

The Gospel in

# James

*Belief that behaves!*



*Field*



*Notes*







# Survey the Land

## James

Christians struggle to live out their beliefs

## Introduction

### FIELD STUDY 1

### Why should we study James?

Christians misbehave. It is a tragic reality and all too common. It is not just that Christians fall into sexual sin, murder, or idolatry. Bad behavior need not be so extreme. Sin can be much more undetectable, excusable, and harmless... or so we think. It is loose lips, indifferent hearts, bad attitudes, or simply cozying up too closely with a world that opposes God. These too are sinful and our churches are filled with Christians misbehaving in many subtle ways.

Bad behavior is not only about what you do, but what you do *not* do. A passive Christian is a misbehaving Christian. A half-hearted believer is a sinful believer. These are double-minded individuals moving back and forth between Christ and the world. Wavering in faith or being inactive for Christ is as much a rebellion as engaging in willful sin.

God does not want us to live the Christian life in a passive or half-hearted way. He wants our exclusive loyalty shown in active obedience. God did not save us just to leave us as we are. He wants more for us than to indulge in entertainment, be indecisive in our faith, and wait for Christ's return. He wants us to believe in and behave like Jesus. Genuine faith in Christ is active and practical. It affects how we talk, how we spend our time and money, how we plan, how we wait, how we react, how we deal with hardship, how we treat people, how we live life—it affects how we behave. Genuine Christian faith is lived out in every way.

This is precisely the call of James to Christians: behave as you believe. There are no excuses. For many readers, James connects works to faith in an uncomfortable way. The reformer Martin Luther went so far as to label the book of James “an epistle of straw” before retracting the

### Field Study 1

#### Previewing James

- 1:1–18 Christian Living
- 1:19–2:13 Responding to the Gospel
- 2:14–26 The Gospel
- 3:1–4:12 Responding to the Gospel
- 4:13–5:20 Christian Living

### Pilgrim's Progress

*The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come; Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream* is a classic Christian allegory written by John Bunyan and published in 1678. This two-part narrative centers around the main character *Christian* who journeys to the *Celestial City*. Along the way he meets *Mr. Facing-Both-Ways* who is trying to live life facing both Christ and the world, which illustrates the very inconsistency James addresses.

### The Roman god Janus

The ancient Roman mythical god Janus is the god of beginnings and transitions. He is usually depicted with two faces illustrating how he looks to both the past and the future. It serves as a good visual display of *Mr. Facing-Both-Ways* from *Pilgrim's Progress*.



1600 1620 1640 1660 1680 1700 A.D.

1611 King James Bible published

1628

The life of John Bunyan

1688

1643 Westminster Assembly begins

1678 Pilgrim's Progress published

1648 Peace of Westphalia





Juan de la Corte, 1631–1660

### Solomon Meets the Queen of Sheba

This painting shows Solomon's massive and ornate palace. His opulent lifestyle and unending lust for women led his life away from God and to ultimate ruin.

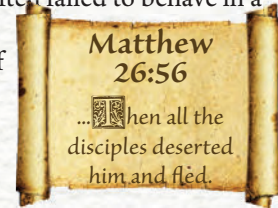
### The Death of Ananias

In Acts 5:1–11, Ananias and Sapphira desired the appearance of complete devotion to God. They sold a piece of property and claimed to give the full amount to the apostles. However, the Holy Spirit revealed that they had held a portion back for themselves. Their wavering devotion cost them their very lives.



Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1515–1516

The story is remarkably similar in the first century A.D. in which the New Testament was written. There we witness God's people struggling with exclusive allegiance and active obedience to the Lord. Jesus' own disciples often failed to behave in a manner befitting of Christ.



The portrait of the early church presented in the epistles also exposes the ongoing

theme of followers of Christ not living according to Christian beliefs. This is evident in the many failures of the church in Corinth which was marked by divisions, jealousy, strife, immorality, and worldliness.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament also highlights the double-life of many individuals including Demas who deserted Paul because he loved this present world.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore evident that James does not write to address a rare problem but a universal one which is still present today. God's people have wavered in half-hearted commitment to him throughout history. James may be a *bossy epistle* but it is also a *necessary epistle* for today. Let's explore what God says in this great book.

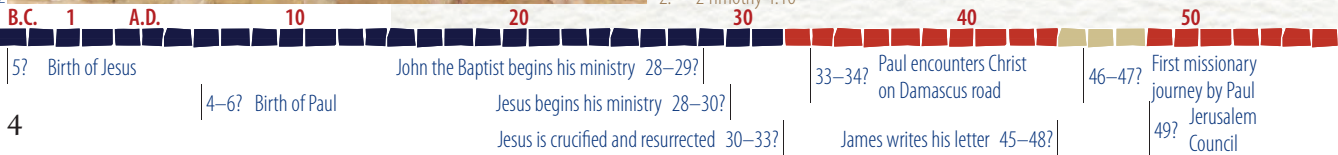
### Who wrote this book?

The author of this letter simply identifies himself as *James*, the servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He must have been so well known in the early church that no further clarification on his identity was necessary. He must have held such universal respect across the early churches that his first name was enough to assert his authority.

There are several options, though only one is likely.



- 1 Corinthians 1:10–17; 3:1–4; 5:1; 6:1
- 2 Timothy 4:10







Two of Jesus' twelve disciples were called *James*. The first is *James*, son of Alphaeus<sup>3</sup> who is also known as *James the Younger*.<sup>4</sup> He is simply too unknown in the New Testament to write a letter with such authority and without need to qualify his identity further. The other disciple is *James* the son of Zebedee who was the brother of John.<sup>5</sup> He was killed in A.D. 44 before this letter was likely written. Other options are *James*,

### Acts 12:1–2

Now, it was about that time that King Herod laid hands on some who were part of the church to hurt them. He put to death James, the brother of John, by the sword.

the half-brother of Jesus,<sup>6</sup> or even another *James* unknown to us in history since this name was very popular among Jews in the first century A.D.

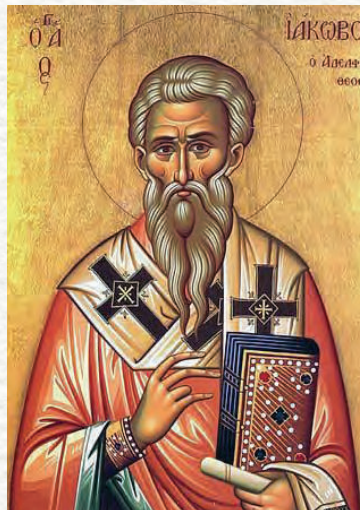
In the book of Acts, there was a *James* who rose to become an important leader in the Jerusalem church. This *James*

was the half-brother of Jesus and would later be known as *James the Just*. He is the most likely author. This is the only *James* that was well known and respected by the churches across the Roman Empire. He chaired the famous Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. The meeting settled the question of whether Gentiles had to become like Jews to be Christians. Because of his important and respected position, *James* wrote the council's decision as a letter to all the churches.

*James* and the other half-brothers actually did not believe in Jesus during his earthly ministry.<sup>7</sup> *James* only became a follower after witnessing Jesus' resurrection.<sup>8</sup> It seems he was also the brother of Jude, the author of the New Testament book with the same name.<sup>9</sup> *James* was the most prominent leader in the first church in Jerusalem<sup>10</sup> and interacted regularly with the apostle Paul.<sup>11</sup> Finally, *James* was also well known outside of church circles in the first century A.D. according to the secular historian Josephus.

(Josephus Antiquities 20.9.1)

3. Matthew 10:3
4. Mark 15:40
5. Matthew 10:2
6. Matthew 13:55
7. John 7:5
8. 1 Corinthians 15:6–8; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19
9. Jude 1
10. Acts 12:17; 15:13; Galatians 2:1–14
11. Act 15; 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12



### Why James and not Jacob?

The names *James* and *Jacob* are originally the same Jewish name. The Greek term used in verse 1 is closer to *Jacob* but this book is known in English as *James*. It may simply be that *James* was the more common of the two versions of the name in English. However, some suspect that *King James I* may have influenced the choice of *James* over *Jacob*. It was during his reign (1566–1625) that the *King James Version* was produced, which became the most influential English Bible translation.

### A half-brother of Jesus?

Matthew 1:18–25 declares that Mary conceived Jesus as a virgin by the work of God and that she was not united sexually with Joseph until after Jesus birth. The Gospels tell us that once Jesus had been born, Joseph and Mary had other children (Mark 3:31; 6:3; John 7:3). These are Jesus' half-brothers and half-sisters.

### James "the Just"

The first reference to *James* being called *the Just* is by early Christian chronicler Hegesippus (110–180 A.D.) While all of his writings are lost, the early church historian Eusebius (260–340 A.D.) quotes Hegesippus who said of *James*, "After the apostles, *James* the brother of the Lord surnamed *the Just* was made head of the Church at Jerusalem."

Eusebius Pamphilus: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, Chapter XXIII, 4.

49? Jerusalem Council

62 James martyred

70 Temple is destroyed

John writes Revelation 95–96?

50–52? Paul's second missionary journey

52–57? Paul's third missionary journey

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption





## Quality Greek from a Jew?

The quality of the text of James in the original Greek is very good on several literary levels. How is this possible if James was an uneducated Jew brought up in the remote region of Galilee? Many Galileans were bilingual knowing both Greek and Aramaic. Moreover, James probably received help from Greek speaking Jewish Christians in Jerusalem when composing this work. Josephus, the famous first century A.D. Jewish writer also admits to receiving help writing in Greek so it seems this was a common practice (*Against Apion* 1.9).

## The Stoning of Stephen

The first major persecution of the church happens with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:54–60. This begins the scattering of believers, including James's congregation from Jerusalem.

## What was going on at the time?

The early church faced many hardships. In Acts 8, we see the beginnings of physical persecution from the Jewish authorities who crucified Christ. The church in Jerusalem scattered. Yet initially, despite hardship, Christians were united in self-sacrificial love and kindness toward one another.<sup>1</sup> As persecutions increased into the A.D. 40's, more Jewish Christians were dispersed across the Roman Empire spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ as they went.<sup>2</sup> Economic strains and a famine that tormented the whole Roman world under the reign of Emperor Claudius throughout the A.D. 40's only increased the persecution. Food was in very short supply and tension was always high. Times were very tough. Unpopular people like Jewish Christians would certainly have felt the strain of finding work and food on foreign shores.

By calling Christians to behave in keeping with genuine Christian faith,

James implies that these scattered believers were no longer responding well to the trials they faced. The portrait that emerges of the early church is an ugly one. We see a Christian community persecuted and scattered among the nations. It could not hold its tongue, did not treat people well, and did not prioritize Christ over the desires of this world. These Christians may have believed in Christ but struggled to behave like Christ. It is as if they did not care enough to obey their Savior. It was a Christian church

1. Acts 2:42–47; 4:29, 32–35; 5:17–18

2. Acts 8:4

## RÉSUMÉ JAMES "THE JUST"

ALSO KNOWN AS JACOB  
CURRENT HOMETOWN:  
JERUSALEM

### BACKGROUND

From Galilee  
Half-brother of Jesus  
Brother of Jude

### EXPERIENCE

Leader of the Jerusalem church  
Presided over the Jerusalem council in Acts 15

### REFERENCES

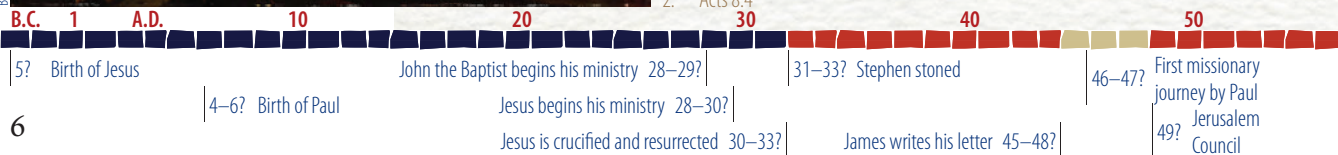
Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3  
Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18  
1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12

## Acts 7:59–8:1

As they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... On that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem, and all except for the apostles, were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.



Bartholomaeus Breenbent, 1632







immature in the faith. The hardships of life molded the attitudes, values, and behavior of Christians according to the pattern of the world instead of Christ. *Tough times can do this!* Such skewed living exposed something that concerned James about the authenticity of their faith.

Therefore, James saw a faith problem in Christian misbehavior. No believer's behavior should be inconsistent with the model of Christ's life. Difficulties will test the character and reality of our faith. Trials reveal the loyalties of our heart, but they need not bring out the worst in us. They can refine our faith in Christ, deepening our devotion to God. In calling for belief that is consistently lived out, James simply calls for a full-fledged dedication to Jesus, the object of our faith.

### Acts 11:19–21

So those who had been scattered because of the persecution connected with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch speaking the word to no one except to Jews. But there were some of them, from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the Lord's hand was with them, and a large number believed and turned to the Lord.

### Who was the audience?

James refers to his readers as “the twelve tribes in the Diaspora.” The *Diaspora* was simply a Jewish way of referring to the world outside of geographical Israel into which many Jews were scattered. It was the lands of the Gentiles or non-Jews.

The *twelve tribes* was also a common Jewish way of referring to themselves because, like provinces or states, Israel was originally composed of twelve tribes descending from the sons of Jacob.<sup>3</sup>

### James 1:1

James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Diaspora: Greetings.

As the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, James had seen persecution disperse his congregation across the Roman Empire. Many likely had abandoned most of their possessions to flee for safety. Furthermore, Jews had previously been exiled and scattered among foreign nations because of God's discipline centuries earlier. Many of these dispersed Jews returned to Jerusalem every year to celebrate Jewish festivals like Pentecost. Acts 2 indicates that many of these pilgrims became Christians when the Holy Spirit was poured out and Peter preached the gospel. After the feast was over, they took the gospel back to their homes in foreign lands, long before Paul's missionary journeys.

James's letter is addressed specifically to all of these Jewish *Christians* living outside of Israel. In the early days of Christianity, the majority of Christians were ethnically Jews. Many were still meeting in Jewish

### The Diaspora

There were many Jews scattered among the Gentile nations as a result of God's discipline. Assyria's invasion of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. and the seventy-year Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 17; 25) are two examples. Most Jews never returned to their homeland after exile. They either assimilated into the foreign cultures or maintained their own Jewish identities abroad. The Jewish *synagogue* was key to keeping Jewish culture alive on foreign shores. By the first century A.D., the *Diaspora* had become a technical category in the Jewish mindset referring to the Jews scattered outside Israel.

3. Genesis 49:1–33; Exodus 1:1–7





## What is joy?

Joy is much more than an emotion or feeling. It is a state of mind, an attitude, or a condition a believer exhibits despite circumstances. Pleasurable situations and experiences produce happiness yet joy is possible even when life is hard. In this passage James explains why it is essential. Christians can be joyful under suffering because of their hope in an all powerful and loving God, who is at work within their struggles.

## Christian maturity

The *maturity* James describes is what Bible scholars refer to as *progressive sanctification*. God does not simply want us to believe in him but to become more like him. This takes time as the Holy Spirit works in our lives. The Christian life involves ongoing growth and maturity in holy character.

Knowing *how* to respond with joy and endure various trials in a way that builds character is incredibly difficult. In fact, one might lack the insight needed to persevere through such difficulties. James anticipates this challenge and directs us to ask God for wisdom, which is available generously and indiscriminately to all. God wants us to be able to endure our trials with practical skill and knowledge.<sup>1</sup> He wants to provide the wisdom essential for us to produce a Christ-like character.



Allen Drabent, 1957–1961

### Testing to purify

The Scriptures use the analogy of what heat does to precious metals in its teaching of the process of purification through hardship. Psalm 12:6 declares, “The words of the LORD are pure, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”

Asking God for wisdom in prayer unlocks his understanding into our situations, but only if that prayer is expressed in faith. Not fully trusting that God wants or is able to help us is to doubt him. It is to waver back and forth, just like the rolling movements of waves in the wind. This instability will spill over into other areas of life. Remember we are not merely asking God for wisdom, but believing that he can and will provide wise counsel. When we only trust God part-time, we are implying that he is dubious, unreliable, or uncaring the rest of the time. God wants us to trust him all the time. He is willing to give us wisdom without being disappointed in us for not knowing what to do.

(5–8)

### A Rough Sea

Some people are always pursuing the newest fad, and like a wave of the sea, they move from one thing to the next. James says these double-minded people will not receive wisdom from God.

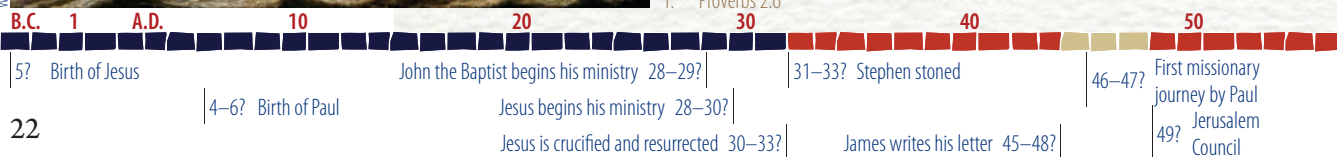
Having been scattered among the nations through persecution, some of James's readers may have been struggling with poverty as they relocated to new lands. He reminds them that wealth does not make living the Christian life easier. Rather, God's wisdom will help the poor believer realize that dignity, self-worth, and self-respect are rooted in a relationship with the Lord. Humble economic circumstances can be a forceful reminder that our only worth is in God.

(9–11)

The LORD's wisdom helps the rich believer realize that the reason to boast is only found in a humble disposition before God and not in powerful and attractive riches. Wealth withers



Willem van Dieët, 1630's







## Jeremiah 9:23–24

**T**he Lord says, let not a wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. Let him who boasts boast in this: that he understands and knows me, that I, the LORD act out of loving-kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth for I delight in these.

and dries up like plants in scorching heat. The believer must not be dragged into pursuing temporal things such as the comfort of riches, for it is as hypnotizing as it is short-lived.<sup>2</sup> God's wisdom in one's economic situation will help change a Christian's mind-set away from how society

classifies status, worth, security, and significance pointing them toward God instead. Both the poor and rich believer will then be able to live out the Christian life properly, independent of their economic status.

## Psalm 49:16–17

**D**o not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his glory will not descend with him.

- (12) James closes out this first section on rejoicing in trials by returning to his initial point. Verse 12 transitions us to the next section by summarizing what has been said. The person who endures perfecting trials will appreciate the ultimate blessing of everlasting life in fellowship with God. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be rewarded with eternal life by their loving God.

**Resisting Temptation (1:13–18):** God uses and may even cause trials in life in order to mature us. A trying situation can lead us in a very different direction from maturity. Trials can expose us to temptation, which may lead us to sin. James is aware that his audience, facing various trials, may wrongly think that God is tempting them.

2. Psalm 103:15–16

## Dry Grass and Hot Wind

Israel often experiences a hot wind known as *Simoom* blasting in from the south-eastern desert regions. These winds dry up vegetation rapidly. This is the same hot east wind in Jonah 4:8 that God sent to dry up the plant under which a grumpy Jonah took shelter. James uses this analogy to speak of the foolishness of taking pride in something as fragile as money which dries up like grass.

## Revelation 2:10

**B**e faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

## Crowning of the Victors

In ancient times, a wreath made from an olive branch was used to crown the winner at the Olympic Games. James uses the analogy of the winner's crown to foreshadow the crown of life from God which awaits believers.



50 60 70 80 90 100 A.D.

49? Jerusalem Council

62 James martyred

70 Temple is destroyed

John writes Revelation 95–96?

50–52? Paul's second missionary journey

52–57? Paul's third missionary journey

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption



**A Plowed Field**

In Mark 4:1–20 Jesus tells the parable of the four soils. The good soil had been prepared to receive God's word and yielded a rich crop.

but rather those who obey the law.<sup>1</sup> Genuine faith will produce practical obedience.<sup>2</sup>

However, sin in our lives can break this chain of events. Therefore, Christians have a responsibility to embrace God's word with humility. We are to get rid of filth and polluting influences so that our hearts become the good soil in which God's word will produce a harvest. Jesus taught this very concept when he told the parable of the four soils in Mark 4. He illustrated three different types of people with impure and ineffective soils. Seeds that landed on the path never penetrated the person's heart. Seeds among the rocks could not grow deep roots and seed

amongst the thorns were choked out. Only the pure soil yielded a crop.

1. Romans 2:13–16

## Where else is this taught in Scripture?

A contrast about obeying the word of God occurs between the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden and the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. In Genesis 2, God commands Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, in Genesis 3 the serpent and Eve converse about what God said and his word is put into doubt, distortion, and finally denial.

**The Original Sin**

Adam and Eve's disobedience of God's word was the original sin that plunged humanity into separation from their Creator.

**Doubt:** "Did God really say..." Serpent (Genesis 3:1)

**Distort:** "God did say... you must not touch it" Eve (Genesis 3:3)

**Deny:** "You will not surely die" Serpent (Genesis 3:4)

In Matthew 4 however, Jesus uses God's word in obedient submission to God the Father despite Satan's manipulation. Rather, than doubt, distort, or deny God's word, Jesus believes, affirms and obeys Scripture by stating, "it is written" in response to Satan.

**Believe:** "man lives... on every word... of God" Jesus (Matthew 4:4)

**Affirm:** "Do not put the Lord your God to the test..." Jesus (Matthew 4:7)

**Obey:** "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" Jesus (Matthew 4:10)

We must know God's word in order to obey him. While obedience liberates us to experience life in fellowship with God, disobedience to God's word breaks our fellowship with him.

**Genesis 2:16–17**

**T**he LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely die."

**Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness**

In Matthew 4, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Jesus responds to Satan's temptations by quoting God's word.

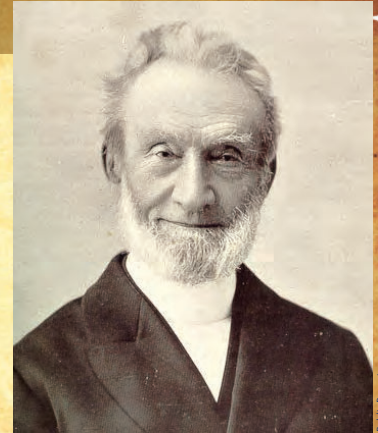




## Where else does this happen in history?

George Müller is a powerful example of a man who lived out his faith in Jesus Christ actively, practically, and sacrificially. His love for God compelled him to reach out to the disadvantaged of society in 19th century England, most notably orphans. Over his lifetime, George cared for more than ten thousand orphaned children and founded over a hundred schools to offer education to more than a hundred and twenty thousand children. He leaned exclusively on God, through prayer to provide the necessary help to feed so many hungry mouths. One particular morning the orphans were waiting to have breakfast and there was not a loaf of bread in the house. As soon as they prayed, the milkman and baker showed up with milk and bread for all. The milkman's cart had broken outside the orphanage doors.

The fruit of his faith in God was not just expressed in compassion for orphans, but in a passion for unsaved souls. In an age when travel was inconvenient, George clocked up several hundred thousand miles preaching the gospel in English, German, and French. George Müller was a man of active compassion, who loved the unsaved, and was devoted to prayer. He was a man of genuine Christian faith who behaved as he believed.



**George Müller**

George Müller (1805–1898) was a Prussian born evangelist who served as the director of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England. Müller modeled a powerful faith, building his orphanages without any money but praying and acting on God's constant provision.

## What does God want?

Many implications for our daily lives emerge in this passage of James. Here are a few thoughts to get us started.

### Listen and obey

True religion always affects behavior. Listening to God is more than attending church. Listening and obeying is continuing to be the hands and feet of Jesus through his church.

Christians are generally good at showing up to a church service, often with a Bible in hand, singing songs, memorizing verses, and hearing the word of God preached. Yet we struggle with living out what we sing, memorize, and hear being preached. We quickly apply what we hear to other people's lives but not our own. However, in this passage, God clearly states that those who believe in him must respond to him with obedience in service. This is what it means to *listen*. It may mean dealing with the sins that you constantly flirt with that are blocking out God's voice. It's time to look at our spiritual ugliness in the mirror and address that which needs to be changed. It may be a behavior, an





attitude, a desire, or any other sinful tendency. We do not hear God's word unless we respond in obedience. The world will change if what you hear from God goes in both ears and out your heart, hands, and feet. Live out your faith in obedience to God.

### Proverbs 14:31

**H**e who oppresses the poor insults his Creator, but whoever is gracious to the needy honors God.

### Favoritism insults God

God is offended by the way we classify the worth of people according to the world's practices. However, we are all guilty of this to some extent or another. It happens in all our churches. We listen more attentively to those we think are more honorable or valuable in society. We treat those who we think are more deserving with more care. We may even expect certain treatment ourselves based on our race, wealth, education, job, or life experience. Wealth or prestige should not determine how the church is managed, how the money is spent, or who should be in leadership. The church is not just another social club. Showing favoritism is worldly. Expecting favoritism towards ourselves is equally ungodly. It is anti-Christian behavior contrary to God's character. Both the church and our Christian lives must not reflect the culture's distorted views of people's status. Favoritism insults God. Every person matters equally as we are all created by and for Christ.<sup>1</sup>

### The Good Samaritan

In Luke 10:29–37, Jesus tells a Jewish expert in the law, a parable. This was to answer the question, "who is my neighbor?" A man was beaten and robbed and left for dead. A priest and a Levite passed the man by but a Samaritan cared for him, brought him to an inn and paid for the stay. The Samaritan was a neighbor.

### Love your neighbor as yourself

James has stated that the opposite of loving your neighbor is showing favoritism. There are always some who are easier to love than others but the idea of selectively loving some and not others is unacceptable. Jesus addressed this idea of loving your neighbor as yourself with the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10. His point was that a Samaritan man showed love to an injured Jew even though the two people groups hated each other. We too are to love all of the people we come in contact with. We are to do this without showing favoritism to those we deem worthy.



1. Colossians 1:16–23





## Discoveries

Now that you have completed your second excavation into the ancient riches of the book of James, it is time to sift through your *Discoveries* and see what you have learned. Carefully choose the questions that are most helpful to you or your group.

### Connecting with the community

These discussion questions will help you apply what God wants from you. When applicable, think of these questions not only as an individual but also in terms of your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. What adjustments need to be made in your speech? Are you prone to anger? Gossip? Talking down to people? Criticizing? Murmuring negative thoughts? What can you do this week to improve your speech? Who can hold you accountable to keep a tight rein on your tongue?
2. James moves from talking about the gospel of Jesus first as *word* and then *law*. How does this shift illustrate that Jesus is the perfection or completion of the Old Testament? Why is this understanding of Christ important for us today?
3. If you would hold up a mirror to your life, what would be out of place and require action? How about if you held up a mirror to your church or small group? What wisdom from God's word can help you to make the necessary adjustments?
4. What makes you deaf to the word of God? What else in your culture can make people deaf to Scripture? According to James, how can you better listen and respond to God's word?
5. How often do you help people who are helpless? Are there orphans or widows that you know who could use your help? Who can you help this week who is oppressed? How can you make social responsibility a regular part of your life?
6. What causes you to get angry? Is it a righteous anger from God or is it sinful? What can you do to get rid of sinful anger? In light of Paul's command in Ephesians 4:26, what can you do to develop a righteous anger like God has?

Notes, Observations & Questions





### A Friend of God

James states that Abraham was God's friend from a common Jewish understanding, not directly as a quote from the Old Testament. It was a well-known way of describing God and Abraham's relationship. For example, in the second century B.C. Jewish writing, *the Book of Jubilees* 19:9 notes that heavenly tablets record that Abraham was the friend of God. It is likely this Jewish understanding comes as an allusion to Scriptural passages which refer to Abraham as God's beloved such as Isaiah 41:8 and 2 Chronicles 20:7.

of Isaac was a *work* or *action* that showed that his faith in God expressed years earlier was genuine.<sup>1</sup> Authentic faith grows into the fruit of works in the Christian life. The type of faith that saves is inseparable from the works of obedience it seeks to produce.<sup>2</sup> Abraham's faith was not merely a professed faith because it expressed itself through his obedience.

### Hebrews 11:17

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac...

### Joshua 2:11

For the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Rahab is presented as the second surprising (25–26) illustration.<sup>3</sup> Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who came to believe in the God of Israel after hearing about him. Her act of receiving and hiding the Israelite spies

### Hebrews 11:31

By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish with the disobedient because she welcomed the spies.

in Jericho who were sent in by Joshua as well as sending them off away from danger proved the genuineness of her faith in God. Rahab's faith was shown to be authentic through the actions it produced.

### Patriarch and Prostitute

Why does James pick Abraham and Rahab to illustrate the relationship between faith and works? Perhaps it was because they are on opposite ends of the social spectrum in the eyes of the first century Jews:

man—woman  
Jew—Gentile  
ruler—prostitute

However, they are equal before God because of their faith. It may be a subtle suggestion that anyone between these two opposites who has the same living faith is accepted by God. Perhaps it is because both of these individuals expressed their living faith through a practical act of hospitality avoiding the favoritism presented in James 2:1–13 (Genesis 18; Joshua 2).

### What is God saying?

The truth that genuine faith is inseparable from works of faith is not unique to the book of James. God has repeatedly communicated this truth to us throughout Scripture.

The *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 is the most famous Old Testament creed summarizing God's law. It teaches that genuine faith toward God is something expressed through one's entire being. In the New Testament, John the Baptist called for those who had repented before God to produce fruit

1. Genesis 22:1–18
2. Ephesians 2:8–10
3. Joshua 2:1–24; 6:1–27

### RÉSUMÉ RAHAB

(CURRENT HOMETOWN: JERICHO  
(MODERN WEST BANK))

#### BACKGROUND

Prostitution

#### EXPERIENCE

Hosted, hid, and helped Israelite spies  
Ancestor of Jesus

#### REFERENCES

Joshua 2:1–24  
Hebrews 11:31 (Hall of Faith)

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

1400

1250

2091? God calls Abraham

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai 1446?

1925? God calls Abraham

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai 1260?

Period of Judges begins 1375?





in keeping with this repentance.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the apostle Paul reminds us that he along with James, John, and Peter were eager to express their faith in Christ practically through remembering the poor.<sup>5</sup> Paul repeatedly calls for obedience of faith throughout his letters.<sup>6</sup> Peter also addresses believers as those set apart by the Spirit for obedience and John calls for Christians to walk in the light because those who say they live in God must walk as Jesus walked.<sup>7</sup> It is no surprise then that James's teaching here comes from Jesus Christ himself. Jesus taught that fruit would provide the evidence to identify both genuine and deceptive faith.<sup>8</sup> He even gives the feeding and clothing of those in need as examples of the practical expressions of the genuine faith that receives reward.

**W**hen the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people from one another like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you cared for me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, '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 welcome you in or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the king will answer them, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.'



James Jacques Joseph Tissot, 1896–1902

### Rahab and the Two Spies

In Joshua 2:10–11, Rahab explains that she had heard of how God dried up the Red Sea so the Israelites could escape Egypt. Her knowledge of the acts of God led to her confession that he is the God in heaven above and the earth below.

Matthew 25:31–46

4. Matthew 3:8
5. Galatians 2:10
6. Romans 1:5
7. 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 2:6
8. Matthew 7:15–23

1250

1100

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500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to  
Babylon and the temple is destroyed 586

1220? Period of Judges begins

971 Solomon becomes king





# Excavate the Site

FIELD STUDY 5

James 3:1–4:12

The gospel bears practical fruit

Maler der Grabkammer des Menna, 1422–1411 B.C.



## Ancient Egyptian Riverboat

Pictured here is a stern-mounted steering oar of an Egyptian riverboat. This small oar served as the ship's rudder and directed the course of the ship. The depiction is from the Tomb of Menna from around 1422–1411 B.C.

## Forest Fires

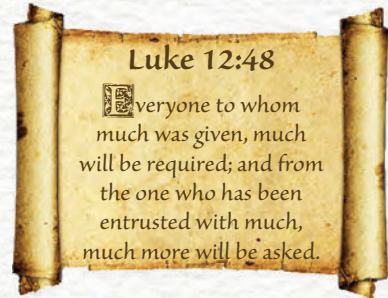
In ancient times, very little could be done to stop a raging forest fire. Even today with all of the modern equipment that exists, fires that start from the tiniest of sparks can decimate vast areas of land. James wants his audience to consider this imagery.



Johan Christian Dahl, 1846

This great responsibility results in greater accountability and therefore the appropriate warning. All Christians, and especially Bible teachers, are at risk of sinning with their words. It takes a perfected or mature person to rein in their tongue.

This ability marks the epitome of self-control.



## Luke 12:48

Everyone to whom much was given, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

(3–6)

In order to highlight the power and danger of the tongue, James provides several illustrations. This tiny part of the human body makes a huge impact on the speaker's life and others. The tongue's power to steer the direction of a life is like a bit in the mouth of a horse. It's body can be tamed and guided through this small instrument put just in the right place. The power of the tongue to influence an entire life is also like the rudder of a ship. A large sea vessel moves according to the larger forces of the wind but through a small rudder a pilot can control the ship, using the wind bearing upon it to set the vessel's direction. Even though the tongue is small, it can claim power disproportionate to its size. Lastly, the power and danger of a tiny tongue is like a small fire or spark that can ignite and destroy an entire forest. If uncontrolled, our speech can be an instrument of evil found within our own bodies. It can corrupt the course of our own lives and the lives of others, fueled from the home of evil itself—hell.

Speaking is clearly a powerful and dangerous work. The reason the tongue is so hazardous is made clear in verses 7–8. Though the tongue can exert control over a life and influence the lives of others, it is itself uncontrollable by man. Humanity may have begun to fulfill God's mandate in creation to rule over the world of creatures by training dogs to sit, teaching birds to talk, charming snakes, and making whales do tricks but he is still unable to tame his own tongue.<sup>1</sup> The tongue remains a restless evil that can destroy just like a snake's poison.<sup>2</sup>

(7–8)

1. Genesis 1:26–28

2. Psalm 140:3

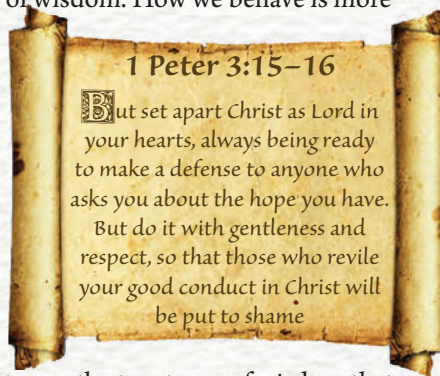




(9–12) James concludes this section by elaborating on how *restless* or *unstable*, *inconsistent*, and *wavering* the tongue can be. The tongue can fulfill its greatest purpose by blessing God and yet be turned over to evil use through speaking ill of other people. Bad-mouthing a person who bears God's image is insulting to God. It is not right for the same mouth to praise God and insult man. It is wrong and unspiritual. The absurdity of a Christian wavering in the use of his or her speech or being *double-tongued* is captured in the closing analogies James provides. Just like a water-source cannot produce different types of water or a fruit tree different kinds of fruit, so it is unnatural and inconsistent for a Christian to be *double-tongued*.<sup>3</sup> A believer who is maturing in Christ is to reflect this inner change through the use of his or her speech.

(13) *Responsible Relationships: The Treatment of People (3:13–4:3):*

James calls those who claim to possess wisdom and understanding to step forward. He may even have the potential teachers of 3:1 in mind. James's primary point is that just like professions of faith can be verified through works of faith, so professions of wisdom are demonstrated through works of wisdom. How we behave is more revealing than what we say we believe. If we profess to be wise, our conduct will verify our claim, because true wisdom produces gentleness and humility toward others. Our lives display the type of wisdom that guides us, no matter what we profess to believe.



(14–18) James clarifies the contrast between the two types of wisdom that produce two distinct types of works. Christians have the capacity to waver between both though this should not be. Those who display sinful jealousy and self-centered ambition create an environment filled with disorder and all sorts of evil practices. These may include unstable relationships, harshness with others, not listening and dishonesty. Such works are the product of living according to a false, ungodly wisdom. This type of worldview is not from God. Rather it is earthly, self-seeking, unspiritual, and is evil or demonic by nature. By contrast, true wisdom from God produces works that are morally blameless. A person with godly wisdom is:

- Pure—has peaceful relationships



### Valley of Hinnom

The term for *hell* in James 3:6 is *Gehenna* in Greek. It comes directly from the Hebrew and means Valley of Hinnom. The Hinnom valley runs down the southern side of the city of Jerusalem. It was a place where the evil of human sacrifices and idolatry occurred in Jeremiah 7:31. In time, it became the city dump where rubbish and sewage were burnt. It naturally came to refer to the place of divine punishment of the wicked and known as a place of evil.

### Gentle and humble

True wisdom is humble and gentle. While society may claim *humility* as a desirable virtue, it is often empty words. Many want to be perceived as humble but not have to embrace humble living. Ancient society too realized the power of being perceived as humble particularly in the public life. There was no desire to embrace such meekness in reality for it was also associated with servant-hood—the bottom of the social hierarchy. Yet humility is recognition of our position before God and responsibility toward others. It is truly a Christian virtue to embrace despite what society thinks. Jesus, after all, said “I am gentle and humble in heart.”

Matthew 11:29

3. Matthew 7:16

50

60

70

80

90

100 A.D.

49? Jerusalem Council

62 James martyred

70 Temple is destroyed

John writes Revelation 95–96?

50–52? Paul's second missionary journey

52–57? Paul's third missionary journey

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption



**Roman Fish Market**

Under the Arch of Octavius, the Roman fish market was a central gathering place for all kinds of business. The marketplace and the emphasis on making money became the center of the Roman cities.



Albert Bierstadt, 1858

*Meaning of Key Terms*

| Key word or phrase               | Meaning and significance                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Lord's Coming<br>(continued) | In this sense, the Lord's coming is near and could occur at any moment. Ultimately, the Lord's coming is a powerful motivation for obeying the ethical teaching of the New Testament. |

**What about the culture?**

James speaks about the pursuit of wealth because just like today, money matters. The ancients were enamored with money much like modern man. Their cities were essentially built around the marketplace. By the first century A.D., cross-cultural trade flourished thanks to travel on relatively smooth Roman roads and security against robbers and pirates. This meant that money and wealth began to flow beyond the few who owned the land. The increase in accessibility to money only spread its corruptive dangers to many more. People have constantly struggled to handle its power, which emphasizes the force of James's warning.

**What is the explanation?**

Let's dig a little deeper into what is presented in this final section of James. It is crucial to remember that James presents a contrast between the type of life to avoid in 4:13–5:6 and the one to embrace in 5:7–20.

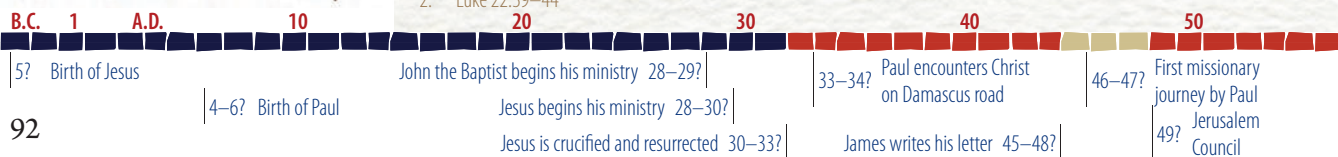
**If it is the Lord's will**

Subjecting our plans in life to God's will is fundamentally Christian. Just like James, Paul also expressed his dependence upon God when making plans for the future (Acts 18:21; 1 Corinthians 4:19). Historically, many in the Christian church have expressed their inner commitment to this truth. Recent history testifies to Christians using the Latin phrase *Deo volente* or the abbreviations *D.V.* at the end of letters to subject all that is written to God's will.

**Worldly Living (4:13–5:6):** James begins warning his Christian readers (13–17) to avoid self-reliant living, which is the opposite of a life of faith. He starts with an example of a businessman who lives his life ignoring God in his day-to-day plans. This self-sufficient attitude is clear from the words James puts on the merchant's lips, alongside the diagnosis of his outlook of life.<sup>1</sup> However, making plans for a business venture is not the problem. God is not against planning or commerce but self-assured scheduling and arrogant boasting in one's self is evil. Jesus modeled the humble attitude that believers are to possess when he prayed in the garden before his arrest.<sup>2</sup> His desire was not to die but Jesus submitted himself to his Father's will. James calls his audience to the same attitude.

1. James 4:13, 16

2. Luke 22:39–44







Mathias Ehart, 2007

The worldly attitude of the merchant is not only evil in that it neglects God without shame, but is also foolish because life is not in our hands. James jeers the self-reliant attitude with the reminder that our lives are short and fragile. In God's perspective, a man is here one moment and gone the next just like the morning mist.<sup>3</sup> God alone knows what awaits us tomorrow and even the rest of today. He holds life in his hands. The wise and contrasting attitude of a person of faith is an attitude of dependence upon God in submission to his will. Therefore, James applies the broader principle to his readers. Wisdom is found in submission to God. To neglect him in daily affairs is sinful and foolish.

### Morning Mist

*"Therefore, they will be like the morning mist, like the dew that disappears early, like chaff blown from the threshing floor, like smoke up a chimney."*

Hosea 13:3

(5:1) The second attitude James warns his readers against, is self-indulgent living. This too is contrary to a life of faith. James turns his attention by addressing the rich so his audience who seem to come from humbler circumstances, understands the challenges of pursuing wealth. He attacks the sinful use, abuse, and misuse of wealth that springs from a self-centered heart, which ignores the needs of others. James has strong words of condemnation for self-indulgent living. He begins by using vivid imagery of weeping and wailing, which his Jewish audience would recognize as common to the Old Testament prophets. For example, Isaiah calls for wailing because the day of the Lord is near.<sup>4</sup> The prophet Amos warns that when the end comes upon the people of Israel, the songs of the temple shall become wailing.<sup>5</sup> Following this established theme, James reminds the believers of the misery that the rich will face at the end of the age when Christ returns.

(2-3) James notes four overlapping reasons for the impending miseries and judgment on the rich:

1. The first reason is the selfish hoarding of riches particularly in these last days when the return of Christ to judge is

3. Job 7:9; Hosea 6:4

4. Isaiah 13:6

5. Amos 8:3

### Knowing the good...

In verse 17, James clearly states that when a person knows what the right thing to do is, but does not do it, he or she sins. Not doing what is right is called a sin of omission. Doing what is wrong is a sin of commission. Both are wrong in the eyes of God.

### Matthew 6:19–21

**D**o not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

50 60 70 80 90 100 A.D.

49? Jerusalem Council

62 James martyred

70 Temple is destroyed

John writes Revelation 95–96?

50–52? Paul's second missionary journey

52–57? Paul's third missionary journey

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption





**The Lord of Hosts**

This often neglected description of God reveals him as the Almighty Warrior. The undefeatable army he leads to bring deliverance and enact judgment may be human (1 Samuel 17:45) or angelic (Isaiah 6:3, 5). Either way, it is unmatched in power for God fights at the helm. All injustice lies public before the eyes of a warrior-God. He knows of every unfair word, opinion, and act of man. He will respond in his time. Our most private moments are not out of his sight.

James ends his letter by repeating the same topics he began with. This literary device is sometimes called *bracketing* or *inclusio*. It shows his skill in bringing unity and completion to his writing.

## James's Repetition of Topics

| Topics              | James 1:2–18     | James 4:13–5:20      |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Trials              | James 1:2, 12    | James 5:10–11, 13–14 |
| Response of Joy     | James 1:2        | James 5:13           |
| Endurance/Patience  | James 1:3, 4, 12 | James 5:7–11         |
| Ask of God in faith | James 1:5–6      | James 5:13–18        |
| Money and wealth    | James 1:10–11    | James 4:13–17        |
| Hope                | James 1:12       | James 5:7, 8         |
| Sin/Salvation       | James 1:13–18    | James 5:15–16, 19–20 |

James 1:12a "Blessed is the man who endures..."

James 5:11a "See how we count as blessed those who endured."

imminent. In the presence of Jesus the righteous judge, wealth is worthless. Even gold and silver are described as rusting before God who has no need for money. Stockpiling riches testifies to selfishness that is deserving of judgment. Selfishly hoarding something rather than giving it away to others in need is wrong.

### Deuteronomy 24:14–15

**D**o not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner living in your land within your villages. Pay him his wages that very day before sunset for he is poor and depends on it. Otherwise he will cry out to the LORD against you and you will be guilty of sin.

- The second reason for miseries comes from employers cheating employees of their wages.<sup>1</sup> To love money to the extent of mistreating people is not just selfish but unjust and wrong. God does not overlook this abuse of power.
- The third reason for judgment is the extravagant misuse of wealth on oneself. James uses the Old Testament imagery of a cow fattening up on abundant grass unaware that she is heading for the slaughterhouse. Several prophets use this metaphor to illustrate coming judgment.<sup>2</sup> Luxurious living will be judged in God's time.
- Finally, James declares that misery awaits the self-indulgent rich person that abuses power bought by wealth in order to exploit the helpless. Many examples of the oppression of the righteous can be found in the prophets. These include taking bribes to deprive the poor of justice in the courts.<sup>3</sup>

James warns Christians of the judgment to come on those living according to worldly values. Business and wealth are not the only spheres of life in which self-reliant and self-indulgent attitudes can exist. Ignoring God and his concern for people to pursue the pleasures of the world is wrong in any area of life. That said, James returns to his gentle tone encouraging Christians to embrace godly living.

1. Malachi 3:5; Leviticus 19:13

2. Jeremiah 12:3; 19:6; Isaiah 30:25; 34:2

3. Amos 5:12

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

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2091? God calls Abraham

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai 1446?

1925? God calls Abraham

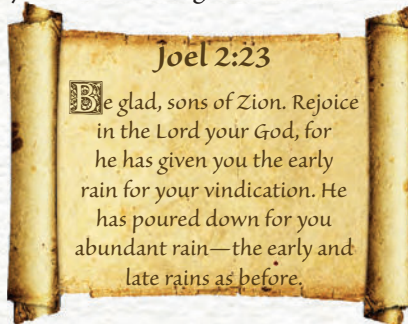
Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai 1260?

Period of Judges begins 1375?





(7–8) **Christian Living (5:7–20):** James reminds his audience to maintain a patient hope until Jesus Christ returns, and assures them that his return is near. It could occur at any moment. Though trials in this world abound, Christians are to wait, well strengthened in their faith given their hope in what lies ahead. The farmer provides a great analogy to confident patience. In Israel, the farmer waited with hope that the early rains in November would come and assure the early growth of planted seed when spring came. He also patiently hoped for the late rains in February to come because these assured that the initial growth continued to result in a harvest.<sup>4</sup> Christians are to wait well for Christ's return.



### Grumbling

Many people will associate grumbling with the Israelites who wandered in the desert in Exodus. This sin was an expression of their impatience and unbelief in God's promise and direction. In light of verse 10 mentioning the Old Testament prophets, and verse 11 mentioning the Old Testament character of Job, it may be that this key word in verse 9 is asking you to connect back to the story of the Old Testament role models of grumbling, impatience, and unbelief.

(9–11) Furthermore, we are to wait without impatient grumbling because we will be accountable for our lives before Christ our Lord. James presents Jesus as our Judge, knocking at the door and ready to enter history once again. Complaining about our situation or about fellow believers may be a natural response in tough times, but it is not the



attitude with which to welcome Christ back. It speaks of unbelief instead of faith and hope. Rather than grumble, James provides us with the examples of the prophets and Job to imitate. The prophets of old endured difficulty because they stood for God. Similarly, throughout Job's life, he waited on God's vindication despite repeated waves of affliction. God wanted to refine Job in the midst of Satan's attacks because God is full of compassion and mercy.

### RÉSUMÉ JOB

CURRENT HOMETOWN:  
LAND OF UZ

#### BACKGROUND

Wealthy landowner, agriculture

#### EXPERIENCE

Blameless and upright  
Feared God and shunned evil  
Lost his seven sons, three daughters  
and all property  
Endured tremendous affliction  
Matured in faith through trial

#### REFERENCES

Job 1–42  
Ezekiel 14:14, 20

(12) James also calls Christians to prayerful dependence on God throughout any of our situations. Aside from

4. Deuteronomy 11:13–15

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500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to Babylon 586

1220? Period of Judges begins

971 Solomon becomes king

Life of Job 550's?





Joseph Wright of Derby, 1775

### Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

Healing is God's prerogative. Only he acts righteously and in keeping with his overall plan. Lack of healing is not to be attributed to a lack of faith. This is not what 5:15 implies. The apostle Paul was not healed despite persistent prayer and firm faith, neither was he able to heal others at all times (2 Corinthians 12:7–9 and Titus 3:20). We pray believing God will heal, but in submission to his will.

invoking God's help, prayer expresses our need of God directly to our heavenly Father. Prayer reminds us, and shows God, that we depend upon him for life. This is the very opposite of the self-centered mindset the world values.

James transitions from patience to prayer by calling for integrity in speech. Rather than grumble, Christians are to speak truth to one another. Christian speech is to be worthy of trust because believers themselves are to be reliable. After all, when we speak or talk to God in prayer we believe that he is dependable. We are to be unfailing in what we say, just as we come before God to voice our concerns believing God is steadfast in what he has said. (13–15)

James encourages Christians to pray to God regardless of the situation. He calls both the troubled and the joyful to connect verbally with God in prayer through petitioning or praise giving. However, in verse 14 James begins to call for specific prayers. God can be invoked in our sickness. If the sickness is so severe it immobilizes a believer, he can call the elders of the church out to him. They are to come and pray for the sick person, anointing him with oil. Oil was a soothing medicine to the ancients, but it was also used in the Old Testament as a symbolic way of speaking of the power of the Holy Spirit and dedication to God.<sup>1</sup> As the elders prayed, dedicating the ill person to God's care and power, they did so in the name of the Lord. This is important for it means invoking Jesus' authority, which assumes submission to his will. Prayer for healing is offered by faith, trusting God will heal and raise the immobilized person. However, the authority and power to bring about this result does not lie in reaching a quotient of faith in prayer, but in the will of the Lord in whose name one calls out.

### Church elders

The New Testament structures the governance of local churches under the headship of Christ but through a certain leadership role or position: eldership. In the early church elders were spiritually mature men responsible for the welfare of the local church physically and spiritually. Look at the criteria for eldership laid out by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9.

James surprises some by introducing the confession of sin. While all illness and disease are the consequences of sin in general, personal sin may at times be the cause of specific illness in a person or among believers in a church fellowship. Given

### 1 Corinthians 11:29–30

(15–18)

For anyone who eats and drinks [communion] without recognizing the body rightly, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and some are dead.

1. Leviticus 8:10–13; Psalm 23:5; 133:2; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

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1400

1250

2091? God calls Abraham

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai 1446?

1925? God calls Abraham

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai 1260?

Period of Judges begins 1375?





physical illness may be God's discipline for the spiritual problem of personal sin, it is essential that confession takes place before him in order to receive forgiveness. James mandates this for all church fellowships. Christians are to pray for the healing of the sick, but they must not divorce such prayers from making amends with one another. Confessing sins to one another is a corporate recognition of wrongdoing that prepares a heart for God's forgiveness and healing. It creates an environment in which pride, jealousy, selfishness, and slander are replaced with humility, concern, unity, and peace. James is not teaching that sin can be absolved before God by confession to men. Rather he is saying that God wants human relations to be reconciled through recognition of wrongdoing and forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> This is because the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective. God listens to those loyal to him. This truth applies to the prayers of a corporate church as well. When a church pursues holiness, God is attentive to its prayers. The prophet Elijah models the power and effectiveness of the prayer

### 1 Peter 4:8

**A**bove all, keep loving one another fervently for love covers a multitude of sins.

(19–20) James closes this book as expected calling for practical Christians. In light of the relationship of personal sin to illness and potentially death, Christians are to pray and confess sin, but also actively help anyone among them who is walking away from God into a life of sin. We have already seen that sin within a church body is to be confessed as prayer for healing is offered up. However, helping a Christian wandering from the church fellowship turn back to God can save

2. 1 John 1:9

3. 1 Kings 17–18

### Galatians 6:1

**B**rothers, if anyone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

## RÉSUMÉ ELIJAH

MEANS MY GOD IS YAHWEH  
CURRENT HOMETOWN:  
TISHBE - NORTHERN KINGDOM

### BACKGROUND

Prophet of God

### EXPERIENCE

Confronted King Ahab

Raised the son of the widow from Zarephath from the dead

Challenged the prophets of Baal

Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind

### REFERENCES

1 Kings 17–21

2 Kings 1–2

### Inclusion

James begins his letter with some of the essentials of Christian living:

James 1:2–4 **patience**  
James 1:5–6 **prayer**

He ends his letter creating an *inclusion* with the exact same emphasis on the essentials of Christian living:

James 5:7–11 **patience**  
James 2:12–20 **prayer**

1250

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950

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500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

1220? Period of Judges begins

930 The kingdom divides

Elijah's ministry 850's?

971 Solomon becomes king

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to  
Babylon and the temple is destroyed 586





Francesco Hayez, 1867

### The Destruction of the Temple

The Roman Army led by Titus surrounded Jerusalem cutting off food and water supplies. With continued resistance from the Jews, the Roman army pressed forward and on July 29th or 30th of A.D. 70, the temple was set on fire. Ultimately Jerusalem was sacked, and according to the Jewish historian Josephus, 1.1 million Jews were killed.

### Roman Catapults

These siege engines are the types of catapults that the Roman army used in penetrating and ultimately destroying Jerusalem in A.D. 70.



Edward Bortner, 1868

a Jewish uprising in Israel for independence against the Romans. It was the first of three Jewish-Roman Wars, sometimes known as *The Great Revolt*. For four years battles raged, and initial Jewish victories were overrun by the Romans. By A.D. 70, the primary Jewish stronghold was the city of Jerusalem. Under Titus, the Romans eventually breached the fortified walls, destroyed the temple, and burned the city. Many surviving Jews were dispersed or enslaved and spread across the Roman Empire.

The Third Jewish Revolt in A.D. 132–136 was brutally crushed by the massive Roman army. The majority of the Jewish population of Judea was killed, exiled, or sold into slavery. This included Jewish believers who were permanently barred from Jerusalem along with the unbelieving Jews. With virtually all Jews removed from Judea, James's letter to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations took on new meaning. Jewish believers remained dispersed from their homeland for centuries to come.

The early church accepted the book of James into the Scriptures just as we hold to today. The work even influenced other New Testament books such as 1 Peter as well as other early church writings of great importance. It was much later in history at the time of the Protestant

Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that some questioned James's teaching on the issue of works. However, this was quite understandable. For some time James was misused to place works as copartners with faith in Christ for a righteous standing before God. However, the unofficial slogan of the Reformation reiterates James: *"We are justified by faith alone, but faith that justifies is never alone."*

As the centuries progressed, generations of Christians since James have found direction and comfort in what James says. Today, Christians scattered across the world learn about living out their faith in a practical and God-honoring way. Many human rights movements such as the abolition of slavery in the United Kingdom







and the United States have Christian roots. Thousands of current organizations, such as *The Salvation Army* and the *Young Men's Christian Association* reach out to the disadvantaged of society in practical ways, which can be considered applications of James. The message of James's letter to live out our faith remains as relevant today as it was in the first century when it was written.

## What does this have to do with Jesus?

James does not write a complete discussion of who Jesus is, or the importance of his death and resurrection. However, James certainly expresses a high view of his Lord, and there are several direct and implied references to Jesus to highlight here in light of our excavations.

First, James refers to Jesus as *Lord*.<sup>1</sup> This is giving Jesus the same status as God, even while affirming that there is only one God.<sup>2</sup> Because Jesus is upheld as fully God, he is the rightful object of genuine faith and service. We are to trust and serve God.

Second, James calls Jesus the *Christ*.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that he is the Anointed One of God or *Messiah*. James sees Jesus as the fulfillment of the anticipated Old Testament messiah to come and rule.

Finally, James affirms the ultimate Christian hope. He states that Jesus will return to earth as judge over all.<sup>4</sup> This truth is recorded across most of the New Testament books and is a reminder to believers that Jesus is more than just a man. He is the Savior who one day will return and make all things new. We have also seen through this study that the

1. James 1:1; 2:1

2. James 2:19

3. James 1:1; 2:1

4. James 5:7–9

## James and Jesus

| Topics                              | The Book of James | Jesus: Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5–7 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Joy under trial                     | 1:2               | 5:11–12                                |
| Maturity and perfection             | 1:4               | 5:48                                   |
| Ask for wisdom                      | 1:5–6             | 7:7                                    |
| The poor or humble are blessed      | 1:9               | 5:3                                    |
| Riches are fleeting                 | 1:10              | 6:30                                   |
| Everything good is from God         | 1:17              | 7:11                                   |
| Man's anger is wrong                | 1:19–20           | 5:22                                   |
| Put God's word into practice        | 1:22–23           | 7:24–26                                |
| The poor are rich in faith          | 2:5               | 5:3,5                                  |
| All of the Law must be accomplished | 2:10              | 5:18–19                                |
| All lawbreakers will be judged      | 2:11              | 5:21–22                                |
| We are called to be merciful        | 2:13              | 5:7                                    |
| We are known by the fruit we bear   | 3:12              | 7:16–20                                |
| Peacemakers are blessed             | 3:18              | 5:9                                    |
| Ask and it will be given to you     | 4:2–3             | 7:7–8                                  |
| Cannot love God and the world       | 4:4               | 6:24                                   |
| Purify your heart                   | 4:8               | 5:8                                    |
| Mourning brings blessing            | 4:9               | 5:4                                    |
| Be humble before God                | 4:10              | 5:5                                    |
| Do not judge or slander             | 4:11              | 7:1–2                                  |
| Do not worry about tomorrow         | 4:13–15           | 6:34                                   |
| Riches will pass                    | 5:2–3             | 6:19–21                                |
| You will be judged                  | 5:9               | 7:1–2                                  |
| Be patient in persecution           | 5:10              | 5:11–12                                |
| Do not swear, keep your oaths       | 5:12              | 5:33–37                                |

50

60

70

80

90

100 A.D.

49? Jerusalem Council

62 James martyred

70 Temple is destroyed

John writes Revelation 95–96?

50–52? Paul's second missionary journey

52–57? Paul's third missionary journey

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption



## A seven lesson study through the letter from James

Believing in Jesus Christ means behaving in a certain way. Too many believers struggle with living a double life. With one foot in secular culture and the other attempting to find grip in God's truth, the results are always disastrous. James reminds us that we are to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world. In fact, God has called us to live out our faith and anything less is rebellion against him.

James addresses the believing community in the first century that had been scattered among the nations. Facing the trials of foreign living, they are reminded to endure for that is part of God's perfecting process. James focuses on the use of the tongue, love and care for others, and the call to Christian living. This practical wisdom flows out of his conviction that genuine faith produces results. James is a book of wisdom for today. It is God's word for your life.

*Digging through Scripture  
revealing God's truth  
pointing us to Christ*



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