

**I. INTRODUCTION.**

- 1) By whom written: James. The particular James who authored the epistle is a great controversy. The evidence leads me to believe that James, a brother in the flesh of Jesus, was the author. I do not believe that this James was one of the twelve but was a very powerful influence in the early church, especially among the Jews. (See Jas. 1:1; Matt. 12:47; 13:55-56; John 7:5; Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:5,7; Acts 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:18-19; 2:6-12; Acts 21:17-18; 15:13-31.)
- 2) To whom written: "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." I believe the book indicates that Christians (spiritual Jews; God's chosen people) are addressed here. I note only the statement made in chapter 1, verse 18: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." The "word of truth" "begetting" can only have reference to the gospel. Those "begotten" can have reference only to Christians. The antecedent of "us" can only be James and those to whom he is writing. The whole tenor of the epistle, however, seems to bear heavily on Jewish background, thought, figures, and also on what is thought to be the main stumblingblocks of early Jewish Christians. (See Gal. 2:21; 3:1-29.)
- 3) When written: between A.D. 40 and 65. Many have fixed the date at A.D. 62. I believe that the very nature of the book and its contents would most likely place the date very soon after the church was established when the church (made up mostly of Jews) was being persecuted by those Jews who had refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah.
- 4) Where written: probably at Jerusalem.
- 5) Why written: to provide practical instruction applicable to living under "the perfect law of liberty" especially due to the change in the law, the nature of the law, and the persecution of those who were trying to obey the new law. James deals with several sins and attitudes which apparently existed among many of the Jewish Christians.

"The Epistle of James is not, nor was it intended to be, a formal, theological treatise, but a simple, sober presentation of Christian principles, the design of which was to enable the readers thereof to resist the sins peculiar to the age; to exhort them to live in such fashion as to merit, and to receive the approbation of Christ; and to cope with the difficult social problems then prevailing. The Letter, because of its eminently practical character has been quite properly styled 'the Gospel of Common Sense.' It is a wonderful demonstration of the fact that the principles of Christ, properly applied and fully assimilated, will adequately meet the needs of every generation, whatever the period in history may be. This evidences the fact that we of our day do not need a new gospel for an alleged modern age; the gospel of Christ when proclaimed and obeyed in its ancient purity, will satisfy every need of every age. ... It is our solemn and honored obligation to make it available to our age without addition, without subtraction, without modification." (A Commentary on the Epistle of James, by Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Co., 1965, pp. 17-18.)

## II. JAMES, Chapter 1.

- A. Salutation (1:1).
- B. Trials benefit Christians (1:2-4).
1. Be joyful when tried. (1:2; 1 Pet. 1:6-7.)
  2. Trying of faith worketh patience. (1:3; Rev. 13:10; 14:12.)
  3. Patience makes one perfect, complete, entire. (1:4; 1 Pet. 2:20-25; Rom. 5:3-6; Heb. 6:11-12.)
- C. This truth is hard to receive. (See John 6:60,66.) Pray for wisdom to understand (1:5-8). (See comments on "The prayer of faith", VI.D., on page 5.)
1. "Ask and ye shall receive..." (Matt. 7:7-8).
  2. "No man can serve two masters..." (Matt. 6:24).
  3. "He that is not with me is against me..." (Matt. 12:30).
  4. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (1:8).
  5. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-3).
- D. Rejoice -- whether rich or poor in this world's goods -- all of you are saved from past sins, all of you are one in Christ, all of you are heirs of God IN CHRIST. (1:9-11; Mk. 10:31; Phil. 4:4,11; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; Heb. 13:5; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 1:3,7,10-11; Rom. 8:16-17.)
- E. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation..." (1:12).  
This seems to be a terribly important key to living acceptably before God. (Lk. 9:23; 1 Pet. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:12.) The reward for faithfulness, however, is worth all that it takes to achieve -- eternal life in heaven. (1:12; Rev. 2:10; 14:13; 21:1-4; 22:1-5; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:3-9.)
- F. The evolution of sin (1:13-16).
1. God does not tempt man to sin. (1:13; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 10:13.)
    - a. The devil does tempt man. (1 Thess. 3:5; Lk. 4:1-13; Rev. 12:9-10; Gen. 3:1-6; John 8:44.)
    - b. God cannot be tempted with evil. (1:13; Matt. 4:7.)
  2. "Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (1:14). LUST = strong desire to possess or enjoy. ENTICED = lured by a bait. (See 2 Pet. 2:12-22. "Beguiling" in vs. 14 and "allure" in vs. 18 are from the same word translated enticed.)
  3. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (1:15a).
    - a. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).
    - b. "Whatsoever is not of faith (conviction) is sin" (Rom. 14:23).
    - c. Sin separates man from God. (Gen. 2:17; 3:6,17-19,22-24; Isa. 59:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Eph. 1:7; 2:1.)
  4. "Sin, when it is finished (fullgrown), bringeth forth death" (1:15b). (Isa. 59:2; 1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 1:32; 6:23; Rev. 21:8.)
  5. We may say that man is lured by bait to have a strong desire to possess or enjoy something. Unless the bait is removed or hidden from view, or unless the strong desire is checked, the strong desire will cause the man to sin either in thought or action or both. Sin separates man from God (spiritual death) but also leads to the ultimate and final reward of death ("The second death") -- eternal separation from God with all of the consequences thereof.
  6. THEREFORE, "Do not err (go astray; commit sin), my beloved brethren" (1:16).
- G. God is the source of everything good (1:17-18).
1. God does not change. (1:17; Mal. 3:6.)

2. We become children of God, begotten with the word of truth. (1:18; Eph. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:3,22-23.)
3. "Firstfruits of his creatures." (1:18b; 1 Cor. 15:20,23; Rev. 14:14.)

H. WHEREFORE . . . (1:19-21)

1. Be swift to hear, slow to speak. (1:19a,b; Prov. 10:19; 8:33; Col. 4:5-6.)
2. Be slow to wrath -- wrath worketh not righteousness. (1:19c-20; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:26; Rom. 12:19.)
3. Lay apart all filthiness (perhaps sins of the flesh; see 2 Cor. 7:1; Hab. 1:13) and superfluity of naughtiness (= superabundance of evil; perhaps sins of the heart; see Matt. 15:18-20).
4. "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (1:21b; Col. 3:12-13; Rom. 11:16-25; 1 Cor. 15:1-2.)

I. BUT . . .

1. Be ye doers of the word. (1:22a; Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:14; Eccl. 12:13-14.)
  - a. Not hearers only. (1:22b; Matt. 7:24-25.)
  - b. Else you deceive yourselves, for... (1:22c-24; Matt. 7:26-27; Gal. 6:3-5,7-8.)
2. Look into the perfect law of liberty. (1:25a; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11-12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1; 1 Pet. 2:15-16.)
3. Continue in the perfect law of liberty. (1:25; Col. 2:6-7.)
  - a. Not a forgetful hearer. (Heb. 13:1-3,7,16.)
  - b. A doer of the work. (Rom. 2:13.)
  - c. And be blessed in your deed. (Prov. 31:31; Eph. 6:8; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 14:13.)

J. A religious man . . .

1. Bridles his tongue. (1:26; Matt. 12:31-37; Jas. 3:2.)
2. Visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction. (1:27a; 2:14-18, 24; Acts 9:36,39; 1 Tim. 5:4,8,16; Matt. 25:35-40; Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Lk. 6:31; also numerous passages in the Old Testament which emphasize the importance of this to anyone who will be obedient to the Lord.)
  - a. VISIT = "primarily, to inspect (a late form of episkopeo, to look upon, care for, exercise oversight)..." (W. E. Vine.)
  - b. FATHERLESS = bereft of parents or a father (desolate in some uses).
  - c. WIDOW = a woman whose husband is dead.
3. Keeps himself unspotted from the world. (1:27b; Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:12-13; 1 Tim. 6:14; Eph. 5:25-27; 2 Pet. 3:14; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 7:1.)
4. OR -- he is not religious (in righteousness) -- his religion is vain (empty; meaningless). (Matt. 15:7-9). Pure religion is DOING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. (John 14:15,21,23; Matt. 22:37-39.)

III. JAMES, Chapter 2.

- A. Do not be a respecter of persons (2:1-11).
1. God is not. (Eph. 6:9; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11.)
  2. Rich oppress you -- do not honor them. (2:6; Matt. 5:40; 1 Cor. 12:22-27.)
  3. God has chosen rich in faith (often poor in worldly goods) as heirs. (2:5; Rev. 2:9.)
  4. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:39).
    - a. A requirement of the law (Matt. 22:40).
    - b. If offend in one point, a transgressor of the law. (2:11; Gal. 5:3.)
- B. To obtain forgiveness, one must forgive; to obtain mercy, one must be merciful. (2:12-13; Matt. 6:14-15; 7:1-2.)

C. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (2:14-26; Rom. 6:16-23; Tit. 3:8; Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 2:11-14.)

1. "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." (2:18; Acts 26:20; Matt. 5:14-16; 7:15-20.)
2. Faith must be accompanied by obedience to God's commands IF we will be blessed by faith and receive access to the mercy, forgiveness, grace, salvation, etc., of God. (Rom. 5:1-10; Eph. 1:3; 2:8-10.)

#### IV. JAMES, Chapter 3.

A. Teachers have a heavy responsibility. (3:1; Rom. 2:21-24; Matt. 18:6-7.)

B. It is a difficult task to control one's tongue.

1. A man who can control his tongue is perfect and can control his whole body. (3:2; Tit. 2:1; 3:2.)
2. The nature of the tongue. (3:3-8; Rev. 13:5; 1 Tim. 4:1-2.)
3. Blessing and cursing out of the same mouth is incompatible -- contrary to nature. (3:9-12.)
  - a. A wise man will show his heart by his speech and actions which are good and produce good fruits. (3:13,17-18.)
  - b. Worldly wisdom involves the use of envy and strife which produce confusion and evil work -- it is earthly, sensual, devilish. (3:14-16; Gal. 5:19-21.)
4. The fruit of righteousness: peace. (3:18; Gal. 5:22; Rom. 12:18; 2:10; Matt. 5:9.)

#### V. JAMES, Chapter 4.

A. The cause of conflicts (spiritual here compared to physical; 4:1).

1. LUSTS (4:2) = strong desires to possess or enjoy.
2. Desires are so strong that continuous war and killing occurs -- and still cannot obtain -- cannot be satisfied. (4:2.)
  - a. Cannot obtain because they do not ask. (4:2; Matt. 7:7-8.)
  - b. Ask and receive not because they ask amiss. (4:3; see VI.D.)
3. Friendship of the world is enmity with God. (4:4; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.)
  - a. Constitutes spiritual adultery. (4:4; Matt. 6:24; Rom. 6:16-18; 7:4; John 3:29.)
  - b. Cannot serve God and the world (or self). (4:4; Matt. 6:24; 12:30.)
  - c. The scripture teaches these truths; does it speak in vain?
4. More than this God gives -- He resisteth the proud -- gives grace to the humble. (4:6.)

B. SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO GOD. (4:7.)

1. Draw nigh to God -- he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse and purify yourselves, both the outer and the inner man: SERVE GOD. (4:8.)
2. RESIST THE DEVIL -- HE WILL FLEE!!! (4:7.)

C. Do not be guilty of assuming the powers and/or privileges of God which you have, in fact, no right to do. (4:11-17.)

1. Who art thou...? There is one lawgiver. (4:11-12.)
2. Only God has the prerogative of knowing what tomorrow will bring. (4:13-16.)
3. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (4:17; Heb. 10:24-26.)

#### VI. JAMES, Chapter 5.

A. The rich will suffer the consequences of causing hardships for the poor wrongfully and for failing to use their possessions wisely. (5:1-6.)

1. "For the love of money is the root of all evil..." (1 Tim. 6:10.)
  2. "...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Matt. 6:19-21.)
  3. "...Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided?" (Lk. 12:15-21.)
- B. The faithful must endure hardship and persecution (whether religious or social, etc.) with PATIENCE. (5:7-8.)
1. The Lord is patient (5:4,7) which is for our benefit (2 Pet. 3:9).
  2. Stablish your hearts to endure (5:8).
    - a. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh (5:8).
    - b. Bear no grudge LEST YE BE CONDEMNED (5:9). (Matt. 6:14-15.)
    - c. Remember the examples of patient endurance: the prophets, Job. (5:10-11.)
- C. Closing admonitions.
1. Do not swear. (5:12; Matt. 5:33-37.)
  2. Pray when afflicted (5:13).
  3. Sing praise (to God) when merry (5:13b). (Ps. 66:1-20.)
  4. The sick are to seek the prayers of others (5:14-16).
  5. Confess your faults one to another (5:16).
- D. The prayer of faith. (1:5-8; 4:2-3; 5:13-18.)
1. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16).
    - a. EFFECTUAL = producing or having effect; completely operative; efficient.
    - b. FERVENT = zealous; earnest; vehement; very hot.
    - c. Of a righteous man. (John 9:31; Ps. 34:15-19.)
  2. The manner of prayer given by the Lord (Matt. 6:5-15).
  3. We pray because we are commanded to, in order to give thanks, to make petitions ("Ask..."), and because it "availeth much".
  4. We must pray in faith, nothing wavering, without doubting (1:7).
  5. We are to pray "without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17); "always" (Lk. 18:1).
  6. We are to pray in private (Matt. 6:6); in public (1 Cor. 14:14-15); everywhere (1 Tim. 2:8).
  7. We are to pray for many things. (1:5; 5:13-16; Matt. 6:9-13; Acts 8:21-24; 2 Cor. 13:7-9; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12; etc.)
  8. If we are righteous (or a repentant Christian seeking forgiveness, 1 John 1:9) our prayer will be heard and answered according to the will of God. (1:5; 5:16-18; Matt. 7:7-11.)
- E. Converting an erring brother (5:19-20).
1. It is possible for a brother (a Christian; a child of God; one who has been saved from past sins) to "err from the truth". (5:19; Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 10:26-31; 2 Pet. 1:9.)
  2. It is possible for an erring brother to be restored to truth and a correct relationship with God. (5:19-20; Acts 8:13,18-24; 1 John 1:9.)
  3. This is accomplished most often through faithful brethren who appeal to the erring with the truth of the gospel. (5:19-20; Gal. 6:1-2.)
  4. The sins of the erring brother are "hidden" (or blotted out) through repentance, confession, and prayer. His soul is saved from spiritual death for the present time and for ever if he continues faithful to God.
    - a. When sins are forgiven, they are said to be blotted out of the remembrance of God. (Acts 3:19; Heb. 8:12; 10:16-17.)
    - b. Simon was told to repent and pray -- his sin was already made known (Acts 8:18-24); we must confess to God (1 John 1:9) and to or before men if our sin is of public knowledge (5:15-16; Acts 19:18). Mark's change of heart was made known (Col. 4:10).