

Supplemental Notes:

*The Book
of
James*

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Acknowledgments

These notes have been assembled from speaking notes and related materials which had been compiled from a number of classic and contemporary commentaries and other sources detailed in the bibliography, as well as other articles and publications of Koinonia House. While we have attempted to include relevant endnotes and other references, we apologize for any errors or oversights.

The complete recordings of the sessions, as well as supporting diagrams, maps, etc., are also available in various audiovisual formats from the publisher.

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James

Introduction

An epistle written by *Jacob* to the descendants of Israel.

Jacobos in Greek;

Jacques in French;

Iago in Italian;

Diego in Spanish;

Ya'kov in Hebrew;

= the supplanter; heel-catcher; tripper-up (Hos 12:3).

James in Scripture

1. James, the son of Zebedee; brother of John the beloved disciple. Called to be a follower early (Mark 1:19). Became, with his brother John and Peter, one of the insiders. (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 10:35; 14:33). Slain by Herod very soon after Pentecost.
2. James, the son Alpheus, brother of Judas (not Iscariot). Only in lists and (possibly) in Mark 15:40 as “James the Younger” or “Lesser”; simply James in the parallel, Matthew 27:56).
3. James, the father of Judas, not Iscariot (see John 14:22), identified as one of the twelve in Luke 6:16 (and in Acts 1:13) and is probably to be identified with Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18.
4. James, the brother of our Lord.

Considered by the early church as a son of Mary and Joseph. (So Jerome, Augustine, et al.) Cf. Matthew 12:46, 47; 13:55; Mark 3:31, 32; Luke 8:19, 20; 1 Cor 9:5.

Unbeliever before the resurrection: John 7:5.

Lord appeared to James: 1 Cor 15:7; thus Gal 1:19.

Prominent as outstanding leader in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15); those going to other churches founded by Paul are said to have come

from James (Gal 2:12). Note that in 2:9, James is named first (although he had already disavowed having authorized them to use his name as an endorsement of their legal teachings: Acts 15:24). We dismiss the tradition that he was “The first bishop” of Jerusalem.

James was intensely Jewish: his advice to Paul when he came to Jerusalem bringing alms for his nation; James suggested that Paul should be at charges for some brethren who were about to complete their Nazariteship... (Acts 21:18ff).

When Written?

Not later than 62 A.D.: Following the reign of Festus (60-62 A.D.), there was a brief lull in Roman authority before the new Roman governor, Claudius Albinus, took full control. In this brief period a conspiracy led by Annas the Younger, the son of the high priest Annas, illegally arranged for the execution of James in A.D. 62. [Hegesippus’ account recorded by Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.230 and Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX.9.1).]

The execution of the popular James may have been a more key event in the circumstances that led up to the rebellion and its squelching by the Romans in 66-70 A.D. We will deal with some strange heresies involving James in a later session.

Possibly written early; right after Pentecost; perhaps after the scattering in Acts 8:1-3.

If later, it may have been written to correct a misunderstanding bordering on antinomianism on the part of some who were pushing Paul’s teaching to an extreme he never intended.

[*Antinomianism*: The view that by faith and God’s gift of grace through the Gospel a Christian is freed not only from OT law of Moses and all forms of legalism, but also from all law including the generally accepted standards of morality prevailing in any given culture.]

If it was written during the time of Paul’s imprisonment at Caesarea, it would explain why James does not mention the name of his dynamic friend, for that would endanger Paul even more.

Contradictory Teaching?

Paul: justification before God;
James: justification before men.

To Whom Written?

Twelve Tribes. (Ten are not missing.) These are the same of whom Paul speaks in his address before Agrippa (Acts 26:7). These are the same as 1 Peter.

The Myth of the Lost Ten Tribes

Even before the Assyrian captivity, many from the northern kingdom identified themselves with the House of David (1 Kings 12:16-20; 2 Chr 11:16-17.)

Upon the northern kingdom's turn to idolatry under Jeroboam, the faithful from all tribes migrated southward (2 Chr 19:4; 30:1, 10-11, 25-26; 34:5-7, 22; 35:17-18, etc.)

Levites and others migrated south: 2 Chr 11:14-17). Later, when Asa reigned in the south, another great company migrated from the north (2 Chr 15:9). Calls were then extended by Hezekiah and Josiah to all Israel—including Manasseh and Ephraim—to worship at the Temple (2 Chr 30:5, 6, 10, 11, 21; 34:9.)

God addresses all 12 tribes: 2 Chr 11:3. [Also, when the Babylonians take over the Assyrian slaves were absorbed.]

Commingle Terminology

After the Babylonian captivity, the terms Jew and Israelite are used interchangeably. Ezra calls the returning remnant *Jews* 8 times; *Israel*, 40 times. Nehemiah calls them *Jews* 11 times, *Israel* 22 times. He speaks of “all Israel” being back in the land (Neh 12:47). The remnant who returned are represented as the nation (Mal 1:1, et al.).

New Testament Terminology

Other tribes than just Judah are mentioned as being in the land: Mt 4:13, 15; Luke 2:36; Acts 4:36; Phil 3:5; “the twelve tribes” Acts 26:7.

Anna knew her identity from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:30). Peter speaks of “Ye men of Judea” (Acts 2:14) and “Ye men of Israel” (Acts 2:22) and “All the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36). Paul knew he was of the tribe of Benjamin (a “Jew” and an “Israelite,” Rom 11:1).

NT speaks of “Israel” 75 times in 73 verses; uses the word “Jew” 174 times. [Cf. *The Twelve Tribes*, an appendix to the *Expositional Commentary on Joshua*.]

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Theme

A Living Faith: evidenced by righteous living and godly behavior.

Not doctrine; practical Christian ethics.

Chapter 1:	Victorious Faith
Chapter 2:	Manifested Faith
Chapter 3:	Controlling and Energizing Faith
Chapter 4:	Submissive Faith
Chapter 5:	Patient and Expectant Faith

Deals with:

- The nature of Faith;
- The nature and character of God;
- Day-to-day behavior as Christians.

Closer connection with the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) than any other NT letter.

60 imperatives in 108 verses; more than any other NT book.

Program:

1. **Faith** (as the starting point for the Christian);
2. **Deeds** (the life of wholehearted obedience to the law of Jesus precisely because one does have faith in Jesus, as illustrated in 2:1);
3. **Maturity** (the goal of perfection and wholeness of Christian character).

James 1:1-12

Victorious Faith

- 1] James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

“A servant” - He knew Christ after the flesh no more: he honors Him as Lord and Messiah and links His name with that of God the Father. Whatever doubts he may have once had, they are gone now.

“To the Twelve Tribes” - He is a Jew writing to Jews. It is also a message for us, just as Paul’s letters written to Gentile Christians are also generally for all believers.

- 2] My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

When God’s people are called upon to pass through great trials, it is not evidence of God’s displeasure. (Cf. Job: that book is not about “why do the innocent suffer?” If it was, it really wasn’t answered. The reader is let in on a conversation that Job had not overheard. It is about attempting to maintain the Divine Viewpoint; the larger picture.)

“Temptations” here does not refer to being tempted to sin, but rather the testing of faith.

- 3] Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

The purpose of suffering; preparation for ministry. If one professes to have faith in the Lord he can depend upon it that his profession will be put to the test sooner or later.

- 4] But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We are, by nature, fretful and impatient. We rebel against the ways of God and want our own way. But he who learns to be submissive to whatever God permits glorifies Him who orders all things according to His own will.

David said his soul had quieted itself as a weaned child: Ps 131 (only three verses that says it all). Fed on more mature food, although initially fretful

and peevish, it accepts gratefully the new nourishment. The goal is maturity and the development of a strong Christian *character*. Becoming mature and whole, no longer craving for what God sees fit to withhold: this is real victory, but it requires superhuman wisdom.

Ask in Faith

- 5] If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

We all lack wisdom. Knowing our need is the first step to receiving what we need.

- 6] But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

But if we make a request in a formal manner without the implicit confidence in His readiness to answer, we dishonor Him.

- 7] For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

To ask in faith requires knowing that our petition is in accordance to His will.

Double Minded Man

- 8] A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

The man of God is not given to change (Prov 24:21). Continuously veering from one course to another reveals instability that lacks being under divine control.

Paul wrote to the Galatians (5:8), “This persuasion (πεισμονή *peismone*) cometh not of Him that calleth you.”

Changeableness is evidence of an unsubdued will (and, perhaps, an inflated ego.)

The man who habitually looks to God for guidance will be certain of his path.

- 9] Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

Ps 25:9 - "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way."

We should rejoice being in the hand of Him who makes no mistakes.

- 10] But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

Psalm 39:5 - "Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and mine age *is* as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. *Selah.*"

[*Selah*: to pause; to lift up. It is a *connector*; a thought-link. Sometimes synthetic, adding a developmental thought. Sometimes antithetic, adding a contrast. 74X in OT: 71 in Psalms; 3 in Habakkuk 3. ^{1]}

Ps 39:6 - "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

- 11] For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Ps 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Crown of Life

- 12] Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

The Crown of Life: the Martyr's Crown (Rev 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.")

(Not to be confused with eternal life, which is the free gift of God. Eternal life can never be forfeited, or it isn't eternal. John 10:25-29.)

Can we lose our crowns? Rev 3:11 - "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." [Note: to *Philadelphia*.]

Five Different Crowns

There are (at least) five:

- 1) **Crown of Life** (here)
James 1:12; Rev 2:10.
- 2) **Crown of Rejoicing**
1 Thessalonians 2:19 “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”
- 3) **Crown of Righteousness**
2 Timothy 4:8 “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”
- 4) **Crown of Glory**
1 Peter 5:4 “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”
- 5) **Incorruptible Crown**
1 Cor 9:24-27.

Run the Race

- 24] Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.
- 25] And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an **incorruptible**.
- 26] I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:
- 27] But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Others:

Philippians 4:1 - “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” Cf. Ps 8:5; 103:4; Lk 22:29.

Rewards:

2 Cor 5:10 - “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;

that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Reward: Profit or Loss?

Missing note in contemporary dispensational premillennialism.

Jesus spoke more about this than about eschatology...

Sermon on the Mount: blessed by being persecuted? Great is your reward in heaven...

Rev 22:12 - “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

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James 1:13-27

James will include 60 imperatives in 108 verses; more than any other NT book.

But we shouldn't just carry away a list of do's and don'ts from this book. The most precious thing to guide us is *perspective*. Let's be sensitive to the real lessons here.

Temptation

13] Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

When I am feeling fear or sorrow or pain, and a friend asks, “What danger or threat is there in your life, that I may pray for you?” I would probably answer, “Pray for my illness, or my financial needs to be met, or that people might stop doing the things they are doing to me,” etc.

I would think of the injuries being inflicted by the trial, and my foremost thought is for the trial to be stopped.

But here James is insisting on a radical change in our thinking. Where is the *real* dangers in our life? The most serious danger is not what is being done *to* me, but the wrong that may be done *by* me.

Temptation is here in the sense of testing or trial. It is never correct to attribute temptation to the infinitely Holy One, who has called us to holiness of life. He would rather seek to induce us to flee from temptation and take the path of holy subjection to His will.

Notice how James asserts the facts of God's nature and God's will, and answers the questions these facts raise about the dynamics of temptation.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." That is, don't leave us to go our own dangerous way which would expose us to pressures from the enemy of our souls.

- 14] But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

We are tempted, not by God, but by the strength of our own lustful desires. We are deceived by our craving for self-gratification.

"Drawn away": a hunting term, as dragged away by a predator. There is real danger in a temptation. The real effect of the temptation is a sin leading to death.

We need to reckon ourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God. (Romans 6:11-13)

Lust *dwelt upon* brings forth sin; for as a man thinketh in his heart so is he (Prov 23:7).

- 15] Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Sin indulged upon leads to death, for "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek 18:4)

The principle being established here is *the minding of the flesh* ("carnally minded") *is death*. (Rom 8:6).

It is never safe to trifle with sin.

David was frequently under attack and was in danger. He prayed not only for protection from his attackers, but even more for the protection from sin. (Psalm 25:4-5, 20-21)

Not just “Lord, keep me safe;” but rather, “Lord, keep me pure.”

16] Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Don’t be deceived about temptation; but don’t be deceived about good gifts either.

Good and Perfect Gifts

17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Notice the “every”—not just some, or most. The grateful heart receives *all* as from God.

The “Father of Lights”: every mathematical attribute of an infinite God has its parallel in the *physics* of light.

“In whom is no *parallax*.” παραλλαγή *parallagay*, (thus, variableness; variation; change). Perfectly collimated light has its apparent source at infinity.

Hologram Analogy

A hologram is a form of lensless photography. (I met Emmett Leath at the University of Michigan, who invented it!)

If you illuminate an object with a laser (which is temporally ordered light) in such a way that light falls not only on the object but also on a piece of nearby film, the film records the *interference* (or intersections) of the light from the laser *and* the light from the object. The result, in natural light, looks like a “darkroom mistake”—it appears as a cloudy overexposed negative.

If, however, we then illuminate the film with the laser that created it, we see a *three-dimensional image of the object*. It is a Fourier-transform of the image. As we move our eye around, we even see *behind* the object. Our film seems to be a window into a three-dimensional universe containing the object. It also has some strange properties: if you cut a piece out of the film, *we don’t lose the image!* We simply move our eye around the hole; we still see the entire object—although we may lose some resolution.

The Bible is like that hologram. Viewed in natural light, “there is no beauty that we should desire it.” (1 Cor 2:14; Isa 53:2. Cf. James 1:23.) But when we illuminate it with the light that created it, we see an image—the image of Jesus Christ.

If we remove a segment, we don’t lose the image—maybe a little resolution. It has been designed as a “Fourier-transform” as it itself notes: Isa 28:10, 13. [If we illuminate with a laser of the wrong frequency, we get a *distorted image*... Don’t be deceived by one posing as an Angel of Light.]

18] Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Our new birth itself was the expression of His grace and goodwill. He brought the Word of truth to bear upon our consciences, leading to confess our sins and trust the Savior He provided. So we become an offering of First Fruits, the pledge of the great harvest to be reaped in due time.

[What an appropriate summary of the Passover Season. Note, I didn’t say “Easter.”]

Swift to Hear, Slow to Speak

19] Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

The measure of maturity. (I won’t ask for a show of hands...)

This can be considered the theme verse for this letter.

Being swift to hear: all effective executives I’ve worked with always have their receivers turned on. Always gathering information and learning. (Receivers don’t work well when the transmitter is on.) I have an excellent personal example: Nan. She is always a receiver: asking questions of others; sincerely interested...

Slow to speak. Oh, if we learn to engage our minds before we let out the clutch. A pause for reflection could spare us so much damage. Proverbs 17:29. We must be careful to properly represent the One to whom we owe so much.

unholy tendencies with which we find ourselves in conflict.

The “salvation of our souls” here is not our redemption from the judgment our sins deserve, but refers to the purification of our affections which are expressed in our soul’s activities. Cf. Mt 7:24ff.

Minimizing the danger of doing evil is, in the light of this verse, recklessly unrealistic. We pray for safety rather purity because we do not see impurity as dangerous.

Biblical repentance is cry out to God, “I don’t want to be like this anymore!”

Doers of the Word

22] But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

How does one become a “hearer only”?

By being relativistic. Subjectivity, relativism.

By being superstitious. The reliance of the ark as magical (1 Sam 4:3f). The Bible, church, etc., can be used as an object in lieu of the Lord Himself.

By emotion, instead of understanding.

By being theoretical, instead of obedient; leaving divisiveness behind rather than relationships.

Having been born again by the Word (1 Pet 1:23) we are called to *walk in obedience* to the faith revealed in the Scriptures. To do otherwise is to be self-deceived, imagining that intellectual assent is all that is required.

How do we become a “doer of the Word”?

By looking intently: searching the Scriptures; digging, not just devotional reading.

By continuing: regular and habitual, not just occasional.

Not forgetting: learning Scripture;

By Doing: applying Scripture.

[“How to be serious about X”:

Talk a lot about X

Have a file about X

Develop a plan about X
Have a chart about X
... etc...
Be Serious About X.]

- 23] For if any be a hearer of the word, and a not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

A natural man (there may be a few here) does this a lot; however,

- 24] For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

[Walter Martin's playful pun: "The law is like a shaving mirror... but the law doesn't shave us. We are shaved by grace."]

If I hear the Word, and don't do what it says, I am treating the Word as if it were useless. I am deceiving myself about the very nature and purpose of the Word of God.

We cannot claim a salvation from death while we carelessly persist in sin which kills.

- 25] But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The "law of liberty" is indeed that. Psalm 119. (Unique to James: we will see it again in James 2:12.) How "liberty?" John 8:36; Mt 7:21-24. Ps 19:7-11. By keeping us from falling into a pit (Ps 119:85) or snare (Ps 119:110); or into bondage (Ps 119:92, 93; 133). It illuminates the path, Ps 119:105.

Do we set a real priority on seeking this blessing?

- 26] If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

χαλιναγωγέω *chalinagogeō* to bridle, hold in check, restrain; keep a tight rein on.

Ouch. A most critical measure of spiritual maturity. Hear David again: Psalm 141:3-4.

“Religion”

Only 5X in the NT; (“religious,” 2X).

Paul, 3X: Acts 26:5; Gal 1:13, 14.

From the Latin; literally, “to bind back.” Thus to rebind man to God. Commonly, a system of faith and practice.

Three Greek words so rendered. Here, θρησκός *threskos* fearing or worshipping God; also to tremble; trembling; fearful.

Religious faith, forms, and ceremonies. Emphasizes outward observances.

27] Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

True religion—practice of piety—is *active obedience* in two ways:

- 1) to manifest real concern to **others**, esp. for the needy; (Ps 146:7-9; Jer 7:1-8. Cf. Matt 25:36, 43) and
- 2) to walk **personally** in holy separation from all uncleanness, and rise above the world’s sinful follies.

Any practice of Christianity that does not exhibit this concern in action (1) is:

- a) deceptive: it misrepresents the truth about God’s own heart; and
- b) worthless (it is of no value to God.)

This is a matter of serious obedience.

In (2), there are three parts:

- a) It directs our attention to ourselves; inward purity;
- b) polluted (ἄσπιλος *aspilos*) spotless; free from censure, irreproachable; free from vice, unsullied; without blemish.
- c) world (κόσμος *kosmos*): the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ; world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly; the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments riches, advantages, pleasures, etc, which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ.

James is not just a moralist: one who keeps a list of ethical guidelines by which to live a happy and respectable life. He is one who is committed to demonstrate that he owes everything to his King.

The nature of James' teaching is to encourage the *application* of God's nature and will in Christian practice. We need to *live identifiably* as His first fruits in His redemptive work through Christ.

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James 2:1-13

The Most Painful Sin

What sin has probably caused the more pain than any other?

Gossip! It is, in its most formal form, a violation of Ex 20:16. However, in its more subtle forms, gossip is probably accountable for more personal pain and suffering than most of us have any appreciation of. Gossip is a form of betrayal!

Common, casual, yet hurtful beyond our reckoning. Quietly, behind the flurry of daily priorities, its venom does its silent work, undermining confidences, betraying relationships, spreading unseen injustices... James focuses on the tongue as a most critical measure of spiritual maturity:

1: 26: If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

χαλιναγωγέω *chalinagogeō* to bridle, hold in check, restrain; keep a tight rein on.

The tongue is a ready and willing instrument to talk about our neighbor behind his back. (Cf. Rom 1:30; 2 Cor 12:20; James 4:11)

Personal

Our own personal troubles during 1988-1991 included bankruptcy, earthquakes, and relocating from our family roots... But the most pain—

that still endures from the traumas of those difficult years—is from the libel and slander that was promoted (or tolerated) by a few of our “Christian” friends.

Most of us can probably relate to similar experiences. It is disturbing to note how many of us have been injured—deeply—by gossip and by those who accept, without checking, negative or derogatory innuendos whispered behind our backs...and we have never experienced more lies, slander—and libel—than since we have entered the ministry...*From ostensible Christians!*

Texts: Lev 19:16; Prov 11:13; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20; 26:21; 26:22.

Lev 19:16 - “Thou shalt not go up and down as] a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am] the Lord.”

Prov 11:13 - “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”

Prov 18:8 - “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

Prov 20:19 - “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”

Prov 26:20 - “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.”

Prov 26:21 - “As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.”

Prov 26:22 - “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

Our Lord’s example: “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone...”
John 8:7.

The “Christian” Approach:

“I don’t want to gossip. However, in order that you might pray more specifically for _____, let me tell you the latest...”

What is a true friendship?
One that doesn't require explanations.
One that gives the benefit of the doubt.
One that is loyal and shuns any form of betrayal.

Poem: "I hear it said..."

Last night my friend—he says he is my friend—
Came in and questioned me. "I hear it said
You have done this and that. I come to ask
Are these things true?" A glint was in his eye
Of small distrust. His words were crisp and hot.
He measured me with anger, and flung down
A little heap of facts [which] had come to him.
"I hear it said you have done this and that."

Suppose I have? And are you not my friend?
And are you not my friend enough to say,
"If it were true, there would be reason in it.
And if I cannot know the how and why,
Still I can trust you, waiting for a word,
Or for no word, if no word ever come!"

Is friendship just a thing of afternoons,
Of pleasuring one's friend and one's dear self——
Greed for sedate approval of his pace,
Suspicion if he take one little turn
Upon the road, one flight into the air,
And has not sought you for your Yea or Nay!

No. Friendship is not so. I am my own.
And howsoever near my friend may draw
Unto my soul, there is a legend hung
Above a certain straight and narrow way
Says "Dear my friend, ye may not enter here!"

I would the time has come—as it has not—
When men shall rise and say, "He is my friend.
He has done this? And what is that to me!
Think you I have a check upon his head,
Or cast a guiding rein across his neck?
I am his friend. And for that cause I walk

Not overclose beside him, leaving still
Space for his silences, and space for mine.”

—Barbara Young

[I, of course, know that none of *you* are guilty of such things; but these suggestions are offered to help you counsel your needy friends...]

James 2:1 - 13

Manifested Faith

The importance of reality in one’s attitude toward God and His Word.

- 1] My brethren, have [“hold”] not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

Notice that the half-brother of the Lord uses here His full title. I hold the view that James was in a much better position to speak of the deity of Jesus Christ than some arrogant theologians who quite distant from the 1st Century—in thought, geography, time, and spirit.

Eusebius’s account of James’s martyrdom gives us a vivid example of impartiality. James was held in such high regard as one who “does not respect persons” that when the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem were alarmed by the numbers who were believing in Jesus as the Christ, they appealed to James to make a speech to calm the crowd! When they presented James to the crowd, the speech he gave was hardly what they wanted, for he declared Jesus to be the Christ in such strong terms that many became believers then. According to the account in Eusebius, it was this incident that led to James’s death. The authorities were so angered by his speech that they cast him to the ground and stoned him to death—while he prayed to God to forgive them.

[The chapter division between 1:27 and 2:1 disguises the linkage between “not showing favoritism” and “being polluted by the world.”]

The way we behave toward people indicates what we *really* believe about God! 1 John 4:20.

Nothing reveals more clearly the selfishness of the human heart than the way in which we are inclined to the wealthy and influential, while neglecting the poor and ignorant.

We have pyramid-climbers in churches as well as in politics, industry, and society (James 3:1).

Examples...

Proverbs 30:8 "... give me neither poverty nor riches..."

Rudyard Kipling was right, regarding success and failure: "Treat both those imposters the same." [His poem, *If*]

There is no place for vulgar favoritism within the Body of Christ. Peter also learned that lesson: Acts 10:38. James himself also voiced it in Acts 15.

Treat Rich and Poor Alike

- 2] For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

"Assembly" = synagogue.

- 3] And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

You can't profess faith in Christ and at the same time be a spiritual snob. Watch out for cliques in church; watch out for divisions and stratification: The rich, the poor; the common, the high and the low, the bond and free, the Jew and the Gentile, the Greek and the barbarian, the male and female...the premillennial and amillennial; the pre-trib and post-trib... we are all *one* in Christ.

Jesus broke down the wall that separated the Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22) Friendship and fellowship are the legal tender among believers. 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.

- 4] Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

Lev 19:15 - “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.”

We live in a society where even the decisions of our courts and governmental bodies are meted out with more regard to social pressures—and power—rather than real justice.

- 5] Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

The Lord is on the side of the poor. He was born in a borrowed stable. He had to borrow loaves and fishes from a little boy to feed the crowd. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” (Mt 8:20) He had to borrow a coin to illustrate the truth. He borrowed a donkey to present Himself to Jerusalem. He borrowed a room to celebrate Passover. He died on a borrowed cross: it belonged to Barabbas, not to Him. They put Him in a borrowed tomb—it belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. Isa 53:1-3.

Job 5:15; 36:15; Psalm 9:18; 68:10; 69:33; 72:12-13; 102:17; Isaiah 11:4.

(James is also a bit hard on the rich in Chapter 5.)

- 6] But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

Isaiah 5: 23 - “Woe unto them... ..Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!”

We pluck our candidates from the flies of the political marketplace. We allow a corrupt press to manufacture political correctness to replace truth; fabricating views of convenience to match their hidden agendas.

Our politicians review the polls each day to determine what they now believe.

Anger replaces patriotism. Frustration is tearing at every fabric of our divisive society. Thus, we have now become a nation without shared values. A growing mass of parasites without leadership.

We have lawyers without justice;
stewards without accountability;

elected representatives who ignore their commitment to our Constitution. We have legislators who vote without even *reading* the proposals before them.²

Our security forces have become the mercenaries of the globalists and prostituted to the egos of our politicians.

Our media presents a perspective that masks the deterioration of our national security and the inevitable financial upheaval on our horizon.

Larry Abraham's Letter:

One Who Voted with his Feet

Larry Abraham, writer of the famed *Insider Report* and a number of highly respected books, and an old friend, was asked by some students, "What is the biggest problem in the United States?"

After serious consideration, Larry concluded that it was "the Lack of Justice." He left the United States a few years ago. He was the 9th newsletter writer to leave for a foreign domicile. (*Money* magazine has indicated that 250,000 Americans expatriated that year.)

Larry's reasons are provocative:

"My people came to America to live as free men, and I had to leave it for the same reason... The greatest single U.S. problem is the increasing loss of the concept of *justice* within the hearts of minds of the American people... Once lost, that concept is hardly ever recovered... Justice is no longer the base on which America conducts its affairs. Clinton and Rodham didn't cause this condition; they are the sad consequences of it, as are the legions of bureaucrats at the FTC, IRS, SEC, HHS, the jurors at the Rodney King, Reginald Denny and Menendez trials. As are the killing of Mrs. Weaver and baby by the FBI, the torching at Waco by BATF, the drive-by shootings, the intellectual insanity of political correctness, the institutionalizing of perverts as a core constituency of the Democratic Party. The politics of envy sponsors an entire body of law that amounts to what the French philosopher Frederic Bastiat called 'legal plunder.' The maze of law that guards this plunder has grown so vast it's now impossible even to know what is legal and what is not... "My commitment has always been, as yours should be, not to a plot of ground but to a moral philosophy. As long as the USA was the finest

example of that philosophy, as long as it struggled justly to live by its high ideals, I would fight to preserve and protect it. And I did so. But when my country becomes as it has the primary purveyor and financier for all I abhor, and without any reasonable sign of reversing itself, then I must choose a different venue from which to carry on the war begun by Burke and Madison, Jefferson, John Adams, Hamilton and Jay.”³

This was written before we had the benefit of the O.J. Simpson verdict. Or the Oklahoma City bombing. Or the murder of Vince Foster.

The Nazis in Germany always operated under the color of law.

- 7] Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

If you are mistreating the poor, you are blaspheming the name of Christ.

Far more effective than apologetics: our lives and ministries are the best defense of the inspiration and authority of the Word of God.

We are becoming increasingly “politically incorrect.” There may well be some among us who will have the unspeakable privilege to give our very lives in testimony to that “worthy name by which we are called.”

The Royal Law

- 8] If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

James drew on Lev 19:18 in the OT and designated the “Golden Rule” as the *royal law*. Who is our “neighbor?” Luke 10:25-37.

Why “royal”?

It was given by our King;

It rules all other laws. (Rom 13:10)

Obeying it makes you a king. (Hatred makes you a slave.)

Love is an act of will, not emotion. Christian love means treating others as God has treated me.

- 9] But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.
10] *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

Suspend a man over a precipice by a chain of ten links; how many of these need to snap to plunge him into the abyss below? The breaking of the weakest link shatters the chain and the man falls to his doom.

We all stand before God as lawbreakers.

- 11] For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

And vice versa. How hopeless are the efforts of anyone to be justified on the ground of his own obedience.

Judgment

- 12] So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

Every orthodox statement of faith ends with a statement about the return of Jesus Christ and the final judgment. (Not all Christians agree as to the details, but none deny the certainty of them.)

Both Jesus (John 5:24) and Paul (Rom 8:1) assured us that Christian believers will never be judged for their sins; *but* our works *will* be judged and rewarded. (Rom 14:10-13; 2 Cor 5:9-10).

Our words will be judged: (James 2:3) Mt 12:36. “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

Our deeds will be judged. Col 3:22-25.

While God remembers our sins no more (Jer 31:24; Heb 10:17), they affect our character and works.

- 13] For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Our attitudes will also be judged.

Mercy and compassion are not competitors; they both come from God. Mt 18:21-35.

Is our *walk consistent* with our profession of faith? This is James' key point.

It is not the desire of God to deal harshly with anyone. He is ever ready to forgive and bless where sin is recognized and confessed. 1 John 1:9. As objects of mercy ourselves, we are called upon to show mercy and compassion on others, no matter how lowly their condition may be.

A story is told that took place in London when a great preacher, very fine young man, by the name of Caesar Milan was invited one evening to a very large and prominent home where a choice musical was to be presented. On the program was a young lady who thrilled the audience with her singing and playing.

When she finished, this young preacher threaded his way through the crowd which was gathered around her. When he finally came to her and had her attention, he said, "Young lady, when you were singing, I sat there and thought how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefit if you would dedicate yourself and your talents to the Lord. But," he added, "you are just as much a sinner as the worst drunkard in the street, or any harlot on Scarlet Street. But I am glad to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, will cleanse you from all sin if you will come to Him."

In a very haughty manner, she turned her head aside and said to him, "You are very insulting, sir." And she started to walk away. He said, "Lady, I did not mean any offense, but I pray that the Spirit of God will convict you."

Well, they all went home, and that night this young woman could not sleep. At two o'clock in the morning she knelt at the side of her bed and took Christ as her Savior. And then she, Charlotte Elliott, sat down and wrote the words of a hymn, *Just as I Am*.⁴

*Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!
Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come!*

[and then the final stanza:]

*Just as I am—Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.*

This is the basis on which all of us must come to Christ.

Summary: Our behavior reflects what we really believe.

Is God really gracious?
Is He really true?
Is He really going to judge us?

Our conduct reveals our real convictions.

* * *

James 2:14 - 26

New Yorker Cartoon:

The Lite Church
24% Fewer Commitments
Home of the 7.5% tithe
15-minute Sermons
45-minute Worship Services
We have only 8 commandments —your choice
We have just 3 spiritual laws.
Everything you've wanted in a church
..and less!⁵

Some churches have striven for comfort, but with no quickening of the conscience; no feeding of the mind; no opening of the heart; no commitment; no real faith.

Paul's epistles focus on the time *before* salvation; James' focus is *after* salvation.

* * *

Faith

Faith is key doctrine in the Christian Life:

The sinner is saved by faith (Eph 2:8-9).

The believer must walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7).

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6).

Whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Rom 14:23).

Faith is not believing in spite of evidence;

Faith is *obeying* in spite of consequence.

Faith is not a feeling we work up; it is *confidence* that God's Word is true; and that acting upon that Word will bring His blessing.

What kind of faith saves a person?

Is it necessary to perform good works in order to be saved?

How can a person tell whether or not he is exercising true saving faith?

Three Kinds of Faith:

James explains that there are three kinds of faith.

1) Dead Faith

- 14] What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can [*that kind of*] faith save him?

There are those who claimed they had saving faith, yet did *not* possess salvation! Mt 7:16-21.

- 15] If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

As believer we have an obligation to help meet the needs of people.

Gal 6:10- "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Matt 25:40- "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me."

- 16] And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body;

what *doth it* profit?

People with dead faith substitute words for authenticating deeds. They know the correct vocabulary for prayer, testimony, etc.

“Be warmed and filled”? 1 John 3:17-19.

- 17] But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?
- 18] My little children, **let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.**
- 19] And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Contrast the priest and Levite with the Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Each would have defended his faith, yet neither *demonstrated* that faith in living works. Any declaration of faith that does not result in a changed life and practical works is a false declaration.

- 17] Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone [*by itself*].

John Calvin: “It is faith alone [*sola fide*] that justifies, but faith that justifies is never alone.”

Faith without the authenticating actions is vain.

- 18] Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

James is repudiating any separation of faith alone or in deeds alone, as if they were contradictory.

Mere intellectual assent is inadequate. One may know the doctrines of salvation, but yet has not yet submitted himself to God.

3X: James warns that “faith without works is dead.” (2:17, 20, 26)

2) **Demonic Faith!?**

James wanted to shock his complacent readers:

- 19] Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Are demons real? Indeed; and the church has rediscovered the reality and activity of demons. Eph 6:10-18.

Yet demons “have faith!” There is not a demon in the universe who is an atheist! Some demons have better theology than we do!

They believe in the existence of God; they are neither atheists or agnostics! They believe in the deity of Christ. They even “witnessed” of Him: Whenever they met Christ when He was on the earth, they bore witness to His Sonship (Mk 3:11-12; Mt 8:29-34; Lk 8:26-37). They knew, and acknowledged, the existence of a place of punishment (Lk 8:31; Mt 8:29); They recognized Jesus Christ as the Judge (Mk 5:1-13).

They submit to the power of His Word. They were not just touched in their intellect, they were touched in their emotions: “*they believe and tremble.*” It is not a confirming experience to just tremble [or roll on the ground and bark...].

A person can be enlightened in his mind and stirred in his heart and still be lost forever. True saving faith involves something more, something that can be seen and recognized: a changed life. (v. 18) Hell will have its share of monotheists, Trinitarians, orthodox, and the *lost*.

20] But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

No fruit; no earnings on His investment.

“Useless” : *ergon*, works, *arge*, useless.

Faith that has no works does not work. James emphasizes that real faith and works are inseparable.

3) Dynamic Faith

True saving faith is based on the Word of God. We receive our spiritual rebirth through the God’s Word (James 1:18, 21; Rom 10:17).

Faith is no better than its *object*. The myth of modern society—and federally supported paganism—is that any object is as good as another...

Dynamic faith involves the whole person: the intellect, the emotions *and the will*.

The mind understands the truth;
The heart desires the truth;
The will *acts on* the truth.

Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; faith is obeying in spite of consequence.

Kinds of “works”:

Works of the law: Gal 2:16

Works of the flesh: Gal 5:19

Wicked works: Col 1:21

Dead works: Heb 9:14

Good works... illustrated in James’s two illustrations.

Abraham’s Justification

- 21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Gen 12, 15, 22... Abraham was spiritually bankrupt; but God added to his account: Gen 15:6. [First mention of “believe.”]

Justification (in the declarative sense) is not a process: it is an act. It is not something that the sinner does; it is something God does for the sinner.

But how can you tell if a person is justified (in a demonstrative sense) by faith? By a changed life and obedience to God’s will. Gen 22 demonstrated that Abraham was already saved. (More than 30 years after Genesis 15:6.)

Abraham was confident they would return together: (v. 4, 5; Heb 11:19; cf. vv 17,18).

- 22] Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

Jesus taught that one recognizes trees by their fruit. Matt 7:15-20; 12:33-37.

- 23] And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

He was declared righteous by faith: Rom 4:1-5; Gal 3:6,7. This was 14 years before circumcision (Gen 17); and hundreds of years before the law!

24] Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

By faith Abraham was justified before God and his righteousness declared; by works he was justified before men and his righteousness demonstrated.

D.L. Moody: "Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather."

Titus 1:16: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Gandi: [Q: What is the biggest obstacle to Christianity in India?
A: "Christians."]

Rahab Justified

25] Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

Joshua 2 and 6. Heb 11:31. [The Hebrew word for "harlot" can have a wider meaning of "an innkeeper." However, the Greek word in James 2:25 and Hebrew 11:31 indicates an immoral person. Yet she becomes the mother of Boaz and is the genealogy of our Lord.]

Rahab was the opposite extreme from Abraham, a respected prominent patriarch:

- 1) She was Gentile;
- 2) She was a prostitute;
- 3) She was a comparatively minor figure in the OT.

Hebrews 11 - "the Hall of Faith" is also the "Hall of Works": vv. 4, 7, 20, 22, 24, 25, 29...

Faith Without Works is Dead

26] For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Dead: meaningless; useless; powerless; lifeless counterfeit. An imposter.

Luke 12:48: For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.

Midterm Exam time: 2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

- Was there a specific time you realized you were a sinner and admitted this to yourself and to God?
- Was there a time that your heart was stirred to flee from the wrath to come?
- Do you truly understand that Christ died for your sins and that you cannot save yourself?
- Have you sincerely repented of your sins and *turned from them*? Do you hate sin and fear God?
- Have you trusted Christ alone for your salvation? Do you enjoy a living relationship with Him through His Word and the Spirit?
- Has there been a change in your life? Do you maintain good works or are they only occasional and weak?
- Are you *ready* for His return? Or will you be ashamed when he comes for you?

Not every Christian has the same personal experience; there are degrees of sanctification. Take continual inventory and measure your growth..

Psalm 139:23-24, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:* And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Bumper Sticker: If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

* * *

Further Questions for the Church:

Doctrine: Does James endorse a two-stage relationship with Christ: a) Savior; and subsequently b) Lord?

Is faith without submission to Christ's lordship genuine at all?

Discipline: Disciplining would seem to be a ministry owned by all church members; aren't we to hold each other accountable for a life of faith? This is not a call for actions which come easily in accordance with our individual personality or temperament or circumstances. It is a call for actions which are painful and sacrificial (like Abraham's) or risky and frightening (like Rahab's), or uncomfortable and inconvenient (like getting to know the poor and homeless.)

Balance: A correct grasp of theology will not save. Neither will a pattern of faithless humanitarianism. Not deeds instead of faith, but deeds in completion of faith.

Activities: We are not being called to do more, but to do differently.

Deeds of devotion: prayer, Bible study, worship, and sacrifice. Abraham placed his son on the altar because he loved God more than he loved his own son. Deeds of devotion are to be done because God is worthy of them.

Deeds of morality: purifying our speech, thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. Rahab wasn't praying about the needs of homeless spies and decided to start a shelter ministry... She simply responded to a situation she was confronted with.

Deeds of ministry: All Christians are also called into ministry, each according to our gifts; but all to obedience.

* * *

James 3:1 - 12

The world's smallest—but largest—troublemaker.

James has explained to us characteristics of the mature Christian:

Chapter 1: He is patient in trouble;

Chapter 2: He practices truth.

Chapter 3: He has control over his tongue.

Controlling and Energizing Faith

We touched on the venomous nature of gossip in an earlier session; but James has more to say about this untamable member.

In James 1:19 he warns us to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

In James 1:26 he emphasizes that the believer who does not bridle his tongue is not truly religious.

(When we examine passages like 4:1 and 4:11-12, we can infer that this gang had some rough meetings!)

The power of speech:

For praise, prayer, and leadership.

But also, lies, deceit, and manipulation.

James gives us six pictures to reveal three powers of the tongue.

The Power to Direct: The Bit and the Rudder (3:1-4)

- 1] My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

People in a position of leadership, and teaching, are in a position of accountability as well as responsibility.

- 2] For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

[It shocks me to watch the ostensible “Christians” who slander and libel other members of the Body of Christ, especially in newsletters and the like... It also disturbs me to find that the business ethics in the professional Christian world appears no better—perhaps even worse—than the secular world...]

- 3] Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

A tiny bit can control a powerful horse. Words lead to deeds, in ourselves, and in others. It can accomplish great things, and launch great disasters.

- 4] Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

“Loose lips sink ships.” They also wreck lives. A small helm—rudder—can steer a huge ship.

Both the bit and the rudder can overcome contrary forces: the wild nature of the horse; the wind and currents that would drive a ship off course; etc.

A bit and a rudder can affect the lives of others. A runaway horse or a shipwreck can mean injury or death to pedestrians or passengers.

A few words can affect the lives of an accused, his family, and his friends; they can place a nation at war; they can redirect the life of a child.

Peter preached at Pentecost and 3,000 souls came to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. (Acts 2)

On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimball went into a Boston shoe store and led young Dwight L. Moody to Christ.

Prov 15:1 - *“A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.”*

Prov 12:22 - *“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”*

Prov 10:19 - *“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”*

The Power to Destroy: Fire and Beasts (3:5-8)

- 5] Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

A fire can begin with just a small spark, but it can destroy a city:

A fire [reportedly] started in the O’Leary barn in Chicago at 8:30 p.m., October 8, 1871; because that fire spread, over 100,000 people were left homeless, 17,500 buildings were destroyed, and 300 people died. It cost the city over \$400 million—and a dollar was worth more than 20 times as much back then.

[Ironically, that same day a dry autumn spark ignited a raging fire in the North Woods of Wisconsin which burned for an entire month, taking more lives than the famed Chicago fire. A veritable firestorm destroyed billions of yards of precious timber—all from one spark.]

Our words can start fires.

The tongue “*setteth on fire the course of nature.*” James 3:6

An Example

Four men met by chance on a Saturday night in a Denver railway depot: Al Stevens, Jack Tournay, John Lewis, and Hal Wilshire. They were newspaper reporters for the *Denver Post*, *The Denver Times*, the *Republican* and the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Each had been sent by his respective newspaper to dig up a story—any story—for the Sunday editions; so the reporters were in the railroad station, hoping to snag a visiting celebrity should one happen to arrive that evening by train.

None arrived. The four met and started commiserating. For them, no news was bad news. All were facing empty handed return trips to their city desks.

Al declared he was going to make up a story and hand it in. The other three laughed. Someone suggested they all walk over to the Oxford Hotel and have a beer. They did.

Jack said he liked Al's idea about faking a story. Why didn't each of them fake a story and get off the hook? John said Jack was thinking too small. Four half-baked fakes didn't cut it. What they needed was a real whopper they could all use.

Another round of beers.

A phoney story would be too easy to check on, so they began discussing foreign angles that would be difficult to verify...

China was distant enough, it was agreed. They would write about China.

John leaned forward, gesturing dramatically in the dim light of the barroom. Try *this* one on, he said: Group of American engineers, stopping over in Denver en route to China. The Chinese government is making plans to demolish the Great Wall; our engineers are bidding on the job.

Harold was skeptical. Why would the Chinese want to destroy the Great Wall of China?

John thought for a moment. They're tearing down the ancient boundary to symbolize international goodwill, to welcome foreign trade!

Another round of beers.

By 11:00 p.m. the four reporters had worked out the details of their preposterous story. After leaving the Oxford Bar, they would go over to the Windsor Hotel. They would sign four fictitious names to the hotel register. They would instruct the desk clerk to tell anyone who asked that four New Yorkers had arrived that evening, had been interviewed by reporters, and had left early the next morning for California.

The Denver newspapers carried the story. All four of them. Front page.

In fact, the *Times* headline that Sunday read: GREAT CHINESE WALL DOOMED! PEKING SEEKS WORLD TRADE!

Of course, the story was a phoney, a ludicrous fabrication concocted by four capricious newsmen in a hotel bar. But their story was taken seriously, was picked up and expanded by newspapers in the Eastern U.S. and then by newspapers abroad.

When the Chinese themselves learned that the American were sending a demolition crew to tear down their national monument, most were indignant; some were enraged.

Particularly incensed were the members of a secret society, a volatile group of Chinese patriots who were already wary of foreign intervention.

They, inspired by the story, exploded, rampaged against the foreign embassies in Peking, and slaughtered hundreds of missionaries.

In two months, 19,000 troops from six countries joined forces, invaded China with the purpose of protecting their own countrymen.

The bloodshed which followed, sparked by a journalistic hoax invented in a barroom in Denver, became the white-hot international conflagration known to every high school history student...as the Boxer Rebellion.⁶

[Additional background:]

The crisis of 1896-98 stirred a furious anti-foreign uprising in Shantung. It was staged by a band of people called the *I-ho ch'üan* (Righteous and Harmonious Fists) who believed that a mysterious boxing art rendered them invulnerable to harm. (The group's origin is generally supposed to have been in the White Lotus sect, though it may have begun as a self-defense organization during the Taiping Rebellion.)

At first, the "Boxers" (as they were called in the West) directed their wrath against Christian converts, whom they vilified for having abandoned traditional Chinese customs in favor of an alien religion. Bands of Boxers roamed the countryside killing Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries. Developing from this anti-Christian hysteria, the "Boxer Rebellion" grew into a naive but furious attempt to destroy all things foreign—including churches, railways, and mines—which the people blamed for their misery and for the loss of a sacred way of life.

Some Boxer recruits were disbanded Imperial soldiers and local militia-men; others were Grand Canal boatmen deprived of a livelihood by the Western-built railways. Most recruits, though, came from the peasantry, which had suffered terribly from recent natural calamities in North China. In 1899-1900 a serious drought struck the North. Vast numbers of starvelings turned to begging and banditry and were easy converts to the Boxers' cause.

Many local authorities refused to stop the violence. Some supported the Boxers by incorporating them into local militias. The Manchu court, meanwhile, was alarmed by the uncontrollable popular uprising but took great satisfaction at seeing revenge taken for its humiliation by the foreign powers. As a result, it assumed at first a neutral policy.

On the part of the Boxers, there emerged sometime in the autumn of 1899 a move to gain access to the court under the slogan of “support for the *Ch'ing* and extermination of foreigners.” By May 1900 the *Ch'ing* government had changed its policy and was secretly supporting the Boxers. The Dowager Empress *Tz'u-hsi* inclined toward open war when she became convinced of the dependability of the Boxers' art. Finally, incensed over a false report that the foreign powers had demanded that she return administration to the Emperor, she called on all Chinese to attack foreigners. Within days, on June 20, the Boxers' eight-week siege of the foreign legations in Peking began; a day later Empress *Tz'u-hsi* declared war by ordering provincial governors to take part in the hostilities.

The foreign powers sent an expedition of some 19,000 troops, which marched to Peking and seized the city on August 14. *Tz'u-hsi* and the Emperor fled to Siam.

With its newly acquired territory in the western Pacific, the United States was determined to preserve its own commercial interests in China by protecting Chinese territorial integrity from the other major powers. The United States, which had announced its commercial Open Door policy in 1899, made a second declaration of the policy in July 1900—this time insisting on the preservation of the territorial and administrative entity of China.

This provided a basis for the Anglo-German agreement (October 1900) for preventing further territorial partition, to which Japan and Russia consented. Thus, partition of China was avoided by mutual restraint among the powers. The final settlement of the disturbance was signed in September 1901.

Moreover, the settlement demanded the establishment of permanent guards and the dismantling of forts between Peking and the sea, a humiliation that made an independent China mere fiction. In addition, the southern provinces were actually independent during the crisis. These occurrences meant the collapse of the *Ch'ing* prestige.⁷

The Tongue is Fire

Indeed, Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

Ps 141:3-4 - *“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing.”*

David knew that the *heart* is the key to correct speech.

Mt 12:34 - *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”*

- 6] And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

Our tongue has more destructive power than a thermonuclear bomb: the bomb's power is only physical and temporal; the tongue's power is spiritual and eternal.

In fact, a tongue controls the bomb.

It is amazing how, when certain people in a church or a ministry organization leave or are replaced, what a beautiful spirit of harmony and love takes over.

Prov 26:20-21 - *“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.”*

The tongue can cause great disasters. From sin on the inside, or pressures on the outside. Fiery words can defile a home, a church, or a schoolroom.

One of the sorrows that our Lord had to bear was the way His enemies talked about Him. They called Him “a man gluttonous and a winebibber” (Mt 11:19). When He performed miracles, they said He was in league with Satan. Even on the cross, His enemies threw vicious taunts into His face.

- 7] For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:
8] But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

No man can tame his own heart. Then, How do you cleanse your heart?
See Isaiah 6:5-7.

The most deadly poison is one that is tasteless and odorless: subtle criticism and slander; verbal venom which has done its work while the victim cannot react. It can include a word *unsaid*; the awkward silence; the raised eyebrows; the quizzical look—all sent from the counsels of Satan.

It can break hearts and ruin reputations.

For every word in Adolf Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, 125 lives were lost in World War II.

Contrast the words of Hitler and the words of Winston Churchill, whose brilliantly measured utterances pulled a faltering nation together for its "finest hour."

The tongue is like an unruly animal, restless, and dangerous. It seeks a prey and then pounces and kills.

Some animals are poisonous, as are some tongues. The deceptive things about poison is that it can work slowly, invisibly. A malicious word can spread, uncontested, and do a great damage to a person, a family, or an entire church.

Animals can be tamed; a fire can be controlled; only God can tame a tongue.

The Power to Delight: The Fountain and the Tree (3:9-12)

- 9] Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.
- 10] Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.
- 11] Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

In most of the world—even small villages—a freshwater fountain in the center of town symbolizes blessing.

Man needs water for drinking, washing, cooking, farming, any other activities necessary for life.

Prov 18:4 - "*The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.*"

Prov 10:11 - *“The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life.”*

Prov 13:14 - *“The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”*

Water is life-giving; so our words can give life. If they are controlled by the Spirit of God, and not our flesh.

Prov 18:21 - *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*

Our recent floods in the Midwest demonstrate what *uncontrolled* water can do.

Water is essential for life. So is the refreshment of the Spirit through His words. Paul’s prayer was that he might “refresh” the saints in Rome when he came to them (Rom 15:32). He often named Christians who had refreshed him (1 Cor 16:18; Philemon 7, 20).

Water also cleanses. There was a laver in the Tabernacle and Temple. God’s Word is the spiritual water that cleanses us (John 15:3; Eph 5:26-27).

Our words to others can also help to cleanse and sanctify them. Our words ought to be like the river in Ezekiel 47 that brought life to everything it touched.

Prov 12:18 - *“There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.”*

Tree By Its Fruit

12] Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

The tongue can be also delightful, as a tree. They provide beauty, shade, and bear fruit. Our words can help shelter and encourage.

Prov 10:21 - *“The lips of the righteous feed many.”* Jesus said, *“These words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* (John 6:63).

The most important thing about a tree is the root system. They need it to be healthy and deep. We need to be like the “blessed man” in Psalm 1.

- 1] Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
- 2] But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
- 3] *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

Nourishment is important. Our Lord communed with His Father and heard from Heaven each day.

Isa 50:4 - *“The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”*

Mark 1:35 - *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”*

If we are to have tongues of delight, we need to meet with Him every morning.

James issued a **warning**: A fountain cannot bring forth two kinds of water; a tree cannot yield two kinds of fruit.

What is your most important **stewardship**?
Your heart.

Matt 15:18 - *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*

Prov 4:23 - *Keep thy heart with all diligence.*

Twelve Words that can transform your life:

Please
Thank You
I'm Sorry
I love you
I'm praying for you.

Give God your heart—and your tongue—and be His blessing to others.

James 3:13 - 18

What is the first thing that God created? [Hint: It isn't in Genesis 1.]

Answer: Proverbs 8 (especially 23-29).

Wisdom

- 13] Who *is* a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Prov 4:7 - "Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

Examples of the folly of man's wisdom:

The Tower of Babel

failure and confusion (Gen 11:1-9);

Abraham's fleeing to Egypt (from famine)

(Gen 12:10-20);

Saul's offer of his armor to David

(1 Sam 17:38ff);

Roman experts setting out to sea despite Paul's warning

(Acts 27).

Origin of man's wisdom: Jam 3:15 - earthy, sensual, devilish.

Three enemies: the world, the flesh, the devil (Eph 2:1-3).

Don't confuse the world's *knowledge* with the world's *wisdom*. Over a century ago, Henry David Thoreau warned that we had "Improved means to unimproved ends." The world by its wisdom knew not God, and its wisdom rejects the very Gospel of God, 1 Cor 1:18-20.

God's wisdom is foolishness to man, 1 Cor 2:14.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Prov 9:10. (Ps 111:10; Job 28:28; Prov 1:7; 15:33).

"There is no fear of God before their eyes," Rom 3:18

[It is disturbing to discover—even among Christians in positions of responsibility—how few conduct themselves with true reverence for Him in honest and forthright dealings.]

How and Where Do We Get our Wisdom?

- 1] Our wisdom is of Christ: 1 Cor 1:24, 30. Col 2:3. Our first step is receiving Him. Paul speaks of being “in Christ” 161 times.
- 2] The Word of God is our wisdom: Deut 6:4.5-6. 2 Tim 3:15. Psalm 119:97-100.
- 3] Also, from believing prayer: James 1:5.

Fear of the Lord comes from one’s devotional life...

False Wisdom

- 14] But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

What are the evidences of *false wisdom*?

Envy: Ambition and boasting attempts to rob God of His glory. Mt 6:1-18. 1 Cor 1:17ff; 29, 31. Is our zeal for the Lord or carnal? Do we rejoice when other succeed, or are we filled with envy and criticism? When others fail, are we burdened or glad?

Strife: Self-seeking. Rivalry. Phil 2:3.

Boasting: Pride. (Paul boasted of his ministry—but gave the glory to God.)

Deceit: The biggest deceit—believing your own press releases...

vs. Meekness: Power under control. Meekness is the right use of power; wisdom is the right use of knowledge. Seeks only the glory of God; doesn’t cater to the praises of men.

- 15] This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

False wisdom’s source: “sensual,” natural.

ψυχικός psuchikos {psoo-khee-kos'} natural 4, sensual 2; from *psuke* (life, soul), from which we get our word "psychology." (!)

1 Cor 2:14 and 15:44, 46: "natural"; opposite of spiritual. Jude 19, "sensual."

Its origin is apart from, and opposed to, the new nature given by God. It is "wisdom from beneath" - devilish, demonic.

Satan's wisdom: Genesis 3. Thus, Rom 1:18-25.

16] For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

Worldly wisdom produces trouble. Wrong thinking produces wrong living. (James 4...)

"Confusion" = disorder from instability; "unstable" in James 1:8; "unruly" in 3:8.

Sets the stage for "every evil work."

Wisdom From Above

17] But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Every good gift is from above: James 1:17.

Our citizenship is in heaven: Phil 3:20.

Our home is in heaven: John 14:1-6.

Our affection is focused above: Col 3:1-4.

Evidences of True Wisdom

Purity: Chaste, free from defilement. Cf. Jam 4:8. There is a worldliness that makes a person a spiritual adulterer. James 4:4.

Peace: Man's wisdom leads to competition, rivalry, and war (James 4:1-2). God's peace is based on holiness, not compromise. Isa 32:17.

Gentleness: Sweet reasonableness. Moderation without compromise; gentleness without weakness.

Carl Sandburg described Abraham Lincoln as a man of “velvet steel.”

Compliance: Agreeable; easy to live with and work with. Yielding to persuasion. “Swift to hear, slow to speak; slow to wrath.” James 1:19.

Mercy: “Full” = controlled by. Good fruits. The Spirit produces fruit to the glory of God (John 15:1-16).

Decisiveness: Singleness of mind; opposite of wavering (James 1:6). Can your commitments be relied upon? Are you a fiduciary to those who trust you?

Sincerity: Openness, honesty, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).

18] And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

We reap what we sow. We are to inspect fruits (not gifts!)

It is a serious thing to be a troublemaker in God’s family. One of the things God hates is to sow “discord among the brethren.” Prov 6:16-19.

(When we examine passages like 4:1 and 4:11-12, we can infer that this gang had some rough meetings!)

James 4

Submissive Faith

How to end wars.

At war with each other (vv. 1, 11-12);

At war with ourselves (vv. 1-3);

At war with God (vv. 4-10).

At War

1] From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

Among *Christians!* Cf. Ps 133:1.

A tragic comment:

Lot and Abraham (Gen 13).
Absalom and David (2 Sam 13-18).
Disciples quarreling (Luke 9:46-48).
Corinthians suing in court (1 Cor 6:1-8; 14:23-40).
Galatians “devouring one another” (Gal 5:15).
Ephesians exhorted to unity (Eph 4:1-16)

Kinds of disagreements:

Class wars (Jam 2:1-9)
Labor wars (5:1-)
Church fights (1:19-20; 3:13-18)
Personal wars (4:11-12)
Cf. 1 Pet 4:8; Mt 18:15-19; Gal 6:1-2.

“Lusts,” desires: ἡδονή *hedone* {hay-don-ay’} ∅ from *handano* (to please); pleasure; desires for pleasure. From which we get hedonism, the belief that pleasure is the chief good in life.

The Pathology of Trouble

- 2] Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Root problem: selfishness. Isa 53:6. Abraham lying about Sarah. Achan taking forbidden loot.

The Remedy

- 3] Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Even wrong *praying*. Covetousness. Selfish people are always unhappy people.

The World

- 4] Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Being friendly with God's enemies?

Abraham was the friend of God (James 2:23); Lot was the friend of the world. Abraham literally had to rescue him. Friendship leads to loving the world (1 John 2:15-17) and conforming to the world (Rom 12:2). And being condemned with the world (1 Cor 11:32); our souls saved, however, "yet as by fire" (1 Cor 3:11-15). Friendship with the world is compared to adultery. We are married to Christ (Rom 7:4) and ought to be faithful to Him. Cf. Jer 3:1-5; Ezek 23; Hos 1 - 2.

The Flesh

- 5] Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

The old nature (Not the body). Grieving the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:6, 7.

The Devil

- 6] But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

He introduced pride; his chief weapon. 1 Tim 3:6. "Neither give place to the devil" - Eph 4:27.

Three instructions:

- 7] [1] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

"Submit" = military term: get into your proper rank.

- 8] [2] Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.

"Purify" = make chaste.

[3] Humble yourselves before God:

- 9] Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

(No laughing matter...)

- 10] Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

God hates pride (Prov 6:16-17).

“A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” Ps 51:17.

- 11] Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

Brothers, do not slander one another.

Why is it that Christians always form firing squads in circles? There are more newsletters, web pages, “exposé” books, written against the brethren *by other brethren*... It is a commonly discussed mystery by secular and Jewish observers: Christians seem to spend so much time nitpicking—and libeling and slandering—each other it’s a tragedy...

- 12] There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Plan Ahead?

Pharaoh was troubled by a series of bad dreams. Through the wisdom of God, they used the warnings of impending famines to prepare themselves.

The safest place in the world is right where God want you.

“The counsel of the Lord standeth forever; the thoughts of His heart to all generations.” Psalm 33:11.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future and a hope.” Jer 29:11.

- 13] Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

We make plans; but they need to be tempered by the realization that only God knows the future.

The Brevity of life

- 14] Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.
The foolishness of ignoring the will of God:

[1] The Brevity of life.

Job 7:6 - My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope."

Job 7:9 - "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no *more*."

Job 8:9 - "(For we *are but of yesterday*, and know nothing, because our days upon earth *are a shadow*:)"

Job 9:25 - "Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good."

[Their "post" was probably faster than ours!]

We count our *years* at each birthday but God tells us to number our *days* (Psalm 90:12).

How many weekends do YOU have left? (For an actuarial estimate, take "threescore and ten", subtract your age, and multiply by 52. If you are 30, you have about 2,000 weekends left...)

- 15] For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

This should be the *constant attitude* of the heart (Rom 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7).

The will of God is a living relationship between God and the believer. It is a growing experience.

Colossians 1:9 - "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be **filled** with the knowledge of his **will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**"

He wants us to *understand* His will:

Ephesians 5:17 - "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*."

We must also *prove* God's Will:

Romans 12:2 - "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The Greek verb means "to prove by experience." By working at it. Your prove by experience what the will of God is.

People who keep asking, "How do I determine God's will for my life?" are announcing that they have never really tried to do God's will.
John 7:17; Mt 11:29.

The secret of a happy life is to delight in duty. Work is kind of prayer when you're home. "They statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" - Psalm 119:54

When God cannot rule, He overrules. His chastening is evidence of His love.

[2] The Complexities of life.

[3] The Uncertainties of life. Pro v27:1 - "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Luke 12:16-21.

Thomas à Kempis, "Man proposes but God disposes."

Solomon: "The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Pro 16:33.

[The new field of mathematics known as *Chaos Theory* is based on the realization that there is no actual randomness in the universe.]

[4] The Frailty of man:

16] But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

Caveats: This can all be easily misapplied, or used as a "cop-out" from responsibility. "Planning" is simply the analysis of the futurity of today's decisions. The Scriptural application of spiritual truths is not a flight from prudence. Pro 22:3 (& 27:12).

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” - Luke 4:28.

What we do need to do is to seek the Lord’s will in all that we undertake.

Disobeying God’s Will

17] Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

2 Peter 2:21. “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”

Why do people deliberately disobey God?

Here’s one example:

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of circumstance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged the punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

- William Ernest Henley

My Captain

Out of the light that dazzles me,
Bright as the sun from pole to pole,
I thank the God I know to be
For Christ the conqueror of my soul.
Since His the sway of circumstance,
I would not wince nor cry aloud.
Under that rule which men call chance
My head with joy is humbly bowed.

Beyond this place of sin and tears
That life with Him! And His the aid,
Despite the menace of the years
Keeps, and shall keep me, unafraid.

I have no fear, though strait the gate,
He cleared from punishment the scroll.
Christ is the Master of my fate,
Christ is the Captain of my soul.

- Dorothea Day

* * *

James 5:1 - 20

The Rich

Being rich is not a sin, but it has its unique hazards. One of the biggest, ironically, is selfishness.

- 1] Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*.

The Bible does not discourage the acquiring of wealth. Abraham was wealthy man yet he walked with God.

Also, Job, David, Josiah, Philemon, Joseph of Arimathea, and Lydia were each rich.

The Jews in Canaan owned their own property, worked it, and benefitted from the produce.

In several of Jesus' parables, He indicated His respect for personal property and private gain. There is nothing in the epistles that contradicts the right of private ownership and profit.
The rights of private property and personal liberty are inseparable.

What the Bible does condemn is acquiring wealth by illegal means or for inappropriate purposes. Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah thundered their messages against stolen wealth, abuse of the poor, and selfish luxury.

Wealth is a spiritual handicap. Material possession tend to focus one's thoughts and interests on the world only.

Money can lead to idolatry; covetousness is idolatry. The problem is not in the currency; it is in the heart. It is the *love* of money that is the root of all evil.

- 2] Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.

The Way They Used Their Wealth

- 3] Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

There is nothing sinful about saving. (2 Cor 12:14; 1 Tim 5:8; Mat 25:27)

But it is wrong to store up wealth when you owe money to others. They were selfishly guarding it for their own security and pleasure.

It becomes hoarding when they keep others from benefitting from it. (1 Cor 4:2)

The Way They Got Their Wealth

- 4] Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

(Mt 20:1-16 describes the system of the day) Cf. Deut 24:14-15; Lev 19:13; Prov 3:27, 28; Jer 22:13.

“Kept back”: Greek tense indicates that the laborers *will never get their salaries*.

Thou shalt not steal. This not only prohibits socialism, it insists that we should pay our bills.

- 5] Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

All wealth is owned by the Lord (Ps 50:10). He permits us to be stewards of His wealth for His glory. Are you investing for the long term or for the short term?

Luxury also reaches a point of diminishing returns. The Quaker says, “Tell me what thou dost need, and I will tell thee how to get along without it.”

Jesus said, “Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15).

Luxury and self-indulgence has a way of ruining *character*. Money is not sinful; it is neutral. But “*Love* of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Tim 6:10).

“Thou shalt not covet” is the only commandment that deals with *motivation* rather than visible practice. It is a sin of the heart.

Abraham was a rich man but maintained his faith and character. When his nephew Lot became rich, it ruined his character and ultimately ruined his life. “If your riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Ps 62:10). “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold” (Prov 22:1).

Riches are always accompanied by uncertainties. The only certainty is that of God’s judgment (v.5:9, below).

They were misusing their wealth: [The Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19-31.]

- 6] Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

“He that hath the gold rules.” Wealth, power, and control of “due process” are the issue (Cf. James 2:6).

Deut 17:8-13;

Judges were not be greedy: Ex 18:21;

not partial to the rich: Lev 19:15;

not to tolerate perjury: Deut 19:16-21;

Bribery was condemned: Isa 33:15; Micah 3:11; 7:3.

Amos condemned the judges who took bribes and “fixed” cases: Amos 5:12, 15.

In less than a decade after James wrote this letter, Jerusalem fell to the Romans and all this accumulated wealth was taken.

[The turbulence on our present horizon could strike a parallel...]

This raises another aspect of the entire discussion. As any careful analyst knows, one of the factors in any strategic financial decision is the “*Opportunity Cost*.” the opportunity of an alternative allocation to the one being considered.

Eph 5:16 speaks of “redeeming the time”—“buying up the opportunity” is the literal translation. We must work while it is “day”; for the night is coming (John 9:4).

[“Schindler’s Regret” - how much more he could have accomplished if he fully realized the broader perspective...]

It is good to have the things that money can buy, *provided* you also have the things that money cannot buy. What good is a \$1,000,000 house if there is no home? Or a million-dollar diamond ring if there is no love?

[Are we buying things we don’t need, with money we don’t have, to impress people we don’t even like?]

What we keep, we lose. What we give to God, we keep, with interest added.

A famous preacher, known for his long sermons, asked to give an annual charity appeal, and was admonished to not let it go too long. He read his text from Prov 19:17: “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the

Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.” He then gave this brief sermon: “If you like the terms, then put down your money.”

The Power of Patience

The Epistle of “Yakov to the Twelve Tribes of Israel” is about spiritual maturity. And that is, essentially, about patience (1:1-5).

- 7] Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

The secret of strategic patience is to keep focused on the imminence of His Second Coming. Some Greek scholars believe that “long-suffering” refers to patience with respect to persons; and “endurance” refers to patience with respect to circumstances.

David was troubled by the prosperity of the wicked: Psalm 37:35-36. In this same Psalm, he also gave the same advice that James gave: “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass” (Ps 37:7).

The Christian can be likened to a “Spiritual farmer,” sensitive to the seasons, sowing the seed and watering, sensitive to the soil, etc.

- 8] Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

The secret to patience is that the harvest is worth waiting for. (Gal 6:9; Mark 4:28-29).

[Rapture & Death: simultaneous from the viewpoint of the Throne?]

- 9] Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Impatience with people betrays an impatience with God. If we start using our sickles on each other we may miss the harvest!

Examples: The Prophets

- 10] Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Jesus also used the prophets as an example of victory over persecution (Mt 5:10-12).

We are promised persecution (2 Tim 3:12). Our Lord was obedient and it led to the cross.

Elijah announced to wicked King Ahab that there would be a drought for 3 ½ years. Elijah himself had to suffer the same drought.

They not only suffered at the hands of the nonbelievers, but at the hands of professed believers!

Jeremiah was arrested as a traitor and thrown into an abandoned well to die. Ezekiel and Daniel also had their share of hardships, but God delivered them.

The NT presents the persecution of the prophets as proverbial (11X): Matthew 5:12; 21:35, 36; 22:6; 23:29-37; Luke 13:33; Acts 7:51, 52; Romans 11:3; 1 Thess 2:15; **Heb 11:32-38**; Rev 16:6; 18:24.

- 11] Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Why do some of those who proclaim the Lord endure difficult trials? So that their lives might back up their messages... Enduring counts. Many obscure heroes will receive their rewards: He will bring His reward with Him (Rev 22:12).

[We need to spend more time with our Bible to draw these insights...]

Job also had his “friends.” With friends like these, one hardly needs enemies! [I wonder if these friends published newsletters or had web sites?]

The friends were wrong; God had no cause against Job (Job 2:3). God rebuked the friends for telling lies about Job (Job 42:7).

Faith is not believing despite the evidence; it is obeying in spite of the consequences.

God never wastes the sufferings of His saints. Job met God in a deeper way (Job 42:1-6).

An impatient Christian is a powerful weapon in Satan's hands. Moses' impatience robbed him of his trip to the Holy Land; Abraham's impatience led to the birth of Ishmael; Peter's impatience almost made him a murderer. Answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee" 2 Cor 12:7-9.

You are not a robot caught in the jaws of fate. You are a loved child of God as part of His profound and wonderful plan. Trust Him.

Straight Talk

Honesty is becoming a scarce commodity. Perjury under solemn oath is epidemic. In our courts, in our sacred vows of marriage, in the assertions of our highest offices... "Their tongues practice deceit" (Rom 3:13).

Breaking vows was forbidden: Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21.

- 12] But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

Cf. Job 1:21-22; Mt 5:34-37. When Peter poured out oaths in the courtyard (Mt 26:71), he was giving evidence that his character was still in need of transformation.

There are appropriate solemn oaths in the Scripture: Jesus, before Caiaphas (Mt 26:63, 64a); Paul calls God as his witness (2 Cor 1:23; Rom 1:9, 10a). Thus, permitted but not encouraged...

Every word will be accounted for: Mt 12:36, 37.

Review

Like a farmer, we await a spiritual harvest, for fruit that will glorify God; Like the prophets, we should look for opportunities to witness, share His truth.

Like Job, we wait for the Lord to fulfill His loving purpose, knowing that He will never cause His children suffer so needlessly.

"Be patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth night." (v.8)

Prayer

Earlier, we spent a substantial amount of time on the *misuse* of the tongue. What is the *highest* use of the tongue? Proclaiming His Word (5:10); and Prayer. (Seven times in this section, James mentions prayer.)

Prayer for the Suffering

13] Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

Afflicted means “suffering in difficult circumstances.” We should not grumble (5:9). Prayer can give us the grace we need to endure troubles and use them to Glorify God. God can transform troubles into triumphs. He can turn weakness into strength (2 Cor 12:7-10; James 4:6).

[Jesus prayed (3X) in Gethsemane that the cup might be removed, but it was not...]

The *mature* Christian knows that God is able to give “songs in the night” (Job 35:10). He did this for Paul and Silas when they were suffering in that Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

The believer’s praise should be intelligent (1 Cor 14:15) and not just mouthing words. (Cf. “7-11” music: seven words repeated 11 times.) It should come from the heart (Eph 5:19) and motivated by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18), and based on the Word of God (Col 3:16).

Prayer for the Sick

14] Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

This is the only such prescription in all of Scripture. There are two Greek words translated “anoint”:

Χρίω Chrio, used in the religious sense; from this we also get the word, *Christos*, the Anointed One. It is used only five times in the NT, and refers to the anointing of Christ by the Father with the Holy Spirit.

The other, *ἀλείφω aleipho*, here, the Greek word is a medicinal term (Mt 6:17, to prepare oneself); it could be translated “massaging.”

Here, it seems, James is assuming its application as a medicine.

There are no blanket formulas: we're dealing with the sovereignty of God.

[It is a cruel hoax to teach that none of us are ever to be sick. Those who claim that God heals in every case, and that it is not His will for His children to be sick, are denying both Scripture and experience. Paul had to leave Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20); Epaphroditus was "ill and almost died" (Phil 2:27); Paul prayed three times for his own healing (2 Cor 12:7-10) but had to endure it until he died.]

Note also that it is not a single person, but the *body of elders* (pl) who seek God's will and pray...

- 15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

"Prayer of faith" is a prayer offered *when we know the will of God*.

This appears to be a case where the sickness is the result of *continuing* in sin (Cf. 1 Cor 11:30).

Remember the Christian's "Bar of Soap": 1 John 1:9.

We never sin alone. It always affects others—in fact, the whole church.

The Prayer of the Righteous

During the 4th century, one of the greatest preachers of the church, John of Antioch, because of his careful exegesis, unrelenting application, and unmatched eloquence, was given the nickname, "Chrysostom" ("Golden mouthed"). Here is his description of prayer:

The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire, it has bridled the rage of lions, hushed anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the fates of heaven, assuaged diseases, dispelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. There is [in it] an all-sufficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine which is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings!

- 16] Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

This seems to confirm that the case in view was one who was under church discipline (1 Cor 5).

Eusebius called James “Old Camel Knees” because he spent so much time in prayer.⁸

- 17] Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

(“Elias” is the Greek form of Elijah).

[Where is the text for this? (1 Kings 17 - 18). The 3 ½ years are given by Jesus and James (here) in the NT! Cf. Luke 4:25. {Gentile election?}]

“Prayed earnestly” = “he prayed in prayer.” Many people do not pray in the prayers; they just mouth religious words and hearts are not in them.

- 18] And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

After the famed confrontation with the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, the nation still needed rain. He prayed and sent his servant seven times until a little cloud appeared and the rain came (1 Kings 18:41-45). Persistence is essential.

Cf. Rev 11:6; (v.3: 1260 days = 3 ½ years) [Fire from heaven: Luke 9:54]

God says what He means and means what He says!

Prayer for the Straying

The OT term is “backsliding.”

“Overtaken with a fault,” (Gal 6:1)

He may be disciplined of the Lord (Heb 12)

Danger of committing a “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16-17; 1 Cor 11:30).

- 19] Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

(“Err”, wander: Greek, *πλανάω planao*, from which we get the word “planet,” a heavenly wanderer.)

If Peter has been praying instead of sleeping, he might not have denied Him three times.

20] Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Do believers need to be converted? Jesus said to Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

It is important that we seek to win the saved!

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Mt 18:15). “Gained” means “won.” (Same as “get gain” in James 4:13).

Love shall cover a multitude of sins: James and Peter (1 Pet 4:8) applied this principle from Proverbs 10:12.

While the application here is to saving the straying brother, how much more does the lost sinner need to be brought to the Savior.

“Seeking the lost” is a frequent picture. In Luke 15, Jesus pictures the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

In Zech 3:2 and Jude 23, the soul-winner is pictured as fireman pulling brands out of the burning. It may require the risks of love to snatch people from the fires of judgment.

* * *

Final Exam

Am I becoming more and more patient in the testings of life?

Do I play with temptation or resist it from the start?

Do I find joy in obeying the Word of God, or do I merely study and learn it?

Are there any prejudices that shackle me?

Am I able to control by tongue?

Am I a peacemaker or a troublemaker? Do people come to me for spiritual wisdom?

Am I a friend of God or a friend of the world?

Do I make plans without considering the will of God?

Am I selfish when it comes to money? Am I unfaithful in the paying of my bills?

Do I naturally depend on prayer when I find myself in some kind of trouble?

Am I the kind of person others seek for prayer support?

What is my attitude toward the wandering brother? Do I criticize and gossip, or do I seek to restore him in love?

* * *

We will now deal with some strange heresies involving James.

Topical Appendix:

The Shroud of Turin

Mark 15:42-46:

- 42] And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,
- 43] Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.
- 44] And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.
- 45] And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46] And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

[Pilate is amazed; Joseph replied, “It’s just for the weekend!”]

The Shroud of Turin - Real?

History

Tradition: Year of crucifixion, Thaddaeus brings the shroud to Edessa (modern Urfa, in eastern Turkey). Known as “the cloth of Edessa” in the earlier history.

525: Major flood at Edessa (1/3 of population–30,000–dies). Emperor Justinian orders reconstruction; cloth, hidden by earlier Christians, found.

787: Leo, Lector of Constantinople, refers to the Edessa cloth at the Council of Nicaea.

944: The cloth of Edessa arrives at Constantinople. Gregory, archdeacon of Hagia Sophia, delivers sermon which implies that cloth of Edessa corresponds to the present Turin Shroud.

1130: Ordericus Vitalis (1075-1143?) Recorded in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

1203: On display in Constantinople; disappeared in the sack by the Crusaders in 1204.

1211: Reference by Gervase of Tilmury.

1355: Reappears in Lirey, near Troyes.

1389: Memorandum by Pierre d’Arcis, Bishop of Troyes.

1578: Moved “permanently” to Turin.

Description

14ft. long, herringbone-twill linen cloth, bearing the remarkable image of

a naked and bearded man, about 6ft. tall, hair in a loose ponytail, back apparently scourged with a multi-thonged whip, hands crossed modestly before him.

[Numerous relics and fakes during the Middle Ages...]

1978: Two dozen scientists from U.S., Switzerland, and Italy perform a battery of tests and used tape to lift pieces of material from its surface for further study. The tests included photo- and electron-microscopy, X- rays, spectroscopy, ultraviolet fluorescence, thermography, and chemical analysis. Findings: The shroud had come into direct contact with a body and that the blood was real. (The likelihood that the work was of a cunning artist was dismissed.)

Ian Wilson's books appear quite thorough and deal with such diverse issues as Roman graffiti, the BP-8 Image Analyzer, grisaille (monochrome gray) painting and the feeding habits of the ibis; the musculature of the brow, the existence of twill-and-herringbone weave in ancient Israeli linen.

The blood flows, the nails through the wrists, the eerie three-dimensional aspects of the image, all appear to support its authenticity as an actual burial shroud.

The image is only one fiber deep, with no discoloration below. The application of acids, or pigments, would not achieve such delicacy. Fiber-by-fiber microscopic graduations, even within a single thread, which make up the image's exquisite shading would defy a human hand.

Experts have concluded that the blood is real blood, and it came from a man who died a traumatic death. The chemical analysis and telltale yellow-green fluorescence under ultraviolet light indicate the presence of remains of a slightly different substance: the fluid exuded from blood clots. That substance and its invisible-to-the-naked-eye manifestation were unknown until the 20th century.

The Danger: *Nehustan*

The Brazen Serpent (Num 21:6-9) Macrocode: John 3:14; *Nehustan*: 2 Kings 18:4.

Col 3:2 - "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Carbon-14 Dating

April 21, 1988: Under the gaze of Anastasio Cardinal Ballestrero of Turin, Italian microanalyst Giovanni Riggi cut a ½-in by 3-inch strip and divided it into postage stamp-size samples and distributed them to representatives of laboratories in Zurich, Oxford, and the University of Arizona in Tucson for radiocarbon dating.

[Carbon dating measures the level of carbon-14 isotopes. Carbon-14 is created when cosmic ray-produced neutrons interact with nitrogen atoms in the atmosphere. Flax plants take up the radioactive carbon-14, the amount of which remains balanced while the plants are alive through the intake of food and air. When the flax plants are picked and made into linen, Carbon-14 decays at a fixed rate known as its “half-life.” (About 5700 years). Measuring the amount of residual carbon-14 in the linen and comparing it with the amount in modern plants yields an estimate on how long the flax plants have been dead.]

After three tests each by the three labs, “1260-1390” was the disappointing result. The widely reported conclusion was that the shroud was medieval. (It is this ostensible dating of the shroud that ties into our perspective of James as will be discussed subsequently.)

[Possible Caveat:]

Dr. Leoncio Garza-Valdès, a San Antonio, Texas, pediatrician with interests in microbiology and archaeology, has pointed to a potential source of error: a bioplastic lacquer-like coating produced by bacteria. (He had been responsible for correcting an earlier error regarding a Mayan jade artifact resulting from such a coating.)

Obtaining a couple of threads and a bloodstain sample in May 1993, and working with microbiologist Stephen Mattingly of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, they determined that the coating was, indeed, embedded with “coccal-shaped bacteria and filamentous mold-like organisms.” This coating, transparent to the naked eye, cannot be removed by conventional cleaning methods of most radiocarbon labs. They believe that this coating could be enough to skew the radiocarbon dating by 1300 years. They believe the shroud is much older, but they don’t know by how much.

Is it possible that the Shroud of Turin is really the shroud that covered the body of Jesus?

Many conservative scholars rule out that possibility because of John 19:40 and 20: 5, 7. John tells us that Peter and John had seen the strips of linen where Jesus' body had rested. The Greek term used, ὀθόνιον *othonion*, refers to small pieces of linen that were used at that time to bury the dead and not to a large sheet.

The “Second Messiah” Echoes

Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas have published several books which suggest that the shroud is that of a crusader, Jacques de Molay, the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, crucified by the Inquisition as a sardonic torture prior to his being burned at the stake in 1314.

They portray the “true story” of the original Jerusalem Church as Jesus and his brother James struggled to establish the “kingdom of heaven” upon the earth using Masonic-style rituals. (The establishment of the “Christian Church” is viewed to be a political invention that had little connection to the man we call Christ.)

The early Christians are said to have buried their most precious scrolls beneath Herod's temple shortly before they and the city was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Their hidden teachings were driven underground. Following the destruction of the Jerusalem Church and the slaughter of the Jewish nation in 70 A.D., a few surviving priests from the smouldering city of Jerusalem headed to Europe to await the moment of return prophesied in the Gospel of John.

The Knights Templar

Precisely 1,000 years later their bloodline descendants reentered the holy city to claim their ancient heritage and form a new order of priests of the Temple: the mysterious Knights Templar. Lost to the world for over a millennium these records were then, it is claimed, clandestinely unearthed and interpreted by the infamous Order of the Knights Templar who adopted these ancient teachings and the rituals as their own. These warrior monks ostensibly conducted a nine-year-long excavation of the ruins of Herod's Temple following the First Crusade. There they recovered the lost teachings (and, perhaps, extensive treasures) hidden

below the tumbled ruins (and may have devised elaborate Tarot cards with cryptic meanings to protect their secret cult).

Their strange history ended nearly 200 years later, when they were discovered and arrested. Philippe IV of France—Philippe le Bel—coveting their wealth and power, on October 13, 1307, arranged their simultaneous seizure, arrest, and goods confiscated. Tried and tortured, their wealth eluded him. Their treasure was secreted out in advance and never found. It remains a mystery.

In March, 1314, their last leader, Jacques de Molay, the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar it is suggested, was crucified in a bizarre parody of the crucifixion of Jesus, and the image of his suffering slowly materialized on the cloth that had once swathed him.

Attempts to eliminate the Templars outside France was less successful. Philippe's own son-in-law, Edward II of England, rendered milder treatment. In Scotland, at war with England at the time, the order was never officially dissolved, and maintained itself for another four centuries. In Germany and Spain they found refuge in other orders. In Portugal they became the Knights of Christ and functioned well into the 16th century, devoting themselves to maritime activity. (Vasco de Gama; Christopher Columbus' father-in-law; et al.)

(In 1522 the Templar's Prussian progeny, the Teutonic Knights, repudiated their allegiance to Rome and threw their support behind an upstart rebel named Martin Luther.)

There are those that believe that the treasures of the Knights Templar fueled the great treasures of the great houses of Europe.

By the 18th century, various secret confraternities were claiming the Templars as their precursors and mystical initiates.

Among them was a group formed by Adam Weishaupt known as the Illuminati on May 1, 1776. (They subsequently were merged into the Masons.)

The guardians of these secrets have tried to hide them from the world—even their own members—but, it is claimed, they remain hidden in the senior rituals of Freemasonry.

The Dangers of Freemasonry

The Masons are a widely held misconception—even among its more common members. (Even the two authors, Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, apparently are still only in the “Blue Lodge,” encompassing the 3 *lowest* of 33 degrees.)

Presumed to be a charitable service organization—and including many innocent and devout members—it consists of subsequent levels which incrementally reveal its inner mysteries. Unbeknownst to its initial (lower) levels—in fact, probably shocking to many of its own—it actually is occult, and committed to the worship of Lucifer!

This is a highly charged topic too complex to detail here, but we strongly urge any interested to seriously check them out! (See reading list in Bibliography.)

The “True Gospel” of James

It is suggested that Jesus led an entirely Jewish sect and that he was succeeded not by Peter but by his younger brother James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem. The role of James appeared as a threat by the Roman Catholic Church, it is claimed, controlling history and removing information about this important figure.

(In 1996, Pope John Paul II issued a statement declaring that Jesus was Mary’s only child, and therefore not his brother after all.)⁹

This view puts Paul in opposition to James as a later intruder. After James is martyred in 62 A.D., a first cousin of Jesus, Simeon son of Cleophas, became the new leader of the Church at Jerusalem. He is later executed by the Romans as a pretender to the Throne of David.

These heresies ascribe modern Christianity to the teachings of Paul, “in contrast” to James, and prey upon the ignorant who fail to perceive the *integrity* of the Word of God.

Eisenman and others attempt to portray James as the central figure among the revolutionary parties in Jerusalem from 40 A.D. to the early 60s, when James was killed by the same pro-Roman priestly establishment that killed Jesus. Throughout his lifetime, James, like Jesus, is presented as preaching a Law-oriented apocalyptic nationalism that contrasted

sharply with the teachings of Paul. It was the death of James that triggered the uprising against Rome that led to the destruction in 70 A.D.

This kind of pseudo-scholastic revisionism can deal severe blows to the faith of those who haven't the depth of background or grounding. An awareness of the integration of the whole is the defense to these attacks.

The *Equidistant Letter Sequences* in Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53 is called "The Holy of Holies" of the OT. The occurrence of *equidistant letter sequences* is striking.

The label "Nazarene," (*Netzer*, נזיר) is also a well-known identity of the Jesus. [The common appellation of a "carpenter" may be a mistranslation. The term τέκτων actually means builder.] While this term appears a dozen times in the Book of Isaiah, it seems significant that it, too, appears here in this key Messianic passage. The term *Galilee* also appears twice. [Isaiah 53:4 and 5, each with an interval of -32 (in reverse). The term is encoded 70 times in the Book of Isaiah.] As isolated events, these "encoded" labels don't seem that significant. But appearing in *combination*, they seem to rise above any ambient noise level.

The time of Passover, the location of Mount Moriah, and the names of Herod and Caesar also seem to make their appearance. Both the names of Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests (Luke 3:2), also appear. Annas was the former high priest and the uncle of Caiaphas. Both of them figure prominently in three of the six trials endured by Jesus following the arrest in Gethsemane (Six trial references).

The most startling discovery has been the names of essentially all of the disciples and the others who were at the foot of the cross that fateful afternoon. While the specific names involve relatively frequent combinations of letters individually, their appearance *in combination*, and their relevance to the text, would seem argue against their occurring by unaided chance alone.

The name of Peter (*Kepha*, כפה) appears in Isaiah 53:3, beginning with the second letter of the fifth word and counting every nineteenth letter from right to left. With over 300 occurrences in the Book of Isaiah, this incidence in isolation also wouldn't seem significant; but the coinci-

dences are piling up. (Remember, the rabbis maintain that “coincidence” is not a kosher word!)

The name of John (*Yochanan*, יוחנן) also appears in Isaiah 53:10, starting with the fourth letter in the eleventh word and counting every 28th letter from left to right. This is a bit more significant since this code appears only nine times in the total Book of Isaiah. There are some other aspects to the specific location that will be discussed shortly.

The name of Andrew (*And' drai*, אנדריי) appears in Isaiah 53:4, beginning with the first letter of the eleventh word, counting every 48th letter from left to right (in reverse). Since there are only five such occurrences in the entire Book of Isaiah, its appearance here adds to compound the evidence against this all occurring by unaided chance alone.

The name of Philip (*Pilip*, פיליפ) also appears in the passage. Since there are only 15 such appearances in the entire Book of Isaiah, its inclusion in this cluster adds additional weight to the inference of deliberate design. [Grant Jeffrey reports it as occurring in Isaiah 53:5, starting with the 3rd letter in the tenth word, at intervals of -133 (in reverse). We couldn't find it there, but it appeared in Isaiah 53:3 at a reverse interval of -82; and also in Isaiah 53:6 and a forward interval of 85.]

Thomas (*Toma*, תומא) also appears in Isaiah 53:2, starting with the first letter in the eighth word and counting every 35th letter from right to left. As there are over 200 appearances of this code in the Book of Isaiah, in isolation this doesn't seem that compelling; but, again, clustering with the others they collectively are seen to be rising above any residual noise level.

Simon (Zelotes), the Canaanite, (*Shimon*, שמעון) appears in Isaiah 52:14, beginning with the first letter in the second word and counting every 47th letter from right to left. With only 15 such occurrences in the entire Book, its inclusion here seems significant.

Thaddaeus (*Taddai*, תדיי) appears in Isaiah 53:12, beginning at the first letter of the eighth word and counting every 50th letter from left to right. (This high frequency combination appears nine times in this passage and would be deemed to have little relevance on its own. Again, it's the composite collective appearances that appear profoundly significant.)

The Two Jameses

The name James (the English equivalent of the Greek *Jacobus*, or the Hebrew *Ya'akov* יעקב) appears twice behind the text, at intervals of -20 and -34 (that is, in reverse). James, or *Ya'akov*, was a common name in that period. [This name appears, using intervals up to 100, 1149 times in the Old Testament, forward 774 times (including 350 without any interval), and in reverse 375 times. In Isaiah, it appears 101 times (forward 73 times, in reverse, 28 times).] What makes this double occurrence particularly provocative, however, is that there were *two* Jameses present at the cross.

One of them was James, the son of Zebedee (Mt 4:21; 10:2; Mk 1:19; 3:17) and the brother of John, (Mt 17:1; Mk 3:17; 5:37; Acts 12:2) with whom he was called by Jesus to be one of the Twelve (Mt 4:21; Mk 1:19-20; Lk 5:10-11). Jesus nicknamed James and John “Boanerges,” meaning “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). These two are very prominent in the various lists of the Twelve (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13), and clearly on the inside circle. With Peter, they were present when Jesus raised Jairus’s daughter (Mk 5:37; Lk 8:51), at the transfiguration (Mt 17:1; Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28), at a confidential briefing on Jesus’ Second Coming (Mk 13:3), and were with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:37; Mk 14:33). James was among the first martyrs by decapitation at the command of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2).

The other James was the son of Alphaeus, another of the twelve apostles (Mt 10:3; Acts 1:13). He is usually identified as “James the younger” (Mk 15:40).

There was also a third James, *who apparently was not present at the cross*. He was the Lord’s half-brother, who, along with his brothers Joses, Simon and Judas (Mt 13:55), apparently did not accept the authority of Jesus before His resurrection (Compare Mk 3:21 and Jn 7:5). After the risen Jesus had appeared to him (1 Cor 15:7), he became a leader of the Jewish-Christian church at Jerusalem (Gal 1:19; 2:9; Acts 12:17). A few years later James suffered martyrdom by stoning at the instigation of the high priest Annas during the interregnum after the death of the procurator Festus in AD 61.¹⁰

It is interesting that the name James appears to be encoded precisely twice in this critical text.

The Three Marys

Mary (*Miryam*, מַרְיָם) was also a relatively common name in that period, and there were three Marys at the cross with John:

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

John 19:25-27

Grant Jeffrey has noted that in Isaiah 53:11, starting with the fifth letter in the ninth word and counting every twentieth letter from left to right spells *Ma* 'al *Yeshua Shmi ohz*, מַעַל יִשְׁעֵי שְׁמִי עוֹ, "exceedingly high, *Yeshua* is my strong name" [Jeffrey, *Handwriting*, p.155]. It is this *yod* (י) in *Yeshua*'s name that is the same letter than encodes *Yochanan*, John, noted earlier.

In Isaiah 53:11, beginning with the first letter in the first word and counting every 42nd letter from left to right spells "Messiah," *Meshiach* מְשִׁיחַ. From the *mem*, מ, in the word "Messiah," counting every 23rd letter from left to right spells "Mary," מַרְיָם. In Isaiah 53:10, all three Marys use the letter *yod* (י) in the word, *ya'arik* יֵאָרֵךְ. This is the same letter *yod* (י) that forms the first letter of the encoded names "*Yeshua*" and "John." Despite the fact that the combination of letters which make up Mary, מַרְיָם, are extremely frequent (there are over 11,000 in the Old Testament, over 600 in Isaiah and over a dozen in this passage), it is the intimate interlinking of the three Marys with both *Yeshua* and John that is rather striking.

An Ominous Omission

There is also a surprising *omission* among the names apparently encrypted in Isaiah 53: יהודה, Judas. This combination of letters appears over fifty times in Isaiah and yet does *not* appear in Isaiah 53.

His replacement, Matthias, (*Mattiyah*, מַתִּיָּה), however, does appear. On the following page is a summary of some of the codes that Rabbi Yakov Rambsel and Grant Jeffrey have reported:

Name	Begins	Word	Letter	Interval	
Yeshua is my name	ישוע שמי	53:10	11	4	-20
His Signature	מחתימו	53:7	8	4	49
Messiah	משיח	53:11	1	1	-42
Nazarene	נזיר	53:6	11	3	47
Galilee	גליל	53:7	1	2	-32
Shiloh	שילה	53:12	21	4	19
Pharisee	פרוש	53:9	14	2	-64
Levites	לוים	54:3	3	6	19
Caiaphas	כיפה	53:15	7	3	41
Annas	ענן	53:3	6	5	-45
Passover	פסח	53:10	13	3	-62
The man Herod	איש הורד	53:6	4	1	-29
Wicked Caesar perish	קיסר עמל אכד	53:11	7	4	-194
The Evil Roman City	רע עיר רומי	53:9	13	2	-7
Let Him be crucified	יצלב	53:8	6	2	15
Moriah!	הירמו	52:7	4	5	153
Cross	צלב	53:6	2	2	-8
Pierce	דקר	53:10	15	3	-92
From the Atonement Lamb	מכפר טלא	52:12	12	2	-19
The Disciples mourn	למדים אנן	53:12	2	3	-55
Peter	כפה	53:10	11	5	-14
Matthew	מתתי	53:8	12	1	-295
John	יוחנן	53:10	11	4	-28
Andrew	אנדרוי	53:4	11	1	-48
Philip	פילף	53:5	10	3	-133
Thomas	תומא	53:2	8	1	35

James	יעקב	52:2	9	3	-34
James	יעקב	52:2	3	4	-20
Simon	שמעון	52:14	2	1	47
Thaddaeus	תדי	53:12	9	1	-50
Matthias	מתיה	53:5	7	4	-11
Mary	מרים	53:11	1	1	-23
Mary	מרים	53:10	7	3	6
Mary	מרים	53:9	13	3	44
Salome	שלמית	52:15	16	3	113
Joseph	יוסף	53:2	1	2	210
Bread ²	הלחם	53:1	1	8	210
Wine	יין	53:5	11	2	210
Obed ³	עבד	53:7	3	2	-19
Jesse	ישי	52:9	3	1	-19
Seed	זרע	52:15	2	2	-19
Water	מים	52:7	9	1	-19
Jonah ⁴	יונה	52:4	6	4	-19

Notes to table references:

- 1) Mount Moriah is the ridge that has Golgatha at its peak.
- 2) Mark 15:40.
- 3) It is interesting that the elements of bread and wine have the same interval.
- 4) It is interesting that a series of lineage items have the same interval.

Over 40 relevant names in 15 sentences. It is the density, *and the relevance to the plaintext*, which would seem to defy attribution to unaided random chance alone.¹¹ [See also, *Cosmic Codes - Hidden Messages From the Edge of Eternity...*]

Endnotes:

1. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, Appendix 66 II.
2. GATT, 22,000 pages eroding the sovereignty of the U.S., was ramrodded through a lame duck Congress without debate. Only one read it. It was passed

with 50.5% although treaties require 66 2/3 majority of the Senate.

3. Quoted from his October *Insider Report*. P.O. Box 84903, Phoenix AZ 85071.
4. J. Vernon McGee, *James*, p.62.
5. R. Kent Hughes, *James*, Crossway Books, Wheaton IL 1991, p.107.
6. Paul Aurandt, ed., *More of Paul Harvey's the Rest of the Story*, Bantam Books, New York, 1981, pp.136-138. q.v. R. Kent Hughes.
7. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
8. Kirsopp Lake trans., *Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 1, 2.23, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, p.170, 171.
9. *The [London] Times*, 30 August 1996.
10. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20. 9.
11. Grant Jeffrey has also found a comparable list of codes in Exodus 30:16, a passage which deals with God's commands regarding the atonement for sins. See Grant Jeffrey, *The Handwriting of God*, Frontier Research Publications, Toronto Ontario, 1997, pp. 172-173.

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