**James**

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| **Faith is Revealed through Works** | | | | | | |
| **Rejoices in Difficulty** | **Obeys the Word** | **Avoids Favoritism** | **Produces Works** | **Speaks Wisely** | **Produces Humility** | **Triumphs** |
| **1:1-18** | **1:19-27** | **2:1-13** | **2:14-26** | **3** | **4:1—5:6** | **5:7-20** |
| Salutation  Trials  Temptations | Listening  Anger  Obedience  Speech  Compassion  Purity | Discrimination  Materialism  Egalitarianism | Meeting Needs  Validation | Influence  Untamable  Use  Wisdom | Conflict  Judging  Presumption | Patience  Prayer  Confrontation |
| **Jerusalem** | | | | | | | |
| **AD 44-47** | | | | | | | |

**Key Word: Works**

**Key Verse*:*** *22But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.* **(James 1:22).**

**Summary Statement:** James exhorts early Jewish believers throughout the Roman Empire that Christian *faith is shown through works* that they might replace their *hypocrisy* with good deeds in maturity and holiness.

**Application:**

What specific works noted in the letter of James do you consistently do that reveals your calling as a Christian?

Others should see *works* resulting from our belief in Christ (James 2:14-26; cf. 1 John 2:3-6, 9-11, 18-19, 24-25; 3:24; 4:20; etc.).

**James**

**I. Title**

The Greek title, “Of James”, is a shortened form of the early title, “Epistle of James”.

**II. Authorship**

A. External Evidence: The identity of the author in James 1:1 has been proposed as any of four different men named “James” in the New Testament.

B. Internal Evidence: The traditional view of 1:1 is that the author is James the Just, the half-brother of Jesus who believed in Christ at his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7) and soon led the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal. 1:19).

**III. Circumstances**

A. Date: Traditional options for dating James fall into two early periods: AD 40-49 or AD 50-62 (Davids, 2; Guthrie, 761-764; Hiebert, 52-53).

1. External evidence:

a. James the Just presided as leader of the Jerusalem church from AD 40 until his martyrdom in AD 62 (Davids, 2; Guthrie, 761).

b. James seems to be quoted by *1 Clement* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and possibly was used by Paul and Peter (1 Peter 1:1 with James 1:1, etc.; Guthrie, 751-753, 763).

2. Internal evidence:

a. Absence of reference to the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the Jewish-Gentile controversy (AD 49) support a date before AD 49.

b. The epistle shows primitive church organization (3:1; 5:14, 15), a Jewish tone (1:11; 2:8, 11, 23; 4:6), poverty within the church (1:27–2:13), no references to Gentiles in the church (1:1; 2:2) and persecution of Jewish Christians (1:2ff.). This supports a date before AD 49.

c. James' use of the word “justify” (2:21, 24, 25) had not yet acquired the technical sense of the Pauline usage (Rom. 3:20, 24, 28; Gal. 2:16, 17).

B. Origin/Recipients: The Book of James specifies its readers as “the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” (1:1). The book's origin is not specifically stated, but the traditional view is that James the Just wrote a general epistle from Jerusalem to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

C. Occasion: This epistle does not explicitly state its purpose, but the internal evidence reveals much about the recipients to help us discern the occasion. The readers apparently met regularly in the synagogue (2:2) where the rich among them (1:10) exploited (2:1-13) the poor within the congregation (1:9; 5:1-6). This led to complaining (4:11-12; 5:9-10) and quarreling against one another (4:1-3). The recipients also evidenced a worldly (4:4-10) and materialistic outlook (4:13-17) that lacked compassion (2:15-16), so James wrote to show that faith shown through good deeds justifies its validity before men (2:14-26).

These deplorable conditions in the church prompted James to write a general epistle as a plea for vital Christianity. The purpose is not a doctrinal but an ethical (practical) treatise to force the believers to examine whether their attitudes and actions demonstrate the reality of their faith in Christ. Its key concepts may be summarized in the exhortation to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (1:22) as well as the declaration that “faith without works is useless” (2:20b).

**IV. Characteristics**

A. The Letter of James is very unique viewed from a literary standpoint:

1. Structure: The book is difficult to outline in that it consists of several pithy sayings.

2. Emphases

a. *Ethical Emphasis*. Luther called James “a right strawy epistle in comparison with [Paul’s Epistles], for it has no evangelical manner about it.” He was unimpressed with the epistle's lack of emphasis on doctrinal teaching and said it conflicted with the Pauline epistles by supporting the Papist view of justification by works (Hiebert, 3:34-35; Kümmel, 285).

b. *Jewish Emphasis.* A strong Semitic flavor appears in its five Old Testament quotes (1:11; 2:8, 11, 23; 4:6), numerous indirect allusions (e.g., 1:10; 2:21, 23, 25; 3:9; 4:6; 5:2, 11, 17, 18), and traces of Hebrew idioms behind the Greek forms of language (Guthrie, 741).

c. *Emphasis on the Sermon on the Mount.* The book contains many similarities with the teaching of Jesus (Guthrie, 743-744), and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) in particular (Blue, *BKC*, 2:818).

d. *Emphasis on Nature.* James has at least 30 references to nature (Blue, *BKC*, 2:817).

e. *Excellent Greek.* DeWette felt that James the Lord’s brother could not pen such superior Greek and thus doubted the letter's authenticity (Kümmel, 285). However, this neglects the fact that James had been leading the Jerusalem church for 10-20 years and had not been a carpenter for some time. It also assumes the false belief that carpenters were uneducated.

3. Unity: James has been accused of lacking “continuity of thought” (Dibelius, 1), but this is unwarranted.

B. James uses words for “save” five times (1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 20).

C. The interpretation of the “faith without works” section (2:14-26) has been much debated, many (e.g., Luther) supposing that it conflicts with the Pauline teaching of justification by faith (cf. Rom. 3:28).

The contrasts can be charted in this manner:

**Romans vs. James on Justification**

**Romans James**

Author: Paul James

Date: AD 56 AD 44-48

Justification is a technical term non-technical term

Justification is before God (vertical) Man (horizontal)

The faith is at beginning of salvation after salvation

The emphasis is upon faith works

D. The early church debated the canonicity of James (especially the Western Church) until it was universally recognized following the third Council of Carthage in AD 397.

Several reasons existed for this hesitancy to accept James as authentic:

a) The Epistle remained unknown to many early churches, having been written from Jerusalem to Jews of the East Dispersion without as wide an appeal as Paul's epistles (Guthrie, 739).

b) The authorship was debated as to whether the author was an apostle or not.

c) It seemed to contradict Paul's teaching.

**Argument**

Because of its many subjects, the Epistle of James is very difficult to outline. Yet there can be no question about its theme: living faith can be shown only through active works.

These works include a joyful attitude during trials and temptations (1:1-18), obedience to God's Word (1:19-27), impartiality without judging social status (2:1-13), good deeds in general (2:14-26), wise control of one's tongue (ch. 3), humility rather than worldliness (4:1—5:6), and finally, patient and prayerful suffering (5:7-20). Topics in the letter change abruptly, but are introduced with the phrase “my brothers” (1:2, 19; 2:1, 14; 3:1; 4:11; 5:7, 19), the words “now listen” (4:13; 5:1), or with a question (4:1; 5:13).

James' main concern is that his readers put away their hypocritical, double-minded (1:8; 3:10) dispositions in order to grow in maturity and holiness. In effect he says, “If you *say* you believe in Christ, then *act* like it!”