

The Book of James

Contextual and Historical Analysis

Author: James calls himself the half-brother of Jesus, Not James. James is a Greek name (Jacob). The KJV translated it as James. The early English bibles translated it as Jacob. This was a son of Mary and Joseph.

James was not a Christian at the crucifixion of Christ. He was only converted post-resurrection.

1 Cor 15:7

7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

NIV

Christ appeared to Peter and then to James, Jesus' half-brother. In the book of Acts, James, the half-brother of Jesus is quite prominent. He was the pastor of the Jerusalem church. He became pastor by way of promotion. Peter had to move on.

There were two apostles named James. The son of Zebedee and the son of Alpheaus. James the half-brother of Jesus becomes prominent after the resurrection, Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18.

- Jesus appeared to him, Matt. 13:55; John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7.
- James became a pastor after the resurrection.
- After Peter is released from prison, he goes to another place. James is elevated to a leaders role, A.D. 44.
- In A.D. 48-49 James is the head of the Jerusalem council concerning circumcision.
- James rose to prominence in the Jerusalem church. Tradition has it that he was a martyr in A.D. 62 in Jerusalem by the high priest.
- James was called “camel knees” due to his constant prayer habit.

- According to Josephus, James was killed in A.D. 62. History tells us that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple.

Date of Composition: James is most likely the earliest book written in the NT, A.D. 45-50 before there was any knowledge of Gentile Christianity. The book was written before the travels of Paul and the Jerusalem council. This was strictly a Jewish book. The book has a strong Jewish tone to it. Their meetings were called a synagogue and led by elders, 2:2; 5:14. Jewish jargon.

Place of Origin: The letter does not say but we assume Jer.

Destination: Unknown but somewhere outside of Palestine. The letter was written to the twelve tribes scattered throughout the nations. No mention is made of the Gentiles. These Jews were in an unknown city of the Roman Empire where they spoke Greek.

Recipients: Jewish Christians. The twelve tribes scattered outside of Palestine. The people were meeting in a synagogue that was led by Elders. Due to persecution, the Jews were scattered. That's how synagogues started. The true Temple can only be "The" Temple if the Ark is present. Although the Temple was the center of worship and sacrifices in Jesus' day without the Ark. These Jews were almost like this right before Christ's first advent. Many are rich and many are very poor. James, in this letter speaks of both. Many were experiencing trials and some persecution.

Background: Believers in discouraging circumstances who needed encouragement. James wanted to help them face the trials and live victorious Christian lives. This is where the book relates to us as Christians.

Occasion: James doesn't tell us how he knew these Christians. He is the pastor of the church in Jer. and feels as if he can offer

some practical advice for their situation. This book is a challenging message and an encouraging word. James was the pastor of a large church in Jer. and felt he could help.

Purpose: To help these Christians know the importance of an everyday, practical, Christian life. “Good deeds” are important to James.

Key Concept: Living faith in everyday life. (A book of everyday life).

Key Verse: 2:26, “Faith without deeds (works) is dead.”

Key Word: Good Works or deeds.

Special Issues

1. Many have had problems with the book of James due to a misinterpretation of the context. Luther, for one, said James contradicted Paul. Luther saw law and gospel in both testaments. Luther saw James, the book, as law in the NT. Luther actually made James an appendage in his German translation of the bible. He saw it as not a part of the scripture. He actually de-canonized it. Luther said Paul wrote Galatians to correct the book of James.

I was taught by Dr. Easley that if that were the case that Paul wrote Galatians to correct *wrongly interpreting* the book of James. I would also agree to that, especially after preaching through it several times. The book of James is pure gold. The key to understanding James is to know that Paul and James are speaking of two different types of faith. Paul speaks of saving faith that is accompanied with grace. James speak of working out our salvation and proving you are saved by works. We cannot save ourselves with works. But, when there is not a hint of works after

conversion, we worry that there has been no conversion. Paul speaks of a saving faith and James a practical living faith worked out in deeds after salvation.

Paul:

- Faith alone saves. Romans 4-5, Galatians

James:

- Saving faith works. James 2:14-17. Saving faith is always worked out.

Paul:

- Faith saves. Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3

James:

- Gen 15:6. Faith is fulfilled by works, James 2:23

Paul:

- Abraham is our example; the promise of Isaac. Romans 4

James:

- 2:21, Abraham the example... Sacrifice of Isaac.

Paul and **James** both use the term justification. Paul... justification before God. James... justification before men.

James is really the NT proverbs. There are strings of practical advice and Christian virtues for life. Many of which, cannot be connected.

2. There is a noticeable weakness in the use of Greek in this book. James uses two words interchangeably for **trials** and **testing**, which make it hard to distinguish between the words. God never **tempts** us but will **test** us to reveal character traits that need work.

3. The material on the tongue is the best in the NT.
4. There is an important section in 5:13-16 on divine healing. James confirms the right of the congregation to call on the elders of the church for anointing and divine healing. James knows Mark 6:13 and there is no reason to think this is *descriptive* and not *prescriptive*. It doesn't seem to be a part of the worship service but the members have a right to call. There is no clear promise that everyone will be healed, but this is a part of the process of asking, seeking and knocking. This is not a source of magic but a response to God in obedience.
5. Mark 6:13 is known by James.

Mark 6:8-13

8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff — no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."

12 They went out and preached that people should repent. 13

They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

NIV

James speaks of healing and anointing the sick with oil. Dr Easley says that the sick may not be healed, but this passage in 5:14, is still *prescriptive* and not *descriptive*. This process is not magic but obedience to Christ. Although the person may not be healed, the anointing is still a part of the process. This proves our faith and healing will come, even in death. I am amazed at those that have been extremely sick and know nothing of this passage. Even if I die, I want to

know I exercised my faith, and who knows, God's healing may come in a peaceful or delayed passing. God's grace is seen in death without suffering. We often miss that.

James describes this as **not** a part of the worship service but it can be. The key to the process is that the sick must call for the Elders.

Illustration: The Easleys could not conceive a child. They felt this was a sickness. He called the elders to anoint them with oil and pray at their house. Their son's name is Jordan.

Outline: Practical Christian Living

1. Tested by Trials: Chapter 1
2. Proven by Good Deeds. Chapter 2
3. Shown by Life Style. Chapter 3
4. Pride and Humility. Chapter 4
5. Jesus is Coming, Be Patient. Chapter 5

Chapters: Kistemaker

1. Perseverance
2. Faith
3. Restraint
4. Submission
5. Patience

Warren Wiersbe Outline from NT Outlines:

Chapter 1

One of the best tests of Christian maturity is tribulation. When God's people go through personal trials, they discover what kind of faith they really possess. Trials not only reveal our faith; they

also develop our faith and Christian character. The Jews to whom James was writing were experiencing trials, and he wanted to encourage them. The strange thing is that James tells them to rejoice! The word "greeting" in v. 1 can mean "rejoice!" How is the Christian able to have joy in the midst of troubles? James gives the answer in this first chapter by showing the certainties Christians have in times of tribulation.

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I. We Can Be Sure of the Purpose of God (1:1-12)

II. We Can Be Sure of the Goodness of God (1:13-20)

III. We Can Be Sure of the Word of God (1:21-27)

Chapter 2

In Gal 5:6, Paul describes the Christian life as "faith working through love" (NKJV). These two aspects of faith are discussed in this chapter. The basic idea is that true Bible faith is not dead; it reveals itself in love (vv. 1-13) and in works (vv. 14-26). Too many people have an intellectual belief in Christ, but not a heart belief. They have faith in the facts of historic Christianity, but not saving faith in Christ personally.

I. Faith Is Proved by Love (2:1-13)

II. Faith Is Proved by Works (2:14-26)

Chapter 3:

We can identify mature Christians by their attitude toward suffering (chap. 1) and by their obedience to the Word of God (chap. 2). Now James tells us that a Christian's speech is another test of maturity. We read and hear many words every day and forget what a wonderful thing a word is! When God gave us the faculty of speech, He gave us a tool to build with; but it can also become a weapon of destruction.

I. The Exhortation (3:1-2)

II. The Illustrations (3:3-12)

- A. Power to direct the bit and rudder (vv. 3-4).
- B. Power to destroy - the fire and animal (vv. 5-8).
- C. Power to delight - the fountain and tree (vv. 9-12).

III. The Application (3:13-18)

- A. False wisdom from below (vv. 14-16).
- B. True wisdom from above (vv. 17-18).

Chapter 4:

This chapter makes it clear that there were carnal divisions and disputes among these believers. One cause was the selfish desire of many to be teachers (3:1), but the basic cause was disobedience. There was a lack of true separation in the lives of the people. It is tragic when brethren dwell together in discord instead of unity (Ps 133). "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

I. The Enemies We Must Face (4:1-7)

- A. The flesh (vv. 1-3).
- B. The world (vv. 4-5).
- C. The devil (vv. 6-7).

II. The Exhortations We Must Heed (4:8-17)

- A. Warning against pride (vv. 8-10).
- B. Warning against criticism (vv. 11-12).
- C. Warning against arrogant self-confidence (vv. 13-17).

Chapter 5:

There are several miscellaneous matters in this last chapter, but the key thought seems to be that of the second coming of Christ (vv. 7-9). When Christians honestly look for the return of Christ, the evidences of this hope show up in their lives.

I. They Are Patient When Wronged (5:1-11)

- A. The sins of the rich (vv. 1-6).
- B. The patience of the poor (vv. 7-11).

II. They Are Pure in Speech (5:12)

III. They Are Prayerful in Trials (5:13-18)

IV. They Are Persistent in Soul-Winning (5:19-20)

Bro Jerry's Sermon Outlines:

Sermon 1:

“The Testing Of Our Faith”

James 1:2-8

Jerry Grey 2023, WBC

1. The Paradox of Testing: Verse 2 (Consider It Joy)
2. The Purpose of Testing: Verse 3 (Endurance)
3. The Process of Testing: Verse 4 (Maturity)
4. The Promise of Testing: Verse 5 (Wisdom)
5. The Problem of Testing: Verse 6 (Doubt)
6. The Premise of Testing: Verse 7 (Assumption)
7. The Psychosis of Testing: Verse 8 (Double-minded)

Sermon 2: