



# The Epistle Of James



**A Study Guide With Introductory Comments,  
Summaries, Outlines, And Review Questions**

**MARK A. COPELAND**

# The Epistle Of James

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This study guide was developed in preparation for teaching adult Bible classes.

- ♦ The objectives for each section are usually things I plan to emphasize during the class.
- ♦ I have found that summarizing and outlining helps me to better understand the Word of God. It is a practice I highly recommend to others.
- ♦ I generally delete the answers to the review questions before printing the material and giving it to the students. But that you might know what answers were intended by the questions, I have included them in these guides.

This material is from **ExecutableOutlines.com**, a web site containing sermon outlines and Bible studies by Mark A. Copeland. Visit the web site to browse or download additional material for church or personal use.

The outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style. To God be the glory!

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**MarkCopeland@aol.com**

# The Epistle Of James

## Introduction

### AUTHOR

James, who identifies himself as "a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (**1:1**). There are four men who bear this name in the New Testament:

- ♦ **James, son of Zebedee and brother of John** - A fisherman called by Christ (**Mt 4:17-22**) who later became an apostle (**Mt 10:2**). Together with John, they were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder" because of their impulsiveness (cf. **Mk 3:17** with **Lk 9:51-56**). He was killed by Herod in 44 A.D. (**Ac 12:1-2**).
- ♦ **James, son of Alphaeus** - Another one of the apostles (**Mt 10:3; Ac 1:12**), about whom very little is known. He may be "James the younger," whose mother, Mary, was among the women at Jesus' crucifixion and tomb (**Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40; 16:1; Lk 24:10**). In **Jn 19:25**, this Mary is called the wife of Cleophas, perhaps to be identified with Alphaeus.
- ♦ **James, father of Judas the apostle** - Even more obscure, one of the few references to him is **Lk 6:16**.
- ♦ **James, the brother of our Lord** - A half-brother of our Lord (**Mt 13:55**), who did not believe in his brother at first (**Jn 7:5**). He became a disciple following the resurrection (**1 Co 15:7; Ac 1:14**) and gained prominence in the church at Jerusalem (**Ga 2:9**). As evidence of his prominence, Peter sent him a special message following his own release from prison (**Ac 12:17**). James also played an important role in the conference at Jerusalem (**Ac 15:13-33**), and Paul brought him greetings upon arriving at Jerusalem (**Ac 21:18-19**).

"**James, the Lord's brother**" (**Ga 1:19**) is most likely the author of this epistle. Tradition describes James as a man of prayer, which may explain the emphasis on prayer in his letter. It was said that he prayed so much, his knees were as hard as those on a camel. He was martyred in 62 A.D., either by being cast down from the temple, or beaten to death with clubs. It is reported that as he died, he prayed as did Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

### RECIPIENTS

The epistle is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (**1:1**). This naturally leads one to think of Jews (**Ac 26:6-7**) living outside the land of Palestine. Since the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, many Jews were scattered throughout different nations (**Ac 2:5-11**). While Jews, the epistle makes it clear that they were also brethren in the Lord, i.e., they were **Jewish Christians**. Nineteen

times James calls them "brethren" and at least one time he definitely means those who were brethren "in the Lord" (2:1).

It appears many of these Jewish Christians were poor and oppressed. Being Jews, they would often be rejected by the Gentiles. As Jewish Christians, they would also be rejected by many of their own countrymen. The letter indicates that most were poor, and some were being oppressed by the rich (2:6-7). Because it was not addressed to a single church or individual, it has been categorized a "General" or "Catholic" (universal) epistle along with 1 and 2 Peter, 1 John, and Jude.

## **TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING**

With no mention of the Jerusalem conference recorded in Acts 15 (A.D. 49), and the use of the word "synagogue" (assembly, 2:2), **A.D. 48-50** is the date commonly given for this epistle. This would make it the first book of the New Testament written. If James, the Lord's brother, is the author, then he probably wrote it in **Jerusalem**.

## **PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE**

The epistle deals with a variety of themes, with an emphasis upon practical aspects of the Christian life. Some of the subjects include handling trials and temptations, practicing pure religion, understanding the relation between faith and works, the proper use of the tongue and display of true wisdom, being a friend of God rather than a friend of the world, and the value of humility, patience and prayer.

While these may appear unrelated, they are crucial to the growth and development of the Christian. For this reason, I suggest that James' purpose was:

### **TO INSTRUCT CHRISTIANS CONCERNING TRUE AND PRACTICAL RELIGION**

In this epistle is a call to be doers of the Word, manifesting a living faith through one's works. In 108 verses, there are 54 imperatives (commands), prompting some to call James "the Amos of the New Testament."

### **KEY VERSE: James 1:22**

*"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

## **BRIEF OUTLINE**

### **SALUTATION (1:1)**

### **I. TRUE RELIGION ENDURES TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS (1:2-18)**

#### **A. WITH JOY AND PATIENCE (1:2-4)**

- B. WITH WISDOM FROM GOD (1:5-8)**
- C. WITH A PROPER PERSPECTIVE (1:9-11)**
- D. WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEMPTATION (1:12-15)**
- E. WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE FATHER'S GOODNESS (1:16-18)**

**II. TRUE RELIGION CONSISTS OF DOING, NOT JUST HEARING (1:19-2:26)**

- A. ONE SHOULD BE SWIFT TO HEAR (1:19-20)**
- B. ONE SHOULD NOT BE HEARERS ONLY, BUT DOERS (1:21-27)**
- C. ONE SHOULD NOT SHOW PERSONAL FAVORITISM (2:1-13)**
- D. ONE SHOULD SHOW THEIR FAITH BY THEIR WORKS (2:14-26)**

**III. TRUE RELIGION DISPLAYS WISDOM, NOT JUST SPEAKING (3:1-18)**

- A. DANGER OF THE TONGUE (3:1-12)**
- B. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY WISDOM (3:13-18)**

**IV. TRUE RELIGION BEFRIENDS GOD THROUGH HUMILITY (4:1-17)**

- A. HOW TO BE AN ENEMY OF GOD (4:1-6)**
- B. HOW TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD (4:7-17)**

**V. TRUE RELIGION BLESSED THROUGH PATIENCE, PRAYER AND LOVE (5:1-20)**

- A. THE CURSE OF RICH OPPRESSORS (5:1-6)**
- B. THE BLESSING OF PATIENCE (5:7-12)**
- C. THE BLESSING OF PRAYER (5:13-18)**
- D. THE BLESSING OF LOVE FOR THE ERRING (5:19-20)**

**REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION**

- 1) What four men bore the name of James in the New Testament?**
  - James, the brother of John
  - James, the son of Alphaeus

- James, the father of Judas
  - James, the brother of our Lord
- 2) Which one is most likely the author of the epistle?**
- James, the Lord's brother
- 3) To whom was this epistle addressed? (1:1)**
- The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad
- 4) From the epistle itself, who were the original recipients? (cf. 2:1)**
- Jewish Christians
- 5) What is this epistle commonly called, along with 1 & 2 Peter, 1 John, and Jude? Why?**
- A "general" or "catholic" epistle
  - Because it is not addressed to a particular church or individual, but to Christians in general
- 6) When was this epistle likely written? From where?**
- A.D. 48-50
  - Jerusalem
- 7) As suggested in the introduction, what is the purpose of this epistle?**
- To instruct Christians concerning true and practical religion
- 8) What might serve as the "key verse" of this epistle?**
- James 1:22
- 9) According to the outline above, what are the main points in this epistle?**
- True religion endures trials and temptations (1:1-18)
  - True religion consists of doing, not just hearing (1:19-2:26)
  - True religion displays wisdom, not just speaking (3:1-18)
  - True religion befriends God through humility (4:1-17)
  - True religion blessed through patience, prayer and love (5:1-20)

# The Epistle Of James

## Chapter One

### OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To appreciate the value of enduring trials
- 2) To understand how sin develops, from temptation to death (separation from God)
- 3) To note the importance of being doers of the Word, and practitioners of religion that is pure and undefiled before God

### SUMMARY

Following a simple and humble salutation (1), James begins his epistle with a call to view trials as occasions to rejoice, understanding they can produce patience which leads to maturity (2-5). If wisdom is needed, he counsels his readers to ask God with faith and no doubting (5-8). In the meantime, the poor are encouraged to rejoice in their exaltation, while the rich are to be thankful for their humiliation (9-11).

Motivation to endure temptation is given, along with an explanation as to the true source of temptations and the development of sin which leads to spiritual death (12-15). Let no one be deceived, God is not the source of temptation, but the Father of every good and perfect gift which comes down from above, who has brought us forth that we might be the firstfruits of His creation (16-18).

With admonitions to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, James then expounds upon a major theme of this epistle: to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Illustrating the folly of being a hearer only, he contrasts the difference between religion that is useless and that which is pure and undefiled before God (19-27).

### OUTLINE

#### SALUTATION (1)

#### I. TRUE RELIGION ENDURES TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS (2-18)

##### A. WITH JOY AND PATIENCE (2-4)

1. Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience
2. Letting patience produce its perfect work
  - a. That you may be perfect and complete
  - b. That you may lack nothing

##### B. WITH WISDOM FROM GOD (5-8)

1. If you lack wisdom, ask God
  - a. Who gives to all liberally and without reproach
  - b. It will be given to you
2. But ask in faith, with no doubting; for he who doubts...
  - a. Is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind
  - b. Should not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord
  - c. Is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways

**C. WITH A PROPER PERSPECTIVE (9-11)**

1. If a lowly brother, glory in your exaltation
2. If rich, glory in your humiliation
  - a. For as the flower of the field you will pass away, as the grass withers with the burning heat of the rising sun
  - b. So the rich man will fade away in his pursuits

**D. WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEMPTATION (12-15)**

1. The man who endures temptation will be blessed
  - a. For he will receive the crown of life when he is proven
  - b. Which the Lord has promised to those who love Him
2. Temptations do not come from God
  - a. God cannot be tempted by evil
  - b. He does not tempt anyone
3. The source of temptations
  - a. One is tempted when drawn away by his own desires and is enticed
  - b. When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin
  - c. Sin, when full-grown, brings forth death

**E. WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE FATHER'S GOODNESS (16-18)**

1. Do not be deceived, beloved brethren
2. Every good and perfect gift is from above
  - a. Coming down from the Father of lights
  - b. With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning
3. Of His own will He brought us forth
  - a. By the word of truth
  - b. That we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures

**II. TRUE RELIGION CONSISTS OF DOING, NOT JUST HEARING (19-27)**

**A. ONE SHOULD BE SWIFT TO HEAR (19-20)**

1. Let every one be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath
2. For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God

**B. ONE SHOULD NOT BE HEARERS ONLY, BUT DOERS (21-27)**

1. What to lay aside, and what to receive
  - a. Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness
  - b. Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls



2. Be doers of the word, and not hearers only
  - a. Otherwise you deceive yourselves
  - b. You are like a man who after looking in mirror soon forgets what he looked like
3. One who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it..
  - a. Is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work
  - b. Will be blessed in what he does
4. Your religion is useless...
  - a. If you think you're religious, but do not bridle your tongue
  - b. You deceive only your heart
5. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this..
  - a. To visit orphans and widows in their trouble
  - b. To keep oneself unspotted from the world

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER**

### **1) What are the main points of this chapter?**

- True religion endures trials and temptations (1-18)
- True religion consists of doing, not just hearing (19-27)

### **2) How should Christians view trials in their life? Why? (2-3)**

- An occasion in which to rejoice
- Knowing that testing one's faith produces patience

### **3) What is the value of developing patience? (4)**

- It helps to make one perfect and complete, lacking nothing

### **4) If we lack wisdom, what should we do? Why? How? (5-6)**

- Ask of God
- He gives to all liberally and without reproach
- In faith, with no doubting

### **5) What is one who doubts like? What can he expect? Why? (6-8)**

- Like the wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind
- To receive nothing from the Lord
- He is double-minded, and unstable in all his ways

### **6) In what should the lowly brother glory? The rich man? (9-10)**

- His exaltation
- His humiliation

### **7) What is the rich man like in his pursuits? (10-11)**

- A flower of the field that soon withers with the heat of the rising sun

### **8) When is the man who endures temptation blessed? How will he be blessed? (12)**

- When he is proved

- By receiving the crown of life the Lord has promised to those who love Him

**9) What should no one say when they are tempted? Why? (13)**

- "I am tempted by God"; God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone

**10) Then how is one tempted? (14)**

- When drawn away by his own desires and enticed

**11) When is sin born? What does sin produce when full-grown? (15)**

- When desire has conceived and given birth; death

**12) What is the source of every good gift and every perfect gift? (17)**

- From above, coming down from the Father of lights

**13) How has God brought us forth (given us birth)? Why did He do this? (18)**

- Of His own will, by the word of truth

- That we might a kind of firstfruits of His creatures

**14) What does James desire of his "beloved brethren"? (19)**

- To be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath

**15) Why should one be "slow to wrath"? (20)**

- The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God

**16) What needs to be laid aside? (21)**

- All filthiness and overflow of wickedness

**17) What needs to be received with meekness? Why? (21)**

- The implanted word; it is able to save your souls

**18) To avoid deceiving ourselves, what must we be? (22)**

- Doers of the word, and not hearers only

**19) What is one like who hears the word but does not do it? (23-24)**

- One who looks at himself in a mirror, only to go away and soon forget what he looked like

**20) Who will be truly blessed in what they do? (25)**

- He who looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it

- He who is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work

**21) Whose religion is useless? (26)**

- The one who thinks he is religious, but does not bridle his tongue and deceives his own heart

**22) What is pure and undefiled religion before God? (27)**

- To visit orphans and widows in their trouble

- To keep oneself unspotted from the world

# The Epistle Of James

## Chapter Two

### OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To consider the sin and danger of showing personal favoritism
- 2) To note the folly of faith without works, how that faith without works is a dead faith

### SUMMARY

In this chapter we first find a call to hold the faith of Jesus Christ without partiality. Evidently some were displaying favoritism toward the rich in their assemblies, while despising the poor. Showing respect of persons made one a judge with evil thoughts, and James provides several reasons why such prejudice was unbecoming of those who believe in Jesus and worthy of condemnation (1-13).

James then addresses the relationship between faith and works, especially the folly of professing faith when unaccompanied by works. Using several examples to make his point, including those of Abraham the friend of God and Rahab the harlot, James declares three times that faith without works is dead (14-26).

### OUTLINE

#### I. TRUE RELIGION DOES NOT SHOW PARTIALITY (1-13)

##### A. SUCH AS SHOWING PREFERENCE TO THE RICH (1-3)

1. The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, is not to be held with partiality
2. A case in point: showing preference with seating arrangements in the assembly

##### B. REASONS NOT TO SHOW PARTIALITY TOWARD THE RICH (4-13)

1. It makes one a judge with evil thoughts
2. Has not God chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?
3. Have not the rich oppressed and blasphemed you?
4. Does not the royal law call upon us to love our neighbor?
5. Partiality will convict us as transgressors, even if we stumble in only one point
6. We shall be judged by the law of liberty, in which judgment without mercy is given to those who show no mercy

#### II. TRUE RELIGION SHOWS FAITH THROUGH WORKS (14-26)

##### A. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS CANNOT SAVE ONE (14-19)

1. What profit is there in faith without works?
  - a. Can such faith save one?

- b. Is there any profit to tell a naked and destitute person to be warm and filled, and not give them what they need?
- c. Thus faith by itself, without works, is dead
- 2. Faith is shown by one's works
  - a. It is not enough to claim to have faith
  - b. The devils believe in God, and tremble

#### **B. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD (20-26)**

- 1. As exemplified by Abraham, the friend of God
  - a. Who was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar
  - b. His faith was working with his works, and by them perfected his faith
  - c. By his works the Scripture was fulfilled that declared him faithful and righteous
- 2. As exemplified by Rahab, the harlot
  - a. Who was justified by works when she hid the spies
  - b. Thus faith without works is dead, just as the body without the spirit is dead

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER**

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**
  - True religion does not show partiality (1-13)
  - True religion shows faith through works (14-26)
- 2) With what is one not to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus? (1)**
  - Partiality, or respect of persons (i.e., prejudice)
- 3) What example does James use to illustrate his point? (2-3)**
  - Showing preference to a rich man over a poor man in the assembly
- 4) Of what is one guilty when they show partiality? (4)**
  - Becoming a judge with evil thoughts
- 5) Why should one not show prejudice against the poor? (5)**
  - God has chosen them to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him
- 6) What had the rich been doing against those to whom James wrote this epistle? (6-7)**
  - Oppressing them and dragging them into the courts
  - Blaspheming the noble name by which they were called
- 7) What would be well for them to do? (8)**
  - To fulfill the royal law: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"
- 8) What is the consequence of showing partiality? (9)**
  - Committing sin and being convicted by the law as transgressors

- 9) Of what is one guilty if they stumble in just one point of the law? (10-11)**  
- Guilty of all; a transgressor of the law
- 10) How then should they speak and act? Why? (12-13)**  
- As those who will be judged by the law of liberty  
- Judgment is without mercy to one who shows no mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgment
- 11) What question does James address next? (14)**  
- What does it profit if one says he has faith, but does not have works?
- 12) What example is given to illustrate the futility of faith without works? (15-16)**  
- Telling a naked and hungry person to be warmed and filled, but then do nothing to help
- 13) What is the condition of faith by itself, without works? (17)**  
- It is dead
- 14) How does James challenge the person who only has faith? (18)**  
- Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by works
- 15) What example does James use next to show the futility of faith only? (19)**  
- That of demons, who believe in God
- 16) How was Abraham justified? When? (21)**  
- By works  
- When he offered Isaac his son on the altar
- 17) What was the relation between Abraham's faith and works? (22)**  
- Faith was working together with his works  
- By works his faith was made perfect
- 18) What two things were the result of Abraham's works? (23)**  
- The Scriptures were fulfilled which said he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness  
- He was called the friend of God
- 19) What point did the example of Abraham illustrate? (24)**  
- A man is justified by works, and not by faith only
- 20) What final example does James appeal to? (25)**  
- Rahab the harlot, who was justified when she hid the two spies
- 21) What is James' conclusion regarding faith and works? (26)**  
- As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also

# The Epistle Of James

## Chapter Three

### OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To appreciate the power and danger of the tongue
- 2) To understand the difference between heavenly wisdom, and that which is earthly, sensual, and demonic

### SUMMARY

James begins this chapter with a caution against many becoming teachers. In view of the stricter judgment that awaits teachers, one should be sure they possess the maturity and self-control necessary to control the tongue. James then provides a series of illustrations to demonstrate the power and danger of the tongue, and how we can easily be inconsistent in our use of it (1-12).

Perhaps some sought to be teachers so as to appear wise. Yet James writes that wisdom and understanding are to be shown by one's conduct, done in meekness. He then defines and contrasts the difference between two kinds of wisdom. There is wisdom which is earthly that causes confusion and every evil thing. On the other hand, there is wisdom which is heavenly that produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness (13-18).

### OUTLINE

#### I. TRUE RELIGION CONTROLS THE TONGUE (1-12)

##### A. CAUTION AGAINST BECOMING TEACHERS (1-2)

1. Teachers shall receive a stricter judgment
2. Maturity and self-control are required not to stumble in word

##### B. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (3-4)

1. Like a bit which controls the horse
2. Like a small rudder which directs the ship

##### C. THE DANGER OF THE TONGUE (5-6)

1. A little member which boasts great things
2. Like a little fire which kindles a great forest fire
3. Indeed, the tongue can be a fire, a world of iniquity
  - a. Capable of defiling the whole body
  - b. Capable of setting on fire the course of nature, being set on fire by hell

##### D. THE DIFFICULTY OF TAMING THE TONGUE (7-12)

1. Man can control creatures of land and sea, but not the tongue
2. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison
3. With it we bless God, and then curse man made in His image
  - a. Thus blessing and cursing proceed from the same mouth
  - b. Something which should not be so
    - 1) For no spring sends forth both fresh and salt water
    - 2) Neither does a fig tree bear olives, nor a grapevine bear figs

## **II. TRUE RELIGION DISPLAYS HEAVENLY WISDOM (13-18)**

### **A. THE TRUE DISPLAY OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING (13)**

1. To be seen in one's conduct
2. With works done in meekness

### **B. THE DISPLAY OF EARTHLY WISDOM (14-16)**

1. Full of bitter envy, self-seeking, boasting and lying
2. A wisdom not from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic
3. Producing confusion and every evil thing

### **C. THE DISPLAY OF HEAVENLY WISDOM (17-18)**

1. Wisdom from above is first pure, then it is...
  - a. Peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits
  - b. Without partiality and without hypocrisy
2. The fruit of righteousness is produced by peacemakers who sow in peace

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER**

### **1) What are the main points of this chapter?**

- True religion controls the tongue (1-12)
- True religion displays heavenly wisdom (13-18)

### **2) Why does James caution against many becoming teachers? (1)**

- Teachers shall receive a stricter judgment

### **3) What is one indication of maturity and self-control? (2)**

- The ability to bridle the tongue

### **4) What two illustrations does James use to show the power of the tongue? (3-4)**

- Like a bit which controls the horse
- Like a rudder which controls the ship

### **5) What illustration is used to show the danger of the tongue? (5)**

- Like a small fire which kindles a large forest fire

### **6) How does James describe the tongue? (6-8)**

- A fire, a world of iniquity
- Set among our members that it defiles the whole body
- Sets on fire the course of nature, being set on fire by hell
- That which no man can tame
- An unruly evil, full of deadly poison

**7) What example does James use to show how the tongue is often misused? (9-10)**

- Blessing God and cursing man who is made in His image

**8) What illustrations does James provide to show the incongruity of such speech? (11-12)**

- A spring does not send forth both fresh and salt (bitter) water
- A fig tree does not bear olives, nor a grapevine bear figs

**9) How is the wise and understanding person to manifest himself? (13)**

- By good conduct done in meekness

**10) What characterizes wisdom that does not descend from above? (14)**

- Bitter envy and self-seeking, boasting and lying against the truth

**11) What is the source of such wisdom? (15)**

- It is earthly, sensual, and demonic

**12) What exists when there is envy and self-seeking? (16)**

- Confusion and every evil thing

**13) What are the qualities of wisdom that is from above? (17)**

- It is first pure
- Then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy

**14) Who produces the fruit of righteousness? (18)**

- Peacemakers who sow in peace



# The Epistle Of James

## Chapter Four

### OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To gain insight into the source of wars and fighting, even among brethren
- 2) To see the importance and means of befriending God, of not speaking evil of brethren, and planning for the future with the Lord's will in mind

### SUMMARY

James asks his readers to consider the source of wars and fights among themselves. He identifies the problem as their own desires for pleasure which war within themselves. Perhaps exaggerating for the sake of emphasis, he describes their lust and coveting (even murder!) for things they do not have and cannot obtain. It renders their prayers fruitless, for they have selfish motives in mind. Sounding like an Old Testament prophet, James charges them with adultery for trying to befriend the world. Becoming a friend of the world leads to enmity with God, who jealously desires us. But if they are willing to humble themselves, God is willing to show more grace (1-6).

James therefore counsels them to draw near to God in humble submission, with clean hands, purity of heart, and true contrition. He warns against speaking evil of brethren and judging one another, lest they become judges and not doers of the law. The chapter ends with a call to make plans with the Lord's will in mind, for we have no idea what the morrow holds and life is short. Otherwise we boast in our arrogance and sin when we fail to do what we know is good (7-17).

### OUTLINE

#### I. TRUE RELIGION DOES NOT BEFRIEND THE WORLD (1-6)

##### A. THE SOURCE OF WARS AND FIGHTS (1-3)

1. From within, from desires that war in one's members
2. Such as lust (envy), murder (hate?), coveting, which do not give what one seeks
3. Leading to unanswered prayers, due to selfishness

##### B. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS ENMITY WITH GOD (4-6)

1. Whoever wants to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God
2. Even as the Scripture warns, and not in vain
3. While God resists the proud, He is willing to give grace to the humble

#### II. TRUE RELIGION DRAWS NEAR TO GOD (7-17)

##### A. BY SUBMITTING TO GOD'S AUTHORITY (7-12)

1. Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee
2. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you
  - a. Cleanse your hands, sinners
  - b. Purify your hearts, double-minded
  - c. Mourn and weep for your sins
  - d. Humble yourself before God, and He will lift you up
3. Let God be the Lawgiver and Judge
  - a. Do not speak evil of one another and judge one another
    - 1) Otherwise you speak evil of the law and judge the law
    - 2) Otherwise you are not a doer of the law, but a judge
  - b. When there is really only one Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy

#### **B. BY SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL (13-17)**

1. We should be careful in making plans for the future
  - a. We do not know what will happen tomorrow
  - b. Life is but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes
2. Therefore we should acknowledge "If the Lord wills" in our plans
  - a. Otherwise we boast in arrogance, which is evil
  - b. For one to know to do good and not do it, that is sin

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER**

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**
  - True religion does not befriend the world (1-6)
  - True religion draws near to God (7-17)
- 2) Where do wars and fights find their origin? (1-2)**
  - Our desires for pleasure that war in our members
  - Lusting and coveting for things we do not have and cannot obtain
- 3) Why do some not receive what they ask for? (3)**
  - They ask for the wrong reason, e.g., for personal pleasures
- 4) What does James call those who would be a friend of the world? (4)**
  - Adulterers and adulteresses
  - An enemy of God
- 5) What possible translations for the Scripture quoted in verse 5?**
  - "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously" (NKJV)
  - "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy" (KJV)
  - "the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely" (NIV)
  - "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us" (NASB)
- 6) Whom does God resist? To whom does He give more grace? (6)**
  - The proud; the humble

- 7) What counsel does James give to those tempted by the world? (7-10)**
- Submit to God
  - Resist the devil and he will flee from you
  - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you
  - Cleanse your hands
  - Purify your hearts
  - Lament, mourn, and weep
  - Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom
  - Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up
- 8) Why should one not speak evil of a brother? (11)**
- They then speak evil of the law and judge the law
  - They become a judge, rather than a doer of the law
- 9) What other reasons does James give for not judging one another? (12)**
- There is one Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy
  - Who are we to judge another?
- 10) Why should we be careful about the plans we make? (13-14)**
- We do not know what will happen tomorrow
  - Our life is only a vapor that appears for a short while
- 11) With what qualification can one make plans for the future? (15)**
- If the Lord wills
- 12) Of what is one guilty when plans are made without considering the Lord's will? (16)**
- Boasting in one's arrogance
- 13) Of what is one guilty if they know what is good, but fail to do it? (17)**
- Sin

# The Epistle Of James

## Chapter Five

### OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To appreciate the need for patience in times of oppression
- 2) To see the value of prayer and confessing sins in times of sickness

### SUMMARY

The final chapter opens with a strong condemnation toward the rich who were oppressing the poor while living in pleasure and luxury. Most likely these were rich unbelievers such as those mentioned earlier (cf. **2:6-7**). The Lord heard the cries of those defrauded, and judgment was to come upon the rich who had condemned and murdered the just. This passage may be an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24 and fulfilled in A.D. 70. James counsels his brethren to patiently wait for the coming of the Lord, and to establish their hearts. Appealing to the farmer, the prophets, and to Job as examples of patience, he also warns against grumbling against one another and swearing rash oaths (**1-12**).

The last half of the chapter provides a call to prayer and praise. The suffering are to pray, the cheerful are to sing praises, and the sick are to call for the elders of the church. The elders were to pray over the sick and anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. What is uncertain is whether the anointing was sacramental or medicinal (I think the latter, see Review Questions below). In answer to the prayer of faith, the Lord will raise the sick and also forgive sins if they had been committed. In this context James encourages Christians to confess their sins to one another and pray for one another that they may be healed. He reminds them of the value of fervent prayer by the righteous, using Elijah as an example of how God answers prayer providentially. The epistle then closes with a reminder that turning a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (**13-20**).

### OUTLINE

#### I. TRUE RELIGION DISPLAYS PATIENCE UNDER OPPRESSION (1-12)

##### A. GOD'S ANGER AT RICH OPPRESSORS (1-6)

1. The rich are called to weep and howl for the miseries to come upon them
  - a. Their riches are corrupted
  - b. Their garments are moth-eaten
  - c. Their gold and silver are corroded
    - 1) Which will be a witness against them
    - 2) Which will eat their flesh like fire
  - d. They have heaped up treasure in the last days
2. The reasons for God's anger against the rich

- a. They have defrauded the laborers who mowed their fields
  - 1) Keeping back wages owed them
  - 2) The cries of the reapers have been heard by the Lord of Sabaoth (Hosts)
- b. They have lived in pleasure and luxury, fattening their hearts in a day of slaughter
- c. They have condemned and murdered the just who does not resist them

**B. A CALL FOR PATIENCE UNDER OPPRESSION (7-12)**

1. Be patient until the coming of the Lord
  - a. Consider the patience of the farmer
  - b. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand
2. Do not grumble against one another
  - a. Lest you be condemned
  - b. The Judge is standing at the door
3. Remember the examples of suffering and patience
  - a. Such as the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord and are blessed for their endurance
  - b. Such as the perseverance of Job, to whom the Lord proved very compassionate and merciful at the end
4. Above all, do not swear (make rash oaths)
  - a. Either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath
  - b. Let your "Yes" mean "Yes," and your "No" mean "No"
  - c. Lest you fall into judgment

**II. TRUE RELIGION BLESSED THROUGH PRAYER, SINGING, AND CONCERN FOR THE ERRING (13-20)**

**A. THE BLESSING OF PRAYER AND SONG (13-18)**

1. If anyone is suffering, let him pray
2. If anyone is cheerful, let him sing psalms
3. If anyone is sick, let him call for the elders of the church
  - a. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord
  - b. The prayer of faith will save (heal) the sick, and the Lord will raise him up
  - c. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven
  - d. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another
    - 1) That you may be healed
    - 2) For the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much
      - a) The example of Elijah, a man with a nature like ours
      - b) He prayed that it would not rain, and no rain fell for three years
      - c) He prayed again, the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit

**B. THE BLESSING OF LOVE FOR ERRING BRETHREN (19-20)**

1. He who turns back one who wanders from the truth will save a soul from death
2. He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will cover a multitude of sins

**REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER**

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**
  - True religion displays patience under oppression (1-12)
  - True religion blessed through prayer, singing, and concern for the erring (13-20)
- 2) Who is being condemned in verses 1-6 of this chapter? (1)**
  - Those who are rich (probably unbelievers who had been oppressing Christians, cf. Ja 2:6-7)
- 3) What sort of miseries were to come upon them? (1-3)**
  - Their riches are to be corrupted, their garments moth-eaten
  - Their gold and silver will be corroded, and serve as a witness against them
  - Such corrosion will eat their flesh like fire
- 4) Why is God so angry at these rich? (3-6)**
  - They have heaped up treasure in the last days
  - They have defrauded their workers by keeping back what is owed them
  - They have lived in pleasure and luxury, fattening their hearts
  - They have condemned and murdered the just, who does not resist them
- 5) What are the Christians to do in response to such oppression? (7-12)**
  - Be patient until the coming of the Lord
  - Establish their hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand
  - Don't grumble against one another, for the Judge is standing at the door
  - Do not swear (make rash oaths), but let their "yes" be "yes" and their "no" mean "no"
- 6) What three examples does James provide to encourage patience? (7-11)**
  - The farmer who waits patiently for the precious fruit of the earth
  - The prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord
  - The perseverance of Job
- 7) What does James encourage one to do when suffering? When cheerful? (13)**
  - To pray when suffering
  - To sing praises when cheerful
- 8) What is one who is sick to do? (14)**
  - Call for the elders of the church
- 9) What are they to do? (14)**
  - Pray over the sick, anointing with oil in the name of the Lord
- 10) Is "anointing with oil" sacramental or medicinal?**
  - "Some commentators consider this anointing with oil to be a sacramental anointing, but others consider it a medicinal anointing. In defense of the medicinal anointing, Burdick wrote the following: `There are a number of reasons for understanding this application of oil as medicinal rather than sacramental. The word aleipsantes ("anoint") is not the usual word for sacramental or ritualistic anointing. James could have used the verb chrio if that had been what he had in mind.

The distinction is still observed in modern Greek, with *aleipho* meaning "to daub," "to smear," and *chrio* meaning "to anoint." Furthermore, it is a well-documented fact that oil was one of the most common medicines of biblical times. See Isaiah 1:6 and Luke 10:34. Josephus (*Antiquities*, 17, 172 [vi. 5]) reports that during his last illness Herod the Greek was given a bath in oil in hopes of effecting a cure. The papyri, Philo, Pliny, and the physician Galen all refer to the medicinal use of oil. Galen described it as "the best of all remedies for paralysis" (*De Simplicium Medicamentorum Temperamentis*, 2.10ff.). It is evident, then, that James is prescribing prayer and medicine." (New Commentary, James, Fausset, and Brown)

**11) What will save (or heal) the sick? Who will raise him up? (15)**

- The prayer of faith
- The Lord

**12) What if the one who is sick has committed sins? (15)**

- He will be forgiven

**13) What are Christians to do? Why? (16)**

- Confess sins one to another and pray for one another
- That they may be healed

**14) What avails much? Who is a good illustration of this? (16-18)**

- The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man
- Elijah

**15) What happens when one turns a sinner from the error of his way? (19-20)**

- A soul is saved from death
- A multitude of sins is covered