

# James, Introduction (part two)

## General Structure and Outline of the Book of James:

- Establishing the theme, format and outline is challenging
- Two opposing suggestions:
  - A collection of unrelated ideas and exhortations
    - Similar to Jewish wisdom literature such as Proverbs
    - Various sections of loosely connected thoughts were for varying audiences.
  - Rhetorical themes with logical movements in a structured composition
    - This recognizes sections or units within the book of James that are recognizable and can stand alone. These sections might be:
      - 2:1-13
      - 2:14-26
      - 3:1-12 (or, 3:1-4:12)
      - 4:13-5:6
- A solid view of the style and structure of James could be described as:
  - A Jewish-Christian writing
  - An influence from Hellenistic rhetoric
  - Arranged as a topic-to-topic Jewish wisdom text
- Some suggested outlines by commentators and scholars:
  - **Outline One:**
    - 1:2-27 – Statements of joy and blessing
      - 1:9-11
      - 1:12-18 – Joy
      - 1:19-21 – Prayer
      - 1:22-25 – Reversal of roles
      - 1:26-27
    - 2:1-26 – Faith and partiality
    - 3:1-5:6 – Strife from words, wisdom and position
      - 3:1-12 – Bad and good words
      - 3:13-18 – Two kinds of wisdom
      - 4:1-12 – Conflict
      - 4:13-5:6 – Arrogance and injustice
    - 5:7-20 – Final exhortations and recalling earlier sections
  - **Outline Two:**
    - 1:1 – Introduction
    - 1:2-27 – Opening statement
      - 1:2-11 – First segment
      - 1:12-27 – Second segment
    - 2:1-26 – Excellence of poverty and generosity
      - 2:1-13 – No partiality is allowable
      - 2:14-26 – Generosity is necessary
    - 3:1-4:12 – Demand for pure speech
      - 3:1-12 – Pure speech has no anger

- 3:13-18 – Pure speech comes from wisdom
    - 4:1-12 – Pure prayer is without anger and in trust
  - 4:13-5:6 – Testing through wealth
  - 5:7-20 – Closing statement
- **Outline Three:**
  - 1:1 – Address and greeting
  - 1:2-19 – Enduring trials
  - 1:19-3:18 – Applying the Word
    - 1:19-27 – Obedience of faith
    - 2:1-13 – Problems in the assembly
    - 2:14-26 – Faith and deeds
    - 3:1-12 – Warning about teachers and tongues
    - 3:13-18 – Two types of wisdom
  - 4:1-5:20 – Witnessing to divine providence
    - 4:1-10 - Community dissatisfaction
    - 4:11-17 – Community problems
    - 5:1-6 – Judgment on rich farmers
    - 5:7-11 – Call to patience
    - 5:12-18 – Community issues
    - 5:19-20 – Final words and brotherly admonitions
- **Outline Four:**
  - 1:1 – Greeting
  - 1:2-27 – Epitome of exhortation
  - 2:1-26 – The deeds of faith
  - 3:1-12 – The power and peril of speech
  - 3:13-4:10 – Call to conversion
  - 4:11-5:6 – Examples of arrogance
  - 5:7-11 – Patience in time of testing
  - 5:12-20 – Speech in the assembly of faith
- **Outline Five**
  - 1:1 – Address and greeting
  - 1:2-18 – Pursuit of spiritual wholeness through trials
  - 1:19-2:26 – Evidence of spiritual wholeness in obedience
  - 3:1-4:32 – The community dimension of spiritual wholeness
    - Speech
    - Peace
  - 4:4-10 – Summons to spiritual wholeness
  - 4:11-12 - The community dimension of spiritual wholeness
    - Speech
    - Peace
  - 4:13-5:11 – Worldview of spiritual wholeness
    - Time
    - Eternity
  - 5:12-20 – Concluding exhortations
- **Outline Six**

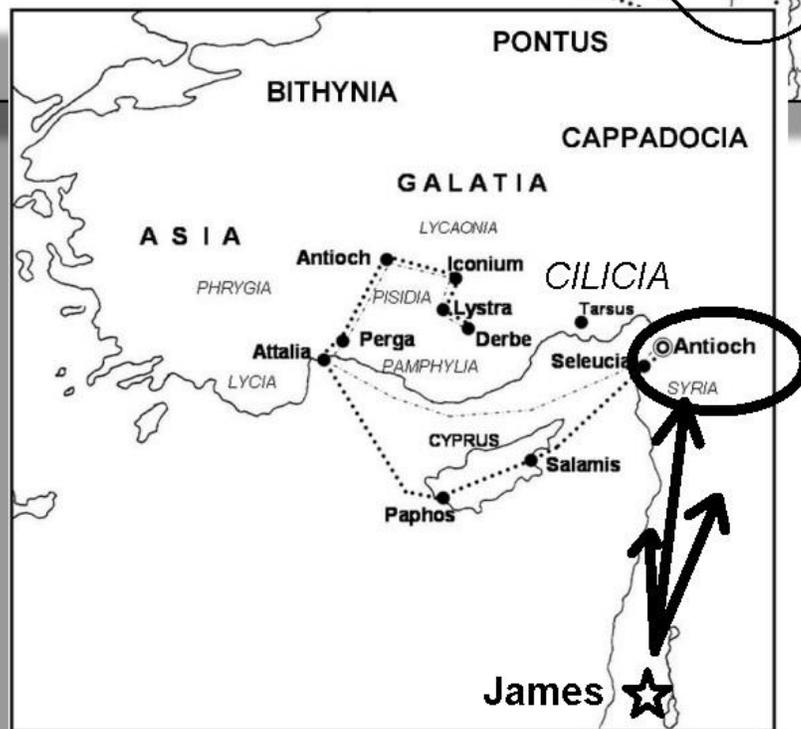
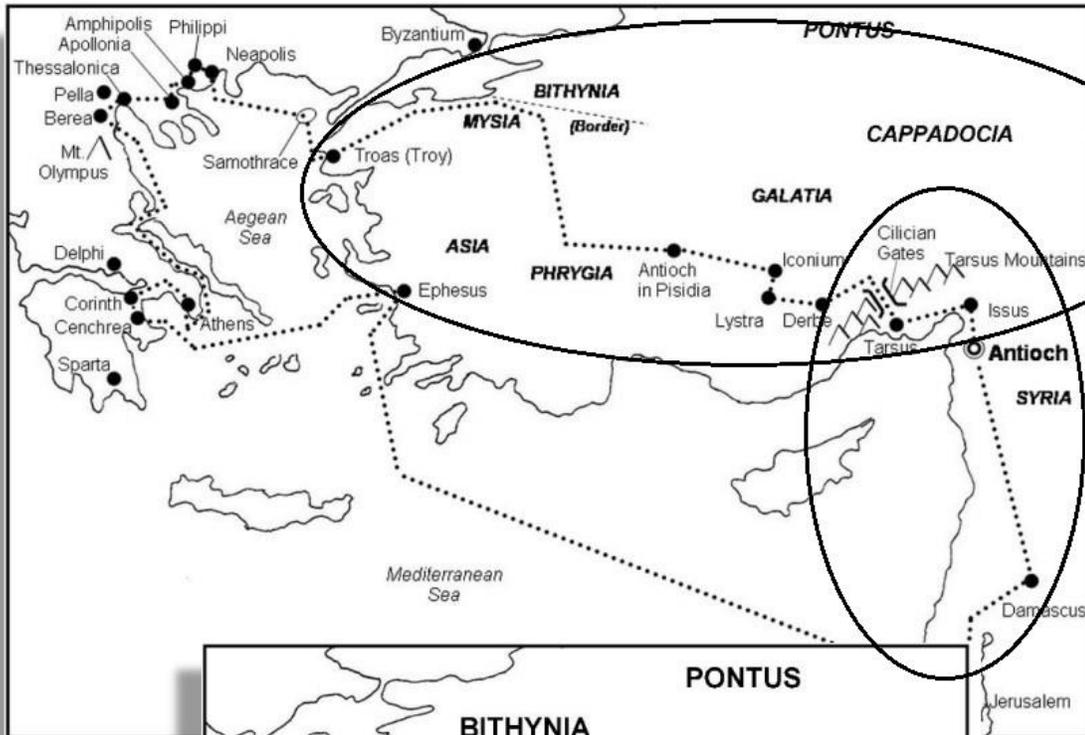
- 1:1 – Prescript
- 1:2-18 - Prologue
  - 1:2-4 – Christian existence in testing
  - 1:5-11 - Testing
  - 1:12 - Blessing
  - 1:13-18- God and testing
- 1:19-5:6 – Body of letter
  - 1:19-27 – Hearing, speaking, anger
  - 2:1-13 – Partiality and Christian faith
  - 2:14-26 – Faith without works; Faith with works
  - 3:1-12 – Power of the tongue
  - 3:13-18 – True wisdom
  - 4:1-12 – Enmity and its origins
  - 4:13-5:6 – Deceitful autonomy of the rich
- 5:7-20 - Epilogue
- **Outline Seven**
  - 1:1 – Prescript
  - 1:2-15 – The correct inner orientation
  - 1:16-27 – Association with the Word of God
  - 2:1-26 – Faith, Love, Deeds
  - 3:1-12 – Responsible leadership in the assembly with the Word
  - 3:13-5:6 – Relationship to the world
    - 3:13-4:3 – Wisdom, strife and their origin
    - 4:4-12 – Friendship with God; Friendship with the world
    - 4:13-5:6 – Particular dangers
  - 5:7-20 – Patience, prayer and issues in the assembly
- **Outline Eight**
  - 1:1 - Prescript
  - 1:2-27 – Prologue
    - 1:2-18 – Themes associate4d with the *shema*
    - 1:19-27 – Obedience to the law of liberty for true piety
  - 2:1-5:6 – Main body
    - 2:1-26 – Testing of genuine faith
    - 3:1-4:10 – Manifestation of wisdom from above
    - 4:11-5:11 – Eschatological judgment of God
  - 5:12-20 – Epilogue
- **Outline Nine**
  - 1:1 – Greeting
  - 1:2-18 – The Testing of Faith
    - 1:2-4 – Joy in trials
    - 1:5-8 – Wisdom from God for trials
    - 1:9-11 – Place of rich and poor before God
    - 1:12 – Reward for those who endure
    - 1:13-18 – Process of temptation
  - 1:19-27 – Hearing and Doing the Word

- 1:19-21 – Hearers of the Word
    - 1:22-25 – Doers of the Word
    - 1:26-27 – True and practical religion
  - 2:1-13 – Sin of Partiality
    - 2:1-7 – Preferring the wealthy over the poor in the assembly
    - 2:8-11 – Royal Law of Love
    - 2:12-13 – Acting in light of judgment
  - 2:14-26 – Faith without Words is Dead
    - 2:14-17 – Faith without works
    - 2:18-20 – Response of a critic
    - 2:21-26 – Examples of Faith by works:
      - Abraham
      - Rahab
  - 3:1-4:12 – Sin of Dissension in the Assembly
    - 3:1-12 – Taming the tongue
    - 3:13-18 – The solution: Wisdom from Above
    - 4:1-12 – Warning against worldliness
  - 4:13-5:12 – Sins of the Wealthy
    - 4:13-17 – Boasting about tomorrow
    - 5:1-6 – Warning to the rich
    - 5:7-12 – Patience in Suffering
  - 5:13-18 – Prayer of Faith
  - 5:19-20 – Concluding Admonitions
- **Outline Ten**
    - 1:1 – Salutation (Introduction)
    - 1:2-18 – The Believer and trials
    - 1:19-27 – General exhortations
    - 2:1-13 – The Believer and Partiality
    - 2:14-26 – The Believer and Works
    - 3:1-4:12 – General exhortations for teachers
      - 3:1-12 – Teachers and the tongue
      - 3:13-18 – Teachers and Wisdom
      - 4:1-10 -Teachers and dissensions
      - 4:11-12 – Teachers, the assembly and the tongue
    - 4:13-5:11 – The Assembly of Believers in Messiah and the wealthy
      - 4:13-17
      - – Sin of presumption
      - 5:1-6 – Sin of oppression
      - 5:7-11 – Response to the wealthy
    - 5:12-20 – Concluding exhortations

**Date of writing:** 43-45 AD (before 48 AD)

**Recipients:** Most likely Jewish Christians north of Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee in Gentile nations of Syria (Damascus, Antioch) and Phoenicia, and further north into the lands of Galatia (where Paul traveled) and Peter wrote to in 1 Peter:

- Acts 15:23 – (The letter James and the Jerusalem Council sent in 48 AD was sent to Jewish believers in these lands) – “With them they sent the following letter: ‘*The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in **Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:** Greetings.*’ ”
- 1 Peter 1:1 – “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,**...””



## Topics (Repeated Themes) in James:

	<b>James 1</b>	<b>James 2-5</b>
Testing/Temptation	1:2-4, 12-15	5:7-11
Wisdom	1:5	3:13-4:3
Prayer/Faith	1:6-8	5:13-18 (2:14-26)
Rich/Poor	1:9-11	2:1-8; 4:13-17; 5:1-6
God's Giving/New Birth	1:16-18	
Speech	1:19-20, 26	3:1-11; 4:11-12; 5:12
Doing Word	1:21-25	2:8-13, 14-26
Concern for Oppressed	1:27	2:1-8
Avoiding Worldliness	1:27	4:4-10

## Points of Organization of the Content of James

1. Three basic themes:
  - a. Testing
  - b. Wisdom
  - c. Poverty/Wealth
2. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the rest of the book (chapters 2-5).
  - a. Many of the key themes of the letter appear in chapter 1.
3. James does appear to consist of brief, independent exhortations. But, there may be a pattern and a method in the organization of the material.
  - a. Chapter 1:2-27 – overview of topics
  - b. Chapter 2:1-13 – believers are rebuked for providing better treatment to the wealthy
  - c. 2:14-26 – people are saved or justified when they display a faith that works (faith with deeds)
  - d. 3:1-4:12 – rebukes false speech with warnings about quarreling
  - e. 4:13-17 and 5:1-11 – the arrogance and injustice of rich people
    - i. God is jealous and demands a allegiance from his people
    - ii. No room for friendship with the world. This is equal to spiritual adultery in OT
  - f. 5:12 – begins the closing of the letter
4. Loyalty to the Lord:
  - a. 1:21-25 – remain loyal to the Lord by obeying his Word
    - i. Do not deceive yourself concerning your spiritual status (1:22)
  - b. 1:27 – remain loyal by having “pure and faultless” religion
  - c. 3:17 – remain loyal by following the Wisdom that comes from above
    - i. “wisdom” in James may be equal to “Spirit” or “Holy Spirit” in Paul
    - ii. 3:15 – avoid a lifestyle that is inconsistent with the Lord, and manifest the influence of earthly wisdom
  - d. Theme: Overcome the divided character in the believer (flesh and spirit in Paul or sin nature and born again nature) and live a life of wholeness and perfection.
    - i. So, inspiring spiritual wholeness in the believer is the goal of the letter (Paul calls it maturity or being spiritual)
5. **Theology in James:** God, Eschatology, The Law (Word of God, Wisdom, Poverty and Wealth, Poverty/Piety, Christian Life, Faith/Works/Justification, Suffering/Testing, Christology, Law/Grace/Faith, Prayer