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The Chapters of James

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James

SECTION OUTLINE ONE (JAMES 1)

James opens with a greeting and short discussions on trials and temptations, trusting, transition, treasure, and true religion.

- I. JAMES'S GREETING (1:1): James addresses his book to the twelve Israelite tribes scattered among the nations.
- II. JAMES SPEAKS OF TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS (1:2-4, 12-16): Here he pictures these experiences in a twofold light.
 - A. Positive (1:2-4, 12): As seen from God's perspective.
 - 1. The purpose (1:2-3): To purify and strengthen us.
 - 2. The products (1:4)
 - a. Perseverance (1:4a)
 - b. Maturity (1:4b)
 - 3. The promise (1:12): God will someday give the crown of life to those who successfully endure.
 - B. Negative (1:13-16): As seen from Satan's perspective.
 - 1. The purpose (1:13-14): To pervert and weaken us.
 - 2. The products (1:15-16)
 - a. Evil actions (1:15a)
 - b. Possible death (1:15b-16)
- III. JAMES SPEAKS OF TRUSTING (1:5-8)
 - A. When to trust God (1:5): When we need wisdom.
 - B. How to trust God (1:6b-8)
 - 1. Positive (1:6a): We need only to ask him in faith.
 - 2. Negative (1:6b-8): Wisdom will not be given to a faithless person.
- IV. JAMES SPEAKS OF TRANSITION (1:9-11): James touches on the shortness of life.
 - A. The example (1:9a, 10a, 11): Human glory is like a beautiful flower that blossoms and soon fades away.
 - B. The exhortation (1:9b, 10b): Only God's glory is eternal.
- V. JAMES SPEAKS OF TREASURE (1:17-25): The treasure here is the Bible itself.
 - A. The source of this treasure (1:17): It came as a perfect gift from the unchanging God, who "created all heaven's lights."
 - B. The salvation in this treasure (1:18): We have become his children through this priceless gift.
 - C. The symbol for this treasure (1:19-25): James compares the Bible to a mirror.
- VI. JAMES SPEAKS OF TRUE RELIGION (1:26-27)
 - A. The fiction (1:26): Some believe they can claim the name of Christ and continue to slander other Christians.
 - B. The facts (1:27): James lists two (of many) signs indicating true religion.
 - 1. Having compassion upon orphans and widows (1:27a)
 - 2. Keeping from the pollution of the world (1:27b)

SECTION OUTLINE TWO (JAMES 2)

James discusses the subjects of godless favoritism and godly faith.

I. GODLESS FAVORITISM (2:1-13)

A. The command against favoritism (2:1-8)

1. The examples (2:1-4): His readers are guilty of the following sins:

- a. Treating rich visitors with great respect (2:1-2a, 3a)
- b. Treating poor visitors with no respect (2:2b, 3b-4)

2. The enigma (2:5-7): James cannot understand this, for often it was the rich who persecuted them and ridiculed their Savior.

3. The exhortation (2:8): James says, "Obey our Lord's royal command found in the Scriptures."

B. The consequences of favoritism (2:9-13)

1. To break this law is to break all laws (2:9-12).
2. To show no mercy is to receive no mercy (2:13).

II. GODLY FAITH (2:14-26): James contrasts having only head faith with having head, heart, and hand faith.

A. Two examples of having only head faith (2:14-20)

1. In regard to the destitute (2:14-18): Head faith by itself is empty faith and attempts to minister to the poor by pious words not accompanied by works.

2. In regard to the demons (2:19-20)

- a. The fiction (2:19a): "Do you still think it's enough just to believe that there is one God?"
- b. The facts (2:19b-20): "Well, even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror!"

B. Two examples of having head, heart, and hand faith (2:21-26)

1. Abraham (2:21-24): He proved his faith by his willingness to offer up his son Isaac.
2. Rahab (2:25-26): She proved her faith by protecting the two Israelite spies.

SECTION OUTLINE THREE (JAMES 3)

James talks about the tongue.

I. IMPORTANCE OF THE TONGUE (3:1-2): Anyone who can control his or her tongue is a perfect (totally mature) person, able to keep the entire body in check.

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TONGUE (3:3-5)

A. How it can control (3:3-4)

1. It is as a bridle to a horse (3:3).
2. It is as a rudder to a ship (3:4).

B. How it can consume (3:5): It is like a spark, which, though small, can destroy a great forest.

III. INIQUITY OF THE TONGUE (3:6): It can be set on fire by hell itself, utterly corrupting and destroying its owner.

IV. INCORRIGIBILITY OF THE TONGUE (3:7-8)

A. People have been able to train the brute creatures (3:7).

B. No person has been able to train the tongue (3:8).

V. INCONSISTENCY OF THE TONGUE (3:9-12)

A. The contradiction (3:9-10): It tries to do two things simultaneously.

1. It tries to praise God (3:9a, 10a).
2. It tries to curse people (3:9b, 10b).

B. The conclusion (3:11-12): It cannot do these two things simultaneously.

1. Fresh water and salt water cannot flow from the same spring (3:11, 12c).
2. A fig tree cannot bear olives (3:12a).
3. A grapevine cannot produce figs (3:12b).

VI. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TONGUE (3:13-18)

A. The path it should follow (3:13, 17-18): In order to control the tongue, the owner should always allow God's wisdom.

B. The path it should flee (3:14-16): The owner should never allow his or her tongue to be

influenced by Satan.

SECTION OUTLINE FOUR (JAMES 4)

James discusses the pollution of the human heart and the solution to this problem.

I. THE POLLUTION IN THE HUMAN HEART (4:1-5, 11-13, 16-17)

A. The root of the problem (4:1a): Envy and wicked desires.

B. The fruit of the problem (4:1b-5, 11-13, 16-17)

1. Constant fighting and quarreling (4:1)

2. Killings (4:2a)

3. Total breakdown in prayer (4:2b-3)

a. Not asking God for spiritual things (4:2b)

b. Asking God for sinful things (4:3)

4. World lovers (4:4)

5. Grieving the Holy Spirit (4:5)

6. Slandering (4:11-12)

7. Boasting about the future (4:13, 16-17)

II. THE SOLUTION FOR THE HUMAN HEART (4:6-10, 14-15)

A. Humble yourself (4:6, 10): This act alone results in a twofold blessing.

1. God will give you grace (4:6).

2. God will lift you up (4:10).

B. Submit to God (4:7a).

C. Resist the Devil (4:7b).

D. Repent (4:8-9).

E. Depend on God for the future (4:14-15).

1. The wrong action (4:14): James reminds his readers that no one knows what tomorrow will bring.

2. The right action (4:15): James urges his readers to simply preface their plans by the following words: "If the Lord wants us to."

SECTION OUTLINE FIVE (JAMES 5)

James discusses the topics of the selfish rich, suffering, swearing, supplication, and soul winning.

I. THE SELFISH RICH (5:1-6)

A. The consternation of the selfish rich (5:1-3a): James warns the rich of the future misery awaiting them.

1. Their very clothes will rot (5:1-2).

2. Their gold and silver will corrode (5:3a).

B. The cruelty of the selfish rich (5:4-6)

1. They cheat their workers (5:4).

2. They live in sinful luxury and self-indulgence (5:5).

3. They condemn and murder innocent people (5:6).

C. The condemnation of the selfish rich (5:3b): Their greed stores up for them the fires of hell.

II. SUFFERING (5:7-11): James gives three examples of steadfastness in suffering.

A. From the soil (5:7): "Be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who eagerly look for the rains in the fall and in the spring."

B. From the Scriptures (5:10-11): "Job is an example of a man who endured patiently."

C. From the Second Coming (5:8-9): "You, too, must be patient. And take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near."

III. SWEARING (5:12)

A. Negative (5:12a): Don't swear by heaven or earth or anything else.

B. Positive (5:12b): Let your answer be a simple yes or no.

IV. SUPPLICATION (5:13-18)

A. The exhortation to prayer (5:13-16a)

1. Seasons of prayer (5:13): When should we pray?

a. In times of trouble (5:13a)

b. In times of triumph (5:13b)

2. Reasons for prayer (5:14-16a)

a. Prayer will raise up the sick (5:14-15a).

b. Prayer will restore the sinner (5:15b-16a).

B. The example of prayer (5:16b-18)

1. The power (5:16b): A righteous person's prayer is both powerful and effective.

2. The person (5:17-18): James selects Elijah as his role model here.

a. "Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for the next three and a half years!" (5:17).

b. "Then he prayed for rain, and down it poured" (5:18).

V. SOUL WINNING (5:19-20)

A. The faithfulness of a soul winner (5:19)

B. The fruits of a soul winner (5:20): The person who turns another from sin has saved that sinner from death.