

Greek scholars who study the epistle acknowledge the high quality of his writing, extensive vocabulary, and his mixing into the Koine hapax legomena from Classical Greek.

His command of the languages, Koine and Classical Greek and Hebrew, has led some theologians to insist that a man from Galilee could not have been the book's author. However, historical evidence indicates otherwise:

James appears to be stylistically sophisticated. The letter displays a large vocabulary as well as a fund of illustrations and rhetorical polish that are somewhat surprising if a Palestinian Jewish peasant is the author. (p. 27)

Galilean Palestine was Hellenistic, and its residents would have known the lingua franca. Some towns within Galilee were so dominantly Gentile that it is difficult to suppose anything being spoken there other than Greek. It is likely that tradesmen would have some familiarity with the common language. (pp. 27–28)

The most thorough study of the use of Greek in northern Palestine is by [J. N.] Sevenster, who specifically examines the case of the Epistle of James and concludes that the bilingual character of northern Palestine, and the fact that cities in Galilee were almost entirely Greek-speaking, make it likely that James and the other disciples were fluent in Greek and possibly even capable of a degree of literary facility.<sup>2</sup> (p. 28)

What we are going to study is the original manuscript of one of the Lord's half-brothers. He is highly educated, but he does not possess the advanced theological and doctrinal understanding that is yet to be developed by Paul and others.

Due to the content of his book it appears evident that it was God's desire to take believers, ignorant of the intricate details of the new dispensation of the church, and reorganize their thoughts with regard to their interrelationships with each other.

For people to get along they must be able to function within a group arrangement by means of agreed upon standards of behavior. In other words, *exōterikē harmonía*—external harmony—must precede the development of *esōterikē harmonía*—internal harmony—so that the instruction and inculcation of advanced doctrines can be maximized within an environment for learning.

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<sup>2</sup> Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 27–28.

As spiritual growth advances, then these facilitated behavior patterns enable believers to display this sophisticated way of life that best represents Jesus Christ to the world. We will begin this very same process when we turn our attention to the exegetical and categorical analysis of the Epistle of James.

### C. Outline of Chapter 1

The first chapter is comprised of 27 verses including an introduction and seven paragraphs:

Introduction: James 1:1:

Par. 1:       Orientation and Adjustment to Testing:  
                  James 1:2–4

Par. 2:       The Need for Wisdom & Trust  
                  James 1:5–8

Par. 3:       The Trials of Poverty & Wealth  
                  James 1:9–11

Par. 4:       The Crown of Life  
                  James 1:12

Par. 5:       Managing Temptation & Sin  
                  James 1:13–18

Par. 6:       Isolating Distractions for Obedient Execution  
                  James 1: 19–25

Par. 7:       Pure Christian Function  
                  James 1:26–27

The chapter has two major sections; the first includes verses 2–15 which emphasizes the levels of growth an advancing believer attains while the second includes verses 16–27 which emphasizes the system that advance utilizes.

In the process, James will address the failures one faces during the process. Most of the human race is disinterested in what the Bible has to say. This is a fallen planet filled with fallen people.

Those who believe in Christ form a significant minority within the population and they, too, are no better than the unbeliever in their modus operandi if they also are disinterested in what the Bible teaches.

James is a Jew, well-educated, erudite, and multilingual; his chart pedigree from the elite tribe of Judah, house of David, and the first natural-born son of Joseph and Mary.

The public ministry of his half-brother Jesus ended only twelve years prior to the writing of the Epistle which was to become the first entry in the New Testament canon.

In A.D. 45, a great majority of believers were Jews whose expressions of worship were bound up in rituals mandated by the Old Testament. This is all they knew. The development of church-age doctrine was yet to be formulated by epistles yet to be written.

The Epistle of James does not develop any mystery doctrines and, since it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, the divine purpose intended it to be thus.

James clearly reveals in the very first verse that his intended audience is the “twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.” This makes reference to the people of the nation Israel wherever they may reside. Some are obviously in Palestine—Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea—others are spread throughout the Roman Empire.

James never addresses the controversy over circumcision, but one of his major themes is the legalism that had found fertile ground in Jerusalem. If grace was to obtain a hearing, then some work had to be done to suppress and eliminate the innate asceticism that accompanied strict compliance with the oral law.

To accomplish the deconstruction of the oral law in the Jewish soul, James assaults behavior patterns that stifle the Christian way of life, such as hypocrisy, arrogance, and monetary lust or elitism. The apostle also addresses two major objectives of the Christian: **(1)** application of what is learned and **(2)** production from what is learned.

Application is determined by mental analysis regarding decision-making while production has to do with the overt result of those decisions.

To accomplish these objectives, James has to get into the mind of new Jewish believers. He has to reveal through biting analyses and revealing illustrations the way these people are thinking. If they are not brought around to the mind-set of grace, then they will not be able to grow in grace nor will they be able to function as effective witnesses to others both Jew and Gentile.

If his readers orient to his messages, then they will reconstruct their souls. Their capacity to live under grace will enable them to become effective participants in the advance of the Christian faith.

Therefore, James's mission is to attack legalism, lust-patterns, mental, verbal, and overt sins, and address the issue of capacity righteousness as compared to imputed righteousness.

## II. James: Chapter One

**James 1:1** James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. (NASB)

1. The epistle begins with a salutation by James which introduces himself and acknowledges the book's intended recipients.
2. We have already done the work of identifying the five men of the New Testament named James and determined that the writer of this Epistle is the eldest natural-born son of Joseph and Mary, the half-brother of Jesus, and an apostle of the Lord.
3. James, however, references none of these bona fides but instead cites what he considers his more important qualification: "a bond-servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ."
4. This is a man whose early youth occurred in the shadow of his older half-brother Jesus. He was aware of who Jesus was during his public ministry. He knew about his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.
5. Through all of these events that captured the imagination of his Jewish brethren, James and his other three brothers remained in unbelief regarding the Messiahship of Jesus.

**John 7:1** After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

**John 7:3 -** Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing.

**v. 4** "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If you do these things, show Yourself to the world."

**v. 5** But not even His brothers were believing in Him.