



Memorial Park

An Evangelical Presbyterian Church

James

Introduction

An early date for the Epistle of James is supported by conditions noted in the text. For example:

The epistle addresses the divide between the rich and poor in Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 70 A.D.

- It is consistent with the intense expectation of the Lord's return as found in I & II Thessalonians, which were among the earlier Pauline letters.
- There is an effort to clarify Paul's teaching about justification by faith, which was given during his public preaching ministry.
- The epistle is addressed to Jews, who represented the majority of the church's earliest history possibly before Paul's first mission trip in 47 A.D.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary estimates the date for the Epistle of James at about 44 A.D., during or soon after the Herodian persecution. (See Acts 12:1-19.)

OUTLINE (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, C. F. Pfeiffer & E. F. Harrison, eds., Moody Press, 1962.)

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- II. Trials. 1:2-8.
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- VII. Social Distinctions and "the Royal Law." 2:1-13.
- VIII. Faith and Works. 2:14-26.
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- XVIII. Reclaiming the Sinning Brother. 5:19, 20.

I. Salutation. 1:1

Read Mark 1:19, 9:2, 10:35-40, Gal 1:19, Acts 12:1-4 & Acts 15:5-21

1. Who do you think was the author of the James Epistle, James the disciple or James the brother of Jesus and leader in the Jerusalem church? For additional evidence, compare the language in the James Epistle to the James speech in Acts To whom is the epistle addressed?
 - a. Why did James use the phrase, "the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" in the salutation?
 - b. What does it mean? See Deut 32:26, Matt 19:28, Luke 22:30, I Peter 1:1, & Rev 21:12.
2. Why should we Christians in the 21st Century include ourselves with "the twelve tribes scattered among the nations?" Why does this epistle also apply to us?

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II. Trials. 1:2-8

1. What is the difference between joy and happiness?
 - a. What makes you happy, and what gives you joy?
 - b. How is it possible to have joy during the trials of life?
 - c. Compare the trials of the 1st Century church to ours here today? What encouragement does this comparison give you?
2. Considering verses 3 - 5, explain the progression to spiritual maturity.
 - a. What is James' definition of spiritual maturity?
 - b. How can we learn spiritual perseverance?
 - c. Why did James link perseverance with spiritual maturity?
 - d. What is the connection between spiritual maturity and wisdom?
 - e. What do we lack that keeps us from spiritual maturity?
3. What are the promises in James 1:2-8?
 - a. Why should we be confident to expect God to fulfill this promise to sinful people?
 - b. What is the criterion James indicated for this confidence? (See Heb 11:6.)
4. James referred to doubt as a contrast to faith.
 - a. What kind of doubt is a roadblock to faith?
 - b. What is the evidence of spiritual doubt? How is spiritual instability evident?

III. Poverty and Wealth. 1:9-11

1. What point of contrast did James make in this section?
 - a. Who did he compare to whom?
 - b. Why was this contrast important in the early church history?
 - c. Why is it important in the contemporary church?
2. What is the high position of the brother in humble circumstances, and what is the low position of the rich brother?
 - a. What position is common to both the brother in humble circumstances and the rich brother?
 - b. What are the dangers to the rich brother and what are the dangers to brother in humble circumstances?
3. Who in the contemporary church are the brothers in humble circumstances, and who are the rich brothers?
 - a. Consider the question locally, nationally, and internationally.
 - b. Considering James 1:9-11, what are the obligations of the rich brothers toward the brothers in humble circumstances, and visa versa?
4. What should be our source of pride?

IV. Trial and Temptation. 1:12-18

1. What trials did the church under James' leadership experience? See Acts 7:59 to 8:3, 9:1-2, 11:19-21, and 12:1-5.
 - a. What temptation does persecution produce?
 - b. What other temptations do Christians experience?
 - c. What will the test of temptations demonstrate?
 - d. What is the promise of perseverance? Considering I Cor 9:19-27, how did Paul describe perseverance? What good things can result from temptation and perseverance? Why does God allow temptation?
2. Describe the process that leads to sin. Where does it start, and where does it end?
 - a. What is the source of temptation? See verse 14.
 - b. What contrast did James make in verse 17?
3. What three attributes did James use to describe God?
 - a. How do these attributes help us to persevere when tempted?
 - b. What tools has God given us to avoid being deceived by temptations?
 - c. What will God accomplish by our perseverance? See verses 12 & 18.

4. To what does the term "firstfruits" refer? See Lev 23:9-14 & I Cor 15:20-23. What does it mean to us today?

V. Reception of the Word. 1:19-25

1. What happens when people are quick to speak and slow to listen?
 - a. What attitude is demonstrated when we are quick to speak and slow to listen?
 - b. Why is this attitude inconsistent with reflecting the character of Christ?
 - c. What are the advantages of being a good listener?
 - d. How do others respond to a good listener?
 - e. How will developing the discipline of being a good listener help us understand God's Word?
2. What is the relationship between anger and slow listening?
 - a. How is anger usually expressed?
 - b. How does anger get in the way of good listening?
 - c. What is the effect on the objects of anger? What does it do to relationships?
 - d. How can anger stand in the way of bringing about the righteous life that God desires?
3. What are the characteristics of being a good listener?
 - a. How does a good listener engage the mind?
 - b. What advice did James provide to those who would strive to be good listeners?
 - c. To what did James say to listen? See verse 25.
4. What are the benefits to the people who will take his advice in this section?

VI. True Religion. 1:26, 27

1. How did James illustrate hypocrisy in this section?
 - a. Why does hypocrisy demonstrate a false religion?
 - b. What should authentic Christianity demonstrate? What is the mark of the Christian? (See John 13:34 & 35.)
2. What does "polluted by the world mean"?
 - a. In what ways can the world pollute us?
 - b. Compare verses 25 and 27. What can we do to prevent being polluted by the world?

VII. Social Distinctions and "the Royal Law." 2:1-13.

1. Compare James 1:9-11 with 2:1-7.
 - a. What new thoughts did James present in Chapter 2?
2. What is "The Royal Law"? See James 2:8-11 and Lev 19:18.
 - a. Why did he call it royal? From whom did we receive it?
 - b. What are the consequences of breaking the "The Royal Law"? What general principle of sin and judgment did James present in this section?
3. Compare verses 12 & 13 to Rom 14:10-12 and II Cor 5:10.
 - a. What warning have we received from Paul and James?
 - b. According to these texts by Paul and James, who is being judged?
4. What is the root cause of partiality and favoritism?
 - a. Which of these causes has James addressed? What possible reason would he select this cause when there are so many from which to choose?
 - b. How has God shown the value of people? What principle can we draw from John 3:16, II Peter 3:9, and Eph 6:7-9 about God's perspective of us? How has God demonstrated impartiality toward us?
 - c. How should we evaluate the worth of a person?
5. What are the dangers of partiality and favoritism in the Church?
 - a. See I Cor 1:10-13. Describe the conditions in the Corinthian church and Paul's admonition.
 - b. See Eph 4:1-6. What ideal did Paul present to the Ephesians?

- c. How does partiality and favoritism stand in opposition to the advancement of the Gospel? See John 13:34 & 35.
 - d. What were the results of unity within the church as described in Acts 2:42-47?
6. How does the warning about judgment (verses 12 & 13) fit into James' argument against partiality and favoritism?
 7. What other argument did James include to counter partiality and favoritism in the Church? (See 2:5-7.) What were the sources of their trials noted in James 1:2?

VIII. Faith and Works. 2: 14-26.

1. See Rom 4:1-8. What apparent conflict do you see between the Romans text and the James text?
 - a. What was the objective of the works Paul referenced in Romans? What was Paul opposing in this section?
 - b. See Eph 2:8-10. To what works did Paul refer in this section? Compare the "works" in verse 9 to those in verse 10. How are they different? What good works has God "prepared in advance for us to do"?
 - c. See Matt 5:16 & 7:15-20; Titus 2:7-8. To what works do these texts refer?
 - d. To what works did James refer – efforts to earn salvation, or the consequences of inward saving faith?
 - e. See II Peter 1:3-11. See Col 3:1-17. What conclusion can you make about the nature of saving faith and how it is able to bring about change in God's people that reflects the character of Christ?
 - f. What was Paul's conclusion in Rom 8:5-14? What is the result of what?
2. In verse 14, referring to faith without deeds, James raised the rhetorical question, "Can such faith save him?"
 - a. Describe the attributes of the type of faith that produces no action. What kind of belief results in no action?
 - b. What is the difference between commitment and intellectual agreement? See the examples James used in verses 15-17 and 19.
 - c. How do trust, commitment, obedience, motivation, understanding and belief affect what we do?
 - d. How do these things affect the way we think in our decision-making processes?
 - e. See John 14:15-21. How do trust, commitment, obedience, motivation, understanding and belief affect our relationship with God?
 - f. If these things are missing, what kind of faith results? Define dead faith as indicated in verse 26.
 - g. What results should we expect from faith that is alive? What examples have we seen from faith at work in God's people?
 - h. What do works that glorify God demonstrate? What do no such works in a person's life demonstrate?
3. What is the difference between "faith without works" and faith that produces works?
4. What is the difference between working for salvation, and working to glorify God?

IX. The Tongue. 3:1-12.

1. What power is there in the spoken word? What danger is there?
 - a. What is the point of the three examples in verses 3 to 5?
 - b. What indictment did James make about human nature in verses 6 to 8? What examples can you think of that confirm and demonstrate his indictment?
2. To what paradox did James refer in verses 9-12?
 - a. What problem did James identify in 1:26 and 3:8?
 - b. See Matt 15:16-20. If we speak out of the heart, what solution is there for the untamed tongue?
3. What warning did James indicate for teachers? Why?

X. The Two Wisdoms. 3:13-18.

1. Identify the source and character of the two kind of wisdom in these verses.
 - a. What are the results when each of these two kinds of wisdom is put into action?

- b. How can you recognize which type of wisdom is implemented?
- 2. How does faith produce the right kind of wisdom? See 1:2-8. How does the right kind of wisdom produce faith?

XI. The World and God. 4:1-10.

1. List the problems among the people to whom James wrote his epistle?
 - a. What was the source of disunity?
 - b. Why were these people in need? See verse 3.
 - c. Compare verse 3 with John 14:14, Matt 7:7, and 21:22? What were these people missing?
2. To adulterate means to pollute. To what kind of pollution did James refer in verse 4?
 - a. Define "friendship with the world."
 - b. What are the results of "friendship with the world?"
 - c. See Ex 20:5, Ex 34:14, Deut 4:24, and Deut 5:9. Why is God a jealous God?
 - d. How does God's jealousy (intense envy in NIV) differ from human jealousy?
3. What is the solution to the "worldliness" in the Church and in our lifestyle?
 - a. What does God offer in verse 6? Why is humility necessary to receive God's grace? What resists submission to God?
 - b. List what we must do in verses 7 to 10 in response to God's offer.
 - c. Using verses 7 to 10, define repentance.

XII. Judging. 4:11, 12.

1. Compare slander with judging others.
 - a. Define slander and judging others.
 - b. What motivates them both?
 - c. Why is James opposed to them both?
2. How do you feel when others talk about you?
 - a. Compare James 4:11-12 to John 13:34-35. What is the significance of this contrast?
 - b. What specific things can we do to build up people?
 - c. How can we encourage each other?
3. In what way is slander and judging others consistent with "friendship with the world" and inconsistent with God's solution for worldliness?
 - a. Who has the right to judge others? About what?
 - b. How does James teaching about judging others relate to his comments in 2:1-4?
 - c. How can we help people if we do not judge what they need?

XIII. Sinful Self-Confidence. 4: 13-17.

1. What is your life? Is it yours alone? Or does Christ call you to kneel at his throne?
 - a. How do verses answer these rhetorical questions?
 - b. How is pride and humility illustrated in these verses?
2. What additional examples are given here to illustrate worldliness?
 - a. What is the motivation behind taking things for granted? What is the evil for doing so? What does it deny?

XIV. Judgment of the Unscrupulous Rich. 5:1-6.

1. Who are the rich people James accused with doing evil?
 - a. Compare this section with 2:5-7.
 - b. What are the specific accusations of injustice listed in 5:1-6?
 - c. Generally, who are described by these verses in our contemporary world?
2. What warning is given to the "rich" as James described them?

3. How do these "rich" in 5:1-6 illustrate worldliness?
4. What advice and warning did James provide? Compare to 1:9-11 and 4:13-17.
5. How should the Church be involved with issues of injustice?

XV. Patience Until Christ's Return. 5:7-11.

1. Compare this section with 1:2-8 & 12. Why did James call for patience regarding the Lord's return?
2. In the example James used to illustrate patience, how does faith relate to patience?
 - a. Why would any farmer be patient while he waits for his crops to grow? What is the farmer's basis of faith?
 - b. What was the basis for Job's faith? What kept him going? Job 27:2-6.
 - c. Considering Stephens' testimony before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:51-53, how did he describe the persecution of the prophets? What kept them going?
 - d. What did the Lord bring about in and through these examples?
3. Noting verse 9, how can impatience affect our relationship with others?
 - a. What is the effect of grumbling?
 - b. Compare verse 9 to James 4:11-12.

XVI. Oaths. 5:12.

1. Is this about taking the Lord's name in vain? Or is it about something else?
2. When people say, "I swear to God and hope to die," what question comes to your mind?
3. If you believe in someone's integrity, can you trust what he or she represents as the truth without swearing?
4. What can we do to earn a reputation of integrity?
5. How can your integrity reflect the character of Christ?
6. What is the danger with using the Lord's name to prove something?

XVII. Prayer. 5:13-18.

1. Over what issues did James list that are appropriate for prayer?
 - a. Why did James require prayer by the elders? Does God not listen to the prayers of his people who are not elders? What is the issue here?
 - b. What does "in the name of the Lord" indicate in prayer?
 - c. What types of healing did James include in this section?
2. What should accompany intercessory prayer? See 5:16.
 - a. What good can result from confessing our sins to each other and praying for each other?
 - b. What is the benefit of prayer that characterizes unity?
3. What does the example about Elijah illustrate?

XVIII. Reclaiming the Sinning Brother. 5: 19, 20.

1. What motivation is there to try to retrieve someone who might wander from the truth?
 - a. Who would go after you if you should wander from the truth?
 - b. What benefits are available to those in a koinonia group that are not available to others in the church?
2. How do these verses reflect James' over all objectives in his epistle?