

Book of James



LESSON ONE

Scripture

James 1:1-11

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. 2 Consider it pure joy, my
brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the
testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you
may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you
should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you
6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a
wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive
anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. 9
Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich
should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the
sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is
destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.*

The Big Idea

The letter opens with the writer mentioning his name, James. He calls himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some, in church history, have thought that this James is the son of Zebedee, the brother of John. However, this seems unlikely in that James was martyred by Herod Agrippa I in the year 44AD as recorded in Acts 12:2. The evidence points to another James, James the brother of Jesus. It wasn't until after the resurrection that Jesus' brothers, especially James in particular, became believers in Jesus, the Messiah. James ultimately became a recognized leader in the Jerusalem church, and he presided over the council which decided to allow Gentiles to be full-fledged members in the church. A speech by James was recorded in Acts 15:14.

James, the Lord's brother, called himself a servant and not the brother of Jesus, which expresses his true belief that Jesus is God, not just a human brother. He uses no title, only

this humble reference. His understanding of the term “servant” is in the Hebrew sense, emphasizing loyalty and devotion to a given person.

The letter is very Jewish in style and closely resembles the book of proverbs. It was written by a Jew, and it was probably directed to Jews, it seems as though the writer has his eye fixed on Christian Jews and to Jews who were not Christians in an attempt to bring them to Christ.

The letter had a wide audience. It was circulated among many groups. Verse one states, “To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”, or “To the twelve tribes in the dispersion.” If we understand the twelve tribes meaning the new Israel, the church, then the term dispersion could also refer to the fact that the church was scattered at that time.

The Christian is to have unrestrained joy in the midst of trials. They must see themselves as good soldiers in spiritual battle. The trials of a Christian is in reality an opportunity for one’s faith to be proved. It’s finding out if you passed or failed. It’s the picture of gold being heated so that which is pure is left. The result of this testing is patience. The Greek word connotes more than just patience. It denotes steadfastness or staying power.

The goal is being “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing,” words that related to the Old Testament picture of the sacrifice offered to God. James’ words reflect the words of Jesus that are found in Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Christians receive spiritual perspective given to them from God. It is seeing things as God sees them. Prayer is seeking God and asking for what is needed with faith. James specifically defines faith here in the text as the absence of doubt or in other words, not being double minded. If that person is going to be effective in receiving from God, he must have his whole mind set on God.

In verse ten, James states that a rich brother boasts in his humiliation, this new insight that his riches don’t really amount to much. He says to the poor Christian to boast in his exaltation. Those who have nothing in this world have become rich in the kingdom of God if they’ve given their life to Jesus.

James revealed the tremendous transformation that takes place when a person follows Jesus. His whole view of life alters, and he sees things differently; he sees things from God’s perspective.

Conversation

1. How does James, the Lord’s brother, describe himself? What does this tell us about himself and Jesus?
2. What response should a Christian have during trials? Why? Compare verse 3 and 4 with 1 Peter 1:17.

3. What resource does the Christian have? Discuss the question of wisdom.
4. Describe the picture given of a man who doubts?

Take Away

One important point is that this very letter is one of the evidences for the resurrection. James had seen the risen Lord. It's because He lives that we can live also. The Christian rejoices because his salvation is tied to Jesus not just dying but being raised from the dead. Truth is what God has revealed about Himself to us.

For the Christian, even trials can be an opportunity by which God can bless them. We must have the right perspective of God. Our view of God will affect everything we do. We have single-mindedness in faith knowing what God want us to do, and then do it. We deal with our doubt by having a true and genuine picture of who God is, the basis for our faith. Our prayer should be that we might be the kind of people that God wants us to be - perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.