

# THE BOOK OF JAMES

## (Introduction)

### Introduction

1. This epistle was written to Christians who were Jews "...living outside of Palestine, yet maintaining their religious observances and customs among the Gentiles" (ISBE; Vol. II; p. 855): "*To the twelve tribes who are of the Dispersion*" (1:1)
    - a. "Dispersion" is from the Greek word "DIASPORA" whose verb form means to "scatter abroad"
    - b. More than once in the history of the Jews, they had been scattered among the heathen or Gentile nations:
      - (1). *Assyria* (2 Kings 17:5ff.)
      - (2). *Babylon* (2 Kings 24:14)
      - (3). *Ptolemy I of Egypt* (322-285 B.C.) – dispersed to Alexandria; brought forth the demands and production of the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek.
      - (4). *Antiochus the Great* (223-187 B.C.) – removed from the Jewish communities in Mesopotamia and Babylon 2,000 families and settled them in Phrygia and Lydia (*Jos.*; *Ant. Xii*; 3;4).
      - (5). *Pompey* (63 B.C.) – after the capture of Jerusalem, he carried hundreds of Jews to Rome where they became slaves. Later they would obtain their freedom and civil rights.
      - (6). Substantial population of Jews in Asia Minor during the New Testament period (cf. I Pet. 1:1, Jn. 7:35).
  2. The Christians who were Jews were suffering severe trials (1:1:2)
  3. The poor among them were being persecuted by the rich among them (2:1-10, 5:1-6)
- I. AUTHOR OF THE BOOK:** "*James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (1:1)
- A. The New Testament mentions at least *three* who bore the name of *James*
    1. The son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21)
    2. The son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3, LK. 6:15)- probably also known as "the less" (Mk. 15:40, cf. Jn. 19:25)
    3. The brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55, Gal. 1:19)
  - B. It is commonly accepted to view James, the Lord's brother to be the author of the Book.
    1. James the son of Zebedee was put to death early in the church's history (A.D. 44). So he probably is not the author (cf. Acts 12:1-2)
    2. James the son of Alphaeus has stronger support being an apostle.
    3. James, the Lord's brother, became a strong influence in the early church at Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19, 2:9, Acts 15;13-21, 21:17-25)

**THE BOOK OF JAMES – INTRODUCTION**  
**PAGE 2**

- a. An apostle – not as one of the twelve (cf. Acts 14:14, Rom. 16:7, I Cor. 15:7).
- b. Josephus says he was martyred about A.D. 62 , following the death of Festus and before the coming of his successor. (Ant.; xx; 9; 1).

**II. DATE OF THE BOOK**

- A. Approximately A.D. 45-49. One of the earliest New Testament books - written before the conference in Jerusalem (A.D. 50).
- B. It was probably written from Jerusalem – Scripture and tradition concurs in representing James as constantly residing in Jerusalem.

**III. THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK**

- A. Theme: Faith Made Practical- the Character of True Faith
  1. Proofs of faith: (J Sidlow Baxter, Explore the Book, p.288)
    - a. Proof 1 – Endurance of Temptation (chapter 1)
    - b. Proof 2 – Impartial Benevolence (chapter 2)
    - c. Proof 3 – Control of the Tongue(chapter 3)
    - d. Proof 4 – Godliness in All Things (chapter 4-6)
- B. Purpose:
  1. To help people become mature or “perfect” in Christ.
  2. To encourage brethren in the midst of trials and temptations (1:2-18)
  3. To set forth the character of true faith: working faith (2:14-26)
  4. James gives:
    - a. *Warnings*: Hearing the word and not doing it (1:22-27); Showing respect of persons (2:1-7); Partial obedience to Christ (2:18-23); False wisdom (3:13-18)
    - b. *Rebukes*: Worldliness and Covetousness (4:1-10); Gossip (4:11-12); Planning without God (4:13-17)
    - c. *Exhortations* – Encouragement: Be patient till the Lord’s coming (5:7-11); Be prayerful in times of joy and distress (5:13-18).

**IV. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK**

- I. Salutation (1:1)
- II. True faith endures temptation (1:2-18)
- III. True faith acts in accordance to the word (1:19-27)
- IV. True Faith Avoids discrimination (2:1-13)
- V. True Faith Avoids inactive profession (2:14-26)
- VI. True Faith Bridles the tongue (3:1-12)
- VII. True Faith Manifests Heavenly Wisdom (3:13-5:18)
  - A. In Spiritual living (3:13-4:10)
  - B. In proper relationship to law (4:11-12)

- C. In commercial plans (4:13-17)
- D. In employer-employee relationships (5:1-6)
- E. In Waiting For the Lord (5:7-11)
- F. In regards to Oaths (5:12)
- G. In Suffering (5:13-18)
- H. In converting erring brothers (5:19-20)