

STUDY THE BIBLE 28 (STB 28) "THE BOOK OF JAMES"

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor 13:5). To be justified before God is not the same as justification before men.

THE PURPOSE

This epistle is a **very stern rebuke** for professing Christians to justify and examine their behaviour. "Would there be enough evidence in a court of law, to show that they were Christians!" James says "Prove that you are Christians!" James wanted some proof!

WHO WRITES JAMES and WHEN

James Zebedee, the brother of John, and **not** James the 'half' brother of Jesus, writes the Epistle of James, just before he is killed by Herod in **44 AD** (Acts 12:2). We know this, as all epistles in the New Testament are written by apostles, and Jesus 'half' brother is not an apostle.

Furthermore, the Christian church was now centred on Antioch (Acts 11:26) to start afresh from those at Jerusalem, which were led by James the brother of Jesus. James Zebedee writes to Jews of the twelve tribes, who have now become Christians (2:1), and are now scattered everywhere (1:1).

As the gospel of **Matthew**, the first book written in the New Testament, around **37AD**, James writes the second book, about **six years later**, around **43AD** and about **seven years before** Paul puts pen to paper with Galatians in **50AD**.

_____ 33 AD _____	_____ 37 AD _____	_____ 43 AD _____	_____ 50 AD _____
The Cross	Matthew	James	Paul

THE BACKGROUND

Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, had come exclusively for Israel, and had then gone back to heaven. He left behind **three** groups of Jews:

1. The **first** group were those of the Old Testament 'hard line', who refused to receive Jesus Christ, and who saw Christ as overthrowing the laws of Moses. They were **extremely happy** that he had been put to death.

2. The **second** group had loved Christ as the Messiah but were not sure whether they should have him as their Saviour, now that he had gone. These were **very disappointed** that Christ had not set up his kingdom here on earth, and in fact, were **wondering** as to whether Christ was who he claimed to be. In fact, they were **hardening** their hearts in their belief toward him, and their love for the blood sacrifices of animals was growing increasingly stronger.

3. The **third** group were those that were saved, having the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and it's to this group James writes. So there would have been a lot of **doubt** and **negativity** about Christ coming from the first two groups. This would have been **dramatically affecting** the faith of the former Jews, now Christians.

And do we know this? In his first **two** chapters James outlines **21 things** where they were sinning.

They were being **DOUBLE-MINDED** and **would receive nothing** from the Lord if it continued.

1. They are falling into **temptations** but not counting it as all joy (v2)
2. They are **wanting** (v4)
3. They lack **WISDOM** (v5)
4. They are **WAVERING** in their faith (v6).
5. They are in danger of **not receiving** anything from the Lord (v7)
6. They are **DOUBLE MINDED** (v8 and Jam 4:8).
7. They are **unstable** (v8).
8. They are being **TEMPTED** (v13)
9. They are **sinning** (v15)
10. They are too **quick** to speak and they are **slow** to listen (v19)
11. They had **filthiness** and **naughtiness** (v21)
12. They were **hearers** of the word and not doers (v22)
13. They had **forgotten** how to be Christians (v24)
14. They had a **VAIN RELIGION** (v26)
15. They were **neglecting** the orphans and widows (v27)
16. They were **involving** themselves in the world again (v27)
17. They were wrongly **respecting** persons (2:1)
18. They had **NO WORKS** (2:14)
19. They were **not clothing** or **feeding** their fellow Christians (2:15)
20. They were **not doing** what God wanted them to do (2:18)
21. They were **just like the devils** who also believe there is one God (2:19)

So James lists all these sins to say this -

“Can you justify yourselves before God and say you haven’t been like this and done these things?” “Can you stand before God and declare your innocence in these matters?” Of course their answer has to be “NO! WE CAN’T!”

So with this evidence, James points to their father in the faith and their father in the natural, Abraham, and he says “Be like Abraham, when he obeyed God and offered Isaac on the altar. He could stand before God and truly say he was **justified by OBEYING God.**” Indeed, he even points out that Rahab the harlot could be justified by declaring her obedience to God. James mentions Rahab to absolutely put them to shame, as there was nothing lower than a harlot to the Jews.

He continues “Now do likewise and **justify yourself with proper thoughts of the hearts and deeds**, such that you can also stand before God and justify yourselves. You haven’t been able to justify yourselves to date, so ‘pull your socks up’ and ‘get your act together’, and start acting like Christians. Walk the walk and don’t just talk the talk. Because at the moment you are really nothing more than devils! Be like Abraham!” Strong words indeed!

And it is in this context we have the true meaning of the word “justified” as James uses it. They are saved **already**, but **they can’t justify their actions as Christians**. Could they stand before God and say “God we have been obedient to all you demand and want as Christians.” Justification before God and justification before men are **two completely different** things.

This is similar to Paul writing to the Galatian Christians, and enquiring after their salvation, as to whether they were also in the faith or not.

DOES JAMES KNOW HOW TO GET SAVED?

Absolutely, and he states this categorically, and is perfectly clear, about the grounds upon which a person may be saved. Once again, he uses Abraham their father in the faith, stating that Abraham was right with God by **imputation**. He says *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. James 2:23.*

James skilfully uses the **two** aspects of Abraham:

1. As being their **father** in the Christian **faith** (Rom 4:16)
2. Using the example of **Abraham’s works**, although not a Christian, was able to justify his deed with Isaac, before God

And it is in this context that James uses the words “works” and “justify” – not to get saved, but now they are saved, where are their works? James’ theme in this epistle is **not justification to get salvation**, but **justification after** their salvation.

THE MISUNDERSTANDING

It’s easy to see “*Was not **Abraham** our father **justified by works...**” (James 2:21), and mistakenly assume that James is promoting a works salvation, until we read the second half of the verse “... *when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*”. This was one particular moment when Abraham could be justified, but it is not the apostle Paul’s meaning that Christians have of justification for salvation.*

Furthermore, James knew that 100% perfect obedience is required by someone to get saved. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet **offend** in **one** point, he is guilty of all. James 2:10.* James knew, as pointed out already, Christ was the only one who could justify us before God, for eternal security. James knew that when he used Abraham as an example to his readers, he was **not** saying that Abraham was permanently justified before God for ever after – **it was only for that point in time that he was justified.**

JAMES FURTHER ADDS

Now just in case the ‘Jewish’ Christians haven’t got the message, he further outlines another **24** faults and short-comings, and where they need to improve.

1. Do not be many **masters** and **teachers** (3:1)
2. Curb your **tongue** – they are full of deadly **poison** (3:8)
3. Let your works be with **meekness** and **wisdom** (3:13)
4. Leave off bitter **envying** and **strife** (3:14)
5. Don’t be **hypocrites** (3:17)
6. Stop **fighting** with each other (4:1)
7. Stop being **adulterers** having friendship with the world (4:14)
8. **Submit** to God (4:7)
9. You are **double minded**, **sinners** with **impure hearts** (4:8)
10. Your laughter and joy needs to **mourning** and **weeping** over their sin (4:9)
11. You need to be **humble** (4:10)
12. Leave off **speaking evil** of each other (4:11)

13. Leave off **your will** about doing this or that (4:15)
14. Stop rejoicing in your **boastings** (4:16)
15. You know what is **right**, just do it (4:17)
16. Your **riches** count for nothing (5:2)
17. You have **robbed** the labourers 5:4)
18. You have lived in **pleasure** and been **wanton** (5:5)
19. You **killed** just people (5:6)
20. Be **patient** and **firm up** your hearts in waiting for the rapture (5:7)
21. Leave off your **grudges** with each other (5:9)
22. Stop using earthly **oaths** (5:12)
23. Pray more **fervently** (5:16) and **sing** psalms (5:13)
24. **Confess** your faults to one another (5:16)

So James would be writing, ten years later after the cross, urging those of the 12 tribes not to drop their bundle, and with practical suggestions on how to live their new found Christian lives.

And he would be very capable in this regard for two reasons:

1. Christ had come and outlined a kingdom of works with his preaching of the kingdom of heaven as contained in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

2. The Jews have a background of works and laws, of do's and don'ts, that have been ingrained in them for 2,000 years, starting way back with their father, Abraham, the first Hebrew.

With a very strong **knowledge of the Old Testament law** combined with the **kingdom of heaven doctrine**, James would be writing a very stern warning for the 12 tribes, exhorting them to be genuine Christians with appropriate behaviour.

CHAPTER 1:1-8 Trials. Patience. Wisdom. Faith

**Rejoice in trials, persecution, afflictions, sufferings (2); Trials work patience (3-4)
Patience works perfection (4); Wisdom (5); Prayer (5); Faith (6-8)**

CHAPTER 1:9-18 Riches. Temptation. New Birth

Riches (9-11); Temptation (12-15); The Christian's new born soul (16-18)

CHAPTER 1:19-27 The Tongue. The word. Pure Religion.

Watch your tongue (19-21); Be doers of the word (21-25); Pure religion (26-27)

CHAPTER 2:1-13 Respect of Persons

CHAPTER 2:14-26 Faith and works

CHAPTER 3:1-12 The Tongue

CHAPTER 3:13-18 Wisdom

CHAPTER 4 Worldly-Mindedness

**Origin of wars (1-2); Unanswered prayer (3); Double mindedness (4-10);
The tongue again (11-12); The Lord will (13-17)**

CHAPTER 5 Riches. Patience. Tongue. Prayer.

**The rich (1-6); Patience under suffering (7-11); The tongue again (12); Prayer again (13-18);
Anointing with oil (14); To win a soul for Christ (19-20)**

OIL ANOINTING? James 5:14.

There is a lot of spiritual superstition and mumbo jumbo about this. There is **nothing** spiritual about physical oil. This was used for physical purposes only. Oil has many health giving minerals in it, and being a dry climate, would absorb into the body. Oil at the time of James would have been pure without the additives of today.

It is the **prayer of faith** and **confession of sins**, that would provide the true healing. *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. 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. James 5:15-16.***

Under the Old Testament, anointing someone with oil, was to pour it all over them, and saturate them from head to toe. It is **not** just a little dab on the forehead. It is meant to be **POURED** all over the head and garments. (Ex 29:7; Lev 8:30; 2Ki 9:3)

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