

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

By William R. Cunningham

INTRODUCTION

We are going to study the letter of James. We are first going to cover the background information that will help us properly or more accurately interpret the letter itself. It is extremely important that we understand the context of the scriptures that we read in order to properly interpret the message that God is revealing to us. We will then go through the letter chapter by chapter as we learn what the Lord says to the Jews centuries ago and to us today.

James is a very important book in the New Testament. Though it was written for a Jewish audience as we will discuss shortly, it has many applications for us today. Many hold that James disputes the theology of Paul regarding faith and works. However, a closer look at James and considering Paul's doctrine of justification, we will find that the two do not contradict and that James is not disputing Paul's teaching, but rather explaining the concept to a different audience. Paul was speaking to a generally gentile audience whereas James was speaking to Jews.

Personally, I have found that James balanced the concept of justification by faith and the place of works in a Christian's life. Sure we are saved by the grace of God and our justification is through faith in Christ Jesus. However, true faith that produces real regeneration in a person (renewal of the spirit) causes outward effects due to the affect that that newness has on the person's life.

LIST OF RESOURCES

I thought it would be expedient to provide you with the list of some of the resources that I used for this study. It is important that conclusions and understandings be based on true "data" or facts. These derive from the Bible and real historical resources that can then be used to properly interpret the scriptures. Here are some of the resources that I used.

1. Nelson Study Bible
2. The Apologetics Study Bible
3. James (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series)
4. Tyndale Bible Dictionary
5. New Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary
6. The Works of Josephus
7. Logos Bible Study Software using its various resources
8. Various articles on the World Wide Web
9. Holman Bible Handbook
10. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

AUTHOR AND DATE

The author of the Epistle of James is identified as James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (James 1:1). However, we need to identify which James this is as there were four James in the New Testament spoken of in the Scriptures.

One thing that I would like point out is that the author only gives his first name and identifies himself as a servant of God and of Jesus Christ. That suggests that this James was most likely a well known figure in the Christian church that would have been readily identified by simply using his first name. Knowing this will help us determine who “James” is really referring to.

The first James is James the father of Judas (Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13).

- *Luke 6:16 (NKJV) {16} Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.*
- *Acts 1:13 (NKJV) {13} And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.*

This James was too obscure to be considered the author of this epistle. He was not a well known figure such that using only the first name would identify him.

The second James is James the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18) – One of the twelve apostles (See Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13).

- *Matthew 10:3 (NKJV) {3} Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;*
- *Mark 3:18 (NKJV) {18} Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite;*
- *Luke 6:15 (NKJV) {15} Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot;*
- *Acts 1:13 (NKJV) {13} And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.*

Nothing is known for certain about this James. Many scholars have identified him with “James the Less” or “James the Smaller.” This designation seems to have been given to him to distinguish him from James the Son of Zebedee (John’s brother) and he may have been physically smaller or younger than James son of Zebedee.“ However, some identify James the less as a separate person from James the son of Alphaeus. In any case it is unlikely that this is the writer of the Epistle of James because of his obscurity.

The third James is James the son of Zebedee. This was one of the twelve apostles and the brother of John the Apostle. He was the first of the apostles to be martyred (about AD 44).

Acts 12:1-2 (NKJV) {1} Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. {2} Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

James the son of Zebedee was most likely not the writer of the Epistle of James since he was killed prior to its writing. We will discuss when the letter was written shortly.

James the brother of Jesus. James was first mentioned in Mark 6:3 as the oldest of Jesus four younger brothers.

Mark 6:3 (NKJV) {3} Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him.

See also Matthew 12:46 and Galatians 1:19. James was the leading elder in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 21:18, Gal 2:9). We should note that he was not one of the 12 apostles, but he still had a significant role in the church and was considered an apostle (See Galatians 1:19).

Tradition states that James was appointed the first bishop of Jerusalem by the Lord himself as well as the apostles. However, what we do know is that he presided over the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:13-20). He was sympathetic to the Jewish Christians and was a faithful adherent to the Jewish law. According to the Christian chronicler of the early church, Hegesippus (c. 180), James was given the epithet, "The Just."

James was martyred according to Josephus (a Jewish historian) at about AD 61 when there was a Jewish uprising after the death of Festus the procurator and before his successor had been appointed.

The Traditional view of the authorship of James is that James, the brother of Jesus wrote this letter. The evidence from the scriptures suggests that James the brother of Jesus is the author of the "Epistle of James." Please note that by "brother of Jesus" I really mean the half brother since they only had the same mother, Mary.

THE CATHOLIC ISSUE

Catholic scholars who hold to the perpetual virginity of Mary believe that James was Jesus' half brother from a previous marriage of Joseph or that he was Jesus' cousin. There is no scriptural or historical evidence for this view. There is no evidence that Joseph was previously married and we do know that Mary and Joseph had children after Jesus (See Mark 6:3). Also, the Greek word *adelphos* (Mark 6:3) plainly means "brother" and not "cousin."

OTHER VIEWS TO THE AUTHORSHIP

However, there are other views about the authorship of James. There are at least three views to the authorship of James besides identifying a particular person (the traditional view as described above). I'll list them here.

1. A Pseudo-James (a later context for authorship) – Here it is argued that James is the response to Pauline doctrine. It was written by a Christian under the pseudonym James

2. By some other Christian with the name of James
3. Sometime later by an anonymous writer, which the letter was later attributed to James.

The commonality of the above is that the letter was written after the lifetime of James the Just (the brother of Jesus). It would have been written in the late first century or the second century AD.

4. Pre-Christian Context for Authorship – This view holds that the letter is actually a Jewish work that predated Christianity and was later adapted to the Christian community. James does put emphasis on the Jewish law and deeds so it is thought that it was written before Christianity. This also helps to explain the seemingly contradiction between Pauline teaching and teachings regarding the law and deeds.

We must note that these views are not supported by scriptural/historical evidence.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Let us consider the historical context of the letter to help us understand its message. If James was written after Paul's letter then it could be interpreted in some degree as anti-Pauline doctrine. However, we will see that it is not anti-Pauline.

Let's look at some references to James' epistle by the early church fathers.

- Origen (early Christian scholar and theologian) cited the letter as Scripture written by James
- Eusebius treated the book as genuine and recorded that the letter was read publicly in many churches. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263 – 339?) became bishop of Caesarea Palastina. He also recorded the history of the early church. He also reported that some in his day disputed James' authorship and that not many ancients have mentioned it (Church History 2.23).

The fact that there are not many references to James by early church fathers has led some scholars to question the traditional authorship of James. However, the fact that there aren't many references to James does not mean that a later date is required. Scholars are still uncertain as to why this letter was not reference that much by early church fathers until about the third century when it was recognized as canonical.

Textual Criticisms – Some hold that the quality of Greek used in the writing of James was beyond the knowledge of James the brother of Jesus. However, very little is known about the education of James or the extent of his travels. Therefore, there isn't enough evidence to say that the quality of Greek was beyond the knowledge or capability of James.

References to Jesus' Teachings – James is full of references to the teachings of Jesus Christ as we will see when we start the study of the epistle itself. However, some scholars have suggested that James could not be the author because the letter does not have the expected abundance of references to Jesus' teachings. The expectation is due to the fact that if James is the brother of Jesus, then surely his letter would have been full with references to Jesus' teachings.

However, many other scholars have shown that the epistle of James is indeed full of references to Jesus' teachings in the synoptic gospels. One would indeed expect that someone who had a personal relationship with Jesus and was personally involved in the ministry of Christ (after His resurrection) would surely have included much of Jesus' teachings in his epistle, which James has done to some extent. We should also remember that James was not one of Jesus' disciples so he was not as close to him as the twelve were for example.

AUTHORSHIP CONCLUSION

The evidence supports the traditional view of the authorship of the Epistle of James that it was written by James the brother of Jesus. The letter was most likely written by James in a Palestinian culture (as opposed to a Hellenistic culture). It was written as a message to the Jewish Christians scattered in the time recorded in Acts 8:1-3.

Early Date versus later date – An early dating of James (as opposed to a post-AD 70 date) explains why the letter wasn't referenced much by church fathers. For one thing the letter had a limited scope. It was addressed to Jewish Christians that were persecuted by the Jews, not Rome. The later Christians were persecuted by Rome and that persecution was more widespread. This meant that Paul's letters would have had a wider scope than this letter to the Jews.

There were only two plausible people that could be considered as authors for this letter. The first is James the son of Zebedee and the second is James the brother of Jesus Christ. Since James the son of Zebedee was martyred at about AD 44 or so, and most scholars agree that the letter was written after that, then the most probable author is James the brother of Jesus.

Is it Anti-Pauline? – James was not written to refute the teachings of Paul, e.g., as a response to Romans and Galatians. James' letter preceded Paul's epistles. The thought that James is somehow anti-Pauline is simply a misunderstanding of the theology of James as well as the theology of Paul. The epistle was written in a Jewish context (for Jewish Christians) during time of persecution. Its message helped to illustrate the teachings of Jesus Christ so that the Jewish community would understand. Much of James' letter includes the teachings from Matthew 5 – 7.

The misunderstanding of Paul's letter dealing with justification by faith (Romans 3:28) and James letter referring to justification by works not by faith alone (James 2:19) is found in the definition of faith. James wrote to readers who would identify faith as intellectual acknowledgment. Because of this he stresses the fact that mere "mental ascent" that does not affect life is not saving faith. Therefore he emphasizes works. True saving faith will produce corresponding works whereas mere mental ascent to faith does not necessarily affect life. Consider the pious Pharisees and other religious leaders. Paul shows that true faith is entrusting one's whole life to God through Christ for salvation. This will indeed produce a renewal in one's spirit that will in turn produce fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), i.e., the faith that one confesses will cause corresponding actions – Just as James said.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is estimated that James was written between A.D. 45 and A.D. 150, depending on how the authorship is regarded. If James is indeed Jesus' brother then it must have been written prior to A.D. 62 (according to Josephus), which was about the time James was martyred. If James is seen as a response to Paul's letters then it might have been written after those letters were in circulation and would therefore have been written about A.D. 60.

Another view is that James was written earlier at about 45 – 49 A.D. Many scholars hold to this date because the whole context of the letter fits the events of the early history of the church.

- It was an era when many Jewish Christians had not completely severed themselves from Judaism. This is perhaps why James uses terms such as “the 12 tribes” (James 1:1) and “the synagogue” (James 2:2)
- His message does not deal with the Jewish/Gentile problems that arose in the A.D. 50s and 60s that Paul dealt with.
- He did not deal with false teachings that developed a little later in the Christian faith.
- There is no mention of the Jerusalem council, which took place in about A.D. 50 to discuss a Jewish/Gentile problem that arose in the church.
- The date is also after A.D. 44, which is when Herod Agrippa initiated persecutions against the Christians (See Acts 12:1). We note that the first Christians were mostly Jewish. That persecution would have caused many Jews to flee Jerusalem making them the “dispersed” in James 1:1.
- The leaders in the church were teachers and elders (James 3:1, 5:4) not bishops and deacons in later Christian history.
- Gentile issues never appear in the letter, e.g., Gentile assimilation into Christianity.

If the Epistle of James was indeed written in A.D. 45 – 49 then it was the first NT book written. If indeed James was written at a later date then we know for sure that it was written before A.D. 61 or 62, which is when James was killed. The evidence suggests an earlier date for this letter.

The letter was written to “the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad” (James 1:1). This implies a Jewish readership outside of Palestine. However, a later statement in the letter implies Jews inside of Palestine (See James 5:4). It refers to “hired field labor” and only in Palestine was field labor hired. Elsewhere field laborers were slaves.

The letter gives many references to the Old Testament, especially the wisdom literature and the prophet Amos. This indicates that James was written to Jewish Christians.

PURPOSE AND TEACHING

The letter of James appears to have been written for the following reasons.

1. To strengthen the Jews that were undergoing trials (James 1:2-4, 13-15; 5:7-11)
2. To explain the place of works in justification (2:14-26).
3. To provide a wealth of practical wisdom

James' theology is not dogmatic like that of Paul in his letters. James does not mention the incarnation, Christ's sufferings, death, or resurrection. The name of Christ only appears twice (James 1:1, 2:1). This suggests that James was not writing for theological purposes, but for more practical purposes and to a community that was Jewish and still somewhat tied to Judaism.

The main topics discussed in James' letter are as follows.

1. Temptations and Trials
2. Law
3. Faith and Works
4. Wisdom

WHO WAS JAMES?

- We already said that James was the half-brother of Jesus Christ. The name James comes from the same root as Jacob.
- According to the Church historian Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria in the late second century stated that James was chosen by Jesus to be the first bishop of Jerusalem.
- James was very pious. In describing James' ascetic lifestyle, Saint Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, quotes Hegesippus' account of James from the fifth book of Hegesippus' lost *Commentaries*:

"After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the Church at Jerusalem. Many indeed are called James. This one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no flesh, never shaved or anointed himself with ointment or bathed. He alone had the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, since indeed he did not use woolen vestments but linen and went alone into the temple and prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees."

Since it was unlawful for anyone but the high priest of the temple to enter the Holy of Holies once a year on Yom Kippur, Jerome's quotation from Hegesippus indicates that James was considered a high priest.

- Paul said that Jesus appeared to James after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7)
- James was a prominent figure at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15)
- According to Josephus (A Jewish Historian), James was killed by the high priest Ananus who quickly made accusations against James and his companions after Festus had died. The following is a quote from Josephus

Antiquities of the Jews 20:9:1

And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our

high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

- There are two other versions of James' death as reported by Clement of Alexandria and Hegesippus as reported by Eusebius.
- James was succeeded by his cousin (another relative of Jesus!) Symeon. The account is narrated in two places in Eusebius' *History of the Church*:

CHAPTER 1

1:1

- This is James, the brother of Jesus. The fact that he didn't say he was Jesus' brother indicates that he was well known.
- The name "James" is actually an English substitution for the name "Jacob"
- "To the twelve tribes..." -- This indicates that James was writing to the Jewish Christians who were dispersed throughout the land because of persecution. This persecution was by Herod Agrippa I (the grandson of Herod the Great) who persecuted the Christians during between 41 and 44 AD. He was a sincere adherent to the Jewish law. Herod Agrippa I is responsible for beheading James the son of Zebedee in AD 44 and for imprisoning Peter (Acts 12:1-4). Some of the persecuted Jewish Christians fled to other areas.

It also believed that Jews considered the 10 northern tribes to be scattered and lost for centuries and that they would be restored at the end of the age. Therefore, it is suggested that James is writing a general letter to "the Israelites scattered everywhere."

Some even suggest that James is using the term "10 tribes" symbolically to mean all Christians. However, the contents of the letter suggest that he is indeed speaking to Jewish Christians.

- James considered himself as property of God (a bond-servant)
- It is interesting here that James appears to have recognized the deity of Jesus Christ in that he placed him equal with God in this passage. He considered himself a bond-servant of the one he could have called his brother.

1:2 -4

- James told the Jewish Christian to consider it joy when their faith was tested by trials. The testing of their faith (trials) produces endurance (steadfastness). See 1 Peter 1:6-7 as well.
- The trials referred to here appears to be poverty and oppression experienced by the poor based on the contents of the letter.
- “Endurance” – steadfastness in verse 3. Here I think of Habakkuk 2:4.

“Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith¹.”
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- The endurance we obtain should perform as it is designed to perform in us. This will enable us to be perfect (mature) and replete.

1:5

- James just said in verse 4, “lacking nothing.” That state of lacking nothing is a result of mature faith. The faith here is steadfastness, which comes from enduring trials. Now in verse 5 he says that if you do lack wisdom then ask God for it.
- God will give wisdom freely (generously) and without rebuke or disapproval (reproach).
- Wisdom will be given to him – see Matthew 7:7

1:6 -8

- We must ask God for wisdom in faith without doubting
- The word faith here comes from a Greek word (pistis) that means “what can be believed; trust; conviction of the truth of anything, belief”
 - pistis occurs 244 times in the New Testament
- The word doubt here comes from the Greek word diakrino and it means to make a distinction, discriminate, prefer, to try, learn by discrimination, to evaluate carefully. It also means to be at variance with oneself (divided within), hesitate. Overall, it involves the state of uncertainty. If we trust God then our certainty is irrelevant. We should be certain in God’s ability and care.
 - We should note here that “doubt” here not referring to an instance within a given circumstance. We all have moments of uncertainty in most of the things we do. The “doubt” here is more so referring to a lifestyle or a “way.”
 - See Proverbs 3:5-6

¹ Or *faithfulness*

- See Matthew 21:21-22 and Mark 11:22-24 regarding asking God
- If God will freely give you wisdom then you should expect to receive it when you ask. That expectation is based on your trust in God. That trust may be tainted by several things, but mainly sin or the perception of sin. In any case, if I trust that God will give me wisdom in a situation then I should believe that I have it while in that situation else I really didn't believe. If that is the case then I shouldn't expect to receive anything from God—here with regards to wisdom.
- **It is important to not that the context of asking and receiving is on wisdom.**
- A person who asks for wisdom and doubts that he receives it will not receive it, nor can he. His double-mindedness (persistent uncertainty) will hinder any wisdom that he might have had to affect the situation.
- Therefore, it appears that if we ask God for wisdom that we can assume to have it since the Scriptures here indicate that God will indeed give it to us. We may not feel anything, but we can still assume that we will have it.

What is wisdom?

wisdom, a term in the Hebrew Bible (OT) standing for many things ranging from the technical skill of the artisan (Exod. 36:8) to the art of government (1 Kings 3:12, 28). It also designates simple cleverness (2 Sam. 14:2), especially the practical skill of coping with life (Prov. 1; 5; 11; 14), and the pursuit of a lifestyle of proper ethical conduct (Prov. 2:9-11 and throughout). Wisdom is also seen as belonging properly to God (Job 28), associated with creation (Prov. 8:22-31), and even identified with the Torah or Law (Ecclus. 24:23).¹

Wisdom is a concept of personal gaining of knowledge, understanding, experience, discretion, and intuitive understanding, along with a capacity to apply these qualities well towards finding solutions to problems.²

Wisdom is more than the ability to choose right and wrong. Wisdom is insight, which can be used to make decisions and to take the “right” course of action. Wisdom is a perspective on things.

Wisdom is more than mere insight as well. It is insight (a different perspective) and the ability to judge based on that insight. For example, it is one thing to have great insight into a situation such that the proper course of action can be determined and another to actually be able to look at what the insight shows and actually make the correct course of action.

We see therefore that wisdom can be applied to many things as it was in the bible. For example you may have the wisdom of the Egyptians (See Acts 7:22), the Wisdom of Solomon, etc. The question then about wisdom can be, “What is the basis or source of the insight or perspective. Someone may perhaps be “street wise” and at the same time be completely foolish in another environment where the wisdom of the street does not apply.

¹ Harper's Bible Dictionary

² From Wikipedia, Wisdom - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom>

Wisdom is therefore relative. However, we seek the one and true wisdom that comes from God. This wisdom affects our very life. The wisdom that God gives is more than a signal of what to do and when. It is more than mere information or directions. It is insight and a new perspective so that you would do the “right” thing because you were able to understand things from a different mode of thinking so to speak or from a different perspective.

Select Scriptures pertaining to wisdom

- Psalm 111:10
- Proverbs 1:7; 9:10

Proverbs 2:1-12 (NASB95)

{1} My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, {2} Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; {3} For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; {4} If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; {5} Then you will discern the fear of the Lord And discover the knowledge of God. {6} For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. {7} He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, {8} Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. {9} Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course. {10} For wisdom will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; {11} Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, {12} To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things;

- We learn from scripture to pursue wisdom
- A double-minded person is one who hesitates. Why does he hesitate? That is the important consideration here.
 - The word “double-minded” literally means “two souls.” This implies that part of a person wants to do one thing, e.g., follow the Lord’s way and the other part wants to do something else. We can’t be true to God and distrusting him at the same time.

1:9 - 11

- Here is a contrast between the rich and the poor.
- When war broke out between the Jews and the Romans in A.D. 66, many rich people lost their fortunes and became poor or lowly.³
- The wealthy landowners exploited the poor throughout the Roman Empire including Palestine. War eventually broke out because of the resulting tension where non-rich Jews slaughtered the Jewish aristocrats.⁴
- The poor were exalted because they did not depend on riches and the difficult times built endurance and overall made their faith stronger
- The rich were exalted of their now lowly position because they would learn to trust God and not their riches. Their trials would too build their faith and bring about endurance.

³ From the Nelson Nelson Study Bible

⁴ The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Craig S. Keener, InterVarsity Press

- Both the rich and the now poor were being strengthened by the trials that they faced.

It is important to note that many Christians faced economic hardships at this time. Some were economically challenged because of the persecution from other Jews. Some were economically challenged because of self-imposed restrictions, e.g., they would no longer participate in a corrupt activity. For the most part, these Christians were economically challenged because of their faith in Christ.

Economic Stress and the Resulting Spiritual Trials

Money is the source of many trials especially in the current economic crisis that the world is undergoing. Because of money we become apprehensive about the future. We worry about what will happen with our jobs and the resulting pay check. We worry about our investments and how we will make ends meet.

Some struggle right now to make ends meet. We look back and beat ourselves up about bad financial choices that we made. We become guilty about our financial mistakes. The thoughts about these things consume us and effectively take us away from our active relationship with the Lord.

Money can affect our thinking in the following ways.

1. Money gives us a sense of worth. We feel that we are worth more if we drive a Lexus than someone who drives a Pinto (remember those cars).
 2. Money gives us a sense of security. We may believe that we don't have to worry about anything as long as we have enough money
 3. Money can bring about pride.
 4. Money can bring about an illusion of power. We think that those who are in power are those with the most money. It is interesting to note that historical figures that did come into great power all started without that power.
- James told the poor that they should be joyful in his exaltation. What is the basis of this exaltation? It is from God. God has looked favorably on the poor. A person's worth is not based on his financial success or abundance.
 - James told the rich to be joyful in his humiliation (the fact that he lost his riches). His wealth is also not dependant on how much he has, but the Spirit of God in him. Our worth is determined by God, not man.

1:12

- Those who endure trials are blessed. They will receive the crown of life because of their perseverance once they have passed the test (been approved). See Revelation 2:10, 1 Corinthians 9:25, Matthew 10:22
- It says that the crown is promised to those who love him. This implies that our love for God is demonstrated by enduring trials against our faith.
- The believer's reward: 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 22:12
- Here our faith is made evident or has the opportunity to express itself through the response to trials.

1:13-15

- God does not tempt us to do evil
- We should never say that we are being tempted by God when we are enticed to sin.
- We are tempted only because of our lust for the object of temptation. For example, a person cannot be tempted with chocolate if he doesn't have a desire for chocolate. A person cannot be tempted with riches he genuinely does not have a lust for it.
- Our lusts carry us into temptation and the result of temptation is sin that leads to death (separation from God).

1:16-18

- Don't be deceived.
- Every good and perfect gift comes from God. Therefore, don't be pulled away by temptation to pursue those things that are not from God.
 1. The good gift (Greek *dosis agathe*) – The act of God giving. This reflects the goodness of receiving something from God.
 2. The perfect gift (Greek *dorema teleion*) – The object of giving, i.e., the gift that is received by the giver. This highlights the perfect quality of what God gives.
- God doesn't change and is not unstable.
- The first century Christians were a type of first fruits of his creatures. They were the first products of the salvation from Jesus Christ, i.e, they were the first Christians.

1:19 - 20

- Every person be...
 3. Quick to listen
 - Proverbs 8:32-35 (wisdom is speaking), Ecclesiastes 5:1
 4. Slow to speak
 - Proverbs 10:19, 13:3", 17:27, 18:13,21*, 21:23; Ecclesiastes 5:23 (towards God)
 - I have learned that things aren't always as they appear. Therefore, we should not be quick to jump to conclusions and spout out our opinions or conclusions about something. We should be quick to listen so that we would gain understanding and a better perspective of the thing.
 - The response to uncertainty is a question not a statement.
 5. Slow to wrath
 - Proverbs 14:17, 29, 15:18, 16:32
- Our wrath does not produce the righteous lifestyle that God requires of us.

1:21

- Reject the unrighteous things (and activities); instead pursue the righteousness of God. Receive the implanted word of God in our souls.

- The word of God is able to save your soul. Notice that wisdom is a principle here. Being wise and striving to live a life consistent with God's way can result in physical as well as spiritual salvation.

1:22 – 25 (Doers of the Word)

- Do what the word says and don't just receive it. Just receiving it without doing what is said is deception.
- Contrast a doer and hear with a hearer only -- See Matthew 7:24-27
- The mirror analogy
 6. The best mirrors were of Corinthian bronze. However, no mirror produced an accurate reflection. There weren't mirrors as we have today (See 1 Corinthians 13:12)
 7. A person who saw himself in a mirror and immediately forgot what he looked like cannot do anything later that would necessitate how he looks.
- The person who continues in the word of God and doesn't forget what was heard (received) and is a doer of the work (lives what the word says) will be blessed in what he does. However, what is he doing? He is doing what the word says.

1:26-27

- If you don't control your speaking then your religion is useless
- What is religion?
 1. Belief in and reverence for God or some supernatural power that is recognized as the creator and ruler of the universe
 2. An organized system of doctrine with an approved pattern of behavior and a proper form of worship.

In James' case both of the above would apply. He would not have been speaking of an organized system of doctrine since the only thing existing at the time was the teachings of Christ, which constituted a way not a set of rules to follow or adhere to. He would definitely have been alluding to the belief God.

We could say that the true way is not evident with an uncontrolled tongue.

- He then says that true and acceptable religion is to take care of the widows and orphans and to keep oneself untainted by the world.
 - The widows and orphans were the most unprotected and needy people in ancient society. They had no direct means of support nor were there automatic legal defenders. They were pretty much on their own
 - Judaism did have procedures to care for the widows and orphans.
 - Exodus 22:21-24, Psalm 146:9, Isaiah 1:17
- True religion is therefore to care for the needy and keep ourselves from the influences of the world.

CHAPTER 2

Favoritism: Verses 1-13

- James starts this section off by that they should not show favoritism (Verse 1).
- There was (and still is) the temptation to show favoritism to rich people who visit a meeting in hopes of making them feel more welcome in order that they may stay with the group. This favoritism was done at the expense of the poor who may also come to a meeting perhaps to enquire about this new “religion.”
- He gives an example of two types of people that enter into a meeting: a rich man and a poor man.
 - If we treat the rich man with respect and treat the poor man with no respect then we are showing favoritism.
 - If our motive for doing something for someone or treating someone a certain way is based on that person’s financial position or some other distinction having nothing to do with the person’s character or the like then we are showing favoritism and therefore sinning.
 - We should treat others in the same way we would want to be treated. That is the guideline for how we should treat other people. How should you treat someone? Put yourself in their shoes so to speak and do accordingly. See Matthew 7:12.

Matthew 7:12 -

{12} “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

- This reveals to us that **discrimination is not only wrong, but a sin**. If we discriminate against one another and treat each other differently based on that discrimination then we sin.

James 2:5 -

{5} Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Who are the “poor of this world?” Is he referring to the poor in Spirit or the financially poor? Let’s look at some background information to understand this verse.

In Palestine the rich were in many cases oppressing the poor (this is not to say that all rich people in Palestine were oppressive).

- Roman law favored the wealthy. A poor person could not put charges against a wealthy person because it was thought that the poor person was doing it for financial gains. The penalty given to a lower-class citizen for conviction of a crime was harsher than what was given to a higher-class citizen
- The Old Testament forbade favoritism to the wealthy

Leviticus 19:15 -

{15} 'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.

James 2:6 -

{6} But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

The Roman courts favored the rich. The rich could bring lawsuits against the poor (socially inferior), but the poor could not bring lawsuits against the rich.

“Poor in this world” – This appears to refer to those who were poor financially. Even a financially poor person can be poor in spirit and a wealthy person can be poor in spirit. So the most probable interpretation given the context of this passage is that the “poor of this world” is referring to the lower-class citizens, i.e., those who were literally poor.

It is not the materially rich people that will enter God's Kingdom or inherit it. It is the people who are rich spiritually (have the Spirit of God within them) that will inherit the kingdom of God.

God did not show favoritism to the rich. However, instead even the poor can become rich (have an abundance of) faith.

Those who are poor are dishonored (by the discriminator) even though God honors them.

2:8-11

- If we truly love our neighbors as ourselves then the idea here is that we won't discriminate (because we wouldn't want to be discriminated against) and we are doing well with regards to living the true Christian way.
- However, those who discriminate break the law.
- Here James makes his point with reference to the law and breaking it. However, aren't we saved by faith and not by the law? Aren't we free from keeping the law? Yes and no. We are no longer under the law with regards to salvation. In other words, merely keeping the law will not save us. This does not mean that we can ignore the law because the law includes the revelation of God to us with regards to interacting with others, interacting with God, and other practical things that God would have us do. So even though we are not saved by the law, the law is still something that we follow indirectly because they still contain the will of God for us.
- We must also remember that James is speaking to Jews that most likely have not abandoned Judaism completely. They would have understood more precisely what James was trying to say to them. We can apply it this way. If we please God in all aspects but one then we are not pleasing God overall.
- If we avoid sin in all aspects of our lives, but sin on one thing then we have sinned and are guilty. A shiny coat may be very clean, but only one spot on it would deem the whole thing as dirty or stained.

2:12-13

- We therefore have to strive to live completely the way of God and not think that there are exceptions to it.
- “The Law of Freedom (or Liberty)” – This is referring to the Word of God (the Law) that brings liberty from sin. The law of liberty can be seen as the “way of God.” It is the principle that we are to live by as Christians and is revealed to us by the Holy Scriptures.
- We are to live our lives as those who will be judged by God. Will God reward us for our justice or will he be displeased with us because of our discrimination.

2:14-17 (Faith without works is dead)

- Notice that James said, “If a brother or sister...” This is referring to a fellow Christian (or perhaps a fellow Jew). I believe the context is fellow Christian since the topic is faith.
- It is expected that Christians would help one another and not just talk.
- It is meaningless to claim to be of the faith (a Christian) and your works (the things you do) are not consistent with your profession of faith.
- A person can claim to have faith (be a Christian) and yet their lives show that they are something else. James makes the point here that our works (the things we do) is an expression of the truth that is within us.

Proverbs 23:6-8 -

{6} Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, Or desire his delicacies; {7} For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, “Eat and drink!” But his heart is not with you. {8} You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten, And waste your compliments.

In general people can put of a façade to give the impression of being one way when inside they are something else.

Talk is cheap and actions speak.

2:18-19

- Here the distinction is made between faith without works and faith accompanied by works
- If a person truly has faith in Christ (and therefore saved) then there will be a change in that person’s life. True faith effects change in a person.
- If a person believes in a cause then that belief will reveal itself in the things that the person does.
- James therefore proclaimed that he could show his faith by the things that he does (his works). This is not to say that works justifies the individual. Works are the result of the faith that is within. Therefore, if there are no works then we become suspicious of the proclaimed faith.

Matthew 3:7-8 -

{7} But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? {8} “Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

- Again talk is cheap and actions speak
- Even saying that one believes in God isn't saying much. Even the demons believe there is a God.

2:20-22

James 2:20-21 -

{20} But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? {21} Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? {22} You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

- Before Abraham actually offered Isaac as a sacrifice he believed that God would raise him from the dead in order to keep the promise that he had made to him previously. See Gen 22:9, 10, 12, 16–18.
- Faith was active with works and what Abraham did (his works) perfected his faith. His faith grew or matured because of what he did.
- Obedience requires action not just talk. Abraham believed God and he acted on that belief. His faith in God manifested itself in the attempted sacrifice of Isaac.

2:23-24

- Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness because of what he did not just an abstract belief.
- So we are not justified by faith all by itself. We are also justified by works in that those works are a result of the faith that is within us. So the two go hand in hand.

2:25-26

- James presents the example of the faith of Rahab. See Joshua 2:1-14.
- Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. They both work together.

CHAPTER 3

3:1

- It appears that there were many Jewish Christians that aspired to be teachers. James' tone here suggests that too many desired to be teachers.

- The teachers here were probably the unofficial teachers that would speak in the synagogue meetings as opposed to teachers at the level of the Apostles.
- A teacher is one who instructs. The word Rabbi (Rabboni) also meant “My Teacher” as a master of students. See John 1:38; Matthew 23:7-8.
- Much latitude was given in the synagogue meetings for even strangers to speak. Paul took advantage of this.
- Teachers have a responsibility in the body of Christ. They must surely practice what they teach, which means that they profess to know the truth. Their judgment is stricter (has a greater condemnation) because of this. A teacher therefore must take his or her position very seriously.
- Notice that James included himself in “we who teach...”

Question: Some versions of the Bible use the phrase, “brothers and sisters” instead of “brethren” in verse 1, e.g., the New Century Version, NLT. Do you think there is a problem with that and if so what is it?

3:2

Stumble means to fall into sin or waywardness; make an error (blunder); to come to an obstacle to belief (See 1 Corinthians 1:23)

- A person that doesn’t stumble in speech is a mature person who is able to control his whole body.

3:3 – 5

James gives examples of how small things can affect big things. A horse is controlled because of the bit in its mouth. A ship is steered by a comparatively small rudder.

Likewise, the tongue affects big things even though it is a small part of the body.

3:6

James paints a picture of the tongue as being a major component in defiling us. Jesus taught us that it is

Matthew 12:36 (NKJV) {36} But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment.

Matthew 15:11 (NKJV) {11} Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

Matthew 15:18 (NKJV) {18} But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.

“set on fire the course of nature” means to set on fire the course of existence. Our tongue (the things we say) affects the course of history (or life).

The tongue itself is set on fire by hell (Gehenna).

Gehenna is a place in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem where human sacrifice had been offered (Jeremiah 7:31) and where continuous burning of rubbish. This made Gehenna (or hell) to be a symbol of the lake of fire.

The tongue is motivated by evil.

We have a picture here of the tongue setting fire to the course of life and itself being ignited by hell itself.

3:7-8

Man have tamed all kinds of animals, but is unable to tame the tongue.

The tongue is an unruly evil and is full of deadly poison.

3:9-12

We use our tongue to bless God (worship and honor) and yet we use the same tongue to curse others. This should not be. A Christian should not have a mouth that says evil. We should speak righteousness.

3:13

James asked a rhetorical question. Wise describes one with moral insight and skill in the practical issues of life. Understanding refers to intellectual perception and scientific acumen.

Wisdom and understanding in this context are not measured by degrees, but by deeds. True wisdom and understanding are measured by the application of such to life.

This is similar to the principle that faith without works is dead. Just as true faith is seen outwardly, true wisdom and understanding are also seen outwardly.

3:14

Bitter envy (zealous jealousy) and self-seeking (selfish ambition—working for personal gain) in one's heart results in one boasting and therefore lying against the truth (falsely representing that which is supposed to be righteous or of wisdom)

3:15-16

The wisdom demonstrated by envy and selfish ambition does not come from God. This type of wisdom is earthly (non-spiritual), sensual and demonic.

Envy and self-seeking is an environment where confusion and every evil exist.

3:17

The wisdom that comes from above (from God) is

- Pure (free from defilement, holy)
- Peaceable (a spirit or disposition of calmness)
- gentle
- Willing to yield (reasonable)
- Full of mercy and good fruits
- Without partiality
- Without hypocrisy

3:18

The fruit (results) of righteousness is sown in peace by the peace makers.

Therefore, wisdom and understanding that come from God produces fruits of righteousness and that in turn is sown by those who perpetuate peace.

CHAPTER 4

4:1-3

The source of their quarrels and conflicts was their own lusts, which wage war within. See Titus 3:9 and Romans 7:23 respectively.

The lust for things causes all types of sin to occur such as murder. People lust for things and are envious of what others have and they do bad things in an attempt to get those things.

“You do not have” should not be taken to mean that they don’t have the things they lust for because they don’t ask God. It should be taken to mean that they don’t have things because their hearts are wrong based on what he says in verse 3.

We should not expect God to give us things when we ask merely to satisfy our own lusts or with the wrong motives.

The greed of humanity is what is behind much of the crimes that are committed. People murder each other because they want what the other has and can’t get it. People steal from each other because of their own lusts. Our very economy is driven by the lust and greed of wealthy people (or those who want to be wealthy).

4:4-5

- Note the use of “adulterers” and “adulteresses.” This signifies the point that they have broken their relationship with God to be joined to another.
- To be friends of the world automatically puts you in enmity (hostility) with God.
 - Matthew 6:24
- This means that those who want to be friends with the world have made themselves enemies of God.

- The important point here is that God is a jealous God. That means that he does not tolerate infidelity and therefore demands loyalty. This is why James used the word adulterers to describe their broken relationship.
- God's jealousy is revealed to us in Ex 20:5; 34:14; Ps. 78:58; 79:5.
- Evidently the people were embracing the world system, which is consistent with James' discussion about their lust.

4:6

- God is a jealous God, but he gives more grace
- God resists the proud (contends against)
- However, God gives grace to the humble

4:7-8

- Since God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud then we should submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from us. The important point here is to submit to God. This implies abandoning the pursuit of worldly lusts and instead pursuing a relationship with the Lord. James is calling for the people to repent. If we do this then we can resist the devil and he will flee.
- If we get closer to God then he will come closer to us. Our goal therefore is to draw closer and closer to God and we will indeed be able to resist the Devil.
- James calls on them to cleanse their hands, i.e., stop sinning
- The double minded is impure. So to purify the heart will eliminate double mindedness

4:9-10

- This is a call to give up the pursuit for worldly pleasures. Be sorry for your sins.
- Turn revelry to humility.
- Humble oneself in God's sight and he will exalt you.
 - Matthew 23:12
 - Luke 14:7-11

4:11-12

- Do not judge one another or speak evil of one another.
- Anyone who judges or speaks evil of a fellow Christian speaks evil of and judges the law.
- We are not qualified to judge one another.
- God is the only one that can judge.

4:13-16

- We don't know what tomorrow holds so we cannot say for sure what we will do tomorrow.

- We should recognize that anything that we can or cannot do is dependant on the will of God.
- We can't see one second ahead of us.

4:17

- If we know to good and don't do it then we have sinned.
- We can get caught up in pursuing our own lusts that we neglect to do what is right for our neighbor for example.

CHAPTER 5

5:1-6

- Here the basic theme is that the rich will be judged.
- The rich here should be understood as those who obtained their wealth by corruption (vs. 2)
 - *James 5:2 (NKJV) {2}Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*
- We also see that the rich were oppressing their servants (employees)
- We also see that the rich were not paying their servants what was due them.
- The Old Testament prophets also pronounced judgment on those who treated their employees unfairly. See Isaiah 3:14, 15; 10:2. See also Ezekiel 18:12,13
 - *Isaiah 3:14 (NKJV) {14}The LORD will enter into judgment With the elders of His people And His princes: "For you have eaten up the vineyard; The plunder of the poor is in your houses.*
 - *Isaiah 3:15 (NKJV) {15} What do you mean by crushing My people And grinding the faces of the poor?" Says the Lord GOD of hosts.*
 - *Isaiah 10:2 (NKJV) {2}To rob the needy of justice, And to take what is right from the poor of My people, That widows may be their prey, And that they may rob the fatherless.*
 - *Ezekiel 18:12 (NKJV) {12}If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence, Not restored the pledge, Lifted his eyes to the idols, Or committed abomination;*
 - *Ezekiel 18:13 (NKJV) {13} If he has exacted usury Or taken increase— Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.*

5:7-12

- Here the picture is of patience for the judgment of the Lord to occur.
- They were suffering, but one day they will be delivered.
- An illustration was given of a farmer who waits until the right time for the harvest.
- The coming of the Lord is at hand. This should be taken to mean that the judgment of the Lord on the rich oppressors was near.
- James instructed them not to grumble at one another else they could be under judgment.

- An example is given of how the prophets had suffered and how they were counted blessed
- Another illustration is given of Job's suffering and how in the end God's will was established and how God is merciful and compassionate.
- James instructs them not to swear by heaven or earth. Just say yes or no and mean it and that should be enough. See Matthew 5:33-37.

Matthew 5:33-37 (NKJV) {33} "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' {34}But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; {35} nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. {36}Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. {37}But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

5:13-18

- Those who are suffering should pray
- Those who are cheerful should sing psalms (songs).
- If anyone is sick then that person should call the elders of the church and have them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- The prayer of faith will save the sick

There are several interpretations of James statements about praying for the sick.

1. Pray for the person in addition to applying available medical remedies to effect healing of the body
2. Pray for the person and ritually anoint him with oil and he will be healed
3. Pray for the weak and weary and they will be restored.

The word "sick" is translated from the Greek work "astheneo." It means to be weak, feeble, to be without strength, powerless. It also means to be weak in means, needy, poor, or to be feeble, sick.

This word is used in Acts to denote weak faith or a weak conscience (Acts 20:35; Romans 6:19; 14:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9-12)

- *Acts 20:35 (NKJV) {35} I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "*
- *Romans 6:19 (NKJV) {19} I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*
- *Romans 14:1 (NKJV) {1} Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.*
- *1 Corinthians 8:9-12 (NKJV) {9} But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. {10}For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? {11}And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom*

Christ died? {12} But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

- The word is also used for physical illness.
- Anoint is from the Greek word “aleipho,” which means to rub with oil.
- In verse 15 the word “kamno” is used and is translated to “sick.” This word means to grow weary, be weary; to be sick.
- The word sick should therefore not be confined to mean only those who are physically sick. Given the context of James at this point, we have to include those who are weary since he preceded this discussion with instruction on being patient. I am reminded here of something that Solomon said.

Proverbs 13:12 (NKJV) {12} Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

- In verse 16 the word heal is translated from the Greek word “iaomai.” It means to cure, heal, to make whole, to free from errors and sins, to bring about salvation.

Whether James is speaking specifically of those who are physically sick, spiritually sick or both is not the main point. The main point is that we should pray for each other when we are weary, whether from physical illness or just the pressures of the world (in their case persecution). This is what we have from these verses

1. Those who are sick (weary or physically ill) should call for the elders of the church
2. The elders of the church will pray over the sick person and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord (by the Lord’s authority)
3. The prayer of faith will deliver (rescue) the sick and the Lord will raise the sick person up.
4. If he has committed sins then his sins will be forgiven
5. Therefore confess you sins to one another and pray for one another that they may be delivered, restored, renewed.

An illustration of Elijah who prayed that the rain would stop and then it would start (See 1 kings 17:1, 18:1)

The point is that effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person produces much. I think it is important to note that the prayer of a righteous person is what produces much.

Therefore, we who strive to live a righteous life and who are justified by faith should surely pray for one another whether for physical, mental, or spiritual restoration.

5:19-20

There are some who lose their way because of the things that life throws at them so to speak. It is for the church to restore such a person.

It is doubtful that James is referring to hell when he speaks of saving a soul from death since he was talking to the redeemed, i.e., those who had already been saved. Perhaps he was

referring to the results of falling away from the way and being destroyed by the world in a more practical sense. His sins will be forgiven (covered – See Ps 31:1, Prov. 10:12, 1 Peter 4:8)

CONCLUSION

We see here a letter of encouragement. James instructs the church as follows

1. Endure trials and profit from them as it produces patience and perseverance
2. All are rich in the eyes of God. The rich should not oppress the poor and the poor should not condemn the rich.
3. Endure temptation
4. Do not think that God would entice anyone to sin
5. Be doers of the word and not just hearers.
6. Do not show favoritism towards each other
7. True faith is accompanied by works.
8. The power of the tongue
9. True wisdom is from God not from the world
10. Selfishness and pride is what causes strife within the church
11. Be humble
12. Do not judge one another (Matthew 7:1)
13. The rich oppressors will be judged
14. The oppressed should be patient for the Day of the Lord to come
15. Be patient while going through troubles
16. Pray for one another to remain strong in the faith
17. Help to restore someone who has fallen away from the way.

We deal with many of the same issues that the early church here did. We go through various troubles in life and there are always those things that test our faith. There are things that life throws at us that will cause us to have animosity towards others who are not going through the same troubles. They can cause us to begin to blame God or even to lose faith in God for our lives.

We all need to be encouraged from time to time and the church should be the environment for that encouragement. Church should not be primarily services and duties. Church is the fellowship of believers and as a fellowship we should help one another.

Our faith should remain in God and we should help each other to maintain that confidence in him. I remember when I was laid off from work how I had to work hard to maintain confidence that God would indeed take care of me. The situation looked bleak. However, I was encouraged by others and that helped a great deal.

Currently the United States is going through a major financial crisis. Thousands of people are losing their jobs and homes. The church should help one another in times like these. We should reach out to help fellow Christians who are in need. We should do what we can with what we have. If we can help then we should help. There is no sense talking about being a Christian and how we have the love of God when we don't help a fellow Christian in need.

Christianity is not a religion. It is a fellowship. It is a family. It is the union of all believers into the family of God. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus through faith because of the grace of God are Christians.

Let's remember that Christianity and church is not necessarily the same thing. We note that James did not refer to services or such activities. He referred to practical lifestyle issues. He referred to things that we should do and should be daily. A person who is a Christian is revealed by his life not confession.

Be strong. Go through life with wisdom and patience. Help one another. Live the word of God as you learn more of it. Know that God loves you and that we should actively love one another.

QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in this study and based on your own studies.

1. Who wrote the Epistle of James and how do we know this?
2. Were there any other men named James during the time of the epistle's writing? If so then who were they?
3. Who was James?
4. What are some other beliefs about the identity of the person that wrote this epistle?
5. Approximately when was the epistle written?
6. What evidence is there for the date that this epistle was written?
7. What was the purpose of the letter?
8. Who is Josephus?
9. Who was the epistle written to and what was their condition?

CHAPTER 1

10. What was the advice that James gave the reader with regard to trials (Chapter 1)?
11. According to James what should we do if we lack wisdom?
12. How should we approach God with respect to wisdom?
13. What does it mean to be double-minded?
14. What does the word "faith" mean in this context?
15. Should we expect to receive wisdom from God if we ask? Why?
16. What is wisdom?
17. How were the rich and the poor exalted respectively?
18. How can money affect our thinking?
19. What does it mean to tempt in this context?
20. Does God tempt us?
21. Why are we tempted fundamentally?
22. Where does every good and perfect gift come from?
23. What does it mean to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to wrath?
24. James said to be _____ of the word. What does that mean?
25. How does James define religion?

Chapter 2

1. What does James say about favoritism?
2. Faith without works is _____. What does that mean?
3. What is meant by faith in this context?
4. What is the relationship between faith (in this context) and works?
5. How is a person's faith revealed?
6. According to James how was Abraham justified?

Chapter 3

1. What was James' advice relating to the church and teachers?

2. In verse 2 what does “stumble” mean?
3. According to James what part of the body defiles us? Jesus taught the same thing. Do you know where?
4. Why do you think it is important to control the tongue?
5. What are two types of wisdom and what are the characteristics of each?
6. What do wisdom and understanding that come from God produce?

Chapter 4

1. What did James say was the cause of the church’s quarrels and conflicts?
2. According to James, why didn’t the church not have things?
3. When they did ask God for things why didn’t they receive it?
4. Why do you suppose James called the church adulterers?
5. What does it mean that God is a jealous God?
6. Who does God give grace to (4:6)
7. James said to resist the devil and he will flee. However, what must we do prior to resisting?
8. What does it mean to resist the devil, i.e., how do you do that?
9. Why shouldn’t we judge one another?
10. What should we be mindful of when we begin to make plans about the future?

Chapter 5

1. What will happen to the rich?
2. What were the rich doing to the poor?
3. What advice did James give to those who were being oppressed pertaining to the judgment of the rich?
4. James said to not swear by heaven or earth. What does that mean?
5. How might we interpret James’ instruction about praying over the sick and anointing them with oil so that they would be healed?
6. What was the general lesson of James’ instruction about prayer?
7. What could the word “sick” refer to?
8. What was James’ instruction pertaining to Christians who lose their way?