

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Study Series: Wisdom for Living – Study of Epistle of James
Part 1: Overview of the Epistle of James

Wednesday, January 31, 2024
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Breakdown of the Study of the Book of James		
Date	Passage	Topic
1/31/2024	James	Part 1: Overview of Epistle of James
2/7/2024	James 1:2–11	Part 2: Growing Through Trials
2/14/2024	James 1:12–18	Part 3: The Process of Temptation
2/21/2024	James 1:19–25	Part 4: Hearing and Doing the Word
2/28/2024	James 2:1–13	Part 5: The Sin of Partiality
3/6/2024	James 2:14–26	Part 6: Faith Without Works Is Dead
3/13/2024	James 3:1–18	Part 7: Taming the Tongue
3/20/2024	James 4:1– 12	Part 8: The Cause of Quarrels
3/27/2024	James 4:13– 5:6	Part 9: Sins of the Wealthy
4/3/2024	James 5:7– 12	Part 10: Patience in Suffering
4/10/2024	James 5:13– 20	Part 11: The Prayer of Faith
4/17/2024	James	Part 12: Summary and Conclusion

Summary of the Book of James

The book of James has been called the “Proverbs of the New Testament”. Some call it the “Application of the Sermon on the Mount”. I would venture to say that it is basically a “guidebook” for the Christian life. It is direct, simple, practical, and filled with valuable information that teaches us how to live and conduct ourselves in different circumstances in this world—and with others. Over the next ten weeks, we will take this powerful book chunk by chunk and trust that it will be implanted in our hearts and transform us.

***James 1:21** “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (NKJV)*

Authorship

The author identifies himself as James (1:1) who is believed to be the brother of Jesus and chief spokesman of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:13-21). There are four James in the New Testament. One of them is Apostle James (one of the twelve disciples) but the author of this letter could not have been him since he died too early (A.D. 44) to have written it. The other two James (son of Alphaeus, another disciple and father of the disciple Judas Thaddeus) did not have the stature or the influence that the writer of this letter had and portrayed.

James was one of several brothers of Christ, probably the oldest since he heads the list in Matthew 13:55. At first, he did not believe in Jesus and even challenged him and misunderstood his mission (John 7:2-5). Later he became a very prominent leader in the church:

- He was one of the select individuals Christ appeared to after his resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:7
- Paul called him a "pillar" of the church. Galatians 2:9
- Paul, on his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem, saw James. Galatians 1:19
- Paul did the same on his last visit. Acts 21:18
- When Peter was rescued from prison, he told his friends to tell James. Acts 12:17
- James was a leader in the important council of Jerusalem. Acts 15:13
- Jude could identify himself simply as "a brother of James" (Jude 1:1), so well-known was James.
- It is believed he was martyred in AD 62 or 69 by being stoned to death by the Pharisees on order of High Priest Ananus ben Ananus.

Date of the Epistle of James

Some scholars date the letter to the early AD 60s. However, there are indications that it was written somewhere between AD 45–48 (since council met in AD 49). This makes it one of the earliest writings of the New Testament.

- The distinctively Jewish nature of the Book suggests that it was written when the church was still predominantly Jewish.
- It reflects a simple church order -- officers of the church are called "elders" (James 5:14) and "teachers" (James 3:1).
- There was no reference made to the controversy over Gentile circumcision which started around AD 49.
- The Greek term synagogue ("synagogue" or "meeting") is used to designate the meeting or meeting place of the church. James 2:2
- If this early dating is correct, this letter is the earliest of all the New Testament writings - with the possible exception of Galatians.

The Audience

The recipients are identified explicitly only in 1:1: "the twelve tribes scattered among the nations." Some believe that this expression refers to Christians in general, but the term "twelve tribes" would more naturally apply to Jewish Christians. Many believe that these were believers from the early Jerusalem church who, after Stephen's death, were scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syrian Antioch (Act 8:1; Acts 11:19). This would account for James's references to trials and oppression, his intimate knowledge of the readers, and the authoritative nature of the letter. As leader of the Jerusalem church, James wrote as pastor to instruct and encourage his dispersed people in the face of their difficulties (see essay, p. 2539).

How does the Book of James apply to my life?

1. It gives practical wisdom to encourage Christians in a variety of life's circumstances.
2. It encourages Christians to persevere in humility, kindness, patience, and wisdom.
3. It teaches the right relationship between faith and good works in the life of a Christian.
4. It serves as a how-to guide for Christians dealing with oppression and trials in the world.
5. It provides advice regarding several areas of the Christian life, urging Christians to mature in their faith.
6. It explains why trials and suffering happens in the lives of Christians and how to respond.
7. Its familiarity with Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount:
 - James 2:5 versus Matthew 5:3
 - James 3:10-12 versus Matthew 7:15-20.
 - James 3:18 versus Matthew 5:9.
 - James 5:2-3 versus Matthew 6:19-20.
 - James 5:12 versus Matthew 5:33-37.

Conclusion

As mentioned, the book of James is a sort of how-to book for the Christian life. It provides practical, thought-provoking wisdom and advice as to how Christians should present themselves and live and as an example of Christ in all areas of their life. It contains a lot of powerful verses and phrases that are widely quoted by believers all over the world. James is a widely recommended book for new Christians to read because it has such practical wisdom and instructions and is a book that all Christians will find valuable. I encourage you to study this book for yourself and you will be blessed by it.