

James ben Joseph

Do any of you have a “perfect” sibling? You know, the one who hardly ever gets into any trouble, the golden child of the family? Well, I should get the award. You see, Jesus was my older brother. We had the usual rivalries and disagreements. No, he didn’t do any miracles, but I guess with all the little brother things I did to annoy him, it might be considered a miracle he didn’t kill me. Just kidding – he would never break the law. But perhaps it was a temptation.

I resented that our parents let him do more and have more privileges, but it was mostly because he was older and trustworthy. Anyway, all younger siblings feel that way. Just like older ones think that the younger ones get away with too much.

When they took him to the temple at age 12, my mother tried to explain that he was special. I wondered because the bar Mitzvah was usually at 13. I had also gotten teased by neighbor kids whose parents told them that there was something wrong about his birth but I didn’t understand it.

He always seemed older than his age and was usually the peacemaker between me and the younger ones. When we were both teenagers, and I was tempted to do something that I knew was wrong, I could see that he had the same desires as I did, but he was always under control.

I resented everything he did. He excelled in learning the Torah and then in his apprenticeship to our father. But when he left home and began teaching, we all thought he was being presumptuous.

What really galled me is one time when he was with his followers – you really should be an official Rabbi to have genuine disciples – and mother and the whole family sent word that we wanted to see him. He said, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

I can see now that it was envy that prevented me from seeing the miracles and the profoundly insightful teachings until after he was crucified, buried and resurrected. Then I turned completely around and tried to make up for lost time. I’m not sure why, but I became the leader of the Jerusalem church. Maybe it was the family connection. I even wrote instructions to the believers who had been scattered because of the persecution. I wrote that suffering was not only normal, it was to be welcomed as beneficial to our spiritual maturation.

Everyone who comes to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Lamb of God, has to deal with his own personal pride and previous prejudice. It is hard to say, “I was wrong!” But it is the gateway to life and purpose. I want to see Him in His glorious Kingdom and hear Him say – not “sit on this throne next to me,” no, that is for others – but simply, “Well done, little brother.”

Matthew 12, Mark 3, Luke 8, John 2 and 7, Acts 15 & 21, James 1-5