BACKGROUND

JAMES, THE LETTER The Letter of James belongs to the section of the New Testament usually described as the "General Epistles." The letter is one of exhortation for practical Christianity. The author stated principles of conduct and then frequently provided poignant illustrations. The author's concerns were clearly more practical and less abstract than those of any other New Testament writer. No other New Testament book has received criticism to the extent encountered by this epistle.

AUTHOR Verse one of the letter identifies James as the "servant of God" and the author of the letter. Several possibilities for proper identification of this "James" include (1) James the brother of John and the son of Zebedee, (2) James the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve apostles, or (3) James the half brother of Jesus, a younger son of Mary and of Joseph. Of the three, James the brother of the Lord is the most likely choice. See James 3. Tradition of the early church fathers universally ascribes the letter to James, the pastor of the church in Jerusalem.

The general content of the letter is a call to holiness of life. This accords well with what is known of the life of James. Church tradition noted his exceptional piety, reporting that the knees of the saintly James were like those of a camel due to the unusual amounts of time spent on his knees before God. The author of the epistle was also steeped in the Old Testament outlook in general and in Judaism in particular.

On the other hand, James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee cannot be the author since he became an early martyr (Acts 12:1-2), his death almost certainly predating the writing of the Letter of James. Little is known of James the son of Alphaeus--too little to conjecture that he was involved in the writing of the epistle. Scholarly theories that later disciples of James gathered his teachings and published them in a Greek style too exalted for James are not necessary to explain the evidence.

RECIPIENTS Although some passages appear to address unbelievers (Jas. 5:1-6), the letter is addressed to "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1 NRSV). Reference to the "twelve tribes" suggests that the recipients were Jews. Specifically, reference is made to the "Jews of the dispersion." This phrase recalled the scattering of the Jewish nation first in 722 B.C. when the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire and finally in 586 B.C. when the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to the marauding Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar.

However, James clearly had a still more narrow focus. Apparently, James had in mind the "Christian" Jews of dispersion. This may be conjectured from James' identification of himself (1:1) as a servant of Jesus Christ as well as from references like having "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1).

DATE Supposing an early date of writing may account for the peculiarity of the address. James' martyrdom by A.D. 66 provides us with the latest possible date of writing. Evidences of a very early date, such as the mention of those coming into the "assembly" (Greek, sunagoge), point to a time very early in Christian history, perhaps prior to the Jerusalem Conference in A.D. 49-50. Though some Bible students date James after A.D. 60, many scholars are convinced that James is the first book of the New Testament to be written, some dating it as early as A.D. 48. As such, it provides the reader with a rather remarkable insight into the developing concerns of the church in its earliest era.

OCCASION The letter was evidently the product of concerns on the part of early pastoral leadership about the ethical standards of early Christians. Therefore, the subject matter includes an analysis in chapter 1 of how to respond to temptation and trial (1:1-18). The necessity of "doing" the word as well as "hearing" the word is the focus of James 1:19-27. Treatment of the poor and the appropriate management of wealth are topics of concern in James 2:1-13 and 5:1-6. The waywardness of the tongue and the necessity of its taming are discussed in chapter 3. Conflicts and attitudes to other Christians is the subject of chapter 4. Appropriate responses to life's demands and pressures are suggested in chapter 5.

JAMES' CONTRIBUTIONS Some scholars have compared James to the Old Testament Book of Proverbs. In many respects the two are quite different. However, the comparison is valid from the perspective of ethical instruction. The theme of the book is that practical religion must manifest itself in works which are superior to those of the world. The essence of such works covers the areas of personal holiness and service
to others, such as visiting "the fatherless and widows," and keeping oneself "unspotted from the world" (1:27). These "works" further demand active resistance to the devil (4:7), submission to God (4:7), and even brokenhearted repentance for sins (4:9).

Patience in the wake of trials and temptations is the subject both of the introduction and of the conclusion of the epistle. Readers are to "count it all joy" when trials come (1:2) and expect reward for endurance of those trials (1:12). In James 5:7-11 James returns to the subject, citing both Job and the prophets as appropriate examples of patience in the midst of tribulation.

**QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF JAMES** Two difficult and widely debated passages in James challenge Bible students. In 2:14-26, James argued that "faith if it hath not works is dead" (2:17). This apparent contradiction to the teaching of the apostle Paul has caused much consternation among some theologians. For example, Martin Luther referred to the book as "an epistle of straw" when compared with Paul's writings.

More careful exegesis has shown that the contradiction is apparent rather than real. James argued that a faith that is only a "confessing faith," such as that of the demons (2:19), is not a saving faith at all. The demons believed in God in the sense of "intellectual assent," but they were void of belief in the sense of "commitment." Orthodoxy of doctrine which does not produce a sanctified life-style is, in the final analysis, worthless.

In 5:13-18 James spoke of healing and its means. Actually, this passage only treats the subject of healing incidentally. The actual purpose of the discussion is to stress the effectiveness of the earnest prayer of a righteous man (5:15-16). This is illustrated by a reference to Elijah, whose prayers were sufficient alternately to shut up the heavens and then to open them (5:17-18).

Whatever else may be intended, clearly the prayer of faith "saves the sick." The anointing oil, whether medicinal, as some have argued, or symbolic, as others have held, is not the healing agent. God heals, when He chooses to heal (4:14), as a response to the fervent prayers of righteous men.

The Letter of James remains of lasting value and consequence to the Christian confronted by an increasingly secular world. Christ ought to make a difference in one's life. That is the theme and mandate of James.
OUTLINE

I. The Purpose of Tests (1:1-12)

   A. Salutation (1:1) (Conventional salutation 1. the name of the author; 2. the designation of the reader; 3. Some form of greeting)

      1. James- Iakobos {ee-ak'-o-bos} James = "supplanter"

      2. bond-servant- doulos {doo'-los}

      3. of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ
         a) Shows ________________________________
         b) Lord Jesus Christ
            1) Lord ________________________________
            2) Jesus _______________________________
            3) Christ ______________________________

   4. twelve tribes- __________________________

   5. dispersed abroad - a scattering, dispersion
      a) of Israelites ___________________________
      b) 10 Northern tribes _______________________
      c) 2 Southern tribes ________________________
B. Testing Produces Joy (1:2).

1. My brethren- ________________________________

2. Consider- hegeomai {hayg-eh'-om-ahee}
   a) to ________________________________
   b) to ________________________________

3. all joy- chara {khar-ah’}
   a) Joy is not ________________________________
   ________
   ________
   b) Joy can be defined as ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

4. when- shows ________________________________

5. you encounter- peripipto {per-ee-pip'-to
   a) Only used ________________________________
   b) This means that
      1) they tend ________________________________
      2) their arrival ________________________________
      3) they can ________________________________
      4) they are ________________________________

6. various- poikilos {poy-kee'-los}- of ________________________________

7. trials- peiramos {pi-ras-mos’}
   a) To try; ________________________________ (1 Pet. 4:12)
   b) Solicitation ________________________________ (Luke 4:13)
   c) The content ________________________________ (see use of same word in vs. 13)
C. Testing Produces Maturity (1:3-4)

1. The Acquiring of Wisdom (vs. 5)
   a) Recognize _____________________________
   b) Respond ______________________________
   c) Realize _______________________________

D. True wisdom from God (1:5-8)

1. The Acquiring of Wisdom (vs. 5)
   a) Recognize ____________________________________________
   b) Respond ____________________________________________
   c) Realize ____________________________________________

2. The Absolute of Faith (vs. 6a)
   a) Cannot _____________________________________________
   b) Provided ____________________________________________

3. The Absurdity of Doubt (vss. 6b-8)
a) *Doubt* ______________________________________________________________

b) *Doubt* ______________________________________________________________

E. **Trials Equalize Rich and Poor** (1:9-11).

I. Trials develop __________________________________________________________

2. Trials cause __________________________________________________________

F. **Perseverance under trial leads to blessing** (1:12).

Faith ______

Endurance _________

Blessing _________

Crown of Life __________

Something already done and found to be true and genuine

Able to remain under and sustain a load

To be fully satisfied; same word used in the Sermon on the mount (Matt 5:3-11); an inward quality of life, peace, contentment, or satisfaction that can be sustained in spite of adverse external difficulties; this blessedness does not come from the relief of trials, but by the endurance of them.

**Note:** Crowns may differ from Rewards in that *Crowns* are received because of *who we are,* and *Rewards* are received because of *what we’ve done* (1 Cor 3:10-15)
G. Temptation Not From God (1:13)

1. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God";
   a. Present, Active, Imperative- __________________________!
   b. tempted- (peirazo) __________ to evil-
      i. a temptation or trial ____________________________
      ii. God ____________________________
H. Source and Result of Temptation (1:14-15)

Each One is tempted

_____ ____ and _______ by his own lust

lust has _______

gives _____ to sin

sin _____ to maturity

brings forth _____
I. All Good is from God (1:17)

...Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren...

Every good thing
Every- (pas)- all things
good- (agathos)- being good in its __________
or __________, is beneficial in its effect (i.e., its usefulness or resourcefulness) (Genesis 1:31; Matt 5:45; Rom 2:4)
gift- (dosis)- a giving (points to the _______)

Every perfect gift
perfect- (teleios)- ________ __ ____, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness
gift- (dorema)- a gift, bounty, benefaction (points to the ______ of giving or the thing given)

from the Father of lights- the endless resource
__________ illumination (Ps. 19:1,2;136:7-9; I John 1:5; Rev. 22:5)
__________ illumination (II Cor. 4:6; Acts 26:18)

is from above- Both the ______ and the _____ of giving are of God, and everything that God gives is ______ and ________
coming down- (katabaino) [Tense - Present; Mood - Participle]- to come or go down, descend. Lit.: “...are coming down…”

whom is no variation, or shifting shadow
no ________- (parallage)- variation, change; immutability (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:18)
An ________ concept- as the Father of lights, God is not subject to the same movements and changes as the heavenly bodies are; each heavenly body follows their God ordained orbit, and varies in light intensity. A ________ concept- God does not vary in His energy, and is therefore an unending resource (II Cor. 12:9-10)
A ________ concept- it is God’s will that we conform to the image of Christ, and being the source of all Spiritual power will enable us to complete what He started (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 1:6; 3:7-14)

shifting shadow
Shifting Shadows- shadows are formed when either the sun or moon are eclipsed by some object, such as, buildings, trees, etc. These shadows move with the rotation of the earth. Those in the shadows receive no light.
As related to God- God can never be ________, neither does light vary in intensity. (I John 1:5-7; Eph. 5:8; I Peter 2:9)

Two ways for darkness to occur- a) lack of ______; b) lack of ability to _____ the light (blindness). The darkness of this world
J. God’s Will Begat Us (1:18)

1. *In the exercise of His will He brought us forth*
   a) his will- God’s ____ and _________ is the reason or cause of our regeneration
   b) brought us forth - (apokueo) [Tense - Aorist]- ____ ______ ___.
      (John 1:13; I Peter 1:3-5)

2. *by the word of truth*- God used His Holy Word to beget us (II Tim. 3:15-17; I Pet. 1:23)

3. *kind of firstfruits*- (aparche)
   a) Symbolized the _____________ of the entire harvest to God and was an _____, or pledge, of the full harvest yet to be gathered (Lev. 23:10)
   b) Christ’s resurrection is an earnest or ______________ of resurrections to come (I Cor. 15:20)
   c) These first believers, mostly Jewish, were a ________ of a fuller harvest yet to come
K. Response to God’s Goodness (1:19)

quick to hear (akouo) - ______________________

slow to speak (laleo) - to use words in order to declare one's ___ and disclose one's ______ (emphasis on the individual speaking) (Prov. 17:27)

slow to anger (orge) - anger exhibited in ________, hence used for punishment itself (Prov. 16:32)

L. Man’s Wrath ≠ God’s Righteousness (1:20)

1. “for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” (Eph. 4:31-32; II Tim. 2:24-26)
2. anger- (orge)- ______________________
3. achieve – (katergazomai)- [Tense - Present] ______________________

Because the nature of God and the nature of man are diametrically opposed, there can be no compromise between each; one works independently of the other.
M. Preparation for the Word (1:21)

Future (will be saved)-
from the ______ of sin
[Glorification] (1 Cor 15:51-58)

Past (saved)-
from the ______ of sin [Justification]
(Acts 16:31)

Present (being saved)-
from the ______ of sin [Sanctification]
(Rom 6:11-14)

one who _____ or fulfils the law
doers- (poietes)
hearers

Note: We deceive ourselves by not being what we ______ we are; we cheat ourselves by not allowing the Word to bring us to ______ (Matt 7:21-23)

Note: We deceive ourselves by false reckoning they themselves- we may deceive others with false piety, but in so doing we are only cheating ourselves

delude – (paralogizomai )[ Tense - Present; Voice - Middle or Passive Deponent; Mood - Participle]- to cheat by false reckoning

hearing is not the ____ in itself

N. Hearers Only are Deceived (1:22)
O. The wrong use of the Word (1:22-24)

I. he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror

II. a man- means ___, not mankind; _____ are more sensitive to what they look like

III. natural face- face he was ____ with, before anything was done to it

IV. for once he has looked at himself- He looks at himself to decide what action he must take

V. and gone away- he decides that no _____ is ________

VI. he has immediately forgotten

VII. forgotten - (epilanthanomai) [Tense - Second Aorist ] implies that the energies were put into ___________, not __________

VIII. what kind of person he was (hopoios)- continues on his way, leaving that image in the past; using ________ as the standard, not the Word.

P. The right use of the Word (1:25)

1. one who looks intently- (parakupto)[Tense - Aorist; Mood - Participle]- of one who would become acquainted with something; Lit: After having looked

2. perfect law, the law of liberty

3. perfect- (teleios)- ________________, finished

4. law of liberty- the __________ power of the Gospel in comparison to the bondage of the law (Rom 8:15; Gal 5:1; 3:24)

5. abides by it- (parameno)[ Tense - Aorist; Voice - Active; Mood - Participle] - to _______ beside, continue always near

6. not having become- (ginomai)[ Tense - Second Aorist] - to ________, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being

7. forgetful hearer- as he is prone to be if he does not continue; being conscious of the ____________ of his memory

8. an effectual doer- he continues in the Word, he becomes aware of the Work it demands; he performs this work with ________, keeping in view the glory of Jesus Christ (Matt 7:21)
9. *this man will be blessed in what he does* - not that he is blessed ____ what he does, but ____ what he does. We should seek no other blessing than that of being involved with all that pertains to God

Q. True Religion Defined (1:26-27)

N. Worthless Religion (1:26)

2. *If anyone thinks himself to be religious* - To be of continual opinion of himself that he is religious because of his _______ _________ of public worship, such as church attendance, almsgiving, prayer, fasting; the Pharisaic element in Christian worship

3. *does not bridle his tongue* - but boasts of his works, and speaks ill of his brethren; backbites them, and hurts their names and characters, by private insinuations, and public charges without any foundation; who takes no care of what he says, but gives his tongue a liberty of speaking anything, to the ______ of others, and the ______ of God, and his ways (Ps 39:1; Eph 4:29; 5:4; Col 4:6; 1 Pet 3:10)

4. *but deceives his own heart* - This form of false, external piety has brought about self-deception. The verb *deceive* is used in the present tense signifying that he is ________ of his problem and continues therein (Gal 6:3)

5. *this man’s religion is worthless* - the result is an ________, worthless religion. (Matt 7:22-23)

O. Priceless Religion (1:27)

2. *Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this* - That which is sincere and genuine, and free from adulteration and hypocrisy

   1) *to visit orphans and widows in their distress* - ________ action (Charity)

   2) *to keep oneself unstained by the world* - ________ purity (Chastity) (1 Ti 1:5)

P. Faith Removes Discrimination (2:1-13)

1. The Command (2:1)
“...do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.”

“Glorious” Lord Jesus Christ
(Matt 17:2)

__ and _________ are not compatible!

2. The Conduct (2:2-3)

a man comes ... with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes...

...there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes...

"You sit here in a good place."

"You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool."

Assembly- (sunagoge);
The common word for gathering of Jews for worship

3. The Consequence (2:4-13)
“You sit here in a good place,”

“You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”

“Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?”

“Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?”

“...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?”

“But you have dishonored the poor man.”

The Royal Law

Partiality ≠

Doing well

“The law as transgressors

‘For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all’

Murder

Adultery

The ___ of God's Law is broken by ___ sin!

Jesus further emphasizes the “spirit” of the law, not just the superficial “letter” of the law.

(Matt 5:27-28; 1 John 3:15; Matt 19:16-22)
Faith In Action
A Study of The Book of James

Not a liberty to do what _______ _______; but a liberty from the condemnation of sin, and the ability to do what _________ ____.  

Filtering our speech and activities through the Law of Liberty will __________ the triumph of Mercy over Judgment!
Q. Faith Proves Itself by Works (2:14-26)

1. The Introduction

a. James in this passage is not speaking of justification before ______ but before ______.

b. James echoes the teaching of Christ in Matthew 7:21-27.

c. ______ Salvation versus ______ Living

d. One of the most misunderstood passages in scripture; a real theological battleground

e. The teachings by Paul and James are parallel and do not cross

i. Paul is combating __________ __________

ii. James is testing for __________ __________

2. The Inquiry (2:14)

“I have _______!”

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:8-10 NAS)

“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God.” (Ro 4:2 NAS)

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” (Ga 5:6 NAS)
3. The Incident (2:15-17)

Faith – Works = __________, _______ _____

4. The Indoctrination (2:18-19)

An inactive Faith is a __________ Faith!
5. The Illustrations (2:20-25)

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

Abraham’s faith was ________ by his works!

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?

6. The Implication (2:26)

Body - Spirit = Death

(Physical characteristics) (what makes you you)

Faith - Works = Death

(unseen; between you and God) (outward manifestation of inward faith)
R. Faith Controls the Tongue (3:1-12)

1. Teachers Judged More Strictly (3:1)

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

The fact is that public teachers must give a more solemn account than other men, and that they expose themselves to the danger of a deeper condemnation -Barnes

2. Stumble In Speech (3:2)

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. Control Examples (3:3-4)

Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

________ forces

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.

________ forces

4. The Tongue’s Characteristics (3:5-6)

is set on fire by hell

small part of the body

sets on fire the course of our life

boasts of great things

defiles the entire body

world of iniquity

is a fire
5. The Problem With Taming (3:7-8)

For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

But no one can tame the tongue;... it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

6. The Problem With Blessing (3:9-10)

...with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

With it we bless our Lord and Father...

...these things ought not to be this way!
7. The Root Determines the Fruit (3:11-12)

Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

Can a fig tree, my brethren,...

...produce olives, or a vine produce figs?
S. Faith Produces Wisdom (3:13-18)

N. Wisdom Shown by Behavior (3:13)

(excellent in its _____ and ___________)  
Good Behavior  
(_____ of life, _____)

Wisdom
(__________ with life's circumstances and resources)

Understanding
(intelligent, experienced, one having the ________________________)

O. The Lie of Selfishness (3:14)

bitter jealousy  
selfish ambition

Boasting arrogance ____________ the possession of wisdom

The presence of selfishness ...

... _________ the manifestation of truth.

Truth
P. False Wisdom (3:15)

"whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." (Php 3:19 NAS)

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1Co 2:14 NAS)

On earth, with __________ the _______ or animal life demoniacal or demon-like

Earthly → Natural → Demonic

Not from above Wisdom

Q. The Failure of Selfish Ambition (3:16)

insatiable lusts  evil  instability
disorder  uneasiness
jealousy  selfish ambition

worthless  disturbances  tumults
R. Heavenly Wisdom Characterized (3:17)

- Pure: pure from ________, chaste, modest
- Without Hypocrisy
- Peaceable: peace
- Unwavering: fair, mild
- Heavenly Wisdom
- Good Fruits: compliant, open to reason
- Good: the fruit of righteousness
- Reasonable: help

S. Peace Prepares Righteousness (3:18)

- Only in peace is the fruit of righteousness found.
- Only those who act peaceably are _______ to peace.
T. Faith Produces Humility (4:1-12)

N. The Source of Wars and Fightings (4:1-2)

O. The Neglect of Prayer (4:3)

P. Whom to Befriend (4:4-5)

Q. Grace for the Humble (4:6)
R. Humility Brings Victory (4:7-10)

S. Law Judge or Law Doer? (4:11-12)

T. Life’s Proper Perspective (4:13-17)
U. Faith Produces Dependence on God (4:13-5:6)

1. Life’s Proper Prospective (4:13-17)

To day or to morrow I will... 
go to such and such a city...
spend a year there...
engage in business...
make a profit.

Note: This _____-assured person states these plans urgently and as if they have already taken place. These phases show the utter folly of presumptuous planning, which is nothing but a form of _______.

2. The Misery of the Rich (5:1-3)

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which ___ _____ upon you

Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will ______ your flesh like fire.
3. The Mistreatment of the Poor (5:4-6)

...and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of _______.

Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you;...

You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of ____________.
V. Faith Endures, Prays, and Confronts (5:7-20)

1. Faith Endures Awaiting Christ’s Return (5:7-12)

2. Faith Prays for the Afflicted (5:13-15)

3. Prayer of Righteous is Heard (5:16-18)
4. Faith Confronts the Erring Brother (5:19-20)