

Subject: *Know Your Bible – Part 29*

Scripture: *James 1:1-15*

Time, Place, and Purpose of James

1. The book of James was probably written from Jerusalem around 46-49 A.D., making it one of the earliest books of the New Testament.
2. The writer of this epistle was James, the half brother of Jesus. Four men are named James in the New Testament, including James the son of Zebedee and brother of John. Tradition points to James, the brother of Jesus, as the writer. Since his name heads the list of Jesus' brothers and sisters (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3), he was the oldest of the children born to Mary and Joseph. James and other family members did not accept Jesus' claims to be Christ until after the resurrection (Jn. 7:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:7). He was one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church and a central figure in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12). The language in this letter is similar to the speech of James in the Jerusalem Council.
3. This letter was written to Hebrew Christians outside of Palestine (Jas. 1:1, 19; 2:1, 7). The place of meeting is called a "synagogue" in the original Greek (2:2) and the entire letter reflects Jewish thought and expressions (2:19, 21; 4:11-12; 5:4, 12). James has several references to the Law and refers directly or indirectly to 22 Old Testament books.
4. The main theme of James is genuine Christian faith. The purpose of this letter is practical rather than doctrinal. James insists that real faith changes a person's character and conduct. If real change has not taken place, then faith is dead and worthless. James is considered to be the most practical book in the New Testament.
5. This letter has similar teachings to Christ's Sermon on the Mount. There are about fifteen indirect references in James such as: profession is not enough to get into the kingdom of heaven; hearing and doing go together; a person's character is known by his actions; warnings against judging others; the wrong use of wealth; and swearing.
6. James used Old Testament characters as illustrations: Abraham (Jas. 2:21); Isaac (2:21); Rahab (2:25); Job (5:11); and Elijah (5:17).
7. The letter of James has a different emphasis than the letters of Paul. Martin Luther called James "a right strawy epistle" in comparison to other New Testament books, especially the letters of Paul. Their writings however do not contradict, but complement each other.

Emphasis of Paul

- A. Faith
- B. Justified in the sight of God
- C. Addresses the issue of legalism
- D. Salvation is by faith alone
- E. The root of salvation
- F. Stresses the object of true faith

Emphasis of James

- A. Good works
- B. Justified in the eyes of men
- C. Addresses the issue of easy-believism
- D. Saving faith is never alone
- E. The fruit of salvation
- F. Stresses the outcome of true faith

In Romans 4, Paul used Abraham to illustrate that justification is by faith alone, not by works. But James 2 states that Abraham was justified by works (Jas. 2:21). Romans 4 and James 2

are actually two sides of the same coin. Paul wrote about justification before God while James wrote about justification before men. Faith that produces no works is not saving faith.

8. James is written in a concise and direct style. James is full of commands (54 in only 108 total verses), but its tone is warm and loving (“brethren” is found 14 times). This letter shifts abruptly from topic to topic much like the Old Testament book of Proverbs.

9. James contains many references to nature and common things:

- A. Wind-tossed waves of the sea (Jas. 1:6)
- B. Burning heat of the sun, withering grass, and fading flowers (1:10-11)
- C. Conception and birth (1:15)
- D. Shadows caused by the sun’s position (1:17)
- E. Firstfruits of the harvest (1:18)
- F. Looking into a mirror (1:23)
- G. Begging (2:15-16)
- H. Breath of the body (2:26)
- I. Bits in horses’ mouths (3:3)
- J. Fountain water, figs, and olives (3:11-12)
- K. Vapor or mist (4:14)
- L. Moth-eaten garments and cankered treasures (5:2-3)
- M. Farm laborers and wages (5:4)
- N. Early and latter rains (5:7)
- O. Anointing with oil (5:14)
- P. Drought (5:17)

Outline of James

- I. The Test of Genuine Faith (1:1-18)
 - A. True faith is purified by trials (1:1-12)
 - B. True faith does not attribute evil to God (1:13-18)
- II. The Characteristics of Genuine Faith (1:19—5:6)
 - A. Faith obeys the Word (1:19-27)
 - B. Faith removes discrimination (2:1-13)
 - C. Faith proves itself by works (2:14-26)
 - 1) Genuine faith and dead faith (2:14-20)
 - 2) The example of Abraham’s faith (2:21-24)
 - 3) The example of Rahab’s faith (2:25)
 - 4) Faith without works is dead (2:26)
 - D. Faith controls the tongue (3:1-12)
 - E. Faith produces godly wisdom (3:13-18)
 - F. Faith produces humility (4:1-12)
 - G. Faith produces dependence on God (4:13-17)
 - H. Warning of judgment upon the rich (5:1-6)
- III. The Triumph of Genuine Faith (5:7-20)
 - A. Faith endures and waits for Christ’s return (5:7-12)
 - B. Faith prays for the afflicted (5:13-18)
 - C. Faith confronts and restores the erring brother (5:19-20)

Know Your Bible – Part 29

James

Time, Place, and Purpose of James

1. The book of James was probably written from Jerusalem around _____, making it one of the earliest books of the New Testament.

2. The writer of this epistle was _____. Four men are named James in the New Testament, including James the son of Zebedee and brother of John. Tradition points to James, the brother of Jesus, as the writer. Since his name heads the list of Jesus' brothers and sisters (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3), he was the oldest of the children born to Mary and Joseph. James and other family members did not accept Jesus' claims to be Christ until after the resurrection (Jn. 7:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:7). He was one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church and a central figure in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12). The language in this letter is similar to the speech of James in the Jerusalem Council.

3. This letter was written to _____ outside of Palestine (Jas. 1:1, 19; 2:1, 7). The place of meeting is called a "synagogue" in the original Greek (2:2) and the entire letter reflects Jewish thought and expressions (2:19, 21; 4:11-12; 5:4, 12). James has several references to the Law and refers directly or indirectly to 22 Old Testament books.

4. The main theme of James is _____. The purpose of this letter is practical rather than doctrinal. James insists that real faith changes a person's character and conduct. If real change has not taken place, then faith is dead and worthless. James is considered to be the most practical book in the New Testament.

5. This letter has similar teachings to Christ's _____. There are about fifteen indirect references in James such as: profession is not enough to get into the kingdom of heaven; hearing and doing go together; a person's character is known by his actions; warnings against judging others; the wrong use of wealth; and swearing.

6. James used _____ as illustrations: Abraham (Jas. 2:21); Isaac (2:21); Rahab (2:25); Job (5:11); and Elijah (5:17).

7. The letter of James has a _____ than the letters of Paul. Their writings however do not contradict, but complement each other.

Emphasis of Paul

- A. Faith
- B. Justified in the sight of God
- C. Addresses the issue of legalism
- D. Salvation is by faith alone
- E. The root of salvation
- F. Stresses the object of true faith

Emphasis of James

- A. Good works
- B. Justified in the eyes of men
- C. Addresses the issue of easy-believism
- D. Saving faith is never alone
- E. The fruit of salvation
- F. Stresses the outcome of true faith

In Romans 4, Paul used Abraham to illustrate that justification is by faith alone, not by works. But James 2 states that Abraham was justified by works (Jas. 2:21). Romans 4 and James 2

are actually two sides of the same coin. Paul wrote about justification before God while James wrote about justification before men. Faith that produces no works is not saving faith.

8. James is written in a _____ style. James is full of commands (54 in only 108 total verses), but its tone is warm and loving (“brethren” is found 14 times). This letter shifts abruptly from topic to topic much like the Old Testament book of Proverbs.

9. James contains many references to _____:

- A. Wind-tossed waves of the sea (Jas. 1:6)
- B. Burning heat of the sun, withering grass, and fading flowers (1:10-11)
- C. Conception and birth (1:15)
- D. Shadows caused by the sun’s position (1:17)
- E. Firstfruits of the harvest (1:18)
- F. Looking into a mirror (1:23)
- G. Begging (2:15-16)
- H. Breath of the body (2:26)
- I. Bits in horses’ mouths (3:3)
- J. Fountain water, figs, and olives (3:11-12)
- K. Vapor or mist (4:14)
- L. Moth-eaten garments and cankered treasures (5:2-3)
- M. Farm laborers and wages (5:4)
- N. Early and latter rains (5:7)
- O. Anointing with oil (5:14)
- P. Drought (5:17)

Outline of James

- I. The Test of Genuine Faith (1:1-18)
 - A. True faith is purified by trials (1:1-12)
 - B. True faith does not attribute evil to God (1:13-18)
- II. The Characteristics of Genuine Faith (1:19—5:6)
 - A. Faith obeys the Word (1:19-27)
 - B. Faith removes discrimination (2:1-13)
 - C. Faith proves itself by works (2:14-26)
 - 1) Genuine faith and dead faith (2:14-20)
 - 2) The example of Abraham’s faith (2:21-24)
 - 3) The example of Rahab’s faith (2:25)
 - 4) Faith without works is dead (2:26)
 - D. Faith controls the tongue (3:1-12)
 - E. Faith produces godly wisdom (3:13-18)
 - F. Faith produces humility (4:1-12)
 - G. Faith produces dependence on God (4:13-17)
 - H. Warning of judgment upon the rich (5:1-6)
- III. The Triumph of Genuine Faith (5:7-20)
 - A. Faith endures and waits for Christ’s return (5:7-12)
 - B. Faith prays for the afflicted (5:13-18)
 - C. Faith confronts and restores the erring brother (5:19-20)