

**The Bible  
FOR DUMMIES  
The New Testament**

***May 13, 2008***



James, Colossians,  
Ephesians,  
Thessalonians, &  
Hebrews

# The Letter of JAMES



## **THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM 15 YEARS AFTER THE RESURRECTION**

- 'House churches' – used the liturgy of the synagogue followed by the Lord's Supper
- 'Elders' directed the worship; 'deacons' took offerings for the poor and the needy
- James was considered the leader, an elder, first among equals
- Church was growing but living in a collapsing world – in the 40's there was famine, Herod Agrippa I died in 44 AD, he was a good leader – following his death there was a very difficult transition... government often collapsed, ineffective to keep peace or deliver any services

***\*many grew impatient for the return of Christ***



## ***The W's of James Who and When***

***Tradition:*** Written by James, the brother of Jesus. James is Greek version of Hebrew, Jacob. At one time James is hostile to his brother's ministry (Mark 3:21 –attempts with others to stop Jesus) – thinking is that James did not believe his brother to be the Messiah until after the resurrection (I Cor.15:7).

להתראות  
בקרוב



### ***WHO AND WHEN continued.***

**James emerged as the leader of the church in Jerusalem (when Peter escaped from prison he reported to James). James presides over first council (should Gentiles be admitted)**

**\*James was a strict Jew, adhered to the Mosaic Law (Gal. 2:12)**

**BUT backed Paul's ministry to non-Jews (did not believe Gentile Jews must be circumcised or follow other Jewish laws).**

**Martyred in AD 62—stoned to death.**



## ***WHO AND WHEN continued.***

v.1 'James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ'. Humble – does not mention that he is Jesus' brother or that he is the leader of the church.

**Revisionist:** Because it is written in excellent Greek (vivid metaphor and facile use of idiom) some scholars argue that a “redactor” edited James letter.

## ***WHAT***

- James is a sermon in the form of a letter
- 108 verses with 60 imperatives!
- James presupposes you have heard the Gospel – reminds you how you ought to live!
- vs.1 “...to the 12 tribes of the Dispersion” – sees the early church as the New Israel.

## ***Why Inclusion in the Canon: Balance!***

### ***PAUL AND JAMES: HARMONY OR DISHARMONY?***

**Luther: 'canon within the canon'; (James does not mention the resurrection or the Holy Spirit)**

**Calvin: 'canon must be taken together'**

**Reformed tradition: scripture interprets scripture**

## ***JAMES AND PAUL***

### **James as Balance**

- 1. Cheap Grace**
- 2. Necessity of works**
- 3. Danger of empty confession**
- 4. Salvation**

***1. Balance to 'cheap grace'***

**FAITH:**

- **For Paul, faith is the believer's loyal relationship to Christ.**
- **For James, concern that it not be 'merely' confession of faith.**

***James 2:1-17***

**<sup>1</sup> My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. <sup>2</sup> For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "Have a seat here, please," while you say to the poor man, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," <sup>4</sup> have you not made distinctions among**

**yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor man. <sup>8</sup>If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. <sup>9</sup>But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>17</sup>So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.**

## **2. Works**

**Paul speaks of 'fruits of the spirit'**

**Galatians 5:22-23 - <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.**

***James speaks of works as expressions of love.***

### **3. Empty Faith**

#### **BOTH AGREE ON THE DANGER OF AN EMPTY FAITH**

Paul's motto is 'faith working through love'  
(Galatians 5.6)

James (2.18-19) <sup>18</sup> But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. <sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.

For James, a man has a DNA test and it demonstrates that he is the 'father' of the child – for James this means nothing! What demonstrates that he is a father is the love and care that he has for a child. Anyone can 'father' a child – anyone can 'say' they believe in Christ – for James, **WORKS** indicate that the person is TRULY A CHRISTIAN.

### **4. Salvation**

**Paul: SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH**

**James: SALVATION BY FAITH AND WORKS**

Paul: because of sin, no one can make themselves righteous before God. Only God can justify a person; therefore, 'works' are of **NO CONSEQUENCE** for salvation. Paul is writing in the context of an ongoing debate with legalistic Jews and legalistic Christian-Jews (who believe the Law is the way of salvation).

## ***Why James “Appears” So Different From Paul***

- James has different battles to fight (danger of an ‘empty faith’)
- For James, faith is the intellectual acceptance of monotheism (this was **NOT** the burning issue – **THE** issue was indifference to others); for Paul faith is acceptance of what **God** has done for us in Christ.

## ***James and Paul’s Audience is Different***

**Paul – Why Christ is important for Jews**

**James – Why works are important for believers**

**‘Religion without effect on your life is a lie’ (James)**

**\*James stands after Paul...If Paul is read first and understand in the context of his times, reading James is not a contradiction. (Besides, we needed a book in the Bible that the ‘chicken fryers’ could call their own!).**

## **CHAPTER 1: 3 MAJOR THEMES**

**1. TESTING**

**2. WISDOM**

**3. RICHES**

### ***1. Testing***

**Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament  
Adversity is the blessing of the New Testament  
'consider it pure joy'**

***James 1:2-3; 12* - <sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.**

***James 1:12* - <sup>12</sup>Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him.  
Trials are outward, temptations are inward.**

***James 1:14-15* - 'Dragged away and enticed' – picture is of a seductress who entices a victim to her bed, seduces him, and conceives a child whose name is **SIN**; the child in turn produces offspring which is the monster called **DEATH**.**

**2. Wisdom – A wise person is one who is slow to speak wisdom; teaches us to receive adversity with joy.**

***James 1*<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him.**

***James 1*<sup>22</sup> ‘be doers of the word and not hearers only’ (a person who reads scripture and does not absorb/learn anything is like the person who gets up in the morning, sees that they look a mess, but then does nothing about it).**

### ***3 marks of a true Christian (1:26-27)***

- 1. Ability to control their own tongue**
- 2. Willingness to engage in acts of charity**  
*\*true religion has more to do with charity than piety (v.27)*
- 3. Attempt to overcome trials and temptations offered by the world**

### **3. Riches**

**The poor are rich because they are heirs of God**

**James 1:9-11 <sup>9</sup> Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup> and the rich in his humiliation, because like the flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.**

***\*Jewish culture saw wealth as a sign of God's blessing – James turns this around***

## **OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS 2 - 5**

## **Chapter 2: Theme Is Poverty and Generosity**

**Verses 1-13 Faith is expressed as right behavior, to discriminate is not Christian**

**Verse 2 Wealthy would fill their fingers with rings. Early Christians urged to wear only one ring, on the little finger, bearing the image of a dove, fish or anchor.**

## **Chapter 3: Beware of the Tongue!**

**<sup>5</sup> So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. <sup>8</sup> But no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.**

***--Tongue is to the person what a rudder is to a ship***

## **Chapter 4: The Two Great Desires In Life**

- 1. The desire for 'the things of this world' and**
- 2. The desire for God**

**(4:1) What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? It is the longing for things of this world.**

**When we yearn for the world, when we covet things it is as though an alien army has invaded our personality. (v.1)**

### ***WE MUST DESIRE GOD ALONE***

**'Spiritual adultery' (v.4-7) – when we fall in love with the world it is as though we have broken a marriage vow with God.**

## **(James, Chapter 5:13-15) A Word On Healing**

**Jews would first go to the Rabbi to be anointed before they would go to the doctor.**

**(v.16-18) In first century Jews believed that sickness was the result of sin; before healing his/her sins must be forgiven**

**Sacrament of unction in the early centuries meant to be a means of cure—not as a preparation for death, as it is now in the Roman church. Not until AD 852 did the Sacrament of Unction become the Sacrament of Extreme Unction administered to prepare people for death.**

## ***Finally ---***

**v.17 “So faith by itself, if it has not works, is dead” By this definition— would you say that your faith is alive, dead or snoozing?**

Colossians

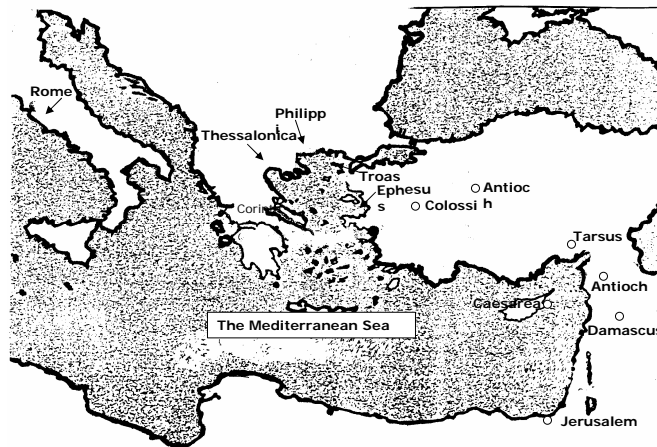
Ephesians

Thessalonians (I & II)

Hebrews

# ***Colossians***

## **The World of the Early Church**



# ***Colossians***

**Concerned with the very high degree of  
INDIVIDUALISM within the church**

**Individualism –**

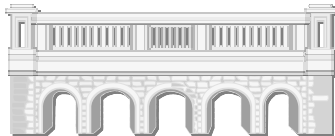
**The Protestant Predicament**

**GNOSTICISM – Mystery. Those who know the mystery are saved. (Gnostic Christians)**

**CHRISTIANITY – Christ saves, not our knowledge. The mystery has already been revealed. “The gospel can be printed on the back of a postage stamp”**

***William Sloan Coffin***

## ***Bridge to Ephesians***



**Colossians: self-sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone for salvation. How is it that we are saved (works? ritual? Through belonging to the correct group?); Christ alone.**

**Ephesians: continues theme and expands it – Christ is sufficient not only for salvation but for unity and everything else that we need.**

## ***Ephesians***

**AUTHORSHIP** - Tradition: Paul, written while in prison (3.1; 4.1) Revisionist: 70 words are unique and style is different from other letters; suggest that it was written after Paul's death by a follower to honor Paul

**CYCLICAL LETTER** –  
To the churches in  
Asia Minor



## ***Where Do I Find The Meaning Of Life?***

**Christian Gnostic** – knowledge! Seek the truth and the truth leads you to God.

**Christian Existentialist** – from my experience of evil and pain in the world I come to the “leap” of faith (life apart from God in Christ does not make sense.)

**Paul** – **Christ is the center.** Key is resurrection - life makes sense only from the post resurrection experience.

## ***Ephesians: Summary of Letter***

***Calvin's favorite  
(though Romans most important)***

***Chapter 1 <sup>9</sup> For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.***

## ***Ephesians – Format***

**PRAISE** is the theme for first half

***Chapter One*** – A prayer

***Chapter Two*** – Explains how Christ broke down the barrier between God and man

***Chapter Three*** – Launches back into prayer

**UNITY** is the theme of second half

***Chapter 4-6*** Tells us how to live together; how to live in unity as a church, in marriage, as a family, at work

## ***Some Themes***

1. **Double life of Christians – at the same time we are called upon to live in the world and in Christ (in Lee County but as a ‘colony of heaven’)**  
*Chosen by God to be holy (HAGIOS – to be set apart)*
2. **We are adopted - Ritual of adoption – purchase a slave; purchased from death to life – receive all benefits of Sonship (per Roman law)**
3. **Doctrine of the Church: Ubi Christus, Ibi - Ecclesia – where the church is, there is Christ. Protestants define church by function (function is to serve; it is horizontal). Roman Catholics often stress that the church is built upon the apostles – concern is for vertical. Difference between ‘Church as gathering of the elect’ (election in order to service) and ‘Holy Mother Church’**

## ***A Word on Submission – Chapter 5***

**False: Wives be subject and submissive to your husbands**

**True: Wives and husbands be submissive to one another and Christ**

## ***Hebrews***

**Written (before 96 AD) to a community (Rome?) living at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century**

- **Issues not unlike those that we face.**
- **Readers are in an extremely serious situation – facing martyrdom (13:7); some have already fallen away (10:25) some of those who remain have false ideas (3:12)**

## ***The New Covenant***

**Christ is a mediator of a New Covenant**

**Chapter 9<sup>15</sup> Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant**

## ***Christ is a Sacrifice Once and For All***

**Chapter 9** <sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

**Why we have a Communion Table rather than an Altar**

## ***The Letters To Those At Thessalonica***

**Concern with those who preach a 'realized eschatology'**

- **Located 80 miles west of Philippi on major trade route, Via Egnatia**
- **Free city governed by a Greek legal system (not Roman)**
- **Cosmopolitan city – many different religions, strong Jewish presence**

## ***Thessalonians I & II***

**Universal agreement that Paul wrote first letter – not sure about second**

**I Thess. First letter written in New Testament (50 AD); written from Corinth not long after he, Timothy and Sivanus escaped from Thessalonica due to threats on their lives from the Jews and “some ruffians”**

**Concern for the people (being persecuted because they believed Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah) so Paul sends Timothy to check on them; Timothy returns with positive report – they are remaining faithful**

## ***One of the Most Misinterpreted Verses in the Bible***

**<sup>17</sup> then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.**

**PAUL**: in Christ there is unity, someday we will be with our loved ones 'in Christ' – Christ is the center who holds everything (life and death) together.

**DARBY**: believed that God would deal with the world through Israel, and therefore the church (true believers) would be removed (**THE RAPTURE** “..meet the Lord in the air”).

Darby's followers known as Adventists  
(advent – coming)

This thinking came to the U.S. in early 1800's (from England) with a new interpretation of the Bible by C.I. Scofield (Scofield Bible). When he died (1921), leadership went to Lewis Sperry Chaffer who founded a school whose purpose was to expound Darby's ideas – Dallas Theological Seminary. Popular graduates are Hal Lindsay and Tim LaHay.

### ***In A Nutshell – They Believe***

True believers will be raptured before the beginning of a 7 year tribulation. During this tribulation the Jewish nation will be converted to Christianity and the Anti-Christ will appear.

Following a brief period of world peace, the Anti-Christ will persecute the Jews resulting in the battle of Armageddon. Christ will return and establish an earthly kingdom, 1,000 years, with the capital in Jerusalem.

At the end of 1,000 years (Satan who has been held in check) will be unleashed for a brief time and Christ will subdue him again. Following this, there will be the final judgment.

## ***Because You May Ask: What Do We Believe?***

1. The promises made to Israel are transferred (in the New Testament) to the church – the church does not need to ‘disappear’.
2. There is **ONE** and not **TWO** resurrections.
3. There are no ‘secret’ time tables in the Bible or hidden secrets known only to some. (This is Gnosticism!)
4. We do not think there is any Biblical evidence for a return to animal sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem during a millennium...the Cross is sufficient (do not need any other sacrifices).

## ***II Thessalonians***

***Chapter 2*** <sup>2</sup> not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

## ***CLOSING THOUGHTS***

**The early church never said that it “believes in the Canon” (this would have been a heresy). Rather the confession of faith for the early church was**

**I believe in Jesus of Nazareth  
as the Christ of God.**

**Thus the new Testament is a summons to share this faith in Jesus. It does not place the New Testament in the place of Jesus and make it *THE* revelation – but speaks to *THE REVELATION WHO IS THE WORD OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST.***