

>>>>>> James – Introduction <<<<<<<

Author

James 1:1 (NASB 2020)

The Testing of Your Faith

¹ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

- 1) Who was this James?
- 2) There are four men in the New Testament by the name of James.
 - a) Two were apostles.

Luke 6:13–16 (NASB 2020)

¹³ And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom He also named Peter, and his brother Andrew; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; ¹⁵ and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; ¹⁶ Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- b) Three of the four men named James appear in this list.
- c) The two apostles and James the father of Judas.
- d) Most scholars believe that there is no real doubt that apostle, James son of Alphaeus, was related to Jesus – he was probably a cousin.
 - i) Very little mention is made of him in historical or scriptural contexts.
- e) The apostle James the son of Zebedee (brother of John) was martyred sometime between 41 and 44CE.

Acts 12:1–2 (NASB 2020)

¹ Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm. ² And he had James the brother of John executed with a sword.

- 3) This martyrdom took place at least 3 years before this letter was probably written.
- 4) The fourth James is the brother of the Lord.
 - a) He is first mentioned directly in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:55–56 (NASB 2020)

⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is His mother not called Mary, and His brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us?"

- 5) So – how do we get to James the brother of our Lord being the writer?
- 6) Well first, we should begin by looking at the next place James may be mentioned though indirectly – the incident in John 7:3-5.

John 7:3–5 (NASB 2020)

James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

³ So His brothers said to Him, “Move on from here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret when he himself is striving to be *known* publicly. If You are doing these things, show Yourself to the world.” ⁵ For not even His brothers believed in Him.

- 7) From the basic timeline of the New Testament we know that Jesus selected the 12 apostles over a year before this event took place.
 - a) So at that time, we can assume that James was with the rest of the brothers and did not believe in Him.
 - b) It then follows that he was probably not a believer during most of Christ’s ministry.
- 8) The next scriptural mention of the Lord’s brother paints quite a different picture.

Galatians 1:18–19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁸ Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I did not see another one of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

- 9) This meeting took place around 35 to 37CE, roughly 5 to 7 years after Christ was crucified.
- 10) From the phrasing in this passage, we can infer that at this time, James has likely been elevated to the status of Apostle.
- 11) Later in the same letter, Paul calls him a pillar of the church in Gal 2:9:

Galatians 2:9–10 (NASB 2020)

⁹ ... and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ They only *asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

- 12) This is one of those things I hope to get filled in when I get to heaven.
 - a) What takes James from an unbelieving brother of Jesus to a pillar of the Church?
 - b) We know that His brother Jude also became a believer.
 - c) I also want to know if the rest of His siblings became believers.
 - d) In that regard, 1 Corinthians 9:5 mentions "the brothers of the Lord."
 - i) In context, it seems they were engaged in ministry alongside their wives.
 - ii) This could be a reference to the other two brothers Joseph and Simon – we just do not know.

- 13) Continuing down this road, there is another indication of leadership mentioned in Galatians – this one perhaps not so favorable:

Galatians 2:12 (NASB 2020)

¹² For prior to the coming of some men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and separate himself, fearing those from the circumcision.

James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

- 14) In this situation we must consider the phrases “men from James” and “fearing those from the circumcision” – why would that have this effect on Peter.
- a) We can only assume that James, at this point anyway, had a “Judaizing” influence on the situation.
 - b) As you remember the chronology of Galatian letter and Acts 15 – Galatians was written before Acts 15 occurred so, this is not necessarily inconsistent with James’ stance in Acts 15.
 - c) However, we are not sure where exactly in the timeline the letter from James fits – more on that as we wrestle with some of these issues later.
- 15) This brings us to what I think is something we need to get a hold of and keep with us throughout this study.
- a) James was absolutely a Christian but he was still seriously interested in the Jews as his “Christian” people.
 - b) The letter fits readily, start to finish, within a sphere showing Judaism as contemporaneous with early Christianity.
 - c) One commentary highlights several things which make this position sound:
 - i) The greeting – “James, to the twelve tribes in the Diaspora”
 - ii) The identification of the worship setting as a synagogue. (2:2)
 - iii) The identification of God using the phrase Lord of Hosts/Armies (5:4)
 - (1) Only used here in the New Testament, though Paul quotes Isaiah’s use of the epithet in Rom 9:29)
 - iv) The role of “elders” (5:14)
 - v) The tenor of the letter’s teaching as a whole, the flavor of the letter could hardly match Hellenistic Judaism more neatly.
 - vi) The letter richly illustrates an environment in which faith in Jesus did not entail a radical separation from the movement’s origins in Judaism.¹
- 16) Regardless of what influence he may have had prior to sending the men to Antioch that caused the Peter/Paul confrontation, we know that in Acts 15, he is the voice of reason in the situation.

Acts 15:12–21 (NASB 2020)

¹² All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³ After they stopped speaking, James responded, saying, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has described how God first concerned Himself about taking a people for

¹ A. K. M. Adam, *James: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Martin M. Culy, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), xviii.

James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

His name from among the Gentiles. ¹⁵ The words of the Prophets agree with this, just as it is written:

¹⁶ ‘After these things I will return,
And I will rebuild the fallen Tabernacle of David,
And I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will restore it,

¹⁷ So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
And all the Gentiles Who are called by My name,’

¹⁸ Says the Lord, who Makes these things known from long ago.

¹⁹ Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not cause trouble for those from the Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols, from *acts of* sexual immorality, from what has been strangled, and from blood. ²¹ For from ancient generations Moses has those who preach him in every city, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

17) If we don’t get anything else from this we can see that James gets what God wants regarding the Gentiles.

a) He goes back to the prophets and nails the fact that they are to be accepted – yea even more that accepted – brought in as equals and not burdened with Jewish traditions.

18) I know that most of this is recent from our study of Acts but it was important to grab all that and bring that perspective to this study.

Date of Writing

19) It is generally accepted that James wrote this letter about 47-49CE.

Target Audience

- 1) Christianity certainly had its beginnings in Jerusalem.
- 2) It was there that Christ spent a large part of His ministry.
- 3) He was tried and crucified there and finally arose and ascended from there.
- 4) At Pentecost and shortly there after, there were literally thousands of Jews added to the church in Jerusalem.
- 5) Then with the martyrdom of Stephen (35CE or so) there began a great persecution of the church.
- 6) Many of the newly converted Christians fled Jerusalem for their lives.
- 7) In addition, many had returned to their homes after Pentecost so, when we read
“... To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.”
- 8) It is believed that these formed what James refers to there.
 - a) Remember that at the point of the persecution there were very few Gentile Christians.
 - b) So it was these folks that had fled that were the main recipients of this letter.

James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

- c) Again, they were obviously Jews who had become Christians.
- 9) And, as we shall see, he also wrote to us, today.
 - a) Although separated by nearly twenty centuries, the teachings he presents are as relevant now as then, and James' message still needs to be heard and applied to our lives.

Purpose and Message

- 10) As to content, the book of James is much like the book of Proverbs in its timber.
 - a) In fact, some have even referred to it as the “Proverbs of the New Testament.”
- 11) Additionally, some have considered it to be much like a sermon in the way it sounds.
- 12) However, in the introduction to the first edition of his German New Testament (1522), Martin Luther made the following oft-quoted (or misquoted) remark about the book of James:

In fine, Saint John's Gospel and his first epistle, Saint Paul's epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Saint Peter's first epistle – these are the books which show thee Christ, and teach thee everything that is needful and blessed for thee to know even though thou never see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore is Saint James's epistle a right strawy epistle in comparison with them, for it has no gospel character to it.
- 13) The great Reformer was by no means denying the inspiration of James (as his phrase “in comparison with them” indicates).
- 14) Nevertheless, his disparaging remarks about the epistle have been echoed by many throughout the history of the church.
 - a) You probably have heard the phrase “Book of Straw” applied to James – this is where that comes from.

- 15) John MacArthur really puts this attitude in perspective when he says:

“But such downplaying of the value of James is shortsighted. Luther had little use for James because it contains little teaching about the great doctrines of the Christian faith that he so passionately defended. (In fact, some of his hostility to James stemmed from his Roman Catholic opponents' misuse of James 2 to defend justification by works.) It is true that James is not a doctrinal treatise but an intensely practical manual for Christian living. Yet that does not lessen its value, since holy living and sound doctrine must not be separated.”

- 16) James was one of the last books added to the New Testament canon. Due to...

- a) its brevity
- b) the fact that it was addressed specifically to Jewish Christians
- c) its lack of doctrinal content
- d) it was not written by one of the twelve apostles or Paul.

- 17) MacArthur's last two comments –

- a) “practical manual for Christian living” and
- b) “holy living and sound doctrine must not be separated”

James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

- 18) ... are exactly where we are hopefully headed in the coming weeks.
- 20) As I study this letter the bottom line of it is not defense of justification by works nor is it a letter that should beat us up.
- 21) Rather it is simply a guide to “Faith Demonstrated.”
- 22) When we look deeply at James’ thoughts, virtually every aspect of the letter gives us input on how to show our faith in Christ but living as he would have us live.
- 23) One further comment seems appropriate here.
- a) As we will see, James uses some phrases and wordings that must not be just glanced at.
 - b) They are sometimes poetic but also deserving of some detailed explanations in order to truly understand what James is intending to say to us and his fellow brothers and sisters.

James	Sermon on the Mount	James	Sermon on the Mount
1. <u>1:2</u>	<u>5:10-12</u>	12. <u>3:6</u>	<u>5:22</u>
2. <u>1:4</u>	<u>5:48</u>	13. <u>3:10-12</u>	<u>7:15-20</u>
3. <u>1:5</u>	<u>7:7-12</u>	14. <u>3:17-18</u>	<u>5:9</u>
4. <u>1:9</u>	<u>5:3</u>	15. <u>4:4</u>	<u>6:24</u>
5. <u>1:12</u>	<u>7:14</u>	16. <u>4:10</u>	<u>5:3-5</u>
6. <u>1:20</u>	<u>5:22</u>	17. <u>4:11-12</u>	<u>7:1-5</u>
7. <u>1:22</u>	<u>7:21-27</u>	18. <u>5:2-3</u>	<u>6:19-20</u>
8. <u>2:5</u>	<u>5:3</u>	19. <u>5:10</u>	<u>5:12</u>
9. <u>2:13</u>	<u>5:7</u>	20. <u>5:11</u>	<u>5:10</u>
10. <u>2:13</u>	<u>6:14-15</u>	21. <u>5:12</u>	<u>5:33-37</u>
11. <u>2:14-16</u>	<u>7:21-23²</u>		

Various Outlines Notes on James

There are three major sections of the letter:

Section 1 – Genuine religion	(1)
Section 2 – Genuine faith	(2:1-3:12)
Section 3 – Genuine wisdom	(3:13-5:20)

Specifically, James has much to say on:

I.	The Test of Perseverance in Suffering	(1:2-12)
II.	The Test of Blame in Temptation	(1:13-18)
III.	The Test of Response to the Word	(1:19-27)
IV.	The Test of Impartial Love	(2:1-13)
V.	The Test of Righteous Works	(2:14-26)
VI.	The Test of the Tongue	(3:1-12)
VII.	The Test of Humble Wisdom	(3:13-18)
VIII.	The Test of Worldly Indulgence	(4:1-12)
IX.	The Prayer and Test of Dependence	(4:13-17)
X.	The Test of Patient Endurance	(5:1-11)
XI.	The Test of Truthfulness	(5:12)
XII.	The Test of Prayerfulness	(5:13-18)

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Copyright © Moody Press and John MacArthur, Jr., 1983-2005

XIII. The Test of True Faith (5:19-20)

Outline of James

The Book of James can be outlined as follows:

I. Introduction	(1:1)
II. Trials and Temptations	(1:2-18)
A. Purpose of Trials	(1:2-12)
B. Source of Temptations	(1:13-15)
C. God's Goodness	(1:16-18)
III. Hearing and Doing the Word	(1:19-27)
IV. Faith in Action	(2:1-26)
A. Warning Against Favoritism	(2:1-13)
B. Faith and Works	(2:14-26)
V. Taming the Tongue	(3:1-12)
VI. Two Kinds of Wisdom	(3:13-18)
VII. Worldliness and Humility	(4:1-17)
A. Causes of Conflict	(4:1-3)
B. Call to Repentance	(4:4-10)
C. Warning Against Judging	(4:11-12)
D. Boasting About Tomorrow	(4:13-17)
VIII. Warning to Rich Oppressors	(5:1-6)
IX. Patience and Prayer	(5:7-20)
A. Patience in Suffering	(5:7-12)
B. The Prayer of Faith	(5:13-18)
C. Restoring the Wanderer	(5:19-20)

1) So, let us begin ...

James 1:1-18 (NASB 2020)

The Testing of Your Faith

¹ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

² Consider it all joy, my brothers *and sisters*, when you encounter various trials,
³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have
its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1) We touched on these verses a few weeks back in our study of Philippians.

2) In all honesty, encountering trials and choosing to be joyful are two things that normally we would not put together.

a) Truth is, this is a remarkable command.

James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

- b) We often think initially at least of trials as intrusions – not a reason to be joyful.
- c) Yet here we are – facing this as a command.
- d) As we look deeper, we do see the reason and that reason is in a perspective.
- 3) That perspective plays out in an aspect of this that we need to observe – that aspect is one of ***progression***.
- 4) James uses this ***progression*** technique here and in one other place in this letter.
- 5) Here, it is a building progression:
 - a) Encounter trials → Testing of faith → Produces (builds) endurance → Completes in perfection and lacking in nothing.
 - b) Further on in the letter, we will see that progression aspect going in the opposite direction.
- 6) Let's consider a few things here.
- 7) First, we must realize that he is not saying that ALL trials fall into this progression.
 - a) We endure trials which do not really test our faith.
 - b) They are only minor or temporary inconveniences which may not even elevate to the level of being called trials.
 - c) Examples might be the flu, a difficult assignment at work, a broken car, etc.
 - d) Obviously we have to endure them and we have to handle them correctly but they are not what James is referring to here.
- 8) Here, the trials are trials that are severe enough to become a “testing of your faith.”

So, how would we recognize one of these trials?

- a) By definition, it tests your faith – that sounds serious.

Does that really mean we doubt what we believe or, perhaps does it mean we doubt the ability of God to handle the trial?

- 9) Bruce Barton makes the comment:

We cannot really know our own depth [*of faith*] until we see how we react under pressure.³

Agree / Disagree?

³ Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman, and Neil S. Wilson, [*James*](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 7.