

JAMES

Synopsis: ^* The book is named after the author, “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1). The book is a powerful little volume on practical Christianity. It encourages the brethren to remain faithful and live righteously.

Author: James

Chapters: 5

Background: ^* James is generally classified as a general epistle as it is not addressed to specific congregations or individuals. Paul’s epistles are named after the recipients; the general epistles are named after the authors.

Only four Jameses are mentioned in the New Testament. The most well-known are James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, and James, the Lord’s half-brother (Mt. 13:55, 56). The apostle James (brother of John and son of Zebedee) died a martyr’s death before A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2). It is therefore generally believed that James, the brother of Jesus is the author.

At first James did not believe in Jesus (John 7:3-5), but a resurrection appearance (I Cor. 15:7) changed his life. He emerged as a figure of prominence in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 1:13, 14; 12:17; 15:13ff.; 21:18). The date of the writing is considered to be around A.D. 45-49. This was during the period of oppression under the high priest Ananias and the Roman governor Felix, when famine was impoverishing the area (Acts 11:27ff.).

The letter is addressed “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (1:1). Fifteen times he identifies his readers as “brethren” who had the “faith of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:1). Thus, the letter was written to Jewish Christians who had likely been scattered because of persecution (Acts 8:1ff.).

Five Great Lessons*

1. God promises help (not exemption) in times of trials.
2. Faith only will not save.
3. There is too much worldliness in the church.
4. An effort must be made to restore the erring.
5. God requires that we be honest and maintain our integrity.

**Butterworth, Ken. God Hath Spoken: An Open-Bible Study Series – New Testament Workbook, 2006.*

^Roper, David. Through the Bible: A Systematic Study of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, 1999.

Outline^ --- TRUE FAITH

GREETING (1:1)

- I. TRUE FAITH IS STRENGTHENED BY TRIALS (1:2-18).
- II. TRUE FAITH IS EXPRESSED (1:19-27).
- III. TRUE FAITH IS IMPARTIAL (2:1-13).
- IV. TRUE FAITH IS ACTIVE (2:14-26).
- V. TRUE FAITH CONTROLS THE TONGUE (3:1-12).
- VI. TRUE FAITH KNOWS THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE (3:13-18).
- VII. TRUE FAITH AVOIDS WORLDLINESS AND STRIFE (4:1-12).
- VIII. TRUE FAITH ALWAYS CONSIDERS GOD'S WILL (4:13-17).
- IX. TRUE FAITH AVOIDS THE DANGERS OF RICHES AND LEARNS PATIENCE (5:1-12).
- X. TRUE FAITH KNOWS THE POWER OF PRAYER (5:13-18).
- XI. TRUE FAITH IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE LOST (5:19, 20).

Lessons ^

There are many parallels between the epistle of James and the Sermon on the Mount (cf. 1:2 and Mt. 5:10-12; 1:5 and Mt. 7:7-12; 1:19, 20 and Mt. 5:22; 1:22 and Mt. 7:24-27).

“Salvation by faith only” is a popular doctrine. The only place the phrase “faith only” is found in the KJV is 2:24, which says, “Not by faith only.”

A theme returned to again and again in James is the subject of the tongue: 1:26; 3:1-12; 4:11, 12, 5:12. Controlling our tongues is one of the hardest struggles we have!

Challenging Themes*

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| 1:1-18 | Temptations and trials will come, but God has promised to see us through them. (See I Cor. 10:13). |
| 1:25 | The Bible is the only perfect standard of right and wrong. |
| 2:14-26 | Our faith is proven or demonstrated through our works. |
| 4:17 | Sin can occur by committing an act of wrong and also by omitting that which is good and right. |

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