

Bible Snapshots



James – Practical Christian Wisdom

Author – 45, A.D., James, Jesus half brother

- Most scholars accept Christ's half brother as the author. He was not converted during Christ's ministry (John 7:3-10), but comes to play a prominent part in the early church after Christ's resurrection (see 1Cor. 15:7; Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13, 23-29; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 21:18-26; Acts 15:13-29). He was called "James the just" by Clement of Alexandria because of his just dealings with all men. Furthermore, authorship of this James is several ancient writers, including Josephus. According to these ancient records, James was beaten to death while preaching Christ in the temple in 63A.D.
- The book encourages Christians through practical advice about trials, faith and living the Christian life fully. It is full of the "marks" of what it means to be truly religious and, on the contrary, what it means to not be.
- James is considered the first of the "general epistles," meaning they are not written to a specific church, but to Christians in general and were to be read by all of the churches. James has 5 chapters and 108 verses.
- It should be noted that some have doubted the authenticity of James, but such an objection is based on unreasonable assertions. For instance, the only reason Martin Luther dismissed it was because he didn't like the idea "faith without works is dead." He confused what James says here and what Paul says about works of the Law, speaking of the Law of Moses, which are different

Themes

- Be doers of the word, patient in trial, always in prayer, serving one another, and drawing near to the Lord.

Key verse – 2:20, 26

Key words / phrase – works and faith / doers of the word

Outline

- I. Various exhortations (1)
- II. Respect of persons in assembly (2:1-13)
- III. Works the proof of faith (2:14-26)
- IV. The Tongue (3:1-12)
- V. Heavenly and earthly wisdom contrasted (3:13-18)
- VI. Worldliness rebuked (4)
- VII. Closing communications (5)

Scientifically speaking – when James uses the phrase "shadow of turning" he is referencing the ancient sundial, a time keeping device. The sundial is mentioned twice in the OT (2 Kings 20:11; Isa. 38:8) and was used throughout ancient oriental cultures. The "shadow of turning" refers to less and less light till there is total darkness. When James uses the phrase he is saying that there is no darkness with the Lord and thus, by metaphorical reference, no sin (1 John 1:5b).

A book of questions – Because it is practical, James is a ready reference for answering some commonly asked questions about Christianity and life in general. What to do when tested? (1:2) What to do when tried (1:3) Where can I get wisdom? (1:5) Does God tempt us? (1:13) How am I tempted? (1:14) What is religion? (1:26, 27) Is faith alone sufficient for salvation? (2:14-26) Why are my prayers not heard? (4:2, 3) Is Christ really coming again? (5:7, 8) Should I hold a grudge? (5:9) How can I stay happy? (5:13) etc.

God's word in James – it is called Word of Truth (1:18); Engrafted Word (1:21) and Perfect law (1:25) – it convinces and convicts (2:9); begets (1:18); implants godliness (1:21); activates and energizes (1:25) – we must look into it (1:25); listen to it (1:23); receive it (1:21) and practice it (1:22).

Religion – The word has gotten a black eye as of late, but such is more a failure to understand the word, often confusing it with the idea of "ritual." Religion refers to devotedness to God and supposes our reconciliation to God and our obedience to the system of faith he has given. It comes from the heart.