

Key to JAMES

1. BACKGROUND:

Writer: James, a half brother of JESUS (Mark 6:3); apparently converted by the appearance of the risen CHRIST (I Corinthians 15:7). James was present at the prayer gathering (Acts 1:14), later became pastor and teacher of the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9). He was moderator of the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13) and according to tradition, died a martyr's death there.

Date: About A.D. 45 and from Jerusalem.

Occasion: James writes to the "**twelve tribes which are scattered abroad**" by which he does not mean Jewish tribes, but Christian Jews of the dispersion, or foreign churches composed of Christian Jews. No doubt these Christians had written of their problems to the home church. This letter may be the result. At any rate, the truth is elementary, yet basic and sound.

2. THEME:

The emphasis is "works" and "holy living." Or, that a holy life and good works are the inevitable results of the Christian profession. It is not that salvation is other than by faith, but that true faith will certainly show its genuineness by good works in the life of the believer.

3. MAIN DIVISIONS:

By chapters:

Testing of faith (1; 2);
an example of the reality of faith (3);
rebuke of worldliness (4);
rich warned (5).

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The letter abounds in vivid imagery. With a single stroke, the writer commends a duty, scourges a fault, denounces a wrong, crowns a virtue.

There is a vast difference between the writing of Paul and James. The latter writes more of a treatise than an Epistle. Without salvation or personal mention, James launches immediately into his subject and concludes with the climax of a platform speaker.

The book seems to be composed of detached subjects without apparent connection: Temptation, patience, wisdom, prayer, poverty, riches, lust, sin, faith, good works, respect of persons, the

tongue, self-sufficiency.

The style and general content of the book seem to be related to the "wisdom books" of the Old Testament (Proverbs).

5. OUTLINE:

Introduction (1:1)
Trial of Faith (1:2-27)

Temptation
Purpose and Source
Practical Rules
Attention, Action
Sincerity

Working of Faith (2)
Respect of Persons
Faith and Works

Wisdom of Faith (3)

Tongue Trouble
True Wisdom

Character of Faith (4)

Purity, Charity
Submission

Triumph of Faith (5:1-18)

Oppression Avenged
Patience Rewarded
Prayer Answered

Conclusion (5:19, 20)

6. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

In Paul's writings we see the principles of salvation and faith, while in the Epistle of James we see the very practical outworking of these principles.

It is easy to understand the need for the "Essay on the Tongue" as given in chapter 3. One can see presumptuous, worldly-minded men putting themselves forward to be leaders in the early

church. In 2:8 we have the "**royal law**" given. The opposite is given next as having respect of persons which James denounces.

James divides wisdom between that which is "**devilish**" (3:15), and that which is "**from above**" or divine (3:17). Encouragement to sing is in 5:13.

7. KEY:

Salvation is a definite miracle of GOD and results in a transformed life. Some of the transformations are listed in James' letter.

~ end of James ~

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