# James

James is a letter for general circulation to the Christian congregations.

Although it’s attributed to someone named ‘James,’ it’s unclear exactly which James it is, since there were several. Traditionally, it’s understood to be the James who’s the brother of Jude and half-brother of Jesus.

The letter was probably first written in Aramaic before being translated into Greek. We don’t really know when it was written, but it must have been sometime before 66 CE, when the Roman invasion came to Jerusalem.

Some have doubted the authenticity of this book. Why? Well, unlike Paul, the writer may appear to be a staunch defender of the Old Law and its customs (James 2:8-11). Also, it lacks some Christian terms. Further, it was one of the last books to enter the Bible canon.

However, if there was a real person named James who was an Apostle to the Jews in JeruSalem, then his terms and subject matter would certainly have reflected the life of Jewish Christians, as Jewish Temple worship was still operating. Further, claims that he defended the Old Law are missing the point of his argument, as it only looks that way if his words are taken out of context.

### James

## Chapter 1

1[From] James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus the Anointed One, to the tweleve tribes that are scattered about:

Rejoice!

2Consider it all a joyful experience, my brothers, when you have to endure various types of trials, 3because you know that this proving of your faith helps you to endure.

4So, may your endurance reach its goal of making you perfect and complete in every way, lacking in nothing.

5If any of you are lacking in wisdom, you should continue to ask God, and He will give it to you… He provides it easily and without any scolding!

6However, you must believe [that you’ll receive it] and not have any doubts, for those who doubt are like waves of the sea that are driven and blown about by the wind. 7Such a person shouldn’t expect to receive anything at all from Jehovah, 8due to his unsureness and lack of faith.

9Therefore, let the lowly brother boast of his high standing, 10and the rich one boast of his lowliness, because he too will pass away like a flower in a field... 11For when the sun comes up and puts out all its heat, the plant withers, the flower drops off, and its beauty fades… And this is how the rich man will fade away in his journey through life!

12However, the man who endures his trials is blest, because after he’s been approved, he’ll receive the garland of life that the Lord promised to all those who love him.

13So may no one who’s being tried ever say:

 ‘I’m being tried by God!’

...because God doesn’t send bad things to try us. In fact, He doesn’t try anyone!

14Rather, we’re each being tried by our own desires, which bait us and lead us on. 15Then when our desires become pregnant, they give birth to sin... And once the sin is committed, it ends in death.

16Don’t allow anyone to mislead you, my beloved brothers...

17Every good deed and every perfect gift comes to us from above. It comes down from the Father of all light, who doesn’t change any more than a shadow when it turns. 18And because it was His Will, He gave birth to us through the message of truth, so that we could be some of the first fruitage of His creation.

19Recognize this, my beloved brothers:

Every man must be eager to listen... Slow to speak... And slow to get angry!

20For a man’s anger doesn’t make him righteous with God.

21So, once you’ve gotten rid of all the filth and badness, humbly allow the Word to grow within you… Because it can save your lives!

22Yes, become a person who does what the Word [directs him to do]. Don’t [be someone who just] listens to it, [for people like that] are fooling themselves.

23Because if anyone is a hearer but not a doer, he’s like the man who looks into a mirror at the face he was born with 24and carefully considers himself, then leaves and immediately forgets what sort of person he really is.

25However, the one who gazes into the perfect Law that belongs to a free people – and then keeps on looking into it – isn’t someone who listens and forgets, but someone who takes action!

This man will be blest in whatever he does!

26Now, if any of you think of yourselves as devout, but you’re misleading your hearts by not putting a bridle on your tongues, your worship is worthless...

27For what our God and Father views as clean, pure worship is this:

[Providing aid] to orphans and widows when they’re in need, and keeping ourselves free from the stains of this system of things.

### James

## Chapter 2

1My brothers,

Don’t show favoritism when it comes to the glorious faith of our Lord Jesus the Anointed One!

2Because if a man who’s wearing a gold ring and fine clothes enters your synagogue, and then somebody whose clothes are filthy also enters... 3do you favor the one who’s wearing the fine clothes and say:

 ‘Here’s a good place to sit?’

And do you then say to the poor one:

 ‘Stand [over there]!’

Or:

 ‘Sit here under my footstool?’

4If so, aren’t you showing favoritism among yourselves and judging from evil thoughts?

5Listen, my beloved brothers!

Didn’t God choose the poor of this system of things to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that He promised to those who love Him?

6Yet, you [tend to] dishonor the poor!

Aren’t rich people the ones who are oppressing you and dragging you into courts?

7And aren’t they the ones who speak badly of the good name you’re called by?

8Now, if you’re obeying the royal law of the Scriptures that says, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself,’ you’re doing well... 9But if you’re showing favoritism, then you’re sinning and the Law convicts you of being its violator!

10Because if someone who’s trying to obey the Law fails in just one little part of it, then he’s broken the whole thing.

11Because the One who said:

 *‘You must not commit adultery,’* [Exodus 20:14]

...also said:

 *‘You must not murder.’* [Exodus 20:13]

So if you aren’t committing adultery, but you murder someone, you’ve broken the whole Law.

12Therefore, speak and behave as though you’re about to be judged by the law of a free people… 13And [remember that] the merciless will be judged without mercy, since mercy is an important part of justice.

14So what good does it do, my brothers, if someone says that he has faith, but isn’t moved to do anything about it? Can his faith save him?

15[For example], if a brother or sister doesn’t have clothing or enough food for each day, 16and you tell him:

 ‘Go in peace; be warm and well fed.’

...if you don’t give him what he needs to survive, what good have you done?

17So, faith without good deeds is dead!

18Now, someone can say:

 ‘Even though you may do good things, I have [more] faith!’

Well, you show me your faith without good deeds, and I’ll show you my faith by the good things that I do.

19And do you say that you believe there’s just one God?

That’s good… But the demons believe that too!

Yes, they believe and it frightens them!

20I want you to know, O empty man, that faith apart from [good] deeds is dead!

21For wasn’t our father AbraHam called righteous because of the things that he did… Such as when he offered up his son IsaAc on the altar?

22Yes, you can see how his faith worked along with his deeds, and that it was his deeds that perfected his faith. 23So the scripture was fulfilled that says AbraHam...

 *‘...believed in The God, and for this he was considered to be righteous...’* [Genesis 15:6]

...and he was called God’s friend.

24So you see, a man is pronounced righteous by the things that he does, not just by the things he believes!

25The same was true of the prostitute, RaHab. For she was called righteous because she took the messengers in and then sent them out by another way. 26So, just as a body that isn’t breathing is dead, faith without good deeds is dead.

### James

## Chapter 3

1Brothers, not many of you should become teachers, because you know that [teachers] will be held more accountable… 2and we all make a lot of mistakes!

So if there’s any man who doesn’t stumble in his words, he’s perfect and he can lead his whole body as if with a bridle... 3Because if we put a bridle in the mouth of a horse to make it obey us, we can control its whole body.

4{Look!} Even large boats that are driven by strong winds are steered wherever the pilot wishes by very small rudders… 5and that’s just like it is with the tongue! Even though it’s just a little body part, it can boast about big things… And just a little flame can set a whole forest on fire!

6That’s how the tongue is… It’s a flame in a world of unrighteousness.

It sits among our body members as the corrupter of the whole body, which sets our very origins on fire… And what sets them ablaze is the garbage dump!

7Even though every sort of wild animal, flying creature, slithering thing, and sea creature can be tamed (and has been tamed) by men, 8no man can tame the tongue… For it won’t stop saying bad things, and it’s full of deadly poison.

9With it we can praise the highest Lord and the Father, or curse men who came into existence in God’s image… 10So out of the same mouth comes both blessings and curses.

There’s no need for things like this to keep happening, my brothers!

11Are there any fountains that bubble up both sweet and bitter [water]?

12Fig trees can’t produce olives.

Grapevines can’t produce figs.

And you can’t get sweet water from salt water, can you my brothers?

13So, who among you is wise and understanding?

Let him show that he has the inner strength that comes from wisdom through the ways that he acts and the things that he does.

14But if you’re bitterly jealous, and in your hearts you just want to argue... Don’t be too proud of this and don’t lie about the facts. 15This isn’t wisdom that comes from above! It’s earthly, animalistic, and demonic!

16For where you find jealousy and arguing, you’ll also find disorder and everything that’s foul.

17But the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, and full of mercy and good fruitage. It isn’t hypocritical or prejudiced, 18because the seeds of the fruit of righteousness are planted in peace by the peacemakers!

### James

## Chapter 4

1So, where are all these fights and wars among you coming from?

Aren’t they the result of battles that are being fought in your body parts over [sensual] pleasures?

2You want, but you can’t have!

You’re jealous... And murderous... But that doesn’t get you anything!

You’re fighting and waging war, but you haven’t received because you haven’t asked.

3Then when you do ask, you don’t receive, because you’re asking for the wrong reasons, since all that you’re really interested in is pleasure!

4Adulteresses, don’t you know that if you’re a friend of the world you’re an enemy of God?

So, whoever wants to be a friend of this world is putting himself down as God’s enemy!

5Does the scripture say that the spirit within us...

 *‘...lusts with envy...’* [perhaps referencing Proverbs 27:4]

...for no reason?

6Now, the loving care that He sends to us is greater than of all that, for we were told:

 *‘Jehovah opposes the proud,*
 *But shows loving-care to the humble.’*
 [Proverbs 3:34, LXX]

7So, let’s do what God says… Resist the Opposer and he’ll run from you!

8But draw closer to God and He will draw closer to you!

So, wash your hands, you sinners! And those of you who are undecided should purify your hearts!

9Otherwise you’ll be crying, groaning, and miserable… Your laughter will be turned into groaning and your joy will be turned into sadness!

10Yes, humble yourselves in the eyes of Jehovah and He will lift you higher!

11Brothers, stop complaining about each other, because those who speak against or judge their brothers are speaking against and judging the Law.

And if you’re judging the Law, you aren’t someone who’s under it, you’re its judge… 12And there’s just one Lawgiver and Judge who can either save or destroy.

So, who [do you think] you are to be judging your neighbors?

13And those of you who say:

 ‘Today or tomorrow I’m going to travel to this city or that, and I’ll spend a year there doing business and making profits...’

14You don’t even know what’s going to happen in your life tomorrow! For you’re just a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears!

15Shouldn’t you rather be saying...

 ‘If it’s Jehovah’s will, I’ll live and do this or that?’

16But now you’re taking pride in things that you just assume to be true, and being proud over such things is wickedness. 17Because, whenever you know what’s right and you don’t do it, that’s a sin to you!

### James

## Chapter 5

1So go on, you who are rich... Cry and bawl over the miseries that you’ll have to endure!

2For your wealth will rot away. Your clothes will be moth-eaten. 3Your gold and silver will corrode. And whatever remains will testify against you and eat your flesh – just like the fire that you’ve treasured away for yourselves in the last days.

4Look! The wages that you refused to pay the workers that harvested your fields are crying out, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of Jehovah of Armies!

5For you’ve lived on the earth merrily and have been greedy… Yes, you fattened-up your own bodiesFor you’ve lived on the earth merrily and have been greedy… Yes, you fattened-up your own bodies<sup class="difference">[Syr] to be ready for the day of slaughter! 6You’ve condemned and murdered a righteous one, [even though] he didn’t stand against you.

7Brothers, let’s be patient until the Lord arrives.

{Look!} For just as the farmer harvests the precious fruitage of the ground after patiently waiting for both the early and late rains, 8we must also be patient… But with determined hearts; because the appearance of the Lord is drawing near.

9Brothers, stop groaning about each other, so you won’t be judged. For look… The judge is now standing at the door!

10Brothers, you should learn from the examples of the Prophets who spoke in the Name of Jehovah about how to suffer bad things and how to be patient, 11for we call those who endured, ‘the blest!’

You’ve all heard of the endurance of Job and you saw how Jehovah ended it…

And this proves that Jehovah is very kind and merciful.

12But above all, my brothers... Stop swearing oaths by heaven, or by the earth, or by anything else.

Just let your yes mean yes, and your no mean no, so that you don’t fail when you’re being judged!

13Are there any among you who are being persecuted?

Let them keep on praying!

Are there any among you who are cheerful?

Let them sing psalms!

14Are there any among you who are ill?

Let them call the elders and ask them to pray over them, as they rub them with oil in the name of the Lord!

15Then their faithful prayers will rescue the ill and the Lord will lift them and forgive any sins that they’ve committed.

16So, admit your errors to each other and pray that each one of you’ll be healed, because prayer has a lot of power when it’s working through righteous people.

17Remember that EliJah was just a man with passions like ours; but when he prayed and asked for it not to rain, it didn’t rain in the land for 3-1/2 years! 18Then when he prayed again, the skies poured with rain, causing the ground to produce its fruitage!

19My brothers,

Whenever someone is led astray from the truth and someone else leads him back... 20Recognize that the one who turns the sinner from the error of his ways will save his own life from death… And it’ll cover many of his own sins as well.