is one of the Twelve, either James the son of Zebedee or James the son of Alphaeus. If our conclusions about the NT evidence, especially Acts, are correct, then the more likely candidate is James of Alphaeus.

8.4 The Gospel of Thomas

Gospel of Thomas logion 12:

The Disciples said to Jesus, “We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader”? Jesus said to them, “Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”

The implied authorship of Gos. Thom. has already been discussed above in sect. 8.0.1. The concentration of literature honoring Thomas that is found in Syria makes that location a good guess for the origin of the Gospel of Thomas as well. A.F.J. Klijn lists some support for a Syriac provenance: “the work pretends to have been written by the apostle Thomas, called by the name usually occurring in Syriac writings Judas Thomas; many Aramaisms can be found in this writing which seems to point to a Syriac background; many passages in this Gospel show

534 Translated by Thomas O. Lambdin, in The Nag Hammadi Library in English, 127.
535 Meyer, “Beginning,” 165
agreement with parallel passages in Syriac writings.”536 Thus, Edessa is a common suggestion for the place of origin for Gos. Thom.537

The dating of Gos. Thom. varies drastically with reference to the viewpoints that a scholar adopts.538 The Gnostic elements of the manuscript suggest a second century—or later—date.539 However, there are many sayings in Gos. Thom. that are not clearly—or necessarily—Gnostic.540 A.J.B. Higgins argues that some of these sayings in Gos. Thom. that have parallels in the Synoptics are arguably more primitive than their NT counterparts.541 It may be that the Gospel of Thomas preserves some early versions of the sayings of Jesus—even from the first century—but is mixed in with later Gnostic materials.542

The most common viewpoint is that Gos. Thom. was translated into Coptic from an earlier Greek version.543 This argument gains strength in that among the many fragments of ancient texts found near Oxyrhyncus were some excerpts from a Greek version of Gos. Thom. However, Nicholas Perrin has argued that a Syriac original is probably to be found behind both the Greek and Coptic versions. He argues for this in that there are many similarities between Gos. Thom. and the Diatessaron.544 Furthermore, Perrin has attempted to demonstrate that a hypothetical Syriac source can best explain the otherwise puzzling structure of Gos. Thom.—in terms of Syriac catchwords and homophones that connect the otherwise individual logia on both sides.545 Perrin’s observations would certainly fit with the commonly accepted provenance of the writing in Edessa: “the vast majority of texts recovered from Edessa from the first centuries . . . are written in Syriac; very little comes to us from that city at that time in Greek.”546 However, Perrin’s arguments have not been widely accepted.547

Regarding how the Gospel of Thomas presents itself, some scholars argue that the author does not claim that the sayings were pronounced by Jesus during his earthly lifetime. The debate

539 William Schoedel explores “Naassene Themes in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas,” VC 14.4 (1960): 225–34, and suggests that the sect may lie behind the final composition or redaction of Gos. Thom. (p. 233). Of particular interest is the role of James for the Naassenes. Schoedel explains: “In view of the minor role that James, the Lord’s brother, plays in Gnostic systems known to us it is undoubtedly significant that Hippolytus twice informs us concerning the Naasenesses that ‘these are the heads of the many discourses which they say James the brother of the Lord handed down to Mariamne’ (Ref. 5.7.1; cf. 10.9.3)” (page 233).
544 Perrin, “Thomas,” 70.
circles around the phrase “the living Jesus” in the incipit. Marvin Meyer, for example, argues that

The use of this phrase in early Christian literature suggests that “the living Jesus” typically refers to the spiritual, divine Christ, who is to be associated with life and truth and whose sayings thus take on the character of revealed wisdom. It seems highly unlikely that the phrase means to refer to anything like the resurrected Christ (in, say, the Lukan sense).548

Whereas Meyer is able to cite confirmatory evidence regarding this phrase from other early Christian literature,549 he apparently fails to consider the evidence of logion 12. Unlike many of the other sayings in Gos. Thom. that do not necessarily demand a historical context, logion 12 assumes—even necessitates—a concrete historical situation, probably between the time of Jesus’s resurrection and his ascension. The disciples state: “we are aware that you will depart from us” and this saying makes no sense if the “living” Jesus were only conceived of as a spiritual (timeless?) Christ. That Jesus’s going away would necessitate the appointment of a new leader in his stead is best explained in a setting before the ascension of Jesus. It may be argued, then, that at least Logion 12 of Gos. Thom. assumes a historical setting when Jesus is still with his disciples in some concrete sense—i.e. before the ascension.

To turn the argument around, since members of the Twelve and other disciples of Jesus whom from the NT we know were followers of Jesus during his earthly life are also prominent in the Gos. Thom., what need is there to conceive of these sayings as taking place after Jesus’s ascension? The naming of the historical persons seems to accentuate a certain “historicity,” or historical situation, for these sayings—even if many of the sayings themselves are “timeless.” These arguments for the narrative setting of Gos. Thom. do not, of course, go far in determining its date (or dates). However, since the author or editors of Gos. Thom. seem to imply a certain historical situation for the sayings—that is, prior to Jesus’s ascension—then it is possible that they would have used any older sources at their disposal for these times. This is obviously confirmed with regard to those portions that parallel the canonical gospels, but our arguments widen the possibility also to those portions that do not have canonical parallels—for example, logion 12.

8.4.1 The Identity of James in Logion 12 of the Gospel of Thomas

James is mentioned only in this one logion of Gos. Thom. He is identified as “the Just” (or “Righteous”), but his relationship to Jesus is not in any way specified. Painter apparently takes the fact that he is labeled “the Just” as determinative that the brother of Jesus is in view.550 However, our findings regarding Clement of Alexandria and Ap. Jas. above caution against such an automatic identification. On the other hand, if the author of Gos. Thom. is to be seen as Jesus’s twin brother (cf. sect. 8.0.1), even though he is also known in the NT as one of Jesus’s disciples, then it is possible that the originator of this saying—or a later editor—viewed James as both a brother of Jesus and as one of the Twelve apostles. Yet, neither is clear from the text. It may be worthwhile to note here that in another Nag Hammadi text, the Book of Thomas the

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550 Painter, Just James, 162–3.
Contender, “Judas Thomas” is referred to as Jesus’s brother, but it is also made clear that “Judas Thomas” will only be called the brother (or twin) of Jesus (i.e., that he is not actually such).

Painter takes the evidence that Thomas is the implied author—with the connection that he is to be viewed as the twin brother of Jesus—to show that in Gos. Thom. the status of the family of Jesus is elevated.\(^{551}\) Furthermore, he sees a rivalry between the family of Jesus and the Twelve apostles in Gos. Thom.\(^ {552}\) Unfortunately Painter does not expound on this view or explain where in Gos. Thom. he finds evidence for such. One could argue quite the opposite since the implied author is apparently both a family member of Jesus and one of the Twelve.

In any case, James is depicted in Gos. Thom. as the unequivocal leader of the disciples of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus states that heaven and earth came to exist for the sake of “James the Just.” James the Just is, therefore, portrayed as an extremely important figure, in a manner similar to what can be found in the First and Second Apocalypse of James. We have suggested above the possibility that James of Alphaeus may be referred to in some later writings as “James the Just” (sects. 8.1.2.2 and 8.2.2.2). The only reference to James in Logion 12 of Gos. Thom. does not in any clear way either confirm or negate this.

### 8.5. James in the First and Second Apocalypse of James

Both the First and Second Apocalypse of James carry the same name (i.e. “Apocalypse of James”). The numeration indicates their order as found in the NHC. 1 Apoc. Jas. is found to contain Valentinian motifs and therefore is normally dated to the beginning of the third century.\(^ {553}\)

#### 8.5.1 The First Apocalypse of James

1 Apoc. Jas. contains three primary parts: (1) a discussion between Jesus and James prior to the crucifixion; (2) a dialogue between the same after the resurrection; and (3) a prediction of James’s death.\(^ {554}\)

1 Apoc. Jas. begins as follows:

> It is the Lord who spoke with me: “See now the completion of my redemption. I have given you a sign of these things, James, my brother. For not without reason have I called you my brother, although you are not my brother materially . . . ” (24.10)\(^ {555}\)

As Roy B. Ward observes, “In the I Apocalypse of James the recipient of the apocalypse is addressed expressly as ‘my brother,’ but it is added that James is not the Savior’s brother according to the material (hule) (24.14, 15).”\(^ {556}\) The purpose of this clarification (by Jesus to James!) is probably a docetic Christology whereby “what is denied is the material being of the Lord.”\(^ {557}\) (See also 1 Apoc. Jas. 31.15–24 where the bodily suffering of Christ is excluded).\(^ {558}\)

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\(^{551}\) Painter, Just James, 162.

\(^{552}\) Painter, Just James, 163.

\(^{553}\) Painter, Just James, 168.

\(^{554}\) Cf. Painter, Just James, 170.


\(^{557}\) Painter, Just James, 171.
The relationship of Jesus and James is therefore “purely spiritual.” It is important to note that in *1 Apoc. Jas.*, James is referred to both as the brother of the Lord and as “the Just” (31.30; 32.1–3, 12; 43.19–21). This identification is similar to that of Hegesippus.

In *1 Apoc. Jas.*, James is cast as a very significant figure as a recipient of the revelation of Jesus. According to William Schoedel, in Gnosticism, “the difference between the redeemer (the Lord) and the redeemed (James, the prototypical disciple) is significantly less pronounced.” In fact, in 27, 8–10, James is identified with “Him-who-is.” Furthermore, the destruction of Jerusalem is in *1 Apoc. Jas.* a consequence of the death of James (probably to be understood in connection with the death of Jesus).

The Twelve are also mentioned in *1 Apoc. Jas.* According to William Schoedel, the relationship, or perhaps more accurately, tension, between James and the Twelve makes sense of the purpose of the writing of *1 Apoc. Jas.*:

One reason for the appeal of the figure of James was the fact that he stood outside the circle of twelve disciples and because of his relationship to Jesus (here understood in purely spiritual terms) could be appealed to as the originator of a purer form of Christian teaching than that represented by the twelve. In this connection, the command to hand on the teaching in secret presumably served to explain why it was that Gnosticism appeared to the uninitiated as a relatively late flowering of the religion of Jesus. Our apocalypse, in short, was attempting to present an alternative to the apostolic authority claimed for the teaching of a steadily advancing catholic form of Christianity. It appears, however, that whereas Jerusalem and Judaism are associated with the darker powers of the universe, the twelve (and thus catholic Christianity) move within the more beneficent spheres of the activity of Achamoth, the lesser Sophia.

Therefore, the twelve are not wholly discounted, but portrayed as less important in comparison to James. For this reason also, James can rebuke and correct the Twelve (42.20–24).

8.5.2 The Second Apocalypse of James

Whereas in *1 Apoc. Jas.*, James is identified as a spiritual brother of Jesus, in *2 Apoc. Jas.*, the identification is a little more complicated. *2 Apoc. Jas.* begins as follows:

This is the discourse that James the Just spoke in Jerusalem, which Mareim, one of the priests, wrote. He had told it to Theuda, the father of the Just One, since he was a relative of his (44.13–20).

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563 Cf. Painter, *Just James*, 171
Therefore “Theuda,” and not Joseph, is the father of James. Furthermore, 2 Apoc. Jas. 50.5–23 reads:

Once when I was sitting deliberating, he opened the door. That one [Jesus] whom you hated and persecuted came in to me. He said to me, “Hail, my brother; my brother, hail.” As I raised my face to stare at him, (my) mother said to me, “Do not be frightened, my son, because he said ‘My brother’ to you (sg.). For you (pl.) were nourished with this same milk. Because of this he calls me “My mother.” For he is not a stranger to us. He is your step-brother.”

It is curious that both 1 and 2 Apoc. Jas. refer to James as the brother of Jesus on the one hand, but also negate the literal connotation on the other. James is in neither a straightforward brother of Jesus (in contrast with, e.g. Mark 6:3; Gal 1:19). John Painter offers an explanation for this curious phenomenon: “This interpretation of the Jewish Christian motif of the distinctive relationship of James to Jesus is an expression of Jewish Christian Gnosticism. As in the First Apocalypse, [so also in the Second] the interpretation of James as brother is made the basis of the teaching of the intimacy between James and the Lord.”

The interest of the authors seems to be in the spiritual closeness, or “brotherhood,” of James and Jesus, rather than in establishing an actual, historical identification of James as the brother of the Lord (as in Mark 6:3 or Gal 1:19).

2 Apoc. Jas. refers to James several times as “the Just” (44.14; 49.9; 59.22; 60.13; 61.14) and contains an account of the martyrdom of James (61.1) that in many ways agrees with the account found in Hegesippus. James is thrown down from a high point at the temple (61.23–27), tortured with a heavy stone over his abdomen (62.3–4), buried half-way into the ground (62.10–11), and finally stoned (62.11–12). As he is dying, James prays, but for himself and not for his enemies (62.13). It should be noted that in 2 Apoc. Jas., the Twelve are not separately mentioned and therefore it is unclear whether or not James is envisioned as one of them.

8.6 The Gospel of the Hebrews

The Gospel of the Hebrews (Gos. Heb.) was, according to some Church Fathers, written in the Hebrew tongue (i.e. Aramaic; Epiphanius, Pan. 30.3.7), and the translation of this Gospel into Greek was the canonical Matthew (Jerome in Cont. Pelag. 3.2). No fragments of it have survived—only excerpts in the Church Fathers. It is mentioned in over twenty Fathers and other Christian sources and quoted from by no less than ten. Jerome claimed to have obtained a copy of said Gospel and translated it into Greek and Latin (Vir. Ill. 2). He quotes it on many occasions (e.g. Epist. 20.5; Comm. Eph. 5.4; Vir. Ill. 2; Comm. Matt. 2.5; 6.11; 12.13).

Because it was thought that Gos. Heb. preceded canonical Matthew, it was sometimes used to explain passages or words that are difficult to understand in the canonical gospels (e.g. Jerome’s Comm. Matt. 2.5; 6.1), or to explain details that are “missing” from them (e.g. Jerome’s

566 Painter, Just James, 176.
568 Edwards counts 22 quotes by Jerome (Hebrew Gospel, xxi).
569 Edwards, Hebrew Gospel, 83.
Comm. Matt. 12.13). Thus, as Edwards notes, “despite its unofficial status, the Hebrew Gospel possessed a de facto hermeneutical authority in the patristic period.”

Modern viewpoints regarding Gos. Heb. differ widely. The various fragments are sometimes attributed to a single early source written in the first century. Others attribute these to two or three “Jewish-Christian” Gospels: The Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Ebionites and the Gospel of the Nazoreans. It appears that scholars who envision a single Gospel of the Hebrews tend to date it so early as to posit that it may have been a source for the canonical gospels (e.g. Edwards, Beatrice), whereas those who envision separate Gospels tend to date them later and emphasize their dependence on the canonical gospels (Luomanen, Gregory). In this issue it is difficult to see which follows which (the date; the number of Jewish-Christian Gospels). Jerome also refers to the Gospel of the Nazoreans (Comm. on Is. 11.1–3), which many scholars take as independent of Gos. Heb. and the Gospel of the Ebionites. However, Jerome elsewhere states that the Gos. Heb. was used by the Nazoreans (Comm. Isa. 40.9–11), suggesting that by the alternate terms he means only one work.

8.6.1 James in the Gospel of the Hebrews (Jerome)

A quotation in Jerome from the Gospel of the Hebrews explicitly attributes a resurrection appearance to James the brother of Jesus. The account is found in Jerome’s De Viris Illustribus 2.11–13:

The Gospel also which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin and which also Origen often makes use of, after the account of the resurrection of the Saviour says, “but the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those that sleep)” and again, a little later, it says “Bring a table and bread,” said the Lord.” And immediately it is added, “He brought bread and blessed and brake and gave to James the Just and said to him, ‘my brother eat thy bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep’” (NPNF 3:362).

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570 Edwards, Hebrew Gospel, 82; although this should be qualified in that the Hebrew Gospel did not possess such an authority in general, but rather in several instances in the writings of some Fathers.
574 Gregory, “Hindrance or Help?,” 399.
8.6.2 The Identification of James in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*

In this section, three “identity markers” as found in *Gos. Heb.* are examined: the reference to James by Jesus as his brother; the reference to James having taken part in the last supper; and the portrayal of James as an ideal believer.

8.6.2.1 What Sort of “Brother” of Jesus is James in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*?

In this passage, James is identified by Jesus as his brother and by the implied narrator as James the Just. Jesus’s reference to “my brother” would suggest that the most natural meaning of the word is in view—Jesus and James had common parents. Were the text not found in Jerome, this would be the most natural interpretation. However, what makes matters more interesting is that Jerome, who is our only access to this text, did not himself read it in this way.

As mentioned above, for Jerome, James the brother of Jesus was actually James of Alphaeus, one of the Twelve apostles of Jesus—as well as his cousin. In the same chapter (2) of *Vir. Ill.* where Jerome quotes this passage from the *Gos. Heb.*, he first clarifies that he thought that this James was, in fact, Jesus’s cousin—the son of Alphaeus. Two simplified options present themselves at this point: First, that the *Gos. Heb.* presented James as a natural brother of Jesus, but that Jerome rejected this viewpoint. Against this is Jerome’s esteem for the *Gos. Heb.* and his claim to have translated it into Greek and Latin (*Vir. Ill.* 2). This would have made the work available to others and, if it did contain a presentation of James as a natural brother of Jesus, would have absolutely undermined Jerome’s own viewpoints regarding Jesus’s family.

However, it should be kept in mind that Jerome was quite resilient in his views regarding James of Alphaeus; he did not even consider the fact that in the canonical gospels (i.e. in Matt 13:5; Mark 6:3) James is straightforwardly called Jesus’s brother to be a contradiction of his viewpoint that James was actually Jesus’s cousin!

Second, it is possible that the *Gospel of the Hebrews* did not contradict Jerome’s viewpoints insofar that James was not an actual brother of Jesus. Is it possible that in *Gos. Heb.* James is referred to as a “brother” in some similar sense as in 1 or 2 *Apoc. Jas*? In both of these any actual physical brotherhood is denied; the emphasis in both is on James’s (spiritual) closeness to Jesus.

8.6.2.2 Is James One of the Twelve in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*?

The identification of James in *Gos. Heb.* is somewhat more complicated yet; the resurrection appearance to James alludes to James’s presence at the Last Supper where he had promised not to eat or drink until he would see the resurrected Jesus.\(^\text{576}\) The account of the Last Supper in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* is now lost. However, a comparison with the canonical gospels raises an interesting issue: the Twelve are either exclusively or most prominently present at the Last Supper.\(^\text{577}\) Mark’s wording would allow that others than the Twelve were present on the occasion (Mark 14:13–20). However, Jesus narrows down the identity of his betrayer by stating that he is, “One of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me” (*Εἷς τῶν ἀδελφῶν...*)

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\(^{577}\) Wieseler, *Galater*, 84.
In John, the “disciples” are present at the Last Supper and the Twelve are not referred to exclusively (13:22). However, the named characters depicted as present all belong to the Twelve: Judas, the son of Iscariot (13:2, 26–30); Simon Peter (13:6, 36, 37); Thomas (14:5); Philip (14:8, 9); Judas, not Iscariot (14:22). Therefore, the Twelve are foremost in the evangelist’s mind, although he refers to them with the more general term “disciples” (which, of course, the Twelve were).580

It is not possible to determine what sort of attendance Gos. Heb. depicted at the Last Supper, for as just indicated the account is now lost. However, in all of the traditions found in the canonical gospels the presence of the Twelve is emphasized almost exclusively. If the tradition of Gos. Heb. was similar, then this raises the possibility that in Gos. Heb. James, whom Jesus calls “brother,” is also one of the Twelve. At least this is the way Jerome apparently understood it. After all, to repeat, this quotation from Gos. Heb. occurs in a section on “James” in De Viris Illustribus—and to Jerome this James was both the “brother” of Jesus and James of Alphaeus.

8.6.2.3 Is James an Unbeliever in the Gospel of the Hebrews?

In commentaries on Acts 12:17, Gal 1:19 and 1 Cor 15:7, where James appears for the first time in each work, it is sometimes argued that James may have been an unbeliever prior to a resurrection appearance by Jesus, after which he became one of the leaders of the church (cf. sect. 7.1.2.4). The notion that James was an unbeliever during Jesus’s ministry hails from the depiction of Jesus’s family found in the Gospels (cf. ch. 6), whereas the evidence for his prominence as a Christian is found in Gal 1:19 and in 1 Cor 9:5 (assuming he is one of the “brothers” in view). On the surface, it stands to reason that a resurrection appearance would be a suitable explanation for this apparent change.

However, Gos. Heb. is the only source that overtly describes an appearance to James the brother of Jesus by the risen (not yet ascended) Jesus. Rather than appearing as an unbeliever, in Gos. Heb. James is depicted as the model disciple, the one who expected Jesus to be “raised from among them that sleep.” He vows not to eat or drink until he sees the resurrected Jesus. It is not because of his unbelief that Jesus appears to James—in order to convert him—but rather because of James’s faith.581 Thus, after Jesus is resurrected, Jesus has a meal prepared for James almost

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578 James Edwards posits that Luke’s mention of “the apostles” suggests that James the brother of Jesus could have attended the meal because he was later considered an apostle (The Hebrew Gospel, 81). This suggestion is incorrect because for Luke—especially at this point in the narrative—the Twelve only were apostles. If Edwards’ suggestion were correct, this would aid the point he wishes to make in his book, The Hebrew Gospel, that Luke, more than the other Gospels, is related to Gos. Heb. Cf. also Ward, “James of Jerusalem,” 181.

579 Actually only Peter (in 6:67), Judas Iscariot (in 6:71) and Thomas (in 20:24) can with confidence be considered members of the Twelve in John since “the Twelve” are only mentioned as such in those passages. The information that Philip (Mark 3:16–19; Matt 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16) and “Judas, not Iscariot” (Luke 6:14–16) are members of the Twelve can be found in the Synoptics (Philip is mentioned in all three; a second “Judas” is mentioned only by Luke; Mark and Matthew mention a “Thaddaeus” instead).


581 In an attempt to find similarity between the Emmaus story as found in Luke (24:13–27) and the resurrection appearance to James in the Hebrew Gospel, James Edwards states that “In both stories the meal enlightens previously noncomprehending disciples” (The Hebrew Gospel, 81). This may be true for the disciples in Emmaus,
as a reward: “My brother eat your bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep.”

8.6.3 Conclusions Regarding James in the Gospel of the Hebrews

In Jerome’s quotation from Gos. Heb. regarding James, Jesus refers to him as “my brother.” However, Jerome himself does not, despite his respect for Gos. Heb., take this James to be a brother of Jesus in the natural sense. Rather, for Jerome this James is one of the Twelve, the son of Alphaeus—a cousin of the Lord. It is therefore impossible to make a strong case on the basis of Gos. Heb. that James the brother of the Lord (i.e. the one in Gal 1:19) was the first to see the risen Lord or, conversely, that the James mentioned in 1 Cor 15:7 was James the brother of the Lord (cf. Gal 1:19), rather than James of Alphaeus (cf. Acts 1:13).

8.7 The Protevangelium (Infancy Gospel) of James

The Protevangelium of James (Prot. Jas.) describes the life of Mary: her own miraculous conception and birth (1.1–5.2); her consecration to live in the Temple (6.1–8.1); her marriage to the older Joseph (8.2–9.2); and her conception and birth of Jesus (11.1–23.4). Some of these events correlate with the infancy accounts of Matthew and Luke. In Prot. Jas. emphasis is given to Mary’s continuing virginity even after Jesus’s birth (19.3–20.1).

Prot. Jas. relies on the birth narratives of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.582 According to Oscar Cullmann (in Schneemelcher’s (ed.) New Testament Apocrypha), “Since Origen certainly, and Clement of Alexandria probably, knew our document . . . we may probably go back, so far as its roots are concerned, to the second half of the 2nd century, although we must regard several chapters as later additions.”583

The author identifies himself as “James” only at the conclusion of Prot. Jas., “Now I, James, who wrote this history, when a tumult arose in Jerusalem on the death of Herod, withdrew into the wilderness until the tumult in Jerusalem ceased. And I will praise the Lord, who gave me the wisdom to write this history” (25.1). Although “James” does not identify himself further, the fact that on two occasions the Protevangelium mentions that Joseph had “sons” before his marriage to Mary (9.2; 17.2), it may be that the author is meant to be identified as James the (step-)brother of Jesus (cf. Mark 6:3 where the brothers of Jesus are mentioned as such—that is, in an unqualified way). However, we wish to emphasize that this identification is not overt in the text of Prot. Jas. That is, the author “James” is not identified as a brother of the Lord. The readers would have had to identify James as the brother of the Lord on the basis of e.g. Matt 13:55 (since the Gospel of Matthew is clearly utilized elsewhere in Prot. Jas.).

As already noted, the Protevangelium “was written for the glorification of Mary.”584 As such, its historical value with regard to knowledge regarding the author, “James,” is limited. On the one hand, the document highlights—even to the point of crudeness (20.1)—the perpetual virginity of Mary. This appears to be one of its primary aims.585 Perhaps for this purpose also, an

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585 Painter, Just James, 198.
explanation for the “brothers” of Jesus in the NT is provided in that Joseph already had sons prior to his marriage to Mary (9.2; 17.2). What better author to record and verify his step-mother’s perpetual virginity than the (non-)son James?586

One aspect of Prot. Jas. may have bearing on the other investigations of this dissertation. As noted, the conclusion (25.1) reads, “Now I, James, who wrote this history, when a tumult arose in Jerusalem on the death of Herod, withdrew into the wilderness until the tumult in Jerusalem ceased.” Cullmann mentions that by “Herod” the author might mean either “Herod the Great” or “Herod Agrippa” (cf. Acts 12:1).587 The latter option would imply that the author of Prot. Jas. would be the same “James” mentioned in Acts 12:17. In Acts, however, there is no mention of James fleeing to the desert, or of a tumult after the death of Herod (Acts 12:23). But much more important is the fact that the only “Herod” mentioned in Prot. Jas. before the conclusion is Herod the Great, who attempts to kill Jesus (22.1–22.2; 23.1, 2; cf. Matt 2:1). Therefore, it is most natural that the death of Herod the Great (cf. Matt 22:19) is meant in the conclusion as well. The “tumult” in Jerusalem and the withdrawal of James into the wilderness (Prot. Jas. 25.1) may be a loose equivalent to the story in Matthew, where Joseph (and his sons?) could not go to Jerusalem after the death of Herod the Great (Matt 2:19) because of Archelaus (Matt 2:22). Instead, they settled in Galilee (Matt 2:23).588

If this interpretation is correct, then the implication is that the author of Prot. Jas. is indeed intended to be James the brother of Jesus. He is depicted as old enough to write the history of these events already at a time when Jesus is only an infant (Prot. Jas. 25.1). However, James the step-brother of Jesus is not called “the Just” in Prot. Jas., nor is his (potential) future leadership role in Jerusalem mentioned in any way. Prot. Jas. cannot, therefore, either confirm or negate our findings regarding James of Alphaeus and James the brother of the Lord elsewhere in this dissertation.

8.8 Summary of Chapter Eight

The investigations of this chapter suggest that second century traditions regarding the Jameses of the Jerusalem church are somewhat more complicated than is presented in John Painter’s James the Just, for example. In all of the sources examined in this chapter, Painter thinks of James the brother of Jesus as the James in view. Yet, this is not always the most natural reading. We will chart here our findings regarding the identity of James in the various sources discussed.

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586 According to Painter, Just James, 199, “There are no grounds for thinking that traditions asserting that Mary bore no other children after Jesus are historically reliable. Rather they are preoccupied with the preservation of the virginity of Mary.


588 This would match also in that the infancy accounts of Matthew and Prot. Jas. (which makes much use of Matthew) would thus end in a somewhat similar manner, in the necessity of Joseph (and James) to live somewhere else beside Jerusalem (cf. Matt 19:22–23; Prot. Jas. 25.1).
Key:

1) James is an unqualified brother of Jesus. This would *prima facie* imply that a natural, biological brotherhood is meant.

2) James is a qualified (so-called) “brother” of the Lord (i.e. spiritual “brother”).

3) James is “the Just.”

4a) James is one of the Twelve.

4b) James could be one of the Twelve.

5) James is not one of the Twelve.

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8.8.1 Was “James the Just” James of Alphaeus?

On the basis of this chart (and indeed, the findings of this dissertation as a whole), a case can be made that James of Alphaeus was the historical “James” who came to be known as “the Just” in some Christian circles. First, columns (4a) and (4b) indicate that several sources that refer to James count him among the Twelve apostles. This is most clearly seen in Clement of Alexandria, who indicates both that “James the Just” is one of the Twelve and that “James the Just” is not James the son of Zebedee. It is quite probable that *Gos. Heb.* also included James among the Twelve as he is present at the Last Supper. This detail alone would not be very significant as it is possible that *Gos. Heb.* simply contained a different view on who was present at the Last Supper, in comparison with the canonical Gospels (ref. sect. 8.6.2.2). Jerome, however, counts James among the Twelve (he is the son of Alphaeus) and, given that all the information we have regarding James in *Gos. Heb.* is found in Jerome, it is only reasonable to resort to his judgment. Furthermore, none of the information in Hegesippus, *Gos. Thom.*, or 2

589 The parentheses indicate that the sources are not wholly straightforward in their presentation of said point of view; cf. our detailed discussion of each source in this chapter.
Apoc. Jas. negates the possibility that in them James is one of the Twelve—i.e. the son of Alphaeus.\(^{590}\)

Second, columns 1 and 2 indicate that the connection between the identity of “James the Just” and that of “the brother of the Lord” is not as strong and clear as often thought. Hegesippus comes closest to making a historical case for such, but elsewhere appears to hold that “James the Just” is actually a cousin of Jesus (cf. section 8.2.2.1). Similarly, Jerome’s short quotations regarding James from Gos. Heb. simply refer to him as a “brother.” However, the combination of two factors make it a very insecure conclusion that the narrator of Gos. Heb. presented James as a natural brother of the Lord: First, the brevity of the quotations limits us from knowing whether a natural kinship, or some other sort of spiritual “brotherhood” was meant by the narrator. Second, Jerome himself did not in fact consider James to be an actual brother of Jesus, but rather a cousin—James of Alphaeus. This appears to us quite decisive given that we do not have access to these parts of Gos. Heb. independently from Jerome. It would appear extremely questionable to take that fractional portion of Gos. Heb. found in Jerome and identify James differently from Jerome, given that Jerome claims to have had access to the whole.

Third, on the basis of our interpretations in chs. 4–7 of this dissertation regarding the Jameses in the NT, James of Alphaeus would be the most likely NT candidate to have gained the nickname “the Just.” Assuming that these findings are correct, in Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25, as well as Gal 2:9–10, 12, James of Alphaeus is portrayed as closely connected to the application of the Mosaic Law. In Acts 21:18–25 he is the most prominent Jerusalem church leader mentioned—and the only one named. He is found leading a Jerusalem Christianity that consists of thousands of believing Jews zealous for the Law (Acts 21:18). The concern of James and the elders is that Paul would be in trouble if he did not express his own zeal (or concern) for the Law (Acts 21:20–25).

Somewhat comparable concerns with regard to Peter seem to be expressed by the “men from James” in Gal 2:12. These individuals who take James as their leader are Law-observant in their dissociation from Gentiles. If James himself followed this practice, this might further explain the appellation “James the Just”—i.e. James was known for his Law-observance. The key difference between our interpretation and that of others is that we identify this James as the son of Alphaeus. According to our identification of the NT Jameses, there is no similar evidence for the Law-advocacy of James the brother of the Lord.

If James the Just was, historically speaking, James the son of Alphaeus, an important question is why did he, in some later sources, come to be referred to as “the brother of the Lord.” For this we have no definite answer. However, we do wish to draw attention again to the fact that this sort of “combining” of actually distinct persons, but with a shared name, is exemplified in the case of “Judas Didymus Thomas” (cf. again sect. 8.0.1). We are merely proposing here that the identities of two, historically distinct Jameses were similarly later combined in some literature.

Thus, the evidence regarding the Jameses in second and early third century Christian literature is multi-faceted—as can be expected from the varied character of the sources in view. With reference to this dissertation, if a unified portrayal of James were to be found in these later sources, and if this portrayal were to be contrary to the findings of the previous chapters of this dissertation, some significant doubt would be cast on those findings. However, it appears that

\(^{590}\) We are here not taking the references to James as the “brother of the Lord” in Hegesippus and 2 Apoc. Jas. as indicative that he could not have also been one of the Twelve, for reasons outlined in sections 9.2.2.1 and 9.5.1.
several of our sources can, in fact, be taken to accord well with our findings regarding the book of Acts—that James of Alphaeus is in view in 12:17; 15:13; and 21:18.
CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

Many interpreters hold that the James mentioned in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 is James the brother of the Lord referred to by Paul in Gal 1:19. This dissertation has critically evaluated those interpretations (see chs. 1–3) and come to the conclusion that the James in view is actually James the son of Alphaeus (ch. 4) who is explicitly mentioned in Acts 1:13 as one of the twelve apostles.

The key verse for this new interpretation is Acts 12:17. It is normally argued that James the brother of the Lord was so well-known to Luke’s audience that he did not need to be identified by the narrator (sect. 4.1). We have argued that this explanation cannot stand in the face of a thorough inquiry into Luke’s literary methods (ch. 4). Luke-Acts actually contains a wealth of data regarding the introduction of new characters (sect. 4.3) and this enables us to make a strong case for the identity of James in Acts 12:17. If we exclude James (in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18) from consideration, only six out of the 117 named characters in Luke-Acts make their appearance into the narrative without any additional introductory information as to who they are (sect. 4.3). Based on these statistics (in isolation), the probability that James (who is not identified in Acts 12:17) is a new character is very low (sect. 4.3). Furthermore, Luke is very precise in differentiating between characters of the same name and yet he does not differentiate the James of Acts 12:17ff. from James of Alphaeus in Acts 1:13 (sect. 4.2).

These analyses of the narrator’s handling of named characters provide the primary foundation for the interpretation of the identity of James in Acts 12:17 (and 15:13; 21:17) here offered. We are not, in principle, opposed to harmonizing Luke-Acts with other documents mentioning “James.” However, we simply cannot neglect the clear data of Luke-Acts and identify James in Acts 12:17ff. as the brother of the Lord. This identification is simply not inherent to Luke-Acts (sect. 4.1).

The identification of James as the son of Alphaeus arguably results in a more coherent interpretation of his role in the Acts narrative (sect. 4.4; ch. 5). It is natural that Peter should refer to him in 12:17 because both are members of the Twelve (sect. 4.4.1). At the “Jerusalem Council” he appears (as expected) among the Twelve apostles and the elders (sect. 5.3.4). As one of Jesus’s twelve appointed future leaders (sect. 5.3.4.3), he offers a “judgment” on the question of Gentile circumcision with which the other apostles and elders, and indeed the whole church, agree (Acts 15:22). Furthermore, he is still found as an important leader in Jerusalem during Paul’s final visit to the city (Acts 21:18)—perhaps the last of the Twelve to remain in the city (sect. 5.4.1).

The identification of James as the brother of the Lord does not result in a similar narrative coherence. The common suggestion that James succeeds Peter and the Twelve as the primary leader of the Jerusalem church is a problematic explanation of Acts 12:17 (ch. 2). Also, with regard to the “Jerusalem Council,” there is no intrinsic narrative reason or explanation as to why the brother of the Lord should even be present and much less for why he should be able to offer a “judgment” regarding Gentile circumcision (sect. 5.3.4.4). To reiterate, from the perspective that James is the brother of the Lord, the narrator has not even revealed his identity! Of course all of this “missing” information regarding the brother of the Lord has been provided by modern commentators, but entirely on the basis of outside sources. The very fact that without this outside
information James’s identity and role is unexplainable within Acts speaks volumes about how foreign the identification of James as the brother of the Lord is to Luke-Acts (sect. 5.3.4.4).

From a historical perspective, the most significant text with which our identification of James must be compared is Galatians where the name James occurs three times (1:19; 2:9, 12). In the first of these instances “James” is identified as “the brother of the Lord” and, resultantly, although the other two references do not identify “James” in the same way, they are usually taken to also refer to the brother of the Lord (sect. 7.2.2). It is this reading of Galatians that has, in our view, colored all modern interpretations of James’s identity and role in Acts as well (sect. 4.1). That is, the stature of James in Gal 2:9, 12 is similar to the stature of James in Acts 15:13 and 21:18 and therefore, so the reasoning goes, the same person is likely in view (sect. 4.1). Furthermore, if the James in Gal 2:9, 12 is identified as the brother of the Lord (as in Gal 1:19), then so should the James of Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18.

But if in Acts James is certainly not identified as the brother of the Lord, then what of Galatians? Without the commonly perceived agreement of Acts, the identification of James the brother of the Lord in 1:19 with the “pillar” James of 2:9 and 12 is not nearly as secure. It is true that the name “James” connects them, but this is where the similarities end (sect. 7.2.2). Paul clarifies in Gal 1:19 which James he means, indicating that Paul does not expect his readers, without this additional identification, to think of the brother of the Lord. A logical corollary follows: a name-only reference to “James” might have led the audience to think of some other James and not the brother of the Lord. That is to say, there are intrinsic reasons within Galatians itself that cast doubt on the view that the “James” of 2:9, 12 is the brother of the Lord (sect. 7.2.2). But if this is the case, then who is he?

We agree with the scholarly consensus that the same James is in view in Gal 2:9, 12 and in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 (sect. 7.2.4). However, we disagree as to his identity. In our view, the identity of James as the son of Alphaeus in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 is intrinsically very secure (ch. 4). Conversely, in our view the identity of James as the brother of the Lord in Gal 2:9, 12 is intrinsically not secure (sect. 7.2.2). Therefore, if the same James is meant in Gal 2:9, 12, and Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18, then it is more likely that in both he is James the son of Alphaeus (sect. 7.2.4). Furthermore, nothing in other early Christian literature, surveyed in chs. 7 and 8, cast (significant) doubts on these conclusions.

A Brief NT History of the Three Important Jameses of Primitive Christianity

If the central findings of this dissertation are correct, it is necessary to construct a new historical picture of the roles of the three prominent Jameses of the NT. We will briefly sketch such a “history” here. With regard to James the son of Zebedee nothing has changed because none of the passages usually attributed to him have been in question in this dissertation. However, the new portrait of the brother of the Lord is markedly different from any found in previous literature—mainly in that several passages that others have attributed to him are here attributed to James of Alphaeus. In our version of the history of the Jameses among the post-resurrection believing community, James of Alphaeus steps into center stage. For demonstration purposes, the summary of the Jameses below is presented in a manner that assumes as true the findings of this dissertation:

According to Acts 1:13, two of Jesus’s twelve original disciples were named James (cf. Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16). One of them is James the son of Zebedee (cf. Matt 4:21; 10:2; 17:01; Mark 1:19, 29; 5:37; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 5:10; 8:51; 9:28, 54). In the lists of the
Twelve found in the Gospels he is named either second after Simon Peter who is always listed first (Mark 3:17), or third after Peter’s brother Andrew (Matt 10:2; Luke 6:13).591 In Acts 1:13, he is listed third, after Peter and John and before Andrew: “Peter and John and James and Andrew.” His prominence in these lists of disciples, who are also called “apostles” in some cases (Matt 10:2; Luke 6:13), including Acts (cf. 1:26), may suggest his relative importance among the Twelve, or at least recall the fact that the sons of Zebedee were, after Peter and Andrew, among the first disciples of Jesus (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20, 29; Luke 5:1–11). Because James is usually listed before John in the Gospels, he is probably the older of the two. In Acts 1:13, however, he is listed third, after John, probably because in Acts John functions prominently as the missionary partner of Peter (cf. Acts 3:1, 3, 4, 11; 4:1, 3, 7, 14, 19, 23; 8:14, 17, 25).

Together with Peter, Andrew, and John, James the son of Zebedee formed part of the inner circle of Jesus’s Twelve disciples in that they accompanied Jesus on some significant occasions to the exclusion of the other members of the Twelve.592 These are (1) the event of the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2 593; Luke 9:28), (2) the miraculous resuscitation of Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51); (3) Jesus’s discussion regarding the destruction of the Temple (Mark 13:3); and (4) Jesus’s prayers at Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). The sons of Zebedee may have over-estimated their significance among the Twelve as they unsuccessfully asked Jesus for the two privileged “seats” in his glory (Matt 20:20; Mark 10:35–41). James the son of Zebedee does not figure individually in any NT literature that regards the time after Jesus’s resurrection, with the possible exception of 1 Cor 15:7, where the risen Christ appears to a further unidentified “James.” Acts 12:2 records, somewhat in a parenthetical comment, that Herod killed James the son of Zebedee.

The second of the Twelve named James is identified as “the son of Alphaeus.” He is always mentioned in the lists of the Twelve (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 14:15), including the one provided in Acts 1:13, but in contrast to James the son of Zebedee, his individual role receives no further mention in the Gospels. James of Alphaeus emerges as an important decision-maker at the Jerusalem church at a somewhat later time in connection with the growing Gentile mission of Paul. In Acts 12:17 the author hints at James’s future importance (to the narrative) by naming him as a recipient of the report that Peter was released from prison. At the Jerusalem Meeting of Acts 15, where the “apostles and elders” gather to decide whether the increasing number of Gentile believers should be circumcised, James of Alphaeus stands out with Peter as a primary decider (Acts 15:13–21). James essentially agrees with Peter in that the burden of circumcision and the Law should not be placed on Gentiles (Acts 15:19); however, he proposes a number of restrictions that Gentiles should adhere to (Acts 15:20).

Gal 2:9 names a James as one of three “pillars” among the Jerusalem church whom Paul spoke with regarding whether the Law and circumcision should be imposed upon Gentiles. The portraits of Acts 15:6–21 and Gal 2:1–10 regarding James of Alphaeus correspond in several ways: (1a) He is close with Peter and John (i.e., within the group of Twelve); (1b) Peter and James are both based in Jerusalem; (2a) James emerges as an important decider specifically with regard to the circumcision question; (2b) Unlike Peter, no other aspect of James’s influence or role is emphasized either by Luke or Paul; (3) Peter and James of Alphaeus agree with Paul in that the Gentile believers should not be circumcised. However, both Luke and Paul mention a

591 In Acts 1:13, James is listed before Andrew, but after his brother John.
592 This inner circle is sometimes reduced to Peter, James, and John, Andrew being omitted, as in Matt 10:2; 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:32; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28
593 Mark here emphasizes that Jesus brought only Peter, James, and John, and not the others (κατ’ ιδίαν μόνους).
(dissimilar) reservation with regard to James’s acceptance that Gentiles should not be circumcised. In Acts, this reservation involved certain restrictions made on the Gentiles (Acts 15:20) that the entire church agreed to (Acts 15:28–29), whereas in Gal 2:11–14 Paul mentions an incident where “certain (men) from James” would not eat with Gentiles—resulting in Peter’s withdrawal from table fellowship also. Although the stories are different, both suggest that James of Alphaeus had a high concern for the Law. This, coupled with the fact that he was one of the Twelve, adequately explains why both in Acts 15 and Gal 2 he, alongside Peter, is the most significant decider regarding the circumcision question.

In Acts 21:18–25 Paul visits James, and the Jerusalem elders also gather. That James alone is named probably signifies his standing in Jerusalem at this time. The question of tensions between Gentile believers and Jews reappears (Acts 21:20–21). A solution is suggested to erase Paul of the charge of antinomianism (Acts 21:23–26), which however results in his arrest (Acts 21:27). It is noteworthy that in Acts 21 James is the only member of the Twelve mentioned by name and that the thousands of believers in Jerusalem are said to be “zealous” for the Law. This seems to reinforce the likelihood that James was an advocate of Law-observance among the Jewish Christians (Acts 21:20). James of Alphaeus is likely the author of the epistle of James and, if so, the letter is an invaluable source for understanding his thought. Concern for Law-observance appears in limited sections of this epistle (2:8–13, 14–26), but does not characterize the epistle per se.

The third notable James of the NT is “the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19). This is likely the same James as found in the list of Jesus’s brothers in Mark 6:3 (and Matt 13:55). In the Gospels, the family of Jesus remains in contact with him during his ministry (e.g. John 2:12; 7:3–6); however, this relationship is portrayed as strained (Mark 3:20–35; Matt 13:55–57; John 7:3–6). Luke’s portrait of the brothers of Jesus is the most neutral in that the visit of Jesus’s mother and brothers to Jesus (Luke 8:19–21) is much less antagonistic than that found in Mark 3:20–35 and Jesus’s remark regarding the rejected prophet is (unlike in Mark 6:3–4 and Matt 13:55–57) not directed at his immediate household (Luke 4:24). In Acts 1:14 the mother and brothers of Jesus are found among Jesus followers, but neither in Luke or Acts are any of the brothers named. John 7:3–6 portrays the brothers of the Lord as non-believers.

Three instances in the NT suggest some later importance for James and the other brothers of the Lord within the church. In Gal 1:19, Paul “sees” James the brother of the Lord during his two week stay with Peter. He is clearly someone worth mentioning and perhaps someone the Galatian audience might know. In 1 Cor 9:5 the brothers of the Lord are mentioned as examples of traveling missionaries who take their wives along, but James is not mentioned by name. The last hint of James’s influence is from the epistle of Jude in which the author identifies himself as a brother of James (1:1; cf. Mark 6:3). If James the brother of the Lord is meant, it suggests that he was better-known among this particular believing community than was Jude. Thus, the information regarding the extent of influence that the brothers of the Lord had in the Christian communities is scant. 1 Cor 9:5 and Jude 1:1 make plain that they were known, as does Josephus (Ant. 20.200) who, as a side note, refers to the death of James. The letter of Jude is the only significant source for understanding the thought of Jesus’s brothers.
What Happened to James of Alphaeus?

In this concluding section of the dissertation, we will indicate that the now common way of identifying “James” in Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 2:9 and 12 as the brother of the Lord rather than as James of Alphaeus is a relatively new development of the last two centuries. We will sketch some steps of the historical “evolution” of the ways in which the Jameses have been identified after the first century. First, James of Alphaeus comes to be known as “the Just.” This is indicated most clearly in Clement of Alexandria where he identifies James “the Just” with the second member of the Twelve with that name (sect. 8.1.2.2). This epithet “the Just” accords well with what is known of James in Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25 as a continuing advocate of the Law (sect. 5.3.3) and therefore it is conceivable that James of Alphaeus came to be known as “the Just” already during his lifetime; however, this cannot be proved on the basis of NT literature.

Second, “James the Just” becomes a more common way to identify James of Alphaeus than the name itself. In second and early third century traditions regarding the Jameses (ch. 8), the most common identification alongside the name “James” is “the Just” (Clement of Alexandria, Hegesippus, Gos. Thom., I and 2 Apoc. Jas., Gos. Heb.). Even sources that apparently have James of Alphaeus in view (sects. 8.1.2.2; 8.6.2.2) refer to him simply as “the Just.”

Third, in some second and third century sources the identity of “James the Just” is combined with that of “the brother of the Lord.” However, this equating of “James the Just” with “the brother of the Lord” is not as common as perhaps previously thought (sect. 8.7). Clement of Alexandria and Gos. Thom. refer to “James the Just,” but do not describe him as the brother of the Lord (sect. 8.7.1). Ap. Jas. refers simply to “James” who is numbered among the Twelve, but does not refer to him either as “the Just” or as “the brother of the Lord” (sect. 8.7.1). Hegesippus and Gos. Heb. do refer to James as Jesus’s brother, but Hegesippus apparently considers James a cousin of Jesus, as does Jerome (sect. 8.7.1). I and 2 Apoc. Jas refer to James as a so-called, or spiritual brother of the Lord, but not as an actual brother (sect. 8.7.1).

Fourth, Jerome solidifies the viewpoint that James of Alphaeus (a.k.a “James the Just”) is also James the brother of the Lord (sect. 8.1.3). For Jerome, “brother” actually means “cousin” or “kinsman” (sect. 8.1.3). It is worth noting that this conclusion was not reached on the basis of a strictly historical inquiry, but rather for the purpose of protecting the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary (sect. 8.1.3). However, unlike many of the second and third century sources that refer to the Jameses without recourse to NT texts, Jerome maintains that his viewpoint is the correct interpretation of the NT evidence.

Fifth, this interpretation of the NT survives for about 1,500 years until the early 19th century. With reference to Acts 15:13, the Geneva Study Bible (1560 C.E.) adds a comment identifying James as the son of Alphaeus, who is called the Lord’s brother. Also, the 18th century commentaries of John Wesley (1703–1791 C.E.) and Joseph Benson (1748–1821 C.E.) maintain this view without any suggestion that other views were common. However, Adam Clarke (c. 1760–1832), in his comments on Gal 1:19, mentions that “some” suggest that there were three Jameses (son of Zebedee, son of Alphaeus, brother of the Lord). However, Clarke himself still maintains the view that the son of Alphaeus is the brother of the Lord.

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We wish to emphasize again that the viewpoint that James of Alphaeus (who is also the brother of the Lord) is meant in both Acts 12:17 ff. and Galatians 2:9, 12 appears to have been the “normal” viewpoint among Christian scholars from at least c. 400 (and perhaps earlier) to c. 1800 C.E. We would speculate that the reason for its long standing among Protestants also (i.e. for reasons other than its reflection on Mary) was that it provided an apparent harmonization of Galatians and Acts.596

Sixth, in the beginning of the 19th Century the equation that the son of Alphaeus was also the “brother” of the Lord is re-examined. We have not been able to determine who originated this development, but find, for example, that Hermann Olshausen, commenting on Gal 1:19 in the early 19th Century, rejects the notion that the brothers of the Lord might also be members of the Twelve on the basis of John 7:5.597 Therefore for Olshausen, the “James” of Gal 1:19 is the brother of the Lord, but not James of Alphaeus. Olshausen then applies this same identification to the references to “James” in Gal 2:9, 12, as well as in Acts.598 Henry Alford (1857) and others follow suit.599

Whereas it was correct for Olshausen to distinguish James the brother of the Lord from James of Alphaeus, it is curious that the idea that only one “James” is meant in all of these passages of Galatians and Acts remained intact; in this regard he remained faithful to the Hieronymian system of identification. In any case, the import for exegesis is that James is thus identified as the brother of the Lord in all of the references in Galatians and Acts (and consequently at every instance where the name occurred without further explanation, both in the NT as well as later Christian literature). In our view, one incorrect way of identifying the Jamess is thus “solved” by the introduction of another.

Throughout the 19th century, this view becomes more widespread. The Philip Schaff Religious Encyclopaedia published in 1891 lists various scholars in favor of each view of the identities of James. At that time, the view that James the brother of the Lord is meant in Acts 12:17ff. and all of the verses of Galatians has the largest collection of names in its support.600 However, a minority of scholars continue to hold the Hieronymian theory. The Encyclopaedia also notes, however, that two scholars, Stier and Wieseler, refer “Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18, Gal. ii. 9–12 to James the son of Alphaeus.”601 In any case, the identification of James as the brother of the Lord in Acts 12:17ff. becomes the prevalent theory and James of Alphaeus consequently becomes an almost forgotten figure of early Christianity.

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596 John Calvin is a notable early dissenter from the Hieronymian view of the Jamess. In his comments on Gal 1:19 he holds that the James in view is the son of Alphaeus, but not a brother of Jesus in any of the previously proposed manners (i.e. actual brother; the son of Joseph by an earlier marriage; a cousin of Jesus). Actually, Calvin gives no explanation as to why Paul would call James of Alphaeus “the brother of the Lord” in Gal 1:19. Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians (Trans. William Pringle; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 44.


598 Olshausen, Biblical Commentary, 28, 40. Olshausen refers to Acts 15:13 specifically, but we may assume that he would also include the other references to James (12:17; 21:18).


600 Philip Schaff, ed. A Religious Encyclopaedia (3rd ed.; vol. 2; New York: Funk & Wagnalis, 1891), 1140

601 Schaff, Encyclopaedia, 1140; Karl Georg Wieseler, Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Galater (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1859), 80–84. I have been unable to find the relevant writings of Stier.
We have extensively argued in this dissertation that James of Alphaeus is clearly the James meant by the narrator in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18. James the brother of the Lord is nowhere in Acts identified as such. The brother of the Lord is identified in Gal 1:19; however, there is no necessity intrinsic to Galatians to identify the James of Gal 2:9, 12 also as the brother of the Lord. In fact, the dissimilarities of description suggest that another James may be meant. On the basis of a comparison with Acts, this esteemed “pillar” James of Galatians 2:9, 12 can be identified as James of Alphaeus—like Peter and John, a member of the Twelve.


SUMMARY

Acts 12:17 is the central verse of this doctoral thesis: “He [Peter] motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, ‘Tell this to James and to the believers.’ Then he left and went to another place” (NRSV). The “James” mentioned in this verse (and in Acts 15:13 and 21:18) is normally identified as James, the brother of the Lord. The passing reference of Peter to James in Acts 12:17 is usually taken as an indication of James’s leadership role in the Jerusalem church. However, James is not identified as the brother of the Lord anywhere in Luke-Acts; the brothers of the Lord are mentioned as a group in Acts 1:14, but their names are not. The identification of James as the brother of the Lord, therefore, derives from outside sources—mainly the epistle to the Galatians (Gal 1:19 in combination with 2:9, 12).

The aim of this dissertation is to re-examine the intended depiction of “James” as a character within the larger narrative of Luke-Acts—first and foremost without recourse to outside sources. We propose that by using the evidence of Luke-Acts alone an intrinsically more coherent and complete picture of James as an Acts character can be constructed than has appeared in previous scholarship. This reconstruction takes up Part One of the dissertation. A secondary (historical) aim is to compare this literary portrait to other NT and second (and early third) century Christian literature to determine its historical plausibility (Part Two).

Chapter One: Does Peter Leave Jerusalem at Acts 12:17?

The first three chapters critically interact with previous interpretations of the role of James in Acts—interpretations that are all based on the identification of him as the brother of the Lord. A common explanation for the passing reference to James in Acts 12:17 is that (a) Peter has to leave Jerusalem because of Herod’s persecution (Acts 12:1) and (b) his instruction to “tell these things to James” indicates that James is now to assume leadership in Peter’s stead.

Chapter One critically examines whether (in Luke’s portrayal) Peter leaves Jerusalem in Acts 12:17. An examination of the wording of Peter’s departure in Acts 12:17 (ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη) does not necessitate that Peter leave the city of Jerusalem (sect. 1.2.1). That Peter “went to another place” (ἐπερεύτων τόπος) may simply mean another place in or near Jerusalem (sect. 1.2.2) for τόπος is not normally used by Luke as a substitute for (another) “city” (πόλις) or ”region” (χώρα). The (supposed) departure of Peter is related to the notion that in Acts 12:19 Herod conducts a (city-wide) search for Peter (sect. 1.3). Central to this is the term ἐπιζητέω which is translated as a “search” in some Bible translations, but which in light of other Acts passages containing the same verb is more likely to mean “seek” in this context. That is, in Acts 12:19 Herod—who is still ignorant of Peter’s escape from the prison cell—seeks for the captive so that he can be brought to him. If Herod does not conduct a “search” for Peter, there is no (narrative) need for Peter to leave the city.

Sect. 1.6 examines the likelihood that Peter left Jerusalem by comparing Peter’s known geographical whereabouts in Acts with that of other major Acts characters. When a character in Luke’s narrative drops from the narrative spotlight for a time, that character will as a rule later be found in the same geographical place (i.e. city) where they were “dropped.” Sects. 1.6.1–7 list the movements and whereabouts of several Acts characters to illustrate this point. Because Peter is found in Jerusalem again in Acts 15:7, after the intervening material of chs. 13–14, it is likely that Luke meant that he remained in the city all along.
Chapter Two: Is Leadership Transferred from Peter and the Apostles to James and the Elders at Acts 12:17?

The majority interpretation of Peter’s and James’s roles in Acts 12:17 has been that Peter (with the Twelve) will no longer be the main leader of the Jerusalem church and that James (the brother of the Lord) now steps in to fill his place. Our findings in Chapter One—that Peter is not portrayed as leaving Jerusalem—argue against this viewpoint. Furthermore, this viewpoint tends to overemphasize Peter’s (and the Twelve’s) disappearance from the Acts narrative at 12:17 (sect. 2.1.1); in fact, Peter (and the Twelve with him) is still a key player in the very next narrative to take place in Jerusalem—the “Jerusalem Council” (Acts 15).

This interpretation of a leadership transfer at Acts 12:17 does not fit well within the larger narrative of Luke-Acts for several reasons: First, for Peter to unilaterally appoint a new leader would be in stark contrast with the collegial decision-making found elsewhere in Acts (sect. 2.2). Second, the appointment of new leaders in Luke-Acts (Luke 6:12–16; Acts 1:16–22; 6:1–4; 13:1–3) usually contain the motifs of prayer (the guidance of God), of choosing the new leaders from among others, and of “finalization” whereby the new leaders clearly step into their new roles among the congregation (sect. 2.3). None of these motifs are found in Acts 12:17 and therefore this verse does not match Luke’s other descriptions of leadership transition.

Third, the idea that Peter must leave Jerusalem at Acts 12:17 and abdicate his leadership role misses the victorious tone of the narrative in Acts 12:1–25, and in Luke-Acts as a whole (sect. 2.4). The point of the narrative is that Peter “wins” and Herod “loses.” It is the miracle story regarding Peter’s release that Peter asks James to be told about in Acts 12:17 (sect. 2.7). The interpretations regarding leadership changes must therefore be found “between the lines” of what the author actually states.

Fifth, in other Acts narratives the Twelve apostles as a whole never leave Jerusalem (sect. 2.5). Even during the “great persecution” of Acts 8:1, the Twelve remain in Jerusalem. The missionary work suggested for the Twelve in Acts 1:8 is never realized in Acts. Other NT evidence suggests that Peter visited Antioch and elsewhere, but Acts does not. Therefore, to discern in Acts 12:17 the time when the apostles left for their missionary work is to conclude without the support of Acts itself that there ever was such a time.

Sixth, perhaps the most decisive evidence against the viewpoint of a leadership transition from Peter and the Twelve to James in Acts 12:17 is that the Twelve are still fully functioning leaders at the “Jerusalem Council” (Acts 15). In relation to the “Council” the Twelve are listed six times before the elders (15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4), suggesting their continuing importance (sect. 2.6.1). Therefore, the idea of a leadership transition at Acts 12:17 seeks to explain the naming of James, but does this poorly in our estimation; many more narrative problems and questions arise than are solved by this line of interpretation.

Chapter Three: Is James the Main Leader of the Jerusalem Church from Its Inception?

John Painter explains the reference to James in Acts 12:17 by claiming that James was already the main leader of the church at the time; that is, Peter reports to the leader, James, what had taken place (sect. 3.1.1). Painter bases this viewpoint almost entirely on outside evidence and, to a large extent, on evidence from the second and third centuries C.E. Painter argues that James was the leader of the Jerusalem church from its “inception”—that is, instead of Peter and
the Twelve. Painter approaches what is said (and not said) regarding James and Peter from two perspectives: First, he claims that Peter is not in Acts portrayed as a leader of the Jerusalem Community, but is more of a traveling missionary; although not stated in Acts, James may have been the community’s leader all along. Second, the author of Acts is uncomfortable with what James represents (theologically) and therefore attempts to hide his leadership in some ways; however, due to the fame and influence of James he appears in some narratives (12:17; 15:13; 21:18).

This historical reconstruction is clearly at odds with the narrative portrayal of Peter and the Twelve in Luke-Acts. In Luke-Acts, the Twelve are witnesses to Jesus’s life and are his closest disciples (sect. 3.2.1). In Luke 22:29–30 Jesus assigns to them leadership positions in his kingdom (i.e. the kingdom of Israel). Furthermore, the Twelve are unique witnesses to Jesus’s resurrection (Acts 12:1–11) and after his ascension they clearly lead the Jerusalem church (sect. 3.2.4). Conversely, James the brother of the Lord is not described in any such role (sect. 3.2.5).

Therefore, Painter’s explanation for the naming of James in Acts 12:17 is at odds with the entire preceding narrative of Luke-Acts. Painter’s explanation raises many more internal narrative problems than it solves.

Chapter Four: Which James Is Luke Referring to?

Chs. 1–3 investigated the previous explanations given for the naming of James in Acts 12:17 and note the narrative problems that arise from these explanations. In Chapter Four we examine the foundation on which all of these interpretations are built—the identification of James as the brother of the Lord. As noted above, James is not anywhere in Luke-Acts identified as such, and yet this is currently by far the prevalent viewpoint (sect. 4.1). This identification hails from Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, where Paul refers explicitly to “James the brother of the Lord” in 1:19. The “James” mentioned in Gal 2:9, 12 is then also identified as the brother of the Lord. Due to similarities of name and stature between the James mentioned in Gal 2:9, 12 and the James mentioned in Acts 15:13 and 21:18, the James of Acts is therefore also identified as the brother of the Lord. That identification then also counts for James in Acts 12:17.

To import this identification to Acts does not seem prima facie problematic because the author does not further identify the “James” of Acts 12:17. However, a close inspection of Luke’s literary methods, and especially those of introducing and distinguishing named characters suggests that this is internally a very difficult identification within Luke-Acts. We raise two primary arguments as to why James (in Acts 12:17) is not meant by the author to be the brother of the Lord and, by the same token, is meant to be James of Alphaeus (mentioned in Acts 1:13). First, Luke carefully distinguishes characters with the same name from each other by means of additional information (such as an additional name) where confusion between characters might be possible (sect. 4.2). On the other hand, Luke only gives additional names for characters who share one or more of their names with other Luke-Acts characters. This suggests that Luke is not concerned to distinguish the characters of Luke-Acts from persons outside of his writings, but only to evade confusion within the narrative. Before Acts 12:17, two “Jameses” have been mentioned—both members of the Twelve (Acts 1:13). One of them, James the son of Zebedee, dies at Acts 12:2 and therefore Luke would have no need to distinguish James of Alphaeus from anyone else at Acts 12:17—he can simply refer to him as “James.”

Second, if Acts 12:17 is a reference to James the brother of the Lord, then this would be the first time he is named in the entire narrative of Luke-Acts. To determine the likelihood of
this, we list every instance in Luke-Acts where named characters (117 of them) appear in the narrative for the first time (sect. 4.3). We find that at the first appearance of 111 of these 117 named characters Luke introduces them to the audience by means of some brief description (sometimes as simple as “a certain one”). In this way the entry of a new character into the narrative is almost always clearly marked for the benefit of Luke’s audience. On the other hand, it is normal for Luke to refer to characters only by name after they have been introduced into the narrative earlier—even if they have not been named in the narrative for many chapters. Thus, as a rule, a character in Luke-Acts referred to by name only (such as is the case in Acts 12:17) has been introduced into the narrative earlier. With reference to James in Acts 12:17, who is mentioned there only by name, these findings favor the viewpoint that James is not a new character. It is far more likely, on the basis of the internal evidence of Luke-Acts, that the James of Acts 12:17 is the previously named James of Alphaeus.

This identification of James arguably fits the larger narrative of Luke-Acts much better than the identification of James as the brother of the Lord (sect. 4.4). It would explain Peter’s connection with James of Alphaeus (sect. 4.4.1), and the fact that the narrator can refer to James without further legitimization (sect. 4.4.2). Therefore, on the basis of this identification we would suggest an explanation for the naming of James at Acts 12:17 different from those examined in chs. 1–3. James of Alphaeus will take on a more important personal role at the “Jerusalem Council” of Acts 15, and so Acts 12:17 is intended to allude to or “hint” at this—but without further explanation (sect. 4.5). Such foreshadowings (or prolepses) are characteristic of Lukan style. The naming of James of Alphaeus in Acts 12:17 serves a narrative purpose rather than a historically informative one.

Chapter Five: Is James the Primary Leader of the Jerusalem Church in Acts 15:13–21 and 21:18–25?

It is a common interpretation that by the time of the Jerusalem Council James is the main leader of the Jerusalem Church (sect. 5.1). However, this interpretation is based on the identification of James as the brother of the Lord. That is, if James appears as an important decision maker at the Council, but is not one of the Twelve, then his individual importance is accentuated all the more. The connotations of the wording of James’s “judgment” (v. 19) can be interpreted in various ways—either emphasizing James’s unique leadership role, or as emphasizing the individual nature of James’s judgment (5.2). Other notions regarding James’s position at the Council—such as that he is the chairman—rely on an individual scholar’s idea of the type of meeting envisioned. We would argue that the Jerusalem Council is not depicted by Luke as so formal as often suggested (sect. 5.3.1) and therefore the attribution of “chairmanship” to James is not justified. Other facets of the narrative that counterbalance the individual leadership role of James are, first, that Luke emphasizes corporate decision making (sect. 5.3.1.1), and second, that Peter is still depicted as holding authority at the Meeting (5.3.2).

We suggest that the identification of James as the son of Alphaeus is the key to correctly understanding James’s role at the Council from a narrative point of view. If James is the brother of the Lord, then this fact is never explained to the reader, nor is any reason given for why he is at the Council in the first place. On the other hand, if James is the son of Alphaeus, then his role makes sense: He has been previously identified to the reader (Acts 1:13) and as a member of the Twelve he is a member of the specific group to whom the question of circumcision was brought (Acts 15:6). His agreement with Peter (Acts 15:14) is not surprising since both are members of
the Twelve. He is able to offer a judgment regarding the Laws of Israel in line with Jesus’s promise to the Twelve (Luke 22:29–30). Therefore, no external information is needed to explain his role at the Council. However, if James is the brother of the Lord, all explanations for his role at the Council must rely almost entirely on outside sources for information.

In Acts 21:18–25 James is the only named Jerusalem leader with whom Paul confers (sect. 5.4). This accentuates his personal importance. As at the Jerusalem Council, James’s concern (and that of the elders) in Acts 21:18–25 is the Law and its application. In fact, the Law is the only matter with regard to which James exercises personal leadership in Acts.

Chapter Six: The Brothers of Jesus and the Twelve Apostles in the Gospels

The investigation of the historical plausibility of our narrative portrait of James in Acts (Part Two) is split into three chapters (6–8). We pay attention to the identification and portrayal of the various Jameses mentioned, as well as to the two pertinent groups—the Twelve and the brothers (or family) of the Lord. What sort of hints regarding future leadership roles are given of these individuals or groups?

Chapter Six concerns the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and John. James the brother of the Lord and James of Alphaeus are mentioned by name in Mark (3:18 and 6:3 respectively) and Matthew (10:3 and 10:55 respectively); however, the Gospel of John names neither. Furthermore, in all three Gospels the brothers of the Lord and the Twelve play some sort of role as groups. We find that none of these Gospels give a positive portrayal of the relationship of Jesus with his brothers during his ministry (sects. 6.1–3). In line with this, no suggestions are given for any future leadership role for the brothers of Jesus among Jesus’s followers.

In contrast, all three Gospels depict the Twelve as the closest followers of Jesus. In Mark and Matthew, the Twelve have a unique role as Jesus’s disciples (Mark 6:13–19; Matt 10:1–4) and similarly in John, when other disciples leave Jesus, the Twelve continue to follow him (John 6:66–70). Therefore, the Twelve are portrayed as much more significant for Jesus and among Jesus’s followers than the brothers of the Lord. Although James of Alphaeus is not individually in spotlight in any of the Gospels, he is always included among the Twelve when the Twelve are named.

Chapter Seven: The Brothers of the Lord and the Twelve in the Epistles, in the Book of Revelation, and in Josephus

The name “James” appears only four times in the Pauline Epistles (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12), but only once is the James in view clearly identified (Gal 1:19). However, scholars commonly conclude that James the brother of the Lord is meant in all of these instances. In 1 Cor 15:7 a “James” is singled out as an individual to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared. He is not identified as the brother of the Lord and, in light of our reading of Luke-Acts, there is less reason than before to identify him as such.

From a historical perspective, the most significant text with which our identification of James must be compared is Galatians where the name James occurs three times (1:19; 2:9, 12). In the first of these instances “James” is identified as “the brother of the Lord” and, resultanty, although the other two references do not identify “James” in the same way, they are usually taken to also refer to the brother of the Lord (sect. 7.2.2). It is this reading of Galatians that has colored all modern interpretations of James’s identity and role in Acts as well (sect. 4.1). We
argue that Paul’s identification of James the brother of the Lord in 1:19 is necessary because otherwise the readers might think of another James. In fact, the portrait of the James in Gal 2:9, 12 differs significantly from that of Gal 1:19, suggesting that another James may be in view.

We agree with the scholarly consensus that the same James is in view in Gal 2:9, 12 and in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 (sect. 7.2.4). However, we disagree as to his identity. In our view, the identity of James as the son of Alphaeus in Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 is intrinsically very secure (ch. 4). Conversely, in our view the identity of James as the brother of the Lord in Gal 2:9, 12 is intrinsically not secure (sect. 7.2.2). Therefore, if the same James is meant in Gal 2:9, 12, and Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18, then it is likely that in these references he is the son of Alphaeus (sect. 7.2.4).

Chapter Eight: Second and Early Third Century Evidence Regarding the Jameses

As with the NT epistles, scholars of second and third century Christian literature commonly attribute all unspecified references to “James” to the brother of the Lord. Similarly, the nickname “James the Just” is usually thought to refer to the brother of the Lord. We argue that this equating of “James the Just” with “the brother of the Lord” is not as common or natural to these sources as previously thought (sect. 8.7). Clement of Alexandria and Gos. Thom. refer to “James the Just,” but do not describe him as the brother of the Lord (sect. 8.7.1). Ap. Jas. refers simply to “James” who is numbered among the Twelve, but does not refer to him either as “the Just” or as “the brother of the Lord” (sect. 8.7.1). Hegesippus and Gos. Heb. do refer to James as Jesus’s brother, but Hegesippus apparently consider James a cousin of Jesus, as does Jerome (sect. 8.7.1). 1 and 2 Apoc. Jas refer to James as a so-called, or spiritual brother of the Lord, but not as an actual brother (sect. 8.7.1). Jerome argues that James of Alphaeus (a.k.a “James the Just”) is also James the brother of the Lord (sect. 8.1.3). For Jerome, “brother” actually means “cousin” or “kinsman” (sect. 8.1.3). In short, there is little concrete evidence in second and third century Christian literature to contradict the findings of this dissertation in previous chapters and especially Clement of Alexandria can be taken to support our findings regarding James of Alphaeus.

Conclusions

In light of Luke’s literary methods, especially those of introducing new characters and distinguishing characters with the same name, it is most likely that the James of Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 is meant by the author to be James of Alphaeus and not James the brother of the Lord. To identify James as the son of Alphaeus also results in a far greater (internal) narrative coherence with regard to James’s role in Acts. He is one of the Twelve apostles, appointed by Jesus to lead. When this finding is compared to other NT documents, as well as Christian literature from the second and early third Centuries C.E., no compelling evidence is found to make it historically implausible.