

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES - OUTLINE OF TEACHING AND AUTHOR

This Epistle calls for special study. Although its message is intended for Jewish Christians – it is addressed to the Twelve Tribes of Israel scattered throughout the earth – it is applicable to all Christians everywhere, in every era of Church history, whether they be Jewish or Gentile Christians. The object of the author is to rebuke and correct the error and sins into which all Christians fall, and to encourage those undergoing trials of their faith how they must have the right attitude toward trials and tribulations in order to overcome them. The Epistle draws attention to community-building virtues and to the destructive force of improperly used wealth. It supplements the Doctrine of Justification by Faith by showing up the insufficiency of faith without works. It sets forth the nature of true and false religion and gives instruction on numerous other subjects, all of which are important for Christian living, such as patience, Prayer, the restraining of the tongue, humility, Holy duties, the repression of lusts and contempt for the world, among many other teachings.

(CP Jas 1:1-27). In introducing himself in V1, James declares that he is the servant of both God and the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasising their co-equality in the Godhead of Christianity, and the truth that they are two distinct and separate Beings (CP Jas 1:1 with Jn 1:1-3; Php 2:6-8). In V2-8 that follow in Jas 1, the emphasis is on the temptations – testings and trials – Christians undergo that test their faith and patience. If they lack wisdom to cope with their situation, Christians need only to ask God and He will provide that which they lack. Wisdom is not simply a high degree of intelligence or vast knowledge, but the skill of living Godly lives in all of life's situations as God intended man to live. Temptations and testings have to be endured to teach patience, and to lead to maturity (CP Jas 1:2-8 with 1Pe 5:8-10; 2Pe 1:1). Next, James teaches that the same Grace that exalts the lowly, humbles the rich. Both are cause for rejoicing. The rich rejoice in new values because they realise that earthly riches are only temporary, as opposed to the true riches of God (CP Jas 1:9-11 with Mt 6:24-34; Lu 6:24-25).

In Jas 1:12 the author emphasises the reward of Eternal life God has laid up for Christians who, despite the temptations and testings they undergo in this life, love Him and remain faithful to Him unto death (CP 1:12 with 2Pe 10-11; Rev 2:10; 3:5, 10-12). James also emphasises the truth that God does not tempt anyone to sin – it is the lusts of their own hearts that they yield to. Every evil comes from within (CP Jas 1:13-15 with Jer 17:9; Mt 12:34-35; Mk 7:21-23; Lu 6:45). God is the source only of good things, and He never changes (CP Jas 1:16-17 with 1Pe 1:23-25). See also author's comments on Jas 1:1, 1:2-4, 1:5-8, 1:9-11, 1:12 and 1:13-15, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

Finally, in V18-27 of Ch 1, James reminds Christians that they were saved by God's Word, and they must honour that fact and live in strict conformity to the Word. They should be eager to listen to Godly teaching but at the same time not be eager to voice

their opinions on issues in the Church. They must consider very carefully what they have to say before they say it. This applies to every matter that arises in the Church. James admonishes them to be doers of the Word, not merely hearers. He stresses the point that it is folly for anyone thinking they will be saved merely by hearing, and not doing, the Word of God. They must also bridle their tongues – rein them in and not be so talkative. The outward expression of Christians' true inward faith and commitment to God is to visit orphans and widows in need and not allow themselves to be defiled by worldly lusts of any description (CP Jas 1:18-27 and 4:4 with Ro 6:11-14 and 1Jn 2:15-16). See also author's comments on Jas 1:19-21, 1:22-25, and 1:26-27, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

(CP Jas 2:1-26). The first half of this chapter (V1-13), denounces the practice of showing respect of persons in the Church. Favouritism is totally foreign to the example set by both Jesus and God in Scripture. There is no place for it in Christianity whatsoever (CP V1-13 with De 10:17; Pr 28:21; Ac 10:34-35; Ro 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25). The simple teaching in Jas 2:10 is that one sin is enough to damn the Soul. (See also author's comments on Jas 2:1-5, and 2:10-12, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**). Jas 2:14-26 next, are probably the most controversial verses in the Epistle of James. They are commonly used in the professing Church in support of teaching that Christians are saved by faith plus works, not by faith alone, as Paul teaches elsewhere in Scripture, thus one teaching contradicts the other, but that is not correct – there is no contradiction, as Scriptures clearly prove. (See also author's comments on Jas 2:14-26 and 2:25, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**).

(CP Jas 3:1-18). The emphasis in V1-12 here is on the dangers of the tongue – its use and abuse. This is a grim warning to all Christians against aspiring too hastily to be a teacher of God's Word, or of occupying any position of authority in the Church where they are responsible for instructing others. Teachers will be held more accountable for everything they say (CP 3:1-12 with 1:19; 3:13; 4:11). See also author's comments on Jas 3:1-2, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his study *Christian - Keep your Tongue from Evil and your Lips from Speaking Guile* and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 3)**. In V13-18 next in Jas 3, James highlights the difference between true and false Religion. He teaches that wise and understanding Christians give practical proof of their wisdom by their conduct and the humility with which they do the work of God's Word. As we learned earlier in this study on Jas 1:2-8, God's wisdom does not involve a high degree of intelligence or vast knowledge, but the skill of living Godly lives in Christ. If Christians always seek God's wisdom, they will be set free from the need to

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compare themselves with others, and from desiring the things they have (CP V13-18 and 1:5-8 with Ro 12:3; Ga 5:26; Php 2:3). See also author's comments on Jas 3:17-18, and all related cross-reference Scriptures referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

(CP Jas 4:1-17). In V1-10 here the emphasis is on worldliness and pride in the New Testament Church. V1-4 carry a dire warning to Christians against fraternising with the corrupt world system which panders to self-gratifying pleasures and lusts. The word 'kill' (KJV), in V2, is used figuratively of the anger, jealousy and rivalry Christians caught up in evil desires exhibit toward each other when they no longer love one another as they should (CP 1:1-4 and 1Jn 2:15-17 with Col 3:1-10; 1Jn 4:7-8). In Jas 4:5-10 James highlights how man's spirit lusts to envy but through the Grace given to them by God Christians can overcome their sins if they humble themselves and draw near to God (CP V5-10 with Ga 5:13-21). See also author's comments on Jas 4:1-4, 4:5, 4:7-10 and Ga 5:13, 5:16, 5:17, 5:19-21, Col 3:1-10, 1Jn 2:15-17 and 4:7-21 and all cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**. In Jas 4:11-12 James admonishes Christians not to speak falsely of other Christians, for whoever does so sets themselves up as their judge and condemns them. Christians who judge others put themselves above God and are in grave danger of forfeiting their salvation (CP V11-12 with Mt 7:1-5; Lu 6:37 and Ro 14:4). In V13-17 James rebukes Christians for their boasting. He stresses the transitory nature of life (CP V13-17 with Lu 12:15-21). See also author's comments on Mt 7:1-5, Lu 6:36-38, 12:16-21, Ro 14:1-9, Jas 4:11-12 and 4:13-16, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

(CP Jas 5:1-20). V1-6 here is probably the most scathing denunciation of rich people and their treatment of the poor, in Scripture. It is rarely preached on in the contemporary Church. James' words are blunt and unsparing. He sternly rebukes the rich for their selfish, uncaring disregard of others and their self-indulgent life styles, and while this is directed to wealthy unbelievers, it is also a reminder call to Christians regarding their responsibilities and

obligations to others less fortunate than themselves, especially other Christians (CP Jas 5:1-6 with Ga 6:10 and 1Jn 3:16). See also author's comments on Jas 5:1-6, Ga 6:10 and 1Jn 3:16-18, and all related cross-reference scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**. In Jas 5:7-11 the emphasis is on patience in affliction. James exhorts Christians to remain steadfast under provocation in view of the fact that Christ is coming again to take them back to Heaven with Him. He reminds them of the steadfastness of Job under affliction in the Old Testament (CP V7-11 with 1Pe 1:6-9; 4:12-17 and 5:8-11). See also author's comments on Jas 5:7-8, 1Pe 1:7, 4:7-11, 4:17 and 5:8-11 and all related cross-reference Scriptures referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer study of the New Testament**.

James next, in V12, stresses the point that Christians are not to attest to the veracity of what they say by swearing an oath. As Christians, they must not embellish the truth in any way. What they say must be a simple statement of fact. They must mean what they say and say what they mean (CP Jas 5:12 and Mt 5:33-37 with Mt 23:16-17 and 12:35-37). See also author's comments on Jas 5:12 and Mt 12:36-37 and all related cross-reference Scriptures referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his study, *Christian - Keep your Tongue from Evil and your Lips from Speaking Guile* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 3)**. The emphasis in the closing verses – V13-20 – of James' Epistle, is on Prayer and the healing of sick Christians (See also author's comments on Jas 5:14-15, 5:16-18 and 5:19-20, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**).

James, the writer of this Epistle, who at the beginning of the Epistle introduced himself as servant of both God and the Lord Jesus Christ, was also one of Jesus' four half-brothers – Judas, who wrote the '*Epistle of Jude*' was another (CP Jas 1:1 with Mt 13:55; Mk 6:1-3; Ga 1:19; Jude 1). See also author's comments on Jas 1:1, Mt 1:18-21, 12:46-47 and Jude 1, and all related cross-reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.