NEW TESTAMENT · GENERAL EPISTLES · BOOK 59 OF 66

James

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only (1:22)

5	c. A.D. 45–62	About 54	“Doers”
Chapters, 108 Verses	Written	Commands	(1:22)

BACKGROUND

A Letter of Practical Faith

NAME

James

Greek Iakobos, the same name as Jacob. The first of the seven General Epistles.

AUTHOR

The Lord’s Brother

James, “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1), leader of the Jerusalem church.

DATE

c. A.D. 45–62

Many favour about A.D. 45–49, before the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

READERS

Scattered Abroad

“To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (1:1): Jewish believers.

WHICH JAMES?

Men Named James

James son of Zebedee

One of the twelve; killed by Herod, c. A.D. 44

Acts 12:2

James son of Alphaeus

One of the twelve

Matthew 10:3

James the Lord’s brother

Saw the risen Lord; led the church in Jerusalem

Galatians 1:19

James father of Judas

Father of the apostle Judas (not Iscariot)

Luke 6:16

James the Lord’s brother wrote this letter.

TIMELINE

James in the Early Church

c. 30
Jesus’ brothers do not believe (John 7:5)

c. 33
Risen Lord appears to James

c. 44
James son of Zebedee killed

c. 45–49
Letter of James written

c. 49
Jerusalem council (Acts 15)

c. 62
James put to death

Dates are approximate (A.D.). The death of James about A.D. 62 is reported by the Jewish historian Josephus.

STRUCTURE

The Book in Four Parts

James reads like a book of wisdom: short commands and vivid pictures, about half of its 108 verses are commands, and many echo the Sermon on the Mount.



Each bar shows that part’s share of the 108 verses.

I 1:1–27 · 27 verses

Trials and Doing the Word

Joy in trials, wisdom from God, hearing and doing.

II 2:1–26 · 26 verses

Faith That Acts

Respect of persons and faith without works.

III 3:1–4:12 · 30 verses

Wisdom, Words and Worldliness

The tongue, wisdom from above, and humble submission to God.

IV 4:13–5:20 · 25 verses

Humility, Patience and Prayer

Waiting for the coming of the Lord.

Echoes of Jesus

- Ask and it shall be given (1:5)
- Doers, not hearers (1:22)
- Let your yea be yea (5:12)

Sermon on the Mount

- Matthew 7:7
- Matthew 7:24–26
- Matthew 5:37

JAMES AT A GLANCE · PART 2 OF 4

Trials and Doing the Word

CHAPTER 1

Joy in Trials

> *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."*
>
> James 1:2–3 (KJV)

1:5

Ask for Wisdom

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally."

1:6

Ask in Faith

"He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."

1:12

The Crown of Life

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

1:17

Every Good Gift

"From the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

CHAPTER 1

Hearing and Doing

1 **1:19**

Swift to Hear

Slow to speak, slow to wrath

2 **1:21**

Receive

The engrafted word

3 **1:22**

Do It

Not hearers only

4 **1:23–24**

The Glass

Do not forget

5 **1:27**

Pure Religion

Widows and fatherless

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (1:27).

JAMES AT A GLANCE · PART 3 OF 4

Faith That Acts and the Tongue

CHAPTER 2

Faith That Acts

2:1–4

Respect of Persons

A gold ring gets the good seat; the poor man is told to stand.

2:8

The Royal Law

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

> *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."*
>
> James 2:17 (KJV)

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (2:26).

Abraham (2:21–23)

- Offered Isaac on the altar
- "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness"

Rahab (2:25)

- Received the messengers
- Sent them out another way

Paul: justified by faith without the works of the law (Romans 3:28). James: true faith is shown by works (2:24). Many see the same truth from two sides.

CHAPTERS 3–4

The Tongue and Two Wisdoms

1 3:3

A Bit

Turns the whole horse

2 3:4

A Helm

Turns a great ship

3 3:5

A Fire

"How great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

4 3:8

Untamed

"Full of deadly poison"

> *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits."*
>
> James 3:17 (KJV)

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (4:7–8).

JAMES AT A GLANCE · PART 4 OF 4

Humility, Patience and Prayer

CHAPTERS 4–5

Humility and Patience

4:14

A Vapour

“What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

4:15

If the Lord Will

Plans are made in humble dependence on God.

5:1–6

Rich Oppressors

The wages kept back by fraud cry out to the Lord.

5:7

Be Patient

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.”

5:7

The Husbandman

Waits for the early and latter rain

5:10

The Prophets

An example of suffering and patience

5:11

Job

“Ye have heard of the patience of Job”

5:17

Elias

Prayed, and it rained not for three years and six months

CHAPTER 5

The Prayer of Faith

> *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*
>
> James 5:16 (KJV)

BIG IDEAS

Key Themes

Trials

Joy and endurance.

1:2–4; 1:12

Wisdom

Asked of God, from above.

1:5; 3:17

Doing the Word

Not hearers only.

1:22–25

Faith and Works

Living faith acts.

2:14–26

The Tongue

A little fire.

3:1–12

Prayer

It availeth much.

5:13–18

KEY VERSE

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

James 1:22 (KJV)