

THE LETTER OF JAMES

{*This epistle is the first of five called "General" or "Catholic" epistles since these were not addressed to individual churches but to Christians in general. This epistle is considered to be a kind of "tract" which was to be distributed to 'the twelve tribes who were scattered all over the world'. The writer seems to be addressing people who had turned to the Christian faith from a background of Judaism but had the difficulty of living within a pagan world. This makes this letter all the more important to the Christian Church today since we too are living in a world in which Christianity is not necessarily the driving force.*}

INSCRIPTION

{*"The Epistle of James" Aleph, B, K, Psi, 81, 630, 1241 & several additional manuscripts. "The Epistle of James the Apostle" P & several additional manuscripts. "The Catholic Epistle of James" several minuscules. "The Epistle of the Holy Apostle James" I, L, 049 & many minuscules.*}

CHAPTER I SALUTATION

<James 1:1>

¹ Greetings from James <*The name means "supplanter" since it is a form of Jacob.*> the servant (*or, bond slave*) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes of the dispersion (*or, who are scattered all over the world*).

FAITH AND WISDOM

<James 1:2-8>

² My beloved (*literally, brothers*), you are to consider it to be a sheer joy (*or, an occasion for joy*) to be surrounded by (*or, beset by*) trials of all sorts ³ for you must be well aware of the [testing] ¹ of your faith which leads to the power to endure (*or, fortitude*). ⁴ Let endurance (*or, fortitude*) go right on doing its work in order that you might become perfect and complete, without any deficiencies. ⁵ If anyone among you is deficient in wisdom, let that person ask God, for it is God who bestows upon everyone without grudging or fault finding. ⁶ You must, however, ask in faith and without doubting, for anyone who has doubts is like the surf of the sea which is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ Such a person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, being double-minded (*or, divided in mind, literally, two-souled*) <*The word "διψυχος" was possibly coined by the writer.*> and undecided in everything that is done.

POVERTY AND RICHES

<James 1:9-11>

⁹ Let the person (*literally, brother*) who is not regarded as important (*or, the lowly brother*) rejoice when raised to a higher position. ¹⁰ The wealthy person ought to rejoice in being brought low, for such an individual will vanish like the flowers of the field. <*There is no pride in poisons!*> ¹¹ The sun rises with its scorching heat (*or, wind*) <*i.e. the sirocco or burning wind*> and withers the plants so that the flowers drop off and their lovely appearance is gone. In the same manner those who are rich (*literally, rich men*) will be destroyed along with their enterprises.

1 {C} So: Aleph, A, B, C, K, P, Psi, 049,056, 0142, many minuscules, Old Latin & Armenian. "genuineness" P74 & 1241.

TRIAL AND TEMPTATION

<James 1:12-18>

12 Oh, the happiness of the [persons who endure]² trials, for, having stood the test. That person will gain the crown of life which has been [promised]³ to all those who love Him. 13 No one is to say, when passing through a trial, 'My temptation comes from God', for God is not able to be tempted to do evil and He does not tempt anyone. 14 When a person is tempted, that one is enticed by his own passions and drawn away. <The word translated "enticed" "δελεαζω" and the one translated "drawn away" "εξελεκω" are used as figures of speech in hunting and fishing.> 15 It is then that passion has conceived and gives birth to sin, while sin, for its part, when it becomes mature gives birth to death.

16 My beloved (*literally, brothers*), do not be misled in this. 17 Every good and perfect gift <*i.e. highly valued gift*> comes from above and comes down to us from the Father who is the source of light. In Him there is no [variation nor is any shadow cast on us because of His turning (*or, shadow of inconsistency*)].⁴ 18 It is an act of His own will by which He made us to be His children through the Word of Truth, so that we might become the first fruits of all His creatures.

HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

<James 1:19-27>

19 This is important (*or, You must know*), [my beloved (*literally, brothers*).]⁵ Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. 20 A person's anger does not become the sort of thing that promotes the righteousness of God. 21 Because of this, rid yourself of everything that is vile and the outgrowth of evil (*or, related to evil in any way*). Instead welcome the Word that is implanted in you which has the power to save your souls in a humble manner.

22 Additionally, see to it that you are obedient to the Word (*or, become doers of the Word*). Do not delude yourselves by merely being listeners. 23 If anyone listens but does not obey, such a person resembles one who carefully looks at (*or, contemplates*) his own face in a mirror. 24 Even though he has carefully looked at himself, he goes away and promptly forgets how he looks. 25 Anyone who looks closely into the law that is perfect, the law that provides freedom, and persists,⁶ not being a forgetful listener, but is an obedient doer, will receive a blessing in this action of obedience.

26 If anyone presumes to be religious (*or, a worshiper*) <*i.e. is careful about the outward forms of religion*> without controlling his own tongue, such a one is deceiving his own heart (*or, is deceiving himself*) and his religion (*or, worship, piety*) is useless. 27 The religion (*or, worship, piety*) that is pure and unstained (*or, spotless*) in the sight of our God and Father is this: To look after helping orphans and widows who are in distress and to keep one's self [free from the contamination of the world (*or, without blemish and spotless*)].⁷

2 {C} So: B in the second corrective hand, C in the original hand, Psi, 1739 & the Majority Text. "person who endures" K, L, 049 & several minuscules.

3 {C} So: P23, P75, Aleph, A, B, Psi, Old Latin, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic & Armenian. "the Lord promised" C, K, P, 049, 056, 0142, 0246, many minuscules & Harclean Syriac. "the promise of God" 945, 1241, 1739, 2492, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac & Ethiopic.

4 {B} So: Aleph in the third corrective hand, A, C, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac & Armenian. There are numerous other variants in the manuscripts.

5 {B} The sense is clear despite manuscript variants.

6 {D} Minuscule 323 inserts an "and" at this point.

7 {B} Minor variants occur.

CHAPTER II WARNING AGAINST PARTIALITY

<James 2:1-13>

¹ My beloved, (*literally, brothers*) you must not combine favoritism (*or, partiality*) with your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is glorious, as you carry out your relationship with others.

² Suppose a man who is wearing gold rings and splendid clothes enters one of your meetings and at the same time a poor man is dressed in shabby (*or, dirty*) clothes <*The Greek word "ρुπαρος" can be translated "shabby", "filthy", or "dirty".*> also enters, ³ and you pay attention to the one who is well dressed and say, ['Stand there,'] ⁸ or 'Sit here. This is a good seat,' and to the shabby (*or, dirty*) one you say ['Sit on the floor near my footstool,'] ⁹ ⁴ is it not evident that you are discriminating among them and are making judgments based on incorrect motives?

⁵ Pay attention, my beloved (*literally, brothers*). Did not God choose those who are poor in this world (*or possibly, those who are thought by the rich to be poor in this world*) to be rich in faith and become the heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him? ⁶ You, however, have dishonored (*or, insulted*) those who are poor. ⁷ Is it not true that those who are wealthy, who domineer you, are the ones who would drag you into their law courts? Are they not the ones who slander the noble name by which you are called? ⁸ If you truly carry out (*or, observe*) the royal law as laid down in the Writings (*or, Scriptures*) 'You shall love your neighbor as your self' (*cf. Leviticus 19:18*) you behave properly. ⁹ However, if you show favoritism (*or, partiality*) you commit sin and are convicted by the law as a transgressor (*or, lawbreaker*). ¹⁰ A person who observes the entire law but fails at one point has become guilty of violating the entire law (*or, is guilty in all respects*). ¹¹ He who has said, 'Do not commit adultery' and also said, 'Do not kill' (*cf. Exodus 20:13,14; Deuteronomy 5:17,18. Quoted either from the LXX or from early church usage.*) and if you commit murder but have not committed adultery you have become a transgressor of the law (*or, a law breaker*). ¹² Speak and act in such a manner that it will benefit those who are to be judged by the law of freedom (*or, the law that makes men free*). ¹³ Whoever does not show mercy will be mercilessly judged, but mercy triumphs over judgment.

FAITH AND WORKS

<James 2:14-26>

¹⁴ What good does it do, my beloved (*literally, brothers*) for a person to say, 'I have faith' and yet his actions do not substantiate the claim (*or, do not correspond*)? Can a faith of that sort save him? ¹⁵ Assume that there are a brother or sister who are wearing shabby clothes (*or, are naked*) <*The Greek word "γυμνος" can be used for both shabby clothes and being naked.*> and lack food for their daily meal ¹⁶ and one of you says, 'Go away (*or, go home*) in peace (*or, peace be with you,*) keep warm and eat well' without supplying their bodily needs (*or, their necessities*), of what use is that? ¹⁷ In the exact same manner faith that is not accompanied by action is in itself dead.

¹⁸ But now, someone will say, 'You have faith. I have actions. Show me your faith apart from your actions and I will show you my faith through my actions.' ¹⁹ Do you believe that [there is only one God?] ¹⁰ Good. The demons (*or, evil spirits*) also believe and they shudder. ²⁰ Oh foolish person

⁸ {C} So: Aleph in the original hand, Psi & a number of minuscules. Omitted or with minor variants in other manuscripts.

⁹ {C} There are variants in the words but the meaning is the same.

¹⁰ {C} So: B, 614, 630, 1505, 2412, 2495. "that God is one" P74, Aleph, A, several minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic (Pell Platt). Other variants also occur.

(literally, man) do you desire to have proof that faith without works is [useless?] ¹¹ ²¹ Was it not because of the actions of our father Abraham, that, when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar (cf. *Genesis 27:1-14*) he was declared righteous. <Abraham means "father of a multitude". Isaac means "laughter". These were two of the Patriarchs.> ²² Do you not see (or, isn't it obvious) that his faith was in cooperation with his actions and that it was by virtue of his actions that his faith reached its supreme perfection. ²³ Because of this the Writings (or, Scriptures) say, 'And Abraham believed in God and it was credited to him for righteousness' (cf., *Genesis 15:6 LXX*) and he was called 'God's friend'. (cf. *II Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8*) ²⁴ You see, by the consequence of his actions he was pronounced righteous and not simply because of faith. ²⁵ Similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute (cf. *Joshua 2:1-22; Hebrews 11:31*) declared to be righteous because of her actions when she entertained the strangers <i.e. spies> and sent them away by means of a different road. ²⁶ For just as the body is a dead thing without the spirit, so also faith is a dead thing without action.

CHAPTER III THE TONGUE

<James 3:1-12>

¹ My beloved (literally, brothers), not many of you should become teachers (or, seek the office of teachers) since you are aware that those who teach assume a more severe judgment than others ² for all of us make many a slip of the tongue. If there is anyone who never makes a slip of the tongue when speaking, to be sure that person is perfect and is able to control his own living body <i.e. his entire being or nature>. ³ [Now] ¹² when we put bits in the mouths of (or, possibly, bridles) horses to make them obedient to us, we are able to guide their entire bodies to turn in every direction. ⁴ On the other hand, look at the ships: as large as they are, a very small rudder can steer them in any direction at the will of the helmsman, even when the strongest gale is driving them. ⁵ Just so the tongue, which is an insignificant part of the body can make great claims. <Only horses and ships were steered in that day, thus causing this seemingly unlikely pair of metaphors. It was perfectly logical to the writer in his day.>

⁶ Just think about how great a forest can be set afire, by even a small spark! Now, the tongue is much like a fire. (cf. *Proverbs 16:27*) It is a world of wickedness. Among all the parts of the body the tongue is so located that it is able to spread evil through the entire body and ignite the entire course of our existence (or, our lives) with fire from the flames of hell (literally, "Gehenna). <The word "ΓΕΕΝΝΑ" was derived from the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, the garbage dump of Jerusalem which always was smoldering, hence a visible source of the descriptive word for the concept of "hell".> ⁷ All kinds of creatures, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are able to be tamed and have already been tamed by human ingenuity. ⁸ The tongue is the one thing no human being is able to tame. It is evil, uncontrollable, filled with deadly poison. ⁹ With it we praise <The Greek word "εὐλογεῖν" is the root of our word "eulogize" and perhaps comes from the LXX.> the Lord and Father and with it we curse our fellow human beings who are created in God's image. (cf. *Genesis 1:27*) ¹⁰ It is out of the very same mouth that praise and curses come. That is wrong! It should never happen! ¹¹ Is there any spring that has water gushing from the same opening that is both brackish (or, bitter) and fresh (or, sweet)? ¹² My beloved (literally, brothers) it is also not possible for a fig tree to yield olives or for a vine to produce figs. No! Neither can [brackish (or, bitter, salty)] ¹³ spring

11 {B} So: B, C in the original hand, 945, 1739, Sahidic Coptic & Armenian.. "dead" Aleph, C in the second corrective hand, K, P, Psi, 049, 056, 0142, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic.

12 {C} Various words are used to provide the transition to a new sentence.

13 {B} Variants occur but of little consequence.

produce fresh water.

THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE

<James 3:13-18>

¹³ Who among you is wise and understanding? Let that person, by the example of good behavior, so live that his actions are guided by gentleness brought about by wisdom. ¹⁴ However, if you, in your heart, harbor bitter jealousies and rivalry do not take pride in it, telling falsehoods that would destroy the truth. ¹⁵ Such wisdom does not come down from above. Instead it is earthly, unspiritual and demonic. ¹⁶ Where jealousy and rivalry exist there will also be confusion (*or, restlessness*) and every kind of evil will flourish. ¹⁷ The wisdom that is from above, first of all, is pure, secondly, peaceful, courteous, congenial, filled with mercy and has a rich harvest of kind actions. It is impartial and free of pretense (*or, hypocrisy*). ¹⁸ Righteousness is the harvest that is produced from the seeds of peace makers who are sowing peace.

CHAPTER IV

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

<James 4:1-10>

¹ What is the cause of conflicts and quarrels among you? Is it not because of your passions (*or, appetites*) that are always carrying on inner warfare within you? ² You covet things you are unable to obtain, you commit murder, you are envious, but are not able to obtain what you want. You fight and carry on war and you do not have what you want because you do not pray. ³ You ask and do not receive because you do not pray correctly, for you want to use what you receive for your own pleasures. ⁴ You are like [adulteresses (*or, want to squander what you receive.*)] ¹⁴ You do not realize that friendship with the world means being at enmity with God. Whoever chooses to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or: do you suppose that the Writings *<i.e. Scripture>* are meaningless when they say, 'God yearns jealously over us because of the Spirit He [implanted (*literally, dwells*)] ¹⁵ in us.' (*Perhaps Psalm 41:2 or Psalm 83:3 LXX*) ⁶ Because of this He says,

'God opposes the arrogant

but He provides grace for the humble.'

(*cf. Proverbs 3:34 LXX or perhaps from early Christian usage.*)

⁷ Now then, submit yourself to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you! Cleanse (*or, wash*) your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts, you who have divided loyalties! ⁹ Feel your misery, grieve and weep. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.

JUDGING A BROTHER

<James 4:11-12>

¹¹ Do not speak disparagingly of (*or, slander*) one another, my beloved (*literally, brothers*). Whoever speaks critically of a fellow believer (*literally, brother*) or passes judgment on a fellow believer speaks disparagingly (*or, slanders*) of the law, passing judgment on the law. ¹² There is only

14 {A} So: Aleph in the original hand, A, B, 33, 81, 629, 1241, 1739, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. "adulterers and adulteresses" Aleph in the third corrective hand, H, K, P, Psi, 049,056,0142. many minuscules & Harclean Syriac.

15 {C} So: P74, A, B, Psi, 049 & some minuscules. "dwelling place" K, P, 056, 0142, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic & Armenian.

one Lawgiver and Judge and He has the power to save or to destroy. Who are you that you would claim to be able to judge your neighbor?

WARNINGS AGAINST BOASTING

<James 4:13-17>

¹³ Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into this city or that one and spend a year there, transacting successful business,' ¹⁴ when you do not even have any idea about what will happen [tomorrow.] ¹⁶ This is what your life is [like.] ¹⁷ You are a [vapor (*or, mist*)] ¹⁸ which appears for a little while and then disappears. ¹⁵ Instead you really ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will and we live, we will do this or that.' ¹⁶ But, as things are, you boast in your own self-confidence. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If a person knows the right action and does not do it, that person is sinful.

CHAPTER V

WARNING THE RICH

<James 5:1-6>

¹ Come now! You wealthy people, weep and bemoan concerning the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your wealth has rotted <*i.e. is temporal*>, your clothing is moth eaten, ³ your gold and silver are corroded and this corrosion will bear witness against you and it will consume your flesh as does a fire. You have hoarded up wealth in these last days <*i.e. when the end time is near*>. ⁴ Now look here! You have withheld from the workmen who have harvested your fields and the outcries of the harvesters have been heard by (*literally, have entered the ears of*) the Lord of Hosts. ⁵ You have lived a life of luxury in this world. You have devoted yourselves to pleasures. You have gratified your appetites and the day of slaughter has come (*or, in the day of slaughter*). ⁶ You have condemned and you have murdered the innocent (*literally, the righteous*) who offer no resistance.

PATIENCE AND PRAYER

<James 5:7-20>

⁷ So be patient my beloved (*literally, brothers*) until the coming of the Lord. Take note how a farmer waits for his precious crop. He is patient about it until it [receives] ¹⁹ the early and late rain. ⁸ Therefore, be patient, maintain your courage (*literally, strengthen your hearts*), for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Do not complain about one another, my beloved (*literally, brothers*) so that you might not be brought to (*or, come under*) judgment. Look! The Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ My beloved, (*literally, brothers*) take as an example the misfortune and the patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ We describe these as having blessedness because they endured. You also have heard about Job's <*The name means "returning". Scholars are divided as to whether this Old Testament book was a "tract", a "drama" or a description of a historic event.*> remaining patient and have known how the Lord provided for him to the end. How filled with tenderness and compassion our Lord is!

¹² Above all things, my beloved (*literally, brothers*) do not use oaths (*or, swear*). Do not swear by heaven or by earth or anything else. Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no' so that you

¹⁶ {D} Minor variants occur.

¹⁷ {C} Minor variants occur.

¹⁸ {D} Minor variants occur.

¹⁹ {B} So: P74, B, 048, many minuscules, Old Latin, Sahidic Coptic & Armenian. "receives the rain that is early and late" A, K, P, Psi, 049, 056, 0142, many minuscules, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac. "receives the fruits of the early and latter rains" Aleph in the original and third corrective hands & some Harclean & Bohairic Coptic.

will not come under condemnation.

¹³ Is there anyone among you who is suffering? Let that person pray. Is there anyone who is happy? Let that person sing Psalms (*or, hymns*). ¹⁴ Is anyone among you ill? Let that person call the elders of the Church and let them pray for (*literally, over*) him and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord. ¹⁵ This prayer offered in (*literally, of*) faith will restore the sick person and will raise him up and if he has committed sins these will be forgiven him (*or, will be canceled.*) ¹⁶ Because of this, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, in order that you might be cured. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness. ¹⁷ Elijah <*The name means "the Lord is God"*. *Elijah was an Old Testament prophet. cf. I Kings 17 - II Kings 2*> was a man who possessed a similar nature <*i.e. weakness*> as ours and he prayed fervently that there should be no rain. No rain fell on the land for a period of three and one half years. ¹⁸ He again prayed fervently and the sky provided rain and the land yielded its crops. (*cf. I Kings 17, 18*)

¹⁹ My beloved (*literally, brothers*) in the event that anyone among you strays from the truth and some one brings him back, ²⁰ let him be [assured] ²⁰ that the one who brings the sinner back from his misguided course (*literally, the wrong road*) will save a soul [from death]²¹ and covers up a great multitude of sins. (*cf. Psalm 32:1*)

²⁰ {D} Minor variants occur.

²¹ {D} "him from death" Aleph, A, P, 048, several minuscules, Old Latin, Syriac, Coptic & Armenian. Variants are found in P74, B, 614 & 2412. "will save from death" K, Psi, 049, 056, 0142, many minuscules & Sahidic Coptic.