

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES

AUTHOR: James the Lord's brother. Note these facts.

The church, from the very earliest of its tradition, has held that the author was James the Lord's brother.

The facts about James the Lord's brother point toward him being the author.

- ⇒ He was a brother of the Lord (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).
- ⇒ He was an eyewitness of the risen Lord. In fact, the Lord appeared to him in a private conversation (1 Cor. 15:7). He was among those waiting for the coming of the Spirit in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14).
- ⇒ He was an apostle. He was probably appointed after his private encounter with the risen Lord (Galatians 1:19).
- ⇒ He became the pastor of the great Jerusalem Church. He probably assumed his duties when Peter left on his missionary journeys (Acts 12:17; etc.). Thereafter, he is by far the greatest personality in the Jerusalem Church.

DATE: Uncertain. Probably A.D. 45-50.

1. The church is still described in its primitive form. The word "assembly" (Greek, *synagogue*) is used instead of *church* (James 2:2), and the elders of the church are mentioned, but the deacons and bishops are not (James 5:14).

TO WHOM WRITTEN: "To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." It was written to Christians of the dispersion (*diaspora*). The word dispersion simply means to the Jews scattered around the world.

PURPOSE: James had two purposes for writing.

1. To correct a corrupted faith that was rapidly seeping into the church. Many were professing faith in Christ, but living immoral and unrighteous lives. Their faith was profession only—a faith of license with little or no restraint upon behavior.

2. To present the true faith of Christ: a faith of the heart—a faith that produces outward fruit. James' point is very simple: a person is known to be a Christian only by his behavior. What he does proves one of two things: it proves he is a Christian or it proves he is not a Christian.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

1. James is "A General or Catholic Epistle." That is, it is not written to a specific church. James is written particularly to all Jewish converts.

2. James is "The Epistle of Practical Living" Its concern is the life of the believer after he has become a Christian and has been assured of his salvation. The thrust is Christian growth.

JAMES CHAPTER ONE OUTLINE

GREETING: THE SERVANT OF GOD ADDRESSES BELIEVERS WORLDWIDE, 1:1

1 There is the servant of God (v.1a)

2 There are the believers all over the world (v.1b)

TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS: THE BASIC FACTS, 1:2-27

The Essential Attitude to Trials and Temptation: Joy, 1:2-4

1. The fact: Will have many trials and temptations (v.2a)

2. The needed attitude: Joy (v.2b-4a)

a. By knowing something: Trials and temptations work patience (v.2b-3)

b. By doing something: Persevering (v.4a)

3. The result: Makes us perfect and entire (v.4b)

The Way to Conquer Trials and Temptation, 1:5-12

1. Ask wisdom of God (v.5-8)

a. God gives liberally (v.5a) b. God does not scold (v.5b) c. Ask in faith, never wavering (v.6-8)

1) Wavering (v.6) 2) Wavering receives nothing (v.7) 3) Wavering shows instability (v.8)

2. Rejoice in one's status (v.9-11)

a. The poor: Christ exalts (v.9) b. The rich: Christ humbles (v.10-11) 1) A danger: False security (v.10) 2) The body of the rich ages and dies (v.11a) 3) The pursuits of the rich fade away (v.11b)

3. Remember the reward for enduring: A crown of life (v.12)

The Origin of Trials and Temptation, 1:13-18

1. Temptation is not of God (v.13)

a. God is never tempted (v.13a) b. God tempts no man (v.13b)

2. Temptation is of man, of his own lust (v.14-16)

a. There is lust and enticement (v.14) b. There is the conception of lust and the birth of sin (v.15a) c. There is the result: Death (v.15b-16)

3. Temptation is not of the nature of God (v.17-18)

a. God is only good (v.17a) b. God gives only good gifts (v.17b) c. God wills only to see us born again (v.18)

The Preparations Necessary to Withstand Trials and Temptation, 1:19-27

1. Preparation 1: Be quick to hear the Word of God (v.19-21)

a. By being slow to speak (v.19a) b. By being slow to anger: An angry man does not do what God says (v.19b-20) c. By putting aside all filthiness (v.21a) d. By putting aside all naughtiness (v.21b) e. By receiving the Word with meekness (v.21c)

2. Preparation 2: Be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (v.22-25)

a. A hearer only deceives himself (v.22) b. A hearer only forgets what he heard (v.23-24)

c. A doer of the Word is blessed (v.25)

3. Preparation 3: Bridle and control the tongue (v.26)

4. Preparation 4: Practice pure religion—visit the needy and keep yourself unspotted from the world (v.27)