

JAMES

It is estimated that the Book of James was written around 50AD which would make it the earliest New Testament book that was written. Origen (185AD – 254AD) quoted from this Book of James multiple times in his commentary on the Book of Romans; in his commentary, Origen refers to James as “the brother of the Lord.”

Jewish tradition asserts that the writer is James (Hebrew, "Jacob" – Ya‘akov), the half-brother of Jesus (one of four sons from Mary and Joseph (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). The actual (linguistically correct) name is “Jacob” (Greek - Iakōbos); however, while being translated into the English Bible, John Wycliffe introduced an “M” – turning the book of “Jacob” into the book of “James.” In 1611, the King James Bible retained “James” from John Wycliffe’s translation.

The eldest of the younger brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3) was actually named after his grandfather. (Matthew 1:16). Just as “Jacob” in the Old Testament fathered 12 sons that matured into the 12 tribes of Israel, Jacob (the brother of Jesus) wrote this letter to the 12 tribes of Israel (James 1:1). In Mark 6:3, the "brothers" of Jesus are named; they are James (Jacob) and Joses (Joseph) and Judas and Simon. Jesus obeyed the angel by naming his eldest son, Jesus. Then Joseph named the second born after his grandfather and his third born after Joseph himself. The youngest two sons had names that reflected key characters in the crucifixion story (Judas and Simon).

Two of the sons, James (Jacob) and Joses (Joseph), appear again in Mark 15:40, where they are said to be the sons of Mary, one of the women watching the crucifixion. “*Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.*” (Mark 15:40) The brothers did not accept Jesus as Lord until after His resurrection, so Jesus Christ committed the well-being of His mother (Mary) to the disciple John. (John 19:26-27)

The author was called "James the Just" and later nicknamed "camel knees" because he constantly prayed on his knees (from Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius). James was not a believer until after the resurrection (Mark 3:21,31; John 7:5), and the resurrected Jesus appeared to him personally (1 Cor. 15:7). In Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus records that James was stoned in 62AD as ordered by the Sadducees in the Sanhedrin; however, another tradition (the second century writers, Clement of Alexandria or Hegesippus) believe that James was pushed off the Temple wall. For generations after the crucifixion of Jesus, a relative of Jesus (through Mary) was appointed leader of the church in Jerusalem.

The Lord Jesus had fulfilled the old (works-based) covenant while establishing a new (faith-based) covenant. As such, the Old Testament can provide insight into God and guidance on a sanctified life while the New Testament emphasizes “justification.” The Book of James was Martin Luther's least favorite book in the New Testament because of the tension between sanctification (i.e., James 2:14-26) and Paul's "justification by faith" (Romans; Galatians).

The book of James is a very Jewish-oriented book that is similar to the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament (James is referenced as the “Proverbs of the New Testament.” This manner of writing is called “pearls-on-a-string” which jumps from subject to subject around a unified theme (the ways the wisdom of God impacts a believer’s life). The book of James focuses on practical, daily living of the Christian faith. James mentions “controlling the tongue” in every chapter (James 1:19, 26, 2:12, 3:5-8, 4:11, 5:12); the tongue is kept in its cage behind the teeth. The words, works and wealth of individuals reveal whether they are following worldly wisdom or heavenly wisdom.

Outline of the Book of James		
James 1	Opening	Overview of Topics
James 1:1-4	Heart	Trials Result in Character
James 1:5-8	Wisdom	God Grants Wisdom
James 1:9-11	Wealth	Riches Decline while Character Grows
James 1:12-18	Heart	A New Creation
James 1:19-27	Heart	Faith in Action
James 2:1-13	Love	Love over Favoritism
James 2:14-26	Heart	Genuine Faith
James 3:1-12	Speech	Consistent Words of Praise Instead of Harm
James 3:13-18	Wisdom	Heavenly versus Worldly Wisdom
James 4:1-10	Heart	Whole Hearted Commitment
James 4:11-12	Speech	Judging & Gossip Condemned
James 4:13-17	Heart	The Pride of Self-determination
James 5:1-6	Wealth	The Danger of Wealth
James 5:7-11	Heart	Persevere & Hope for the Lord’s Return
James 5:12	Speech	Do Not Distort the Truth
James 5:13-18	Heart	Prayerful Life
James 5:19-20	Love	Restore Others

19 James 1

Read James 1:1-4 ... Encouraging Joy During Persecution of the Jewish Believers

1:1 James addresses this letter to the believing Jews of the twelve tribes (1 Pet 1:1; Rev 7:4)

- “James” (Iakōbos Ἰάκωβος) is the Greek form of the common Hebrew name, “Jacob” (Ya’āqōb יַעֲקֹב)
- Although a biological brother of Jesus, James humbles himself as a bond-slave.
- The full title is recorded as the Lord (deity) Jesus (humanity) Christ (Messiah). (Romans 10:13; Philippians 2:9)
- Jews use the term “peace” (shalom שְׁלוֹמ) to greet each other, Greeks use the word “grace” (charis χάρις) to greet each other. James uses the common opening form of “Greeting” (chairein χαίρειν) which is closely related to “grace” (charis χάρις).
- The dispersion may have been due to Jerusalem’s persecution of Christians.

1:2 Believers should be encouraged that the sovereign God is accomplishing His will – even through trials.

- The Greek term “consider” (hēgēsasthe ἡγήσασθε) means to “esteem” or “count it.” The remainder of James fits the situation that believing Christians were being persecuted and needed to respond wisely in love.
 - In modern mathematics, figures are listed from top to bottom with a line and a sum underneath; however, in ancient times, the sum was on top with a line and the figures below (that added up – the phrase “add up”).
- The joy is not concerning the conflict, but joy is a function of God’s work in that conflict.
 - The primary characteristic of the fall from Eden is selfishly “*what is in it for me*” while the characteristic of salvation is selflessly “*how can I glorify God by loving others?*”
- The Greek term “various” (poikilois ποικίλοις) literally means “many colored” or “rainbowed.”
 - This is similar to the robe of many colors that Jacob gifted to Joseph because of his favor. (Genesis 37:3) God disciplines His sons because of love. (Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 8:1, 4; 14:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10; Hebrews 12:6)
 - For every multicolored trial (1 Peter 1:6), there is a multicolored grace of God.

1:3 Believers should understand God’s purpose to mold each believer into the image of Jesus (Job 36:15; Psalm 119:75; Proverbs 3:11-12)

- Issues and challenges provide the pressure to grow the “muscle” of faith. Untested faith is weak faith.
- Circumstances should not be able to rob a believer of a faithful walk.
- The Greek term for “faith/belief” (pistei πίστει) goes beyond intellectual or emotional consent to a commitment to God and a shifting of faith from self to God.

1:4 The joy of the believer is based on the hope of the Lord’s return and an understanding of future blessing.

- Believers endure short term challenges with joy because of the hope of the Lord’s return and a future with Him.
- The Greek term “perfected” (teteleiōken τετελείωκεν) means to be complete, full or adequate.
 - God advances His children to maturity through sufferings (Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 8:1, 4; 14:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10).
 - Christ Jesus was also perfected (completed) through sufferings (Hebrew 5:8).
 - The term “perfect” is repeated 7 times throughout James, and means wholeness and consistency in thought, word and actions.

Read James 1:5-8 ... Confidently Ask for Wisdom from God

1:5 God will give wisdom to those who ask without doubt.

- Wisdom represents Christ (Proverbs 4:7; 1 Corinthians 1:24) who is exemplified through suffering, death, resurrection and finally glory.

- 1:6 Believers should have consistent faith instead of ebbing and flowing like the continual tide (Isaiah 57:20).
- 1:7 The one who doubts whether they will receive anything from the Lord ought not to expect anything from the Lord.
- 1:8 The Greek term ‘double-minded’ literally means “two-souled.” The term is only used twice with the other being James 4:8; the term cannot be found elsewhere in Greek literature, so James may have coined the term. A related term of “double-heart” (wālêb̄ :גלב) is found in Psalm 12:2.

Read James 1:9-11 ... Life is Temporal

- 1:9 There are no “spiritually” poor Christians; in Christ, the poor are headed towards a glorious eternity with the Lord.
- The life of Christ reveals that suffering and death precede resurrection & life.
- 1:10 A simple math equation: The more that an individual possesses in this life – the more that they lose at death because everything that is not eternal will be lost.
- 1:11 The poor should have dignity because this life is brief.

Read James 1:12-18 ... Temptation Leads to Death; Trust God for Good Gifts

- 1:12 Believers who love God will receive the crown of life after enduring earthly trials (Rev 2:10); these crowns should also be incentive to pursue what is right (2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4)

New Testament Crowns as Rewards for Believers	
1. Crown of Life	James 1:12
2. Crown of Righteousness	2 Timothy 4:8
3. Crown of Life	Revelation 2:10; 3:11
4. Crown of Glory	1 Peter 5:4
5. An Imperishable Crown	1 Corinthians 9:25

- This verse is reminiscent of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount where He said, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:10)
- 1:13 While Satan may tempt Jesus (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:13), He was not tempted having no evil desire to follow the lies (1 Timothy 6:9).
- God Himself does not tempt anyone, but He may lead us into areas (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4) where we might be tempted due to our own depravity (1 Corinthians 7:5), but God will always leave an escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- 1:14-15 Every individual is responsible to train their hearts and minds; each person is responsible for their choices and actions.
- Evil desires → Temptation → Sin → Death
 - The Greek hunting terms for being “drawn away” (exelkomenos ἐξελκόμενος) and “enticed” (deleazomenos δελεαζόμενος) were used for trapping animals.
 - Jewish Rabbi’s teach that the mind correlates to prepared soil, and the “seeds” that enter through the eyes and ears takes root in that prepared ground and bears fruit.
 - Sin begins in the thought life. (The mind is considered “flesh” while the heart is “spiritual”).
 - Society (i.e., Hollywood) has numbed modern culture to sin.

- God provides what you need (both good & bad circumstances and situations). Be expectant and content.
- 1:16 There is a repeated warning against deception throughout Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:9; 15:33; Galatians 6:7; 1 John 3:7). Believers are to understand God’s Scripture instead of religious conjecture.
- Christians are vulnerable when suffering; however, don’t sin which results in spiritual death, but instead, understand that physical suffering results in physical death while producing spiritual life.
- 1:17 Instead of pursuing what the world offers, believers should joyfully receive and be satisfied with gifts from the Lord.

Short List of God’s Gifts to Believers	
John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 9:15	Jesus
Luke 11:13	The Spirit
Luke 12:32	The Kingdom
John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8	Salvation
1 John 5:11	Eternal Life
1 John 14:27	Peace
James 1:5	Wisdom

- The Greek term “lights” (photon φώτων) are a metaphor for understanding and insight. The ability to see and comprehend truth.
 - God’s attributes do not change from moment to moment erratically. (Psalm 102:26-27; Malachi 3:6)
- 1:18 By the sovereign God’s choosing, He enlightened His people to the gospel. Salvation is God motivated as He acts out of grace. (John 6:44,65; Romans 9; Ephesians 1:4; 2:8; 1 Peter 1:3) God takes the initiative and man responds.
- The “word of truth” (logo alētheias - λόγῳ ἀληθείας) refers to God’s gospel message. (Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 1 :23-25)
 - In Jewish culture, the “first fruits” (bikkūrê בִּכּוּרֵי) is literally translated as the “promise to come.”
 - Just as the first crops were dedicated to the King while the people retained the later crops, the first fruits were dedicated to the Lord understanding that He would bless with additional fruits afterward.

Read James 1:19-21 ... Do Not Act in Anger

- 1:19 *“Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.”*
- Hear (James 1:19) → Receive (James 1:21) → Do (James 1:23)
 - Anger reveals that an individual is wanting things “His/Her Way;” this was a sin in the garden of Eden.
- 1:20 Anger comes from man while righteousness comes from God. (Romans 3:24; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 2:8-9)
- God is righteous. (Romans 3:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 16:5).
 - God desires believers to be righteous. (Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27; Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23; Ephesians 1:4; 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; 3:16; 1 John 3:7; 1 Peter 2:24)

1:21 Believers should proactively “clean house” spiritually to get rid of sin and things that instigate sin.

- The Greek term for “filthiness” (rhyparian ῥυπαρίαν) was used in ancient times as “a wax build-up in the ear” which makes sense because sin makes it difficult to hear God.

The Power of His Word (logō λόγῳ) <i>(The Revelation of Christ Jesus)</i>	
James 1:18	<i>“He gave us birth by the word of truth”</i>
James 1:21	<i>“Ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.</i>
James 1:22	<i>“Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.”</i>
James 1:23-24	<i>“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer.... he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.”</i>

Read James 1:22-25 ... Act on God’s Word

1:22 *“Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* (Ezekiel 33:31)

1:23-24 The word of God is the mirror (Ex 38:8) in which each man sees his need (e.g., dirtiness = sinfulness) relative to God’s truth.

- God’s Word (Scripture) reveals the ways to please God.
- 1:25 If one walks in God’s truth, he will be blessed in his efforts (1 Kings 2:2; Joshua 1:8). These blessings occur with the good works that are fruits of his faith and the application of truth (James 1:22; 2:14-26).
- Just as Christ accepted the mission of loving sacrifice, so do Christians

Read James 1:26-27 ... The Actions of a Religious Man

1:26 Religious maturity is evidenced by an individual’s discretion in speech.

- This is difficult to judge in others because they might be silencing their tongue more than others know.
 - Throughout the book of James, there is an emphasis on speech. In chapter 1 (verses 19, 26), the first priority concerning speech is being able to stay silent. The discernment and ability to “be silent” is critical.
- 1:27 *“Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”*
- God is holy, and helps His people in in their weakness.

20 James 2

- James 2:1-13 continues the pearls-on-a-string methodology of listing a variety of truths quickly to keep the readers attention, but then coming back to a central theme.
- Outline of James 2:1-13
 - The way that the Current Age deals with people

- The way that the New Age (Messianic Kingdom) will deal with people

Read James 2:1-7 ... The Royal Law

2:1 The impoverished live by faith out of necessity and should not be snubbed for a wealthy man. (Deuteronomy 1:17; 10:17; 16:19; 24:17; Leviticus 19:15; Acts 1-:34)

- James is conveying challenging truths, but he continues to show an intimate relationship through calling the hearer “my brother.” (James 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19) In Greek, this is literally “*brothers of me*” (adelphoi mou - ἀδελφοὶ μου)
- Everyone (and everything) pales in comparison to the Lord’s glory. The literal Greek translation is “*Lord of us Jesus Christ of glory.*” (Kyriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou tēs doxēs – Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης)
 - Jewish Rabbi’s referred to the Lord’s glorious presence as the Shekinah Glory (although the term is not in Scripture).
- Jews were hesitant to use the covenant name of God; throughout the Old Testament, Jews would use the term Adonai for “Lord” instead of the covenant name of “Yahweh.” (Exodus 3:14)
- According to the Old Testament, Judges were not to show “partiality” towards anyone on trial (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19; 24:17).
 - The Hebrew term “partiality” (tiśśā נִפְזָה) means “lift up the eyes.” As an accused came before the judge, the judge was not to lift their head to look into their face in case the judge recognized them which would affect the judgment/verdict. (Deuteronomy 4:19; Job 11:15; Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14)

2:2 The Greek term for “assembly” (synagōgēn συναγωγῆν) is the root word for “synagogue.” (Hebrews 10:25) Early believers must have continued to refer to their churches as synagogues.

- The Greek term for “gold ring” (chrysodaktylios χρυσοδακτύλιος) literally means “gold fingered.” In the Greco-Roman culture, rings represented wealth and several rings were frequently worn on each hand. Gold rings could be rented for special occasions and events.

2:3 Synagogues had seating sections of honor – the “chief seats.” Further into the sanctuary (at the upper or “Jerusalem end”), the chest containing the Book of the Law was positioned, so the chief (honored) seats were closest to the Law.

- The poor man is told to stand in a distant area. Even worse, the poor man is made to sit at the footstool as having been a defeated foe of lowly status. (Psalm 110:1; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:35; Hebrews 1:13, 10:13)

2:4 Christianity involves the right heart attitudes and motivations.

- The Greek term for “distinctions” (diekrithēte διεκρίθητε) is a compound noun from dia (“through” - διά) with krinó (“judge” - κρίνω). To make a distinction is to judge someone.

2:5 James calls on the reader to pay attention – “to listen!” (Akousate ἀκούσατε). God calls His people to reach out to the poor as a show that they are included in the family of God. (Matthew 11:5; Luke 1:51-53; 4:18)

- The poor had been excluded in Judaism because wealth was a sign of God’s favor while poverty was a sign of God’s displeasure.

- “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good news to the poor...*” (Isaiah 61:1)
- “*Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.”* (Luke 7:22)
- The first and last sermons of Jesus (as well as most of His parables) dealt with the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God refers to His sovereignty as the King.
 - His divine will is obediently followed in heaven, and His earthly creation should also completely submit to His purposes.
 - God presently reigns in men’s hearts, but He will materially reign over all the earth during the millennial kingdom.

2:6 The recipients of this letter were guilty of disrespecting the poor.

- Wealthy politicians (hypocritically) speak out to the masses against the subjective “rich” while promoting “values” to assist the “working middle class.” The “working middle class” is a political categorization which Scripture never addresses. Scripture honors the poor which politicians fail to recognize because the poor have no sway in public opinion.
- It is difficult for a wealthy man to trust God instead of his resources. (Matthew 19:23; Mark 10:23)
- The wealthy people oppress Christians while promoting perverse and addictive behaviors.
- The Sadducees were powerful aristocrats that primarily held to the Pentateuch and were more focused on ethics than theology. The Sadducees were the elites who controlled the priesthood and the Temple. The Sadducees were the political leaders who controlled the power and wealth as they collaborated with Rome. The Sadducees would be abolished in 70AD with the destruction of the Temple.
- The Greek term for “oppress” (katadynasteuousin καταδυναστεύουσιν) is only used one other time in Scripture to describe the oppression of the Devil. (Acts 10:38)

2:7 The Greek phrase “*the good name by which you have been called*” (ta kalon onoma ta epiklēthen eph’ hymas - τὰ καλὸν ὄνομα τὰ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς) is literally “*the good name having been called upon you.*”

- The wealthy people may have mocked and persecuted the name of “Christian.”
- This phrase was used in multiple ways in Scripture:
 - a patriarchal family blessing (Genesis 48:16)
 - a way to designate God's people (2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 14:9; Daniel 9:19; Amos 9:12; Acts 15:17)
 - a wife taking her husband's name (Isaiah 4:1)

Read James 2:8-13 ... Breakers of the Law

2:8 “*If you really carry out the royal law prescribed in Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well.*” (Leviticus 19:18)

- James repeatedly discusses the “law” of the new covenant (James 1:25, 2:12)
- The writer quotes Leviticus 19:18, but several verses prior, Scripture commands to judge fairly.

- *“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.”* (Leviticus 19:15)
 - Jesus repeatedly quoted Leviticus 19:18 (Matthew 5:43, 22:39; Mark 12:31)
- 2:9 James is very direct in this verse as he calls the readers “lawbreakers” and “offenders.”
- The Greek term for “violators/transgressors” (parabatai παραβάται) originated with “stepping over a line or boundary.”
- 2:10 Eternal life requires perfection, so any minute sin makes an individual unworthy outside of the forgiveness of God through Christ’s death.
- Man cannot perfectly comply with the Mosaic Law from Bar Mitzvah until death. (Galatians 3:15-19)
 - Any sin negates an acceptable life because the Mosaic Law had to be kept perfectly. Good deeds do not counterbalance sin; good deeds have no bearing on whether someone has broken the law. “Some obedience” is not enough.
- 2:11 An individual cannot personally choose which laws to follow and which ones to be noncompliant.
- 2:12 *“So speak, and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom.”* (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:6, 16)
- Beliefs should be consistent with actions; an individual should not hypocritically teach one way and live another.
 - An individual’s words and lifestyle must agree; ultimately, lifestyle reveals what the individual genuinely believes.
 - The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; however, believers may give an account of their availability to God’s service and use of spiritual gifts to determine their reward.
 - The Law marked an era of freedom after being set free from slavery (in Egypt); Laws preserve freedom. Freedom necessitates responsibility.
- 2:13 The lives (fruits) of believers reveal whether they align (walk) with God. If a person is a believer, they will demonstrate godly characteristics. (Matthew 7:13-27; 1 Corinthians 13)
- Individuals will reap what they sow. (Job 34:11; Psalm 28:4; 62:12; Proverbs 24:12; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Jeremiah 17:10; 32:19; Matthew 6:14-15; 7:1-5; 18:22-35; Romans 2:6; 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7; 2 Timothy 4:14; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 2:23; 20:12; 22:12)
 - *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* (Matthew 6:14-15)
 - An individual who shows mercy will receive mercy.
 - *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”* (1 John 4:20)

Read James 2:14-26 ... Dead Faith Without Works

- Martin Luther disliked this portion of James because of the tension with Romans 4 and Galatians 3; however, the passages are targeting two different categories of people using the same words.
 - Intended Audience:
 - Paul is writing Jews who want to ensure their standing with God by keeping the Mosaic Law. To Paul, the word “works” equates to the legal requirements of the Mosaic Law.
 - James is writing to believers who talk about faith, but they do not apply what they believe to their lifestyles. To James, the concept of “works” is not the Mosaic Law, but instead, “works” is the life of selfless love for the Christian.
 - Justification
 - Paul uses the word “justification” to mean the declaration of righteousness based on the finished work of Christ. Paul refers to the crediting of righteousness to Abraham (Romans. 4:3, 9, 22; Galatians 3:6)
 - James uses the word “justification” to mean that someone is shown to be righteous by the way that they live. James emphasizes the confirmation and proof of Abraham's faith.
 - Abraham
 - Paul references the beginning of Abraham's walk of faith (Genesis 15)
 - James references the ongoing characteristics of Abraham's faith - the birth of Isaac contrasted to the offering of Isaac. (Genesis 22).
 - Paul and James do not contradict each other, but actually compliment each other (as two sides of the same coin). Instead of “faith or works,” the correct view is “faith then works.”
 - Paul focuses on the profession of faith.
 - James focuses on the act that validates and gives credibility to the profession.
 - A life that is genuinely redeemed will change over time to become increasingly Christlike. (Genesis 1:26; Galatians 4:19; 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:24) An individual cannot meet Christ and remain unchanged.
 - Christ will meet man in whatever sinful state he is, but Christ will not leave man there (in his sin)
 - Man is not saved by good works, but man is saved unto good works.
- 2:14 A man might claim to have faith; the man might even be deceived within himself that he has faith. Saving faith is evidenced by works.
- Genuine faith is put into practice; claiming a belief does not make the statement an actual belief.
 - Throughout the book of James, there is an emphasis on speech. In this verse an individual is able to “talk religion,” but the person doesn't “live religion.” This individual does not “walk the talk.”
- 2:15 God meets the needs (clothing and feeding) of the impoverished through His children. (Deuteronomy 10:18; Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31)
- The children have the same characteristics of their Father.

- 2:16 Sometimes, there is a recognition of a physical need; however, there is no willingness to be used by God to meet that obvious need. The question of “*what use is that?*” is literally “*what is the profit?*” (Ti ta ophelos – τι τὰ ὄφελος)
- God condemns a flippant, light-hearted response to the needs of others.
 - Christ became poor that His people might be rich; Christians should also be willing to become poor for the benefit of others.
 - Faith is NOT empty words devoid of action; after worldly catastrophes, unbelievers often comfort each other with the statement, “My thoughts and prayers are with you.”
 - Faith is NOT wishing something were true, but acting dependent on something being true.
- 2:17 “*Faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*” (James 2:26)
- Good works will be the natural result of proper faith (Ephesians 2:8-10)
 - Webster defines “dead” (nekra νεκρά) as being characterized by a lack of activity or excitement; no longer functioning or alive; no longer relevant or important (i.e., a “dead” issue).
- 2:18 The individual making this statement in second-person is in-the-right. Works are a testimony to the faith of an individual.
- The children of God (Romans 8:14) can be identified (John 13:35) because they love in the same way that God loves. (Matthew 6:25-34, 11:5)
 - It is assumed that the second-person quotation begins and ends in this verse, but there is no punctuation in Greek.
- 2:19 Belief (pistis πίστις) in God or that there is only one God is not enough. While it is beneficial to understand theology, that grasp of doctrine will not be enough for salvation without faith in and relationship with Jesus Christ that results in a god-fearing lifestyle.
- James 2:19 might be a reference to the Shema which would infer that James is directing this message to Jewish believers.
 - Shema Israel (Sh'ma Yisrael שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל) means to "Hear, O Israel" which is a Jewish prayer utilized in the morning and evening Jewish prayer services.
 - The Shema is often the first Scripture learned by the Jewish child; “*Hear, Oh Israel; the LORD is our God; the LORD is one*” (Deuteronomy 6:4).
 - God is “One;” Works (visible) that come from Faith (invisible) are also “One”
 - Demons are monotheists, and they are fearful of God – but it is not enough for their salvation.
 - The Greek term for “shudder” (phrissousin φρίσσοισιν) means to bristle or tremble like a personal earthquake.
- 2:20 “*But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless?*”
- Before receiving a calling (ministry opportunities), an individual realizes that faith must be put into practice.
- 2:21 When Paul mentions “works,” he is referencing obedience to the Mosaic Law; however, Abraham lived centuries prior to the Mosaic Law.
- James uses the term “works” as obedient actions in response to the calling of God.

- Immediately after the promise of God (Genesis 21:1-3) that Abraham's lineage would grow through this single person (Isaac), God tested Abraham to see if He believed in God's trustworthiness (Genesis 22:1-2).
- Abraham believed that Isaac would return with him alive (Genesis 22:5; Hebrews 11:19).
- The Old Testament is a foreshadowing of God's greater plan. Just as Abraham offered his "son of promise," God would offer His Son to die before His Son conquered death to live forevermore.

2:22 Abraham was not saved because he offered Isaac; Abraham's salvation was revealed because he offered Isaac. The act proved the faith.

- Being made "perfect" is the thought of being "finished/completed" (Hebrews 5:9; John 19:30; Luke 13:32). Even Jesus was perfected through trials and sufferings (Hebrews 2:10).
 - While remaining fully divine (He can never be anything less than God), Jesus took on humanity and became fully human to understand man to represent man knowingly through sufferings. (Hebrews 4:15)
 - Just as Jesus became a perfect representative through sufferings, believers will also go through sufferings to become Christlike. (Genesis 1:26; Galatians 4:19; 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:24)

2:23 The fulfilled Scripture was Genesis 15:6 – "*And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*" This was Abraham's response to the promise of God for descendants.

- Abraham is called "the Friend of God." (2 Chronicles 20:7. Isaiah 41:8. James 2:23).
- Abraham was "reckoned righteous" in Genesis 15; however, Abraham didn't sacrifice Isaac until Genesis 22.

2:24 "*You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*"

- It is impossible to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ without the life being changed.
- This concerns an individual selflessly serving God through their love for others and humbly responding to God's call for correction and action.

2:25 The writer identified both ends of the spectrum from mature and stoic Jewish Abraham to the rambunctious Gentile prostitute, Rahab.

- Rahab is in the lineage of Jesus. (Matthew 1:5) Salmon (Σαλμών σαλμων) married Rahab who was the harlot of Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17, 22-25; Hebrews 11:31). From Salmon and Rahab came Boaz who was the great-grandfather of David. (Salmon/Rahab → Boaz/Ruth → Obed → Jesse → David)
- Jewish tradition passed down that Rahab seduced Joshua and had children – then from their lineage came Jeremiah and Ezekiel.
- Rahab believed God would bring victory to his people and give them the Promised Land; she acted in faith by assisting the scouts. (Joshua 2)

2:26 "*For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*" (James 2:17)

- The spirit can live without the body; however, the body is simply a corpse without a spirit. The spirit gives life to the body; the spirit testifies to the life of the body through movement.
 - Works give action and testify to a living faith.
- Good works will be the natural result of proper faith (Ephesians 2:8-10)
- Webster defines “dead” (νεκρά νεκρά) as being characterized by a lack of activity or excitement; no longer functioning or alive; no longer relevant or important (i.e., a “dead” issue).

21 James 3

- Similar to “works” in James 2, in this chapter (James 3), speech is a “window into the heart of an individual.” The character of an individual is revealed in the way that they speak.
- *“There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.”* (Mark 7:15)

Read James 3:1-8 ... The Power of Speech

3:1 Although believers should strive to understand deeply, not all should become teachers because teachers will receive a stricter judgment.

- Teaching is listed as a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:26) and is associated with pastors (1 Timothy 3:1-2; Ephesians 4:11). Being an Overseer is a noble desire (1 Timothy 3:1), but it is not right for everyone.
- Society at the time may have influenced the desire to teach:
 - Church meetings of the time were dynamic and unstructured where everyone interrupted each other (1 Corinthians 14:26-40).
 - In the newly found freedom of testifying about what God had done, young believers were discussing topics that they did not fully understand.
 - Jewish society held Rabbis in high regard, so there may have been a desire to be respected and admired among peers.
- James includes himself as one of the “teachers” who will be judged more harshly.
- Jesus said: *“But I say to you that for every idle word man may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”* (Matthew 12:36)
- There are degrees of judgment in hell: Matthew 10:15, 11:20-24, 18:6; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 12:47-48, 20:47; John 19:11
- Those who know (or have been given the opportunity to know) the truth will be held more accountable than those who did not have the opportunity to learn God’s word. (Luke 10:10-16)
 - Everyone will be judged because there is a degree of understanding (natural revelation- Roman 1 & inner morality – Romans 2)
- Those who speak and teach the truth are held more accountable to comply with the facts that they are teaching. Jesus is the only individual in the New Testament that uses the term “hypocrite;” clearly, Jesus was angered by those who taught one truth and lived another. (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; 23:13-15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 24:51; Mark 7:6; Luke 6:42, 11:44, 12:56, 13:15)

3:2 The focus broadens from only teachers to everyone.

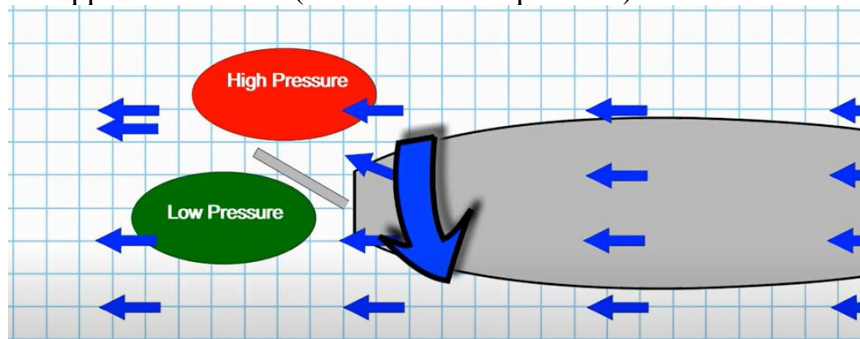
- The Greek term for “stumble” (ptaisē πταίσις) was used earlier in James to mean sin. (James 2:10)
- Scripture is very clear that all men have sinned. (Genesis 6:5,11-12,13; 8:21; 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Job 4:17; 9:2; 15:14-16; 25:4; Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-4; 130:3; 143:2; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-18,19,20,23; Galatians 3:22; 1 John 1:8-10)
- The Greek term “perfected” (teteleiōken τετελείωκεν) means to be complete, full or adequate. The man who is “complete” and “mature” in Christ is able to control his speech as well as his entire body.
- Every man sins; however, as a believer matures in Christ, he sins less and speaks more meaningfully. The maturity of a Christian is demonstrated by his speech.
- Jesus focused on speech:
 - *“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”* (Matthew 12:37)
 - *“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”* (Matthew 15:18-19)

The Tongue is As Little as a... (James 3:3-5)		
James 3:3	Horse Bit	Direction of a Large Horse
James 3:4	Rudder	Course of a Large Ship
James 3:5	Spark	Fiery Conflagration to Burn Down Forests

3:3 The bit is intentionally placed in the horse’s mouth to turn the head. The head is a metaphor for thoughts which control the entire body.

3:4 The trade ships of the Greco-Roman world could be very large to safely navigate the Mediterranean. The rudder itself does not turn the ship per se, but it sets the drift angle resulting in a hydrodynamic moment where moving forces and tension turn the ship.

- High pressure occurs in the direction that the rudder is turned as the ship turns in the opposite direction (towards the low pressure).



- The area of an effective rudder is $\sim 2/70$ of the immersed middle plane area of the floating vessel; the total rudder area should be 3-4% of boat's lateral plane area (the lateral projection of the underwater body)
- Faster vessels require less rudder area (rudders of motorboats are much smaller than sailboat rudders); as the speed increases, the impact of the rudder also increases.

- The most efficient rudder angle is 35 degrees.
- 3:5 A spark can originate from friction or burning debris from a larger fire. The small tongue can boast greatly, or it can inspire great things.
- 3:6 The Greek term of “world” (kosmos κόσμος) means the order and process of things. The tongue is a utility of unrighteousness that changes the course of a life and can destroy the lives of others.
- The tongue represents the wickedness in a heart. (Matthew 15:18-19)
 - The “*course of life*” (ton torchon tēn geneseōs - τὸν τροχὸν τῆν γενέσεως) is literally “the circle/wheel of man’s nature.”
 - In the Greek philosophy, the circle/wheel was used to represent the lifespan of man (from life-to-death).
 - Speech can destroy the “circle of life.”
 - This is the only use of the term “hell” (geennēs γέεννης) outside of the words of Jesus. (Matthew 23:15, 33)
 - The Hebrew term “Gehenna” means “Valley of [the sons of] Hinnom.”
 - This was the valley south of Jerusalem where ancient Israelites sacrificed their children to the Canaanite god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:2–6). This became Jerusalem’s garbage dump where trash is endlessly burned in later years.
 - The phrase “*the whole course of one’s life*” was commonly used in Greek philosophy and religion.
- 3:7 Mankind has domesticated and tamed wild animals throughout the history of the world.
- 3:8 While man cannot control his tongue, the Lord can curtail man’s wicked tendencies (Psalm 141:3) The metaphor is a snake’s tongue that moves endlessly in and out.
- Snakes have a small notch in the lip (the rostral groove), which allows for the tongue to pass out of the mouth without the mouth having to open.
 - Snakes have forked tongues which retract inside of a sheath in the lower jaw, so that only the forked ends are visible.
 - When a snake's tongue is flicked out of the mouth, receptors on the tongue store minute particles, which are perceived as scent. When the tongue is retracted, the tips of the tongue fit neatly into small openings in the roof of the mouth (the Jacobson's organ), so that the brain can assess the chemical information.
 - The first sin was initiated by the speech of a snake (Genesis 3:1-6)

Read James 3:9-12 ... Be Consistent in Worship

3:9 Love for God will result in a love for fellow man (1 John 4:20).

3:10 “*Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things should not be this way.*” (Ephesians 4:29)

- The Greek use of “cursing” (katara κατάρα) is calling down God’s judgment and wrath on someone. The opposite is blessing where God’s approval is called down. (1 Peter 3:9)
- Blessing can also be praise and worship towards God. (Psalm 28:6; 31:21; 66:8, 20; 68:19, 26, 35; 103:1-2, 20-22; 104:1, 35; 134:1-2; 135:19-21)
- An individual cannot genuinely worship (bless) God one day and then hate (curse) his fellow man during the next six days.

3:12 It is impossible for a fruit tree to bear a different kind of fruit. It is impossible for a salt water source to produce fresh water.

Read James 3:13-18 ... Godly Wisdom

3:13 There are two types of wisdom – one beneficial & one detrimental. Worldly wisdom is characterized by envy and selfish ambition

- This letter was being read by teachers/leaders in the early church (James 3:1); however, as with speech (the tongue), it applies to every believer.
- Wisdom must be applied. There is more to orthodoxy/beliefs than theology.
- Wisdom and understanding are often interchangeable.
 - The Greek term for “wise” (Sophos σοφός) relates to a spiritual outlook with daily application. Religion is not academic – it is applied truth.
 - The Greek term for “understanding” (epistēmōn ἐπιστήμων) relates to an educated individual that is similar to a scribe.
- Spiritual wisdom results in a lifestyle (application) of God’s word. God’s wisdom is practical, applicable and daily. (Matthew 7:16, 12:33)
- Strong leaders can be humble. Two individuals in Scripture are called “humble:” Moses (Numbers 12:3) and Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:29)
- The term “*meekness/humility of wisdom*” (prautēti sophias – πραῦτητι σοφίας) is made easier by genuinely grasping the greatness of God and the nature of man (1 Corinthians 8:1)

3:14 Jealousy and ambition reveal arrogance. Regardless of the activity where an individual excels, it can humbly be used for God’s service or (depending on the motive) it can be used for self-exaltation.

- Leadership “naturally” becomes egotistical, arrogant and domineering in any field of expertise. These teachers may have had correct theology, but poor motivation.
- The Greek term for “ambition” (eritheian ἐριθείαν) means self-interest and originally described the act of spinning cotton into yarn. This evolved into a politician that pushed political party interests (“to spin a yarn”).
 - Local churches and ministries should not compete with each other.
- The motive behind leadership must comply with the truth of love and humility. The teacher’s heart must correspond to the teacher’s message. Christianity is more than just correct doctrine. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) Correct theology goes beyond reason to application.

3:15 Self-serving wisdom is not from God.

- The term “earthly” (epigeios ἐπίγειος) means that this wisdom characterizes the way that men do things rather than the way that God does something. (2 Corinthians 5:1)
- The term “natural” (psychikē ψυχική) is the root word for psychology that can mean human, unspiritual or human instinct. It is the “life force” (lōnepēš חַיָּוּת) within a human or an animal. (Genesis 2:7)
- This unique term “demonic” (daimoniōdēs δαιμονιώδης) is only recorded this once in Scripture. It is not inspired or instigated by a demon, but it is someone acting demon-like. This might be someone who knows the spiritual truth, but rebels against what they know to be true. James has already used demons as examples of orthodox believers (James 2:19).

- The real need of believers is not to uncover additional truth about God, but to act on the truth that has already been revealed.
- These are not “false teachers” theologically (Judaizers, Gnostics), but they are “false teachers” motivationally.

3:16 The fruit of teachers who teach one thing (possibly even doctrinally correct), yet do not apply their teaching to their lives - results in confusion.

- The Greek term for “disorder” (akatastasia ἀκαταστασία) means “anarchy.”

3:17 *“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy.”*

Attributes of Godly Wisdom (James 3:17)		
1. Pure	Hagnē ἀγνή	Without hidden motives
2. Peace-loving	Eirēnikē ειρηνική	Opposite of rivalry
3. Gentle	Epieikēs ἐπιεικής	Kind; Tender
4. Reasonable	Eupeithēs εὐπειθής	Rational & Appropriate Response
5. Full of Mercy & Good Fruits	Mestē eleous kai karpōn agathōn μεστή ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν	Forgiving & caring for the needy
6. Impartial	Adiakritos ἀδιάκριτος	Fair & unprejudiced
7. Not Hypocritical	Anypokritos ἀνυπόκριτος	Sincere; undivided

3:18 Instead of the “fruit of wisdom,” James emphasizes the “fruit of righteousness” because wisdom (especially teaching) is inseparably connected with personal uprightness. (Matthew 5:9)

- Godly teachers sow in peace while bringing God’s peace to others.
- A truly “wise man” will control his speech (James 3:1-8), live consistent with his beliefs (James 3:9-12), and be a peacemaker. (James 3:13-18)
- Everyone is teaching someone because someone is watching everyone.
- Everyone is sowing seeds – so what kinds of seeds are being sown?

22 James 4

Read James 4:1-10 ... Deny the World & Seek God

4:1 The origin of disagreements and conflict is not God, but instead they originate from personal desires.

- The Greek terms for “disputes” (polemoi πόλεμοι) and “conflicts” (machai μάχαι) are used interchangeably. The slight difference is that “polemoi” refers to an entire military campaign, while “machai” refers to an individual battle.
- The Greek term for “desires” (hēdonōn ἡδονῶν) is the root word for “hedonism” with the meaning of a passion for self-gratification at any cost.
 - In Scripture, the term “hēdonōn” is always used in a negative sense. (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:13)
- This strife with sinful nature does not end at the point of salvation. The term “warring” (strateuomenōn στρατευομένων) is an ongoing battle that is the root word for “strategy.”
- As a new “creation” in Christ, man often retains old tendencies; however, the saved man is alive in the Spirit with new power to overcome old sin, (2 Corinthians 5:17)

- False teaching was promulgated about the sinful nature. The Gnostics believed that all flesh was evil. Ascetics taught that physical and emotional suffering equated to closeness to God.
 - The body is neutral that can be used for God’s glory or man’s destruction.
 - The body is the primary battleground of spiritual battles.
- 4:2 The murder of a brother may simply be anger without a cause. (Matthew 5:21-26)
Every “murder” begins with a desire (Scripture does not document whether the desire was good or bad). (James 5:6) Desires can be appropriate while the pursuit is characterized by wicked actions and attitudes.
- Believers should not deceive themselves; just because the goal is profitable or honorable does not mean that any means necessary can be used. Methodologies are judged as stringently as goals.
 - The Greek terms for “envy” (phthonos φθόνος) and “murder” (phoneuó φονεύω) are closely related.
 - Believers should not seek things without first seeking God’s will. Some use self-effort to attain their goals regardless of God’s will.
- 4:3 God will reject prayers when they are prayed with the wrong motives and self-serving intent. Even prayer can be displeasing to God when it is self-serving and wicked. (1 Kings 10:10-13)
- 4:4 James focuses on “faithless wives” as making friendships with the world. Wives have influence and sway over their husbands. (Amos 4:1-2; Ezekiel 8:14; 1 Kings 21:4-15).
- The author John Steinbeck in Travels with Charlie stated that beauticians are the most powerful influencers in America because of their influence on the wives of powerful men.
 - Later translations added “adulterers” to the original text of “adulteresses.”
 - Some broaden the title of “adulteress” to include all of God’s people as turning from Him in spiritual adultery. (Isaiah 54:4-8; Jeremiah 3:20; Hosea 9:1; Matthew 12:39; 16:4)
 - The phrase “a friend of the world” means to have worldlike ambitions, hobbies, expenses, etc. separate from God, His divine call and eternal plan (James 1:27; 3:6; Matthew 6:24; John 15:19; 1 John 2:15-17)
 - Those who are enemies of God cannot submit to God; traditionally, the pseudo-believer picks and chooses when he wants to submit or not. (Romans 8:7)
- 4:5 This verse is not explicitly quoted from Scripture; however, there are general themes concerning God’s jealousy. The question leads up to the next verse (James 4:6) which does quote Proverbs 3:34 (1 Peter 5:5-6).
- God desires for believers to be faithfully devoted to Him alone as they follow the guidance of His Spirit within them (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 6:14-15; Romans 8:26-27)
 - While it is wrong for man to be jealous out of false pride, God deserves the complete worship and commitment of His creation.
 - Man should not desire to elevate himself while selfishly filling himself with worldly pleasures.

4:6 This verse quotes Proverbs 3:34 (1 Peter 5:5-6). A man's escape from sinful worldly desires is to humbly admit one's fallen, sinful nature and accept God grace which He offers to the humble.

- This reference to Psalms reveals the importance of wisdom to James. The Books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are considered the "Books of Wisdom" in the Old Testament,
- Those who believe that they "are good enough" are arrogant, self-righteous and self-deceived.
- In the preceding verses, haughty leaders have been described as they compete for stature and worldly rewards. The humble leaders will be described in the following verses.

4:7 *"Submit therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."*

- The Greek term for "submit" (Hypotagēte ὑποτάγητε) is a military term that applies to a chain of command. (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:13)
- Man has three spiritual enemies (Ephesians 2:2-3):
 - 1. The fallen world (James 4:4)
 - 2. Man's sinful nature (James 4:1, 2, 5)
 - 3. Satan/Devil/Personal Evil (James 4:7)
- There is a personal, created being (Satan) whose goal is to thwart God's will. Believers should understand that every decision is spiritual warfare. (Ephesians 6:10-13)
 - The Devil has a demonic influence with broad angelic subordinates although the devil is limited to being in one place at one time. (1 Peter 5:8)
 - Jesus resisted the devil, and Satan left Him. (Matthew 4:1-11)
- Believers must understand that they are in a spiritual battle that is positioned on the way that an individual's body is utilized. Demons desired to have control over a body for their will instead of the body being subjected to God's will. (Matthew 8:28-32)

4:8 *"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."*

- Hands often reference what a believer does. The cleansing comes through God's Word. (Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Psalms 24:3-4, 51:7; Isaiah 1:16)
- This washing is a reference to the actions of the priesthood as they washed in the laver prior to serving God in His Tabernacle. (Exodus 30:17-21)
- In the Old Testament, Israel would draw close to God through entering His Tabernacle after the washing of hands in the laver.
- God will meet His people as their true heart is revealed to walk closer with Him.
- The term "purified hearts" (hagnisate kardias - ἀγνίσατε καρδίας) reveals that believers are being called to spiritual cleanliness before God (This is more than simply bathing and dressing up before a church service).
- The term "double-minded" (dipsychoi δίψυχοι) refers to a believer that is torn between God and the world (James 1:8). Man cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24)

4:9 This verse is similar to the beatitudes in Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:1-6). Believers should have contrite hearts over their fallen nature and sin. (Psalm 51:17)

- There needs to be a humble, repentant attitude while walking in the joy of the Lord. (James 1:2)

4:10 *“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*

- God opposes the proud, but give grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5)

Twelve Imperatives for Believers	
James 4:7	Submit to God
James 4:7	Resist the Devil
James 4:8	Come close to God
James 4:8	Cleanse your hands
James 4:8	Purify your hearts
James 4:9	Be broken
James 4:10	Humble yourselves
James 4:11	Do not speak against others
James 4:11	Be “doers” of the Law
James 4:13	Be open to God’s will & leading
James 4:16	Stop boasting
James 4:17	Do the right thing

Read James 4:11-12 ... Do Not Belittle or Look Down on Believing Brothers & Sisters

4:11 Believers are warned not to slander each other (2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Peter 2:1).

- Throughout the book of James, there is an emphasis on speech. As prideful individuals ambitiously attempted to exalt themselves, they were warned against speaking poorly about their brothers.
- Jewish Rabbi’s refer to negative gossip and criticism as the “3rd tongue” which kills three people: 1. The one who speaks 2. The one who listens 3. The one who is criticized.
- Slander is a way to boost personal ego as the slanderer becomes the judge of the accused.
- By criticizing fellow believers, the slanderer exalts themselves over the law to love one another (James 1:25; 2:8, 12; Leviticus 19:16-18).

- Criticism has been called a spiritual cancer that destroys people. (Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:36-38; Romans 14:3-4, 10, 13)

4:12 Believers should not elevate themselves to the position of the judge of the law (James 2:19). Every man will stand before God alone (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6-7; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Read James 4:13-17 ... Personal Plans are Dependent on God’s Sovereign Will

4:13 Believers should include God in their plans instead of developing their own manmade agenda for self-seeking purposes. (Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 16:3)

- There is nothing about God in the plan. Believers who do not begin with the will of God can never be satisfied in their own self-seeking wills. (Psalm 10:3)
- A vocation or marriage without God is a miserable experience.
- Jews wear tassels or tzitzit (תְּצִיץ) on the corners of the tallit (the Jewish prayer shawl) to remind them not to follow their heart.
 - *“It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so that you will do them and not follow your*

own heart and your own eyes, which led you to prostitute yourselves.”
(Numbers 15:39)

- Although society (Hollywood) urges children to follow their hearts, the heart is deceitful and wicked. (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21)

4:14 This verse is a reference to Proverbs 27:1. A man does not control his fleeting, temporal life and should not boast of achievements or brag of human plans.

- The parable of the rich fool focuses on this truth. (Luke 12:13-21)
- *“For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away.”*
- Mankind is frail, and man’s security should only be in God.
- This reference to Proverbs reveals the importance of wisdom to James. The Books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are considered the “Books of Wisdom” in the Old Testament,

The Transiency of Life	
A Shadow	Job 8:9; 14:2; Psalm 102:11; 109:23
A Breath	Job 7:7,16
A Cloud	Job 7:9; 30:15
A Wild Flower	Psalm 103:15; Isaiah 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:24
Grass	Psalm 37:2; Isaiah 51:12; James 1:10-11
Mist/Vapor/Vanity	Ecclesiastes 1:2,14; 2:1,11,15,17,19,21,23,26; 3:19; 4:4,7,8,16; 5:7,10; 6:2,4,9,22; 7:6,15; 8:10,14; 9:9; 11:8,10; 12:8

4:15 Live according to God’s will instead of personal ambitions.

- *“Lord, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am.”* (Psalm 39:4)

4:16 The Greek term for “arrogance” (alazoneiais ἀλαζονείαις) was used in ancient times to describe itinerant (showmen) doctors who traveled around as a medicine show selling magical potions as a remedy

- Men who boast of plans without God are simply “traveling medicine showmen” with imaginary ambitions.

4:17 *“So, for the person who knows to do good and doesn't do it, it is a sin.”*

- This describes the sin of omission where sin occurs because of inaction. (Romans 14:23)
- The Theologian A.T. Robinson believed that James 4:17 was the central truth in all of the book of James.

23 James 5

Read James 5:1-6 ... The Judgment of the Wealthy

5:1 James directs his message to the wealthy of this world (James 1:9-11; 2:1-7). The wealthy must understand the futility of their wealth and the judgment to come because of it. (Matthew 6:2-4,19-34; Luke 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:9-10,17)

- Wealth brings problems and worries in this life; in many ways, wealth exacerbates issues while masking sin.
- Wealthy people tend to be snobbish and pretentious; however, they should bitterly grieve (as if they lost their riches). These emotions are symbolic of repentance as they transition from trusting in wealth to trusting in God. (Psalms 51:17; 147:3)

- It is difficult for the wealthy to get into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23)
 - *“He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; Then it was well. ‘Is not that what it means to know Me?’ Declares the Lord.”* (Jeremiah 22:16)
- 5:2 Wealth is transient (Proverbs 23:5; Job 15:29; Habakkuk 2:6)
- In the ancient world, wealth consisted of three categories: (Matthew 6:19-20)
 - Stored Food... will become “rotted”
 - Festival Clothing... will be “moth-eaten”
 - Precious Metals ... will be “rusted”
 - There is no security in this world outside of God.
 - Everything that man treasures, the world can take away.
 - The sin is “stored up treasure” – savings. Self-serving savings will testify against the hoarding individual. The word “hoarding” literally means a sign or billboard.
- 5:3 Man will give an account as to the way that he used his resources – whether they are saved for personal use or given to those in need.
- All achievements will be tested by God. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)
 - The “last days” are already taking place and are synonymous with the “church age.” The “last days” began with the downpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as foretold in Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:17).
- 5:4 One charge against the wealthy was that they did not pay their laborers. (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14-15). The laborers made enough each day to feed their families; however, the wealthy would withhold the laborers pay to incite the laborers to return to work.
- The withheld wages testify to God against the wealthy. God will judge on behalf of exploited people. (Psalm 35:10, 91:8; Amos 4:1; Isaiah 10:2, 25:4)
 - The “Lord of Hosts” (Kyriou Sabaōth – Κυρίου Σαβαώθ) represents the Lord as the Commander of Heaven’s armies against which nothing can stand.
- 5:5 The next charge against the wealthy is that they were self-serving in their comforts without meeting the needs of others (Amos 4:1).
- Just as animals (i.e., cattle, pigs, chickens, sheep, etc.) are given much to eat leisurely as they are prepared for the day of slaughter – the same has happened to the wealthy.
 - The nation of America has been blessed, but pampered luxury comes with a responsibility to care for others. In 2020, America possesses 30% of the world’s wealth.
 - The poorest 20 percent of Americans consume more goods and services than the national averages for all people in most affluent countries.
- 5:6 Another charge against the wealthy is that they arrogantly abuse those around them.
- The murder of a brother may simply be anger without a cause. (Matthew 5:21-26)
The “murder” began with a self-seeking pride (James 4:2).

Read James 5:7-12 ... Hope for the Return of Jesus

5:7 This section concerning the Lord’s second coming encourages the reader to “be patient.” (Makrothymēate Μακροθυμήσατε)

- Just as the farmer must patiently endure his work during rain, believers must continue to patiently work through challenging times for the Lord’s return.

- The Lord’s “coming” (parousias παρουσίας) carries the meaning of a royal visit and all of the preparation for the arrival.
- 5:8 The phrase “*strengthen the hearts*” (stērixate tas kardias – στηρίζατε τὰς καρδίας) literally means to put iron in your hearts which directs believers to be courageous and bold.
- Believers should live in the constant expectation of the Lord’s return. This attitude should impact the believer’s behavior in challenging circumstances.
- 5:9 Do not complain or gossip about fellow Christians. Believers will give an account and be judged for each time that they have judged and talked against others. (Matthew 6:14-15, 18:35; Luke 6:38)
- “*The Judge is standing right at the door.*” (Revelation 3:20)
 - This is a metaphor of the Judge preparing to enter the courtroom.
- 5:10 The self-righteous, religious people of the Old Testament, persecuted the prophets (Matthew 5:12; 23:30-31, 37; Luke 6:23, 11:50; 13:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:15), and then they built monuments to the prophets. (Matthew 23:29)
- 5:11 There is a well-known idiom where someone is characterized as having “the patience of Job.” Job had great wealth – “*Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and very many servants.*” (Job 1:2-3) Job lost everything he owned and for 35 chapters after his friends show up, Job tries to prove his innocence.
- “*The Lord is full of compassion* (polysplanchnos πολύσπλαγχνός) *and is merciful.* (oiktirmōn οἰκτίρμων)” (Psalm 103:8; 111:4) These same characteristics of pity and mercy are attributed to God repeatedly. (Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13)
 - This reference to Job reveals the importance of wisdom to James. The Books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are considered the “Books of Wisdom” in the Old Testament,
- 5:12 Throughout the book of James, there is an emphasis on speech. In this verse, there is an emphasis “above all” that speech should not improperly use the name of God to swear – especially when man has so little control of circumstances. (James 4:13-17)
- Jews had elaborate guidelines about proper ways to swear. (Matthew 5:33-37)
 - The judgment could relate to lying (Leviticus 19:12) or to taking God’s name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)
 - In modern culture outside of church, God’s name is used more frequently in cursing than in witnessing.
 - James encourages the hearer to be straightforward and honest. The truth should be simple, and the believer should be faithful.

Read James 5:13-18 ... Prayer is the Appropriate Response to Suffering

- 5:13 Believers should engage with God at all times. In both difficult and joyful times, believers should respond to the Lord.
- The prior verses prohibited the misuse of God’s name, but this verse testifies to the appropriate use of God’s name.
- 5:14 The elders of the church need to be included in prayers for the sick. This is beneficial for the elders as well as those who are sick.

- The terms elders, overseers, bishops and pastors are interchangeable.
- 5:15 The prayer of faith will heal and bring forgiveness.
- There are multiple individuals who could not be healed throughout Scripture including Elisha (2 Kings 13:14), Paul (2 Corinthians 12:8) and Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20).
- 5:16 *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*
- Believers should share their shortcomings and failures with each other for support and accountability. Scripture does not require the sharing of sin with church leadership, but encourages the admission of sin with one another in fellowship.
- 5:17-18 Christians have the same spirit within them as Elijah had with his miracles
- The timeframe was not documented in the Old Testament, but it was passed down through Jewish tradition. (1 Kings 18:41-45).

Read James 5:19-20 ... Christianity Concerns Restoration

5:19 Sin leads to sin – disaster to disaster. When someone repents from a single sin, the sinner turns from more than a single action – they turn from a progressive path of destruction.

- The Greek term for “wander” (planēthē πλανηθῆ) originates from the same root as planets. Ancient astronomers would track the movement of the stars; however, some heavenly bodies would not travel as the other heavenly bodies because they were planets.

5:20 The Book of James concludes with brotherly correction and support. Believers are to help each other turn from sin. (Galatians 6:1)