

# James

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**AUTHOR:** James, brother of our Lord.

**TIME WRITTEN:** Perhaps between A.D. 46 and 49

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 59th Book in the Bible
- 20th book in the New Testament
- 15th of 21 epistle books
- 58 have preceded it. 7 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 5

**VERSES:** 108

**WORDS:** 2,309

**KEY WORD:** Faith that Works

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **James 1:19-22** - "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;  
 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.  
 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.  
 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."
2. **James 2:14-17** - "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?  
 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,  
 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?  
 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

**KEY CHAPTER:** James 1

1. One of the most difficulty areas of the Christian life is that of trials and temptations.
2. James reveals our correct response to both:
  - a. To trials - count them all joy.
  - b. Temptations - realize that God is not their source.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT JAMES**

1. Four men are named James in the New Testament.
  - a. James the father of Judas (not Iscariot).
    1. Mentioned twice (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13) as the father of one of the twelve apostles, but is otherwise completely unknown.
  - b. James the son of Alphaeus. Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13
    1. Also called James the Less. Mark 15:40
    2. One of the twelve apostles.
    3. Apart from being listed with the other apostles, this James is completely obscure.
  - c. James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John. Matthew 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mark 3:17; 10:35; 13:3; Luke 9:54; Acts 1:13
    1. Was one of the members of the inner circle of our Lord's apostles.
    2. Martyred in A.D. 44
  - d. James, the Lord's brother. Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19
    1. Was one of the "pillars" in the church in Jerusalem. Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; Galatians 2:9-12

2. The author of the Book of James.
3. He apparently did not accept the claims of Jesus until the Lord appeared to Him after the resurrection. **1 Corinthians 15:3-7** - "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
  - 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,
  - 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.
  - 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.
  - 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.
  - 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."
4. He became an acknowledged leader in the church at Jerusalem. Acts 12:7; Galatians 2:9-12
5. He was a central figure in the Jerusalem council in Acts 15.
6. He suffered a martyr's violent death not long before the fall of Jerusalem.
  - a. According to Josephus, James was martyred in A.D. 62.
  - b. Heigesippus, quoted in Eusebus, fixed the date of James death at A.D. 66.
2. The Book of James is addressed "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (1:1) and it is apparent that from verses like 1:19 and 2:1-7 that this greeting refers to Hebrew Christians outside Palestine.
  - a. In James 2:2 their place of meetings is called a "synagogue" in the Greek text.
  - b. The whole epistle reflects Jewish thought and expressions. 2:19-21; 4:11-12; 5:4, 12.
  - c. Jewish Christians were beset with problems that were testing their faith, and James was concerned that they were succumbing to:
    1. Impatience.
    2. Bitterness.
    3. Materialism.
    4. Disunity.
    5. Spiritual apathy.
  - d. As a resident of Jerusalem and a leader in the Lord's church there, James no doubt had frequent contact with Christians from a number of Roman provinces.
  - e. He therefore felt a responsibility to exhort and encourage them in their struggles of faith.
3. Several factors in the book indicate that this letter may have been the earliest writing in the New Testament.
  - a. There is no mention of Gentile Christians or their relationship to Jewish Christians as would be expected in a later epistle.
  - b. James does not mention the issues involved in the Acts 15 council in Jerusalem (A.D. 49)
4. The Sermon on the Mount is especially prominent in James's thinking in that there are about fifteen indirect references.
  - a. James 1:2 and Matthew 5:10-12
  - b. James 1:4 and Matthew 5:48
  - c. James 2:13 and Matthew 6:14-15
  - d. James 4:11 and Matthew 7:1-2
  - e. James 5:2 and Matthew 6:19
5. James has a great deal to say about the subject of faith.
  - a. Faith without works cannot be called faith.
  - b. Faith without works is dead, a dead faith is worse than no faith at all.

1. Faith must work.
  2. Faith must produce.
  3. Faith must be visible.
  4. Faith displays itself in works.
  5. Faith is more than mere words,
  6. Faith is more than knowledge.
  7. Faith is demonstrated by obedience.
  8. Faith overly responds to the promises of God.
  9. Verbal faith is not enough; mental faith is insufficient.
  10. Faith must be there, but it must be more—it must inspire action.
- c. Faith endures trials.
    1. Trials come and go, but a strong faith will face them head-on and develop endurance.
    2. Faith understands temptations.
    3. Faith will not allow us to consent to our lust and slide into sin.
    4. Through trouble and trial faith stifles complaining.
  - d. Faith obeys the Word. It will not merely hear and not do.
    1. Faith produces doers.
    2. Faith harbors no prejudice.
  - e. Faith controls the tongue.
    1. This small but immensely powerful part of the body must be held in check.
    2. Faith can do it.
  - f. Faith gives us the ability to choose wisdom that is heavenly and to shun wisdom that is earthly.
  - g. Faith produces separation from the world and submission to God.
  - h. Faith provides us with the ability to resist the devil and humbly draw near to God.
  - i. Finally, faith waits patiently for the coming of the Lord.

## **SUMMARY OF JAMES**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- A. James is the Proverbs of the New Testament, because it is written in the terse moralistic style of Wisdom Literature.
  1. It is evident that James was profoundly influenced by:
    - a. The Old testament (especially by its Wisdom Literature).
    - b. The Sermon on the Mount.
  2. James's impassioned preaching against inequity and social injustice also earns him the title of the Amos of the New Testament.
- B. There are three major sections in the book:
  1. The Test of Faith. (1:1-18)
  2. The Characteristic of Faith. (1:19 - 5:6)
  3. The Triumph of Faith. (5:7-20)

### **THE TEST OF FAITH. (1:1-18)**

- A. The first part of this epistle develops the qualities of genuine faith in regard to trials and temptations.

1. After a one-verse salutation to geographically dispersed Hebrew Christians (1:1), James quickly introduces his first subject—outward tests of faith (1:2-12)
2. These trials are designed to produce mature endurance and a sense of dependence upon God, to whom the Christian turns for wisdom and enablement.
3. Inward temptations (1:13-18) do not come for the One who bestows “every good gift.” 1:17
4. These solicitations to evil must be checked at an early stage or they may result in disastrous consequences.

### **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH. (1:19 - 5:6)**

- A. A righteous response to testing requires that one to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (1:19) and this broadly summarizes the remainder of the epistle.
  1. Quickness of hearing involves an obedient response to God’s Word. 1:19-27
  2. True hearing means more than mere listening; the Word must be received and applied.
    - a. After stating this principle (1:21-22), James develops it with:
      1. An illustration in 1:23-25.
      2. An application in 1:26-27.
  3. A genuine faith should produce a change in attitude from partiality to the rich to a love for the poor as well as for the rich. 2:1-13
  4. True faith should also result in actions. 2:14-26
    - a. In Romans 4, Paul used the example of Abraham to show that he was justified by faith.
    - b. In 2:21 James says that Abraham is justified by works.
    - c. There is no contradiction between Paul and James in the matter.
    - d. A faith that produces no change is not saving faith.
    - e. A faith that does not manifest itself in obedience is a dead faith.
- B. Moving from words to words, James shows how a living faith controls the tongue (“slow to speak.” 1:19)
  1. The tongue is small, but it has the power of accomplish great good or equally great evil.
  2. Only the power of God applied by an active faith can tame the tongue. 3:1-2
  3. Just as there are wicked and righteous uses of the tongue, so there are demonic and divine manifestations of wisdom. 3:13-18
  4. James contrasts seven characteristics of human wisdom with seven qualities of divine wisdom.
- C. The strong pulls of worldliness (4:1-12) and wealth (4:13 - 5:6) create conflicts that are harmful to the growth of faith.
  1. The world system is at enmity with God; and the pursuit of its pleasures produces covetousness, envy, fighting and arrogance. 4:1-4
  2. The Christian’s only alternative is submission to God out of a humble and repentant heart.
    - a. This will produce a transformed attitude toward others as well. 4:7-12
  3. The spirit of submission and humility should be applied to any attempts to accrue wealth (4:13-17), especially because wealth can lead to pride, injustice, and selfishness. 5:1-6

### **THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH. (5:7-20)**

- A. James encourages his readers to patiently endure the sufferings of the present life in view of the future prospect of the coming of the Lord. 5:7-12

1. Christians may be oppressed by the rich or by other circumstances; but as the example of Job teaches, they can be sure that God has a gracious purpose in his dealings with them.
2. James concludes his epistle with some practical words on prayer and restoration. 5:13-20
  - a. The prayers of righteous men are effective for the healing and restoration of Christians
  - b. When sins is not dealt with, it can contribute to illness and even death.