

# THE BOOK OF JAMES

## (Introduction)

### Introduction

1. This epistle was written to Christians who were Jews "...living outside of Palestine, yet maintaining their religious observances and customs among the Gentiles" (ISBE; Vol. II; p. 855): "*To the twelve tribes who are of the Dispersion*" (1:1)
    - a. "Dispersion" is from the Greek word "DIASPORA" whose verb form means to "scatter abroad"
    - b. More than once in the history of the Jews, they had been scattered among the heathen or Gentile nations:
      - (1). *Assyria* (2 Kings 17:5ff.)
      - (2). *Babylon* (2 Kings 24:14)
      - (3). *Ptolemy I of Egypt* (322-285 B.C.) – dispersed to Alexandria; brought forth the demands and production of the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek.
      - (4). *Antiochus the Great* (223-187 B.C.) – removed from the Jewish communities in Mesopotamia and Babylon 2,000 families and settled them in Phrygia and Lydia (*Jos.*; *Ant. Xii*; 3;4).
      - (5). *Pompey* (63 B.C.) – after the capture of Jerusalem, he carried hundreds of Jews to Rome where they became slaves. Later they would obtain their freedom and civil rights.
      - (6). Substantial population of Jews in Asia Minor during the New Testament period (cf. I Pet. 1:1, Jn. 7:35).
  2. The Christians who were Jews were suffering severe trials (1:1:2)
  3. The poor among them were being persecuted by the rich among them (2:1-10, 5:1-6)
- I. AUTHOR OF THE BOOK:** "*James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (1:1)
- A. The New Testament mentions at least *three* who bore the name of *James*
    1. The son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21)
    2. The son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3, LK. 6:15)- probably also known as "the less" (Mk. 15:40, cf. Jn. 19:25)
    3. The brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55, Gal. 1:19)
  - B. It is commonly accepted to view James, the Lord's brother to be the author of the Book.
    1. James the son of Zebedee was put to death early in the church's history (A.D. 44). So he probably is not the author (cf. Acts 12:1-2)
    2. James the son of Alphaeus has stronger support being an apostle.
    3. James, the Lord's brother, became a strong influence in the early church at Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19, 2:9, Acts 15;13-21, 21:17-25)

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- a. An apostle – not as one of the twelve (cf. Acts 14:14, Rom. 16:7, I Cor. 15:7).
- b. Josephus says he was martyred about A.D. 62 , following the death of Festus and before the coming of his successor. (Ant.; xx; 9; 1).

**II. DATE OF THE BOOK**

- A. Approximately A.D. 45-49. One of the earliest New Testament books - written before the conference in Jerusalem (A.D. 50).
- B. It was probably written from Jerusalem – Scripture and tradition concurs in representing James as constantly residing in Jerusalem.

**III. THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK**

- A. Theme: Faith Made Practical- the Character of True Faith
  1. Proofs of faith: (J Sidlow Baxter, Explore the Book, p.288)
    - a. Proof 1 – Endurance of Temptation (chapter 1)
    - b. Proof 2 – Impartial Benevolence (chapter 2)
    - c. Proof 3 – Control of the Tongue(chapter 3)
    - d. Proof 4 – Godliness in All Things (chapter 4-6)
- B. Purpose:
  1. To help people become mature or “perfect” in Christ.
  2. To encourage brethren in the midst of trials and temptations (1:2-18)
  3. To set forth the character of true faith: working faith (2:14-26)
  4. James gives:
    - a. *Warnings*: Hearing the word and not doing it (1:22-27); Showing respect of persons (2:1-7); Partial obedience to Christ (2:18-23); False wisdom (3:13-18)
    - b. *Rebukes*: Worldliness and Covetousness (4:1-10); Gossip (4:11-12); Planning without God (4:13-17)
    - c. *Exhortations* – Encouragement: Be patient till the Lord’s coming (5:7-11); Be prayerful in times of joy and distress (5:13-18).

**IV. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK**

- I. Salutation (1:1)
- II. True faith endures temptation (1:2-18)
- III. True faith acts in accordance to the word (1:19-27)
- IV. True Faith Avoids discrimination (2:1-13)
- V. True Faith Avoids inactive profession (2:14-26)
- VI. True Faith Bridles the tongue (3:1-12)
- VII. True Faith Manifests Heavenly Wisdom (3:13-5:18)
  - A. In Spiritual living (3:13-4:10)
  - B. In proper relationship to law (4:11-12)

- C. In commercial plans (4:13-17)
- D. In employer-employee relationships (5:1-6)
- E. In Waiting For the Lord (5:7-11)
- F. In regards to Oaths (5:12)
- G. In Suffering (5:13-18)
- H. In converting erring brothers (5:19-20)

# JAMES – LESSON 1

## I. PRACTICAL FAITH : SEEING THROUGH UNTO REALITY (1:1-11)

- A. Salutation: Greeting – wishing joy (1:1)
  - 1. James – bondservant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 2. Recipients of Letter – twelve tribes which of the Dispersion.
  
- B. Seeing through temptations (1:2-4)
  - 1. Faith proven under fire worketh stedfastness.
  - 2. Stedfastness is an essential part of maturity.
  
- C. Seeing God as giver of wisdom (1:5-8).
  - 1. God gives liberally and upbraideth not.
  - 2. God gives wisdom to see through the trials.
  - 3. God gives wisdom to those who ask in faith – nothing doubting.
  - 4. The double-minded man does not receive from the Lord.
  
- D. Seeing through to the truly rich (1:9-11)
  - 1. Brother in low degree can rejoice in his high estate in the Lord.
  - 2. The rich can be humbled knowing that he and his riches quickly fade away.

### QUESTIONS:

- 1. Reflecting on the men named James in the New Testament, what does James' salutation in this letter say about the heart of the writer?
  
- 2. How is the word “temptations” used in verse 2?
  
- 3. Why should a Christian rejoice at his or her confrontation with temptations?
  
- 4. How does the need of “wisdom” in verse 5 fit the context?
  
- 5. What two characteristics of God should encourage us to ask God for the wisdom we lack?

6. What does it mean to “ask in faith”?
  
7. Describe the “double-minded” man by giving an example.
  
8. In verses 9-10, is God condemning rich people and justifying the poor?  
Explain your answer.
  
9. What reality should humble the rich?

## JAMES – LESSON 2

### II. PRACTICAL FAITH: UNDERSTANDING THE GIFTS AND ACTIONS OF GOD (1:12-18).

- A. The Lord promises and gives the crown of life (1:12)
  - 1. Promise is to the one who is approved successfully enduring trials – He is blessed.
  - 2. Promise is to those who love the Lord.
  
- B. The Lord does not entice men to sin (1:13).
  - 1. God cannot be tempted with evil.
  - 2. God tempts no man.
  
- C. Enticement to sin is of man's own lust (1:14-16)
  - 1. Temptation comes when one is drawn away by own lust and is enticed.
  - 2. Lust conceived brings forth death.
  - 3. Sin full grown brings forth death.
  - 4. Brethren warned not to be deceived.
  
- D. The Lord is the source of every good and perfect gift (1:17-18)
  - 1. The Father of lights – always consistent and faithful
  - 2. The Father has produced an exalted spiritual creation.
    - a. Of God's own will
    - b. by the word of truth.

### QUESTIONS:

- 1. The "crown" that God promises signifies:
  - (a). a "kingly" or "diadem" crown
  - (b). a "victor's" or "public honor" crown
  - (c). both a & b
  
- 2. What facts about the person accompanies the blessed state of receiving the crown of life?
  
- 3. What is the difference between the temptation talked about in verse 13 and that of verse 12?
  
- 4. Give two reasons why you cannot blame God for your sin?

5. At what point does temptation become sin?
  
6. What is the consequence of sin?  
Is it ALWAYS the consequence for EVERY sin?
  
7. Why did James have to warn the brethren about the source of sin?
  
8. Describe the character of the gifts of which God is the source?
  
9. Every \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ gift comes from  
\_\_\_\_\_. Describe further these gifts:
  
10. The source of these gifts is:
  - a. Science
  - b. Money
  - c. God
  
11. God is not only the source of these gifts but He is the source of  
\_\_\_\_\_.
  
12. What is the character of the “Father of lights”?
  
13. What place does God’s “own will” have in our spiritual new birth?
  
14. What does God use to bring us forth as a new creature?
  
15. What does God expect from his new spiritual creation?

## JAMES – LESSON 3

### III. PRACTICAL FAITH: PROPER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORD OF GOD AND RELIGION (1:19-27).

- A. We should be swift to hear (1:19-20)
  - 1. Be slow to speak.
  - 2. Be slow to wrath – such does not work the righteousness of God.
- B. We should receive the implanted word (1:22-25)
  - 1. Demands that we put away all filthiness and abundant wickedness.
  - 2. Demands that we receive the word with meekness.
  - 3. The word is able to save souls.
- C. We should be doers of the word and not hearers only (1:22-25).
  - 1. “*Hearers only*” delude self.
    - a. Like looking into a mirror and walking away forgetting of what manner of man we have seen.
  - 2. “*Hearers that worketh*” are blessed in their doing.
    - a. They look into the perfect law of liberty and continue the way therein dictated.
- D. We should practice true religion (1:26-27).
  - 1. Bridle the tongue.
  - 2. Watch over with assistance the orphans and widows.
  - 3. Keep oneself unspotted from the world.

### QUESTIONS:

1. When should we especially be conscious of being slow to speak and swift to hear?
2. What never works the righteousness of God?  
Why?
3. Where in man does the word of God do its work?
4. What can keep the word of God from wielding its saving and perfecting power?
5. Describe those whom God says will be blessed?
6. What makes our religion vain?





## JAMES – LESSON 4

- IV. **PRACTICAL FAITH: SHOW NO RESPECT OF PERSONS (2:1-13)**
- A. Nature of problem: Christians regarding the rich while dishonoring the poor (2:1-4).
    - 1. Giving rich man good place in the synagogue, while the poor man sits under your footstool.
    - 2. Brethren are making distinctions – becoming judges with evil thoughts.
  - B. Christians exhorted to think about their actions in dishonoring the poor (2:5-6a).
    - 1. God chose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith.
    - 2. God chose them that are poor as to the world to be heirs of the kingdom.
      - a. A promise to them that love God.
  - C. Christians exhorted to think about their actions in showing special regard towards the rich (2:6b-7).
    - 1. The oppress Christians – drag them before the judgment seats.
    - 2. They blaspheme the honorable name by which Christians are called.
  - D. Fulfilling the royal law (2:8)
    - 1. Loving thy neighbor as thyself.
    - 2. In doing so, ye do well.
  - E. We will be judged by a law of liberty (2:9-13)
    - 1. Sin in one part of law – guilty of all.
    - 2. Judgment without mercy to them who show no mercy.
    - 3. Mercy glorieth against judgment.

### QUESTIONS:

1. What all is involved in “*holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ*”?
2. What action can never fit with our profession of Christ?
3. How were the Christians showing *respect of persons*?  
Can this be done in our assemblies today? (Explain why or why not.)
4. What riches has God chosen the poor to have?

5. How do we know that James is not making a blanket *commendation* for being poor?
  
6. What were the rich doing with to the Christians?
  
7. What is the “*royal law*” ?  
Why is this law “*royal*” ?
  
8. What traps can we fall into when we think wrongly concerning “*the law*”?
  
9. By what standard will we be judged?
  
10. Explain why manifesting mercy in this life is so important?

## **JAMES – LESSON 5**

### **V. PRACTICAL FAITH: ONLY EFFECTIVE THROUGH WORKS (2:14-26)**

- A. Man's faith without works is dead (2:14-20, 26).
  - 1. No profit – cannot save
  - 2. Illustration: mere talk does not clothe and feed the needy.
  - 3. By works faith is shown.
  - 4. Illustration of faith apart from works: Demons believe that God is one and shudder.
  - 5. Illustration: faith without works is like the body without the spirit – body is dead.
- B. Man's faith with works justifies (2:21-25).
  - 1. Abraham was justified by works in offering up Isaac.
    - a. Faith wrought with works.
    - b. Faith was made perfect.
    - c. Genesis 15:6 was fulfilled.
    - d. He was called the friend of God.
  - 2. Rahab, the harlot, was justified by works in receiving the messengers of God and sending them secretly away.

### **QUESTIONS:**

- 1. James' discussion on faith is considering:
  - (a). the faith of a saved Christian, not the faith of a sinner.
  - (b). the essential principle of saving faith.
  - (c). the faith that should be praised, but not considered essential to salvation.
- 2. A dead faith is a non-existing faith. (T) (F).
- 3. How do we manifest our faith in God?
- 4. What two illustrations are given to show that one can have a "dead faith"?
- 5. Show how James' consideration of Abraham's justification of faith does not contradict Paul's discussion of his justifying faith in Romans 4.
- 6. When was Genesis 15:6 fulfilled?



## **JAMES – LESSON 6**

### **VI. PRACTICAL FAITH: THE USE AND CONTROL OF THE TONGUE (3:1-12)**

- A. The hasty desire to be recognized as a teacher should be tempered (3:1, cf. Matt. 23:7,8).
  - 1. Heavier or stricter judgment is upon the teacher.
  
- B. Being able to avoid stumbling in word is a characteristic of the perfect man – mature to control the whole body (3:2).
  
- C. The tongue is small, but powerful (3:3-5a).
  - 1. Small bridles turn big horses – as man wills.
  - 2. Small rudder turns big ships- as the steersman wills.
  - 3. The tongue is a little member that boasts great things.
  
- D. The tongue is wild and uncontrolled (3:5b-8)
  - 1. It is like a small fire that kindles much wood.
  - 2. The varied potential for evil spreads to all.
    - a. Source or influence of such evil is Hell - set on fire by Hell.
  - 3. While mankind has tamed the animal kingdom, he cannot tame the tongue.
    - a. The tongue remains as a restless evil ready any moment to unleash its poison.
    - b. Full of deadly poison.
  
- E. From the same mouth the tongue is blessing the Lord and Father and cursing man (3:9-12)
  - 1. This ought not to be.
  - 2. Sweet and bitter water do not come from the same source or fountain.
  - 3. Fig tree cannot yield olives – Vine cannot yield figs.
  - 4. Salt water cannot yield sweet water.

### **QUESTIONS:**

- 1. If we follow James' exhortation, in light of 2 Tim. 2:2,, can we excuse ourselves from teaching?
  
- 2. What is exactly the problem relating to teaching that James wants his readers to consider?
  
- 3. Explain why teaching should not be entered into hastily?

4. What is implied in 3:2 about sins of the tongue?
5. In 3:2, define “perfect”?
6. How does man and his tongue relate to the illustrations of bridles and ship rudders?
7. What is meant by the tongue “setting on fire the wheel of nature”?
8. From what source does the defiling tongue receive its power?  
How does this source work?
9. What is meant in verse 8 by not being able to “tame” the tongue?
10. How does your answer of question 9, like James’ statement, CONTRAST with what man has done in the animal kingdom?
11. What “ought not” brethren do, which nature “cannot” do?

## JAMES – LESSON 7

### VII. PRACTICAL FAITH: MANIFESTING TRUE WISDOM (3:13-18)

- A. True wisdom is demonstrated in the works of one's life (3:13).
  - 1. By one's good manner of life
  - 2. By one's meekness
  
- B. Earthly wisdom is the source of faction (3:14-16).
  - 1. If you have jealousy and faction (self-seeking ambition)- glory not.
  - 2. Earthly wisdom is sensual and devilish – not true wisdom from above.
  - 3. Confusion and every vile deed accompany jealousy and faction.
  
- C. The character of true wisdom that is from above: (3:17-18).
  - 1. First, it is *pure* – Holy.
  - 2. Then,
    - a. *Peaceable* – harmonious with others.
    - b. *Gentle* – Kind, equitable
    - c. *Easy to be entreated* – easily persuaded.
    - d. *Full of mercy* – outward manifestation of compassion for another's infirmity.
    - e. *Good fruits* – beneficial action
    - f. *Without variance* – no partiality.
    - g. *Without hypocrisy* – no pretence.
  - 3. Those who make peace – sow peace which yields righteousness as a fruit.

#### QUESTIONS:

- 1. Why is a truly “*understanding*” mind important in our life before God and others?
  
- 2. How will true wisdom manifest itself?
  
- 3. How will earthly wisdom manifest itself?
  
- 4. Explain the two adjectives describing “devilish” wisdom:
  
  
- 5. What does “faction” mean?  
What sin is connected with it?  
Explain why you would find the two together:



6. Why does the cause of Christ suffer when its representatives manifest “faction”?
  
7. What will the wisdom that is from above be FIRST?
  
8. *“I have sinned and in danger of losing my soul.”* What characteristics of wisdom need to step up and help me escape eternity in Hell?
  
9. *“Two members of the local church are at odds with one another”.* What characteristics of wisdom need to be at the forefront to help in achieving unity?
  
- 10, What is the fruit of the peacemaker?

## **JAMES: LESSON 8**

### **VIII. PRACTICAL FAITH: KNOWING THE CAUSE AND REMEDY OF CONFLICTS (4:1-10)**

- A. Continual fighting comes from seeking to satisfy fleshly desires contrary to God's way (4:1-3).
  - 1. Lust – have not – kill
  - 2. Covet- cannot obtain – fight and war
  - 3. You do not ask
  - 4. When you do ask – receive not – ask amiss
    - a. Evil purpose: spend (waste) it in own pleasures.
  
- B. Brethren must understand that friendship of world is enmity with God (4:4-6)
  - 1. Principle evident in Scripture – Does it speak in vain?
  - 2. Holy Spirit, who abides, yearns unto jealousy for our undivided devotion.
  - 3. Scripture says (Proverbs 3:34): God resists proud – gives grace to humble.
  
- C. Requirements for friendship with God (4:7-10)
  - 1. Be subject unto God.
  - 2. Resist the devil – He will flee from you.
  - 3. Draw nigh unto God – He will draw nigh unto you.
  - 4. Cleanse hands of sin – purify hearts of double-mindedness.
  - 5. Manifest godly sorrow.
  - 6. Humble yourself in he sight of the Lord – He will exalt you.

### **QUESTIONS:**

- 1. Where did James see wars and fightings occurring?
  
- 2. What was the root cause for the fightings?
  
- 3. Give two reasons for one not receiving desires?
  
- 4. What does it mean to be a friend of the world?







## JAMES – LESSON 10

### X. PRACTICAL FAITH: SEEING THE END WITH PATIENCE; SPEAKING THE TRUTH (5:1-12)

- A. The corruption of the wicked rich (5:1-6)
  - 1. Their wretched state:
    - a. Riches are corrupted or rotten.
    - b. Garments are moth-eaten.
    - c. Gold and silver are rusted.
    - d. Corruption is a testimony against them and their final treasure.
  - 2. Their ungodly actions:
    - a. Defrauded their hired laborers.
    - b. Lived the soft life while condemning the righteous in the courts and killing the unresisting righteous.
  
- B. The patience of the righteous unto the coming of the Lord in judgment (5:7-11).
  - 1. Like a farmer who waits for the maturing of a precious crop.
  - 2. Establishes heart without murmuring knowing that the Lord is near standing at the doors.
  - 3. Follows the examples of patience:
    - a. True prophets who were patient in suffering
    - b. Job who was patient in suffering.
      - (1). Blessed in the end.
  
- C. The word of the righteous is their bond (5:12).
  - 1. Avoid allowing oaths to be the basis for fulfilling promises.
  - 2. *“But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.”*
  - 3. Avoid the condemnation of God by fulfilling promises.

### QUESTIONS:

- 1. How does James’ condemnation of the rich relate to the brethren?
  
- 2. What proper perspective of riches do you have reading this portion of James?
  
- 3. The riches of the wicked were a \_\_\_\_\_ against them.  
(Explain how this is so)

4. What wickedness brought the rich under condemnation?
5. What characteristic of patience should brethren have?
6. What encouragement does James give those who would be patient?
7. What should we NOT do in our patience?
8. What are *two* great examples of patience in suffering?
9. Why should these examples be encouraging unto us?
10. What facet of our speech would involve oaths?
11. What does “*let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay*” mean?
12. What happens if “*your yea is not yea*”?
13. Does 5:12 prohibit swearing an oath in a court of law?

## **JAMES – LESSON 11**

### **XI. PRACTICAL FAITH: SPIRITUAL SOLUTIONS TO LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES (5:13-20)**

- A. If you suffer – pray (5:13a)
- B. If you are cheerful – sing praise (5:13b)
- C. If you are sick: (5:14-18)
  - 1. Call for the elders of the church.
  - 2. Let them pray over you
    - a. Anointing you with oil.
    - b. In the name of the Lord
  - 3. Prayer of faith will save the sick.
    - a. Lord will raise you up.
  - 4. If sins were committed – forgiveness.
  - 5. Confess sins one to another – Pray for one another – be healed.
  - 6. Prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working.
    - a. Example: Prayer of Elijah (I Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-46)
      - (1). Prayed fervently that it might not rain.
      - (2). No rain for three years and six months.
      - (3). Prayed again – heaven gave rain, earth brought forth fruit.
- D. If you err from the truth – be converted (5:19-20)
  - 1. The one who converts you will be saving a soul from death.
  - 2. The one who converts you will cover a multitude of sins.

### **QUESTIONS:**

- 1. What suffering were James' readers experiencing?
- 2. What was the remedy?
- 3. What kind of songs should be in the heart and on the lips of the cheerful Christian?
- 4. What type of sickness (physical or spiritual) is under consideration in v. 14? Explain your answer.



