

The Epistle of James

M. Ryan Strouse, MBS

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INTRODUCTION

James, the stepbrother of the Lord Jesus Christ, had the unique opportunity to observe the perfect God-Man¹ fulfill all righteousness² from a young age (Luke 2:40-52) to his death, burial, and resurrection. The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ seemingly stoked the attention of his unbelieving family to belief (Matthew 13:55-58, Acts 1:14); two of them would transition from stepbrother to “*Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (James 1:1, Jude 1:1). James would rapidly grow from a religious, unbelieving Jew to a sincere “*Doer of the work*” (James 1:25-27). James grew as a Christian in the Jerusalem church from after the resurrection through Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff), through persecution and scattering by Saul (Acts 8:1; 9:31), through persecution from Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1ff), until finally transitioning into the role as pastor (Acts 12:17; 15:13,19; 21:18). The Lord Jesus Christ uniquely prepared³ his redeemed stepbrother to lead, shepherd, and encourage the persecuted and scattered Jerusalem saints.

The Lord Jesus Christ allowed his first candlestick assembly⁴ in Jerusalem to undergo severe persecution at the hands of Saul, a rising star among the religious leaders. The large assembly (Acts 2:48, 4:4) was scattered⁵ into smaller, independent assemblies throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 8:1, 9:31). The Lord used his stepbrother, James, to write an inspired letter of encouragement to these church members to respond in a Christ-like manner through the divers tribulations in patience, in godly behavior, and in faith. The “*Divers*” or various (James 1:2) types of trials facing these church members included physical persecution (Acts 7:58), imprisonment (Acts 8:3), poverty (James 1:9), oppression and garnered wages from the rich (James 5:4), and physical illness (James 5:13-14). As well, some followed after the world’s wisdom and responded carnally to the testing, which led to fighting and division in the scattered assemblies (3:13-4:4). James sought to help the erring brothers turn back to truth (5:19-20, Ps. 119: 59, 176). James recognized that true saving faith and godly behavior are challenged during trials, especially when physical and financial persecution are involved⁶; hence, the *Epistle of James* provides practical and pithy statements to encourage a godly response from the persecuted believers. Ultimately,

¹ I Timothy 3:16 – “*God was manifest in the flesh*”; Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23 – “*Immanuel... God with us*”

² Isaiah 42:21, Matthew 3:15, Galatians 3:24 – Jehovah was well pleased in the Messiah-Servant for fulfilling all righteousness

³ James had the unique position of being one that doubted Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah despite being so close to him for many years. As a converted “True Jew”, James could precisely minister to the last generation of the covenant community to trust in the “*Once for all*” sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God (Hebrews 10:10-11).

⁴ The Lord’s first church was assembled at the arrival of John the Baptist in Matthew 3; multitudes from Jerusalem and surrounding regions responded to the “*Messenger*” (Malachi 3:1) in faith that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, confessed their sins, were baptized in the Jordan, and began to follow Jesus the Great Shepherd as disciples. Initially, the Lord’s assembly was large, but upon his teaching about being the bread of life “*Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*” (John 6:66). The Word of Life’s assembly would dwindle to a “*Little flock*” (Luke 12:32) as the time drew nearer to the cross.

⁵ διασπορά – “*Scattered*” Acts 8:1, James 1:1, I Peter 1:1

⁶ Acts 8:3, “*As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison*”.

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James wanted these church members to endure the tests of faith in righteous behavior to “*Receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*” (James 1:12).

Another important purpose of this letter is to test⁷ the church members faith as genuine or not. The Lord allowed spiritual, physical, and financial persecution to test the sincerity of their faith (James 1:3); the individual that would exhibit godly works and behavior when faced with opposition revealed that “*He being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work*” (James 1:25) had “*Pure religion*” (James 1:27). James provides excellent, inspired doctrine regarding works and fruit that follow true saving faith. James boldly declared to his audience in James 2:20, “*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*” James methodically laid out the principle that works or fruit always follows true saving faith^{8 9}. The behaviors that James encourages his audience with are also the works that follow genuine saving faith in the Holy Spirit-filled believer (Eph.5: 18, Gal.5: 16¹⁰).

In essence, the individual with truth saving faith will exhibit the following behaviors in tribulation while filled with the Holy Spirit: “*Count it all joy*” (1:2), patience (1:3-4), pray in faith for wisdom (1:5-6), lays aside ungodly behavior (1:13-21), doer of the Word (1:22-25), visit the fatherless and widows (1:27), impartiality (2:1-13), living faith followed by works (2:14-26), control of the tongue (3:1-12), conversation of godly wisdom instead of carnal wisdom (3:13-18), not a friend of the world (4:1-6), draws close to the Lord (4:7-10), does not slander other brethren (4:11-12), seeks the Lord’s will in everything (4:13-17), prayerful in financial persecution (5:1-6), patient in tribulation (5:7), waits for the coming of the Lord (5:7-8), prepares for judgment (5:9), has the patience of Job (5:10-11), does not participate in false oaths (5:12), has an effectual, fervent prayer life (5:13-20).

James wanted his audience of scattered church members to test their faith as genuine and successfully respond through the diverse tribulations and persecutions that faced them. As well, he sought to restore unity in the assembly by having individuals draw nigh to God, cleanse their hands, and purify their hearts (4:6-8). James laid out a formula for trials of faith. Essentially, as believers assembled to worship the Lord Jesus Christ and carry out his commission divers tribulations (1:2) arose to the faithful. Those believers needed to count it all joy (1:2) as they hoped in the Lord Jesus Christ (5:8), remain patient (1:3-4) under testing, and seek the Lord in prayer (1:5-6) for wisdom. As they followed these broad commands they were to walk in godly behavior (1:13-5:20) while under the pressure of the test. The individual that endured the test, let patience have her perfect work (1:4), and saw the “*End of the Lord*” as Job did (5:11) would be more complete and entire in sanctification (1:4) and would receive the “*The crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*” (1:12).¹¹

⁷ James challenges the audience to test their faith: James 1:8 “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*”; James 1:26 “*If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain*”; James 3:13 “*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?*”.

⁸ Matthew 3:8 – John the Baptist challenged the religious Pharisees and Sadducees to “*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*”

⁹ The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 12:15-20 “*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*”

¹⁰ Galatians 5:16 “*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*”. When the believer is filled with the Spirit and actively walking in the Spirit it is impossible to fulfill the lust of the flesh at the same time; however, once we sin we break the Spirit-filling. “*Ye shall not fulfill*” is an emphatic subjunctive negation; it includes the double negative οὐ μὴ and subjunctive verb τελέσητε to emphatically negate any possibility of fulfilling the flesh!

¹¹ Job 23:10 “*But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*”.

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BACKGROUND

John the Baptist heralded the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was “*Immanuel*” and “*The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*”. At the beginning of the Lord’s ministry there were many Jews who continued to have a heart of unbelief; primarily, this group included the Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, and other religious leaders. The unbelieving religious leaders would promulgate their unbelief to the multitudes, and would continue an ongoing attack of unbelief on the Word of Life from before his birth, during his earthly ministry, and after his death, burial, and resurrection with the candlestick assemblies. The Lord transparently told his disciples to anticipate persecution in Matthew 10:24-25, “*If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household*”¹². The rejection of the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was “*Immanuel*” or “*God with us*” (Is.7:14, Mt. 1:23) had been and would continue to be the impetus for persecution of Jesus and any who follow him.

Matthew 3 reveals the beginnings of the Lord’s assembly when multitudes from the region had faith that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, repented of sins, were baptized in the Jordan River, and followed Him as disciples. The Lord’s following would grow to over five thousand (Mt.14:21). Many of His “*Disciples went back, and walked no more with him*” (Jn.6:66) as the Lord’s teachings became more narrow and He prepared His disciples for His death on the cross. As Jesus was carried away by the high priests, Matthew 26:56 indicates, “*Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled*”. Ultimately, the Lord was crucified alone with “*Many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him*” (Mt.27:55). Peter and the disciples forsook the Lord; however, the Lord tremendously restored Peter and the disciples after his resurrection in John 21. The Lord would minister to his assembly once more before ascending into heaven to prepare a place for believers and to sit on the right hand of God (Acts 1:3-4, John 14:2, Mark 16:19).

After the Lord’s resurrection from the dead, restoration of Peter and the disciples, and ascension into heaven the decimated Jerusalem assembly reconvened in the upper room (Acts 1:13-15). The Holy Ghost would authenticate the assembly on the day of Pentecost as the place of worship until the Lord’s return (Acts 2:1-5). The renewed and restored Peter would preach mightily and three thousand souls were saved, baptized, and added to the church (Acts 2:41). The large Jerusalem assembly kept its ministry model¹³ simple as indicated in Acts 2:42, “*Continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*”. This assembly had tremendous momentum in Jerusalem that Peter and John stood on Solomon’s Porch in the temple and preached to the Jewish multitudes that, “*Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses*” (Acts 3:11-15). This momentum grieved the Sadducees, but they were helpless as another five thousand souls “*Heard the word believed*” (Acts 4:4). The once decimated Jerusalem church whose leaders forsook the Lord was restored and grew to a membership of at least 8,120 souls (Acts 1:15, 2:41, 4:4).

¹² Matthew 12:24-32 reveals that the Pharisees committed the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost by claiming that Jesus cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub.

¹³ Note that fellowship should always follow doctrine, not the other way around. As well, the large size of the church did not require more activities or amusement; they simply walked in biblical doctrine, fellowshiped around biblical doctrine with food and prayer.

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The momentum of the Jerusalem church that followed Pentecost began to dwindle as the high priest and Sadducees “*Were filled with indignation*” and cast Peter and the apostles into the common prison; nevertheless, the “*Angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors*” and commanded them to teach in the temple (Acts 5:17-19). The religious leaders confronted Peter in the temple, and brought him before the council to reprimand him about not teaching in the name of Jesus; Peter quaintly responded, “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). Gamaliel came to the defense of Peter and the Apostles, they were beaten, commanded to not speak in the name of Jesus, and let go (Acts 5:34-40). Despite the powerless warning of the Sadducees, the Apostles continued forward as revealed in Acts 5:41-42, “*And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ*”.

The large Jerusalem church required assistance with the daily ministrations of widows. The Apostles primary ministry was around the Word of God, not serving tables and daily ministrations (Acts 6:1-2). The twelve Apostles gathered the assembly and they appointed seven men of honest report to fulfill the role of deacon¹⁴ (Acts 6:1-5, I Tim.3:8-13). Of the seven deacons appointed, Stephen stood out as “*A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 6:5). Stephen served as a deacon and did “*Great wonders and miracles among the people*” so much that the people could not resist “*The wisdom and the spirit by which he spake*” (Acts 6:10). Stephen’s bold testimony stirred up the religious leaders once again, who brought him before the council under false accusations of blasphemy (Acts 6:13-15). Stephen was given a captive audience of unbelieving religious leaders so he capitalized on his opportunity and preached a thorough message that covered about two thousand years of Jewish history to reveal the absurdity of their unbelief (Acts 7).

The prophets indicated that the Messiah would come to reign as King over his people (Is.9:6,11:10); however, the Jewish people rejected that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, Son of God, and the Once for all sacrifice (Heb.10:10). In Acts 7, Stephen responded boldly to the high priest and council. He takes these Jewish leaders through about two thousand years of Jewish history from when God appeared to Abraham to Jacobs’s twelve sons to Moses leading the twelve tribes out of Egypt back to the Promised Land. He reminds them how the first generation of Jews in the Wilderness (Acts 7:39) did not obey God and rebelled against him. He likens this generation of Jews to the previous generation of their fathers that resisted God. The Jewish leaders were stiff-necked and resistant. Stephen indicated that the old generation of Jews rejected the direct communication with God in the wilderness and persecuted the prophets of the coming Christ, and this generation rejected and killed their Messiah. Acts 7:54 reveals, “*They were cut to the heart*” by his preaching that wove the Old Testament into their current situation. Acts 7:57 reveals that they stopped listening and could not handle the truth that was pricking their hearts; ultimately, they ran toward him and stoned him to death. Stephen’s message was that they rejected the Just One, their Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Jerusalem church was not being persecuted for just being Christians or other vague ideas of Christianity; they were being persecuted for boldly and clearly teaching the Word of God, and when the Word of God is taught contextually and interpreted within its context it will prick the heart.

¹⁴ The office of Deacon was first established in Acts 6:1 to serve the widows who were neglected in the daily ministrations. “*Ministrations*” is from the root Greek word *διακονία* (deacon), which means “through the dust”. The office of Deacon is an office of service, not of leadership and decision-making for the assembly. The qualifications of a deacon are found in I Timothy 3:8-13. Also note, the Jerusalem church had seven deacons for a membership of at least 8,120.

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After Stephen was martyred, it is revealed that Saul consented to the murder of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The Murder of Stephen launched a full-fledge persecution of church members, which cause the scattering of the Jerusalem church. Any momentum the Jerusalem church had was gone; Saul seemingly had full license to persecute this assembly. Acts 8:1-3 reveals that Christian men and women were dragged from their homes for teaching truth. The teaching of the Church of God at Jerusalem convicted the Jewish Religious leaders; these leaders controlled the hearts of the city and country and used their size and power to oppress the church members in a variety of ways (James 1:2). Acts 8:4 reveals that the Jerusalem assembly was scattered abroad; nevertheless, the scattered believers preached the Word of God wherever they went. Acts 9:31 indicates that once Saul was converted the scattered churches in the regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had rest. James wrote to scattered church members that went on to start independent churches in these regions.

AUTHOR

The New Testament scriptures include several individuals by the name of James; however, the only two potential candidates for authorship would be James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, or James, the stepbrother of Jesus. James, the son of Zebedee, left his father, fishing, and ship behind and followed Jesus of Nazareth by faith (Matt.4:22ff). James, the son of Zebedee, would be sent out in the role of Apostle¹⁵ to “*The lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt.10:2). Acts 12 reveals that the Apostle James was the first Apostle to be martyred by Herod Agrippa I¹⁶. Agrippa saw that the murder of James pleased the Jews and he sought to kill Peter; however, the church members prayed for him and the Lord miraculously delivered Peter from Herod’s imprisonment (c.f. Acts 12:6-19). Peter tells the praying church members to notify James the stepbrother of Jesus of his miraculous delivery from the grips of Agrippa. This is the first passage that reveals the leadership position of James, the brother of Jesus, over the Jerusalem assembly. The timing of the James’, the son of Zebedee, death and the sequence of scripture does not support him as the author of the *Epistle of James*.

James, the brother of Jesus, was one of the natural born sons of Joseph and Mary. Matthew 13:55 reveals their children, “*Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?*” James had the unique opportunity to grow up in the same homestead with Jesus, who was “*God was manifest in the flesh*” (I Timothy 3:16). Similar to the experience of the Apostle John, James was

¹⁵ Apostle means a “*Sent one*”. The role of Apostle was first seen in the Lord’s assembly in Matthew 10:2. In order to replace Judas’ spot as Apostle, Acts 1:21-26 details the qualifications for selecting a new Apostle: to have companied with the Lord Jesus and to be a witness of his resurrection. Paul noted in I Corinthians 12:28, “*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles*”. Ephesians 4:11 indicates that Christ “*Gave some, apostles*” to the churches. In Ephesians 2:20-22, Paul uses the construction motif to reveal that the apostle’s doctrine is the foundation of the local church, which is built on “*Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*”. The role of Apostle extended beyond the twelve to James the stepbrother of Jesus, and to Paul, “*As one born out of due time*” (I Cor.15:7-9).

¹⁶ The New Testament details several Herod’s that ruled over Judea and surrounding provinces. Herod The Great (Matt.2, Lk.1:5) brought on “*Rachel’s weeping*” when he slew all children under two years old (Matt.2:16). His son, Herod Archelaus, took over the reign once his father died (Matt.2:15, 22). Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded at the wish of his adulteress wife, Herodias. Herodias had been married to Herod Philip and had a daughter named Salome (Mt.14:6, Lk.3). As well, Herod Antipas put Christ on trial and escalated the responsibility to Pontius Pilate. Herod Agrippa I is the one that killed James, the Apostle and brother of John, in Acts 12. Finally, Herod Agrippa II was “*Almost persuaded*” by Paul to be a Christian in Acts 26:28.

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able to hear, to see, and touch the “*Word of Life*” throughout the early years of his life (I John 1:1). James was able to see first hand that Jesus was perfect, and never sinned¹⁷; he would reflect on this in James 2:2, “*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*”. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, was the God-Man that revealed his perfection to his family by complete control of his tongue, body, and behavior. Despite being intimately close to the Lord for many years, James initially suffered from the same unbelief as many others in the first generation of Jews in the wilderness that saw the Red Sea parted, that were led by a pillar of fire and a cloud of smoke, and that saw the Lord furnish a table of food in the wilderness for them day by day.

Growing up in the household with the Lord, James and his siblings did not have faith that their stepbrother was actually the Messiah, and scripture indicates they were offended in him (Matt.13:57). John 7:5 reiterates this point, “*For neither did his brethren believe in him*”. As well, James and his siblings carried the stigma that their Mother, Mary, was a fornicator instead of the virgin mother of the Messiah (John 8:41). This family was ashamed of their Mother who operated in faith and claimed Jesus to be “*Immanuel*” (Matt.1:23); as well, they were offended in Jesus who was perfect, but caused major disruption for hypocritical Jews. Ultimately, James and his brethren were saved by faith and assembled with their stepbrother’s church after his ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9,14).

James would rapidly grow as Christian in the Jerusalem church under the pastoral leadership of Peter and the Apostles (Acts 1:15). James, as most Jews living in Nazareth, had the head knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures; as well, James was privy to the teachings of Immanuel during his earthly ministry, and was able to see perfection and sincerity in his actions. His sanctification would have accelerated once the confluence of that didactic and practical knowledge met true saving faith. As indicated previously, James grew as a Christian in the Jerusalem church from after the resurrection through Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff), through persecution and scattering by Saul (Acts 8:1; 9:31), through persecution from Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1ff), until finally transitioning into the role as pastor. In Acts 12:17, Peter told the church members to notify James of his miraculous escape; this is the first acknowledgement of James’ leadership over Jerusalem church. James senior leadership over the assembly is seen further in Acts 15:13 and 19 when he had the final sentence in decision making, “*James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me*” and “*Wherefore my sentence is*”. For a third time, Luke highlights James as the senior elder in Acts 21:17-18, “*When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren receive us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present*”. Not only was he the pastor of the Jerusalem church, but also Paul indicates in Galatians 1:17-19 that James was an Apostle in that assembly.

James exhibited the characteristics of the spiritual gift of exhortation as detailed in Romans 12:12, which Paul would write at a later time. The initial encouragement in James 1:2-6 includes count it all joy, have patience, and pray for wisdom; similarly, Romans 12:12 is the corresponding verse for the gift of exhortation that states, “*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer*”. Under inspiration, Paul could have based the characteristic verses of the spiritual gift of exhortation after James and his epistle. The Lord placed the right

¹⁷Families can see the “*Old man*” come out in the flesh among each other in the privacy of the home; nevertheless, the Lord was observed to be perfect in the comfort of his home by his family.

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pastor with the right spiritual gift to oversee this particular group that needed biblical exhortation. Appendix B details the defense of James gift of exhortation.

James had a unique background and preparation to be the perfect pastor for the Jerusalem church and scattered saints during this time of persecution from Judaism. He was able to intimately observe the Messiah in person longer than any other Jew and rejected him as Messiah for a long period; nevertheless, he had sincere faith and became a converted “True Jew”. James was well equipped to address a Jewish audience that was accustomed to hypocrisy and vain oblations (Is.1:13, Amos 4:4, Zech.7:5-7) about sincerity and pure religion (1:25-27).

AUDIENCE

James 1:1 details his audience as “*The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*”. The reference to the twelve tribes indicates the Jewish background of his audience, which would indicate an origin from Jerusalem. The key word in identifying the specific context of this Jewish audience is “*Scattered*” or διασπορά in the Greek. This word unlocks the context of the specific audience that James is addressing in his letter. The verb form is first used in Acts 8:1 that indicates, “*And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*”. In Acts 8:4, Luke provides additional information regarding their fortitude toward the Gospel while under duress: “*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.*”. Saul drove the persecution of the Jerusalem church to squelch the teaching that Jesus was “*Immanuel*”, who came to save sinners; nevertheless, the persecution drove the believing Jews and the Gospel to other regions. Acts 9:31 reveals that scattered church members started churches “*Throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria*”. Acts 11:19-21 indicates that the scattered Jewish church members started local churches “*As far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word*”. Peter, the second pastor¹⁸ of the Jerusalem assembly, would write his first epistle to the “*Strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*”. This persecution drove the Gospel throughout the world by beautiful feet of believers that “*Preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*” (Rom.10:14-15, Is.52:7). In short, the scattered twelve tribes were the persecuted church members originally from the Jerusalem church.

There was at least a minimum church membership of 8,120 souls prior to the scattering from Saul; the majority of scattered church members consisted of new converts. All were alive during the earthly ministry of Christ and were aware, if not eye witnesses, of the miraculous events that occurred after the resurrection of Christ (Mt.27:50-54). In particular, these Jews were apart of the last generation of the Covenant Community. The Covenant Community¹⁹ included the Jews from the time Moses ratified the Old Covenant with Jehovah (Ex.24:7-8) until the death of Christ on the cross, which signified the New Covenant (Mt.26:28, Heb.9:14-15); practically, the Covenant Community did not end until the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. The first generations of the Covenant Community had tremendous privilege and presence from Jehovah, and the last generation had the “*Light of the world*”, the “*I AM*”, and “*Immanuel*” in their presence; yet, they had him crucified. Paul would exhort this same audience to cease from animal sacrifices in the Temple, and to trust in the “*Once for all*” sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb.10:10).

¹⁸ The Lord Jesus Christ was the first Pastor the Jerusalem church, which he lovingly called his “*Little flock*” (Luke 12:32). Peter was the second lead Pastor of the Jerusalem assembly (Mt.10:2, Acts 1:15). James was the third lead Pastor of this assembly.

¹⁹ Thomas M. Strouse, *The Word of Exhortation: A Commentary on The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (Cromwell: CT, 2018), pp.18-22.

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The scattered Jewish church members were dispersed throughout the world; they started their own independent churches (Acts 9:31, 11:19, I Pt.1:1), and would assemble in synagogues on Sundays when the synagogues were open. James 2:2 uses the Greek word συναγωγήν (synagogue), which is translated as Assembly. The biblical precedent for where churches assembled together included the following: by the seaside (Mt.13:1), a room (Acts 1:13), synagogues (Jm. 2:2), the Herod-Zerubbabel Temple (Acts 3:11), a house connected to a synagogue (Acts 18:7), and the homes of church members (Rom.16:5ff). The purpose of an ἐκκλησία is for believers to assemble around the Word of God and to continue therein; the simple church model (Mt. 18:20) the Lord has given allows believers of any socio-economic status in any time period and culture to worship in a “Golden candlestick” (Rev.1:20).

As with all pastors, James was wary that he had a mixed audience of believers and unbelievers. The Lord would use persecution to test his churches, which would cause believers and unbelievers to decide if they would turn to the Lord. James challenged his audience to test their faith in James 2:14, “*What doth it profit, my bretheren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?*” James audience went from extreme legalism and works righteousness to salvation by faith alone (Gal.2:16). The teaching of salvation by faith alone elicited three responses: true saving faith and resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ (Gal.2:20-21), works salvation and frustrating the grace of God by supplementing it with works (Gal.1:6, 3:1, Heb.10:10-11), or a profession of dead faith with no works (James 2:14ff). James audience enjoyed the prospects of freedom from the burden of Judaism’s tradition and law (Mt.23:4); they gravitated to this faith with freedom from these traditions, but only made false professions and had dead faith. Unfortunately, some scattered church members responded carnally to the test and trials, which led to division and fighting among the scattered assemblies.

THEOLOGY

The Epistle of James contains a small amount of theological doctrine; however, once the reader understands the context of the book it is understood that the audience was well versed in the “*Apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). *The Epistle of James* has oft been criticized by its lack of doctrine, namely, Martin Luther who indicated the book was too practical, “*Strawy*”, and anemic in doctrine²⁰. James’ focus is on pure religion that stems from a sincere heart of an individual with true saving faith; he rebukes empty professions of faith, hearers of the Word, insincerity, carnal behavior, and respect of persons. These were issues all too common with the religious leaders and hypocritical Jews. James does include the following broad doctrinal categories: Theology proper (1:1, 1:17, 2:1, 2:5, 3:9, 5:4), Doctrine of Salvation (1:1, 2:1, 2:14-20), Doctrine of Eschatology (1:12, 5:7-9), Doctrine of Ecclesiology (1:1, 2:2, 5:13-15), Doctrine of Prayer (1:5-6, 1:17, 5:4, 5:13-18), the Doctrine of Patience (1:3-4, 1:12, 5:7-11), and the Doctrine of Christ-like behavior.

The primary doctrine in *The Epistle of James* is that of Christ-like behavior stemming from a heart of sincere saving faith. James would challenge and exhort his audience to behave as Christ perfectly exemplified in all areas (Heb.4:15). The doctrine of James was rooted in the person of Christ from the Old Testament scriptures, personal observation of the God-Man (3:2), and the recent earthly ministry and teachings of Christ. James seems to hint at the Lord Jesus Christ when he instructs them “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God*” (1:5); James’ audience understood that *Wisdom* was the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Prov. 8:35). James audience was well versed in the doctrine of the law and scriptures; thus, James urged them to be a “*Doer of the work*” and to have “*Pure religion and undefiled before God*”. The theology of Christ-like behavior in James is based off His

²⁰ James H. Ropes, *The Epistle of St. James The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, 1978), p.106.

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perfect behavior and responses during his earthly ministry; James urged these church members to respond and behave as Christ, our perfect example.

STRUCTURE

The outline, structure, and flow of James are noted as difficult to follow by many commentators, and it is criticized as a random grouping of proverbial statements. Martin Luther remarked on the flow of James as, “*Throwing things together chaotically*”²¹. The key issue in understanding the structure and flow of the *Epistle of James* is the author and the context. James wrote with the heart of a pastor that wanted to see his scattered, former church members successfully pass the test of faith. The context reveals that they were in the midst of severe persecution; James’ audience did not need a treatise on doctrine, but concise and practical instruction on how to respond and behave in persecution. James’ structure and flow is fragmented into short topics on Christ-like response and behavior; however, when the context and author’s perspective is understood, the reader can follow the flow of the book.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER SCRIPTURES

James masterfully cross-references the Old Testament scriptures and the teachings of Christ throughout his epistle for his Jewish audience. He does not enter into great detail, but is giving general and specific reminders of already known scripture to his audience (The tongue: 3:1-12, wisdom, 3:13-17, the man Job: 5:11, spiritual adultery:4:4). In regards to Old Testament writings, *The Epistle of James* has many similarities in structure and content with the *Book of Proverbs*. James and many in his audience were witnesses of the teachings of Jesus Christ; specifically, the Sermon on the Mount. *The Gospel of Matthew* would not have been written at the time of James’ letter; however, James clearly had an understanding of the Sermon on the Mount as he used many of its principles in his epistle.

In relation to *Book of Proverbs*, James writes the inspired words to pray for wisdom and to have true, heavenly wisdom instead of the carnal, devilish wisdom of the earth (1:5-7, 3:13-17). James is writing to an audience that knew the *Proverbs* of Solomon and was accustomed to the teaching of wisdom, but they did not practice true wisdom (cf. Prov.8:13). As well, the Jewish audience would have understood the key point in Proverbs 8:35 that Wisdom is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have peace with God (Prov.8:35, Rom.5:1). As well, James and Solomon both dealt sternly with the tongue as a weapon of destruction; James was certainly referring back to the litany of proverbs on the mouth and tongue (Prov.18:21, 15:28, 16:27, 11:9-17, 15:1, 20:15). Finally, the structure and flow of the book is similar to that of *Proverbs* in that it contains short groupings of pithy, practical statements.

James seemingly took a page from the Lord’s sermon and used His approach in writing the *Epistle of James* to the scattered church members. The *Epistle of James* is similar to the Sermon on the Mount in context, structure, and content. The context of the Sermon on the Mount and the *Gospel of Matthew* is found throughout the Old Testament that Immanuel would come to set up His kingdom, but the Jews would first have to pass

²¹ Douglas Moo, *James: a revised edition* (Downers Grove: IL, 2015), p.53.

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through the tribulation. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord is preparing, encouraging, and teaching the Jews on how to navigate the actual Tribulation before the Millennial reign of Christ. James was writing to an audience that was going through severe persecution; whereas, the Lord was preparing His audience who were about to go through the actual tribulation.

The structure of James' letter is similar to the Sermon on the Mount in that it contains short groupings of proverbial statements on behavior. The Lord moved from one topic or principle to another in order to provide practical "Pearls" on how to navigate the Tribulation. In essence, He is giving a "Field guide" on Christ-like attitude and behavior that needs to be exhibited during the most extreme persecution of believers. The ultimate reward for those few that will endure the Tribulation will be to hear "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Mt.25:34).

The content of James' letter is similar to the Sermon on the Mount in its practical and behavior-focused nature. James deals with many, but not all of the topics the Lord used in His sermon. In particular, James teaches on the following topics that are found in the Sermon on the Mount: Persecution (1:2, Mt.5:10-12), Perfect or Complete nature (1:4, Mt.5:48), Ask of God (1:5, Mt.7:7), the Poor (1:9, Mt.5:3), The Way of Life (1:12, Mt.7:14), Wrath (1:20, Mt.5:22), Hearers only deceive themselves (1:22, Mt.7:21-27), the Poor are heirs of the Kingdom (2:5, Mt.5:3), Be Merciful (2:13, Mt.5:7, 6:14-15), the profession of faith without works (2:14-16, Mt.7:21-23), the tongue and fire (3:6, Mt.5:22), good fruit comes from a good tree (3:10-12, Mt.7:15-20), peace follows True Wisdom (3:17-18, Mt.5:9), cannot serve two masters (4:4, Mt.6:24), encouragement to the humble (4:10, Mt.5:3-5), judging others (4:11-12, Mt. 7:1-5), earthly and heavenly treasures (5:2-3, Mt.6:19-20), persecution of prophets (5:10, Mt.5:12), blessed are the persecuted (5:11, Mt.5:10), and false oaths during persecution (5:12, Mt.5:33-37).

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THE ESSENCE OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES: THE BELIEVERS RESPONSE TO TESTING

Ultimately, *The Epistle of James* is an exhortation for believers to put their faith into practice and to respond to the testing of faith in a manner perfectly exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ. James' audience was well acquainted with scripture and the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ; however, they were accustomed to an unbelieving and insincere Jewish traditionalism that perpetuated observance of the Law without a belief in the purpose of the Law – “*The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*” (Gal.3:24). James did not have to re-teach detailed doctrine; instead, he urged the practice and outworking of sincere saving faith based off the truth they already knew (1:25, 2:1, 3:2, 3:13, 5:7). James lays down a formula for responding to the test of one's faith, and he warns against a variety of categories and proclivities that the “*Old Man*” wants to revisit in time of trouble (cf. Gal. 4:9). Some in the assembly followed worldly wisdom and responded carnally to the test, which led to fighting and division in the scattered assemblies. As Pastor, James would have an intimate view and knowledge of how his former church members were responding to the “*Divers temptations*” that stemmed from the larger persecution by Saul; James sought to exhort them to a Christ-like response in order for his audience to grow in sanctification and to warn against a carnal response; as well, to repair the division in the assembly.

As the context of *The Epistle of James* is pieced together the scope of the tests facing this audience is evidently severe and wide. In essence, everything these church members knew had changed; they were wrapping their heads around the fact that they had the Messiah in their presence to set up His kingdom, but murdered Him instead. Soon after, the Jerusalem church had a surge of momentum that came to a crashing halt with the murder of Stephen; they were scattered to new locations and forced to consider “*Is this really worth it?*”. Death, imprisonment, financial persecution, and sickness provided a multi-faceted “*pressure cooker*” test of faith for each believer. The tests of faith were piling up, and at that point anything would be easier than being a Christian. Would they respond as Job's wife who advised him to “*Curse God and die*” in the wake of tremendous tragedy (Job 2:9)? Or, would they respond as the Shunammite woman, who in the face of a dying child said, “*It shall be well*”²² (II Kings 4: 23)? These believers were certainly at their “*Wits end*”²³, and a Christ-like perspective and response would be challenging without biblical instruction.

James wasted no time in his letter to encourage these believers, “*My brethren, count it all joy*” (1:2). He begins with the imperative command to count or consider the severe test of their faith Πᾶσαν χαρὰν. James use of Πᾶσαν (all) indicates that the believer needs to consider the entirety and full extent of the test as joy. The believer needed to understand that all of trial was necessary to refine the believer. Joy is an attribute of a believer that has hope in Jesus Christ. Matthew 2:10 details the joyous moment when the star the wise men followed from the East finally stopped and stood over the location of the young Messiah, “*When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy*”. The wise men traversed a great distance, but when the star finally stopped it meant their hope was coming to fruition and they had exceeding great joy! Peter wrote his epistles to the same audience

²² II Kings 4:23-26, “*It is well*” is derived from the Hebrew :שְׁלוֹמִים – shalom or peace.

²³ Psalm107:25-28 - :תְּהַבְּלֵנָה תְּהַבְּלֵנָה translated “*At their wits' end*”; their wisdom has been engulfed or swallowed up, they have no other human option but to turn to the LORD.

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going through the same persecution; he succinctly characterized the believer that has hope and faith in Jesus Christ in I Peter 1:8, “*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*”. The believer that places their faith and hope in Jesus Christ for salvation and for every test of faith can count it all joy, have exceeding great joy, and have joy unspeakable! The first Christ-like response to testing is to count it all joy as you rest in the hope of the Savior.

Paul indicated in Hebrews 12:2 that the Lord Jesus Christ responded with joy in obeying His Father's will, “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*”. Luke 22:42ff reveals the agony that Christ faced in his humanity, “*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*”. In His humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ was in an intense agony as he faced going to the cross to bear the sins of humanity; nevertheless, he perfectly obeyed His Father's will with joy and fortitude (Is.50:7). The Lord Jesus Christ exemplified James' point that a believer should count it all joy in the midst of a trial as they walk in obedience in all areas.

James follows his command to count it all joy with the temporal conjunction ὅταν (when). The persecuted believers needed to consider or count it all joy when they run into trials. The word ὅταν indicated to the audience that trials are guaranteed and not flukes that randomly occur. James then uses the *aorist subjunctive*²⁴ περιπέσητε (might fall) emphasizing the potentiality of falling into a trial. Περιπέσητε (fall) is used three times in the New Testament, and it gives the idea that falling is an unexpected occurrence that an individual would not knowingly enter into²⁵. James emphasized the point that trials and tests will come to the believer; he reminded any believer who was not aware that “if you're not in a trial, you will soon be heading into one”. Peter instructed his audience of scattered church members in I Peter 4:12-13, “*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy*”. The common response to testing is “Why is this happening to me?” Tests of faith will come to every individual with true saving faith; James and Peter attempted to reset the expectations of their audience in reference to fiery trials and tests. The second Christ-like response is to expect and be ready for the test of faith.

Next, James describes the type of trials that are to be expected by the believer. The believer should expect ποικίλοις (various, diverse, manifold) temptations. In the case of the scattered Jerusalem church members, the primary persecution came from the religious leaders that denied Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Saul had authority under the religious leaders to murder and imprison Christians for heresy. The religious leaders were able to influence the local government via angry mobs (Mt.27:11-12, Acts 12:1-3). The secondary effects of that primary persecution included Jewish synagogues throughout the region would spread the disdain for Christians

²⁴ The subjunctive mood presents the verbal action of something being possible or having potential.

²⁵ Luke 10:30, “*And Jesus answering said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment...*” Acts 27:41, “*And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves*”

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to the community. The people in the communities would withhold employment or wages from Christians because the religious leaders allowed or even encouraged it. Nevertheless, the tests and trials the believers faced²⁶ were various in type and degree of severity, and they reached every aspect of the believer's life.

The third Christ-like response of the believer undergoing the test of faith was to respond with patience (1:3-4). James continued his point that the believer can count it all joy because the testing of faith brings about patience. James labels the believer's persecution and suffering as "*The trying of your faith*"; δοκίμιον is the Greek word behind trying, which gives the sense of testing. The Lord allows our faith in Him to be tested by external pressures, barriers, and challenges. Often, the Lord places seemingly impossible barriers or challenges that are complex and matrixed before us to test our response of faith or unbelief. Will we faint in unbelief, or run to the Lord in prayer and faith?

Patience is challenged by the human nature to escape hardship as soon as possible. The human efforts to shortchange a test of faith are natural and instinctive by the old man; nevertheless, the believer needs to approach testing with the mind of Christ and allow patience to have its perfect work. Sometimes the Lord allows believers the choice to remain patient or exit the test early; other times, the Lord blocks every possible exit and demands the believer to remain under testing. Scripture provides several examples of believers that desired to escape their testing through a variety of means. David indicated that he wanted to fly away from his troubles in Psalm 55:6, "*And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*" Job questioned why he was ever born in Job 3:11-16, "*Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light.*" Similarly, Jeremiah questioned his birth into trouble in Jeremiah 15:10, "*Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me*". Elijah sought the Lord to take his life at the receipt of Jezebel's threat in I Kings 18:4, "*But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers*". The test of faith challenges the believer's reliance on the Lord, and once the believer takes their focus off the Lord they allow fear to replace faith; ultimately, fear drives an impatient response to flee the test by a variety of means.

Patience is a key truth that James deals with in his epistle; he uses two different Greek words – ὑπομονήν (1:3-4) and Μακροθυμήσατε (5:7-8). ὑπομονήν means to abide under, and Μακροθυμήσατε means long to burn or suffer. In verse three, James sets the expectation that the test of faith is to produce patience in the believer. Believers are to patiently rely on the Lord during testing, and wait on his delivery; however, believers often look for the nearest and easiest exit strategy to avoid patiently waiting on the Lord, which is typically provided by demonic forces. In verse 4, James uses the present active imperative ἐχέτω (let have) to demand the need for the believer to let patience run its complete course. The believer is to allow patience to have its τέλειον (perfect) work or effect so that the believer may be τέλειοι (perfect, complete). James is not referring to sinless perfection, but to the spiritual maturity that comes from the refining process of abiding under pressure and patiently waiting on the Lord. Trials are to drive the believer to constant reliance on the Lord, and during that period of reliance and patience the believer is matured.

²⁶ David exclaimed about his enemies in Psalm 35:19, "*Them...that hate me without a cause*"; likewise, the perfect Lord Jesus Christ succinctly revealed in John 15:25, "*They hated me without a cause*". The faithful believer can expect persecution and testing.

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The course that patience runs is one that requires time under pressure, and during that time the believer is to abide in patience with a hope in the Lord. I Samuel 23:14 indicates, “*And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.*” The Lord could have removed the threat of Saul at any time, but instead He allowed David to be pursued every single day; each day, David would have to seek the Lord, trust the Lord, rely on the Lord to be his Rock of Escape (I Sam.23:28). Likewise, as the Lord prepared Elijah he sent him to the brook Cherith and then to Zarephath (the place of refining) to wait on the Lord. In the midst of tremendous famine, Elijah had to depend on a fickle raven and a small brook to bring him food and water. The Lord moved him to Zarephath where a poor widow woman would be the vessel used to provide for Elijah. The Lord placed extremely fickle, uncomfortable, and weak vessels in place that would drive Elijah to trust Him while under pressure of the test; nevertheless, Elijah was obedient and patiently relied on the Lord.

Often, the Lord isolates the believer during a test of patience to drive reliance on Him instead of dependence on others. David wrote about his time of trouble and patience in Psalm 142:4-5, “*I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living*”. Despite being alone, David encouraged himself in the Lord who was his constant refuge. The Lord Jesus Christ exhibited patience and fortitude when He received tremendous rejection and ridicule as He went to the cross as indicated in Isaiah 50:6-7, “*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed*”. The believer needs to follow the Lord’s perfect example of trusting in the Lord’s help during the greatest difficulty; as well, the believer ought to set their “Face like a flint” and harden himself or herself in obedience to the Lord. Rich and tremendous spiritual blessings abound when the believer allows patience to run its course during a test of faith. Job realized the purpose and importance of patience as he indicated in Job 23:10, “*But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*”. Likewise, Peter declared in I Peter 1:7, “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*”. In this context, the scattered saints were to abide under the diverse tests and pressures to be refined and perfected for the ultimate honour and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 5, James tells the bewildered members to seek the Lord God in prayer for wisdom as their life has drastically changed. He asks the rhetorical question if any man lacks wisdom then they need to ask. The test of faith brings scenarios that one is not familiar with, which requires truths that may have not been applied in one’s life. James refers to the lack of σοφία (wisdom), which was a topic and theology the Jewish community would have had a strong understanding. Wisdom is an extensively discussed truth in the Old Testament, and Solomon was the wisest man that wrote the most inspired truths on the topic of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs. In particular, Proverbs 8 reveals that Wisdom is the personage of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wisdom was possessed by God the Father before the creation week (Prov.8:22). Wisdom declares in Proverbs 8:35, “*For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD*”; comparatively in Romans 5:1, “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*”. Wisdom is Jesus Christ who is the Word of Life. The believer that places faith in Jesus Christ has an intimate relationship with the everlasting Wisdom and

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has access to His wisdom from His Word. James uses the present active imperative verb “αἰτέτω” to urge or command the believers to go to the Lord in prayer asking for the wisdom that they lack. The persecuted believers needed to go to the one and only source of true Wisdom – God the Father. Proverbs 8:22 indicates regarding Wisdom, “*The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before His works of old*”. James would later indicate in James 3:15, 18 that carnal wisdom “*Decsendeth not from above*”, but true Wisdom “*Is from above is first pure...*”. James indicates that new trials can bring a lack of wisdom; hence, they need to ask the One who has possessed Wisdom from everlasting for Wisdom.

James then follows his command “Let him ask” with important points in regards to proper prayer. James emphasizes that a realization that God is generous and does not hold back is necessary for the praying believer. The other important factor that James gives in regard to prayer is faith. James expounds on the importance and necessity of faith in prayer; he states “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering”. James describes that when asking in faith the believer must have μηδὲν διακρινόμενος (nothing wavering). Pure faith comes when the believer is asking from a mindset that does not waver or doubt the Lord’s ability to answer a prayer. In this context, the persecuted believers could have doubted the Lord’s ability to give wisdom during a time of tremendous chaos and confusion; hence, James used the imperative verb “αἰτέτω” to urge them to ask the Lord in faith.

Thus far in James introductory remarks he has implored his audience to count it all joy, remain patient, and pray for wisdom; in verses 9-11, James commends the position of humility and low degree. The Old Testament and the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ were harmonious in regards to true believers having humility. James’ highlights that the brother of low degree and humility is lifted up to a position of exalted status during a trial; the humble have an advantage in testing since they are already accustomed to relying on the Lord. Whereas, the πλούσιος (rich) need to exalt in their new state of humility; it is in the status of humility where one is stripped of all other supports and must completely rely on the Lord²⁷. James gives a physical analogy of the grass and the flower that indicates the transient nature of the human life; in essence, James indicates that life is short, how will you respond and who or what will you rely on?

James concludes his introductory exhortation on a Christ-Like response with the culmination for enduring temptation (1:12). The man that ὑπομένει (endureth, remains patient) will receive a spiritual blessing and he shall receive the crown of life from King Jesus! James reveals one of the Lord’s promises to the faithful believer that endures the test that He gives to them; the believer that responds by counting it all joy, remaining patient, praying for Wisdom, and remaining humble will receive the crown of life at the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul would later write Romans 1:17, “*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith*”. The believer’s life begins by faith in Christ, ought to be lived by faith, and should end in the final act of faith that they would enter into the presence of our King in heaven. During the believer’s life, the Lord allows a wide variety of challenges and temptations to test ones faith to bring forth a

²⁷ Ecclesiastes 7:2-3 “*It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better*”. A sober outlook and reality is good for the heart, and ensures a believer is focused on the LORD.

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response of hope, patience, prayer, humility, and faith with the ultimate purpose of spiritually maturing the believer; the eternal reward for responding in faith is the “*Crown of life*” (1:2-6, 12).

CHAPTER ONE SUMMARY

James exhorts the scattered believers to count it all joy, remain patient, ask God for wisdom, and remain humble (1:2-11). James would come back to these introductory topics throughout his epistle; in particular, their need to ask God for wisdom. Believers desperately needed to seek the Father for the Wisdom that is the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. He rounds out his exhortation with future hope of receiving the crown of life at the judgement seat, which will ultimately be cast at the feet of our King (1:12, Rev.4:10). The second half of chapter one is spent admonishing carnal behavior and encouraging Christ-like response and behavior during the test of faith. James details the process of temptation and sin; he indicates that the ownership for sin is on man, and not on God (1:13-18). James admonishes the response of wrath, and encourages a response that is quick to hear and receive the engrafted word (1:19-21). James finishes the chapter by exhorting persecuted believers to be sincere doers of the Word and not hearers only; their sincerity would be evidenced by true religion of a bridled tongue, purity, and care of the fatherless and widows (1:22-27).

CHAPTER TWO SUMMARY

James continues on the theme of sincere and true religion; he highlights the asynchrony between having the faith of Christ and the respect of persons (2:1-13). The Lord Jesus Christ came to save all mankind despite social status, ethnicity, wealth, intelligence, and ability. Any believer that exhibits partiality to others does not uphold the faith of Jesus Christ. In particular, the persecuted and scattered church members respected the rich that came into the assembly and disrespected the poor in the assembly. During the persecution, many scattered Jews would have been impoverished or had garnered wages (1:9, 5:4-6); a carnal response would be to garner favor from the rich for ulterior motives. Nevertheless, James admonishes this carnal response during the test of faith. The second half of chapter two focuses on the key teaching that works follow true saving faith.

James challenges those that have a profession of faith, but do not have any righteous works that follow their profession (2:14). He revisits the principle of sincerity, and indicates that one with true saving faith would actually help the destitute (2:15-16). James makes it clear, “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*” (2:17). James indicates that a true believer demonstrates his faith with righteous works, and not by a mere profession. James gives a Jewish example of Abraham’s works that validated and confirmed his saving faith. At 76 years old, Abraham experienced saving faith when he left Ur and believed Jehovah’s promise to give him a vast number of children; despite being old in age, Abraham, “Believed in the LORD: and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen.15:6). After ten years in the land of Canaan Sarai struggled with the Jehovah’s promise, as she was not bearing children in her timing (Gen.16:1-4). At 86 years old, Abram “Hearkened to the voice of Sarai” and took her handmaid, Hagar, who conceived Ishmael outside of Jehovah’s plan (Gen.16:3). In that moment, Abram and Sarai did not live by faith, but Abram’s initial faith in God’s promise still counted him as righteous. Fourteen years later, Abram and Sarai’s faith was reinvigorated and she conceived and bare a son named Isaac (Gen.21:1-5). James 2:21 revealed more fruit and works that came out of Abraham’s faith many

years after he was counted righteous by Jehovah, “*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*” James refers to the account in Genesis 22 where the Lord commanded Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice; Abraham’s obedience was followed by the provision of a lamb to substitute Isaac’s place as the sacrifice. James identifies this as a work or fruit that came out of true saving faith. Abraham is an example of one who was saved by faith before the law (Gal.3:17), lived by faith (Gen.21, 22, Rom.4:18-22), and died in faith (Heb.11:3). James continues with a Gentile example of Rahab, whose true saving faith was followed by the work of assisting the spies in scouting the walls of Jericho. Joshua 2:9-11 details Rahab’s testimony of faith in the one true God, “*And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath*”. Apparently her faith in the LORD God occurred prior to meeting the two spies; subsequently, she demonstrated her faith by her work of concealing and assisting the Jewish spies. James provided both a Jewish and Gentile example to emphasize that righteous works always follows true saving faith; James succinctly indicates, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” (2:26). The Christ-like response and behaviors that James encourages throughout his epistle are works and fruit that can only come out of true saving faith.

CHAPTER THREE SUMMARY

James began this chapter by admonishing individuals that claimed to be masters or teachers of the Word; he included himself in the teaching that teachers of the Word have greater accountability and condemnation. In the context of severe persecution, church members claimed to be teachers of the Word; however, many were unable to control their tongue and were following the carnal wisdom of the world. James specified those that claimed to be a teacher of the world, but expanded the teaching on the tongue and wisdom to all the brethren (3:10). James indicated that an individual that can bridle or control the tongue could control the entire body; he provided two analogies about the horse’s bit and the ship’s helm to demonstrate the control and power of the small tongue (3:3-4). James reveals that the tongue is a little fire that is capable of igniting a great matter (ῥῆγμα) or forest fire. The uncontrolled tongue is ignited by demonic forces and is capable of setting the course of one’s life on fire. He goes on to condemn the hypocrisy of the tongue that curses man and blesses God (3:9-10). James continues along the theme that believer’s with true saving faith will have righteous fruit; he indicates that trees bear only one type of fruit and fountains only produce fresh or salt water 3:11-12).

Believers were not asking God for wisdom during the test of their faith, but instead were following the carnal wisdom of the world (1:5). The Jewish audience would have understood the key point in Proverbs 8:35 that Wisdom is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have peace with God. In the second half of chapter three, James lays out a comparison of true Wisdom versus carnal wisdom (3:13-18). James indicates that some were claiming to be wise and endowed with knowledge, but they did not behave in a Christ-like manner. ἐπιστήμων is a *hapax legomenon* that means factual knowledge; these Jewish Christians had a tremendous amount of head knowledge, but they were not demonstrating it with righteous works or fruit (3:13). Instead, they had bitter envy and strife in their hearts that was the result of carnal wisdom (3:14). James characterized carnal wisdom as earthly, sensual, and devilish (3:15). The results of receiving and living out carnal wisdom include confusion and every evil work (3:16). In comparison, true Wisdom is characterized as from above, pure, peaceable, gentle,

easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (3:17). The outcome of true Wisdom is a cycle of righteous fruit and peace (3:18).

Believers that were under the pressure of the test of faith were losing control of their tongue and following after carnal wisdom, which led to strife, confusion, and evil works in the scattered assemblies. James laid out true Wisdom for them to establish peace in the assembly. The carnal responses to testing not only negatively impacted the individual but also the assembly. James was seeking to establish spiritual stability for the future of these church plants by addressing each individual's spiritual status.

CHAPTER FOUR SUMMARY

Fighting and division in the assemblies were the result of losing control of the tongue and following after carnal wisdom (4:1). James directly admonishes their carnal behavior, and indicated their friendliness with the world. These believers fell back to the carnal wisdom of the world during testing, and did not ask God for Wisdom; instead, they followed the world's wisdom that brought about physical fighting and division. James makes the clear statement that if they are friends with the world, then they are the enemy of God (4:4). He indicted them for the serious sin of spiritual adultery by choosing the world instead of the Lord (4:5). James urges the church members to humble themselves before God and receive his grace; he continues his point by giving the imperative command Ὑποτάγητε to submit themselves under God and to resist the devil (5:7). He continues to urge the church members to draw near to God and to cleanse their hands (5:8). Again, James condemns them as being double-minded (δίψυχος), one that tries to be a friend of the world and profess faith in God (1:8, 4:8). Among the division, believers were speaking evil of another and judging one another; James reminds them that there is only one judge that can save and destroy – the Lord Jesus Christ (4:10-12). James encourages the believers that are looking to relocate to make gain to seek the Lord's will; it could have been that some entrepreneurial members sought to leave the test to make money in another location. James reminds them of the brevity of life and encourages them to seek the Lord's will in every step. He concludes this section with the truth, *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (4:17).

James had the opportunity to provide the first teaching on divisions in the assembly. His former church members were scattered and in new church plants; however, they responded to the test of faith in a carnal manner. As they neglected to ask for true Wisdom from God, they followed after carnal wisdom that brought about confusion, evil works, fighting, division, worldliness, and spiritual adultery. In the context of chapter two, they claimed to have the faith of Christ, but works of righteousness did not demonstrate their profession of faith. James gave the only solution to confusion, evil, and fighting – *“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. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”* (4:7-8).

CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY

James gave a public admonition toward the rich who were abusing their power of the poor Christians; in particular, they were withholding the wages of Christian laborers (5:4). He warned them that cries of those Jewish Christians had entered into ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (5:4). Lord of Sabaoth is an equivalent to the Lord of Host, which was a military title that indicated the Lord has a mighty army that he leads to exact justice. James returned to his introductory truths that he use to encourage those persecuted believers – hope, patience, and prayer. James urged them to patiently wait for the return of the Lord; *Μακροθυμήσατε* is translated as patience in this passage, but literally means to suffer long or long to burn (II Pt.3:9). As many were financially swindled amidst other tests, they needed to be long to burn or to react. They were to look for the coming of the Lord; he was to be their hope during persecution (5:8). He revisited the theme of discord in the assembly, and reminded them that the “*Judge standeth before the door*”; they were to ensure they were right with another before the Lord appeared and judged them at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

James encouraged the believers to look forward in hope to the return of the Lord, but also to look back at the examples of the prophets; in particular, they were to recall the life of Job (5:10-11). The prophets and Job exemplified remaining patient while suffering affliction. Job lost all his wealth, his seven sons and three daughters, and several of his servants; he experienced anguish and pain to the point that he wished he was never born (Job 3:8-15). The book of Job details the response, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of Job as he sought to understand his calamity. Job 1:22 details the response of Job, “*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*”. Job was patient and focused on the Lord during his testing as described in Job 13:15, “*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him*”. James points the persecuted believers back to Job as an example of how to respond in calamity. In particular, James instructs that they need to see the end of the Lord in the trial; they need to “*Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*” (1:4). James condemns the practice of making false oaths with another, and insincerity in their dealings with another. Apparently, while under persecution they were resulting to dishonest practices for their own gain (5:12). On top of the test of faith, diverse tribulations, financial swindling, and persecution came physical sickness in the assembly. James concludes his epistle with teaching and an example of the “*Effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man*” (5:14-18).

James final exhortation is that if anyone has gone astray from the truth and someone helps them return, then that person has turned another from straying into a multitude of sins, destruction, and death. James is referring to the unstable Christian that was responding to the test in a carnal manner; one that was insincere, unable to control their tongue, embraced the wisdom of the world, friendly with the world, and causing division in the assembly. James exhorted the brethren to respond in a Christ-like manner and to help erring brothers turn back from sin. The Sweet Psalmist of Israel, David, indicated in Psalm 119:176 “*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments*”. Believer’s struggle and wander away from the truth of the Word; in essence, we end up a sheep in the jaws of a lion. David prefigured the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, in I Samuel 17:34-35, “*There came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him*”. James exhorts these believers to follow Christ’s example and help those wandering from the truth to return back to their first love (Rev.2:4).

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Appendix A

HAPAX LEGOMENON IN JAMES

| <u>Reference</u> | <u>KJV</u> | <u>Lemma</u> | <u>Manuscript</u> | <u>Other Definitions</u> | <u>Grammar</u> | <u>Verb</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| James 1:5 | <i>Liberally</i> | ἀπλῶς | ἀπλῶς | Generously, simply, sincerely | Adverb | NA |
| James 1:6 | <i>Driven with the wind</i> | ἀνεμίζω | ἀνεμιζομένω | To drive by the wind | singular, dative, masculine | Present passive participle |
| James 1:6 | <i>Tossed</i> | ῥιπίζω | ῥιπιζομένω | Blown around, tossed about | Singular, dative, masculine | Present passive participle |
| James 1:11 | <i>Grace</i> | εὐπρέπεια | εὐπρέπεια | Graceful, suitable | Singular, nominative, feminine | NA |
| James 1:11 | <i>Fade away</i> | μαραίνω | μαρανθήσεται | Extinguish, pass away | Singular, third person | Verb, future, passive, indicative |
| James 1:13 | <i>Cannot be tempted</i> | ἀπείραστος εἰμί | ἀπείραστός ἐστι | God's being is incapable of being tempted | Singular, third person | Verb, present, active, indicative |
| James 1:14 | <i>Drawn away</i> | ἐξέλκω | ἐξελκόμενο | Drag forth, entice | Singular, masculine | Verb, present, passive, participle, nominative |
| James 1:17 | <i>Variableness</i> | παραλλαγή | παραλλαγή | Change, variation | Singular, feminine | Noun, Nominative |
| James 1:17 | <i>Of turning</i> | τροπή | τροπῆς | Change, turning | Singular, feminine | Noun, genitive |
| James 1:17 | <i>Shadow</i> | ἀποσκίασμα | ἀποσκίασμα | Shade, shadow | Singular, neuter | Noun, nominative |

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| <u>Reference</u> | <u>KJV</u> | <u>Lemma</u> | <u>Manuscript</u> | <u>Other Definitions</u> | <u>Grammar</u> | <u>Verb</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| James 1:21 | <i>Filthiness</i> | ρύπαρία | ρύπαρίαν | Moral uncleanness | Singular, feminine | Noun, accusative |
| James 1:21 | <i>Engrafted</i> | ἔμφυτος | ἔμφυτον | Implanted, deeply fixed | Singular, masculine | Adjective, accusative |
| James 1:25 | <i>Forgetful</i> | ἐπιλησμονή | ἐπιλησμονῆς | Failure to remember | Singular, feminine | Noun, genitive |
| James 1:25 | <i>A doer</i> | ποιητής | ποιητής | Maker, doer of activity | Singular, masculine | Noun, nominative |
| James 1:26 | <i>Be religious</i> | θρησκός | θρησκός | Pious, ceremonious in worship | Singular, masculine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 2:2 | <i>With a gold ring</i> | χρυσοδακτύλιος | χρυσοδακτύλιος | A gold ring on a finger | Singular, masculine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 2:9 | <i>Ye have respect of persons</i> | προσωπολημπτέω | προσωποληπτεῖτε | Show partiality | Plural, second person | Verb, present, active, indicative |
| James 2:13 | <i>Without mercy</i> | ἀνέλεος | ἀνίλεως | Merciless | Singular, feminine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 2:15 | <i>Daily</i> | ἐφήμερος | ἐφημέρου | For the day | Singular, feminine | Adjective, genitive |
| James 2:16 | <i>Needful</i> | ἐπιτήδειος | ἐπιτήδεια | Convenient, necessary | Plural, neuter | Adjective, accusative |
| James 2:19 | <i>Tremble</i> | φρίσσω | Φρίσσουσι | Shudder, shiver in fear | Plural, third person | Verb, present, active, indicative |
| James 3:5 | <i>Boasteth great things</i> | αὐχέω | μεγάλαυχεῖ | To boast greatly | Singular, third person | Verb, present, active, indicative |
| James 3:5 | <i>A matter</i> | ῥλη | ῥλην | Wood, forest, timber | Singular, Feminine | Noun, accusative |
| James 3:6 | <i>Course</i> | τροχός | τροχόν | Wheel of life or existence | Singular, masculine | Noun, accusative |
| James 3:7 | <i>Of things in the sea</i> | ἐνάλιος | ἐναλίων | Belonging to the sea | Plural, neuter | Adjective, genitive |
| James 3:8 | <i>Deadly</i> | θανατηφόρος | θανατηφόρου | Death-dealing | Singular, masc | Adjective, geni. |

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| <u>Reference</u> | <u>KJV</u> | <u>Lemma</u> | <u>Manuscript</u> | <u>Other Definitions</u> | <u>Grammar</u> | <u>Verb</u> |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| James 3:9 | <i>The similitude</i> | ὁμοίωσις | ὁμοίωσιν | Likeness, similar | Singular, feminine | Noun, accusative |
| James 3:10 | <i>Ought</i> | Χρή | Χρή | It should or ought | Singular, third person | Verb, present, active, indctv. |
| James 3:11 | <i>Send forth</i> | βρύω | βρύει | Pour forth, flow | Singular, third person | Verb, present, active, indicative |
| James 3:12 | <i>Salt</i> | άλκός | άλκόν | Salty | Singular, neuter | Adjective, nominative |
| James 3:13 | <i>Endued with knowledge</i> | ἐπιστήμων | ἐπιστήμων | Understanding, learned | Singular, masculine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 3:15 | <i>Devilish</i> | δαιμονιάδης | δαιμονιάδης | Demonic | Singular, feminine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 3:17 | <i>Easy to be intreated</i> | εὐπειθής | εὐπειθής | Obedient, compliant, easily persuaded | Singular, feminine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 3:17 | <i>Without partiality</i> | ἀδιάκριτος | ἀδιάκριτος | Impartial, no divisions within a group | Singular, feminine | Adjective, nominative |
| James 4:4 | <i>Friendship</i> | Φιλία | Φιλία | Love | Singular, feminine | Noun, nominative |
| James 4:5 | <i>In vain</i> | κενῶς | κενῶς | No purpose, no end | Adverb | NA |
| James 4:5 | <i>That dwelleth</i> | Κατοικίζω | κατόκησεν | Cause to dwell or inhabit | Singular, third person | Verb, aorist, active, indicative |
| James 4:9 | <i>Be afflicted</i> | Ταλαιπωρέω | Ταλαιπωρήσατε | Lament, feel miserable | Plural, second person | Verb, aorist, active, imperative |
| James 4:9 | <i>Laughter</i> | γέλως | γέλως | Laughter, joy | Singular, masculine | Noun, nominative |
| James 4:9 | <i>Be turned</i> | Μετατρέπω | Μεταστραφήτω | Turn around, changed | Singular, third person | Verb, aorist, passive, imperative |

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| <u>Reference</u> | <u>KJV</u> | <u>Lemma</u> | <u>Manuscript</u> | <u>Other Definitions</u> | <u>Grammar</u> | <u>Verb</u> |
|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| James 4:9 | <i>Heaviness</i> | κατήφεια | Κατήφειαν | Gloominess, dejection | Singular, feminine | Noun, accusative |
| James 4:12 | <i>Lawgiver</i> | νομοθέτης | νομοθέτης | Lawgiver | Singular, masculine | Noun, nominative |
| James 5:1 | <i>Howl</i> | ὀλολύζω | ὀλολύζοντες | Cry aloud, alarm, be troubled | Plural, masculine | Verb, present, active, participle, nominative |
| James 5:2 | <i>Are corrupted</i> | Σήπω | Σέσηπε | Decay, rot, useless | Singular, third person | Verb, perfect, active, indicative |
| James 5:2 | <i>Moth eaten</i> | σητόβρωτος | Σητόβρωτα | Moth eaten | Plural, neuter | Adjective, nominative |
| James 5:3 | <i>Is cankered</i> | κατιώω | κατιώται | Become rusty, corroded | Singular, third person | Verb, perfect, passive, indicative |
| James 5:4 | <i>Who have reaped</i> | ἀμάω | ἀμησάντων | Mow, reap, cut grass | Plural, masculine | Verb, aorist, active, participle, genitive |
| James 5:4 | <i>Cries</i> | βοή | βοαί | Cry, shout, protest | Plural, feminine | Noun, nominative |
| James 5:5 | <i>Ye have lived in pleasure</i> | τρυφάω | ἐτρυφήσατε | Self-indulgently, luxuriously | Plural, second person | Verb, aorist, active, indicative |
| James 5:7 | <i>Early</i> | πρόϊμος | πρώϊμον | Early, autumn rains | Singular, masculine | Adjective, accusative |
| James 5:7 | <i>Latter</i> | ὄψιμος | ὄψιμον | Latter | Singular, masculine | Adjective, accusative |

Appendix B

THE DEFENSE OF JAMES' SPIRITUAL GIFT OF EXHORTATION

James, the brother of Jesus, is the author of *The Epistle of James* and was the pastor of the Jerusalem church in the first century. James writes his epistle to the scattered Jerusalem churches during the fiercest part of their persecution by Jewish leaders. In his letter, *The Epistle of James*, James reveals so much about himself and his spiritual gift. The audience of James' letter is in need of great spiritual encouragement, as they are being physically attacked for their faith in Jesus Christ. James letter to the scattered and persecuted Jerusalem churches is filled with spiritual exhortation to continue to serve the Lord in faith with righteous behavior during the persecution, along with the encouragement to receive the Lord's blessing for enduring trials. It is this author's postulation that James, the brother of Jesus and the pastor of the Jerusalem church, had the spiritual gift of exhortation. It is this author's goal to defend the interpretation that the Lord gave James the spiritual gift of exhortation at the point of his salvation. This author will primarily use the Word of God to defend his position, and will secondarily use his personal experience of having the spiritual gift of exhortation as a subjective reference.

The doctrine of spiritual gifts is found in its fullest teaching in Romans 12:6-15; this reference will be the primary launch point of this defense. In this passage, Paul lists the seven different spiritual gifts as follows: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. The Word of God seems to indicate that the believer will only have one spiritual gift. The Lord is the one who gives each person one of these gifts at birth, and upon salvation that gift is regenerated and specified for use spiritually in a church of God. The spiritual gift that the Lord gives describes the person; the gift is inescapable in that it defines the essence of the person's decision-making and personality. In a broad stroke, every person can be categorized into one of the seven gifts, and as discussed previously unbelievers have latent gifts that are regenerated upon salvation. Believers with spiritual gifts were once unbelievers with latent gifts; the believer does not get saved and take on a new personality than they had before. Certainly though, the believer is changed from the old man to the new man; therefore, unbelievers can be categorized by a gift defined in Romans 12.

In the context of Romans 12, the reader knows that the letter was written to six separate house churches in Rome²⁸. In Romans 12:4-5, Paul discusses that each body of Christ is made of many members, none of whom have the same office. Paul is setting the foundation, as he is about to teach about spiritual gifts. Paul seamlessly transitions from "*Many members in one body*" to "*Having then gifts differing according to the grace*". He is making the connection that each body of Christ is made up of many members who each have a different spiritual gift. As discussed in the thesis statement, this author is defending the position that James, the brother of Jesus, had the spiritual gift of exhortation; with that, the emphasis will shift to the spiritual gift of exhortation as it relates to James.

Romans 12:8 states, "*Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation*", and the corresponding traits of the gift of exhortation are found in verse 12, which states "*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer*". Romans 12:12 could be the introductory verse for *The Epistle of James* in this author's interpretation. The Lord created it so that the person with the gift of exhortation will have strength and focus on hope, patience, and continuous prayer; hence, these are the defining and biblical traits of the gift of exhortation. The Greek root behind exhortation is *παρακαλέω*, this word is found 108 times in the New Testament; this is a compound word that literally means to "To call alongside of". A signature trait of a person with the gift of exhortation is that they come along side others to encourage and lift others up. Acts 4:36 tells the Bible student that Barnabas name was

²⁸ Romans 16:5-15 lists the six local assemblies in Rome that each met in a church members house.

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a translation for the son of consolation; the Greek word behind “*consolation*” is παρακαλέω, which is also translated as exhortation. Barnabas certainly had the spiritual gift of exhortation; he was the first Jerusalem church member to approach vicious Saul after his conversion. Acts 9:26 states, “*But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him....*”. Barnabas was able to encourage and exhort Saul as a new convert of Christ early in Saul’s ministry.

As James writes his letter to his now scattered churches in Jerusalem, he is writing as a Pastor with the gift of exhortation. The Lord placed James as the pastor of the Jerusalem church for a specific reason, which could be that James and his gift of exhortation were the exact combination needed to biblically encourage the church members during their persecution. It must be understood that church members under severe physical and spiritual attack would certainly doubt and be discouraged about continuing in the faith. The Lord used Holy Spirit-filled James with his gift to write a letter encouraging these church members to “*Count it all joy*” and to live righteously during persecution. It is interesting to note that James spends the first twelve verses encouraging the believers to endure their trial, but then he spends the rest of the book exhorting them to live righteously during their trial.

In James 1:1-5, James emphasizes the three points of the spiritual gift of exhortation that are laid out in Romans 12:12, which are “*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer*”. First, James encourages the assembly to rejoice in hope. James writes to the church members in need of encouragement, so James immediately begins by exhorting the assembly with Πάσαν χαρὰν. James is expressing hope in that they need to count this trial as all joy. James is approaching their persecution in a positive sense by using the aorist imperative ἠγγήσασθε to urge them to consider the trial of their faith as all joy. The noun χαρὰν is translated as “*Joy*” 55 times in the New Testament and the noun renders the sense of gladness. As Pastor, James is not immune from the persecution; hence, James addresses the Jerusalem church members as ἀδελφοί μου. The vocative noun ἀδελφός is used in the New Testament in reference to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in a broad sense, and in this context it specifically refers to his brothers in Christ within the persecuted Jerusalem church. The pastoral council to “*Count it all joy*” is followed by the assurance of “*When ye fall into divers temptations*”. James is clear in telling the assembly that trials will come, and when they come the believer needs to “*Count it all joy*”. James is living out the biblical strengths of the spiritual gift of exhortation by promoting and rejoicing in hope with the persecuted church.

Secondly, in verses 3-4 James encourages and teaches the assembly members to be patient in tribulation. James explains in these verses that the temptation that they fall into will be a δοκίμιον or test of their faith, which κατεργάζεται brings about patience. James is teaching and encouraging the members on the purpose of trials. Just as Romans 12:12 prompts the exhorter to be “*Patient in tribulation*”; James exhorts the persecuted church members to be patient in the testing of their faith. Once the believer allows patience to be fulfilled in their temptation, the believer has the possibility to be mature and complete spiritually, lacking nothing. James gift of exhortation clearly comes out as he succinctly teaches on patience in trials in verses 3 and 4.

Thirdly, in verse 5 James encourages the persecuted members to pray. Prayer is the third strength of the Spirit-filled believer with the gift of exhortation that is laid out in Romans 12:12. Thus far, James has urged the potentially despondent and fearful to count their trial as all joy and to let patience complete its course throughout the trial. In verse 5, James tells the bewildered members to seek the Lord God in prayer for wisdom as their environment has drastically changed. James uses the present active imperative verb αἰτέτω to urge or command the believers to go to the Lord in prayer asking for the wisdom that they lack. James then follows his command “*Let him ask*” with important points in regards to proper prayer. James emphasizes that a realization that God is generous and does not hold back is necessary for the praying believer. The other important factor that James gives in regard to prayer is faith. James expounds on the importance and necessity of faith in prayer; he states “*Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*”. James describes that when asking in faith the believer must have μηδὲν

διακρινόμενος²⁹. Pure faith comes when the believer is asking from a mindset that does not waver or doubt the Lord's ability to answer a prayer. In this context, the persecuted believers could have doubted the Lord's ability to give wisdom during a time of tremendous chaos and confusion; hence, James used the imperative verb αἰτέω to urge them to ask the Lord in faith. Thus far, it appears that James gift of exhortation was coming out in his letter to the persecuted church members as he emphasized hope, patience, and prayer (Cf. Romans 12:12).

James ends his introduction of his letter in verse 12 with the encouragement of a blessing on those that endure temptations and trials. The blessing states, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*", the Greek word behind "*endureth*" is ὑπομένω. The Greek root ὑπομένω is the same root word behind the word for "*patience*" in James 1:3-4, and it is the same root word behind the word for "*patient*" in Romans 12:12. James encourages the believers in James 5:7 "*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord*". James finishes his letter with the example of Job's patience, and encourages the believers in his example. Clearly, James is highlighting traits of the spiritual gift of exhortation from Romans 12:12.

The spiritual gift of exhortation is not simply a "feel good, motivator" gift, but the spiritual purpose of this gift is to encourage others with hope from the Word of God, patience, and prayer throughout a life serving the Lord Jesus Christ; hence, believers with this gift usually emphasize discipleship of other believers. Biblical discipleship could be described as teaching others how to implement the Word of God in their daily life. As discussed already, the Word of God tells us that Barnabas had the gift of exhortation. Barnabas ministered with Paul, who had the gift of Prophecy (Cf. I Cor.13:2). Barnabas journeyed with Paul throughout the Mediterranean preaching the Word of God to the toughest crowds of people; they endured multiple sufferings together (Cf. II Cor.12:24-28). A key example of the gift of exhortation is found in Acts 15:36-40 when Paul and Barnabas disagreed about who should join them on their next journey. Paul, with the gift of prophecy, did not want to bring John Mark because he left the work with them in Pamphylia; however, Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance on this next journey. In this contention, we see that two people with two different gifts are looking at one situation from two different gift perspectives (prophecy and exhortation). Prophecies gift traits are found in Romans 12:9, "*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*"; in summary, the gift of prophesy focuses on a ministry with their great ability to speak and to discern. Paul was discerning that John Mark was inconsistent in his walk, but Barnabas was willing to take John Mark where he was to disciple him. At the end of Paul's ministry he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:11, "*Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*". It appears that the Lord allowed the strong contention between Paul and Barnabas so that John Mark could be more intently disciplined by Barnabas to be profitable in the ministry.

Barnabas is a wonderful example of the gift of exhortation, and this author used his example to emphasize the connection between the gift of exhortation and discipleship training. As the believer reads through the *Epistle of James*, it is filled with practical and God-inspired truth for the edification of the persecuted saints. James emphasizes on being a "*Doer of the word, and not hearers only*" (Cf. James 1:22). Again, James addresses the application of truth in James 2:14, "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?*".

The spirit-filled believer with the gift of exhortation rejoices in hope, is patient in tribulation, and continues instant in prayer; however, when the believer is in the flesh the negative aspect of the gift arise from the believer. In particular, the carnal believer with exhortation does the opposite by becoming hopeless, impatient, and not prayerful. Instead of exhorting and coming along side of others, the carnal believer can tear down others with their tongue. This author poses that James, having the gift of exhortation, was aware of his carnal use of his gift and was able to give an excellent practical teaching on controlling the mighty tongue in James 3. In James 1:19,

²⁹ διακρινόμενος is a present middle participle

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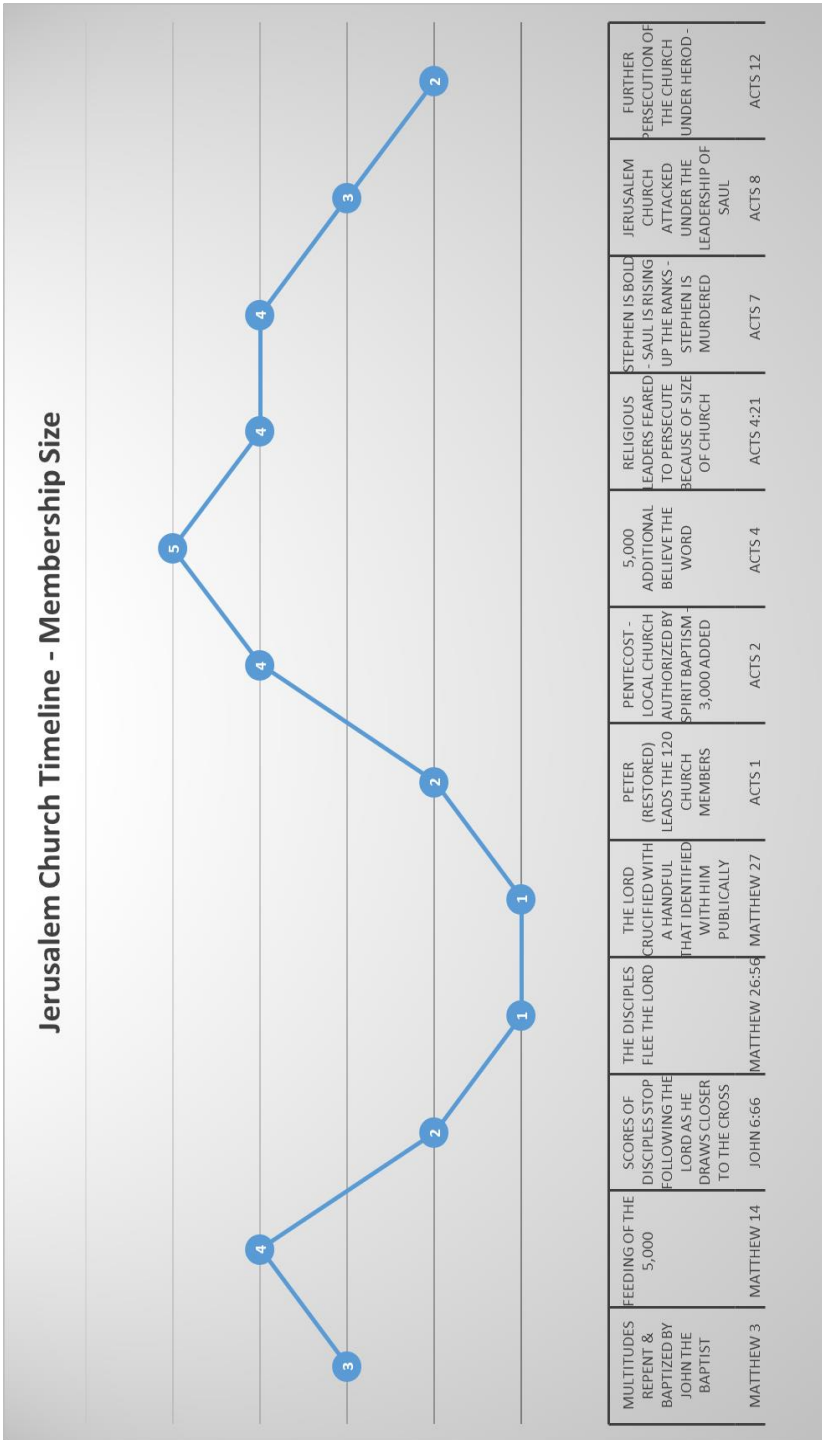
he teaches that the believer needs to be slow to speak and to use the mighty tongue. James emphasis on controlling the tongue comes from his spiritual gift of exhortation, which challenges him to edify and to bless with the tongue instead of cursing others.

In James 5:16-18, he ends his letter teaching about prayer. Romans 12:12 indicates that prayer is the continuous activity of the believer with the gift of exhortation; hence, prayer is the focal point for those with this gift. James passionately describes, “*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*”; James knew that a righteous, spirit-filled believer with unwavering faith who fervently prayed to God is capable of seeing many answered prayers. James was able to relate to Elias of the Old Testament in regards to prayer, and he taught that example to his church.

James met the criteria for the traits of one with the fit of exhortation in Romans 12:12; this was shown in his writings throughout his letter to the Jerusalem church. James also shared many similar traits with Barnabas who clearly had the gift of exhortation. It is this author’s conclusion that James, the pastor of the Jerusalem church and the brother of Jesus Christ, had the gift of exhortation as described by the previous information. As well, it is the author’s intention to encourage others with the spiritual gift of exhortation to Biblically use their gift.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Appendix C



Scale:

| | | |
|---|------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Very Small | Handful of people |
| 2 | Small | <50 people |
| 3 | Medium | 50-120 people |
| 4 | Large | >3,000 people |
| 5 | Very Large | >5,000 people |