

THE BOOK OF JAMES

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**(As always, revisions are necessary when new
information is obtained)**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES¹

James is one of the more controversial books in the New Testament due to its Jewish character and to what some feel is a legalistic presentation of the faith. Martin Luther, a noted anti-Semite, called it "An epistle of straw" for both reasons also doubting its canonicity. Later he retracted the remark. But he could never quite be content with its inclusion in the New Testament. Over the centuries there has been a lively controversy over the authenticity of the authorship as well as of the content in general.

Most of the New Testament books after Philemon are in a group where the authenticity of authorship does not have as much support as the books listed up to Philemon. In fact, the New Testament is essentially ordered according to the level of authenticity that could be mustered to support their inclusion in the canon. For James, there is the testimony of third century church fathers. But even as early as the 4th century, some church fathers doubted the validity of its inclusion.² Nevertheless, the Book of James was not rejected by the early church but rather copied and distributed through the first and second century.

The book itself is different in style as well. It is a book of admonitions as well as encouragement, firm mandates and correction as well as wisdom. It deals with what Christian responses ought to be forthcoming in a setting of persecution, uncertainty and struggle coming mostly from within their own Jewish community. For the most part it is James addressing "conduct unbecoming"³ in the community to which he is writing. The readers seem to have difficulty in knowing how best to deal with their trials and are in turmoil about what part God plays in it all. It seems they responded with doubt about their faith in God, and with anger, frustration, criticism, and prejudice toward others as well as trying to gain favor with the powerful. And apparently some are making verbal comments that are unacceptable for a believer in Christ. He makes this clear as he writes, and he gets more direct and confrontational. There are many conduct issues including discrimination against the poor, language, spiritual degradation, favoritism of the rich, self-centeredness, infighting, even murder is mentioned and, bottom line, the failure to put into practice the very essence of what it means to be a Christian and act accordingly.

¹ See "Summary Outline" in the appendix.

² For a fuller explanation of the basis for inclusion of James in the New Testament, see the article in the appendix.

³ Normally used as a military term, and applies to officers as well who are held to a higher standard, as Christians ought to be also.

There is a strong theme that challenging tradition, personal pride and favoritism and favors humility, caring for the poor, and doing the things that come from the heart and motivation of a true person of faith. One could say that James is a New Testament book of wisdom in that a somewhat proverbial style is adopted to broadcast the wisdom therein. Though he preaches on several subjects likely brought to his attention by Jews abroad (whom he heard about in Jerusalem), his overall theme is the correction of attitudes, behavior, responses, conduct, and beliefs that are problematic among the people he is addressing.

In reading James, his dialogue seems often choppy and disconnected. But after a time, it begins to flow together though seemingly disjointed at times. This is partially due to the fact that he is writing exclusively to Jews and does not explain a lot of his thoughts as Paul or John does when Gentiles are also addressed.

One chief problem with trying to interpret James is determining whom he is actually addressing in terms of either those who believe and are Christians and those who may not yet be believers. Though this is a challenge at times, there is no doubt he begins by addressing believers, all of whom appear to be Jews according to his salutation. As one continues through his work, it is clear he addresses believers at most times. In 5:1-6, he addresses the "rich" directly before returning to "brethren."

Another problem with trying to interpret James is his lack of defining the terms he uses. Terms like "word", "law", "royal law", "perfect law," and "law of liberty" must be interpreted as his context indicates, but this is not an easy task. Just because we would like these terms to mean one thing or another is not a sound basis for interpreting them as such. But there are helps along the way as we shall see in the text.

In addition, though we may think James is speaking theologically, especially in chapter two, I find that this is not the case at all. James' intent is not to espouse a theological framework, but to use terms believing Jews can grasp so James message about conduct will be understood. It's one thing to say one has faith as millions do today. It's another to actually see it in practice in Christian love and truth. James never says that works alone, apart from faith, can bring salvation and makes that clear in chapter 2, verse 22.

James has a goal and it is not theological. It is to correct a terrible situation in the hearts, minds, faith, and behavior of those naming the name of Christ. Considering that his book is quite early in the church history and that he did not have any

materials from which to refer as we do today (namely Paul's grasp of the bigger picture) it is a remarkable book. He often reflects Jesus' teachings and employs Leviticus 19:18 as a key passage, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD" demonstrating his intent in what he writes. Both Jesus and Paul refer to this passage for much the same reasons.

More will be expressed in the commentary.

Another problem is the English translations that arbitrarily translate words like "test" "temptation", "lust" in chapter one, and so on, without connecting the concepts to the intent James is trying to get across. Often these translations leave the reader misdirected. It could have been done more carefully in my opinion since the word "test" and "tempt" or ("temptation") have the same root, and the word "lust" conveys sexual temptation, which James is not concerned with at all in his comments within the context. Fortunately many translations use "desires" or "consuming desires" or the like instead of "lust" giving the reader other options to consider.

Which brings us to who might have actually written it and when it might have been written. There is nothing in the book itself to tell us who this particular James might be and that itself is a clue. His readers must have known which "James: this was from as we will investigate in the next sections. Often, the conclusion of an epistle gives us much personal and historical information. But the Book of James ends rather abruptly as if there is a missing part to it. So we are left with the testimony of the church fathers, tradition and general consensus from early on in church history. The author only identifies himself as "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..." at the beginning. If there was more to the book, it is lost.

OVERVIEW OF AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF WRITING

Four men in the New Testament have this name as we will discuss in some detail later. This James is most likely the oldest son of Mary after Jesus' birth who became the leader of the Jerusalem council as we see in Acts 15. He is mentioned many times with respect in the New Testament as we will see. The author of this epistle could not have been the apostle James, brother of John sons of Zebedee as he was executed in c. 44 A.D. and is likely too early for this epistle to have been written. The two other men named "James" did not have the stature or impact to be credited with writing an epistle with only mentioning his first name as

identification. So when "James" wrote this epistle, everyone getting it knew who it was from and didn't have to guess. James is noted for writing to believers outside of Jerusalem and even Israel as we see in Acts 15:22-29. So James of Mary and Joseph is the most probable candidate.

Now, to when it was written. There is an opinion among scholars that James could be the first New Testament book ever written, although Galatians is the more likely. The date of the epistle must be prior to c. 62 A.D. when James was killed.⁴ Thus, it could have been written in the 50's, or even the late 40's. This makes sense in that the contents are to Jewish converts "dispersed abroad" and there is no mention of prominent events or persons that appeared sometime later such as Paul, his teachings and epistles or even Peter and his writings and work. Nothing is said about the church in Jerusalem. He doesn't use the terms "Christian" to describe the constituency of believers. This points to an early writing as believers in Christ were not called "Christians" until early in Paul's ministry at Antioch in Syria (11:26). And James' work does not reflect the advanced understanding of the New Covenant as Paul came to understand and preach it. If it was written after the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15, c. 49-50) it makes no mention of the revelations there or of the Gentile controversy. In this light, it is a remarkable book for its time and shows James' grasp of essential Christian ethical standards based in Jesus' teachings and that of the Old Testament prophets. He is on the verge of a complete understanding of grace, but doesn't seem to quite have it all down if one takes his comments as legalistic. This will be examined as we go.⁵

A personal note:

James is one of my Biblical heroes. There are a lot of reasons for this and they will be made evident as we look at the person of "James" and his miraculous transformation from a sceptic to a martyr for his stand for the gospel and the truth

⁴ Josephus in his "Antiquities of the Jews," book 20, chapter 9 writes, "Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrim 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:..." Lecceius Albinus was the Roman Procurator in Judea after Porcius Festus and ruled from 62-64. He was responsible for having James stoned to death for violation of religious law as prompted by the Jews. A first century ossuary bearing the engraved name, "James (Jacob) son of Joseph brother of Jesus" was discovered in Jerusalem and elevated a controversy about its meaning and authenticity. It could have held the remains of James, but the ossuary was found empty.

⁵ Much of the controversy over James' "apparent legalism" stems from the incident in Antioch Paul speaks of and answers in Galatians 2:11-21. This will be addressed in the appendix.

about his older brother about whom he once may have felt ought to have been committed.

WHO IS THIS JAMES?

Let's start with the name itself. The name "James" is an odd derivation from the original Hebrew "יַעֲקֹב" (Yaa-qob) - or in the English, "Jacob." A theory about how it arrived in the English as "James" can be found online in several places and one you can type in for more information is: "Abarim Publications James". In nearly every other language the Bible is translated on earth, his name is "Jacob" or a close variation thereof. Only in English do we have "James." There are other Biblical names in English that are far off from the original giving us an idea of how important it is to do a little research on all our English texts of the Bible. This commentary hopes to help with that task.

"Jacob" is a very popular name in the Jewish tradition, even today. It first occurs in Genesis 25:26, "Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she (Rebekah) gave birth to them." "Jacob" or "Yaa-qob" means "heel." Here, Jacob was born holding on to his brother Esau's heel as Esau was the first born. It came to mean that Jacob would cause his older brother to stumble and fall, which he did. It was Jacob who was renamed "Israel", and from whom the twelve tribes of Israel were born and who formed the "children of Israel" (or Jacob). Today, the nation of Israel exists and the beginnings are from Isaac's son Jacob.

The name "James" in the Greek New Testament is Ἰακώβος (Iakōbos) - "yahk-oh-bohs." This is from the Septuagint as the Jewish translators took "Yah-qob" and rendered it in as close an approximation for the Greek of that day. In pronouncing both, they are quite similar, but not pronounced anywhere near "James."

Turning to the New Testament then, we see that there are four different "James" noted in the New Testament.

1. In Luke 6:16 we have the father of Judas (not "Iscaiot") mentioned and his name is "James" (or Jacob). Also in Acts 1:13.
2. We have the sons of Zebedee, James and John mentioned several times, but this

is not the "James" of our focus. This is however the "James" of the oft mentioned trio, Peter, James and John.

3. In Matthew 10:3, we have the son of Alpheus, James, one of the twelve apostles, also known as James the son of Alpheus to distinguish him James the son of Zebedee. Some think that he is also the "James the less" of Mark 15:40, but this is highly debated and we will look at this a little later on.

4. In Matthew 13:55-56, we have "our" James, as the verse reads, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?"

Being mentioned first would make him the first born son after Jesus. He is likely the "James" mentioned in Matthew 27:56 where Matthew refers to "Mary, the mother of James and Joseph." But we will see.

THE LIFE OF JAMES

James is alluded to several times before his conversion, but not in a complimentary way. Here is where he gets interesting. Several passages from the gospels give us a feel for how Jesus' family and community felt about Him and the confusion that is expressed about them:

Matthew 13:54-58, "He came to His hometown (Nazareth) and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, 'Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary (Miriam in the Hebrew and Greek), and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?' And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his *own* household.' And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief."

Mark 3:20-35, "And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. When His own people heard *of this*, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.' The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.' And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in

parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"-- because they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.' Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent *word* to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, 'Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.' Answering them, He said, 'Who are My mother and My brothers?' Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.'

Comment: In Matthew 13:57 they took "offense" at Him. The same is said in Mark 6:3. This "offense" means that He was a stumbling block, and an impediment in their path to religious sanctification. This fulfills Isaiah 8:14-15,

"Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, *And* a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many will stumble over them, Then they will fall and be broken; They will even be snared and caught."

The term in Mark 3:21, "When His own people..." means those of His own household, His family or kinsmen. In Mark 3:31-35, we have what appears to be a criticism from Jesus directed toward His family. However, His words only apply to those who are not intent on knowing and doing the will of God. Certainly Mary, His mother can be considered to be one who knows and does God's will though she may never have envisioned or anticipated the ministry of her son thus far. Her confusion is understandable if that is the case.

But, we have John 2:1-12 where Jesus, His mother, disciples and probably His brothers and sisters were in attendance to witness the miraculous water being turned into wine. John's order and chronology are different than the Synoptic Gospels, but may show that James could have witnessed a thought provoking event. The story concludes with,

"This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and *His* brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days."

But, according to John's chronology, James was not yet a believer. For in John 7:2-10 we read,

"Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. Therefore His brothers said to Him, 'Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.' For not even His brothers were believing in Him. So Jesus said to them, 'My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.' Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret."

A little later in the same context, Jesus did appear in the temple area and was in a discussion with the "Jews." His brothers were likely in the crowd. As he was answering accusations, He said,

John 7:19-20, "Did not Moses give you the Law, and *yet* none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?' The crowd answered, 'You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?'" (This illustrates the general impression the Jews and the crowds had of Jesus as they tried to figure out how He could know and do such things.)

The next day in the temple again with the Pharisees and scribes the conversation continued along the same lines:

John 8:45-52, "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God.' The Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?' Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not

seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.' The Jews said to Him, 'Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'"

And in John 10:18-20, "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.' A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"

The impact of both the religious leadership and much of the populace had to be significant on James. It took a special post-resurrection appearance by Jesus to James himself to shake him up and apparently bring him to faith. (I Corinthians 15:7). But he may have actually witnessed the torture, death and burial of Jesus. With this, he may have been quite convinced of the impossibility that Jesus could have survived. A later resurrection appearance to Him by Jesus would then have a greater impact than any contrary rumors. In Acts 1:14, Mary, the mother of Jesus, James and all of Jesus' brothers were there as well, demonstrating that a conversion of His family had taken place during the forty days Jesus appeared to many after His resurrection.

Now, is he the same "James" as "James the Less" of Mark 15:47? This is the only reference to any James as "the Less." I tend to think that our James and this man are the same, but can't say for absolutely sure. The Catholics have all sorts of twisted ideas about the family of Jesus because of their doctrine that Mary was a perpetual virgin. So they have to assign all the references of Jesus' family to some other source for parentage. But no such statement appears in Scripture. Let's look at the passages and contexts where "James the Less" seems to be.

Mark 15:47 takes place at the crucifixion of Jesus. All the accounts have a list of those at Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial. First, Matthew 27:54-56, 59-61.

54: Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" 55: Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. 56: Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

59: And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60: and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61: And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

So we have in Matthew, Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the "other Mary." The "other Mary" is most likely the wife of Clopas,⁶ who may be the same "Clopas" (Cleopas) whom Jesus encountered after His resurrection on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:18 ff.

Mary, the mother of James and Joseph could easily be also the mother of Jesus since Mary's next two births after Jesus were James and Joseph. The name of her second son, "Joseph" would have been in honor of her husband as well as the patriarch for whom he was named. It would be a weird coincidence for some unknown "Mary" to have sons with the same names and in the same order. And why would she be mentioned anyway unless the readers already knew who she and her sons were? No other "Mary" with these two sons is noted anywhere else in the New Testament. Further, the gospels were penned after James became prominent in Jerusalem and Judea, and probably written after his death in c. 62 A.D. Thus, the designation of Mary as "the mother of James" would be understood as a known entity. Let's continue. In Mark 15:39-41, we have the same account but with the designation "James the Less" for the "James" in Matthew.

39: "When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40: There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of 'James the Less' and Joses, and Salome. 41: When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."

"Joses" is another designation for Joseph. Salome is normally understood to be the oldest daughter of Mary and Joseph. Again, Mary Magdalene is noted. The mention of the many women of Galilee is significant as we will see. This is the only place where the James who attended the crucifixion with his mother Mary is called "James the less."

Then Mark notes in 46-47, "Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped

⁶ See John 19:25.

Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of James were looking on *to see* where He was laid. This is the same Mary from verse 40, except "James" is not mentioned here. It is possible he just bailed after seeing Jesus' die. Like most Jews, this would end any hope that Jesus was actually the Messiah.

Luke has the same account and adds some help (23:55-24:10)

55: "Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid."

These women would include Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, James, Joseph and so on.

56: Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

24:1: But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2: And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3: but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4: While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; 5: and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6: "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7: saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." 8": And they remembered His words, 9: and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10: Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles."

Again, "Mary, the mother of James." We'll, now we know that this Mary came from Galilee. We also know that Mary, the mother of Jesus came to Jerusalem during these days from Galilee. We also know that her first born child after Jesus was James and her next son after that was Joseph. We also know she was at the crucifixion as John notes in 19:25-27.

25: "Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary

Magdalene. 26: When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' 27: Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*."

And then, some forty days later Luke writes this account in Acts 1:13-14,

13: "When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. 14: These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

Here, Mary is noted among the women in the upper room awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. He is obviously a believer now. But more noticeable is that three men named James are mentioned but both described by their fathers to differentiate them from one another. Those of "His brothers" might well have included "our" James, but we can't be sure. But when the name "James" is mentioned alone with no parental link, it is James, the son of Mary, Jesus' mother. As the gospels accounts record what took place, James had no prominence. In fact, he was an unbeliever and apparently quite skeptical, if not demeaning toward Jesus. He is not noted with any respect until later in the early church after his conversion and his rise in importance as the church grew. Then his name is mentioned without any parental link because all came to know who he was. Perhaps once designated as "James the Less" by Mark, he came to be known as "James the Just" in tradition and church history.

He became the acknowledged head of the church and counsel in Jerusalem and even Peter submitted himself to his leadership and authority. Early on, during the major persecution against the church in which Saul of Tarsus was part, and where Stephen was stoned, we are told in Acts 8:1, "And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. James and the other remaining apostles stood their ground to care for the church, the destitute widows and orphans and those in need.

Other references of James are found in Acts 12:13-17; 15:1-21; Galatians 1:19, 2:9, 2:12, and Jude 1:1. In each of these he is mentioned without need for

identifying him by another means, except in Galatians 1:19 where Paul calls him "the Lord's brother." This demonstrates how well known and respected he was.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

CHAPTER ONE

1: "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. 2: Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3: knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4: And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5: But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6: But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7: For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8: *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

1: This is the only place where the author is identified in the book or in the New Testament.⁷ But it is well supported that this is James, the oldest son born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus. The fact that there is no other identification tells us that the readers knew who this "James" was. The only "James" with the reputation and authority to write this would be the "James" (Jacob) born of Joseph and Mary after Jesus' birth.

He identifies himself as, "a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," affirming his faith. But he does not use the term "apostle" of himself telling us he was not one of the twelve. This also tells us the letter is early because in Galatians 1:19 Paul calls James an "apostle." But James may not have thought of himself as an "apostle" at the time of his writing as the term was limited to the twelve for quite some time. Or, he may have simply been a very humble man after the shocking realization that his older brother was indeed resurrected from the dead and was the true Messiah (Christ). Both may have played a part in his not using the term.

A "bond servant" "δουϋλος" is a slave – a slave - either by purchase, subjection, indentured or voluntary. A slave could be bought and sold and was considered the property of the one who purchased him/her. Paul makes the position clear when he writes in I Corinthians 6:20, "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." And in I Corinthians 7:21-23, "Were you called while

⁷ See introduction regarding authorship.

a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." And in Acts 20:28 to the elders at Ephesus he said, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

So we are slaves through being purchased from the auction block and set free from slavery to sin and free to be slaves of righteousness.⁸ In this case, James, like Paul and other apostles freely commit to be "slaves" in the service of the One who freed them. They are slaves to life, righteousness, truth, the good news, love, and all the good things that come to the believer.

"To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad..." This "dispersion" (used literally of "scattering or sowing of seed") may be partly that spoken on in Acts 11:19.

"So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone."

Peter makes reference to this as well in his first sentence recorded in I Peter,

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen..."

The first dispersion of the Jews (actually Israelites) from their homeland took place in c. 721 B.C. when Assyria invaded the northern nation of Israel. They took captive tens of thousands of Israelites and in forced marches and in carts dropped them off in isolated places all over the mid-east to fend for themselves. And they did so, migrating to major metropolitan areas and grew in numbers. Then in c. 586 B.C. Judah was invaded by Babylonia and destroyed. Again, thousands of captives were taken to Babylonia. Though many returned in 535 B.C. when allowed to by Cyrus, king of Persia, who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. Others stayed or migrated to other places.

By the time the dispersion happened in Acts 11, the Jewish people were inhabiting

⁸ Romans 6:6-19

Areas in Asia and Europe, even into territories in southern Russia, the Balkans, the near east and even as far as India.

The epistle is a general epistle. That is it is designed to be read, and either sent on to the next community or copied and sent on. His readers are addressed as the dispersed twelve tribes. But his message, though at times to the general Jew, is also to those who have come to faith in Christ. There are problems within the mixed community and in the assembly between and within each group.

They are still meeting in the synagogue it appears from 2:2.⁹ This also points to an early date for the writing. It also explains why there is a growing problem among the Jews who believe in Christ and those who do not. And it explains the Jewish flavor to the book and the use of the Law as a standard and as a judge.

James does use the word "church" (the English) once in chapter five, but the term is used to differentiate those "called out" from those who are not believers in Christ. The word translated "church" in English is actually translated "called out" and refers to those who had come to faith in Christ responding to His call and moving from where they were (lost in the kingdom of this world) into His kingdom. (See comment at 5:14)

"Greetings" is actually "rejoice" in the original. The root is "Xaris," "joy" or "rejoice."

2-3: He uses the same root for "greetings" in verse one in "count it all 'joy'"... This is not an admonition to be cheerful at any and all difficult, painful or tragic circumstances as is often taught. The issue is the "when you encounter various trials." The word for "trials" "πειρασμός" (pay-ras-mohs) is also translated "temptations." The point is that the "trials" they are undergoing are directly related to their faith in Christ, much as Jesus' temptation by the Devil was to persuade Him to doubt, disobey or sidestep God's will for Him. The same here. So if persecuted for one's faith, which is the situation here (2:7), then that is a cause for rejoicing, not for negative reaction, anger and "getting in the face" of others.

Peter, who may have written to the same people, said this to them,

"But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.
AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE

⁹ The word "assembly" (sometimes translated "meeting", "gathering", and so on) is actually the word "synagogue".

TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;..." (I Peter 3:14-15)

And,

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." (I Peter 4:12-14)

And, in Acts 5:40-41, when Peter and the apostles were arrested and later flogged for preaching to the people we read, "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name."

So verse 2 is not an admonition to "rejoice" in all harsh circumstances. To do so might actually lead someone to think that such a person was insane. Here, James is counseling them to "count it joy" in contrast to the negative way they have been handling their circumstances and the distorted way in which they see God as the cause of much of their distress.

"My brethren" is a phrase that occurs seventeen times in the epistle. He does not define whether he refers to their mutual Jewish heritage or to them as believers in Christ, but in 2:1 he links them as those who have faith in Christ as he also does in 5:7 and alludes to this in 2:14 and 5:19. So, unless there is a different intent when he uses this noun we will assume he intends to address his fellow believers.

Verse 3 sees this trial or temptation to reject or ignore Christ as a "testing" of their faith, which it is. The word "testing" is "δοκίμιον" (doh-key-mee-on) only used twice in the New Testament, here and in I Peter 1:7. There it is also translated, "proof." The word comes from the idea of the smelting process where ore is separated and purified through a fiery process. Peter alludes to this in 1:3-9 and we can see James' intent in using this word as well,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the **proof** of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

This "testing" is first, not from God. But God will use it for our benefit.

[Let's jump to James 1:12-16 for a moment. It fits the theme here.

12: Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him. 13: Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14: But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15: Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16: Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."

In 12, the word "trial" is the same as in verse 2, and includes the idea of "temptation." In 2, the "trials" seen as a "testing" of the faith produces "endurance" and in verse 12, this "endurance" or "perseverance" (same exact word) finds its conclusion in receiving the "crown of life." In 3, this perfect result is that this one will be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." There the outcome is a temporal benefit and here, in 12, it is eternal.

Now, notice that verse 13 makes it clear that God is not doing this "tempting" ("testing" - same word as in 12 and 2). These "temptations" or "tests" come not from God but from the unbelieving world around us which belongs, of course, to Satan, the "ruler of this world."¹⁰ Here, it is the Jewish community attacking those

¹⁰ John 12:31; 16:11. In Matthew 4:8-10, the Devil tells Jesus during His "temptation", when he, "...showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus *said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" Contrary to what some believe, Satan did have the authority to do so as

who have placed their faith in Jesus. In chapter 5, there is a particular emphasis on those that are rich oppressing those that are poor or laborers for the rich.

All the words in 12 and 13 are forms of "pay-radz-oh" and could be translated Either "temptations" or "trials." Both are the same actually for both seek to draw one from devotion and obedience to God, or to deny Christ in some way.

Persevering in the way and word of God is rewarded even if it is difficult and painful. Though verse 14 makes it appear that it is temptation to sexual immorality, this is not necessary at all though can be included. Why? Two reasons. First, Because the word "lust" in verses 14 and 15 does not have the basis in sexual immorality at all, but is the Greek word, "ἐπιθυμέω" (epi-thu-meh-oh). Broken down, beginning with "thu-meh-oh", we have a root word of "thu-mohs" from which we get our word "thermos" or "thermostat." It describes heat, anger, passion, drive and desire for something but most often is used to indicate rage, anger, wrath or temper associated with a consuming desire (lust) for something.

But it could be anything from the destruction of a person or thing standing in the way of one's goal, to acquiring wealth, fame, power, property, possessions, and the like. Sexual desires may be included, but in verses 19- 20, James says, "*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (See also 4:1-2)

Second, we have a Jewish Christian writing to other Jewish Christians. They are fully aware of the commandments and the severe punishment dealt out to those who commit adultery, fornication and even coveting. It's not as if sexual immorality did not ever occur, but the Jews worked hard to keep from the temptation in that area. They were, however, often found to indulge in other unacceptable attitudes and behaviors dealing with anger, money, pride, ambition, prejudice, disregarding and looking down upon the poor and destitute, handicapped, crippled and so on. James will address these matters directly and clearly in the ensuing chapters.

The prefix "epi" is a preposition that here means "over" or "upon." So, "over-consuming desire." And, does verse 16 go with what precedes it or what comes after?] We'll see in a bit.

he owns the whole world. We, of course, are the ones who gave it to him.

3. (Continued) "endurance" is "υπομονην" and means the ability to withstand (literally: "stand under") further onslaughts, attacks and persecution. Note 1:12,

"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him."

The same word, "υπομονην" is used for "perseverance" in this parallel statement.

4. The believer is to have faith that God will use this to the believer's benefit and that He is with them through it, not inflicting it upon them. To this day believers are confused and in doubt about God's love for them because they have been subtly influenced that God does these "horrible things" for a reason. The common statement that "God allowed this horror into my life" is untrue.¹¹ Suffice it to say that it is the believer that is to "allow" God to "work these things together for good," not wonder why God "allowed" this to invade his life, which God didn't do at all. This attitude and belief causes the "double minded man" and James wants to put that to rest once and for all. I do too.¹² "Perseverance" or "endurance" while under attack produces a, "perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." The word "perfect" (a poor translation) means "reaching the end" of a process. This is why verse 5 continues the thought. This is quite similar to Romans 8:28 where Paul says, " And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose."

5. "Wisdom" is first of all, a process. We call it "experience." "Lack" is to "be defective", to "fall short", or "be unprepared." In the Hebrew, the word translated "wisdom" is "Hohk-mah" and pictures a raw material such as ore or clay, refined, prepared and molded into something useful or beautiful. This process is "wisdom" in that "wisdom" results from a process. It could be, as Proverbs notes, the absorption and practice of God's Word. It also means "skillful" and there are many places where this idea is incorporated.¹³ James uses "sophia" as the Greek to translate the Hebrew and the LXX also uses "sophia" for the Hebrew.¹⁴

¹¹ A lengthy discussion can be engaged in at this point, but if one wishes to see the arguments about this, please see my articles on "The Problem of Evil" at: www.bibleclassroom.org, Bible studies, topical studies.

¹² In 4:8 James excoriates the double minded with considerable passion.

¹³ See: Exodus 28:3; 31:1-11; 35:25-29 etc.

¹⁴ Some have experienced an immediate "insight" or "knowledge" when appealing to God in a difficult situation when the solution is not known by them and have received help from the Lord. This is due to an established relationship of faith and a dedicated walk with God. James does not speak of this particularly as there are other

In this verse, one must ask God for "wisdom." But this is not a "frivolous" request at the last moment. The asking is based in an already deeply growing relationship with God and His word as we see throughout the Old Testament.

James, a Jew and writing to Jews, already knows what is required to attain "wisdom." It is clear from his knowledge and upbringing. This needed wisdom may relate to the trials and persecution many James is writing to are suffering.

How best to understand it and cope with it could well be the motive for asking in this context.

For the Jew, there are several conditions in gaining wisdom from God. First, he first must seek the Lord with His whole heart. Here are a few verses that underscore this.

"But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

(Deuteronomy 4:29)

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; (I Chronicles 28:9)

"Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the LORD understand all things." (Proverbs 28:5)

Proverbs 2:1-11,

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

words for these "insights." Nevertheless, the condition for gaining either insight or a deep wisdom is based on the conditions James mentions in verse 6.

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...".

And the familiar Proverbs 3:5-8,

5: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6: In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. 7: Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. 8: It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones."

Second is the simple condition noted in verses 6-7 for both Jew and Christian. "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord..."

Hebrews 11:6 repeats this idea, "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

For the believer in Christ he has already met the first condition of seeking the Lord and having a bonded relationship with Him, but the request for wisdom must not be "frivolous" or "shallow" either in my opinion. The request for God's wisdom to be imparted needs to be a heart felt real need directed at one's inner core to understand and make decisions that are vital to his or her life and walk - i.e. one's understanding, conduct (or behavior), and response.

In this context it involves how to best cope, deal with and respond to the pointed attacks, persecution, trials, mockings, derision and such things that come our way because we name the name of Jesus as Savior.

And of course, the condition of verse 6 applies to all.

6: The point of this verse is that a person seeking and asking for wisdom must trust that what God has said or says can be fully relied on. If one does not rely on God's counsel, then he will not be stable. The word "doubt" means to waver, be of

two judgements not knowing which to rely on. James may be reflecting Isaiah 57:20-21 that says,

"But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud. 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'"

Paul says something similar in Ephesians 4:14, as he speaks about those God gives to teach and lead,

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming..."

Not knowing what advice to follow and unable to make a decision as to whom to trust will leave a person tossed about as James describes.

7-8: As a result, there is no way a person in this condition will receive anything from God since he has no singular trust in Him. "Double-minded" is more than indecisive, it is an endemic condition of the inner heart and spirit. The original word "δίψυχος" (di-psu-kohs) means "a divided soul." That is why he is "unstable" in all his ways, not just in this instance. As believers, we must come to a point where we stop wondering about this and that about God and just simply, like a child, trust Him with all of our being. Jesus said,

"Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*." (Mark 10:14-5)

In the context, the readers are responding to persecution in inappropriate ways. There comes a time when one must recognize the truth of what James is saying and place a full trust in God so that the responses will be God's will.

A bridge needs to be burned. We need to cross over the bridge of doubt, confusion, wondering if we or God are doing the right thing... and leave behind the land of judging God and simply say, "No matter what may come of me, my loved ones or the world, I trust in God and only in God."

1:9-11,

9: "But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; 10: and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11: For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away."

9-11: The connection to what precedes these three verses is awkward to figure out but they are book-ended with passages on trials and persecution. The brother of humble circumstances, suffering trials, must take hope and courage from the fact that God has compassion on the lowly and they in turn seem more ready to turn to Him when things are dark. The rich man, under trial, may lose all or much of what he has and therefore he can take hope and have courage as the poor man can.

The wealthy often find security in their riches and trust in them for whatever may come their way. Thus, the prompting to look to God for their needs is often

lacking. Many Old Testament passages make it clear, as does James, that all stand equal before God regardless of their wealth or lack thereof. In fact, it is proclaimed many times that the high will be brought low and the low lifted up.¹⁵ This sentiment is seen in James' comments and the Lord makes it clear that riches are no help in finding one's way into the kingdom of God.

Jesus also made this clear when He said,

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25¹⁶

Also, the translation here could be improved a little.

With the conjunction and the present subjunctive of the verb, we should see something like, "But let the brother who is in a low place, (or in humble circumstances) rejoice." And even a mild "ought" or "should" could be added, so, "But the brother who is in a low place, (or in humble circumstances) 'ought to' rejoice..."

¹⁵ James may be reflecting God's view of the lowly and the wealthy as seen in a few passages like: Psalm 116:46; Isaiah 2:11, 26:5-7, 49:10; Ezekiel 17:24; Luke 3:4-6, 1:51-53.

¹⁶ The literalists try to convince people that there was a small gate in the Jerusalem wall called the "needle's eye" through which a camel could not enter. This is not true. Jesus is using a hyperbolic metaphor, one form of many ways to emphasize a point using imagery found throughout the Bible.

The same for the rich man. He ought to "*rejoice*" (supplied) in his low position, not because of his wealth because his wealth has no effect on his citizenship in God's kingdom. In spite of his wealth he can rejoice that he, if a believer, also in a low position and must depend on, rejoice in, and boast in Christ alone for his salvation and hope. Stripped of all his riches, he and the man of low estate are equal before God in their need of mercy.

This is the point of, "because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away." Here James quotes Isaiah 40:6-8.¹⁷ Just an eloquent way of saying that the pursuits and riches of this world will pass away. They are useless when one enters the eternal kingdom. Whether a rich man entrusts himself to his pursuits, talent and wealth - or not - is the issue when it comes to salvation.

1:12-15,

12: Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him. 13: Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14: But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15: Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

12-15: (See the commentary on pages 16 and 17) The theme throughout the chapter so far is the attitude and understanding when trials hit and how to cope with them coupled with the tendency to blame God for the troubles and trials. James addresses this, and the true cause of the trials is revealed. Mankind itself is the source bringing on the trials and evil in the world. Response to these evils and dealing with them in a wise and understanding way seems to be what James is trying to convey. Persevering is possible because not only is God not the cause of these trials, but He is there to see us through them.

1:16-19a,

¹⁷ Isaiah 40:6, "'A voice says, 'Call out.' Then he answered, 'What shall I call out?' All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7: The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8: The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.'"

16: Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17: Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

18: In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. 19a: *This* you know, my beloved brethren.

16: Does this warning come with what is said before this verse or what comes afterward or both? Well, it is both as it is a fine bridge between that which precedes and that which follows. It warns (based on the previous content) that it is deception to believe God has brought tests and temptations into the believer's life because (based on the following content) God only brings good and blessed things to mankind.

17: In contrast to the thinking that God has brought this testing to the believer and James clear objection to this thinking in verses 13-14, James proclaims that only good things and perfect gifts come from God and that there is no variation or change in this. The word "good" is, "ah-goh-thos" meaning that which is beneficial and good to or for us. "Perfect gift" is a bestowment of that which is complete, fulfilling or a good result or outcome. But in contrast to the trials and evil that men generate, God only brings good and perfect gifts to us.

"Every good thing given and every perfect gift" is from above, coming down from the "*Father of lights*" is referring to the idea that God is consistently of one nature and that He doesn't change or shift. There is no evil, temptation, testing and so on with God. These attributes are reserved for Satan. To assign them to God would be close to blasphemy. So, there is no reason to be a "double minded" man because God does not vacillate or change in temperament depending on the situation or circumstances as men do.

His consistency always comes in a manner that is always deemed as good, as He said of His work at creation, "It is very good." Perhaps there is a backdoor message that says, "You should be like this also with the things that come from you."

James does not dwell specifically on what these good things and perfect gifts might be. However, the term, "Father of lights" speaks of God as the creator of the universe and the powerful source of the beauty we see in the night sky and the days sunshine. He alone has provided us with these blessings. There also seems to be

an allusion to the creation account in Genesis (1:14-18) where the lights were created, especially the Sun and the Moon,

14: "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 15: and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so. 16: God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. 17: God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18: and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good."

While standing in the light of either the Sun or the Moon, a shadow will be cast. As the planet turns, the shadows will shift. With God, no such turning or shifting shadow exists. The point is that God's nature and character, His Word and truth do not vacillate for any reason. We can conclude this based partly on verse 18 because light also is a metaphor for truth alluded to in verse 18. In this metaphor there is no variance or shifting shadow in God as there is in man.¹⁸

18: Now, in this verse, to what is James referring when he says, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures?" Is he referring to the creation of man himself? Is he referring to the creation of the nation of Israel? Or is he referring to new creatures in Christ? And, what is the "word of truth" to which he refers?

First, the term "brought forth" is only used twice in the New Testament, here and in James 1:15. It rests in an ancient root that means a swelling of a wave and its dissipation. It evolved into a swelling of the abdomen and the dissipation of that swelling when birth takes place. So "to give birth to" would be a fair translation although "brought forth" is actually more accurate. I could not find it ever used in the LXX. In the KJV, NRSV, YLT, NIV, ISV, Bishops Bible, CEV, Geneva Bible, NLT¹⁹, and other translations and versions it is translated in the birth motif. In IV Maccabees 15:17 it is clearly used to indicate a woman giving birth.

Now, there is a different word for "pregnancy" and "birth" as well as for

¹⁸ The phrase, "...there is no shadow of turning with Thee..." in the Hymn, "Great is Thy Faithfulness" may well come from this verse.

¹⁹ King James Version (1611), New Revised Standard Version, Young's Literal Translation, New International Version, International Standard Version, Bishops Bible (1568), Contemporary English Version, Geneva Bible (1587), and the New Living Translation.

delivered." But these do not quite describe what James is after. The word "delivery" does not occur at all and "delivered" is never used of the birth process. And, "pregnancy" must be thrown out as James is wanting us to know that a process has occurred whereby "we" came into being. So he chose this word. There is actually no specific other word in the Greek that describes what James wishes to convey. "Brought forth as in a birth" would be in tune with his thought. Second, the phrase, "the word of truth" is found once in the Old Testament (Psalm 119:43) and three times in the New Testament (Ephesians 1:13; II Timothy 2:15 and here). Psalm 119:43 and II Timothy 2:15 refer to the Old Testament while Ephesians 1:13 refers to the Gospel. We find no real help here in determining whether James is speaking of the Gospel or the Old Testament.

However, the phrase, "a kind of first fruits among his creatures" is a big help. It literally means, "... so that we might, in a sense, be the first-fruits of the things which He has created."²⁰ The "first fruits" find their origin in the harvest, the first fruits of it belonging to God. So this eliminates mankind in general as the subject. So it is not confined to the creation in Genesis. Leaving Israel or the New Covenant believers, we need a little more help to determine the matter.

A big help is that the "church" was born on the "Day of Pentecost." Pentecost is the Greek term for the Hebrew "Shavuot" meaning "weeks." It occurs fifty days from the waving of the barley sheaf at Passover. It is also known as the "Day of harvest" and "The Day of First Fruits." And though "people" are not called "first fruits" in any place in the Bible, this is why James might have said "... so that we might, *in a sense*, be the first-fruits of the things which He has created" (or "among His creatures.") Though the term "creature" is odd, Paul uses the same word also in II Corinthians 5:17,

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Paul noted in Romans 8:23, "...And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." Then in I Corinthians 15:20 he says something similar, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."

19a: Then, finally here in 19a, he calls his readers "beloved brethren." In general

²⁰ Weymouth New Testament, 1912 has the closest literal translation.

when he uses the term "brethren", (as we see in the commentary at 1:2, page 15) he is referring to fellow believers in Christ. Plus, this is all in the context of verses 1-3 where there is no doubt he is addressing believers in the Jewish community and we see that also in 2:1 he continues his epistle to those who hold "faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ."

This being the case, then he is saying that the early believers in Christ are, in a sense, the first fruits of all that which God has created. And therefore, the phrase "word of truth" would refer to the Gospel.

1:19b-21:

19b: But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; 20: for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21: Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

19-20: These two verses, though seemingly disconnected, may actually be at the heart of the epistle as James is focused on "conduct unbecoming" among the Christian believers to whom he is writing in the Jewish community.

Verse 19 begins with a conjunction linking it with what has just been said but the conjunction is "ὡς ἵνα" (hohs-tay).²¹ The main use of this conjunction is in expressing a result regarding what has preceded it. So, (which can be an example of how "hohs-tay" is used) we can conclude with some confidence that James is saying that his readers (his beloved brethren - very much directed to believers), know that they have been "brought forth as a mother gives birth" by His Word of truth, and are new creatures in Christ. They can also believe that God brings forth only good and beneficial things to them, without condemnation for their sin.

Now we see that one of the major problems that creeps into their fouled up theology is not listening, but speaking hastily and critically (a common Jewish fault even to this day) and getting provoked to anger, another common Jewish fault, often related to the culture. James could support his argument if necessary with scripture such as Proverbs 17:27-28, "He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is *considered* prudent."

²¹ This conjunction could mean a variety of things from, "so as to", "so then", "therefore", "so too", "that is", "thus", "insomuch" "as", "so that", "then", "that", "to", "wherefore", "also", to the simple "so."

Then, anger is also addressed in scripture in passages like Proverbs 14:29, "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly." And, Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger." Then, Proverbs 19:11, "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression."

God is not the cause of their trials, but of their hope and all good things they enjoy, and so they ought not to submit to the impulse of anger and abusive speech. Anger here is not just general "blowing off steam" but getting in the face of those who are belittling the faith of the believers in the community. This reaction and response will not produce the fruit of "righteousness" in those who have to listen to this. Nor will it produce the fruit of righteousness in those who express their defensiveness in anger. As a result, James spends nearly all of chapter three on the problems with the tongue.

21: "Therefore" (or "consequently") they are to set aside all the filthiness (normally used as describing the human discharge of waste) and remaining "wickedness" (miserable attitude and actions toward others). These words are used to describe the corruption, distortion and filth that has filled their hearts and minds, and often spews out of their mouths.

Again, we can use the idea of setting this all aside, leaving it behind, then crossing the bridge as we illustrated earlier, burning it, and fully trusting God in all things. They are to receive the word that has been already or should be implanted in them with meekness which is able to "save", "protect", "heal", "rescue" or "make whole" their "souls" - that is the inner core of their life. Empty out the garbage, be quick to hear the truth, and fill oneself up with the implanted Word.

This is not a note about how to be "saved" in terms of eternal life by faith in Christ. The point of this is to bring a change to their inner heart, motive, understanding, attitude and all that is at the core of their being so that they can understand and deal with the circumstances they are enduring, and respond in a manner worthy of their calling and identity in Christ. "...able to 'fix' or 'repair'" your souls' might be a way to see this phrase more clearly.

1:22-25,

22: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23: For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24: for *once* he

has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25: But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

22-24: Yes, they are to humbly receive the implanted Word, be quick to listen, but that's not the end of it. The simile of the mirror is to imprint upon each of James hearers that it is as important to act upon the word they hear as it is to hear it. The comparison in the simile is hearing the word, and doing nothing about what one hears. It is like seeing the reflection of one's "natural" face in a mirror,²² in that he sees the reflection of his natural self and once he is gone away he forgets about it. He is not just to hear the Word and forget about it but gaze intently at the perfect law and allow it to make changes in his life which are to be expressed in what he does.

Now, does James intend the term "word" (logos) to refer to the preaching of the gospel and New Covenant message? Or is it simply short for the "Word of God" indicating The Old Testament? We shall see as we investigate further that it is both focused on one passage in the Old Testament repeated often in the New as a directive to Christians.

25: But if he "looks intently" at the "perfect law, the *law* of liberty" as one might look intently in a mirror, he will see the need for some change and be motivated to do it and be "blessed" (or happy) in what he does.

The question now is, to what is James referring when he uses the terms "the perfect law, the *law* of liberty?"

James uses the term "law" in ways that could be different from each other. He definitely is referring to the Mosaic Law in 2:8-11 and in 4:11. In 2:8 he calls it the "royal law."

In 1:25 and 2:12 he uses the term "law of liberty" which is also called "the perfect law" in 1:25. The only place the Law is called "perfect" (in the English translations) is in Psalm 19:7 where it reads (in the English), "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

²² In ancient times, a mirror was a highly polished small plate of metal, copper, silver, bronze or gold.

The question is, "Is he also using the terms "perfect law" and "law of liberty" to designate the Law of The Old Testament, (the Old Covenant) or is he now using this different term to indicate a New Testament and New Covenant "law?" That is the rub, and scholars are both in disagreement on this and disturbed by it. So how do we establish the actual intent? This is the most important "theological" matter in the book, but not necessarily at the heart of the purpose and intent of James. Frankly, in the long term it doesn't matter as James' point is that the readers/hearers need to employ Christian conduct and set aside all the junk filling their hearts, which comes forth in doubts and inappropriate comments and conduct. James is not writing a treatise on "theology" or how the keeping or doing the law applies to righteousness or salvation before God or anything of the sort. He is addressing his brethren regarding their view of God amidst trials and their inappropriate responses to them. So he uses the only divinely authoritative available to him and his readers, the Old Testament. But he does so selectively as we shall see and includes references to the teachings of Jesus as well.

But let's see what we can and cannot determine and look at a few opinions. First, the phrases, "perfect law" and "law of liberty" (identified by each other) only occur here in James.

Albert Barnes says this definitely refers to the Old Testament law and he calls upon Psalm 19:7 and Psalm 119:45 as support. In agreement with him are; Burton Easton (Interpreters Bible); W. E. Oesterley (Expositors Greek Testament-seen as a combination with the teachings and fulfillment of Jesus); Ralph Martin (Word Biblical Commentary seeing it as the same as "the implanted word" of 1:21.)

Others like the Cambridge Bible Commentary; Adam Clarke; John Gill; Marvin Vincent; Jamison, Fausset and Brown; Robertson; Bo Reicke see it as the "law" of the New Covenant that sets the believer free from the law of sin.

All of these have verses they use to underscore their points. But all are not convincing to me. However, there are a few considerations I would like to propose.

I. Whether one law or the other, the point James is after has to do with conduct, actions, attitudes and responses, of these believers in Christ to their circumstances, not to salvation or the theological considerations we might impose on his intent. So in one sense, whatever "law" James refers to is only utilized for this purpose. But on the other hand we can come to a

reasonable conclusion about James' use of the term "perfect law" or "law of liberty" and to what this refers, though he himself does not clearly define it.

II. If James references Psalm 19:7 in any way at all as some suggest, the word "perfect" is changed in Psalm 19:7. Psalm 19:7 translated from the Hebrew reads, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple". The word "perfect" in the Hebrew is "תָּמִים" (ta-mim) and means complete and without defect. It is used of lambs (or other animals) that are unblemished offered for sacrifice, and is translated variously as "complete", "entire", "whole", "without blemish or defect" and so on.

III. But the apostles, to a man, all used and quoted from the Septuagint exclusively. The Septuagint uses "ἀμώμων" (ahm-oh-mon) for this word in Psalm 19:7. This word means, "unflawed" or "unblemished." James, however, if even referencing Psalm 19:7, does not use this word though it is available to him. He uses "τέλειος" which means, "having reached its end" or, "the law as it is complete."

Now this may not mean anything at all and James may not have thought of Psalm 19:7 at all. But in using this word, he might have thought of the law as having been fulfilled and so the intent would lean toward the New Covenant sense of the "Law of Christ" Paul refers to in I Corinthians 9:19-21 where he says,

19: "For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. 20: To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the *law of Christ*, so that I might win those who are without law."

James may be employing this same approach, a Jew "as under the Law" so he might win those under the law. And in Galatians 6:2 Paul writes,

"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the *law of Christ*."

The "law of Christ" or "the law of the Messiah" is universally defined as love toward God and others as found in Leviticus 19:18. Paul makes this argument as

well in Galatians 5:13-16,

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

Paul quotes Leviticus 19:18. It sounds as if Paul and James are consistent in their view of Jewish conduct and the need to correct it in the lives of Jewish believers. And notably, the first fruit of the Spirit is "love."

(John Gill makes a note about the "Law of the Messiah" that can be reviewed in the footnote.)²³

As we also know, Jesus made it clear, quoting Leviticus 19:18 Himself when asked by a scribe,

"What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:28b-31

James would be familiar with this and possibly John's note about Jesus words when He said to His disciple three times,

²³ "...and so fulfil the law of Christ; which is the law of love to one another, [Joh 13:34](#) in opposition to the law of Moses, the judaizing Galatians were so fond of, and by which Christ's disciples may be distinguished from those of Moses, or any others. This is a law or doctrine which Christ has clearly taught, and recovered from the false glosses of the Pharisees; it is his new commandment, which he has strengthened and enforced by his own example in dying for his people, and which he, by his Spirit, inscribes upon their hearts. The Jews speak of the law of the Messiah as preferable to any other.

"The law (they say (x)) which a man learns in this world is vanity, in comparison of תורתו של משיח "the law of the Messiah", or Christ;" by "fulfilling", it is meant, doing it, acting in obedience to it, and not a perfect fulfilling it, which cannot be done by sinful creatures.

(x) Midrash Kohelet, fol. 83. 1. "John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible" found in e-Sword on line at: www.e-Sword.net. in his commentary on Galatians 6:2.

"This I command you, that you love one another. (John 15:17)

This is the thing James is trying to accomplish in his epistle and whether he reflects either the Old Testament teaching or Jesus' teachings about this is all for the same purpose using the same Scriptures. We see this clearly in 2:8 and in 2:11 where James employs the same passage from Leviticus 19:18 and 19:34 that Jesus Himself quotes.

So then, as we read from verse 18 onward, we are in the context of being birthed by the "word" of truth. We know that is not the Old Testament Law, but the gospel. As Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

And in 22, James' readers are told to be "doers of the word" not doers of the law." But does he mean the the "word" as it includes Christ's teachings? Or is he speaking of the "word" as something specific from the Old Testament? The term "word" (logos) applies to both.

Once again, in 18, the "word" is the gospel. In verse 21 he counsels them to "receive the 'word' implanted." Then in 22, he tells them to be doers of the "word" not hearers only. Let's remember that in verse one James makes the statement that he is a servant of the "Lord Jesus Christ." Then, as he continues in chapter 2:1, it is clear he is still talking in a Christian context. Yet the "word" even if being Old Testament has no effect on his point when he uses it in that way, but in fact as he come to quote Leviticus 19:18, he blends both the teachings of Jesus and the "royal law" into one mandate as the foundation for his point and the "word" that is implanted.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude James is speaking in a Christian context throughout his epistle, but uses the only scripture available (Old Testament) to instruct his readers in what he is trying to tell them, namely, that their understanding about God and their trials, their distorted faith in Him and their conduct resulting from this are out of line and unacceptable. He is selective in his Old Testament choices so as to underscore his point, and unites this with the teachings of Christ but is not trying to establish a theological and legalistic foundation for salvation since his readers are already believers.

His context then, is Christian at its root, but though he uses the "law" in places to buttress his counsel, he is not telling them that they are justified by law, but that

their faith ought to be reflected in their words and their conduct as he details in chapter 2 and beyond. They are to reflect the mandate of the "royal law" which he defines as Leviticus 19:18, which both Jesus and Paul use as the focus of their instruction to the believing Jews.

We must remember that James had no New Testament documents, no apostolic writings to which to refer, no help from Paul's gasp of the New covenant and its provisions. In 1:25, he uses the term "Perfect law, the law of liberty." The word "perfect" is "teleios" meaning "the end" of or "the completion" of. The law of liberty is like what Paul describes in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." He expands on this in Galatians 5:13-14, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (Leviticus 19:18b).

James repeats this same verse in 2:8, and Jesus employs it as well in answer to the question, "What is the greatest commandment?" The "Law of Christ" is mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2. This is, as well, the command to love one another and to love one's neighbor as one's self. So we can at least propose that James does have a handle on the gospel and the teachings of Jesus (which we shall see later also). So the word "law" as James uses it will focus on Leviticus 19:18 and not the entire Old Covenant. His readers are to set aside all the corrupt and distorted inner thoughts and beliefs and receive the truth implanted.

Again, in summary, he does not counsel keeping or doing the Old Testament Law in its legalistic form, but employs it as it effects faith and conduct, emphasizing love toward God and others while abandoning doubt and unacceptable behavior.

Bottom line, Leviticus 19:18 fulfills both the mandate of Jesus, the New Covenant, the Old Covenant and all the forms James uses when describing the various adjectives associated with his use of the word "law." He quotes this directly in 2:8 as does Jesus as seen in Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31-33; Luke 10:27-37; and Paul Romans 13:8-9; Galatians 5:14, 6:2; and I Thessalonians 4:9.

We must remember that there were no New Testament writings or epistles at all for James to refer to, so he can only employ Old Testament texts to buttress his authority to counsel his readers who, as we know, were Jews.

1:26-27,

Comment: This appears to begin a renewed emphasis for James. But we do find these verses again "sandwiched" between 1:19, 2:12 and chapter three. In 1:19 we do have, "But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak..." But in 2:12 we have the conclusion, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty." Then chapter three is nearly totally about the tongue revealing the seriousness of this problem among the people to whom James is addressing his epistle.

26: "If anyone thinks himself to be religious,²⁴ and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27: Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world."²⁵

26: "Religious" is "θηρησκος" (thrays-kohs) and indicates the piety of one who falls before his or her god in worship.

This is done in vain unless one "bridles" his tongue. Only James uses this word in the New Testament here and in 3:2. The word "bridle" means to "guide with a bit and bridle" or "hold in check." It is used specifically in reference to horses in Philo. The idea is to put something in your own mouth to control the tongue.

"Deceives himself" means that he is under a delusion if he miss-uses his mouth yet acts in a pious manner and assumes this pleases God. Another word for this would be "hypocrite." His religious conduct is in vain and futile unless his mouth is in accord. Jesus put it this way,

"*It is* not what enters into the mouth *that* defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." Matthew 15:11, 17-20

²⁴ James does not use the word "Christian." This may also point to an early writing of this epistle as believers weren't called Christian until Paul's time in Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:26).

²⁵ See Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17; 2:21-24; 27:19.

And in 12:34 speaking to the Pharisees,

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

27: Here, James does not define "pure and undefiled religion" in terms that one must keep the law. But he employs God's very clear Old Testament mandates such as Psalm 68:5-6 that sees God as a, "Father of the fatherless."

"A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land."

And God has compassion for the orphans, widows and the poor,

"For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Deuteronomy 10:17-19 (10:17 becomes prominent in James 2:1.)

Isaiah 1:15-17 is reflected in James 1:26-27,

15: "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. 16: "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, 17: Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow."

Other verses (and many more) on this include: Deuteronomy 14:29,

"The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

And, Deuteronomy 24:17,

"You shall not pervert the justice due an alien *or* an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge.

James is the only New Testament writer to counsel this as a means of practicing one's "religion."

Keeping oneself "unstained by the world" is reflected by Paul in Romans 12:2,

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

And by John in I John 2:15-17,

15: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16: For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17: The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

James repeats this also in 4:4, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

THE BOOK OF JAMES

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction:

It has now become apparent that James is quite upset about the conduct of those who are supposed to be Christians. He makes this clear in his ensuing comments. As he writes, he gets more direct and confrontational. There are many conduct issues including prejudice, discrimination against the poor, language, spiritual degradation, favoritism of the rich, self-centeredness, infighting, arrogance, pride, jealousy and even murder is mentioned and, bottom line, the failure to put into practice the very essence of what it means to be a Christian

2:1-4,

1: My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. 2: For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3: and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," 4: have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

1: Clearly the term "brethren" and the remaining sentence refers to his fellow Jewish believers. The contrast is that their faith in Christ is not consistent with personal favoritism. It is prohibited. James calls our Lord Jesus Christ, "glorious." The word is "doxa" from "dokeo" and conveys that which is of great and unequalled weight or importance, worthy of praise, honor, and approval, shining with brightness, glory and power.

And here the contrast with that is "favoritism", favoring one person over another. And as verse 4 will reveal, it looks to be for some personal benefit based in "evil Motives." But Jesus, all glorious, loved and died for all peoples, rich and poor, low and high, Jews and Gentiles, and people of all nationalities, conditions, circumstances and all who will may come to Him. He did not and does not play "favorites." Peter upon observing that the Holy Spirit had come upon the gentiles at Caesarea said, "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is

welcome to Him.' (Acts 10:34-35) Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:9,

"And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him." He said the same in Romans 2:11.

The Jews were supposed to know this already whether Christians or not. It is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 10:18-19 and 16:19,

He (*God*) executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Italics mine)

"You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous." ²⁶

2-5: James gives them an illustration. In doing so he uses the word "synagogue" to describe their meeting place.²⁷ The people are assembling when someone known to be wealthy comes in wearing fine clothes, followed by a very poor man wearing dirty (or "shabby") clothes. And you, with the apparent authority to seat the people, invite the rich man to a nice seat and then invite the poor man to stand in the back or sit on the floor next to a footstool, esteeming him little better than the footstool itself. Why would one do that? This is James point...the motive.

In the criticism of those who do these kinds of things, first, they have taken on the role of "judge." This is prohibited by Scripture in both the Old Testament and in Jesus' teachings. In Psalm 82:2-4, God berates the leaders in Judah,

2: "How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked?
Selah. 3: Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. 4: Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver *them* out of the hand of the wicked."

And,

²⁶ See also: II Chronicles 19:7; Job 34:19; Proverbs 24:23-24; Matthew 22:16; Luke 20:21; Acts 10:34; Galatians 2:6; Colossians 3:25; I Peter 1:17.

²⁷ He doesn't use the terms "Christian," to describe the constituency of believers. This points to an early writing as believers in Christ were not called "Christians" until early in Paul's ministry at Antioch in Syria (11:26).

Leviticus 19:15, "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."

Jesus said, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2)

James concludes with, "...have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?" This begs the question, "What would these evil motives be" in terms of attempting to gain favor with the wealthy?

2:5-8,

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? 6: But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 7: Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? 8: If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.

5: "Beloved brethren" again pointing to fellow believing Jews. The remainder of this verse is revealing in that this is not an Old Testament promise, but one Christ Himself made. In fact, the term "kingdom of God" appears nowhere in the Old Testament and only in Daniel is there reference to "His kingdom" referring to God's.²⁸ But nothing in Daniel reflect what James is saying. On the other hand, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20)

And,

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and *which* have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." Isaiah 64:4²⁹ The promise of a "kingdom" belongs to the heirs of David as the Old Testament repeats time and again. Unknown to those writers, it wasn't until the birth of Jesus,

²⁸ Daniel 4:3, 4:34, 6:26, 7:14, and 7:27.

²⁹ (From I Corinthians 2:9 and translated from the LXX) The Hebrew says, "For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him."

God in human form, that the promise came into being, fulfilling both the "kingdom of David" and the "kingdom of God."

6: There are ample passages where God is seen as compassionate toward the poor and commands His people to reach out to them and help them. Conversely, the rich are condemned when they treat the poor and destitute with disdain. James, as well as his hearers are aware of this but the stigma of considering the poor and destitute as equal before God is hard for many to bear. Yet, this is the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Proverbs 14:31 notes how God relates to the treatment of the poor,

"He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him (*God*)."³⁰

Jesus answered the following question in a parable, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'" Matthew 25:37-40

7: Here is an insight to part of the problem the believers are facing. Other Jews, especially the wealthy "blaspheme" the name of Jesus. The poor only have God to look to for hope and a future while the wealthy trust in their riches. James may be reflecting not only the real experience of people, but the Scriptural passages like Psalm 73 part of which, referring to the wealthy, reads,

"Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of *their* heart run riot. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth." (7-9)

8: The "royal law" is of course Leviticus 19:18. The term "royal Law" does not necessarily include all the rest of the law. James uses this term for Leviticus exclusively and we can be confident that when he speaks in terms of "doing the law" this is what is on his mind.

The Jews, especially the religious leaders in Judea, were not known for "loving

³⁰ Italics mine.

their neighbor." They despised the Samaritans,³¹ Nazarenes, Galileans, the Romans, the Gentiles, the blind³², crippled, deaf and poor, women, and anyone who disagreed with their doctrine and viewpoint...and of course, Jesus. In John 8:48, "The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" This illustrates a little of their prejudice and hatred.

In quoting Leviticus 19:18, there is no conflict here with New Covenant provisions. Both Jesus and Paul quote this verse in their admonitions to those who claim to be of faith. Under the law, consistently fulfilling this in the flesh may be impossible, but for those who are born again by the Spirit of God, it needs to be a guiding principle as the first fruit of the Spirit is "love."

2:9-13,

9: But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10: For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. 11: For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12: So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. 13: For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

9: James points out that though one may keep all the law but fail in one point - showing partiality - he is violating the law. This law is found in Leviticus 19 again, this time in verse 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."³³

10-11: James is simply using an illustration about the law to point out that violation of one law is actually a violation of all the law. The partiality "law" is not found in the Ten Commandments, yet James accounts it just as important.

³¹ Jesus story about the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:29-37) was in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor." He threw the prejudice of the Jews (toward Samaritans) in their face with this story.

³² Note John 9 where, on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a man born blind. The question asked by His disciples, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Reveals the stupid theological doctrine taught by the Pharisees in those days and how ingrained these ideas and prejudices came to be.

³³ More statements like this are found in Exodus 23:2-3, 7-8; Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19; 27:19 etc.

12: James summarizes the conduct of his addressees as problems with "speaking" and "acting." The word "act" is "poi-eh-oh" meaning "to make" so, basically, "make your lives" as though...

"Law of liberty" is noted in 1:25 where it also corresponds to "the perfect law" which is Leviticus 19:18, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." "Partiality" does not fulfill this law.

13: If one shows no mercy, he will receive no mercy in judgment is a proclamation of both the Old Testament and that of Jesus. In Proverbs 21:13 we read, "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered."

Jesus said, "But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent. (Matthew 12:7 quoting Hosea 6:6 from the LXX.)³⁴

Jesus also said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (Matthew 5:7.) And in the parable of the evil and unjust slave, He concludes, "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' (Matthew 18:21-35)

James obviously knew of these teachings as did most of the Jews. He does not seem, at this time, to recognize or know that under the New Covenant there are other realities and provisions. But then, that is not the issue at hand. His epistle is not an exposition on the New Covenant or any tenants thereof. Interpreters make a giant error in discounting James because they look at his teachings in that context rather than in James' which is to correct the ungodly and foolish conduct of his readers.

Jesus spoke under the Law to those under the law. At times He spoke of the covenant to come, but His teaching is an application of the Law to the heart and motive before which all stand guilty. The New Covenant was initiated at the cross, and not before. James reflects the standard of the Old Covenant and not the provisions of the New.

³⁴ In the NASB the word for "loyalty" is the Hebrew "chesed." "Chesed" can mean "loving kindness," "devotion," "goodness," "kindness," "mercy," etc. depending on the context. The LXX chose "mercy" (The Greek "eleos") as the best word. James follows suit. Though "loyalty" is something God desires over sacrifice, many translations do choose the word "mercy" here. Both fit what God desires from His people. "Loyalty" or "devotion" fit Hosea's context better, but for James' context, "mercy" is definitely what he is after.

Nevertheless, his point regarding conduct toward others stands, whether Old or New as both come together in agreement on this issue.³⁵

2:14-17,

14: "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15: If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16: and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? 17: Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself."

14: This is a powerful confrontation by James. He is saying that one can truly doubt their actual salvation even though one claims to have "faith." I know of those who claim to have "faith", but also have little to do with Christ, God, the church or anything normally a part of one's life of faith. So "faith" by itself, as claimed by the proponent is useless and dead if it has no expression of good works, especially to those who are poor and needy and those who are of a different class, persuasion or even opposed to the truth. Just saying one has "faith" does not save them.

Later in verse 19, James says, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." So, just saying one is of faith is not the same as being a person of faith. A person with real faith demonstrates it by the works he does and the works he does demonstrate both their faith and their heart. Even Paul wrote, "Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?" (II Corinthians 13:5)

Jesus noted, "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they?" (Matthew 7:16) And, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

³⁵ The difference here between the Old and New is that when one comes to Christ in humble faith and repentance and believes in Him, a spiritual miracle takes place. His desires and motives began to change as his heart is affected by the Holy Spirit. A new birth and a new life are begun. This does not occur under the law. The Law is the ministry of condemnation and death (II Corinthians 3). Those in "Christ are new creatures" and do not come into judgment (John 3:18; 5:24; Romans 8:1-2.) However, they are to allow the Spirit to guide them in matters of attitudes and actions toward others and thus show mercy to those who are in need of it. James' ignorance of this is another indication of the early writing of this epistle.

The warning against presumption regarding one's position before God needs to be taken seriously. But works alone are not evidence of faith either. As we will see in verse 18 and following.

15-17: The illustration is simple and follows the mandate to be merciful and care for the poor and needy James has been talking about the entire chapter. In 17, he means that just the claim of faith, by itself, as mentioned in verse 14, is dead. It is not alive and has no real existence. It is dead in the sense that nothing can cause it to become alive or animated. John the apostle wrote in his first epistle, chapter 3 verses 14-18,

"14: We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15: Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16: We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17: But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18: Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

So John, James and all the apostles recognize that faith must be translated into works if it is a genuine faith. For me, faith is a bonded spiritual relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A relationship this important ought to automatically cause the believer to blossom with good things of the Spirit.

It is important to recognize that we are known by God rather than claiming we "know Jesus." This is made clear in Matthew 7:21-23, 25:10-12; I Corinthians 8:3; Galatians 4:9. The biblical idea of "knowing" in his context is that of an intimate relationship. For example, in the Scripture Adam "knew his wife" and she became pregnant first with Cain, then Enoch and the Seth.³⁶ The Hebrew is "Yada," to "know." God had a close relationship with Moses Deuteronomy 34:10 tells us and the word "know" is used there as well as in many places where a close personal relationship is mentioned. So just saying one has "faith" is not the same as one having a real relationship with God. Verse 10 bears this out as well. James is not saying that a person can be saved by works apart from a real faith. He makes this clear in verses 22-23 following.

³⁶ Genesis 4:1, 17, 25;

2:18-26,

18: "But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19: You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 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; 23: and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. 24: You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25: In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26: For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

18: The works of a person of true faith are activated by that faith. James questions whether one can claim to have faith yet do so with no display of works.

19: This harkens back to verse 14. A professed faith in God is not the same as a faith that generates and motives a person to do good. Around 85% of Americans say they believe in God. But that brings us back to the person who looks in a mirror and after they have gone away, they forget what they have seen.³⁷There is no result from this kind of belief. One might just say, "I believe in something" for all the good it does. There is no effect from this kind of professed faith. At least the demons are effected by the power and fear of God.

20: James presses the point. Let's remember his goal. It is to underscore the importance of doing good to others especially their neighbors and not just talking about stuff that either doesn't matter or is offensive. Let alone cozying up to the rich. The people to whom James is writing are in a rut of self-indulgence and self-centeredness looking out for themselves in the midst of their trials. This is the time to reach out to help others of those who are struggling, not close the doors.

21-24: James is not trying to say that a person is justified before God by works alone either. If that were the case, Jews keeping the Law with all their effort may expect they would stand just before God. Here he stresses that though Abraham

³⁷ 1:23.

was justified by his faith, the demonstration of this is seen in his obedience to take Isaac to the sacrificial altar. "Faith was '*perfected*' ... means that Abrahams faith found completion because he acted on it in the works James describes.

James notes that, "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." On the one hand, of course, if one presses the theological point, James is incorrect. On the other hand, James' point boils down to what one must define as real "faith." Even Paul, who is the standard bearer for "justification by faith", also presses the point about a real faith that motivates one to care about and love others. For Paul, "justification" before God does not correspond with the "works of the Law" but comes by faith apart from works. And, James does not advocate works of the Law as a means to stand righteous before God.

Paul's point was made to Jews who felt that keeping the Law was sufficient for righteousness before God. Paul argues against that and is clear that the Scripture is clear that faith is the foundation for righteousness not just religious works and law-keeping.

James hits it from the other direction. His point is made to Jews who claim to have faith and then just sit back on their "laurels" now that they don't have to keep the law to be righteous before God. Both groups miss the point. However, you will not find that James claims that works by themselves apart from or without faith is sufficient for salvation and righteousness before God.

Interestingly, both use the same example of Abraham to press their point.³⁸

But there ought to be some change of heart when faith in Christ is real and this change should demonstrate itself in looking outward to the needs of others. For example, Paul makes it clear that because of his faith, his preaching and ministry occur.³⁹ And he frequently talks about love for one another being a result of faith.⁴⁰ In Hebrews 11 we have a list of saints whose faith is demonstrated in many ways. Rahab is included there. James follows suit. One's faith ought to result in some sort of good deeds and a desire to be obedient to God and the leading of His Spirit. After all, even the demons "believe."

25-26: Rahab, not a Jew but a Gentile pagan - as well as a woman, is brought forth by James as an illustration of his point. We know she couldn't have been justified

³⁸ Romans, chapter 4.

³⁹ II Corinthians 4.

⁴⁰ II Thessalonians 1:3; I Timothy 4:12, 5:8. Also see comments on verses 15-17.

by works of the law. Therefore James isn't saying that at all about anyone. Rahab demonstrated the "actions of faith" or how a true faith motivates to action.

James is adamant that true faith is a package. First comes belief in the truth, God and in His Son. Second, this faith has an effect and that effect is demonstrated in works that come from faith. One without the other is suspect. In 4:5, James makes it clear that God "desires His Spirit to dwell within us" and that ought to be the power that motivates us, not personal opinion, attitude, and emotion.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

CHAPTER THREE

3:1-12,

1: "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. 2: For we all stumble in many *ways*. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. 3: Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 4: Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires."

1: There is definitely a shift in focus now. However, there also might be a transition from the faith and works emphasis to those who are teaching about these things. In verse 13 below he challenges his readers to consider who is actually "wise and understanding" and relates this to "his deeds." And this verse relates to what follows indicated by "For..." at the beginning of verse 2. If one has a loose or profane tongue, he or she ought not to be teaching, knowing a stricter standard is expected. Yes, "stricter (or 'greater') judgment" is noted. James uses a word that often describes God's judgment and, although that is not said here, it is implied. It could be viewed as the judgment of others or the Church or assembly as well.

The effect of the teaching and of the Christian witness is diminished by ungodly use of the tongue. James includes himself in this comment ("we"). Seeing himself as a teacher, especially in this epistle, he also places himself under the stricter (or greater) expectation.

2: James revisits his comment in chapter 1:26, "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless." James' humility is noticeable. The stumbling he speaks about is mostly about the use of the tongue. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a "perfect" man. The word "perfect" is a little misleading. It is the Greek "teleios" that James uses again and indicates a person who is complete, mature and has come to a successful the end of life's journey. In other words, what needed to be accomplished in this person relating to the use of the tongue is complete or fulfilled.

What is extraordinary is that a person who is able to "bridle" the tongue now has

the ability to do the same with all his faculties.

3-4: One example of verse 2 is that when bridling a horse's mouth, the entire horse can be controlled. Another is how the control of a small rudder can control an entire ship.

3:5-6,

5: "So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6: And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell."

5: Following this train of thought, James points out that the tongue, though small, brings the entire person into its power either for good or defilement. Another illustration is that of a small flame can set an entire forest on fire.

6: There is no question that the people to whom James is writing are having a time controlling their mouths and are the cause of much of the trouble they are experiencing. Going back from his last sentence, it is "hell" (Gehenna) that ignites the tongue that defiles. "Gehenna" is the Hebrew for the "Valley of Hinnom" located on the south side of the City of David below the temple mount in Jerusalem. It is named for the Jebusite "Hinnom" whose son possessed this valley and in offered up child sacrifices through burning to Molech, the chief god of the Ammonites and to Baal, the god of the Caananites and other nations. Jeremiah said that God renamed it, "The Valley of Slaughter."⁴¹

This abomination ceased sometime after the Babylonian invasion. There is a debate regarding whether the valley was thereafter used to burn garbage and trash and became the city landfill, as it were, with fires constantly burning and smoke going up even in Jesus' day. There is really no evidence to support this idea. The abominable history of the place is sufficient for the verbal pictures Jesus painted.

So, this valley became the portrait of the fate of the wicked and unbelieving.⁴² All the people living in the days of Jesus knew the horrifying history of this valley.

⁴¹ Jeremiah 7:32, 19:6.

⁴² There are many references to this valley in Scripture: Joshua 15:8, 18:16; II Kings 23 where Josiah destroyed the sacrificial altars there, II Chronicles 28 and 33 telling the horrors of kings Ahaz and Manassah; Nehemiah 11:30; Jeremiah 7:31-34; chapters 19 and 32; and twelve places in the New Testament under the word "hell."

Luke, in Acts 1:18-20 reports that Judas Iscariot fell headlong and,

"...burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, 'Field of Blood.'"

Matthew records the following,

"And he (Judas) threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.'" And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.' (27:5-8)

Tradition says that when Judas hanged himself, the rope broke after a time and his bloated body fell onto the rocks below and burst open. By tradition, the place where Judas died is near the eastern end of the Valley of Hinnom near the junction with the Kidron Valley and at the same place where the ancient burning platform of Topheth and altar of Molech once stood. Today it is a nicely landscaped area with a park. The paved road winding down the center of the valley is still called, "Gey Ben Hinom Street."

3:7-12,

7: For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8: But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. 9: With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10: from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. 11: Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? 12: Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

7-8: This is James strongest admonition against those who have loose and ungodly tongues. He may be using hyperbole here to point out both the extreme importance and the extreme difficulty in controlling one's tongue. Is it possible that not one person has ever been able to control their tongue? I know at least one that has never had a problem with her tongue. I have been married to her for 53 years.

James has just made it clear that the tongue must be controlled (1:26) and now says it can't be. There are many who do not have this problem with their tongues. But for those who do, it must be addressed.

Is he speaking to those who have an intermittent problem or a chronic one or both? All have an occasional problem with this, I would imagine, but James seems to be addressing those with a chronic problem. Nevertheless, the problem with the tongue needs attention regardless of the frequency of the problem.

"Evil" here is not "poneros" but "kakos" meaning "troublesome, injurious, destructive. The tongue would be used here in a way that brings a worthless element to the discussion, and even causes a caustic or harsh result. Gossips are known for this kind of the use of the tongue. The word "poison" is the venom of deadly snakes.

9-10: Many have fallen into this contradiction. Believers, raised in a profane environment of cursing and swearing often pick up the habit and use foul language when angry or upset. Then when they come to Christ they may revert to this under certain conditions. This seems to be happening among some of the people to whom James is writing. The proper response of course, is contrition. The proper course is to work on keeping this from reoccurring. The grace of God covers this, but to exercise this just because it is covered by grace is prohibited. Paul wrote,

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" And,

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Romans 6:1-2; 6:15

He concludes this verse with, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." This statement might well be considered the theme of the entire book and by which it all can be properly interpreted.

11-12: The first three of James illustrations are in the form of rhetorical questions. He points out that the nature of one thing disallows it from being something else. This is also called "The Law of Contradiction (or non-contradiction)." Simply stated, something cannot be one thing and something totally different at the same time.

His point is that, if we are people, who by faith, have the Spirit of God dwelling in

us, then how is it that some express themselves in a totally contradictory way?

3:13-18,

13: "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14: But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. 15: This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16: For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. 17: But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18: And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

13: Sandwiched between "teachers", "tongues" in chapter three and "fights and quarrels" in 4:1 this rhetorical question challenges self-examination. If one answers "I am" then he must examine his behavior to see if it is of the Lord. If one answers "I'm not" then he must ask, "Why not" and look at his or her behavior as well. Clever in my book.

The rhetorical question is also especially pertinent to those who are in the role of leader, elder or teacher. James is saying that a person with wisdom and understanding will demonstrate this by deeds done in the gentleness of that wisdom. This "wisdom", if from God as he will note, is also akin to what he says about those of faith because both are of God and both result in good deeds. "Gentleness" is also "humility" and "meekness" as opposed to proud and arrogant, jealous and ambitious as he points out in the next verse. Wisdom is a skill learned from experience. In verse 15, James differentiates two kinds of wisdom, one from God and the other from the earthly and demonic.

14. This verse is quite revealing. Here we have "bitter jealousy" and "selfish ambition" that may well reflect James' statements in 1:14-15, 19-21; 2:3-4; and 3:1 ff. This is in contrast to the "gentleness of wisdom and the resulting good deeds. He will elaborate in chapter 4. Plus he says this twice in the same paragraph, (verses 14 and 16). This indicate a core problem among those to whom he is writing.

What would they be jealous of and what would their selfish ambition consist of? Wanting to curry favor with the rich, jealous over the position and wealth of others, as well as wanting to be in a position perhaps as a teacher, seeking control

over others or a situation, attempting to gain the respect or admiration of others?
What else?

Lying against the truth. Of what does this consist? James could be referring either to the self-deception of these people who think and say they are wise in the Lord yet express it in an ungodly manner negating their own stated position. Hypocrisy. Or, he could be referring to the gospel itself that they have ignored and substituted their own version of it and are expressing it and what they are saying and doing is a lie.

15-16: This is very important. The result of all this is disorder and every evil thing. This is because it does not come from God, but from the demon influenced world.

17: In contrast to what they are thinking about their own approach to their faith, James calls them up short and points out that the true wisdom from God is not what they think, say or do, but is, "peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy." This last word, "hypocrisy" means that some present themselves to others as this "lovely compassionate Christian" (2:15-16) but in fact are phonies, caring little for anyone but themselves.

18: James reflects Isaiah 32:15-17,

15: "Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fertile field, And the fertile field is considered as a forest. 16: Then justice will dwell in the wilderness And righteousness will abide in the fertile field. 17: And the work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever."

And/or perhaps Hosea 10:12-13a,

12: "Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD Until He comes to rain righteousness on you. 13: You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies..."

The seed is of God, whether it be faith or wisdom or His righteousness and bears the "fruit of righteousness" which is seen in genuine acts of goodness resulting in peace, not contention, rebellion, selfish ambition, jealousy, strife, lying, manipulation, anger, and the like as we shall see James address in chapter 4.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

CHAPTER FOUR

4:1-3,

1: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2: You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3: You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures."

1: Well, James has heated up his diatribe. With good reason. He tells of "quarrels and conflicts" among them. "Quarrels" are "wars". "battles" and "fights." More than just disagreements. "Conflicts" are more the disputes and quarrels.

But the source is self-centeredness, and James calls it, "he-dohn" (pleasures) from which we get the term "hedonism." The dictionary defines this as, "...the idea that all people have the right to do everything in their power to achieve the greatest amount of pleasure possible to themselves." It is the most important "good" a person can strive for. This drive or ingrained attitude is "waging war" in their very physical body. It screams for fulfillment.

2: The word "lust" continues his thought. It is defined as "consuming passion and desire." Again, "lust" is not necessarily sexual in nature, but is a consuming desire for position, power, wealth, recognition, control, material goods and all of that including sexual, although James makes no specific reference to this. "Lust" parallels "envious" later in the verse. This parallels the "selfish ambition" in 3:14 and 3:16. So since they cannot get what they want they have to remove the obstacle and commit murder? These are Christians to whom James is writing? Wow!

I have known one man, who claiming to be a Christian, was desperate for money as he had a family to support and was deep in debt. So he agreed to commit a murder for hire for \$100,000.00. Unfortunately, the man he was hired to kill came to the front door with his young son and this man killed them both. He was caught, tried and convicted and now is spending the rest of his life in prison. His wife divorced him and remarried. His two daughters were left devastated and last I

heard were not doing very well. Was this worth it?

"Envious" is the same word translated "jealous." Envy and jealousy stem from an inner anxiety and fear of either losing something or never gaining something one suppose he or she needs. The desire becomes an obsession and blocks out reason, spiritual truth or both. There is a dissatisfaction about life, a lack of security and well-being all of which should be fulfilled by a knowledge of the truth and one's secure faith in God. Unfortunately, the church often fails to instill these truths in their congregation leaving them in doubt, disappointment, distress, disillusionment, despair, depression and defeat to name a few of the negative "d's".

Thus, people are left to their own thinking, to the wisdom of the world and to their own devices to fill the void that subjects them. So the caution to be careful when seeking the role of "teacher."

2b-3: They do not have because they "do not ask." James is speaking about coming before the Lord and accepting whatever does or does not come from His hand. But their asking is with wrong motives and so they do not receive what they ask. Again, the heart is the issue. We need to be content with what we have and not "lust" for what others have, but trust the Lord.

The word "pleasures" is the same in verse 1, "he-dohn." (See verse one for explanation) James' audience have those who pray to please themselves and have what they lust and are envious for. When God doesn't answer this corruption, they seek a vile means of making it happen anyway.

4:4-6,

4: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5: Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us'? 6: But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, 'GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.'"

4: "Adulteresses" is here rather than "adulterers and adulteresses" is due to the testimony of the earliest papyri and manuscripts. The term is to be applied in the spiritual sense as is so common in the Old Testament where it is applied to idolaters.⁴³ Gender is not significant in terms of his point. There is a spiritual

⁴³ See for example, Exodus 34:15-16, Deuteronomy 31:16; Psalm 106:38-39; Hosea 1:2, 3:1...

"adultery" going on.

"Friendship" is "philia", an attachment, even love for the "world." This sets up a contrast and a conflict with the hypocritical statement that one loves God. Jesus noted, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13)

5: James' intent is to show that God wants His Spirit to dwell in us, not that of the world. There is a purpose and a reason for this. It is to keep His people from the seductions of the world. But if James is quoting a scripture passage here, it cannot be found in the material we have at hand. There are verses one can piece together to validate this sentiment however. For example, Numbers 11:29, "...Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" And Isaiah 44:3-4, 59:21; Joel 2:28-29. But an exact match is not to be found.

6: The greater grace is to those who humble themselves. God is opposed to the proud. Both James and Peter (I Peter 5:5) quote this verse, but it is not found in scripture or in any apocryphal books we have at hand as we see it here. Again, there are verses to support the truth of this such as: Leviticus 23:29; Psalm 40:4, Proverbs 11:2; Isaiah 2:11, 5:15, and so on, but the exact quotation is not to be found.

Humility is simply setting aside ones self-centered need to be right, in control, or be served and defer to another. The word is often translated "meekness" or "made low." How we see these definitions can be misleading. Jesus was a humble man, but also the most powerful. He used His position for the benefit of others and Philippians 2:5-9 reads,

5: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6: who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. 8: Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9: For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ...".

In verse 10 below, the counsel to humble oneself before God closes with the same promise of being exalted by God. Man's sin from the beginning is self-exaltation.

4:7-10,

7: "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9: Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10: Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

7-10: Based on what he has quoted, James issues a series of related mandates. First is that they are to "submit to God." They are not doing so. James implores them to do this three times in these verses, "submit to God", "draw near to God" and "humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord."

Then he commands them to resist the devil promising them that he will flee from them if they do so. This suggests that the devil afflicts us with the temptation to ungodly or disobedient behavior because we allow him to do so, perhaps even invite him to do so. This is reminiscent of Genesis, chapter three, which is of course a portrait of all of us, not just the two pictured in the account.

Their behavior is summarized in the commands, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." James desires sincere and genuine repentance and not just words.

See commentary at verse 6 above regarding "humility."

4:11-12,

11: "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge *of it*. 12: There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

11: This harkens back to several admonitions regarding the use of one's tongue. We saw them in 1:19; 2:12; and in 3:1-12. This "speaking against a brother" has often taken the form of "judging" another. "Judging" is evaluating something about the other person that the "speaker" deems worthy of condemnation.

He may well be referring to the familiar passage he has already employed,

Leviticus 19:16-18, "You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."

12: "Would you take God's place?" This is just another way to express James' point. This is God's role and we are not to assume it.

Comment:

There is a break in the narrative theme at this point. Verse 13 and what follows is actually connected to 5:1 and the following verses. There were no chapter and verse divisions in the original manuscript. They were added over a thousand years later. But James moves on from specifically addressing the the "brethren" to a general address to "you who say" and in 5:1, "Come now you rich."

4:13-17,

13: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' 14: Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15: Instead, *you ought* to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.' 16: But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17: Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

13: Presumption. Assuming on the future without considering God's desire, will or role in one's plans. The problem is their attitude and motive, not the fact that they have not consulted God about every little thing. They are operating in the flesh, driven by consuming desires, self-centered motives, caring less about the needs of others or how God is to affect their lives and future, their conduct and their decisions.

Proverbs looks at it two ways. One is to consult with the Lord and other counselors so ones plans will be successful. The other is to plan with all this in mind and watch the Lord direct one's steps. For example,

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own

understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." (3:5-6)

"Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed." (15:22)

"Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established." (16:3)

"The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps." (16:9)

"Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand." (19:21)

There is a reference to making a profit. The motive is not to serve God but to heap upon themselves the things they are obsessed with for their own pleasures.

Then there is the pronoun "we." This could indicate a group of men are together in the enterprise or that some have influenced others to join them. This would double the offense and perhaps define verse 17 in a different way.

14: The idea is that one's plans need to be those that take into consideration the wisdom of God and others so they will be successful. There is nothing wrong with planning or setting long term goals, but the arrogance to think that one can do this on his own without considering God, the unknown future, and the consequences of this approach is foolishness especially when the motive is so, "...that you may spend *it* on your pleasures."

James has not left the the theme of their obsession with their own self-centered desires.

15-16: These two verses amplify James point that it is their motives, arrogance, boasting, and attitudes that are their problem, not the fact that they are thinking ahead or making plans for the future. Not taking into account God's will or desire for their lives, but just thinking in a totally worldly way, (verse 4) is evil.

17: The key to know James' intent here is to determine what "right" (or "good", "virtuous", "beautiful" "honorable") thing he is referring to.

His thinking may be on what he says in 5:4 in a moment. Or he might be thinking about the matter of putting God first in one's life and plans before going off in arrogance. Perhaps the point of being a friend of the world making one an enemy

of God. Or it could reflect the "we" where some are enticing others to their scheme and leading them from their seeking the Lord. Or perhaps this is simply a general spiritual and moral "catch all" principal.

In any case, if there is something right, good, honorable, virtuous, or beautiful one can and ought to do (any of which the word James selected can be translated as) and one disregards or ignores it, his is considered sin as much as if he committed sin itself.

Jesus said as much at the conclusion of the discussion over the healing of the man born blind in John 9:40-41. Paul also alludes to this in Romans 1:20, 1:32 and 2:17-23.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

CHAPTER FIVE

5:1-6,

1: "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 2: Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3: Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! 4: Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5: You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6: You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you."

1: James now writes a polemic against the rich. Yes, the brothers have problems, but the rich that have power and influence are not innocent either. They are to weep and mourn for miseries coming upon them for their behavior and greed. This is interpreted by many commenters as foretelling the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. some 20-25 years in the future. How this guess affects the rich Jewish people in faraway Turkey is nuts in my opinion. The context gives us more help and we can offer better answers than this one.

I suggest that the context tells us that James is talking about judgment upon these greedy and oppressive rich when Christ returns and judgment is rendered. These rich have "witnesses against them of their abuse (verse 3) and it is for the "last days" this "treasure" (sarcasm I'm sure) has been stored up (i. e. not boding well for them). In verse 7 the brethren are to be patient until the coming of the Lord. In other words, the greedy rich will get theirs then, as I see it.

2-3a: This is not literally the case, but in light of 4:13-16 this is a metaphor for the actual value they have in God's eyes. The rich count these possessions as having value and worth, but not so when it comes to God as James rightly points out. The word for "rusted" here is "corrosion" or even "poison" as used in Romans 3:13 and James 3:8. Gold itself does not "rust" or "corrode" so this fact helps us understand the intent of James' phraseology.

3b-6: "...and their rust (see above for a fuller description of this word) will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!"

This is not an unfamiliar tenet to the Jews. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 reads,

14: "You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, whether *he is* one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns." 15: "You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you."

And,

"He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him." Proverbs 14:31

"Lord of Sabaoth" from the Hebrew, "יהוה צבאות" (Yahweh Tzbaoth) and means God of the armies (or possibly angels, or powers, earthly or heavenly)

The corruption of their wealth in God's eyes comes from James' description of how they accumulated it. This was through cheating laborers who worked hard in their fields, and bringing charges against the innocent, seeing them executed and confiscating their land and goods.

5:7-11,

7: "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8: You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9: Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. 10: As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11: We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful."

7-8: James returns to his brethren who have suffered under the oppression of others, especially the greedy rich. Their response to this has not been commendable. The early church anticipated the soon return of Christ. It wasn't

until time, thought and examination of the scriptures began to reveal that this was not to be the case. The spread of the gospel to the "whole world" as Jesus commanded could not be done in a short time and Peter realized that it could be a long time when he wrote chapter three of his first epistle.

So James counsels patience. His illustration is excellent. His counsel is sound though his expectation of a "crop" was found to be optimistic, as the scattering of the seed is found to be a nearly timeless process. The word "patient" is the Greek "mahk-roh-thu- meh-oh" and means to have endurance (as a distance runner), and to persevere. Not just to "wait."

9: "Complain" is also "murmur" and the believing Jews are to refrain from this. James may well be quoting this from the memory of Jesus words,

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5

"The Judge is standing right at the door" is another reference to the soon expected return of Christ.

10-11: James recalls the patience of respected and renown men of old under persecution as an encouragement to these to whom he writes. He notes that God is merciful and compassionate to those who suffer and continue to hold faith and confidence in God.

5:12,

12: "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment."

12: "Above all" is a priority in James thinking as he considers all he has said in the previous comments, especially verses 8 and 9. Why? Because the Jews were accustomed to making vows, in a legalistic sense, to gain God's favor. Jesus had a great deal to say about this. James nearly quotes Him verbatim,

"Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil." Matthew 5:33-37

Jesus also said,

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, *that* is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' "You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? "And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, *that* is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.' "You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? "Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. "And whoever swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it." (Matthew 23:15-22)

This oath and vow taking still goes on today and is taken quite lightly, even at the wedding altar. But when things don't go in the way one feels they ought to go for themselves, the vow is seldom considered as binding. Vows in court are not held with much esteem, and even a signature on a contract or check is often looked upon with wonder if it will actually be good. Promises? Good luck with that.

But both Jesus and James are adamant that a person's word ought to be enough without going through all the "cross my hearts," promises, vows, and all that. If a person's word was good, all the rest would be unnecessary. People are rightly skeptical about believing another's word or promise, probably because they so seldom keep their own.

Personally, I have been lied to by so many Christians and efforts to deceive, manipulate, mislead, swindle, cheat, and use me have been so common coming from Christians, I often wonder about what is going on in the church.

The bright light for me is to know people who are like Jesus' assessment of Nathanael, who when Jesus saw him said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

5:13-18,

13: "Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14: Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15: and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." 16: Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17: Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18: Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."

13: Drawing close to God in prayer during times of suffering is common and a good thing. James counseled this in 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." There is much about prayer as he continues. His ensuing comment, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" may well fit verses 15 and 16.

"Singing praises" would bring to mind many of the praise psalms either chanted, sung, or set to music (also a legitimate translation of the Greek). Instruments, songs, recitations are all included in the original word translated "sing." The word "Psalm" is the Greek LXX for the Hebrew "Miz-mohr" and the word James uses for "sing" is "psalloh" related to "psalm."

14: When sick (weak, feeble, unable to function properly) one is to call for the elders of the church. James' use of the word "church" (the English) only occurs once here in his epistle. He is not referring to a meeting place. For that he uses "synagogue" in 2:2. His use of this term here is to differentiate those "called out" from those who are not believers in Christ. The word translated "church" in English is actually translated "called out" and refers to those who had come to faith in Christ, responding to His call and moving from where they were (lost in the kingdom of this world) into His kingdom.

Peter uses the same root word in I Peter 2:9,

"But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has *called you out* of darkness into His marvelous light;..." (underlined bold italics mine).

And Paul says it this way,

"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,..." (Colossians 1:13)

So James is referring to people who are, in this case, believing elders. "Elders" is "pres-bu-ter-ohs" from which we get the word "presbytery" or "Presbyterian" at one time indicating a church body ruled by elders. In James' time, elders were actually old and experienced men. The young "elders" today are not representative of the original intent.

The elders who are called are to pray over the sick, anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. This is an ancient practice going all the way back to God's instructions in Exodus. There are several blends of "oil" used for different purposes. The sacred "oil" was a special olive oil blend as directed by God in Exodus 30-22-33. It was used for "anointing" holy places, things and people and its use was restricted.⁴⁴

Another blend was used in common applications. In the New Testament, Mark says of Jesus' disciples, "And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them." (Mark 6:13) This specific practice is only mentioned twice in the New Testament, here and in James.

However, apparently another blend of olive oil was commonly used to treat wounds. In the parable of "The Good Samaritan" in Luke 10, verses 33-34 read, "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt Compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him." James does not indicate which oil the elders were to use. And, olive oil was also used in cooking, burning for light in the special lamps, and so on.

⁴⁴ One may look up "anointing oil" in a concordance for more information from the many texts in the Bible referring to this.

The prayer and oil anointing are a simultaneous act. The prayer may also be accompanied by the laying on of hands. There is quite a bit about prayer and its effectiveness from this point on, but there are also conditions.

15-16: The two verses look to be parallel, a common literary technique. First, "...and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him."

It may well be "elders" who have seen this accomplished in their experience and why they can offer up a prayer in "faith." Literally it is "the prayer of faith." It is not one's faith that is the key, but the object of our faith, the greatness and compassion of our God in whom we place our confidence and hope, not ourselves.

The promise is that the Lord will raise up the person thus prayed for.

In 16, the counsel is repeated with additional comments about confession. Verse 15 would seem to indicate that forgiveness from God accompanies this prayer process. Verse 16 seems to indicate that it is the confession to another that releases a person from sins against another person.

There are at least two points of view on this.

1. James, like most, did not yet grasp the full significance of Christ's finished work on the cross. This is possible as most teachers and preachers, churches and Christian educational institutions don't have a clue about this either, even today.
2. James was aware of Christ's finished work on the cross, but realized that his statement in verse 15 could be misleading and so clarified in 16.

He doesn't specifically mention forgiveness from God, nor does he deal with forgiveness anywhere else in his epistle. But he does mention confessing sin to one another, and not to God, suggesting that it is interpersonal problems that need dealing with. In support of this view, most of epistle is about interpersonal conduct and the need to repent and clear it up. Verse 20 may also support this view.

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" is referencing the Elders in the context. "It can accomplish much." His support for this is found in verses 17-18.

17-18: James summons of Elijah as his supporting cast. He is quick to point out that he was a man with a "nature" like ours. Not a bad translation for a complex word. The original is "ho-moi-oh-path-ēs" meaning, "similar passions." So, James is not saying he was intrinsically "righteous" or even "more righteous" than anyone else, but that he trusted God, turned to God and did as God directed. Therein lay his righteousness.

The point of James' using Elijah was that Elijah "prayed earnestly" and that this type of earnest prayer is effective.⁴⁵ There is no statement to this effect regarding Elijah and the famine in the Old Testament, but Elijah is highly respected for his faith and courage despite his weaknesses. The account of this event is found in I Kings 17-18. It is probable that the prayer aspect of Elijah comes at the beginning of the rain episode when Elijah prayed over the dead son of the widow in Zarephath of Sidon and raised him up.

There is also no specific mention of the three and a half years either. Then why these statements? Even Jesus mentions the three and a half years. (Luke 4:25) The common view involves the symbolic use of the number seven. Seven is the number of completion and rest taken from the creation account. Half of that indicates the midway point in God's purposes for a completed period, often judgment on a nation or even the earth. In Genesis 41:1-7 for example, Pharaoh had a dream involving sevens. Joseph interpreted them as seven good years and seven years of famine and advised Pharaoh on what to do. Elisha predicted a seven year famine in II Kings 8:1 and Revelation 11:1-6 speaks of a three and a half period in several ways. In first Kings 18:1 we are told, "Now it happened *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." Tradition speaks that this period in three and a half years and Jesus also repeats this in Luke 4:25. Just because it doesn't say this specifically in the text doesn't mean that it didn't occur.

5:19-20,

19: "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20: let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

⁴⁵ Jesus also uses Elijah as an illustration for a different reason, (Luke 4:25 and more) as does Paul (Romans 11:2).

19-20: First, James is no doubt addressing believing Jews. Second, there is an encouragement to turn one back to the truth if a brother sees him straying. This "straying" may be due to false teaching, believing a deception, or just personal self-driven, ungodly conduct. What is interesting is that this also parallels verse 20 regarding a "sinner" - that is, straying from the truth is sin. "Straying from the Truth" and the "error of his ways" correspond.

In the phrase, "...will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" does James suggest that a wayfaring believer might be in danger of losing his salvation?

There are several approaches to this. If the straying from the truth involves a person that "says" he has faith, but is living a life of denial of Christ and his faith isn't real, then this idea would fit that scenario.

If it is a true believer that has strayed into error or sin, then saving his soul from death may not refer to an eternal penalty at all, but an earthly one. (See comment at 1:21 reproduced below)⁴⁶

If however, James has not yet grasped the truth about salvation by faith and the finished work of Christ, or we think he hasn't, and still is thinking that "The wages of sin is death" even for the believer, then he has condemned himself for in 3:2, he writes, "For we all stumble in many ways...". This hardly makes sense considering where he has come from. It is his use of the word "death" that is difficult to interpret.

If he is speaking of interpersonal relationships in the community, and the inner soul and heart. then this comment along with the "forgiveness" aspect makes good sense. This is the context. A hint is given us as there looks to be a reference to Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions." I Peter 4:8 quotes this Proverb also where Peter writes, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." If this is the case, then James may not be thinking in eternal terms at all. He seldom does in this

⁴⁶ In 1:21, that comment reads, "This is not a note about how to be "saved" in terms of eternal life by faith in Christ. The point of this is to bring a change to their inner heart, motive, understanding, attitude and all that is at the core of their being so that they can understand and deal with the circumstances they are enduring, and respond in a manner worthy of their calling and identity in Christ. "...able to 'fix' or 'repair'" your souls' might be a way to see this phrase more clearly."

epistle.

There is a debate as to whether the one turning the errant brother back to the truth covers that person's sins or his own. Well, James is not ignorant that it was Jesus who died for our sins, so this idea is not a salvation idea but a relational one. The entire passage has to do with healing and restoration of people and the epistle is designed overall, for this as well. The eternal matters seem to take a backseat to the problems he addresses within the community as well as those who claim to be Christians within it.

But, since James is not in the habit of explaining his intent very often, we are still left to ponder.

The epistle ends rather abruptly at this point. It is impossible to know if this was James' intention or if the conclusion of the book, normally containing a benediction, greetings and so forth has been lost.

APPENDIX

THE BOOK OF JAMES

Theme: "Conduct Unbecoming"

Summary Outline

I. Situation - (commonly called "the occasion" - the reason James was prompted to write his epistle)

1. The recipients are Jews and believers in Christ (1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12,19). They live in Jewish communities or "quarters" among many Jews who are not believers in Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), (2:7). Normally these Jewish communities are within a larger population in or near a city. The epistle is written to many of these communities scattered throughout the provinces of modern day Turkey (1:1). Both the believing Jews and the traditional Jews attend the same synagogue (2:2). There is friction between them (4:1).

2. Those in the larger non-believing community are mocking, belittling and deriding those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and some are even blaspheming the name of Jesus (2:7). Those who believe are undergoing trials and stress for their faith (1:2-3; 1:12, 5:7-8, 10-11)

3. The response of these believing Jews to their circumstances are:

A. Some believe that God is causing their distress and blame Him for these problems as well as not relieving them, and are doubting much of what they have heard in terms of the gospel. Because of this false belief, they are caught between believing what others say and what they have heard about the truth.

B. Some, who name the name of Jesus, are railing back and acting with "behavior unbecoming." Included in this is: "Anger" (1:19-20), "filthiness" (1:21), "remains of wickedness" (1:21), failure to do

works consistent with whom a Christian is supposed to be (1:22-27; 2:14-26), misusing their tongues and quarreling (1:26; 3:1-12; 4:11), conforming to the world (4:4-10), judging others (4:11-12). Other problems include; "lust" (consuming passion for position, power, and things they don't have), envy, jealousy, self-centeredness, pride, presumption, arrogance, boasting, lying against and about the truth, and perhaps even murder (chapter 4).

C. Some are currying favor with the rich in an attempt to gain support or some benefit from doing so. At the same time, there is a disregard for the poor and needy (1:27-2:9).

D. The use of their "tongue" is not only unacceptable, but defiles them. Their "getting in the face" of others is disgraceful to them and to Christ whose name they bear. (1:26; 3:2-12)

II. James' response.

James corrects and admonishes his readers/hearers about each of these problems in their midst. Corresponding to the items above, James teaches:

A. God is not the cause of their trials and troubles. He is not testing them. This common belief is not only incorrect it is the cause of doubt and confusion. He addresses this in 1:13-18 after encouraging them to rejoice when persecuted for their faith in Jesus rather than exhibit doubt, confusion and emotional turmoil and outbursts.

God only brings good and benefit, not suffering and trial. They need wisdom to see the truth and act accordingly. (1:5-8) They will be blessed if they persevere under trial rather than act in doubt and in "conduct unbecoming" a believer in Christ. (1:12)

B. Their anger, frustration, doubting and corrupt hearts will not receive wisdom or anything from God until they discard it and replace it with faith, the true word of God and then begin acting on it. This action, based on the word of truth should reflect the perfect and royal law found in Leviticus 19:18. This will be seen in kind and loving acts to the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, and their neighbor. This

is what faith in Christ means and without an exhibition of good works, it is useless. (2:14-26)

C. Playing favorites is another way of judging people and is condemned by the Lord. Their currying favor with the rich comes from evil motives. Their disregard of the poor is dishonorable and a violation of the Law. (2:1-13)

D. James illustrates and warns them about the improper and ungodly way they are speaking to others. This comes from bitterness in their hearts. What they profess is not divine wisdom, but earthly, natural and demonic. They are to humble themselves before God and put a stop to these things. (3:1-4:12)

There are other matters James includes such as admonishing the rich, encouragement to the believers to remain patient for the return of the Lord as He will make the judgments, to avoid taking oaths, and to confess their faults and sins to one another, to pray for one another and direct those who stray back to the truth.

The book of James is often misunderstood. It is not an epistle about how to be righteous before God by doing the works of the Law as many think. It is an epistle to correct "conduct unbecoming" in the Christian population of the Jewish communities to whom it is written. The primary "law" referred to is Leviticus 19:18 quoted by Jesus and the apostle Paul as the standard of conduct expected of those who name the name of Christ. James follows suit. His use of the term "law" and the various adjectives describing it are discussed in the commentary.

Inclusion, Authenticity and Canonicity of the Book of James

The Epistle was first explicitly referred to and quoted by Origen of Alexandria (225 A.D.) and possibly a bit earlier by Irenaeus of Lyons as well as Clement of Alexandria in a lost work according to Eusebius, although it was not mentioned by Tertullian, who was writing at the end of the Second Century. It is also absent from the Muratorian fragment, the earliest known list of New Testament books.

The Epistle of James was included among the twenty-seven New Testament books first listed by Athanasius of Alexandria in his *Thirty-Ninth Festal Epistle* (AD 367) and was confirmed as a canonical epistle of the New Testament by a series of

councils in the Fourth Century. Today, virtually all denominations of Christianity consider this book to be a canonical epistle of the New Testament.

In the first centuries of the Church the authenticity of the Epistle was doubted by some, including Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. Because of the silence of several of the western churches regarding it, Eusebius classes it among the Antilegomena or contested writings (*Historia ecclesiae*, 3.25; 2.23). St. Jerome gives a similar appraisal but adds that with time it had been universally admitted. Gaius Marius Victorinus, in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, openly questioned whether the teachings of James were heretical.

Its late recognition in the Church, especially in the West, may be explained by the fact that it was written for or by Jewish Christians, and therefore not widely circulated among the Gentile Churches. There is some indication that a few groups distrusted the book because of its doctrine. In Reformation times a few theologians, most notably Martin Luther in his early career, argued that this epistle should not be part of the canonical New Testament.

Martin Luther's description of the Epistle of James changes. In some cases, Luther argues that it was not written by an apostle; but in other cases, he describes James as the work of an apostle. He even cites it as authoritative teaching from God^[41] and describes James as "a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but *vigorously promulgates the law of God.*" Lutherans hold that the Epistle is rightly part of the New Testament, citing its authority in the Book of Concord, however it remains part of the Lutheran antilegomena.

A. The earliest quote from any apostolic writer appears to be Origen. (225 AD)

1. "The letter bearing the name of James," (Origen, Commentary on Matthew, 17.30)
2. "They thought, then, that He was the son of Joseph and Mary. But some say, basing it on a tradition in the Gospel according to Peter, as it is entitled, or "The Book of James," that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary." (Origen, Commentary on Matthew, 2.17)
3. James is quoted by Origen many times in his Commentary on John (19.61)

The Misunderstanding at Antioch

In Galatians 2:11-21, Paul wrote of his experience while in Antioch of Syria after returning from his first missionary journey. This appears to reflect the same account Luke writes about in Acts 15. Obviously provoked, here is Paul's rendition from his letter to the churches in Galatia,

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Paul responds to this either reporting what he said at this meeting or as an explanation to his readers, or both,

"We *are* Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

In Acts 15, Luke's account is as follows,

1: "Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' 2: And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate

with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue."

It is quite evident that Paul was unhappy, if not incensed at all this. Then, having to go to Jerusalem and defend his apostleship, explain all this and engage in a heated debate with the Pharisaical Jews must have been quite unpleasant. However, Paul's reputation as a scholar and rabbi, plus his conversion could not have gone unnoticed.

Later after they arrived at Jerusalem, Luke reports,

4: "When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5: But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.' 6: The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter."

Now we see that some of the believing Pharisees had yet to understand that God cared about the Gentiles. These may be among some of the "men" that Luke mentions in verse 1 who came to Antioch insisting on this practice. Paul calls these "men" false brethren in Galatians 2:4, "But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage." But, as Luke continues his report, Paul seems to have accepted what James said later in the conference, that they had not come with instructions from James at all. Luke continues,

7: "After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8: And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9: and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10: Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11: But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.'"

This is quite a speech by Peter and had a profound effect upon all assembled. His encounter with Paul at Antioch coupled with his previous experience at Caesarea

seems to have gotten through to Peter. Once seeking favor of the Jews who opposed Paul, Peter finally takes his stand. Paul must have seethed as he had to engage in great debate again, go through all this while Peter just sat and watched. Finally, Peter took a stand. Then Paul and Barnabas were able to also give testimony to similar events Peter had described taking place among the Gentiles.

Luke continues,

12: "All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13: After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me."

This now becomes the moment of truth for the history of the church. James, the undisputed leader of the council and the church takes his stand and says,

"Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.' "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (14-21)

So James, not unfamiliar with the scriptures regarding God's intent for the Gentiles, makes a historic decision. As Luke continues, all agree.

22: "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23: and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. 24: Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, 25: it

seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26: men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The key verse is 24. James had given no instruction to the "men" whom sent to Antioch, who apparently claimed that their visit and point of view was authorized by James. James, according to Luke, seems unhappy with that visit and what transpired there.

So to claim that James was a "legalist" and that he taught works as the means of salvation based on what Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians is in error. Paul may have genuinely thought James was culpable when these men from Jerusalem came and tried to persuade Paul was teaching error and purportedly this came from James. But that looks to be a sham. There was no question Paul went to Jerusalem with a bitter taste in his mouth and quite upset. "Great debate" took place. It carried on for quite a while before Peter got the courage to stand up and speak the truth.

Paul must have been incensed during this time. But, finally, it came to the proper resolution. Paul's comments in Galatians, likely written after he returned to Antioch and heard about the same "legalistic" teaching in the churches he had founded while on his first missionary journey for which he was severely persecuted and even stoned apparently to death, must have been devastating after what he had just had to go through. He has already had to defend his apostleship from accusations against him that he was and is not an apostle, and now this on top of it all.

His anger is clearly apparent in Galatians and he also expresses a "fed up" attitude toward the leaders in Jerusalem when he writes about the ordeal there,

"But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)--well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me." (Galatians 2:5-6)

Emotions ran high, but God saw to it that the truth of the gospel was proclaimed and that the church was unified in this effort. The Jerusalem conference, though difficult and unpleasant for all involved, actually became the foundational meeting

affecting the entire future history of the church. And it was James who made the key decision.

THEMATIC OUTLINE IN COLOR

Encouragement to the brethren.

Jas 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

Jas 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Jas 1:4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Jas 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

Jas 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

Jas 5:8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Jas 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

Jas 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

Jas 5:15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Jas 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Jas 5:19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

Jas 5:20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

God only gives good gifts.

Jas 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Jas 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Jas 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. Jas 1:19a *This* you know, my beloved brethren.

God's Wisdom versus that of the world.

Jas 3:13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

Jas 3:14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth.

Jas 3:15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

Jas 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Jas 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Jas 3:18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Bering double minded.

Jas 1:6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

Jas 1:7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

Jas 1:8 *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Jas 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Jas 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Jas 1:15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Jas 1:16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

The tongue and one's inner problems.

19b But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger;

Jas 1:20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Jas 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless.

Jas 3:5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

Jas 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell.

Jas 3:8 But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison.

Jas 3:9 With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

Jas 3:10 from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing.

Key verse, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way."

Jas 3:11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*?

Jas 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

Jas 4:11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge *of it*.

Jas 4:1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

Jas 4:2 You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

Jas 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

Jas 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

Jas 5:10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Jas 5:11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.

Jas 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

Admonishment.

Jas 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

Jas 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Jas 4:5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

Jas 4:6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Jas 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Jas 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Jas 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

Jas 4:14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

Jas 4:15 Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

Jas 4:16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Faith ought to be demonstrated in deeds of kindness.

Jas 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Jas 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

Jas 2:16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

Jas 2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

Favoritism and prejudice are from evil motives.

Jas 2:1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

Jas 2:2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

Jas 2:3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

Jas 2:4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

Polemic against the greedy rich.

Jas 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

Jas 5:2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.
Jas 5:3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!
Jas 5:4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.
Jas 5:5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.
Jas 5:6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.

For the pride filled, and all who take lightly their own transgressions.

Jas 4:9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

Jas 4:10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

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