

# NEW TESTAMENT SYNTHESIS NOTES

by Dr. Fred Wittman

## GENERAL (“CATHOLIC”) EPISTLE BY JAMES

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. What would you do if you suddenly found out that, though you had been relying solely and exclusively upon your faith in expectation of spending Eternity with The Lord Jesus Christ when He comes again, Scripture clearly states, “Faith without works is dead!” (Jas. 2:14-20-26)?
- B. Review:
  1. The Theme of The Bible: **The Coming of The Messiah, The King and His Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace.**
  2. The Purpose of The Bible: **To Teach The God’s Plan of Redemption.**

### PRESENTATION:

#### I. Facts to Be Noted

##### A. Pertinent Facts:

Author: James, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus Christ.      Date Written: A.D. 37(-45)      Provenance: Jerusalem  
Written to: Christian Jews outside Palestine (12 tribes of the dispersion)      Key Word: “faith” (16x in 12vs.)  
Key Verse: 1:22.      Content: Practical Christianity.      Theme: Faith Proven By Works

1. Authorship: a problem, which James? (Answer is related to date.)
  - a. James, son of Zebedee died A.D. 44, although dating is not the problem for identifying this James as the author, the other more likely author is the brother of The Lord Jesus, who stood out as spokesman for the first Church Council in 49 A.D. (Acts 15:12-21).
  - b. James, our Lord’s half-brother (Mk.6:3 cf. Acts 15:12-21). He is most likely the author because he became the spokesman of the first Church Council in A. D. 49 (Acts 15:12-21); also note his leadership in Acts 12:17;21:18 and Gal. 1:19; 2:9,12.)

##### 2. Dating:

- a. There is no reference to the fall of Jerusalem which took place in A.D. 70.
- b. There is no reference to the Jewish-Gentile controversy before A.D. 50 (Acts 15:1-31).
- c. There is reference to a primitive state of church and leadership: synagogue with elders, but not bishops or deacons.
- d. The Jewish tone of the Epistle indicates a strong Jewish emphasis.

All four points suggest an early dating. It is the earliest of The New Testament Writings by four to twelve years. It is interesting that the brother of The Lord Jesus who did not believe in Him but taunted Him (Jn. 7:3-5) should become the first writer of New Testament Literature.

##### 3. Canonicity.

This problem, which questioned The Epistle as inspired Scripture, extended into the Reformation because of the controversy between faith and works discussed in chapter 2.

##### 4. Characteristics.

Very Jewish, social-conscious, practical.

##### 5. Readers (Three views).

- a. Unconverted Jews: James 1:1 taken in widest possible sense.
  - (1) Why received into canon if that is so?
  - (2) Faith in Christ is assumed (2:1).
- b. Christians in a general (non-literal sense). Thinking of church as new Israel has theological presuppositions which are heretical. Too many references are exclusively Jewish.
- c. Jewish believers (Hebrew Christians). References to: religion (1:26,27), synagogue (2;2), ten times to The Law (1:25; 2:8-12; 4:11,12) and to Abraham as “our father” (2:21) plus three references to The Law indicate Jewish readers. References to The Law: (1) The Perfectly Complete Law (2:25 APT); (2) The Perfectly Complete Royal Law (2:8 APT); and <sup>0</sup>Law of Freedom (2:12 APT).

##### 6. Purpose (3fold):

- a. To encourage persecuted Jewish believers to patiently endure trials,
- b. To warn against the sin of class discrimination.
- c. To emphasize works as essential to faith. “Man is justified by faith alone, but not by that faith which is alone.”

B. Only one scene: wherever the twelve-tribe Jews are scattered.

##### C. Characters.

James, The Lord Jesus Christ, Abraham, Rahab, the Devil, Job, and Elijah.

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**I. Facts to Be Noted (cont.)**

D. Outline.

I. The Patience of Faith (Ch. 1)

II. The Practice of Faith (Ch. 2)

III. The Prudence of Faith (Ch. 3)

IV. The Purity of Faith (Ch. 4)

V. The Prayer of Faith (Ch. 5)

E. Prophecy Fulfilled.

The lawgiver (4:12 cf. Isa. 33:22).

**II. The Theme of Bible: The Coming of The Messiah and His Coming Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace:** Since The Messiah came and departed to await the time of taking up His Bride, The Church to Heaven to consummate the marriage, encouragement is needed to endure longsuffering patiently and to endure testing and hardship until His coming presence. This Epistle provides transitional teaching from Judaism to The Life of Faith in The Lord Jesus Christ.

**III. The Purpose of The Bible: To Teach The Plan of Redemption:** James took up the process of teaching the Plan of Redemption where The Lord Jesus had completed the transaction. Because The Lord Jesus emphasized faith and committing trust, there was a need to emphasize the need to demonstrate that faith. After he was converted, the oldest half-brother of Jesus, James took the leadership in His Church and wrote this Epistle to deal with this problem of faith demonstrated by works early in Church history.

**IV. The Progressive Revelation of The God:** In The General (Catholic) Epistle by James, written not much more than four years after the crucifixion and resurrection-ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, The God revealed These Truths: He Himself as The Lawgiver, who also will judge. The opportunity to resist or submit to the devil. Submission to The God must be through humility. The relationship between faith and works is clarified early in New Testament Literature. How serious and how harmful sin in word is! The process of sin from temptation through its birth to result in death is revealed. The God at times responds to united prayer of faith efforts of the local church for healing of a sick member. And those who are brothers in Christ through regeneration are to persist constantly in longsuffering until the coming presence of The Lord (5:7).

**DISCUSSION:**

James emphasized that “Faith without works is dead!” (2:20,26). Therefore faith alone cannot save! The apostle Paul taught that salvation is not of works, that is the works by keeping The Law and seeking The God’s merit or Salvation by doing good works. Such works do not avail. Salvation had been accomplished by The work of The Lord Jesus Christ in suffering crucifixion death on Calvary and by ministering as Great High Priest in His Resurrection-ascension ministry in applying His blood in Heaven alone and by none other. Salvation is appropriated by repentance and persistent committed trust (faith) in Him, followed by the persistent on-going and out-working of that Salvation and Redemption in the lives of those who appropriate that Salvation and Redemption. Later the apostle Paul reinforced this teaching claiming that confession of faith in The Lord Jesus Christ with the mouth must persistently be followed by the works of faith backing up that confession throughout the rest of the life of the one committing trust (Eph. 2:8-10).

“<sup>10</sup>For we are His workmanship<sup>[product of doing]</sup>, being created ones in<sup>[év w / dat]</sup> union with Christ Jesus for beneficially good works, which The God prepared beforehand in order that we persistently walk in them” (Eph. 2:10 APT).

1. What does this mean concerning all those who claim to be redeemed on the basis of faith alone but do not show it by keeping the last commandment (Mt. 28:16-20) The Lord Jesus gave His disciples (the core group of The Church) and practicing the making of disciples and reaching out to the lost by proclaiming (Mk. 16:7) The Gospel?
2. How can you demonstrate your appreciation, gratitude, thanks, and love for The Lord Jesus Christ and all that He did for you and thus work out your professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?
3. What is the ultimate consequence for those claiming to believe but fail to produce the works of faith?

**APPLICATION:**

What will you do beginning today to demonstrate the practicality of your faith through works of faith especially in the matter of reproducing yourself spiritually by persistently discipling faithfully and making disciples of others?