

THE BOOK OF
JAMES

NOTES BY DONALD TOWNSLEY

The Book of James

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I. TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

1. The book of James is called a “General Epistle”.
 - a. It was not written to a congregation or Individual in some particular locality.
 - b. It was written for the benefit of Christians wherever they might be in all of the world.
2. James addresses the letter “*to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*” (James 1:1).
 - a. The apostles are now judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).
 - b. Rom. 2: 28 – 29; Col. 2: 11 – 12
 - c. Phil. 3:3
 - d. Gal. 6: 15 – 16

II. THE AUTHOR

1. The writer identifies himself as “*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (James 1:1).
2. In the New Testament there were five men by the name of James:
 - a. James “*the son of Zebedee and John his brother*”, Jesus called them (Matt. 4:21; Matt. 10: 2).
 - i. James was killed by Herod Agrippa I early in the history of the church (Acts 12:2).
 - b. Another disciple had the name “James” (Matt. 10:3); he was the son of Alphaeus.

- c. There was “James the less” (Mark 15:40).
- d. Judas, brother of James (Acts 1:13; Luke 6:16; Mark 3:18) (Thaddaeus).
- e. There was **James the brother of Jesus** (Matt. 13:55).
 - i. He was a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 1:9, 18 – 19).
 - ii. **He seems to be the James that wrote the book.**

III. THE DATE OF THE BOOK

1. Josephus fixed the death of James about 62 A.D.
2. It was written between 45 A.D. and 62 A.D.
3. Some say from 45 A.D. to 50 A.D.

IV. WHERE WAS IT WRITTEN?

1. Since James was a native of Palestine, and for so long was linked with Jerusalem, this would appear to be the place it was written.

V. THE CONTENTS AND CHARACTER OF THE LETTER

1. The general **THEME** of the letter is “*pure and undefiled*”, in contrast with “*vain religion*” (James 1:20 – 27).
2. Vain religion does not accomplish its purpose.
3. In studying the book notice the things that go to make up “*pure and undefiled religion*”, and the things that will make our religion vain.

VI. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION

- a. **Joy and Patience** in the midst of trials (James 1: 2 – 4).
- b. **Unwavering Faith** and **Singleness of Mind** (1: 5 – 8).
- c. **Acceptance** of the Providential allotments of life and **Contentment** with them (1:9 – 11).
- d. The recognition of the **Sources of Temptation** and the **Consequences of Yielding to Temptation** (1:13 – 15).
- e. Recognize the **Divine Source of all Blessings** (1: 16 – 18).
- f. When to be **Quick** and when to be **Slow** (1:19 – 20).
- g. **Preparing the Heart** to be taught (1:21).
- h. **Hearing and Doing** (1: 22 – 25).
- i. The practice of **Generosity** and **Benevolence** toward others, and **Purity in Life** (1:27).
- j. The **Works of Faith** (2: 18).

VII. THE MARKS OF VAIN RELIGION

- a. **Carelessness** and **Forgetful Hearing** of the word of God (James 1: 22 – 24).
- b. Religion made vain by an **Unbridled Tongue** (James 1:26).
- c. **Respect of Persons** toward brethren.
 - i. Honoring the rich and despising the poor (James 2: 1- 9; I Sam. 16:7).
- d. **Partial Obedience** to the Law (James 2: 10 - 12).
 - i. No selective obedience.
- e. An **Unmerciful Disposition** toward others make our religion vain (2:13).

- f. A **Mere Profession of Faith** makes religion vain (2: 14 – 20)
- g. The **Failure to Control Our Tongue** makes our religion vain (James 3: 1 – 8).
- h. **Blessings and Cursing out of the Same Mouth; Hypocrisy** is evidenced and religion is vain (3: 9 – 12).
- i. **Envy, Strife, and Following the Wisdom which is Earthly, Sensual and Devilish** which emanates from Satan, makes our religion vain (3: 14 – 16).
- j. When we give ourselves to **Discontent** and to **Unholy Passions** our religion is vain (4: 1- 2).
- k. Unanswered prayer because of our **Lustful Desires** and our **Selfish Attitudes**, and **Worldliness** in our lives shows our religion is vain (4: 3 – 4).
- l. **Pride** in our hearts will make our religion vain (4:5 – 9).
- m. **Speaking Evil of Others** makes our religion vain (4: 11 – 12).
- n. **Presumption** in arrangements of future business; **Leaving God Out** of our plans makes our religion vain (4: 13 – 16).
- o. When we **Neglect to Do What We Know is Right** our religion is vain (4:17).

VIII. WARNINGS, EXHORTATIONS AND INSTRUCTION

- a. **Warning** to those who put **Trust in Riches** of this earth (5:1 – 6).
 - i. He warns them of **Eternal Condemnation** (5:1).
 - ii. *“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten”* (James 5:2; Matt. 6:19).
 - iii. These will testify against them in the **Judgment**.
- b. **Their Sins (5: 4 – 6)**
 - i. **Unjust** to laborers (5:4).
 - ii. They **Lived in Luxury and Self-indulgence** (5:5).
 - iii. **Condemned and Killed the Just** (5:6).

1. The rich controlled the courts.

c. Exhortations (5:7 – 8)

i. Be **Patient** (5: 7 – 8)

d. Instruction

i. “***Do not grumble*** against one another, brothers” (5:9).

ii. **Follow the example** of the Prophets and Job in patient endurance (5: 10 – 11)

iii. **Warnings against Swearing** (5:12; Matt. 5: 34 – 37; Col. 4:6).

IX. CLOSING

a. James closes the letter with a **Final Exhortation** and **Instruction** respecting **Prayer**.

i. **Pray in Time of Trouble** and **for the Sick** (James 5: 13 – 15).

ii. **Confession of Faults** and **Intercessory Prayer One for Another** (James 5:16).

iii. **Effectual prayer**, illustrated in the case of Elijah (James 5: 16 – 18).

iv. The **Duty of Winning Souls** and turning them the error of their way in order to **Cover a Multitude of Sins** (James 5: 19 – 20).