

**Bible Baptist Theological Seminary**

***The Epistle of James***

**Dr. M. Ryan Strouse**

# THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

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# THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

## Course Calendar

Course Week	Date	Content	Reading	Discussion Topic
Week 1	Monday, August 29, 2022	Introduction to James	p.13-48	Christ exemplified the cost of doing the Father's will
Week 2	Monday, September 5, 2022	LABOR DAY - NO CLASS		
Week 3	Monday, September 12, 2022	Introduction to James	p.48-77	Can Christian's really sin that bad?
Week 4	Monday, September 19, 2022	Doctrine of James	p.77-121	Church accountability in James
Week 5	Monday, September 26, 2022	James 1:1-8	p.127-156	Spiritual instability outside the place of Wisdom
Week 6	Monday, October 3, 2022	James 1:9-18	p.156-184	The root of the worst sins - our heart
Week 7	Monday, October 10, 2022	James 1:19-27	p.184-214	Pure Religion - doers of the Word
Week 8	Monday, October 17, 2022	James 2:1-13	p.215-250	Loving the unloveable during crisis
Week 9	Monday, October 24, 2022	James 2:14-26	p.251-282	Can a Born-again believer behave like a lost person?
Week 10	Monday, October 31, 2022	James 3:1-12	p.283-346	Examples of Christ controlling His tongue?
Week 11	Monday, November 7, 2022	James 3:13-18	p.346-383	The Cycle of Chaos starts with proud hearers
Week 12	Monday, November 14, 2022	Professor's Anniversary - NO CLASS		
Week 13	Monday, November 21, 2022	James 4:1-10	p.383-439	Restoration of the willfully sinful church member
Week 14	Monday, November 28, 2022	James 4:11-17	p.440-470	After restoration - don't judge!
Week 15	Monday, December 5, 2022	James 5:1-12	p.471-546	Don't mess with the LORD's people
Week 16	Monday, December 12, 2022	James 5:13-20	p.547-595	The final warning before church discipline

### Required Reading:

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: James*. Chicago, IL. Moody Publishers. 1998.

Moo, Douglas. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: James*. Downers Grove, IL. Intervarsity Press. 2015.

Strouse, M. *Pure Religion When it Costs: An Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*. Cromwell, CT. Bible Baptist Theological Press, 2021.

### Course Requirements:

- 300 pages of reading
- 10 Greek word studies: 1) Word Grammar, 2) Word usage elsewhere in TR, 3) theological significance to passage in James
- 8-page Essay: Choose a passage from one of the discussion topics. Provide a brief CIA (Context, Interpretation, Application) of the associated passage. Defend or explain the point from scripture.

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## OUTLINE

- I. James 1
  - A. 1:1 = Introduction
  - B. 1:2-4 = Count it all Joy in patience
  - C. 1:5-8 = Spiritual instability outside the assembly
  - D. 1:9-11 = “Pure religion” in socioeconomic status
  - E. 1:12 = Eternal Reward for patience amid persecution
  - F. 1:13-16 = Man’s lust gives sin
  - G. 1:17-18 = God gives good and perfect gifts
  - H. 1:19-27 = The essence of “Pure Religion” is doing the Word
- II. James 2
  - A. 2:1-13 = Lack of Pure religion among those assembling
  - B. 2:14-26 = Believers that hear only behave as unbelievers with dead faith
- III. James 3
  - A. 3:1-12 = the wicked tongue inhibits “Pure religion”
  - B. 3:13-18 = “Pure religion” is meek and seeks peace
- IV. James 4
  - A. 4:1-5 = All believers are capable of all sins outside of “Pure religion”
  - B. 4:6-10 = The great grace of God restores believers to “Pure religion”
  - C. 4:11-12 = Criticism and judgment of others in the assembly is not “Pure religion”
  - D. 4:13-17 = “Pure religion” seeks the Lord’s will in everything
- V. James 5
  - A. 5:1-6 = The LORD of Sabaoth hears the cries of those with “Pure religion”
  - B. 5:7-11 = “Pure religion” is patient for the Lord like the prophets of old
  - C. 5:12 = Breaking civil and spiritual oaths inhibits “Pure Religion”
  - D. 5:13-18 = “Pure religion” yields powerful prayer through fulfilment of “Royal law”
  - E. 5:19-20 = Faithful believers are to exhort others to “Pure religion”

### THEME VERSE:

James 1:27 “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

### THEME:

The “Perfect” Lord Jesus Christ exemplified and desires “Pure religion” at all times from an obedient and pure heart of faith that obeys the “Whole” law while filled with the Holy Spirit. Amid the cost of persecution, faithful church members are to exhibit “Pure religion” when it costs them the life of sight in every sense. Believers that keep some of the law (assembling) amid persecution but break other parts of the law (despising the weak in the assembly) are guilty of breaking the “Whole” law. James held the high and perfect standard of the Lord Jesus Christ for believers to follow out of a pure heart that yields “Pure religion.”

### EMPHASIS:

James used his gift of exhortation to employ numerous imperative commands in a short, succinct fashion, which would implore believers to obey known truths amid challenging persecution. James spoke from a position of spiritual humility and brokenness as a sinner saved by grace and a servant of the Lord that pointed believers to the “Perfect man” the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## INTRODUCTION

James, the stepbrother of the Lord Jesus Christ, had the unique opportunity to observe the perfect God-Man<sup>1</sup> fulfill all righteousness<sup>2</sup> 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 prepared<sup>3</sup> his redeemed stepbrother to lead, shepherd, and encourage the persecuted and scattered Jerusalem saints.

The Lord Jesus Christ allowed his first candlestick assembly<sup>4</sup> 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 scattered<sup>5</sup> 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 involved<sup>6</sup>; hence, the *Epistle of James* provides practical and pithy statements to encourage a godly response from the persecuted believers. Ultimately, 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).

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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> διασπορά – “*Scattered*” Acts 8:1, James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1

<sup>6</sup> 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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Another important purpose of this letter is to test<sup>7</sup> 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<sup>8 9</sup>. 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: 16<sup>10</sup>).

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).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 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?*”.

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

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

<sup>10</sup> 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!

<sup>11</sup> 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*”<sup>12</sup>. 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 model<sup>13</sup> 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).

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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 deacon<sup>14</sup> (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.

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<sup>14</sup> 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. In his own testimony, Saul indicated in Galatians 1:13, “*For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it*” (I Cor.15:9, Acts 9:21). 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 Apostle 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 I<sup>15</sup>. 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 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 sinned<sup>16</sup>; 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

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<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup>Families 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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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 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

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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 pastor<sup>17</sup> 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 Community<sup>18</sup> 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).

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

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<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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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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 doctrine<sup>19</sup>. 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 perfect behavior and responses during his earthly ministry; James urged these church members to respond and behave as Christ, our perfect example.

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<sup>19</sup> James H. Ropes, *The Epistle of St. James The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, 1978), p.106.

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## 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*”<sup>20</sup>. 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 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

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<sup>20</sup> Douglas Moo, *James: a revised edition* (Downers Grove: IL, 2015), p.53.

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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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## 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

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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 (ὄλην) 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 endued 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 responding 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).

## ***Deceitfully Wicked Heart (Self-Deception)***

At the center of each individual's daily struggle to walk in the Spirit is the deceitfully wicked heart (Jms.1:13-15). Jeremiah 17:9 reveals, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" James asked the rhetorical question that transparently revealed the dismal estate of each man's heart, "*Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?*" (Jms.4:5). Likewise, Paul bemoaned the struggle to walk in the Spirit, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Rom.7:24). The deceitfully wicked heart is capable of wreaking havoc on oneself in a diverse array of manners; ultimately, it leads the believer to trust themselves or follow carnal wisdom instead of trusting the LORD (Is.26:3-4).

## ***Pride***

In tandem with the deceitfully wicked heart is pride, which effects each individual daily. Pride and self-deception lead to varying degrees of delusion. A common delusion we all manifest is "I am better than that sinner." Another common delusion rooted in pride is "I can solve my problems, I can amass my wealth, I can do anything I want to do." An advanced delusion is the god-complex where one believes their actions are justified because they know better than God's Word and man's laws. Lucifer exemplified this delusion in Isaiah 14:14, "*...I will be like the most High.*" It is essential to recognize that pride is foundational to all abnormal behavior, and must be addressed in the counseling process.

## ***Fear of Man***

The fear of man drives humanity into a vast array of problems that worsen over time; for example, it enslaves many to anxiety and depression, which if not mediated can compound into devastating effects. Proverbs 29:25 reveals the simplicity of each individual's choice, "*The fear of man bringeth a snare: But whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.*" Trusting the LORD in every situation comes with the full backing of the Triune Godhead and the Word of God, whereas trusting oneself and fearing man brings enslavement and paralysis. This sin is foundational to analyzing behaviors and providing Biblical counseling.

## ***Spiritual Gift – Blessing or Blight?***

Romans 12:6-10 reveals the list of seven spiritual gifts that are energized when a soul is redeemed and indwelt with the Godhead; conversely, the positive and negative traits of the gift are recognizable in the unredeemed individual. The understanding of spiritual gifts reveals specific Biblical guidance on positive behavior in the Spirit and carnal behavior in the flesh. The secular world realizes the personality constructs in groups of seven or nine such as "*360 assessment,*" "*BMI Personality Test,*" and "*Enneagram personality testing.*"

Understanding of one's gift and its operation in the flesh is essential to discerning the nuances and manifestations of mental illness; it provides precision as one navigates carnal and fleshly behavior.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Schizophrenia* (“split mind”)**

Without schizophrenia, modern psychiatry would be extinct. Prior generations understood anxiety and depression as normal experiences of life that demanded a change since those generations had less of a cushion for paralysis. Furthermore, out of control children were labeled as misbehaved and products of parents that did not train or discipline, not ADHD. Hence, psychiatry focused on the truly bizarre behaviors of Schizophrenia. In the 1940's and 50's, the Germans definition of schizophrenia became wildly popular in America, where the label was applied to a wide array of diseases (encephalitis, dementia, etc.). The broad use of the term kept psychiatry in business until Robert Spitzer extended the DSM to include normal experiences of life as billable diagnostic labels (Anxiety, depression, bipolar, etc), which created the current construct that gives patients a diagnostic label in exchange for insurance reimbursement. Currently, psychiatry can diagnose and bill for anything in the DSM-5, which is comprised of normal experiences of life that require a Biblical response.

It is important to note that the term schizophrenia has been used to mean many different things over the last two centuries. Kraepelin and the early German psychiatrist primarily focused on the bizarre behaviors of odd speech patterns, facial tics, hallucinations, and odd walking patterns and called the disease *Dementia Praecox*, which some suggest to actually have been the results of the physiological disease of encephalitis or dementia. The French psychiatrist Paul Bleuler coined the term *Schizophrenia* (split mind); however, his definition of the disease process was not the same as Kraepelin. Bleuler actually spent time observing patients, whereas Kraepelin only read patient charts. Bleuler noted that the mind of the afflicted was split between reality and fantasy. Modern psychiatry focuses on the hallucinations and delusions, which are derived from the brain-dysfunction theory or genetic disorder.<sup>22</sup> The symptoms are categorized as positive (hallucinations, delusions, disorganized speech, bizarre behavior) and negative (flat affect, no joy, no social interaction).

Former Harvard Psychiatrist Dr. Peter Breggin notes the following about schizophrenia:

*“Is there such a thing as schizophrenia? Yes and no. Yes, there are people who think irrationally at times and who attribute their problems to seemingly inappropriate causes, such as extraterrestrials or voices in the air. Yes, there are people who think they are God or the devil and repeat the claim no matter how much trouble it gets them into. But no, these people are not biologically defective or inherently different from the rest of us. They are not afflicted with brain disorder or disease.”*

The root issue from a Biblical perspective of what is known as schizophrenia is a deceptive and wicked heart. The individual is deceived in their thinking about themselves, their circumstances, and others; presumably,

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<sup>21</sup>Please consider the following resources on Spiritual Gifts: Strouse, T. *Having Then Gifts: A Practical Guide to Spiritual Gifts*. Cromwell, CT. Bible Baptist Theological Press, 2016 and Main, K. *The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts*. Endicott, NY. Heritage Baptist Publications, 2018.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 47

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the deceptive thinking protects themselves as the victim. This deception is further complicated by spiritual warfare. Jeremiah 17:9 reveals, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” Daniel Berger provides a sound explanation:

*“Scripture provides clear explanation for all degrees of deception and provides three specific reasons why people think and behave in the way described as “psychosis.” The Bible sets forth three causes of psychosis: (1) the naturally deceptive and destructive heart of each person, (2) the deceptive and destructive words and actions of others that evoke a deceptive response, and (3) the deceptive and destructive influence of demons.”<sup>23</sup>*

The secular determinist claims the cause of schizophrenia to be genetics and chemical imbalances (nature); however, there is no objective or empirical evidence to denote biological markers of physical disease. Others claim negative relationships and experiences to be the cause (nurture), which gets closer to the issue. However, it is key to note the major difference between influence and causation of negative experiences. No doubt, negative relationships, destructive words, and traumatic experiences influence an individual; nevertheless, it can not be said that negative experiences cause schizophrenia because that would remove the individual’s choice to respond in a Christ-like manner. Cohorts of certain demographics (childhood trauma; verbal and physical abuse) usually respond in the same deceptive manner commonly known as schizophrenia.

The wicked heart deceives to protect one’s pride of the identity they desire to have in order to escape the horrors of what was done to them or what they did. It is a natural and normal response to desire escape from one’s situation of trauma. David’s gifted use of imagery portrayed this natural response, “*And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest.*” Ultimately, self-deception prevents one from repentance and/or running to the LORD for deliverance.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p.48.