

JAMES - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
- b. Why did He record it for our study?

“To be permitted to have a view of God is the highest privilege accorded to man. This privilege should be prized above all earthly distinction or honor.” *ST*, June 16, 1898

1. Who was this James? *James* is an English name used to translate the Greek name *‘Iakobos* equivalent to the Hebrew name *Yaaqob* or Jacob; and thus, it was very common among the Jews. Do we read about him elsewhere in the Bible? (See Matthew 12:46-47; 13:55; Mark 3:31-35; 6:3; Luke 8:19-21; John 7:5; Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13,19; 21:18; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9,12; Jude 1.)

This James was apparently the older stepbrother of Jesus. Many believe that he later became a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem. (See notes below.)

James (jamz). [Gr. *Iakobos*, from the Heb. *Ya‘aqob*, Jacob.] At least 4 persons mentioned in the NT bore this name—2 of the Twelve (a son of Zebedee and a son of Alphaeus), a brother of Jesus, and the father of Judas, one of the Twelve. One of the early leaders of the church at Jerusalem was named James, as was also the author of an epistle, though these have generally been identified with either the son of Alphaeus or with the brother of Jesus. Possibly “James the less” (Mk 15:40) may be similarly identified....

3. The Lord’s brother, named first and thus presumably the eldest of Jesus’ brothers (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3), the others being Joses (RSV “Joseph,” Mt 13:55), Simon, and Judas (see Brethren of the Lord). Like “James the less” he had a brother named Joses (Mt 27:56; see James, 5). In Gal 1:19 Paul refers to “James the Lord’s brother” as one of the “apostles” he saw in Jerusalem upon his first visit to the city 3 years after his conversion. Aside from these references, this James is not certainly mentioned elsewhere. However, it is commonly believed that he is to be identified with the prominent leader of the church at Jerusalem mentioned several times in Acts and Galatians (see James, 4). This James is doubtless included elsewhere with the “brethren of the Lord,” as in Jn 7:5 and Acts 1:14. The “brethren” of the Lord appear not to have believed in Jesus as the Messiah during His earthly life and ministry (Mt 12:46, 47; Jn 7:5), but are mentioned among the believers at Pentecost 10 days after the ascension (Acts 1:14). In view of the fact that the “brethren” of the Lord are

mentioned as accompanying Mary, the mother of Jesus (Mt 12:46, 47; Lk 8:19; Jn 2:12), and because they assumed the right to direct His ministry at various times (Mt 12:46, 47; Jn 7:3), it may be assumed that they were his older stepbrothers, the sons of Joseph by a previous marriage.

4. A church leader at Jerusalem. In the book of Acts (chs 12:17; 15:13; 21:18) and in 2 of Paul's epistles (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 2:9, 12) mention is made of a certain James who was a prominent leader in the church at Jerusalem, apparently head of the board of elders. He is mentioned first in this office soon after the death of James, the brother of John, c. A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2, 17). This James is next mentioned as moderator of the Jerusalem Council, c. A.D. 49, at which he summed up the arguments presented and announced the decision (ch 15:13). About A.D. 58 this James still held his pre-eminent position at Jerusalem, when Paul presented a report of his ministry among the Gentiles and delivered the Gentile gift for poor Christians at Jerusalem (Acts 21:17–20). This leader of the church is always mentioned in such a way as to make evident that both Luke and Paul considered him sufficiently well known to require no further introduction to readers. In Gal 1:19 Paul speaks of seeing "James the Lord's brother" upon the occasion of his first postconversion visit to Jerusalem, and a few verses later (ch 2:9, 12) refers to a James as one of 3 "pillars" of the church there, without further identification, thus implying identity. James the leader at Jerusalem seems to have been a conservative Christian Jew who adhered closely to the rites of Judaism himself and who firmly believed that Jewish believers should do likewise (Acts 21:20; Gal 2:12), but who took a liberal view on such matters in so far as Gentile converts were concerned (Acts 15:13, 19). From early times it has been generally believed that James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, was James, the brother of our Lord.

5. **Author of the epistle of James**, who identifies himself simply as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (ch 1:1). Many believe that he was James the Lord's brother, but there is no certain Biblical evidence either to prove or to disprove this. That the author considered it unnecessary to identify himself otherwise implies that he was well known to his intended readers, "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (ch 1:1). Of other NT persons named James, only the son of Alphaeus and the Lord's brother seem to qualify. The weight of evidence may be construed as tending to favor the latter over the former.—Horn, S. H. (1979). *SDA Bible Dictionary*, article *James* p. 529–530. Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Four men—James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas—are mentioned as brothers of Jesus. (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) There has been much

discussion through the centuries as to the exact relationship of these men to Jesus. Three principal views have been advanced:

(1) That they were Jesus's actual brothers, that is, sons of Joseph and Mary (and, therefore, younger than Jesus);

(2) That they were His stepbrothers, that is, children of Joseph by a previous marriage (and thus, all older than Jesus and not His blood relatives at all);

(3) That they were the cousins of Jesus on the mother's side, according to some, or on Joseph's side, according to others. Those who hold the **first view** argue that this is the most natural way to understand the various references to those brethren; also, that this is the most obvious intent of Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7. Those who hold the **second view** argue that Oriental family ethics would not permit younger brothers to taunt or otherwise meddle with an older brother as Jesus's brothers taunted Him. (See Mark 3:31; John 7:3,4; *DA* 86,87,90,321.) They point out further that the fact that Jesus left His mother in the care of the apostle John (John 19:26-27) rather than with one of His brothers strongly implies that Mary had no other children. **The view that these brethren were the cousins of Jesus** on Joseph's side is based on pure conjecture. That they were **cousins on Mary's side** is based on the uncertain identity of "Mary the wife of Cleophas" with the sister of Mary, (John 19:25: cf. Mark 15:40) and on the unproved identity of "Clopas" (John 19:25, *RSV*) with Alphaeus. (Mark 3:18) See *SDA Commentary* 5:399,400.

Jesus' brothers are mentioned as accompanying Jesus and His mother to Capernaum after the marriage at Cana (John 2:12). Later Mary and these brothers are recorded as seeking an audience with Jesus (Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). Toward the end of Jesus' ministry, His brethren are mentioned as urging Jesus to prove His Messiahship, which they themselves doubted (John 7:3-5). That they were later converted is clear, for they are described in Acts as uniting with the disciples and others in "prayer and supplication" prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:13,14). Paul implies that they were all married (1 Corinthians 9:5). Many commentators hold that the author of the epistle of Jude, who identifies himself as the "brother of James," was one of these brothers (Jude 1). It is also generally believed that the leader of the church at Jerusalem was James, the Lord's brother (see Acts 12:17; 15:13). This seems to be confirmed by Paul's reference to his visit to Jerusalem, in which he states that he saw only Peter, and "James the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:18,19; cf. 2:9). **According to Josephus, James, the Lord's brother, was stoned to death (*Ant. xx. 9. 1*). *SDA Bible Dictionary* article, *Brethren of the Lord*. [Bold type is added; brackets are in original.]**

2. Who wrote the book of James? How was it accepted by early Christians?

James has one of **the weakest external testimonies**, being only *alluded* to, not quoted, by the earliest church fathers. It is also not in the *Muratorian Canon*. This is probably because it was from Jerusalem, addressed to Eastern Jews and *seemed* to many people to contradict Paul on justification by faith.

However, James is quoted by Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, and Jerome. Eusebius tells us that James was among books spoken against (*antilegomena*) by some Christians, but he himself quoted it as Holy Scripture.

The internal evidence for James is quite strong. It harmonizes with what we know of James' style from Acts and Galatians, and also with the history of the Dispersion known from other sources. There is no reason to forge such a book; it contains no major doctrinal additions (as a heretical second century forgery invariably does). **Josephus tells us that James had a very good reputation for devotion to the law among Jews, but was martyred for witnessing for his Messiah when this was forbidden. This Jewish historian says that James was stoned by order of the high priest Ananias. Eusebius tells us James was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and finally clubbed to death. Hegesippus combines both these traditions.**

The argument that the Greek style of the Epistle of James is "too good" for a Palestinian Jew shows an unbecoming ignorance of the amazing intellectual talents of the chosen people. *Believer's Bible Commentary* [Bold type is added.]

Some think that James was one of the first books of the New Testament to be written.

Josephus says James was stoned to death under Ananus II [also called Ananias] in AD 62, (*Antiquities* 20, 9, 1,201-203) so the Letter must predate that. **Since the Epistle says nothing of the decisions on the law made at the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 48 or 49) over which meeting James presided (Acts 15), a date between A.D. 45 and 48 is widely accepted.** *Believer's Bible Commentary*. [Bold type is added; ??brackets are in original.]

There is an extensive discussion of the authorship and dating of the book of James by the early church leaders in *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures-The Epistle of James*, by Gary H. Everett. It strongly supports the idea that James the half brother of Jesus was the author.

It is more than a little disturbing to note that this Christian church leader addressed his book, probably written fairly early in the history of the Christian church, only to the Jewish Christians. Several reasons have been suggested for this:

1) The book was written in the very early days of Christianity before there were many Gentile Christians. 2) It was addressed to Jewish Christians because James felt that they needed this instruction more than others! 3) James felt that his particular responsibilities were to the Jewish Christians, while others, like Paul, addressed themselves to the Gentile Christians.

The fact that this letter was addressed to “the twelve tribes scattered abroad” makes it clear that it was not addressed just to Jews in Palestine.

The “catholic” epistles have nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church but rather, are epistles written to the “general” church instead of to an individual or a single church. The word *catholic* means “general.”

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When Christian believers gather in churches, everything that can go wrong sooner or later does. Outsiders, on observing this, conclude that there is nothing to the religion business except, perhaps, business—and dishonest business at that. Insiders see it differently. Just as a hospital collects the sick under one roof and labels them as such, the church collects sinners. Many of the people outside the hospital are every bit as sick as the ones inside, but their illnesses are either undiagnosed or disguised. It’s similar with sinners outside the church.

So Christian churches are not, as a rule, model communities of good behavior. They are, rather, places where human misbehavior is brought out in the open, faced, and dealt with.

The letter of James shows one of the church’s early pastors skillfully going about his work of confronting, diagnosing, and dealing with areas of misbelief and misbehavior that had turned up in congregations committed to his care. Deep and living wisdom is on display here, wisdom both rare and essential. **Wisdom is not primarily knowing the truth, although it certainly includes that; it is skill in living.** For, what good is a truth if we don’t know how to live it? What good is an intention if we can’t sustain it?

According to church traditions, James carried the nickname “Old Camel Knees” because of thick calluses built up on his knees from many years of determined prayer. The prayer is foundational to the wisdom. Prayer is always foundational to wisdom. (*The Message* - Introduction to James)
[Bold type is added.]

3. **Did James contradict Paul as Luther seemed to suggest? What do you think is the main message of James? Does the book of James tell us anything unique about God?** Does it add anything not found elsewhere? What picture of God would you have if you had only James? James belongs to a part of the New Testament sometimes called the “catholic epistles.” What does that mean?

In a word St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. **Therefore St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw**, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it. But more of this in the other prefaces.—Translation of Luther's *Preface to the New Testament*. 1546 ed. (Originally, 1522) [Bold type is added.]

Contrary to what Martin Luther suggested, there are some clear agreements between the writings of James and the writings of Paul. (Compare James 1:22-25; Romans 1:5; 2:13; see appendix.) **While Paul's main emphasis was faith, and James's main emphasis seemed to be action, both regarded faith and action as essential in the Christian life.** Paul constantly talked about the importance of trusting God and the very fundamental necessity of understanding and knowing Him for faith to take place. The book of James recognizes that faith is essential, but goes on to suggest that anyone who has faith will also act on that faith; and if no action is apparent, it is most likely because the faith relationship is not there.

James seemed to tell us that Christians must learn to live together in their community. He recognized some of the main problems facing such communities: prejudice, greed, gossip, lack of hospitality, etc. James was probably writing to a very young church which was still almost exclusively Jewish.

James pointed out a very important point which we should have learned from the Old Testament experience: Although God is sovereign, He cannot accomplish what He wants most by the use of power. The devils recognize His power, and it scares them! (See James 2:19.) James also pointed out more clearly than do others that sins of omission are just as serious as sins of commission. (James 4:17)

Though written as a letter, the book of James is more like a short book of instructions for daily living. For James faith means action! In fact, the entire book is a series of examples that show faith in action in wise and practical ways.

His advice was clear and to the point: If you are poor, don't despair! Don't give up when your faith is being tested. Don't get angry quickly. Don't favor the rich over the poor. Do good things for others. Control your tongue and desires. Surrender to God and rely on his wisdom. Resist the devil. Don't brag about what you are going to do. If you are rich, use your money to help the poor. Be patient and kind, and pray for those who need God's help. *Contemporary English Version*

The writer uses many vivid figures of speech to present instructions regarding practical wisdom and guidance for Christian attitudes and

conduct. From the Christian perspective he deals with a variety of topics such as riches and poverty, temptation, good conduct, prejudice, faith and actions, the use of the tongue, wisdom, quarreling, pride and humility, judging others, boasting, patience, and prayer. **The letter emphasizes the importance of actions along with faith, in the practice of the Christian religion.** (GNB)

The letter is so markedly Jewish in character that some scholars have regarded it as a Jewish document subsequently “baptized” by a few Christian insertions, but such an origin is scarcely tenable in view of the numerous contacts discernible between the Letter of James and other New Testament literature. **From the viewpoint of its literary form, James is a letter only in the most conventional sense; it has none of the characteristic features of a real letter except the address. It belongs rather to the genre of parenthesis or exhortation and is concerned almost exclusively with ethical conduct. It therefore falls within the tradition of Jewish wisdom literature, such as can be found in the Old Testament (Proverbs, Sirach) and in the extra-canonical Jewish literature (Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Books of Enoch, the Manual of Discipline found at Qumran). More specifically, it consists of sequences of didactic proverbs, comparable to Tobit 4:5-19, to many passages in Sirach, and to sequences of sayings in the synoptic gospels.** Numerous passages in James treat of subjects that also appear in the synoptic sayings of Jesus, especially in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, but the correspondences are too general to establish any literary dependence. **James represents a type of early Christianity that emphasized sound teaching and responsible moral behavior. Ethical norms are derived not primarily from christology, as in Paul, but from a concept of salvation that involves conversion, baptism, forgiveness of sin, and expectation of judgment** (James 1:17; 4:12). (NAB) [Bold type is added.]

The epistle of James is almost like a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. James used many illustrations from nature, similar to ones that Jesus used. **The basic theme of the book of James is “faith that works.”** Compare Matthew 25:31-46; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 1:10-20.

4. **How do you think God gives wisdom? (James 1:5)** Have you received any from Him? Can you think of anyone who received a lot of wisdom and made terrible use of it? (1 Kings 3:1-15; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12)

Someone has said that knowledge is the ability to take things apart, while wisdom is the ability to put them together. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. All of us know people who are educated fools: they have brilliant academic records, but they cannot make the simplest decisions in

life.—Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 340). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

God teaches by illustration and experience. However, most of us seem to be slow learners. Constantly, the Devil is doing his best to get us to go back into our old ways of sin. But, even when God miraculously seems to give someone wisdom, it does not keep him from making a fool of himself! Look at the life of Solomon.

5. **Who or what does the book of James suggest is the main source of our temptations? (James 1:13-15)** How does this relate to the work of the Devil? What is the final result (or consequence) of this sin that seems to come forth from within us? (James 1:15; Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23)

This is a very important passage in the book of James. It does not seem to have a direct parallel in any other part of Scripture. (Compare Romans 7.) But, for those who have struggled with the challenges of living the Christian life, the truth of this passage must be self-evident.

If we most often sin of our own accord, following our bad habits, does it mean that much of the time the Devil and his angels can take a vacation? **What events in the life of a Christian get the Devil really excited? Wouldn't it be when a Christian seems to be making some real headway in understanding God, the great controversy, and what the issues were back in the beginning when he rebelled in heaven?** Satan realizes, much better than we seem to, that this is a life and death matter for him. If a group of people who clearly understand the issues in the great controversy should actually form and begin to tell the world about them, Satan is in trouble. What are we waiting for?

6. **Does the book of James contradict Luther's theme that we are saved by "faith alone"?** (Compare James 1:22; Romans 2:13.) **Did Paul ever suggest that the faith he spoke of would not be expressed in appropriate actions?**

Romans 2:13: For it is not by hearing the Law that people are put right with God, but by doing what the Law commands. (*GNB*)

James 1:22: Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice. (*GNB*)

Almost immediately, it should be clear that there is no real contradiction between these two passages. The difference in the writings of Paul and James is simply a matter of emphasis. Paul (and Martin Luther) were focused on bringing new believers into the faith. They wanted to emphasize the essential and foundational role of faith in one's understanding of the gospel. By contrast, James was dealing with church members who had been Jews, and who probably had grown up "believing" in many of the essentials of the gospel. To such members, James wanted to say: "If you profess to have real faith, it will be shown by your actions."

Paul was an evangelist and a church planter who worked in very difficult pagan cities to establish new congregations. James was a church “administrator” who was dealing with many other Christians who surrounded him in his work and needed sound advice regarding Christian living. We need to listen to both of them and take their advice, in context, when appropriate.

7. **What is the ultimate purpose of the law? Did James regard the law as something that keeps us in bondage? What do you think he meant by “the perfect law that sets people free”? (James 1:25, GNB) How does this relate to “the truth that sets us free”? (John 8:32) How could a law (apparently the Ten Commandments—James 2:11) set us free? (James 2:12) Would keeping “the perfect law that sets people free” make one safe to have in heaven?**

We can never be saved in indolence and inactivity. There is no such thing as a truly converted person living a helpless, useless life. It is not possible for us to drift into heaven. No sluggard can enter there. If we do not strive to gain an entrance into the kingdom, if we do not seek earnestly to learn what constitutes its laws, we are not fitted for a part in it. **Those who refuse to co-operate with God on earth would not co-operate with Him in heaven. It would not be safe to take them to heaven.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 280.2. [Bold type is added.]

8. **Would a person who truly loves, ever intentionally break any of the Ten Commandments? How could the angels have been surprised to discover that there was a law? (MB 109; Maranatha 79)**

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. **When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8.—Ellen G. White, *Mount of Blessing* 109.2.

God, in his wisdom and mercy, tests men and women here, to see if they will obey his voice and respect his law, or rebel as Satan did. If they choose the side of Satan, putting his way above God's, **it would not be safe to admit them into heaven;** for they would cause another revolt against the government of God in the heavenly courts. He who fulfills the law in every respect, demonstrates that perfect obedience is possible.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1891 par. 13.

God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character. **This infinite standard is**

presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. **Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven.** Clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, they have a place at the King's feast. They have a right to join the blood-washed throng.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 315; *God's Amazing Grace* 148 (1900). [Bold type is added.]

See also the appendix.

Clearly, God's infinite standard describes those who do what is right because it is right. God's laws are not arbitrary! **Consider the Ten Commandments and ask yourself: If it was your responsibility to establish the rules for a completely new society, which one of these ten could you ignore without causing any problem?**

9. Would you agree with James's definition of *pure and genuine religion*? (James 1:27, *GNB*) Doesn't this seem a lot like works? How would you compare Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5:21-24; 1 Corinthians 13:3?

The word translated religion is *thrēskeia*, and its meaning is not so much *religion* as *worship* in the sense of the outward expression of religion in ritual and liturgy and ceremony. What James is saying is, "The finest ritual and the finest liturgy you can offer to God is service of the poor and personal purity." To him real worship did not lie in elaborate vestments or in magnificent music or in a carefully wrought service; it lay in the practical service of mankind and in the purity of one's own personal life. It is perfectly possible for a Church to be so taken up with the beauty of its buildings and the splendor of its liturgy that it has neither the time nor the money for practical Christian service; and that is what James is condemning.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (p. 61). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. (*Daily Study Bible*, article on James 1:27) [Italics are in the original.]

In placing among them the helpless and the poor, to be dependent upon their care, Christ tests His professed followers. By our love and service for His needy children we prove the genuineness of our love for Him. To neglect them is to declare ourselves false disciples, strangers to Christ and His love.—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* 205.2. [Bold type is added.]

10. Does James 2:10 seem fair to you? How could this verse be true? Could telling a "white lie" make you as guilty as a murderer?

James goes on to lay down a great principle about the law of God. To break any part of it is to become a transgressor. The Jew was very apt to

regard the law as a series of detached injunctions. To keep one was to gain credit; to break one was to incur debt. A man could add up the ones he kept and subtract the ones he broke and so emerge with a credit or a debit balance. There was a Rabbinic saying, "Whoever fulfills only one law, good is appointed to him; his days are prolonged and he will inherit the land." Again many of the Rabbis held that "the Sabbath weighs against all precepts," and to keep it was to keep the law....

But as James saw it, the *whole* law was the will of God; to break any part of it was to infringe that will and therefore to be guilty of sin. That is perfectly true. To break any part of the law is to become a transgressor in principle. Even under human justice a man becomes a criminal when he has broken one law. So James argues: "No matter how good you may be in other directions, if you treat people with respect of persons, you have acted against the will of God and you are a transgressor."

There is a great truth here which is both relevant and practical. We may put it much more simply. A man may be in nearly all respects a good man; and yet he may spoil himself by one fault. He may be moral in his action, pure in his speech, meticulous in his devotion. But he may be hard and self-righteous; rigid and unsympathetic; and, if so, his goodness is spoiled by the infecting fault.

We do well to remember that, though we may claim to have done many a good thing and to have resisted many an evil thing, there may be something in us by which everything is spoiled—and all the goodness goes for nothing. (*Daily Study Bible*, article on James 2:8-12) [Italics are in original source.]

It is not the greatness of the act of disobedience that constitutes sin, but the fact of variance from God's expressed will in the least particular; for this shows that there is yet communion between the soul and sin. The heart is divided in its service. There is a virtual denial of God, a rebellion against the laws of His government.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* 51.3.

11. How would you describe the difference between the faith of a true Christian and the faith of a "demon"? (James 2:19) Or, should we say that the demons do not have "faith," they only "believe"? What does faith do for the demons? What would you like your faith to do for you? Could you write out a clear definition of *faith* that would distinguish between your faith and the faith of a demon?

Satan seemed to assume a religious character and was very willing that the people should think they were Christians. He was even anxious that they should believe in Jesus, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Satan and his angels fully believe all this themselves, and tremble. But if this faith does not provoke to good works, and lead

those who profess it to imitate the self-denying life of Christ, Satan is not disturbed; for they merely assume the Christian name, while their hearts are still carnal, and he can use them in his service even better than if they made no profession.—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* 227.2.

Many concede that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, but at the same [390] time they hold themselves away from Him, and fail to repent of their sins, fail to accept of Jesus as their personal Saviour. **Their faith is simply the assent of the mind and judgment to the truth; but the truth is not brought into the heart, that it might sanctify the soul and transform the character.**—Ellen G. White, *1 Selected Messages* 389.2. [Bold type is added.]

A biblical definition of *faith* based on all of Scripture and stated many times so well by one of God's best modern friends, Dr. A. Graham Maxwell, is as follows:

Faith is [just] a word we use to denote a relationship with God as with a Person well known. The better we know Him, the better this relationship may be.

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deep admiration. It means having enough confidence in Him, based upon the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe whatever He says [as soon as we are sure that He has said it], to accept whatever He offers [as soon as we are sure that He is the one who is offering it], and to do whatever He wishes [as soon as we are sure He is the one who wishes it]—without reservation—for the rest of eternity.

Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven. [Faith also means that like Abraham and Moses, God's friends, we know God well enough to reverently ask Him, "Why?"]—A. Graham Maxwell, *You Can Trust the Bible*, p. 81. [Content in brackets is added based on Dr. Maxwell's lectures.]

The faith that is unto salvation is not a casual faith, it is not the mere consent of the intellect, it is belief rooted in the heart, that embraces Christ as a personal Saviour, assured that He can save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. To believe that He will save others, but will not save you is not genuine faith; but when the soul lays hold upon Christ as the only hope of salvation, then genuine faith is manifested. **This faith leads its possessor to place all the affections of the soul upon Christ; his understanding is under the control of the Holy Spirit, and his character is molded after the divine likeness. His faith is not a dead faith, but a faith that works by love, and [392] leads him to behold the beauty of Christ, and to become assimilated to the divine character.**

[Deuteronomy 30:6,11-14 quoted.]—Ellen G. White, *1 Selected Messages* 391.3. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

12. When James started talking about *the tongue* in James 3, do you think he had changed his subject? What does the tongue have to do with keeping the commandments? (See also Romans 1:29.) As an early church leader, do you think James ever had to deal with the problem of gossip?

In the New Testament itself we get glimpses of teachers who failed in their responsibility and became false teachers. There were teachers who tried to turn Christianity into another kind of Judaism and tried to introduce circumcision and the keeping of the law (Acts 15:24). There were teachers who lived out nothing of the truth which they taught, whose life was a contradiction of their instruction and who did nothing but bring dishonour on the faith they represented (Romans 2:17-29). There were some who tried to teach before they themselves knew anything (1 Timothy 1:6,7); and others who pandered to the false desires of the crowd (2 Timothy 4:3).

But, apart altogether from the false teachers, it is James's conviction that teaching is a dangerous occupation for any man. His instrument is speech and his agent the tongue. As Ropes puts it, James is concerned to point out "the responsibility of teachers and the dangerous character of the instrument they have to use."

The Christian teacher entered into a perilous heritage. In the Church he took the place of the Rabbi in Judaism. There were many great and saintly Rabbis, but the Rabbi was treated in a way that was liable to ruin the character of any man. His very name means, "My great one." Everywhere he went he was treated with the utmost respect. It was actually held that a man's duty to his Rabbi exceeded his duty to his parents, because his parents only brought him into the life of this world but his teacher brought him into the life of the world to come. It was actually said that if a man's parents and a man's teacher were captured by an enemy, the Rabbi must be ransomed first. It was true that a Rabbi was not allowed to take money for teaching and that he was supposed to support his bodily needs by working at a trade; but it was also held that it was a specially pious and meritorious work to take a Rabbi into the household and to support him with every care. It was desperately easy for a Rabbi to become the kind of person whom Jesus depicted, a spiritual tyrant, an ostentatious ornament of piety, a lover of the highest place at any function, a person who gloried in the almost subservient respect showed to him in public (Matthew 23:4-7). Every teacher runs the risk of becoming "Sir Oracle." No profession is more liable to beget spiritual and intellectual pride. (*Daily Study Bible*, article on James 3:1)

It might be argued against James's terror of the tongue that it is a very small part of the body to make such a fuss about and to which to attach so much importance. To combat that argument James uses two pictures.

(i) We put a bit into the mouth of a horse, knowing that if we can control its mouth, we can control its whole body. So James says that if we can control the tongue, we can control the whole body; but if the tongue is uncontrolled, the whole life is set on the wrong way.

(ii) A rudder is very small in comparison with the size of a ship; and yet, by exerting pressure on that little rudder, the steersman can alter the course of the ship and direct it to safety. Long before, Aristotle had used this same picture when he was talking about the science of mechanics: "A rudder is small and it is attached to the very end of the ship, but it has such power that by this little rudder, and by the power of one man—and that a power gently exerted—the great bulk of ships can be moved." The tongue also is small, yet it can direct the whole course of a man's life.

Philo called the mind the charioteer and steersman of man's life; it is when the mind controls every word and it itself is controlled by Christ that life is safe.

James is not for a moment saying that silence is better than speech. He is not pleading for a Trappist life where speech is forbidden. He is pleading for the control of the tongue. Aristippus the Greek had a wise saying, "The conqueror of pleasure is not the man who never uses it. He is the man who uses pleasure as a rider guides a horse or a steersman directs a ship, and so directs them wherever he wishes." Abstention from anything is never a complete substitute for control in its use. James is not pleading for a cowardly silence but for a wise use of speech. (*Daily Study Bible*, article on James 3:2)

It should be clear from these notes that the tongue has a very powerful influence not only on ourselves but also on those with whom we come in contact. James understood what a danger an unbridled tongue could have in a congregation. As the first "general conference leader," he wanted to make it clear that church members needed to be careful not to undo the work of the Holy Spirit by tearing churches apart by the ill use of their tongues.

13. How do you fit the definition of *sin* as recorded in James 4:17 with the definition of *sin* as recorded in 1 John 3:4 and Romans 14:23? Are these definitions in contradiction? Is a sin of omission just as serious as a sin of commission? What does sin do to us? (Isaiah 59:2)

James 4:17 (GNB): So then, those who do not do the good they know they should do are guilty of sin.

1 John 3:4 (*GNB*): Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law, because sin is a breaking of the law.

(*RSV*) Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

Romans 14:23 (*GNB*): But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; **for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.**

Isaiah 59:2 (*GNB*): It is because of your sins that he doesn't hear you. **It is your sins that separate you from God when you try to worship him.** [Bold type is added.]

Theologians talk of sins of *commission* and sins of *omission*. It is a sin to do something that you should not; but, it is also a sin to leave undone something that you should do. James as usual was emphasizing the action part of the Christian life. As a Christian pastor, he was doing his best to motivate his church members.

14. Why did James seem to have so much to say about being rich and the behavior of the rich? (James 1:9-11; 2:1-7; 5:1-6)

Some modern sage has said: "Money isn't everything, but it is way ahead of whatever is in second place!"

By contrast, the Bible states clearly:

1 Timothy 6:10 (*GNB*): ¹⁰For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil. Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.

(*RSV*) ¹⁰For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.

James spelled out some of the reasons why money and riches are such a problem. Those who have it think that money gives them some kind of superior authority, while those who want it are consumed with covetousness. James pointed out that it is often the rich who are oppressing the poor; a practice that is forbidden in Scripture.

15. What was James trying to tell us about prayer for the sick? (James 5:13-18) How many people are healed by prayer and anointing?

It is through the prayer of believers that divine aid and blessing are invoked. Oil was widely believed to have a medicinal value in biblical times (cf. Is. 1:6; Luke 10:34) and is here used in this sense. The text is stating that the prayer of faith will heal and that medical means are to be used. God does occasionally, however, directly heal those who are ill. The believer has a right to ask for healing from the Lord, who revealed Himself to His people in Ex. 15:26 as Yahweh-Ropheka (Heb., "For I am the LORD who heals you"). God heals and often employs means in the process (cf. Is. 38:21; Mark 6:12, 13; 1 Tim. 5:23).—Criswell, W. A., Patterson, P., Clendenen, E. R., Akin, D. L., Chamberlin, M., Patterson, D. K., & Pogue,

J. (Eds.). (1991). *Believer's Study Bible* (electronic ed., Jas 5:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The Lord always promises healing to the faithful. But, He does not necessarily promise healing at the time and in the manner we suggest. God heals in the way and at the time that He sees is best in the overall context of the great controversy.

We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His [306] purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will. These experiences that test faith are for our benefit. By them it is made manifest whether our faith is true and sincere, resting on the word of God alone, or whether depending on circumstances, it is uncertain and changeable. Faith is strengthened by exercise. We must let patience have its perfect work, remembering that there are precious promises in the Scriptures for those who wait upon the Lord.—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* 230.4 (1905); *Gospel Workers* 219.1,2; *CCh* 305.5.

The early church most certainly did not attach any sacramental efficacy to the ceremony of anointing, though the church later used supposedly “holy oil” as a substitute for pagan magic, in an attempt to heal the sick. By the 8th century this passage of Scripture had come to be used in support of the practice of what Catholics today call extreme unction, or the last rites of the church for the dying. The Council of Trent in its fourteenth session, 1551, officially declared that James here teaches the sacramental efficacy of the oil. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, article on James 5:14.

It is the divine plan that we shall work as the disciples worked. Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* 141; *Christian Service* 133.6.

The Lord Jesus is our example. He came to the world as the servant of mankind. He went from city to city, from village to village, teaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing the sick. **Christ spent more time in healing than in teaching.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, September 10, 1908, par. 4.

During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* 19; *Christian Service* 132.1.

Not without one more call to repentance could He give them up. Toward the close of His ministry in Galilee, He again visited the home of His childhood. Since His rejection there, the fame of His preaching and His miracles had filled the land. None now could deny that He possessed more than human power. The people of Nazareth knew that He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. **About them were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house; for He had passed through them, and healed all their sick.** The mercy revealed in every act of His life testified to His divine anointing.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 241.1. [Bold type is added.]

Those who need healing feel a special need. They are usually ready to accept help. Jesus met their needs and, thus, won many to His cause. But, healing is never to be separated from teaching the gospel.

16. What is the relationship among faith, works, and becoming the kind of people who are safe to admit to the heavenly kingdom?

See appendix below. If faith is the only requirement for salvation, (Acts 16:31) then what is the role of works? It should be clear from reading the book of James that faith by itself is worthless. All true faith exhibits its true nature by actions, sometimes called works. The disciples certainly did not sit around exercising their faith. There is far too much gospel missionary work to be done for any true believer to sit back and do nothing.

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Appendix

Ellen White Comments

How would you compare these three statements from Ellen White?

None need to make a mistake in regard to the character required to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King; for God wrote these ten holy rules on tables of stone and kept them in the ark made for them, called the ark of God's testimony.—Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, Aug 18, 1886, par. 3; *SD* 370.

In the gift of God's dear Son, a definite view of His character has been given to the race that is never absent from His mind. His very heart is laid open in the royal law. **That infinite standard is presented to all, that there may be no mistake in regard to that kind of people God would have compose His kingdom. It is only those who are obedient to all His commandments who will become members of the royal family,**

children of the heavenly King.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, November 17, 1898, par. 8; compare *Christ's Object Lessons* 315.1; *God's Amazing Grace* 148.4.

There is no excuse for sin, or for indolence. Jesus has led the way, and he wishes us to follow in his steps. He has suffered, he has sacrificed as none of us can, that he might bring salvation within our reach. We need not be discouraged. Jesus came to our world to bring divine power to man, that through his grace, we might be transformed into his likeness. **When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit.** But he will not accept those who claim to have faith in him, and yet are disloyal to his father's commandment. **We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works.** Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easy-going, accommodating, crossless religion. But Jesus says, "if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross , and follow me."—Ellen G. White, Morning Talk given at Basel, Switzerland, September 17, 1885; *The Signs of the Times* June 16, 1890 par 6; *1SM* 382; *Faith and Works* 49.4; *Notebook Leaflets* 38.1; *TMK* 229.4. [Bold type is added.]