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This volume is dedicated to

Steve and Penny Carlile

*who were such a help in
securing our new office space.
Our new building was formerly
the office of Penny's father,*

Charlie Flowers

(now with the Lord)

*who was a godly businessman,
an active church member, and
motivational speaker.*

*I believe he is pleased
that his office is still involved
in the Lord's work!*

Here's what the Lockman Foundation has to say about the New American Standard Bible 1995 Update:

Easier to read:

- ▣ Passages with Old English “thee’s” and “thou’s” etc. have been updated to modern English.
- ▣ Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- ▣ Verses with difficult word order or vocabulary have been retranslated into smoother English.
- ▣ Sentences beginning with “And” have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for “And” in the original. In some other cases, “and” is translated by a different word such as “then” or “but” as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

More accurate than ever:

- ▣ Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- ▣ Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- ▣ Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

And still the NASB:

- ▣ The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- ▣ The NASB update continues the NASB’s tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation’s Fourfold Aim.
- ▣ The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Continuing a tradition:

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

—The Lockman Foundation

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently, is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS⁴). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.
2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS⁴ and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.

5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word-for-word translation. The verse-by-verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophesies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message

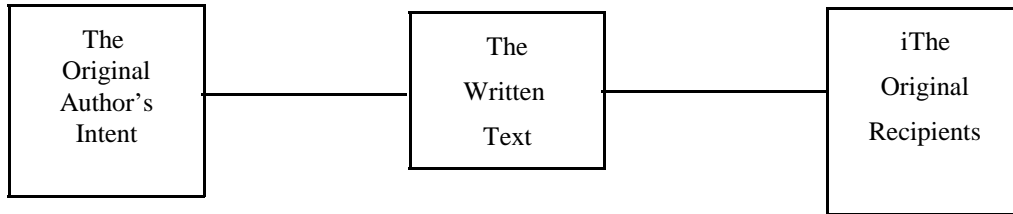
2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
6. the words chosen to present the message
7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

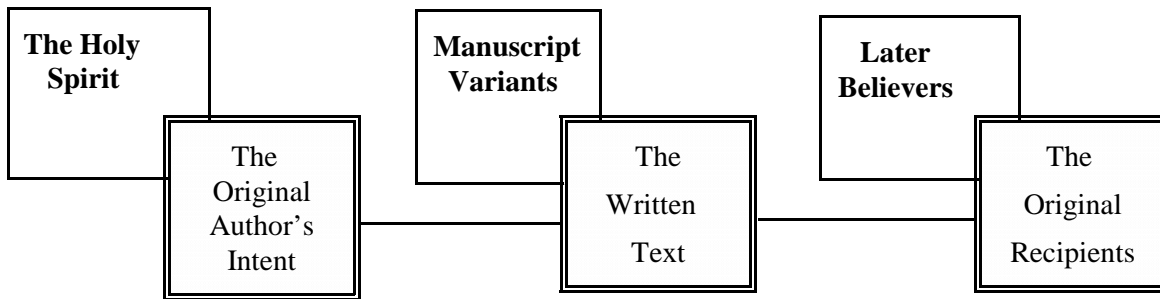
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context
2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary work usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book

- a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events
3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
 4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
 3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
 5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:
“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”
- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:
According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible as God’s word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”
- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:
“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 1. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised(UBS⁴)
 2. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)

3. The New King James Version (NKJV)
4. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
5. Today's English Version (TEV)
6. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 1. literary context
 2. historical, cultural insights
 3. grammatical information
 4. word studies
 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 3. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 4. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
 1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts

Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES

OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. This was Soren Kierkegaard's favorite book in the New Testament because it emphasizes practical, daily Christianity.
- B. This was Martin Luther's least favorite book in the New Testament because it seems to contradict Paul's "justification by faith" emphasis in Romans and Galatians.
- C. This is a very different genre from other NT books
 - 1. very much like a new covenant book of Proverbs (i.e. wisdom literature) spoken by a fiery prophet
 - 2. written early after Jesus' death and still very Jewish and practical

AUTHOR

- A. The traditional author is James (Hebrew, "Jacob"), the half-brother of Jesus (one of four, cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 1:14; 12:17; Gal. 1:19). He was the leader of the Jerusalem Church (A.D. 48-62, cf. Acts 15:13-21; Gal. 2:9).
 - 1. He was called "James the Just" and later nicknamed "camel knees" because he constantly prayed on his knees (from Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius).
 - 2. James was not a believer until after the resurrection (cf. Mark 3:21; John 7:5). Jesus appeared to him personally after the resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:7).
 - 3. He was present in the upper room with the disciples (cf. Acts 1:14) and possibly also there when the Spirit came on Pentecost.
 - 4. He was married (cf. I Cor. 9:5).
 - 5. He is referred to by Paul as a pillar (possibly an apostle, cf. Gal. 1:19) but was not one of the Twelve (cf. Gal. 2:9; Acts 12:17; 15:13ff).
 - 6. In *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:9:1, Josephus says that he was stoned in A.D. 62 by orders from the Sadducees of the Sanhedrin, while another tradition (the second century writers, Clement of Alexandria or Hegesippus) says he was pushed off the wall of the Temple.
 - 7. For many generations after Jesus' death a relative of Jesus was appointed leader of the church in Jerusalem.
- B. In *Studies in the Epistle of James*, A. T. Robertson affirms James' authorship:

"There are many proofs that the epistle was written by the author of the speech in Acts 15:13-21—delicate similarities of thought and style too subtle for mere imitation or copying. The same likeness appears between the Epistle of James and the letter to Antioch, probably written also by James (Acts 15:23-29). There are, besides, apparent reminiscences of the Sermon on the Mount, which James may have heard personally or at least heard the substance of it. There is the same vividness of imagery in the epistle that is so prominent a characteristic of the teaching of Jesus" (p. 2).

A. T. Robertson is following J. B. Mayor's *The Epistle of St. James*, pp. iii-iv.
- C. There are two other men named James in the NT apostolic band. However, James, the brother of John, was killed very early in A.D. 44 by Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12:1-2). The other James, "the less" or "the younger" (cf. Mark 15:40), is never mentioned outside the lists of apostles. The author of our epistle was apparently well known.
- D. There have been three theories as to the relationship of James to Jesus:
 - 1. Jerome said that he was Jesus' cousin (by Alphaeus and Mary of Clopas). He deduced this from comparing Matt. 27:56 with John 19:25.
 - 2. Roman Catholic tradition asserts that he was a half-brother by a previous marriage of Joseph (cf. Origen's comments on Matt. 13:55 and Epiphanius in *Heresies*, 78).

3. Tertullian (A.D. 160-220), Helvidius (A.D. 366-384) and most Protestants assert that he was a true half-brother of Jesus by Joseph and Mary (cf. Mark 6:3; I Cor. 9:5).
4. Options #1 and #2 were developed to guard the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

DATE

- A. If the above authorship is accepted, there are two possible dates:
 1. Early, before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) in A.D. 49 (if this date is true then James is the earliest NT book to be circulated).
 2. Later, just before the death of James in A.D. 62.
- B. The early date has in its favor:
 1. the use of “synagogue” in 2:2
 2. the lack of church organization
 3. the use of the word “elder” in its Jewish sense in 5:14
 4. no mention of the controversy over the Gentile mission (cf. Acts 15)
 5. James seems to be writing to early Jewish believing communities away from Jerusalem and probably out of Palestine (cf. 1:1)
- C. The late date has in its favor:
 1. the possible reaction by James (cf. 2:14-20) to Paul’s letter to the Romans (cf. 4:1ff), taking an opposite approach to correct an inappropriate usage by the heretics (cf. II Pet. 3:15-16). If this is true, a good title for James would be “a mid-course correction.”
 2. The book apparently assumes basic Christian doctrines because of their total absence from the book.

RECIPIENTS

- A. The reference to “the twelve tribes that are scattered over the world” (1:1) is our major hint. Also, the inclusion of the letter in the “catholic epistles” (i.e. letters addressed to several churches) reflects its encyclical nature. Obviously one church is not as prominent as a specific though scattered group of individuals and these seem to be Jewish Christians outside of Palestine.
- B. There are three possible interpretations of the phrase in 1:1:
 1. Jews—This seems improbable because of the recurrent use of “brethren,” the lack of the major gospel truths about Jesus, as well as the specific mentioning of faith in Christ in 2:1. Also, after the Babylonian Exile, many of the original twelve tribes never returned. The same metaphor is used symbolically of believers in Rev. 7:4-8.
 2. Christian Jews—This seems to be the most likely because of the Jewish flavor of the book and the leadership position of James in the Jerusalem church.
 3. The church as spiritual Israel—This is possible because of the use of “diaspora” in I Pet. 1:1 and Paul’s allusion to the church (believing Jews and Gentiles) as spiritual Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 4:16ff; Gal. 3:29; 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9).

OCCASION

There are two major theories:

- A. An attempt to apply the New Covenant specifically to first century Jewish Christians living in pagan settings.
- B. Some believe it was wealthy Jews persecuting Christian Jews. It is also possible that the early Christians were subject to antisemitic pagan abuse. It was obviously a time of physical need and persecution (cf. 1:2-4,12; 2:6-7; 5:4-11,13-14).

LITERARY GENRE

- A. This letter/sermon reflects a knowledge of wisdom literature, both canonical (Job - Song of Songs) and inter-biblical (Ecclesiasticus about 180 B.C.). Its emphasis is practical living—faith in action (cf. 1:3-4).
- B. In some ways the style is very similar to both Jewish wisdom teachers and Greek and Roman moral itinerant teachers (like the Stoics). Some examples are:
 - 1. loose structure (jumping from one subject to another)
 - 2. many imperatives (54 of them)
 - 3. diatribe (a supposed objector asking questions, cf. 2:18; 4:13). This is also seen in Malachi, Romans, and I John.
- C. Although there are few direct quotations from the OT (cf. 1:11; 2:8,11,23; 4:6), like the book of the Revelation, there are many allusions to the OT.
- D. The outline of James is almost longer than the book itself. This reflects the rabbinical technique of jumping from subject to subject in order to keep the attention of the audience. The rabbis called it “pearls on a string.”
- E. James seems to be a combination of OT literary genres: (1) sages (wisdom teachers) and (2) prophets (much like Amos or Jeremiah). He uses OT truths but bathes them in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount teachings. (See section B. under Content below).

CONTENT

- A. James uses allusions to Jesus’ words, found in the Synoptic Gospels, more than any other NT book (i.e. 1:5,6,22; 2:5,8,13; 3:12,18; 4:10,12; 5:12). It is even possible that James contains some quotes from Jesus (cf. 1:27; 2:13; 3:18; 4:11-12,17).
- B. James is reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount.

JAMES	SERMON ON THE MOUNT
1:2	Matt. 5:1-2
1:4	Matt. 5:48
1:5	Matt. 7:7 (21:26)
1:12	Matt. 5:3-11
1:20	Matt. 5:22
1:22-25	Matt. 7:24-27
2:5	Matt. 5:3 (25:34)
2:8	Matt. 5:43; 7:12
2:13	Matt. 5:7 (6:14-15; 18:32-35)
3:6	Matt. 5:22,29,30
3:12	Matt. 7:16
3:18	Matt. 5:9; 7:16-17
4:4	Matt. 6:24
4:11-12	Matt. 7:1
4:13	Matt. 6:34

5:2	Matt. 6:19-20
5:10-11	Matt. 5:12
5:12	Matt. 5:34-37

C. It is applied theology (faith without works is dead). Out of 108 verses, 54 are imperatives.

CANONIZATION

- A. James' inclusion was late and difficult.
1. James was not in the canonical list from Rome about A.D. 200 called "Muratorian Fragment."
 2. It was not in the canonical list from North Africa, A.D. 360, called "Cheltenham List" (also called Karl Mommsen's catalog).
 3. It was not included in the Old Latin version of the NT.
 4. Eusebius lists it as one of the disputed books (Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, Jude, and Revelation), *Hist. Eccl.* II:23:24-24; III:25:3.
 5. It was not received in the Western Church until the 4th century and was not documented in the Eastern Church until the revision of the Syriac translation of the 5th century called the Peshitta.
 6. It was rejected by Theodore of Mopsuetia (A.D. 392-428), the leader of the Antiochean school of biblical interpretation (he rejected all of the catholic epistles).
 7. Erasmus had doubts about it, as did Martin Luther, who called it a "strawy epistle" because he felt it contradicted Romans' and Galatians' emphases on "justification by faith."
- B. Evidence of James' genuineness:
1. It was alluded to in the writings of Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) and later in the second century by Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus.
 2. It is alluded to in the non-canonical, but popular, Christian writing called *Shepherd of Hermas*, written about A.D. 130.
 3. It is quoted directly by Origen (A.D. 185-245) in his commentary on John, XIX:23.
 4. In his *Hist. Eccl.* 2:23, Eusebius listed it among the "disputed books," but added that it was accepted by most churches.
 5. It is included in the revision of the Syriac translation of A.D. 412 (called the Peshitta).
 6. Origen and John of Damascus in the East and Jerome and Augustine in the West championed this book's inclusion in the Canon. It received official canonical status at the Councils of Hippo, A.D. 393, and Carthage, A.D. 397 and again in A.D. 419.
 7. It was accepted by Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) and Theodoret (A.D. 393-457), both leaders of the Antiochean school of biblical interpretation.

READING CYCLE ONE (see p. vi)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (see pp. vi-vii.)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

JAMES 1:1-27

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greetings to the Twelve Tribes	Salutation	Salutation	Address and Greetings
1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
Faith and Wisdom	Profiting from Trials	The Blessing of Trials	Faith and Wisdom	Trials a Privilege
1:2-8	1:2-8	1:2-4	1:2-8	1:2-4
				Prayer with Confidence
		1:5-8		1:5-8
Poverty and Riches	The Perspective of Rich and Poor		Poverty and Riches	The Lot of the Rich
1:9-11	1:9-11	1:9-11	1:9-11	1:9-11
Trial and Temptation	Loving God Under Trials		Testing and Temptation	Temptation
1:12-15	1:12-18	1:12-16	1:12-15	1:12
				1:13-15
				Receiving the Word and Putting It into Practice
1:16-18			1:16-18	1:16-17
		1:17-18		1:18
Hearing and Doing the Word	Qualities Needed in Trials	True Worship	Hearing and Doing	True Religion
1:19-21	1:19-20	1:19-21	1:19-21	1:19-21
	Doers - Not Hearers			
	1:21-27			
1:22-25		1:22-25	1:22-25	1:22-25
1:26-27		1:26-27	1:26-27	1:26-27

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the keys in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, Three and Four.

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

POSSIBLE OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 1

There are several ways to outline this chapter. One is to list the characteristics of the redeemed and mature believers versus the redeemed, but weak believers:

MATURE	WEAK
1. joy amidst trials (1:2)	(no joy)
2. ask for wisdom to endure trials (1:5)	(did not ask)
3. do not doubt in prayer (1:6)	doubt
4. glory in Christ (1:9)	glory in wealth
5. persevere in temptation (1:12)	yield to temptation
6. quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger (1:19)	(the opposite)
7. put off all moral evil (1:21)	(the opposite)
8. receive the word of God (1:21)	(the opposite)
do the word of God (1:22)	(the opposite)
look to and remember the word of God (1:24-25)	(the opposite)
9. careful of speech (1:20)	(the opposite)
10. help the needy (1:27)	(the opposite)
11. remain unstained by the world (1:27)	(the opposite)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 1:1

¹James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

1:1 “James” It is the Greek form of the common Hebrew name, Jacob. He was known by both Jews and Christians in Jerusalem as “James the Just.” He became the respected leader of the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 15). Some traditional evidence indicates that this was because of his genealogical relationship to Jesus. This seems to have been a pattern in this church for several generations. One reason I believe this book is not pseudonymous in that James does not specifically identify himself or his relationship to Jesus. This humility characterizes NT authors.

▣ **“a bond-servant”** This refers to either (1) a sense of humility or (2) an OT honorific title (i.e. Moses, David). It is obviously used as the opposite of “Lord” (cf. Jude v. 1).

▣ **“of God and the Lord Jesus Christ”** This GENITIVE phrase combines God and Jesus in a grammatical parallel in order to assert Jesus’ equality with God (cf. Titus 2:13; II Pet. 1:1; John 20:28). It could also link the Father and the Son into one activity (cf. I Thess. 3:11; II Thess. 2:16). NT authors often use the title “Lord” (i.e. *kurios*, which is synonymous with the Hebrew *adon*, both translated “owner,” “master,” “husband,” or “lord”) to assert the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. It was a term used to translate “YHWH” from the Hebrew OT into the Greek of the Septuagint (cf. Ex. 3:14).



NASB “to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad”
NKJV “the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad”
NRSV “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion”
TEV “to all God’s people scattered over the whole world”
NJB “the twelve tribes of the Dispersion”

The “twelve tribes” would be an inclusive metaphor for all of the Jewish believers. They are the new people of God, the new Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28,29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9).

“Dispersed” is literally “diaspora,” a technical term for Jews who lived outside of Palestine (cf. John 7:35). Here it refers to believers in Christ (cf. I Pet. 1:1 or Gal. 3:29). Most of the early Christian congregations were made up primarily of Jewish believers.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE

Twelve has always been a symbolic number of organization

1. outside the Bible
 - a. twelve signs of the Zodiac
 - b. twelve months of the year
2. in the OT
 - a. the sons of Jacob (the Jewish tribes)
 - b. reflected in
 - (1) twelve pillars of the altar in Exod. 24:4
 - (2) twelve jewels on the high priest’s breastplate (which stand for the tribes) in Exod. 28:21
 - (3) twelve loaves of bread in the holy place of the tabernacle in Lev. 24:5
 - (4) twelve spies sent into Canaan in Num. 13 (one from each tribe)
 - (5) twelve rods (tribal standards) at Korah’s rebellion in Num. 17:2
 - (6) twelve stones of Joshua in Josh. 4:3,9,20
 - (7) twelve administrative districts in Solomon’s administration in I Kgs. 4:7
 - (8) twelve stones of Elijah’s altar to YHWH in I Kgs. 18:31
3. in the NT
 - a. twelve apostles chosen
 - b. twelve baskets of bread (one for each Apostle) in Matt. 14:20
 - c. twelve thrones on which NT disciples sit (referring to the 12 tribes of Israel) in Matt. 19:28
 - d. twelve legions of angels to rescue Jesus in Matt. 26:53
 - e. the symbolism of Revelation
 - (1) 24 elders on 24 thrones in 4:4
 - (2) 144,000 (12x12) in 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (3) twelve stars on the woman’s crown in 12:1
 - (4) twelve gates, twelve angels reflecting the twelve tribes in 21:12
 - (5) twelve foundation stones of the new Jerusalem and on them the names of the twelve Apostles in 21:14
 - (6) twelve thousand stadia in 21:16 (size of new city, New Jerusalem)
 - (7) wall is 144 cubits in 21:7
 - (8) twelve gates of pearl in 21:21
 - (9) trees in new Jerusalem with twelve kinds of fruit (one for each month) in 22:2

☐ **“Greetings”** This is the common form (i.e. *charein*) of a Greek letter, but it is rare in the NT letters. It literally means “rejoice.” James uses this same “greetings” in Acts 15:23. Paul slightly changes it from “greetings” to “grace” (i.e. *charis*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 1:2-4

²Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1:2 “Consider it” This is an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. The TEV translates it as “consider yourselves.” The Williams NT translates it as “you must consider.” James is calling on believers to make a decisive personal choice about how they face their life situations. Knowing Christ changes everything! It is literally “add it all up!” In the ancient world sets of numbers were totaled at the top, not the bottom, as in our culture.

☐ **“all joy”** “All” is placed first in the Greek text for emphasis. In James the trials are not joy, but their possible results are (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23; Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:3; I Pet. 1:6). Jesus suffered and we must share this maturing experience (cf. Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 1:5,7; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; Heb. 5:8-9; and especially I Pet. 2:21; 3:14-17; 4:12-16).

☐ **“my brethren”** James uses the term “brethren” (*adelphos/adelphoi*) to (1) introduce a new subject (like Paul) and (2) to endear himself to his readers, which was necessary because of his hard-hitting prophetic style. James uses this literary technique often (cf. 1:2,9,16,19; 2:1,5,14,15; 3:1,10,12; 4:11 [thrice]; 5:7,10,12,19).

The Greek term follows the Hebrew connotation of a blood relative, close kin, neighbor, or covenant partner. The Greek term is a combination of “womb” (*delphys*) and “a” (i.e. one from the same womb). The people of God perceive themselves as God’s children. This led to the use of many familial metaphors in the NT: (1) child/children; (2) born again/born from above; (3) adopted; and (4) brother/brothers.

☐

NASB	“when you encounter”
NKJV	“when you fall into”
NRSV	“whenever you face”
TEV	“when. . .comes your way”
NJB	“when. . .come upon you”

This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE of the compound terms “to fall” and “around.” The SUBJUNCTIVE speaks of possible future action, but with some degree of doubt. These believers were experiencing some problems but apparently not all of them. Trials and problems are common for believers in this fallen world (cf. I Pet. 4:12-16; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 2:12).

☐ **“various trials”** This is literally “many colored” or “rainbowed” (cf. I Pet. 1:6). In I Peter 4:10 the same word is used to describe God’s grace. For every trial we face there is a matching grace of God! In James 1:3a trials purify faith, in 1:3b they produce patience, and in 1:4 they produce maturity. Problems happen! How believers face them is the crucial issue!

1:3 “the testing of” The Greek term *dokimos* was used of testing metals to prove their genuineness (cf. Prov. 27:21 in the Septuagint). It developed the connotation of “to test with a view toward approval” (cf. 1:12; I Pet. 1:7). God tests His children (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; Judg. 2:22; 13:3; II Chr. 32:31; Matt. 4:1; I Pet. 4:12-16), but it is always for strengthening, never for destruction. See Special Topic at 1:13.

☐ **“faith”** Here, the word *pistis* is used in the sense of personal trust in God through Christ, not Christian doctrine as it does in Jude vv. 3,20.

The Greek term *pistis* may be translated in English as “trust,” “believe,” or “faith.” This term conveys two distinct aspects of our relationship with God: (1) we put our trust in the trustworthiness of God’s promises and Jesus’ finished work and (2) we believe the message about God, man, sin, Christ, salvation, etc. Hence, it can refer to the message of the gospel or our trust in the gospel. The gospel is a person to welcome, a message to believe, and a life to live.

☐ **“produces”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE. Notice that an ongoing process, not an instantaneous result, is being emphasized. A similar chain of growth stages is seen in Rom. 5:3-4; Col. 1:11-12; I Pet. 1:6-7. Salvation is a gift and a process! See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing at 1:13.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR “TESTING” AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

There are two Greek terms which have the idea of testing someone for a purpose:

1. *Dokimazō, Dokimion, Dokimasia*

This term is a metallurgist term for testing the genuineness of something (i.e. metaphorically someone) by fire. The fire reveals the true metal and burns off (i.e. purifies) the dross. This physical process became a powerful idiom for God and/or Satan and/or humans testing others. This term is only used in a positive sense of testing with a view towards acceptance.

It is used in the NT of testing:

- a. oxen - Luke 14:19
- b. ourselves - I Cor. 11:28
- c. our faith - James 1:3
- d. even God - Heb. 3:9

The outcomes of these tests were assumed to be positive (cf. Rom. 1:28; 14:22; 16:10; II Cor. 10:18; 13:3; Phil. 2:27; I Pet. 1:7). Therefore the term conveys the idea of someone examined and proved to be:

- a. worthwhile
- b. good
- c. genuine
- d. valuable
- e. honored

2. *Peirazō, Peirasmus*

This term has the connotation of examination for the purpose of fault finding or rejection. It is often used in connection to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

- a. It conveys the attempt to trap Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; 10:25; Heb. 2:18).
- b. This term (*Peirazōn*) is used as a title for Satan in Matt. 4:3; I Thess. 3:5.
- c. It is used by Jesus to not test God (cf. Matt. 14:7; Luke 4:12) [on Christ cf. I Cor 10:9]. It also denotes the attempt to do something that has failed (cf. Acts 9:20; 20:21; Heb. 11:29).
- d. It is used in connection with the temptations and trials of believers (cf. I Cor. 7:5; 10:9, 13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 3:5; Heb. 2:18; James. 1:2, 13, 14; I Pet. 4:12; II Pet 2:9).

▣ **“endurance”** This Greek word means a “voluntary, active, steadfast, patient endurance” (cf. v. 12; Luke 21:19). This is a recurrent theme in James (cf. 1:3,4,12; 5:11).

1:4 “And let endurance have” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Of the 108 verses in the book of James there are 54 IMPERATIVES. It is a book of exhortation to practical living.

▣ **“its perfect results, so that you may be perfect and complete”** The Greek word “perfect” (*teleios*) used twice, cf. 1:17,25; 3:2) means “fully equipped,” “mature,” or “ripe.” It is often linked to love (cf. Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 13:9-13; I John 4:18). Noah is described by this same word in the Septuagint of Gen. 6:9. It seems to have the connotation of a mature faith which issues in faithful, loving service. It does not imply or suggest “sinlessness” or “without fault.” It is just possible that this could have an eschatological reference. James often looks toward the culmination of the Christian hope (cf. 1:8-9,12; 5:7,8).

The second term “complete” (*holoklēria*) is used of the health and wholeness of the physical body (cf. Acts 3:16) and metaphorically of the well-being of all mankind, both physically and spiritually (cf. I Thess. 5:23 and in an eschatological sense, vv. 8-9,12).

▣ **“lacking in nothing”** Notice that a mature Christian is described in three ways: (1) perfect (*telos*); (2) with integrity or complete (*holoklēros* cf. I Thess. 5:23); and (3) lacking in nothing (NJB “not deficient in any way”). Trials are God's means of producing maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8-9). Maturity is not theological insight only, but daily faithful endurance! Maturity is who we are, not what we know! Its fruit is seen and developed in crisis.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 1:5-8

⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

1:5 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means it is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Believers need wisdom to live a godly life in this fallen world. James knew that trials are often taken as a sign of God’s displeasure (cf. Deut. 27-28), but they are, in this fallen world when caused by godliness, exactly the opposite (cf. Job and Ps. 73).

▣ **“any of you lacks wisdom”** There is a wordplay between vv. 4c and 5a. It is captured in the NASB translation “. . . lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom.” This theme is continued in 3:13-18.

Notice the universal offer of wisdom “if any of you. . .” God’s wisdom is available to His children, but they must sense the need, ask, and receive. Wisdom, like maturity, is not automatic.

▣ **“wisdom”** In the OT wisdom/knowledge represents two aspects: (1) intellectual and (2) practical (cf. Pro. 1:1-6). In this context it is the practical, daily insight from God that sustains His persecuted people.

God’s gift, through sustained prayer, of wisdom is conditioned on faith without doubt, vv. 5-8. Both believing prayer and God’s wisdom are our spiritual weapons in trials and temptations (cf. Eph. 6:10-18).

▣ **“let him ask of God”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which is literally “let him continue to ask of God.” This same verbal form is repeated in v. 6 with the additional qualifying phrase “in faith” (cf. Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9). In Matthew it is God who gives “good things”; in Luke it is God who gives “the Holy Spirit” and in James it is God who gives “wisdom.” Wisdom can be personified, as in Prov. 8:22-31. In John 1:1 God’s wisdom refers to Jesus (the *Logos*).

▣ **“gives to all”** What a universal promise to all of God’s children. Notice how the context develops this universal theme: “if any ask,” “gives to all generously,” “without reproach,” “it will be given.” But, there are conditions: “ask in faith,” “without doubting.”

The universal availability for believers to know how to live in a way that is pleasing to God is a wonderful truth, especially in times of trials. It is even possible that a gracious God would answer the heartfelt prayer of the lost person in giving him/her wisdom also, a wisdom that leads to salvation (cf. II Tim. 3:15).

▣

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB

NKJV

“generously”

“liberally”

This form of the term *haplōs* is found only here in the NT. Its root form (*haploos*) means “single” or “with an undivided motive or mind” (cf. Matt. 6:22 for another possible link to the Sermon on the Mount).

It (*haplotēs*) came to be used metaphorically of sincerity, genuineness, or purity of motive (cf. Rom. 12:8; II Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22) or liberality (cf. II Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13). James uses it here to describe God’s free gift of wisdom to those who ask and continue to ask in faith. God, then, is the opposite of the doubting man.

▣ **“and without reproach”** God is not a harsh, stingy disciplinarian! He is a loving parent who wants the best for His children! He does not play favorites.

1:6 “he must ask in faith” This is the condition for all of God’s spiritual gifts and provisions. This does not refer to doubting our abilities, but doubting God’s ability and willingness (cf. 5:15; Matt. 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24; Heb. 11:1ff). Faith establishes fellowship with God; doubt destroys it! God has limited Himself to respond to the believing/faithful/trusting prayers of His children! The concept of “unanswered” prayer is discussed again in 4:1-3.

▣ **“without any doubting”** In the Greek text the term “doubting” is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. It is repeated twice. The term “*diakrinō*” usually means “to discern by making distinctions” (cf. 2:4), but in several passages it takes on the connotation of wavering between two decisions or opinions, which implies an unsettled mind, a lack of mature faith (cf. Matt. 21:21; Mark 11:23; Rom. 4:20; 14:23; James 1:6). It illustrates the continual struggle of the doubting Christian.

1:7 “that man” This is a Semitic idiom of contempt. This is parallel to the doubter of v. 6.



NASB	“being a double-minded man”
NKJV	“he is a double-minded man”
NRSV	“being double-minded”
TEV	“unable to make up your mind”
NJB	“inconsistent in every activity”

Literally this means “two-souled” (cf. 4:8). This term is unique to James in the NT and in Greek literature. Many believe James coined it. It probably comes from the OT’s “double-heart” (cf. I Chr. 12:33; Ps. 12:2). It was used early and often by the early church, first by Clement of Rome about A.D. 96. This is possibly an evidence for the early date of this letter. In Paul Bunyan’s allegory *Pilgrim’s Progress*, this is seen in “Mr. Facing Both Ways.” He is described in V. 6 as a restless ocean and in V. 8 as a double-minded, unstable person. Verses 6-8 describes a person who claims to know God and is a part of the believing community. It is possible that v. 6 deals with a doubting person and vv. 7-8 deal with a double-minded person. This passage may reflect the proverbial “two ways” or the Jewish “two intents (*yetzers*)” (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Prov. 4:10-19; Matt. 7:13-14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER

A. Related to one’s personal relationship with the Triune God

1. Related to the Father’s will
 - a. Matt. 6:10
 - b. I John 3:22
 - c. I John 5:14-15
2. Abiding in Jesus
John 15:7
3. Praying in Jesus’ name
 - a. John 14:13,14
 - b. John 15:16
 - c. John 16:23-24
4. Praying in the Spirit
 - a. Eph. 6:18
 - b. Jude 20

B. Related to one’s personal motives

1. Not wavering
 - a. Matt. 21:22
 - b. James 1:6-7
2. Asking amiss
James 4:3
3. Asking selfishly
James 4:2-3

C. Related to one’s personal choices

1. Perseverance
 - a. Luke 18:1-8
 - b. Colossians 4:2
 - c. James 5:16
2. Discord at home
I Peter 3:7
3. Sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - c. Isaiah 64:7

All prayer is answered, but not all prayer is answered in the affirmative or the way we desire. Prayer is a two-way relationship. The worst thing God could do is grant believers' inappropriate requests. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at Col. 4:3.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VERSES 7-8 AND 9-11

- A. The conjunction used in v. 9 (*de*) signals the reader that these verses are somehow connected with what goes before. However, the link is unspecified. It is obvious that the discussion of trials, which is introduced in v. 2, begins again in vv. 12ff.
- B. The contextual connection is uncertain. Some say:
 - 1. the "all joy" of v. 2 relates to "rejoice" of v. 9
 - 2. the trials of v. 2 relate to the tests of poverty or wealth in vv. 9-11.
- C. Most commentators relate vv. 9-11 to the "trials" of v. 2. These trials are discussed again in vv. 12ff. The trials of vv. 9-11 would uniquely refer to temptations caused by poverty or wealth, not persecution.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. To whom is this letter addressed?
- 2. What is the purpose of trials according to vv. 3 and 4?
- 3. What is doubt? How does doubt affect believers' prayers?
- 4. Are there two kinds of people spoken of in vv. 6-8 or only one?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 1:9-11

⁹But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

1:9 "brother" Although James has a Jewish flavor, it is addressed to a Christian audience. This is confirmed by (1) the use of the term "brother" (cf. 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12,19); (2) the use of the term "Lord" (cf. 1:1,7,12; 2:1; 4:10,15; 5:4,7,8,10,11,14,15); (3) the specific mention of faith in Christ (cf. 2:1); and (4) the expectation of Jesus' return (cf. 5:8).



NASB "of humble circumstances"
NKJV "lowly"
NRSV "who is lowly"
TEV "who are poor"
NJB "in humble circumstances"

This refers to physical poverty (cf. Luke 6:20), although this same term is used by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount for the "spiritually poor" (cf. Matt. 5:3).



NASB “to glory”
 NKJV “glory”
 NRSV “boast”
 TEV “must be glad”
 NJB “should glory”

This usage of glory (*kauchaomai*) can be seen in the Septuagint of Ps. 32:11 and in the NT in Phil. 3:3. This is a strong Greek term and should be translated “exult” (cf. Rom. 5:2,3,11).

▣ “in his high position” This refers to one’s personal exaltation at being a Christian (cf. Jer. 9:23-24). In light of this, worldly distinctions and trials fade into insignificance.

1:10 “the rich man is to glory” The exact point of the comparison is not clear, but it becomes obvious if we assume that both are believers (cf. Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). However, the term “brother” does not appear in v. 10. This passage may be contrasting poor believers and wealthy unbelievers, like 5:1-6 and the parable of Jesus in Luke 16:19-31.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

- I. Perspective of the Old Testament as a whole
 - A. God is the owner of all things
 1. Genesis 1-2
 2. I Chronicles 29:11
 3. Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11
 4. Isaiah 66:2
 - B. Humans are stewards of wealth for God’s purposes
 1. Deuteronomy 8:11-20
 2. Leviticus 19:9-18
 3. Job 31:16-33
 4. Isaiah 58:6-10
 - C. Wealth is a part of worship
 1. the two tithes
 - a. Numbers 18:21-29; Deut. 12:6-7; 14:22-27
 - b. Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15
 2. Proverbs 3:9
 - D. Wealth is seen as a gift from God for covenant fidelity
 1. Deuteronomy 27-28
 2. Proverbs 3:10; 8:20-21; 10:22; 15:6
 - E. Warning against wealth at the expense of others
 1. Proverbs 21:6
 2. Jeremiah 5:26-29
 3. Hosea 12:6-8
 4. Micah 6:9-12
 - F. Wealth is not sinful in itself unless it is priority
 1. Psalm 52:7; 62:10; 73:3-9
 2. Proverbs 11:28; 23:4-5; 27:24; 28:20-22
 3. Job 31:24-28
- II. Unique perspective of Proverbs
 - A. Wealth placed in arena of personal effort
 1. slothfulness and laziness condemned—Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4-5,26; 12:24,27; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4,13; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16
 2. hard work advocated—Proverbs 12:11,14; 13:11

- B. Poverty versus riches used to illustrate righteousness versus wickedness—Proverbs 10:1ff; 11:27-28; 13:7; 15:16-17; 28:6,19-20
- C. Wisdom (knowing God and His Word and living this knowledge) is better than riches—Proverbs 3:13-15; 8:9-11,18-21; 13:18
- D. Warnings and admonitions
 - 1. warnings
 - a. beware of guarantying a neighbor's loan (surety)—Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; 27:13
 - b. beware of getting rich through evil means—Proverbs 1:19; 10:2,15; 11:1; 13:11; 16:11; 20:10,23; 21:6; 22:16,22; 28:8
 - c. beware of borrowing—Proverbs 22:7
 - d. beware of fleetingness of wealth—Proverbs 23:4-5
 - e. wealth will not help on judgment day—Proverbs 11:4
 - f. wealth has many "friends"—Proverbs 14:20; 19:4
 - 2. admonitions
 - a. generosity advocated—Proverbs 11:24-26; 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; 22:9,22-23; 23:10-11; 28:27
 - b. righteousness better than wealth—Proverbs 16:8; 28:6,8,20-22
 - c. prayer for need, not abundance—Proverbs 30:7-9
 - d. giving to the poor is giving to God—Proverbs 14:31

III. Perspective of the New Testament

- A. Jesus
 - 1. wealth forms a unique temptation to trust in ourselves and our resources instead of God and His resources
 - a. Matthew 6:24; 13:22; 19:23
 - b. Mark 10:23-31
 - c. Luke 12:15-21,33-34
 - d. Revelation 3:17-19
 - 2. God will provide our physical needs
 - a. Matthew 6:19-34
 - b. Luke 12:29-32
 - 3. sowing is related to reaping (spiritual as well as physical)
 - a. Mark 4:24
 - b. Luke 6:36-38
 - c. Matthew 6:14; 18:35
 - 4. repentance affects wealth
 - a. Luke 19:2-10
 - b. Leviticus 5:16
 - 5. economic exploitation condemned
 - a. Matthew 23:25
 - b. Mark 12:38-40
 - 6. end-time judgment is related to our use of wealth—Matthew 25:31-46
- B. Paul
 - 1. practical view like Proverbs (work)
 - a. Ephesians 4:28
 - b. I Thessalonians 4:11-12
 - c. II Thessalonians 3:8,11-12
 - d. I Timothy 5:8
 - 2. spiritual view like Jesus (things are fleeting, be content)
 - a. I Timothy 6:6-10 (contentment)
 - b. Philippians 4:11-12 (contentment)

- c. Hebrews 13:5 (contentment)
- d. I Timothy 6:17-19 (generosity and trust in God, not riches)
- e. I Corinthians 7:30-31 (transformation of things)

IV. Conclusions

- A. There is no systematic biblical theology concerning wealth.
- B. There is no definitive passage on this subject therefore, insights much be gleaned from different passages. Take care not to read your views into these isolated texts.
- C. Proverbs, which was written by the wise men (sages), has a different perspective than other types of biblical genre. Proverbs is practical and individually focused. It balances and must be balanced by other Scripture (cf. Jer. 18:18).
- D. Our day needs to analyze its views and practices concerning wealth in light of the bible. Our priorities are misplaced if capitalism or communism is our only guide. Why and how one succeeds are more important questions than how much one has accumulated.
- E. Accumulation of wealth must be balanced with true worship and responsible stewardship (cf. II Cor. 8-9).

▣ **“like flowering grass he will pass away”** This refers to the transitory nature of all material things (cf. II Cor. 4:18). These words in vv. 10-11 are an allusion to Isa. 40:6-8 or Ps. 103:15-16 (cf. I Pet. 1:24-25). The poor need a sense of worth and the rich need a sense of humility. Earthly distinctions fade away in Christ and will one day fade away in the consummated kingdom of God.

1:11 “For the sun rises with a scorching wind” This refers to the desert Sirocco winds. Grass (and humanity) is fragile, dependant, and transitory.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-18

¹²Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

1:12 “Blessed” This reflects Hebrew usage (cf. Ps. 1:1; Prov. 3:13; 8:34; Job 5:17; Isa. 56:2; Jer. 17:7). This can be translated “happy” (cf. TEV). This is the same term used in “the Beatitudes” of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5:1-17).

▣ **“the man who perseveres under trial”** This is a PRESENT TENSE which means continuance under trial (cf. v. 3). Believers are not blessed by the trial, but the spiritual maturity which perseverance and faith produce in us.

▣ **“for once he has been approved”** “Test” is the Greek word *dokimos* (cf. v. 3). It often implies “to test with a view toward approval.” This approval comes only through testing. It was used in Greek for medical doctors taking a final practical test before graduation. See Special Topic at 1:13.

▣ **“crown of life”** This is the Greek term *stephanos*, which was a wreath worn on the head as a symbol of military or athletic victory. It is the word from which we get the English name Stephen. There are several crowns referred to in the NT which faithful believers will receive from God: (1) “the crown of righteousness” (cf. II Tim. 4:8); (2) “the crown of life” (cf. Rev. 2:10; 3:11); (3) “the crown of glory” (cf. I Pet. 5:4); and (4) “an imperishable crown” (cf. I Cor. 9:25).

Because of the Jewish flavor of James, this probably does not refer to an athletic victory wreath, but follows the Septuagint where *stephanos* is used of a royal or priestly crown.

▣ **“which the Lord has promised”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE with an unexpressed subject. The NASB, NKJV, NRSV, and NJB supply “the Lord,” while TEV and NIV supply “God.” This is typical of many later scribal changes to the original Greek texts. The scribes tried to make the text as specific as possible to remove ambiguity or supposed heretical interpretation.

Also notice this crown (1) is promised by God, but (2) comes through the believer's victory over trials and temptations. As always God deals with mankind through covenant "if. . .then" categories. God provides, initiates, and empowers, but we must respond and continue to respond by repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance.

▣ **"to those who love Him"** Love is shown by obedience (cf. 2:5; Exod. 20:5-6; Deut. 5:10,32; 6:6; 7:9). There is no excuse for disobedience (cf. Luke 6:46).

1:13 "Let no one say" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means "stop saying." The implication is that some believers were saying this or that this may reflect a literary technique called diatribe (cf. Malachi; Romans).

▣ **"when he is tempted"** The context implies that one saying that he is tempted by God is attempting to make his sin God's fault. The word tempted (*peirasmois*) is used in v. 2 in the sense of outward trials, but here the VERBAL form is used of temptation. God provides, or allows, testing (cf. Matt. 4:1), but Satan does it. "Tempted" (*peirazō*) is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (i.e. "he is being tempted"), which often has the connotation of "testing with a view toward destruction." It is the opposite connotation of the word "test" (*dokimazō*) used in 1:3,12. See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing at 1:3.

▣ **"I am being tempted by God"** God is not the source of evil! Please read Ecclesiasticus 15:11,15,20.

▣ **"for God cannot be tempted by evil"** This means either (1) not temptable or (2) "untrained in evil" which means that God has no connection or experience with evil.

▣ **"He Himself does not tempt anyone"** However, the Bible records several of God's tests: Abraham, Gen. 22:1; Israel, Deut. 8:2; Jesus, Matt. 4:1; and believers, Matt. 6:13. This statement seems to be caught up in the differing connotations between the terms "tempt" (*peirazō*, cf. 1:13), and "test" (*dokimazō*, cf. 1:3,12). God does not tempt so as to destroy, but He does test so as to strengthen.

1:14 "when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust" These two verbs were used of trapping and luring animals into captivity. We tend to blame others for our sin. We may blame God, the devil, parents, society, education, etc. We are our own worst enemy. The Bible speaks of three enemies of humanity: the world, the flesh, and the devil (cf. 4:1-7; Eph. 2:1-3). In this context, "the flesh," or our Adamic nature, is the culprit (cf. Ecclesiasticus 15:14-15). Notice that Satan is not even mentioned in this section on human sinfulness. Neither is he mentioned in Paul's section in Romans on human sin (cf. chapters 1-3). Satan is a real tempter, but he cannot force humans to sin and is, therefore, no excuse for their moral failures.

1:15 "when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin" Sin is personified and is viewed as beginning in the mind (cf. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). Here the metaphor changes from capturing animals to "birth" used in a negative sense while in v. 18 it was used in a positive sense.

▣ **"death"** The Bible speaks of three kinds of death: (1) spiritual death (cf. Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1); (2) physical death (cf. Gen. 5); and (3) eternal death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14). Often the first two senses are combined as in Ezek. 18:4.

Death has become a theological issue in the evangelical discussion over a young earth (30,000 - 10,000 years) versus an old earth (billions of years). Is physical death (and extinction of some species) the normal order of creation or is it a result of human rebellion and sin? These kinds of questions are not specifically addressed in the Bible. Modern people try to answer these questions by an appeal to science, the Bible, or a combination of them. The Bible provides clear information about God and redemption, but not every intellectual inquiry. If one appeals to modern science, theories change; if one appeals to commentators, theology is often parochial or denominational.

1:16 "Do not be deceived" This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which here means to "stop an act already in progress" with the added connotation of an ongoing outside temptation. This is a strong idiom which is used to introduce a major truth (cf. I Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; and I John 1:7). God gives good gifts, not evil temptations.

▣ **"beloved brethren"** See note at 1:2 and 1:9.

1:17 "every good thing given, and every perfect gift" This is the contrast to vv. 13-16. Two different words are used here which appear to be used as parallels. If they are not synonymous, then the first emphasizes the act of giving and the second the thing given. God wants to give us good things. He is not reluctant but often believers are not ready to receive and use God's gifts in healthy ways. The Bible does list some of the things God has given us:

1. Jesus (John 3:16; II Cor. 9:15)
2. the Spirit (Luke 11:13)
3. the Kingdom (Luke 12:32)
4. salvation (John 1:12; Eph. 2:8)
5. eternal life (I John 5:11)
6. peace (John 14:27)
7. wisdom (James 1:5).

▣ **“coming down from”** Phrases like this imply that heaven is above the earth. Often this is used to discredit the Bible. The Bible is written in phenomenological language, the language of description using the five senses. It is earth-centered or focused. This language is a literary way of expressing the priority of God’s ultimate creation, mankind. The Bible is not a science book, but a theology book. It is not anti-scientific, but pre-scientific. In this way it relates to all cultures through time.

▣ **“the Father of lights”** Light is a biblical metaphor of good, of health, of insight or truth, of purity. The first mention of light is in Genesis 1 where YHWH creates light (cf. v. 3). He also names darkness (cf. Gen. 1:4-5) which shows His control over both. This does not refer to the sun, which is not brought into being until day four (cf. Gen. 1:14-19; Ps. 136:7). Light is often associated with God (cf. Ps. 104:2; I Tim. 6:16; I John 1:5) or Christ (cf. John 1:4-5; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).

Mankind’s destiny is not controlled by angelic or demonic influences depicted in the movement or eclipse of heavenly lights. God is the creator (cf. Gen. 1:14-18) and controller of the heavenly bodies (cf. Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:26). He always gives good things to His children; even trials have a positive, purposeful, intended outcome—our maturity and trust in Him (i.e. Christlikeness, cf. Rom. 8:28-29).



NASB “with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow”
NKJV “with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”
NRSV “with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change”
TEV “who does not change or cause darkness by turning”
NJB “with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change”

These terms reflect the waxing and waning of the heavenly bodies of light. God is not like them. He is unchanging (cf. Ps. 102:26-27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:11-12; 13:8). This is not meant to imply that He is rigid or unsympathetic to human need (cf. Exod. 32:12,14; Ps. 106:44-45; Jer. 18:6-10), but that His nature, His character of love and compassion towards humankind does not change. Believers can depend on His promises because His character is unchanging, immutable.

The ambiguity of this phrase caused scribes to alter the text in several ways. For a full discussion see Bruce Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* pp. 679-680.

1:18 “In the exercise of His will” God always takes the initiative (AORIST PASSIVE [deponent] PARTICIPLE) in mankind’s situation and salvation (cf. John 6:44,65; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:4; 2:8; I Pet. 1:3).

▣ **“He brought us forth”** This is a common biblical familial metaphor for salvation as becoming God’s children through birth (cf. 1:12-13; John 3:3; Acts 17:29; Heb. 12:5-9; I Pet. 1:3,23; I John 2:29; 5:1,4). This phrase could refer to the initial creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis. If this is true then it could explain the difficulty of 1:21 where believers are to welcome the word that is already implanted in them. This then would refer to the image of God in humans by creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6) and its full restoration through faith in Jesus Christ.

However, in context this seems to refer to becoming a Christian because the agency is the word of truth which implies that salvation is only through the gospel, not creation. Part of the interpretive ambiguity is the fact that the term “father” is used in several distinct ways in the Bible: (1) creator of all things; (2) begetter and sustainer of Israel (and Israel’s king); (3) begetter and sustainer of spiritual Israel (the church); and (4) relationship within the Trinity (Father - Son).

▣ **“the word of truth”** In Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; and II Tim. 2:15 it is synonymous with “the gospel.”

▣ **“first fruits”** This means first: (1) in the sense of time as in the OT where the first-ripened part of the crop was dedicated to YHWH to show His ownership of all the crops (cf. Exod. 28:19; 34:22,26; Lev. 23:10) and (2) metaphorically first in priority and prominence. This is not to imply that God loves believers more, but that He wants to use them and their changed lives of faith to reach the others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do vv. 9-11 relate to the argument of chapter 1?
2. Is the rich man in v. 10 a Christian?
3. What does Matthew 6:13 mean if God does not tempt (v. 13)?
4. What is Satan's relationship to temptation?
5. List the types of trials mentioned in chapter 1.
6. Explain in your own words the three enemies which assault the children of Adam.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 1:19-27

- A. There is an emphasis in this context on "the word."
 1. spiritual birth comes through the word (v. 18)
 2. the word is received (v. 21)
 3. the word is implanted (v. 2)
 4. the word acts as a mirror for God's will (v. 24)
 5. the word is the law of the new age (v. 25)
- B. There are three key IMPERATIVES which show the intended theological progress, similar to the process in Ezra 7:10
 1. hear (v. 19)
 2. receive (v. 21)
 3. do (v. 22; this is the theme of James)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:19-25

¹⁹*This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;* ²⁰*for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* ²¹*Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.* ²²*But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.* ²³*For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;* ²⁴*for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.* ²⁵*But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

1:19 "This you know" This is a PERFECT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Although this could be taken as an INDICATIVE statement (Greek morphology), the introductory IMPERATIVES of 1:16 and 2:5 clue us that this is also a command relating to our understanding of the gospel (cf. I John 2:21). The word "know" is used in Hebrews of "personal relationship with" and in Greek of "facts about." Both are crucial aspects of the gospel, which are (1) a person to welcome; (2) truths about that person to believe; and (3) a life emulating that person to live. Believers must live appropriately! This entire section could be entitled "Results of the New Birth" or "The Life Changing Message." Eternal life has observable characteristics.

▣ **"my beloved brethren"** See note at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ **"quick to hear, slow to speak"** This is a proverbial saying (cf. Prov. 10:19; 13:3; 16:32; 17:28; 29:20). Verses 22-25 relate to this first imperative phrase. This injunction may refer to the informality and unstructured dynamic nature of the worship services of the early church (cf. 3:1ff). This openness was often abused. This same tension among rival singers, tongue speakers, and prophets can be seen in I Cor. 14.

▣ **“slow to anger”** Anger is not a sin (lest Jesus be accused of sin in the cleansing of the Temple or His harsh words to the Pharisees), but it is an emotion easily used by the evil one (cf. Prov. 14:17; 16:32; Eccl. 7:9). Anger in this context may refer to (1) persecutions, trials, temptations or (2) personal pride or jealousy related to Christian worship (cf. I Cor. 14).

1:20 Angry Christians distort the message that God is trying to communicate to others through them (cf. Matt. 5:22; Eph. 4:26).

1:21 “putting aside all filthiness” This is an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE functioning as an IMPERATIVE. This phrase emphasizes our volitional capacity and responsibility as believers. The removal of clothing is often used as a biblical metaphor for spiritual characteristics (cf. Rom. 13:12; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:22-25; Col. 3:8,10,12,14; I Pet. 2:1). Dirty clothing is an OT metaphor which is often used for “sin” (cf. Isa. 64:6; Zech. 3:4).

▣ **“all filthiness”** This term often means “a wax build-up in the ear.” It may refer to unholy living which impairs a believer’s hearing of God’s word. However, its primary usage was “dirty,” as in dirty clothing (cf. James 2:2) which would relate to a believer’s lifestyle. “Vulgarity” is another possible usage of the term, which would refer to a believer’s speech.

▣

NASB “all that remains of wickedness”
NKJV “overflow of wickedness”
NRSV “rank growth of wickedness”
TEV “all wicked conduct”
NJB “remnants of evil”

This term is used in the NT of “that which is left over” or an “abundance of” something (cf. Rom. 5:17; II Cor. 8:2;10:15). Here it seems to mean to keep oneself within the appropriate God-given bounds. This term can be translated “malice” (NEB) or “vicious talk,” which would relate it to James’ continuing emphasis on the spoken word.

▣ **“in humility”** This Greek term and its related forms mean “gentleness,” “meekness,” and “consideration.” It is the opposite of the harsh, selfish attitudes and actions delineated in v. 21.

Plato used this family of terms for the “golden mean,” that is a wholesome balance in life brought about by one’s control of himself. Believers are able to take off evil (i.e. the old man) and put on good (i.e. the new man) because of their trusting relationship with Christ and the indwelling Spirit. Humility is a word picture of Jesus (cf. Matt. 21:5) and is God’s will for every believer (cf. Matt. 5:5; I Pet. 3:4). See note at 3:13.

▣ **“receive”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. God’s word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, must be received (cf. John 1:12; Acts 17:11; Rom. 10:9-13; I Thess. 2:13). This receiving is both initial repentance, faith unto salvation, and continuing repentance, faith unto godliness and Christlikeness. The hearing of faith must issue in a life of faith.

▣ **“the word implanted”** This is the metaphor of planting (cf. Matt. 13:8; II Pet. 1:4). The Greek text implies that humans already have the implanted word which they must receive by faith. This could be referring to the original creation of humanity, as could v. 18. If so it would refer to God’s image in us (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), which was marred by the Fall (cf. Gen. 3), but is restored by faith in Christ. Three metaphors are used to illustrate the “word of truth”: a seed (v. 21); a mirror (v. 23); and a law (v. 25). The gospel must be received and then lived out.

Verse 21 contains both prerequisites of NT salvation: repentance (laying aside) and faith (receiving, cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). This is a negative “turning from” (repentance) and a positive “turning to” (faith).

▣ **“which is able to save your souls”** This implanted word is a powerful metaphor of believers’ new relationships with God. The term “soul” speaks of the whole person. Humans are a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7); they do not have a soul (Greek concept). Theologically, soul (*psuchē*) and spirit (*pneuma*) are synonyms for the whole person.

The term “save” has an OT meaning of “physical deliverance” (*yasha*) and a NT meaning of “eternal salvation” (*sōzō*). The OT usage is found in James 5:15,20. But here and in 2:14; 4:12 the NT connotation fits best.

The current theological discussion over “a free salvation” versus “Lordship salvation” is a good example of how modern interpreters proof-text one passage (or category of passages) to the exclusion of others and thereby developing a dogmatic, systematic, theological position. However, the NT, like all ancient near eastern literature, is highly figurative and often dualistic in the sense of presenting truth in tension-filled pairs. In this context we are saved (eternal life) by God’s word, but we must also act on God’s word daily (OT saved or delivered). For joy and maturity both are necessary. This combination of faith and works is James’ central message, faith and works! They are covenant twins!

1:22 “But prove yourselves doers of the word” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. This verse is the central message of the entire book (cf. 1:22,23,25). Christianity is a volitional decision to a faith relationship with Jesus Christ which issues in

a Christlike lifestyle. It is possible that this phrase is an indirect way of referring to OT obedience as in the Ten Commandments (cf. James 1:12 combined with Ex. 20:6 and Deut. 5:10).

☐ **“not merely hearers”** This word was used in Greek literature for those who attended lectures but never joined the groups. Hearing the truth is not enough; believers must act on it and continue to act on it daily (cf. Luke 11:28; Rom. 2:13).

☐ **“who delude themselves”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. Modern Christianity is guilty of supposing that church attendance or civil responsibility is equated with Christian service. Our cultural segregation of the secular and sacred only achieves self-deception. Verses 23-25 are an example of such self-deception. Life belongs to God and each of us will give an account to God as to how we have lived it.

1:23 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Modern believers often attend Sunday School and preaching but it does not affect their daily lives. In a sense this is practical atheism, the irrelevancy of God!

Christianity is not a building, nor a creed only, but a faith relationship with God through Christ that impacts every area of life, every day!

☐
NASB, NKJV “natural face”
NRSV (margin) “at the face of his birth”
TEV “see themselves”
NJB “sees what he looks like”

This metaphor, “face of birth,” is used in the sense of seeing one’s self. The whole point of vv. 23-24 is that believers must do more than hear the truth or know the truth. We must act on it. What we do not use, we lose!

☐ **“mirror”** Ancient mirrors were made of polished metal. They were very expensive and produced only a distorted reflection (cf. I Cor. 13:12). God’s word functions as a spiritual mirror of perfect clarity.

1:24 A quick, superficial look at our true self issues in a settled life of rebellious self-deception!

1:25 “looked” There are two Greek terms in vv. 23-25 for “look” or “observe.” The first is *katanoeō*, used in vv. 23 and 24. The second, used here, is a stronger term, *parakuptō*, which means “to look intently at” or “to closely examine” (cf. John 20:5,11; I Pet. 1:12).

Believers are to observe themselves in light of God’s word, then they are to gaze intently at “the perfect law, the law of liberty,” the gospel of Jesus Christ. Knowledge of self is helpful, but knowledge of God is eternal.

☐
NASB “at the perfect law, the law of liberty”
NKJV “the perfect law of liberty”
NRSV “the perfect law, the law of liberty”
TEV “the perfect law that sets people free”
NJB “the perfect law of freedom”

This phrase is parallel to “the royal law” in 2:8 and “the law of liberty” in 2:12 (also, notice John 8:23; Rom. 8:2; 14:1ff; I Cor. 8:1ff; 10:23-33; Gal. 6:2). God’s word is not a barrier to our freedom, but is real freedom from our sin nature. Believers are now free to serve Him (cf. Rom. 6).

☐ **“this man will be blessed in what he does”** Notice the criteria for blessing: (1) looking intently at the perfect law; (2) abiding by it; and (3) being an effectual doer of it.

The FUTURE TENSE could refer to temporal blessing now, but because of James’ eschatological orientation (cf. 1:8-9,12; 5:7-8) it is probably end-time, Resurrection/Judgment Day blessings.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-27

²⁶If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man’s religion is worthless. ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

1:26 “If anyone thinks himself to be religious” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. The King James adds “seems” but the phrase refers to self-deception, not the observation and evaluation of others. Often believers substitute the human performance of rules and ritual for daily, Christlike living. Verses 25-26 are not a reference to religious hypocrites, but to sincere, unfulfilled, uninformed, unfruitful religionists. The term “religious” means “one concerned with scrupulous details.” James envisions (1) legalistic believers who trust in rules or (2) gnostic believers who trust in knowledge, neither of whom live godly lives.

▣ **“does not bridle his tongue. . .this man’s religion is worthless”** Human speech is a major issue in James (cf. 1:19; 3:2-12; Matt. 15:8-9; Col. 2:20-23; II Tim. 3:5). Self-control is a sign of Christian maturity (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). Orthodoxy without orthopraxy is common among the people of God. This is an empty show (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8-9; Col. 2:23-25; II Tim. 3:5; James 1:19; 3:2-12). Religion can be a barrier to God (cf. Rom. 9:30-32).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SPEECH

I. OPENING THOUGHTS FROM PROVERBS

- A. Speech is part of the image of God in mankind (i.e. creation is spoken into existence and God talks to His human creation). It is a vital part of our personhood.
- B. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life. Therefore, it reveals who we really are (Prov. 18:2; 4:23 [20-27]). Speech is the acid test of the person (Prov. 23:7).
- C. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow humans. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (Prov. 17:10) and negative (Prov. 12:18) ways.
- D. There is tremendous power in human speech (Prov. 18:20-21)—power to bless and heal (Prov. 10:11,21) and power to curse and destroy (Prov. 11:9).
- E. We reap what we sow (Prov. 12:14).

II. PRINCIPLES FROM PROVERBS ON HUMAN SPEECH

- A. The negative and destructive potential of human speech
 1. the words of evil men (1:11-19; 10:6; 11:9,11; 12:2-6)
 2. the words of the adulteress (5:2-5; 6:24-35; 7:5ff; 9:13-18; 22:14)
 3. the words of the liar (6:12-15,19; 10:18; 12:17-19,22; 14:5,25; 17:4; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18; 26:23-28)
 4. the words of the fool (10:10,14; 14:3; 15:14; 18:6-8)
 5. the words of false witnesses (6:19; 12:17; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18)
 6. the words of a gossip (6:14,19; 11:13; 16:27-28; 20:19; 25:23; 26:20)
 7. the words too quickly spoken (6:1-5; 12:18; 20:25; 29:20)
 8. the words of flattery (29:5)
 9. too many words (10:14,19,23; 11:13; 13:3,16; 14:23; 15:2; 17:27-28; 18:2; 21:23; 29:20)
 10. perverted words (17:20; 19:1)
- B. the positive, healing and edifying potential of human speech
 1. the words of the righteous (10:11,20-21,31-32; 12:14; 13:2; 15:23; 16:13; 18:20)
 2. the words of the discerning (10:13; 11:12)
 3. the words of knowledge (15:1,4,7,8; 20:15)
 4. the words of healing (15:4)
 5. the words of a gentle answer (15:1,4,18,23; 16:1; 25:15)
 6. the words of a pleasant answer (12:25; 15:26,30; 16:24)
 7. the words of the law (22:17-21)

III. THE OT PATTERN CONTINUES IN THE NT

- A. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life; therefore, it reveals who we really are (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:2-23).
- B. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow man. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (II Tim. 3:15-17) and negative (James 3:2-12) ways.

- C. There is tremendous power in human speech; power to bless (Eph. 4:29) and power to curse (James 3:9). We are responsible for what we say (James 3:2-12).
- D. We will be judged by our words (Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:39-45) as well as our deeds (Matt. 25:31-46). We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Corinthians 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e. intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e. will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit’s activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e. Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, “God was grieved to His heart” (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, “with all your heart and all your soul”
 - c. Deut. 10:16, “uncircumcised heart” and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, “a new heart”
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, “a new heart” vs. “a heart of stone”

1:27 “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this” This expresses true religion in terms of service, as do Deuteronomy and Matt. 25:31-46. Also, see Micah 6:6-8 for a definition of true religion. The verse reflects Judaism’s almsgiving (cf. Matt. 6:1) which was thought of as an evidence of one’s relationship to God. Holiness is not a radical separation from society, but an involvement in the needs of the poor and socially ostracized (cf. 2:15-17).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER

The OT introduces the intimate familial metaphor of God as Father: (1) the nation of Israel is often described as YHWH’s “son” (cf. Hos. 11:1; Mal. 3:17); (2) even earlier in Deuteronomy the analogy of God as Father is used (1:31); (3) in Deut. 32 Israel is called “his children” and God is called “your father”; (4) this analogy is stated in Ps. 103:13 and developed in Ps. 68:5 (the father of orphans); and (5) it was common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:8; Israel as son, God as Father, 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9).

Jesus spoke Aramaic, which means that many of the places where “Father” appears as the Greek *Pater* may reflect the Aramaic *Abba* (cf. 14:36). This familial term “Daddy” or “Papa” reflects Jesus’ intimacy with the Father; His revealing this to His followers also encourages our own intimacy with the Father. The term “Father” was used sparingly in the OT for YHWH, but Jesus uses it often and pervasively. It is a major revelation of believers’ new relationship with God through Christ (cf. Matt. 6:9).

It must be remembered that Father is a metaphor of family, not of generation or previous existence. There has never been a time when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit were not together and of one essence! See Special Topic: The Trinity at Gal. 4:4.

▣ **“to visit orphans and widows”** This refers to the social outcasts and socially vulnerable people (cf. Deut. 27:19; Ps. 68:5; Eccl. 4:10; Matt. 25:31). The true life-changing gospel always carries with it social concerns and activism. Truly knowing God must issue in serving others made in His image.

▣ **“to keep oneself unstained”** This is a PRESENT INFINITIVE (cf. I Tim. 5:22). The term was associated with acceptable sacrificial animals. Faith has two practical aspects: social action and personal ethics (cf. Matt. 25:31ff).

▣ **“by the world”** Remember that as believers we are in the world, not of the world (cf. James 4:4; I John 2:15-17); lack of involvement and heavy involvement are both inappropriate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What are we to understand from James 1:19?
2. List the items in vv. 19-27 that could relate to problems in public worship.
3. Explain the two elements of salvation which are discussed in v. 21.
4. In what way do religious people deceive themselves?
5. Why is the speech of believers mentioned so often in James (1:19,21,26; 3:1ff)?
6. Explain James' definition of true religion in vv. 26-27. What two items does he emphasize?

JAMES 2:1-26

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Warning Against Partiality	Beware of Personal Favoritism	The Respect Due to the Poor	Warning Against Prejudice	Respect for the Poor
2:1-4	2:1-13	2:1-7	2:1-7	2:1-4
2:5-13		2:8-13	2:8-13	2:5-9
				2:10-13
Faith and Works	Faith Without Works is Dead	Faith and Works	Faith and Actions	Faith and Deeds
2:14-17	2:14-26	2:14-27	2:14-17	2:14-17
2:18-26		2:18-26	2:18-24	2:18-23
			2:25	2:24-26
			2:26	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:1-13

- A. James 2:1-13 is an expansion of the discussion about the relationship between the rich and poor in 1:9-11,27.
- B. It is uncertain whether the rich referred to in 1:10-11; 2:6 or 5:1-6 are believers. Possibly they were wealthy Jews, the very ones who persecuted the early Christians.
- C. Wealth in the OT was a sign of God's pleasure (cf. Lev. 26; Deut. 27), but later teachings bring the needed balance to this concept (cf. Job, Ps. 73; Matt. 5-7). Poverty even came to be a metaphor for spiritual hunger (cf. Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20).

- D. The section develops into two related topics:
1. the ways of this age (vv. 1-7)
 2. the ways of the coming Messianic Age (vv. 8-13)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-7

¹My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of personal favoritism*. ²For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him*? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

2:1 “My brethren” See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

☐ “do not hold” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which means to stop an act that is already in process. The Williams translation has “stop trying to maintain. . .” This implies that the people acting this way were misguided believers.



NASB, NJB	“your faith”
NKJV	“the faith”
NRSV	“really believe”
TEV	“as believers”

This is not “faith” in the sense of doctrine, as in Jude 3 and 20, but personal trust in Christ (OBJECTIVE GENITIVE).

☐ “in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” This GENITIVE phrase is literally “of glory” and is in opposition to the GENITIVE phrase “of our Lord.” This is a title for deity in the Bible (cf. Ps. 29:1-3; Acts 7:2; I Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:17). The rabbis used the term “Shekinah glory” to speak of YHWH dwelling with Israel (cf. Ex. 16:10; II Chr. 7:1-3). Here the phrase describes Jesus (cf. Luke 2:32; John 1:14; 17:5; I Cor. 2:8; Heb. 1:3). Notice that Jesus is called (1) Messiah (Christ in Greek); (2) Lord (Greek translation of YHWH using the meaning of the substituted term *Adonai*); and (3) “of glory” (unique title for YHWH). These titles are a literary technique of attributing the divine characteristics of YHWH to Jesus of Nazareth.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The word “radiance” (*apaugasma*) is used only here in the NT. In Philo it was used of Christ’s relationship to God in the sense that the *logos* was a reflection of deity. The early Greek church fathers used it in the sense of Christ as the reflection or effulgence of God. In a popular sense to see Jesus is to see God, as a mirror reflects the light of the full sun. The Hebrew term “glory” (*kabod*) was often used in the sense of brightness (cf. Exod. 16:10; 24:16-17; Lev. 9:6).

This phrasing may be related to Prov. 8:22-31, where “wisdom” (the term is FEMININE in both Hebrew and Greek) is personified as God’s first creation (cf. *Sirach* 1:4) and agent of creation (cf. *Wisdom of Solomon* 9:9). This same concept is developed in the apocryphal book *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:15-22a and 22b-30. In v. 22 wisdom fashions all things; in v. 25 wisdom is pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; in v. 26 wisdom is the reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God; in v. 29 compared with the light (i.e. sun and stars) she is found to be superior.

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kabod*) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) which meant “to be heavy.” That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty. He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold. God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous:

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22).

▣ **“Lord”** The term *Kurios* only appears once in this context, not twice as in the RSV, NKJV, TEV, and NJB translations.



NASB “with an attitude of personal favoritism”
NKJV “with partiality”
NRSV “with your acts of favoritism”
TEV “you must never treat people in different ways according to their outward appearance”
NJB “do not let class distinctions enter”

This reflects an OT idiom, “to lift the face” (cf. Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 10:17; 16:19; 24:17). Believers must be careful of worldly distinctions (cf. Acts 10:34). God (in Christ), has torn down every barrier that humans have raised to their fellow man: rich-poor; Jew-Gentile; slave-free; and men-women (cf. I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

Grammatically, verse 1 is either a statement or a question which expects a “no” answer (NRSV). Most translations make it a statement (NASB, NKJV, TEV, NJB, NIV).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM

I. Introduction

- A. This is a universal expression by fallen mankind within his society. This is mankind’s ego, supporting itself on the backs of others. Racism is, in many ways, a modern phenomena, while nationalism (or tribalism) is a more ancient expression.
- B. Nationalism began at Babel (Gen. 11) and was originally related to Noah’s three sons from whom the so called races developed (Gen. 10). However, it is obvious from Scripture that humanity is from one source (cf. Gen. 1-3; Acts 17:24-26).
- C. Racism is just one of many prejudices. Some others are (1) educational snobbery; (2) socio-economic arrogance; (3) self-righteous religious legalism; and (4) dogmatic political affiliations.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Gen. 1:27- Mankind, male and female, were made in the image and likeness of God, which makes them unique. It also shows their individual worth and dignity (cf. John 3:16).
2. Gen. 1:11-25 - Records the phrase, “. . .according to its own kind. . .” ten times. This has been used to support racial segregation. However, it is obvious from the context that this refers to animals and plants and not to humanity.
3. Gen. 9:18-27 - This has been used to support racial dominance. It must be remembered that God did not curse Canaan. Noah, his father, cursed him after awakening from a drunken stupor. The Bible never records that God confirmed this oath/curse. Even if He did, this does not affect the black race. Canaan was the father of those who inhabited Palestine and the Egyptian wall art shows they were not black.
4. Joshua 9:23 - This has been used to prove one race will serve another. However, in context, the Gibeonites are of the same racial stock as the Jews.
5. Ezra 9-10 and Neh. 13 - These have often been used in a racial sense, but the context shows that the marriages were condemned, not because of race (they were from the same son of Noah, Genesis 10), but for religious reasons.

B. New Testament

1. The Gospels
 - a. Jesus made use of the hatred between the Jews and Samaritans on several instances, which shows that racial hatred is inappropriate.
 - (1) the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

- (2) the woman at the well (John 4:4)
 - (3) the thankful leper (Luke 17:7-19)
 - b. The Gospel is for all humanity
 - (1) John 3:16
 - (2) Luke 24:46-47
 - (3) Hebrews 2:9
 - (4) Revelation 14:6
 - c. The Kingdom will include all humanity
 - (1) Luke 13:29
 - (2) Revelation 5
- 2. Acts
 - a. Acts 10 is a definitive passage on God's universal love and the gospel's universal message.
 - b. Peter was attacked for his actions in Acts 11 and this problem was not resolved until the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 met and came to a solution. The tension between first century Jews and Gentiles was very intense.
- 3. Paul
 - a. There are no barriers in Christ
 - (1) Gal. 3:26-28
 - (2) Eph. 2:11-22
 - (3) Col. 3:11
 - b. God is no respecter of persons
 - (1) Rom. 2:11
 - (2) Eph. 6:9
- 4. Peter and James
 - a. God is no respecter of persons, I Pet. 1:17
 - b. Because God does not show partiality, then neither should His people, James 2:1
- 5. John
 - a. One of the strongest statements on the responsibility of believers is found in I John 4:20

III. Conclusion

- A. Racism, or for that matter, prejudice of any kind, is totally inappropriate for God's children. Here is a quote from Henlee Barnette, who spoke at a forum at Glorieta, New Mexico for the Christian Life Commission in 1964.

"Racism is heretical because it is unbiblical and unchristian, not to mention unscientific."
- B. This problem gives Christians the opportunity to show their Christlike love, forgiveness and understanding to a lost world. Christian refusal in this area shows immaturity and is an opportunity for the evil one to retard the believer's faith, assurance, and growth. It will also act as a barrier to lost people coming to Christ.
- C. What can I do? (This section is taken from a Christian Life Commission tract entitled "Race Relations")

"ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL"

 - ★ Accept your own responsibility in solving the problems associated with race.
 - ★ Through prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with those of other races, strive to rid your life of racial prejudice.
 - ★ Express your convictions about race, particularly where those who stir up race hatred are unchallenged.

"IN FAMILY LIFE"

 - ★ Recognize the importance of family influence in the development of attitudes toward other races.
 - ★ Seek to develop Christian attitudes by talking over what children and parents hear about the race issue outside the home.
 - ★ Parents should be careful to set a Christian example in relating to people of other races.
 - ★ Seek opportunities to make family friendships across racial lines.

“IN YOUR CHURCH”

- ★ By the preaching and teaching of biblical truth relating to race, the congregation can be motivated to set an example for the entire community.
- ★ Be sure that worship, fellowship, and service through the church is open to all, even as the NT churches observed no racial barriers (Eph. 2:11-22; Gal. 3:26-29).

“IN DAILY LIFE”

- ★ Help to overcome all racial discrimination in the world of work.
- ★ Work through community organizations of all kinds to secure equal rights and opportunities, remembering that it is the race problem which should be attacked, not people. The aim is to promote understanding, not to create bitterness.
- ★ If it seems wise, organize a special committee of concerned citizens for the purpose of opening lines of communication in the community for education of the general public and for specific actions in improving race relations.
- ★ Support legislation and legislators in the passing of laws promoting racial justice and oppose those who exploit prejudice for political gain.
- ★ Commend law enforcement officials for enforcing the laws without discrimination.
- ★ Shun violence, and promote respect for the law, doing everything possible as a Christian citizen to make sure that legal structures do not become tools in the hands of those who would promote discrimination.
- ★ Exemplify the spirit and mind of Christ in all human relationship.

2:2 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL which refers to potential action. This refers to (1) hypothetical wealthy visitors coming to a Jewish, Christian worship meeting or (2) a synagogue-like Christian court setting.

▣ **“your assembly”** This is literally “synagogue,” which means “to bring together.” The use of this uniquely Jewish term reflects (1) the early date of the letter when Christians and Jews were still worshiping together (cf. Heb. 10:25) or (2) the early Jewish Christians’ worship services patterned after a synagogue structure. The presence of “seats of honor” and “footstool” in the Jewish Synagogue (cf. Matt. 23:6) seems to confirm this interpretation (cf. v. 3). I think the assembly described is not a worship setting but a Christian court similar to those held in the synagogue (cf. Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12). If so, the two visitors (litigants) are part of a legal proceeding. This may explain (1) why they do not know where to sit and (2) the reference to “drag you into court” in v. 6 (cf. Lev. 19:15).

▣ **“gold ring”** This was a sign of wealth; often in the Greco-Roman culture several rings were worn on each hand.



NASB, NRSV	“poor man in dirty clothes”
NKJV	“a poor man in filthy clothes”
TEV	“a man in ragged clothes”
NJB	“a poor man. . .in shabby clothes”

This implies not only poverty, but a beggar, the cultural opposite of the finely dressed man.

2:4 “have you not made distinctions among yourselves” Verses 4 and 5 are questions which expect a “yes” answer. Believers were and are guilty of showing distinctions and favoritism. “Distinctions” is a compound word of *dia* (through) with *krina* (judge).

2:5 “Listen” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE which expresses urgency.

▣ **“my beloved brethren”** See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ **“did not God choose the poor of this world”** “Choose” is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE (cf. Eph. 1:4). We get the English word “elect” from this Greek term. “Of this world” is literally “in this world” used in the sense of this world’s goods. The irony is that God has chosen to bless the poor and socially ostracized. God has chosen them and made them rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, but the local worship leaders were favoring the wealthy and powerful. These were the very ones who were

persecuting the early believers. The gospel being preached to the poor was a sign of the New Age (cf. Isa. 61ff; Matt. 11:5; Luke 1:51-53; 4:18; 7:22).

The poor have always felt ostracized from “official” religion, but they were wonderfully accepted and embraced by Jesus. The poor gladly accepted Christ, while the rich tended to trust in their own resources (cf. Matt. 19:23-26). This is not to imply that every poor person is saved, but they surely are welcome to come to Jesus. Most of the early church were from the poorer classes of society.

▣ **“heirs”** The Scriptures talk about believers inheriting many things because of their relationship with Jesus who is heir of all things (cf. Heb. 1:2), and they as coheirs (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7) of

1. the kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:34, I Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50)
2. eternal life (cf. Matt. 19:29)
3. God’s promises (cf. Heb. 6:12)
4. God’s protection of His promises (cf. I Pet. 1:4; 5:9).

▣ **“the kingdom”** This is a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus’ first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic.

The phrase relates to the eschatological (end-time) thrust of Jesus’ teachings (followed by James). This “already, but not yet” theological paradox relates to the Jewish concept of two ages, the current evil age and the righteous age to come, which will be inaugurated by the Spirit through the Messiah. The Jews expected only one coming of a Spirit-empowered military leader (like the Judges in the OT). The two comings of Jesus caused an overlapping of the two ages. The Kingdom of God has broken into human history with the incarnation at Bethlehem. However, Jesus came not as the military conqueror of Rev. 19, but as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53) and the humble leader (cf. Zech.9:9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the OT YHWH was thought of as the King of Israel (cf. I Sam. 8:7; Ps. 10:16; 24:7-9; 29:10; 44:4; 89:18; 95:3; Isa. 43:15; 4:4,6) and the Messiah as the ideal king (cf. Ps. 2:6). With the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (6-4 B.C.) the kingdom of God broke into human history with new power and redemption (new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-36). John the Baptist proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15). Jesus clearly taught that the kingdom was present in Himself and His teachings (cf. Matt. 4:17,23; 9:35; 10:7; 11:11-12; 12:28;16:19; Mark 12:34; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 12:31-32; 16:16; 17:21). Yet the kingdom is also future (cf. Matt. 16:28; 24:14; 26:29; Mark 9:1; Luke 21:31; 22:16,18).

In the Synoptic parallels in Mark and Luke we find the phrase, “the kingdom of God.” This common topic of Jesus’ teachings involved the present reign of God in men’s hearts which one day will be consummated over all the earth. This is reflected in Jesus’ prayer in Matt. 6:10. Matthew, written to Jews, preferred the phrase that did not use the name of God (Kingdom of Heaven), while Mark and Luke, writing to Gentiles, used the common designation, employing the name of deity.

This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic gospels. Jesus’ first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now! It is surprising that John uses this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus’ parables). In John’s gospel “eternal life” is a key term and metaphor.

This tension is caused by the two comings of Christ. The OT focused only on one coming of God’s Messiah—a military, judgmental, glorious coming—but the NT shows that He came the first time as the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53 and the humble king of Zech. 9:9. The two Jewish ages, the age of wickedness and the new age of righteousness, overlap. Jesus currently reigns in the hearts of believers, but will one day reign over all creation. He will come like the OT predicted! Believers live in “the already” versus “the not yet” of the kingdom of God (cf. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart’s *How to Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

▣ **“which He promised to those who love Him”** See note at 1:12.

2:6 “But you” This is an emphatic contrast to what God has done for the poor, powerless, and ostracized of v. 5.

▣ **“the rich”** The rich are characterized as (1) oppressing you; (2) dragging you to court; and (3) blaspheming the name by which you are called. Can these be wealthy believers? I think not!

2:7

NASB “blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called”
NKJV “blaspheme that noble name by which you are called”
NRSV “blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you”
TEV “who speak evil of that good name which has been given to you”
NJB “who insult the honorable name which has been pronounced over you”

This is literally “called upon you” (cf. Acts 15:17). Culturally this could refer to

1. a patriarchal family blessing (cf. Gen. 48:16)
 2. a wife taking her husband’s name (cf. Isa. 4:1)
 3. a slave becoming a permanent property of another
 4. a baptismal formula (cf. Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38)
 5. an Old Testament title for the covenantal people of God (cf. Deut. 28:10; II Chr. 6:33, 7:14)
 6. the title “Christian” (little Christ), first given in derision to believers at Antioch of Syria (cf. Acts 11:26).
- In context #4 fits best.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:8-13

⁸If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT COMMIT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. ¹³For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

2:8 “If” Both verses 8 and 9 start with FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. His hearers/readers were fulfilling the royal law if they loved appropriately.

▣ **“royal law”** This concept goes by several names (cf. 1:25; 2:12; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2). It obviously points back to the Ten Commandments (cf. v. 11) but reaches into the inaugurated New Age of Jesus’ teachings, a new way of treating God and our covenant partners (cf. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7).

▣ **“according to the Scripture”** This is a quote from Lev. 19:18, but with an eye toward Lev. 19:15 (i.e. you shall not be partial) also.

▣ **“YOUSHALLOVEYOURNEIGHBORASYOURSELF”** Appropriate self-love, in a Christian sense, is crucial in appropriately loving others (cf. Matt. 19:19; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9). Jesus often used Lev. 19:18, along with Deut. 6:4-5, as summaries of the whole law (cf. Matt. 7:12; 22:40).

2:9 “if you show partiality” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, like v. 8. It is a strong word for the church today. We dare not play favorites with those for whom Christ died (cf. Rom. 14:15,20; I John 2:9-11; 3:9-18).

▣ **“you are committing sin”** “Sin” is in an emphatic position in the Greek sentence. Showing partiality was a violation of the Mosaic covenant and the law of love (the royal law).

▣ **“convicted by the law as transgressors”** Transgression means to “step over a known boundary” and was one of the OT definitions of sin. Notice this is not ignorance, but willful action against God’s revealed will.

2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all” This is an important verse in helping to explain the theological difficulty of righteousness by human merit and the purpose of the Mosaic law (cf. Gal. 3:15-29). Partial obedience, or temporary obedience, was never enough to be accepted by God through the Mosaic covenant (cf. Matt. 5:19; Gal. 5:3). This type of summary statement about keeping the whole law (from *bar mitzvah* [boys from age 13] and *bat mitzvah* [girls from age 12] now responsible to keep the law) is the theological basis of Paul’s strong statements of mankind’s sinfulness in Rom. 3:9-23.

2:11 This is the order of the Ten Commandments (which shows James' early Jewish flavor) in the Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the OT begun about 250 B.C. and is quoted by most NT authors.

2:12 “So speak and so act” These are both PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES. Believers' words and lives must agree. We must practice what we preach (cf. Matt. 7). This is the major theme of the book!

▣ **“who are to be judged”** All humans will be judged (cf. Matt. 25:31ff; Rom. 2:6,16). Even Christians will be judged (cf. II Cor. 5:10), not for sin, but for their attitudes, availability and for the use of their spiritual gifts.

2:13 “judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy” This is the spiritual principle that humans reap what they sow (cf. Matt. 6:14-15; 7:1-5; 18:22-25; Gal. 6:7). It may have been a well-known proverb in Palestine. It is the negative of Jesus' statement in Matt. 5:7. This is not works-oriented salvation, but the family characteristics of God should be evident in His children's lives (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; I Cor. 13).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do we discriminate in our churches today?
2. Why has God chosen the poor to be blessed and saved? Why is it so hard for the rich to become believers? Why did this shock the Jews of Jesus' day?
3. Why is v. 10 so important?
4. How do the OT commandments relate to “the law of liberty”?
5. How do verses 12-13 relate to justification by faith?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO JAMES 2:14-26

- A. This section of James has caused major theological controversy. This comes not so much from the passage, contextually understood, but from our theological presuppositions and dogmatic systems of proof-texted, western theology.
- B. James and Paul do not contradict, but complement one another. The seeming contradiction comes from a misunderstanding of (1) the purpose and (2) the recipients of the NT books of Romans and James.
 1. Paul is writing to Jews who believe that they are right with God on the basis of (1) their race (nationality) and (2) their keeping the law of Moses (legalism). Paul speaks of entering into the Christian life. He uses Abraham's life as an OT example of being declared right with God before circumcision and before the Mosaic Law (cf. Gen. 15:6), based solely on God's initiating grace and the appropriate faith response (cf. Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6).
 2. James is writing to church people who are making Christianity a creed instead of a lifestyle (antinomians or intellectualists, Jewish gnostics). These folks are asserting orthodoxy as the basis for their assurance of salvation. The books of James and I John assert that daily love in action is not an option for Christians, but is the evidence of their being Christians. For James, “works” are not Jewish rules, but love in action (cf. I Cor. 13).
 3. Paul and James are not giving two ways of salvation, but two aspects of one salvation. Paul speaks of the beginning of Abraham's walk of faith (cf. Gen. 15), and James speaks of its ongoing characteristics (birth of Isaac versus offering of Isaac, cf. Gen. 22).
 4. It is not “faith or works” but “faith and works.” Not only is faith without works dead, but works without faith is also dead (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; John 15:1-6). Being a carnal, weak, baby Christian is possible (cf. I Cor. 3:1-3, 10-15; Heb. 5:11-14), but it is the exception, not the norm.
 5. John Calvin said “faith alone justifies but the faith which justifies is not alone.”

- C. This section functions as an encouragement to active faith. In a sense it is a passage on assurance— not assurance as a doctrine, but as a lifestyle. Assurance is surely a biblical truth, but only in connection with daily Christlikeness, not systematic theology! We are saved to serve. Service is the evidence of salvation. It is never the means, but it is the goal, the fruit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10). This truth is much needed in our day of (1) easy believism and (2) assurance as a denominational theological tenet (usually given as a dogmatic statement at the beginning of the Christian life).
- D. The entire book of James deals with the practical issue of how believers use their resources (physical and spiritual) on behalf of the Kingdom. Allocation of physical resources reveals the heart!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:14-17

¹⁴What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being by itself*.

2:14

NASB “What use is it”
 NKJV “What *does it profit*”
 NRSV, TEV “what good is it”
 NJB “How does it help”

Grammatically this question expects a “no” answer. Faith without works is of no use, no profit.

▣ “my brethren” See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ “if someone says” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, “someone may say.” It is structured like the diatribe form (a supposed objector) of 1:26.

▣ “he has faith” Biblical faith (*pistis*) has several aspects: (1) doctrine (cf. I John 4:1-6; Jude 3,20); (2) personal relationship and commitment to Jesus (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13); and (3) lifestyle (cf. James and I John). All three aspects are involved in genuine, mature faith.

▣ “Can that faith save him” This is used in an eschatological sense. Judgment will be based on (1) works (cf. Matt. 25:31ff; Rom. 2:6; II Cor, 5:10; Gal. 6:7-9) and (2) faith (cf. Rom. 4; I Cor. 3:10-15; Gal. 3). This is the second question of verse 14. It also expects a “no” answer.

2:15 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is an example of how believers should not act, especially toward other believers.

2:16 “Go in peace” “Go in peace” is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. “Be warmed” is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE and “be filled” is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. This is a veiled prayer for God to provide their needs. It is an OT idiom for God’s provision (cf. Judg. 18:6; I Sam. 1:17; 20:42; II Sam. 15:9). It reflects a shallow, flippant response, much like our “I will pray for you” (cf. Gal. 6:10; I John 3:17-18) when used in an insincere manner.

2:17 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. James is using this literary construction which suggests a contingency to illustrate the difference between true faith and fake faith or possibly mature faith versus weak faith.

This is an important theological summary statement (cf. vv. 20 and 26). In his *Study Guide Commentary on James* Curtis Vaughan sees these three summary statements as constituting the main outline: (1) genuine faith is not an empty claim (vv. 14-17); (2) genuine faith is not mere acceptance of a creed (vv. 18-20); and (3) genuine faith is faith that produces an obedient life (vv. 21-26, p. 56).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:18-26

¹⁸But someone may *well* say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works” ¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

2:18-20 Grammatically this is a very ambiguous passage as to punctuation and pronoun antecedents. It is uncertain whether there is (1) one supporter of James’ position; (2) one objector to James’ position; (3) one of each; or (4) two opposing hypothetical persons alluded to by James. It is uncertain whether the quotation stops at v. 18a (NKJV, NRSV, NIV) or 18b (NASB, TEV) or if it goes through v. 19.

It is possible that James’ supposed objector is claiming that Christians have different spiritual gifts, some faith and some works. James responds that faith is not a gift, but a bedrock relationship of trust in Christ. To know Christ is to emulate Him; to live as He lived; to love as He loved; to give oneself to others as He gave Himself to others (cf. I John 3:16).

Spiritual giftedness is not a reduction of Christian responsibility, but an empowerment for effective ministry (in conjunction with other believers).

☐ **“show me your faith without works”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This would be a similar truth to the parable of the sower in Matt. 13. Fruit-bearing, not initial response, proves genuineness. No fruit, no root!

2:19 “You believe that God is one” This (monotheism) was the first test of orthodoxy for the Jews (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). Yet the demons believe this also (cf. Matt. 4:3; Mark 5:7). Christianity is not only correct doctrine, but a relationship of obedience and love. Orthodoxy alone, without orthopraxy, is empty (cf. I Cor. 13). A theological, intellectual commitment to monotheism (cf. Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5-6) does not make one right with God. Proper belief cannot save, for who among fallen humanity has perfectly accurate theology? Salvation through Christ affects the head (doctrine), the heart (volitional trust in Christ), and the hand (lifestyle Christlikeness).

☐ **“the demons also believe”** Demons have orthodox theology!

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEMONIC

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed personality to forces of nature, animals, natural objects, and traits of human personality. Life is explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) that impacted individual human lives.
 1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
 2. Egypt, order and function
 3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright’s *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92
- C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.
 1. *Se’im* (satyrs or hair demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
 2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
 3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15,18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
 4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
 5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)

6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26)

(These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523.)

However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT. Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zech. 3), not an enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

- D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.) and was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons.

Judaism's theology of personified evil is explained and documented well in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 749-863) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.

1. Satan or Sammael
2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

- E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in Judaism Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God). They oppose God's will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings, also called (1) unclean spirits, cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18, or (2) evil spirits, cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2, from human beings. Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them. Exorcisms are a sign of the defeat of Satan's kingdom.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift nor is a methodology or procedure given for future generations of ministers or believers.

- F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor purpose is revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged and will be removed from creation.

☐ **“and shudder”** This is possibly related to the practice of exorcism in YHWH's name. This term was often used in this sense in the magical papyri found in Egypt.

2:20

NASB **“that faith without works is useless”**

NKJV **“that faith without words is dead”**

NRSV **“that faith apart from works is barren”**

NJB **“that faith without deeds is useless”**

Three possible translations come from the four most ancient Greek manuscripts: (1) \aleph , A, C² have “dead,” (cf. v. 26); (2) B and C^A have “barren”; (3) P⁷⁴, the Bodmer Papyri, has “vain” (used earlier in v. 20).

2:21 This question expects a “yes” answer.

☐ **“Abraham”** He is used by both Paul (cf. Gen. 15 quoted in Rom. 4) and James (quotes Gen. 22) to prove their theological points, but each uses different events in his life. Paul speaks of his initial call (i.e. the birth of Isaac), but James speaks of the consummation of his faith years later (i.e. the offering of Isaac).

☐ **“our father”** This term seems to reflect Jewish Christian recipients (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 8:39). However, Paul uses this same concept for Gentiles (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11-12,16; Gal. 3:7; 6:16).

☐ **“justified by works”** This is the Greek verb *dikaioō*. The semantic field (possible meanings and connotations) this term has is interesting.

- I. From Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (p. 196-197)
 - A. “Show justice” or “do justice to someone”

- B. “Justify, vindicate, treat as just”
- C. Paul uses the term for God’s judgment
 - 1. of men
 - a. “be acquitted”
 - b. “be pronounced and treated as righteous”
 - 2. of God’s activity - “make upright”
 - 3. “to make free or pure” (ACTIVE)
or “to be made free or pure” (PASSIVE)
 - 4. “God is proved to be right”

- II. From Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd edition (vol. 2 p. 64).
 - A. “to put right with” (vol. 1, 34:46, p. 452)
 - B. “show to be right” (vol. 1, 86:16, p. 744)
 - C. “acquit” (vol. 1, 56:34, p. 557)
 - D. “set free” (vol. 1, 37:138, p. 489)
 - E. “obey righteous commands” (vol. 1, 36:22, p. 468)

When one compares these lexical usages it becomes clear how Paul could use this term in one way (specialized forensic sense of “made righteous”) and James in another (shown to be righteous by one’s godly living). The term is fluid enough to allow both. But please remember it is a “both/and” situation, not an “either/or.” Also be careful of a set theological definition of this term (or any term) which is then read into every usage of the word in Scripture. Words only have meaning in specific contexts!

▣ **“offered up Isaac”** The offering of Isaac (cf. Gen. 22) was not the grounds of Abraham’s faith (cf. Gen. 12,15), but the result and expression. James is using the term “works” in a different way than Paul. James is speaking of the Christian’s lifestyle faith (cf. I John), while Paul is speaking of a works-righteousness of the Jews as a basis for being accepted by God (cf. Rom. 10:2-3).

2:22 “faith was working with his works” This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which denotes continual action in past time. There is a word play between “working with” (*syn + ergon*) and “works” (*ergōn*).

▣ **“faith was perfected”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Faith is initiated and perfected by God, but believers’ volition and actions are also part of the equation. The term “perfected” means “mature,” “equipped for the assigned task,” “complete.” The biblical covenant concept unites the sovereignty of God and the free will of humanity to form a contract or agreement which has both benefits and obligations, a gift and a requirement.

2:23 “the Scripture” This refers to Gen. 15:6, as do Rom. 4:3 and Gal. 3:6. James is saying that this verse was “fulfilled” by Abraham’s later actions in his willingness to obey God and offer Isaac, the son of promise, as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah (cf. Gen. 22).

▣ **“the friend of God”** Abraham is called by this title three times in the Bible (cf. II Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8).

2:24 “justified by works” See note at 2:21.

2:25 “Rahab the harlot” She was Judaism’s ultimate proof of God’s forgiveness and the power of repentance (cf. Josh. 2). She also is an ancestor of Jesus (cf. Matt. 1:4). James uses two extremes, Abraham and Rahab, to prove his point.

2:26 Active love is to faith what the breath is to the human body.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is faith?
2. Define the minimum biblical requirements for salvation.
3. Do Paul and James contradict each other? Why or why not?
4. Why do Paul and James both use Abraham as an example?
5. List the ways that Rahab is an opposite of Abraham.
6. How does James' necessity of "works" relate to carnal Christians?

JAMES 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Tongue 3:1-5a	The Untamable Tongue 3:1-12	True Wisdom 3:1-5a	The Tongue 3:1-5a	Uncontrolled Language 3:1-2a 3:2b-12
3:5b-12		3:5b-12	3:5b-12	
The Wisdom from Above 3:13-18	Heavenly Versus Demonic Wisdom 3:13-18	3:13-18	The Wisdom from Above 3:13-18	Real Wisdom and its Opposite 3:13-18

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 3:1-12

- A. Human speech is a recurrent theme of James (cf. 1:19,26; 2:14; 3:1-12; 4:11,12, 5:12). He deals with it from several different angles in almost every chapter. Speech is part of the image of God in mankind (cf. 3:9).
- B. A human's speech, like a human's works in 2:14-16, truly reveals one's character (cf. Matt. 12:37).
- C. The tongue can be a great blessing when controlled and energized by God, but a terrible, destructive force in the hands of the evil one.
- D. Opening Thoughts From Proverbs on Human Speech
 1. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life. Therefore, it reveals who we really are (Prov. 18:2; 4:23,20-27). Speech is the acid test of the person (Prov. 23:7).
 2. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow humans. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (Prov. 17:10) and negative (Prov. 12:18) ways.

3. There is tremendous power in human speech (Prov. 19:20-21)—the power to bless and heal (Prov. 10:11,21) and the power to curse and destroy (Prov. 11:9).
4. We reap what we sow (Prov. 12:14).

Principles from Proverbs on Human Speech

1. The negative and destructive potential of human speech
 - a. the words of evil men (1:11-19; 10:6; 11:9,11; 12:5-6)
 - b. the words of the adulteress (5:2-5; 6:24-35; 7:5ff; 9:13-18; 22:14)
 - c. the words of the liar (6:12-15,17,19; 10:18; 12:17-19,22; 14:5,25; 17:4; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18; 26:23-28)
 - d. the words of the fool (10:10,14; 14:3; 15:14; 18:6-8)
 - e. the words of false witnesses (6:19; 12:17; 19:5,9,28; 21:8; 24:28; 25:18)
 - f. the words of a gossip (6:14,19; 11:13; 16:27-28; 20:19; 25:23; 26:20)
 - g. the words too quickly spoken (6:1-5; 12:18; 20:25; 29:20)
 - h. the words of flattery (29:5)
 - i. too many words (10:14,19,23; 11:13; 13:3,16; 14:23; 15:2; 17:27-28; ;18:2; 21:23; 29:20)
 - j. perverted words (17:20; 19:1)
2. The positive, healing and edifying potential of human speech
 - a. the words of the righteous (10:11,20-21,31-32; 12:14; 13:2; 15:23; 16:13; 18:20)
 - b. the words of the discerning (10:13; 11:12)
 - c. the words of knowledge (15:1,4,7,8; 20:15)
 - d. the words of healing (15:4)
 - e. the words of a gentle answer (15:1,4,18,23; 16:1; 25:15)
 - f. the words of a pleasant answer (12:25; 15:26,30; 16:24)
 - g. the words of the law (22:17-21)

Principles from the New Testament on Human Speech

1. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life, therefore, it reveals who we really are (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:2-23).
2. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow man. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (II Tim. 3:15-17) and negative (James 3:2-12) ways.
3. There is tremendous power in human speech; the power to bless (Eph. 4:29) and the power to curse (James 3:9). We are responsible for what we say (James 3:2-12).
4. We will be judged by our words (Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:39-45) as well as our deeds (Matt. 25:31-46). We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

- E. There is an interesting discussion on the topic of “Biblical Perspectives on Language” in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, edited by Moises Silva, pp. 204-217.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-5a

¹Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. ²For we all stumble in *many* ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. ³Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. ⁵So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things.

3:1 “many of you” This shows the tendency of a large section of the church to want to speak during the group meetings (cf. I Cor. 14:26-40). The worship service of the early church was dynamic and unstructured.

☐ “become” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which means to stop an act already in process. This section of James begins with the responsibility of Christian leaders but easily transitions into the responsibility of every Christian in relation to speech.

▣ **“teachers”** This seems to reflect either (1) the early church’s worship where anyone could speak or (2) the place of honor of the rabbi in Jewish society. Teaching is listed as a spiritual gift in I Cor. 12:28 and 14:26. It is also listed as a function of pastors (cf. I Tim. 3:1-2; Eph. 4:11). In Acts 13:1 it is connected to prophets. But here it is viewed as an option for all believers.

It is my theological opinion that all believers participate in the gifts at some practical level. Surely we would not accept a Christian saying:

1. I do not have the gift of prayer so I do not pray
2. I do not have the gift of giving so I do not give
3. I do not have the gift of evangelism so I do not witness.

We would say these activities are for all believers. God gifts some for effective service in these areas, but all believers have responsibilities in these areas.

▣ **“my brethren”** See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ **“as such we”** James includes himself in this group. Paul calls himself a preacher, apostle, and teacher (cf. II Tim. 1:11). All Christians have at least one spiritual gift (cf. I Cor. 12), but some have several.

▣ **“we will incur a stricter judgment”** Knowledge and leadership bring greater responsibility (cf. Luke 12:48). I believe the New Testament does teach degrees of blessings and punishment (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:22,24; 18:6; 25:21,23; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 10:12; 12:47-48; 20:47).

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT

- A. Appropriate and inappropriate response to God is based on knowledge. The less knowledge one has the less responsible one is. The opposite is also true.
- B. Knowledge of God comes in two basic ways.
 1. creation (cf. Ps. 19; Rom. 1-2)
 2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19, 119; the gospel)
- C. OT evidence
 1. rewards
 - a. Gen. 15:1 (usually associated with earthly reward, land and sons)
 - b. Deut. 27-28 (covenant obedience brings blessing)
 2. punishment
 - a. Deut. 27-28 (covenant disobedience brings cursing)
 3. The OT pattern of reward for personal, covenantal righteousness is modified because of human sin. This modification is seen in Job and Ps. 73. The NT changes the focus from this world to the next (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7).
- D. NT evidence
 1. rewards (beyond salvation)
 - a. Mark 9:41
 - b. Matt. 5:12,46; 6:1-4,5-6,6-18; 10:41-42; 16:27; 25:14-23
 - c. Luke 6:23,35; 19:11-19,25-26
 2. punishment
 - a. Mark 12:38-40
 - b. Luke 10:12; 12:47-48; 19:20-24; 20:47
 - c. Matthew 5:22,29,30; 7:19; 10:15,28; 11:22-24; 13:49-50; 18:6; 25:14-30
 - d. James 3:1

- E. For me the only analogy that makes sense is from the opera. I do not attend opera presentations so I do not understand them. If I knew more of the difficulty and intricateness of the plot, music, and dance I would appreciate the performance much more. I believe heaven will fill our cups, but I think our earthly service determines the size of the cup.

Therefore, knowledge and a response to that knowledge results in rewards and punishments (cf. Matt. 16:7; I Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17,18; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14). There is a spiritual principle—we reap what we sow! Some sow more and reap more (cf. Matt. 13:8,23).

- F. “The crown of righteousness” is ours in the finished work of Jesus Christ (cf. II Tim. 4:8), but notice, “the crown of life” is connected to perseverance under trial (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:10-11). The “crown of glory” for Christian leaders is connected to their lifestyle (cf. I Pet. 5:1-4). Paul knows he has an imperishable crown, but he exercises extreme self-control (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).

The mystery of the Christian life is that the gospel is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but as we must respond to God’s offer in Christ, we must also respond to God’s empowerment for Christian living. The Christian life is as supernatural as is salvation, yet we must receive it and hold on to it. The free-and-cost-everything paradox is the mystery of rewards and sowing/reaping.

We are not saved by good works, but for good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Good works are the evidence that we have met Him (cf. Matt. 7). Human merit in the area of salvation leads to destruction, but godly living which results from salvation is rewarded.

3:2

NASB “we all stumble in *many ways*”

NKJV “we all stumble in *many things*”

NRSV “all of us make *many mistakes*”

TEV “all of us often make *mistakes*”

NJB “we all trip up in *many ways*”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE indicating continual, habitual action. “Stumble” is used in the sense of “sin.” The Bible teaches that all people are sinners (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12,13; 8:21; I Kgs.8:46; Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-4; 130:3; 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl.7:20; Rom. 3:10-18,19,20,23; Gal. 3:22; I John 1:8-10). This may reflect the non-canonical Jewish wisdom book of Ecclesiasticus (cf. 5:13-14; 14:1; 19:16; 22:27; 28:13-26). There are several allusions in the book of James to this inter-biblical wisdom book, written about 180 B.C.

☐ **“If”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE; all humans stumble.

☐ **“what he says”** James is concerned in 2:14-26 about faith without works. This section shows that one’s speech, in a sense, reveals true spiritual character. The Bible stresses the importance of our speech (cf. Prov. 13:3; 18:21; 21:23; Ps. 39:1; Matt. 12:36-37; 15:11, 18-19). We are known and judged by our words because our words reveal our character.

☐ **“he is a perfect man”** “Perfect” means “fully equipped,” “full-grown,” “complete,” or “mature,” not sinless. James uses this term often (cf. 1:4,17,25; 2:22; 3:2) because of his emphasis on the functioning, effective Christian life.

☐ **“able to bridle the whole body as well”** The control of the tongue is a sign of Christlike maturity and self-control (cf. 1:26; Gal. 5:22-23).

3:3 **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE; horses have been domesticated.

3:3-5 Here are examples of how a small thing can affect a large thing: bridle/horse, rudder/ship, and spark/fire. Horses and ships are used often in the papyri from Egypt as metaphors for control.

3:4 **“ship. . .great”** The Greco-Roman world had large ships. Paul had been aboard a grain ship which carried 276 passengers plus cargo. Josephus records that he was on a ship with 600 passengers. He describes its dimensions as 180' by 65' by 44'.

3:5 “boasts of great things” Here James is alluding either to the power of human speech or the idea of “pride.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:5b -12

⁵See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

3:5b “great a forest” This could be translated (1) forest or (2) “stacked lumber.” This metaphor of the tongue as a spark focused James’ mind on the destructive and uncontrollable nature of the tongue (cf. vv. 6-8).

3:6

NASB “the *very* world of iniquity”
NKJV, NRSV “a world of iniquity”
TEV “a world of wrong”
NJB “a whole wicked world”

This seems to mean that human speech represents unrighteousness; it reveals the often hidden wickedness in humans. It defiles everything. James uses the term “world” (*kosmos*) in a negative sense in 1:27 and 4:4.

▣

NASB “sets on fire the course of *our* life”
NKJV “sets on fire the course of nature”
NRSV “sets on fire the cycle of nature”
TEV “sets on fire the entire course of our existence”
NJB “set fire to the whole wheel of creation”

This is literally “the wheel of birth.” For a good discussion of this rare term see M. R. Vincent’s *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 356-357. It seems to mean a person’s life from birth until death, which can even affect future generations. Both of these phrases in v. 6 show the intensive and destructive potential of human speech.

▣ “set on fire by hell” This is literally “being inflamed by Gehenna,” which refers to the valley of the sons of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. This is the metaphor Jesus used to describe the punishment and place for those who reject faith in God. It was turned into the garbage dump for Jerusalem because this valley was the site in the OT where the fire god Molech was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Lev. 18:21). This is the only use of “Gehenna” outside of the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,47; Luke 12:5). This metaphor is referring to the activity of the evil one in our daily lives. James must have personally experienced or observed the negative effects of human speech!

3:7 This reflects the fourfold order of the creation of animal species in Genesis 1:26 and 9:2.

▣ “tamed” Mankind was given dominion (cf. Gen. 1:26,28; Ecclesiasticus 17:4). Humans can domesticate and control every animal except themselves.

3:8

NASB, NRSV “a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison”
NKJV “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”
TEV “evil and uncontrollable, full of deadly poison”
NJB “a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison”

This is used of the nonstop movement of a snake’s tongue (cf. Gen. 3:1,4-5; Ps. 140:3) and possibly satanically inspired “teachers.”

3:9 “we bless our Lord and Father” This grammatical construction (one ARTICLE and two NOUNS) is ambiguous. It can refer to Jesus and the Father (cf. 1:27) or to YHWH alone. Most translations prefer the second option because of the mention of human beings created in God’s image.

The blessings of God among contemporary Jewish synagogues would involve (1) liturgical blessings and (2) personal prayers. Surely this structure was followed in the early Christian meetings. For “Father” see Special Topic at 1:27.

▣ **“curse men”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE. Cursing means to call down problems and evil on another using the power of God’s name (cf. Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:14). In context it may refer to rival teachers (cf. v. 14).

▣ **“who have been made in the likeness of God”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. Mankind was made in God’s image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 5:1, 9:6; I Cor. 11:7), and they remain so, even though fallen (cf. Gen. 9:6; I Cor. 11:7). This verse reflects the worth and dignity of mankind whether poor or rich, slave or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile (cf. I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). To speak evil of another is to criticize the God who made them (cf. Psalm 139). The term “likeness” (image) is left undefined in Genesis. There are several theories as to the exact components of “the image”: (1) conscious life; (2) rational ability; (3) moral consciousness; and/or (4) volitional choice.

3:10-12 This reflects the truth of Matt. 7:15ff. Human speech has wonderful potential for good, but it also has terrible potential for evil.

▣ **“my brethren”** See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

3:11-12 Both questions in vv. 11 and 12 expect negative responses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why should the subject of teaching be brought up for special treatment?
2. Are there degrees of punishment?
3. Why is Christian speech so important?
4. Define “Gehenna” in v. 6.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO JAMES 3:13-18

- A. The context concerning teachers continues from 3:1-12. Several warnings are given.
 - a. stricter judgment is a reality (cf. 3:1)
 - b. there is danger in human speech (cf. 3:2)
 - c. life must reflect teachings (cf. 3:13)
 - d. proper attitude is a must (cf. 3:15)
 - e. there is a demonic counterfeit (cf. 3:15).

This seems to confirm the presence of unqualified teachers in the early church who claimed to be spiritual and have special revelations from God. However, we need to be reminded that although the context may speak especially to teachers, it addresses all Christians. All Christians can ask for wisdom (cf. 1:5). All Christians must walk and talk in wisdom.

- B. This section gives the test for “teachers.”
 1. wisdom from God
 2. affirmed by lifestyle

3. dependent on proper attitude.

I would add, from I John 4:1-6, proper content about the person and work of Christ.

- C. Remember that James is similar in genre to OT Wisdom Literature. In the Old Testament “wisdom” had both a religious orientation and a practical application to daily life.
- D. Paul uses “the fruit of the Spirit,” Gal. 5:22-23, to describe the appropriate Christian life, but James used the Old Testament category of wisdom (cf. Prov. 1-3; 8:22ff; Eccl.1:1). Wisdom involves more than content or orthodoxy. It is inseparably linked to lifestyle and proper motivation (cf. Matt. 11:19).

SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Lists of both vices and virtues are common in the NT. Often they reflect both rabbinical and cultural (Hellenistic) lists. The NT lists of contrasting characteristics can be seen in

	<u>Vices</u>	<u>Virtues</u>
1. Paul	Rom. 1:28-32	---
	Rom. 13:13	Rom. 2:9-21
	I Cor. 5:9-11	---
	6:10	I Cor. 6:6-9
	II Cor. 12:20	II Cor. 6:4-10
	Gal. 5:19-21	Gal. 5:22-23
	Eph. 4:25-32	---
	5:3-5	---
	---	Phil. 4:8-9
	Col. 3:5,8	Col. 3:12-14
	I Tim. 1:9-10	---
	6:4-5	---
	II Tim. 2:22a,23	II Tim. 2:22b,24
	Titus 1:7, 3:3	Titus 1:8-9; 3:1-2
2. James	James 3:15-16	James 3:17-18
3. Peter	I Pet. 4:3	I Pet. 4:7-11
	II Pet. 1:9	II Pet. 1:5-8
4. John	Rev. 21:8;	---
	22:15	---

- E. There are four terms used in this passage which occur only here in the New Testament: “understanding” (*epistēmōn*, v. 13), “demonic” (*daimoniadēs*, v. 15), “reasonable” (*eupelthēs*, v. 17), and “unwavering” (*adiakritos*, v. 17). This means their exact meaning, connotations, and/or idiomatic usages are uncertain.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:13-18

¹³Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle,

reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

3:13 “Who” This seems to imply that James is continuing the diatribe from chapter 1.

☐ **“wise and understanding”** In the OT this would refer to a teacher who could apply God’s truth to daily life. It would refer to a professional teacher or scribe. “Wise” and “understanding” (1) may be synonymous (cf. LXX of Deut. 1:13,15; 4:6) or (2) may reflect the Hebrew distinction between practical wisdom and intellectual knowledge. Remember that believers are encouraged to ask God for wisdom (cf. 1:5). The gift of “teacher” involves a gift, a lifestyle, and a proper attitude.

☐ **“Let him show”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE; it is the theme of 2:14-26.

☐ **“by his good behavior”** The King James Version has “good conversation,” which in A.D. 1611 meant “lifestyle.” This is a good example of why our English translations need a continual upgrading—because of the changing meaning and connotations of terms. The NKJV has “good conduct.”

☐ **“in the gentleness”** This means the “controlled strength” of domesticated animals. This was a uniquely Christian virtue. It typifies the life of Christ (cf. Matt. 11:29; II Cor. 10:1; Phil. 2:8). It is advocated for all believers (cf. Matt. 5:5; Gal. 5:23; Eph. 4:2). Gentleness or meekness is a defining quality of God’s wisdom.

☐ **“of wisdom”** Literally the full phrase is “meekness of wisdom.” This is a startling paradox for fallen mankind! Teachers must live and teach humbly.

3:14 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true. Verses 14-16 describe false wisdom. This verse assumes the presence of unqualified teachers. Heresy is usually committed by sincere believers who (1) magnify one truth to the exclusion of other biblical truths or (2) claim special insight or spiritual power.

☐
NASB “bitter jealousy”
NKJV, NRSV “bitter envy”
TEV “jealous, bitter”
NJB “bitterness of jealousy”

This is also listed as sin in II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; and Eph. 4:31. Egotism has no place among the people of God, especially in teachers.

☐ **“selfish ambition”** Originally this meant “to spin for hire” but later was used metaphorically of aggressive, political ambition (cf. Phil. 1:17). It refers to an egotistical, jealous ambition—“my way or no way”—among leaders.

☐ **“in your heart”** This was the seat of the personality or the intellect. See Special Topic at 1:26.

☐ **“do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth”** These are two PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVES with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which means to stop an act that is already in process. Teachers’ and leaders’ actions speak louder than their words (cf. Matt. 7:1-23. James 2 focuses on Matt. 7:24-27).

3:15 “from above” This circumlocution was a rabbinical way of referring to YHWH. These teachers may have been vociferously claiming divine insight and knowledge. See fuller note at 1:17b.

☐ **“earthly”** This is in opposition to heavenly.

☐
NASB “natural”
NKJV “sensual”
NRSV, TEV “unspiritual”
NJB “human”

This is from the Greek root *psuche* (reflecting the Hebrew term *nephesh*), which is that part of mankind which he shares with the animals. This would then mean natural as opposed to the supernatural, the earthly as opposed to the heavenly. This probably refers to (1) the “evil intent” (*yetzer hara*) in human nature or (2) a person who judges life by the five senses. Therefore, this is the opposite of spiritual.

▣ **“demonic”** This relates to content that is supernatural, but not from God (cf. I Tim. 4:1; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:16). The presence of demonic wisdom leads to confusion and evil practices (v. 16). However, the context may imply that these teachers are not only doctrinally false, but also morally and motivationally false. The demons of 2:14 are doctrinally correct, but it does not affect their action. Heresy is not only a disruption of orthodoxy, but also orthopraxy. See Special Topic at 2:19.

3:17 “pure” The term *hagnos* has the same Greek root as “holy” (*hagios*). It implies that it is free from ethical defilement (cf. 4:8). Verses 17-18 are a list of qualities of godly wisdom as vv. 14-16 describe ungodly wisdom. True wisdom is known by its deeds. Paul’s definition of true and false wisdom is seen in I Cor. 1:18-3:23.

▣ **“peaceable”** This is the Greek term *eirēnē*. It was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term *shalom*. In the OT “peace” is usually associated with (1) cessation of war and hostilities and the promotion of harmony and (2) the presence of health, prosperity and wholeness, ultimately in this sense of the reign of the Messiah and eschatological salvation (cf. Rom. 15:13). The form of the word used here also occurs in Heb. 12:11.

▣ **“gentle”** The word *epiekēs* means “sweet reasonableness” or “forbearance.” It does not push its own rights or opinions without listening to others and respecting others (cf. Phil. 4:5; I Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; I Pet. 2:18).

▣ **“reasonable”** This may be paired with “gentle.” It implies a willingness to hear and respond appropriately, not selfishly or egotistically.

▣ **“full of mercy”** This is not just feelings but actions. Biblical love and compassion issue in active love and service, not sentimentalities. This term is linked with the next one and both speak of the care of the poor, needy, and alienated of 2:15-16. Wisdom without works is also dead!

▣ **“good fruits”** This is linked with “full of mercy.” This is a concern and care for those in need. In Phil. 1:9-11 it is connected to love, knowledge, and discernment.

▣
NASB **“unwavering without hypocrisy”**
NKJV **“without partiality”**
NRSV, NJB **“without a trace of partiality”**
TEV **“free from prejudice”**

This term implies free from prejudice or divided loyalties and may relate to 2:4 or even 1:6. This was a theatrical term used of one who never played a part for personal gain. It speaks of a transparent genuineness (cf. Rom. 12:9; II Cor. 6:6; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 1:5; I Pet. 1:22). These last two form a related pair as do the two before them.

3:18 “the seed whose fruit is righteousness” Notice it is not the fruit of wisdom; wisdom without righteousness is not wisdom. God’s righteousness results in His children’s righteousness. The whole life—the head (doctrine), the heart (volition), and the hand (lifestyle)—is affected and redirected.

▣ **“is sown”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. The emphasis is on giving, not gathering! We are all sowing some kind of seed. What kind are you sowing?

▣ **“in peace by those who make peace”** This passage may reflect Isa. 32:17. It is obvious that v. 18 is contrasting v. 16.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do you know who truly speaks for God?
2. Describe true wisdom.
Describe false wisdom.
3. How are Galatians 5 and James 3:13-18 related?
4. How does chapter 3 relate to chapter 2?

JAMES 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Friendship with the World 4:1-10	Pride Promotes Strife 4:1-6 Humility Cures Worldliness 4:7-10	The Contrast Between Godliness and Worldliness (4:1-5:6) 4:1-10	Friendship with the World 4:1-6 4:7-10	Disunity Among Christians 4:1-3 4:4-10
Judging a Brother 4:11-12	Do Not Judge A Brother 4:11-12	4:11-12	Warning Against Judging One Another 4:11-12	4:11 4:12
Warning Against Boasting 4:13-17	Do Not Boast About Tomorrow 4:13-17	4:13-5:6	Warning Against Boasting 4:13-16 4:17	A Warning for the Rich and Self-Confident (4:13-5:6) 4:13-5:6

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT INTO JAMES 4:1-10

- A. The diatribe (literary technique of using a supposed objector to present the author's message) of previous sections continues in James 4:1-10 with two rhetorical questions in v. 1.

- B. This chapter deals with Christians' struggle with their fallen natures, exacerbated by the influence of worldly wisdom in the church. This may relate to the rivalry of church leaders (teachers) of chapter 3, whose actions influence all Christians.
- C. This section reflects Christians' continuing struggle with their fallen natures. Christians are addressed in such terms as "adulteresses," "sinners," and "double-minded." The three enemies of mankind are listed in this section:
1. fallen nature (vv. 1,2, and possibly 5)
 2. the world system (v. 4)
 3. the devil (v. 7)
- These three enemies also appear in Ephesians 2:2-3 (cf. W. T. Conner, *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 248-249).
- D. The Jerome Biblical Commentary outlines these verses as (1) root causes of conflict (vv. 1-6) and (2) remedies (vv. 7-10) (p. 374). This is a valid way to outline this section. It is related to the improper use of the tongue as in chapter 3.
- E. Verse 5 is very ambiguous because:
1. The original reading is uncertain
 - a. The CAUSATIVE form, *katōkisev*, which would mean God has caused His Spirit to be in believers (in MSS P⁷⁴, R, A, B).
 - b. The INTRANSITIVE form, *katōkēsev*, which would mean the Spirit indwells believers (in MSS K, L, P).
 2. The punctuation is uncertain
 - a. One question leading to an unknown quote in NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NAB (possibly from a lost Jewish apocalyptic writing)
 - b. Two questions leading to the OT quote (Prov. 3:34 from the Septuagint) in v. 6 in ASV, Moffatt and Phillips translations
 3. The meaning of "jealously desires" is uncertain
 - a. God yearns for His Spirit to guide believers' lives (Ex. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 6:14-15). This would mean a positive connotation, "zealous" or "jealous" and a capital "s" Spirit.
 - b. Mankind's fallen nature yearns for world pleasures (cf. Rom. 8:1-8). This would mean a negative connotation, "envy" and a small "s" spirit.
 4. The verse may refer to
 - a. God's jealous love for believers' complete allegiance to Him
 - b. Mankind's total corruption (v. 5), but God's grace (v. 6) (cf. TEV).
- F. In verses 7-10 there is a series of ten AORIST IMPERATIVES which are urgent commands. This structure reminds one of the OT wisdom teachers and the rhetoric of the OT prophets.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-10

¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

4:1 "quarrels and conflicts" These are military terms with slightly different connotations. The first term (*polemos*) refers to an entire military campaign, while the second (*maxē*) refers to an individual battle. The NJB translation tries to combine these usages: "Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves?" Both are used here and in v. 2 metaphorically of strife within individual Christians (cf. II Cor. 7:5), while in II Tim. 2:23 and Titus 3:9 they refer to conflict within congregations.

▣ **“pleasures”** This same word is repeated in verse 3. From this Greek word we get the English term “hedonism,” which is a passion for self gratification, pleasure, or position at any cost! This term is only used three other times in the NT, Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; and II Pet. 2:13. It is always used in a negative sense.

▣
NASB “wage war”
NKJV, NRSV “war”
TEV “constantly fighting”
NJB “fighting”

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE which emphasizes the emotional struggle within believers (cf. Rom. 7). It is literally the term “soldiering.” From this Greek term we get the term “strategy” (cf. I Pet. 2:11).

▣ **“in your members”** Our physical bodies are not evil, nor the source of evil, but they are the battle ground of evil (cf. Rom. 6:12-12). This was a major ontological difference between Greek philosophy and biblical Christianity.

It is just possible the “members” may refer to the body of Christ, the Church. It is uncertain whether the warning is (1) internal (fallen nature); (2) external (problem in the church); or (3) both.

4:2 The punctuation of this verse is uncertain. There is an intended two or threefold parallelism. The thrust of the verse is that we desire things which we cannot obtain so we resort to violent acts in order to get them instead of asking God and trusting in His provision.

The NT offers modern readers a window into the diversity and divisiveness of the early church. The book of Romans reveals tensions between believing Jewish and believing Gentile leadership in the Roman Church. The book of I Corinthians reveals the party spirit in the Corinthian Church. Here James reveals the internal struggle of lust and the external struggle of criticism and judgmentalism among the Jewish Christian congregations of the Greco-Roman world.

▣ **“lust”** This term means “to desire,” “to set one’s heart upon something.” That something can be good or evil. Usually in the NT the term has a negative connotation. It is possible, in context, that the things desired were not evil in themselves but became evil in the person’s willingness to obtain them by any and every means apart from God’s will.

▣ **“murder”** In his second edition of the Greek New Testament (A.D. 1519), Erasmus changed the Greek word to “envy.” They are similar and the cognate nouns formed from these verbs “murder” and “envy” are confused in the Greek manuscript variations of I Pet. 2:1. This solution to the problem of v. 2 has been adopted by Luther and the modern translations by Moffatt and Phillips and the New International Commentary. There is no Greek manuscript support for this emendation in James! The term may be used in the sense of “hate” like Matt. 5:21-26 as a means of comparison. James often alludes to Jesus’ teachings in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7).

▣ **“envious”** This Greek term, like “lust,” is a neutral term and can be used of “zeal” or “strong desire.”

4:2-3 “ask” Un-Christlike motives and lack of prayer are two reasons why Christians often experience unfruitful lives. Often we use prayer as an attempt to obtain our will, not God’s. In this attitude the worst thing that God could do for us would be to answer our self-centered prayers!

Prayer is a powerful weapon in Christians’ battle against evil (cf. Eph. 6:18-19). I believe that the sovereign God has chosen to limit Himself to the appropriate prayers of His children. Believing, Christ-like prayer affects God, us, and situations. Oh, the tragedy of a prayerless Christian! Oh, the tragedy of a proof-texted promise out of context (cf. Matt. 7:7-11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAYER, UNLIMITED YET LIMITED

A. The Synoptic Gospels

1. believers are encouraged to persevere in prayer and God will provide “good things” (Matt.) or “His Spirit” (Luke) Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13)
2. in the context of church discipline believers (two) are encouraged to unite in prayer (Matt. 18:19)
3. in the context of the judgment of Judaism believers are to ask in faith without doubting (Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:23-24)

4. in the context of two parables (Luke 18:1-8, the unrighteous judge and Luke 18:9-14, the Pharisee and the sinner) believers are encouraged to act differently from the godless judge and self-righteous Pharisee. God hears the humble and repentant.

B. John's writings

1. in the context of the man born blind whom Jesus heals, the true blindness of the Pharisees is revealed. Jesus' prayers (as anyone's) are answered because He knew God and lived accordingly (John 9:31).
2. John's Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)
 - a. 14:12-14 - believing prayer characterized by
 - 1) coming from believers
 - 2) asking in Jesus' name
 - 3) desiring that the Father be glorified
 - 4) keeping commandments (v. 15)
 - b. 15:7-10 - believers prayer characterized by
 - 1) abiding in Jesus
 - 2) His word abiding in them
 - 3) desiring that the Father be glorified
 - 4) producing much fruit
 - 5) keeping commandments (v. 10)
 - c. 15:15-17 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) their election
 - 2) their fruit bearing
 - 3) asking in Jesus' name
 - 4) keeping command to love one another
 - d. 16:23-24 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) asking in Jesus' name
 - 2) desiring that joy be made full
3. John's first letter (I John)
 - a. 3:22-24 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) keeping His commandments (vv. 22,24)
 - 2) living appropriately
 - 3) believing in Jesus
 - 4) loving one another
 - 5) abiding in Him and He in us
 - 6) having the gift of the Spirit
 - b. 5:14-16 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) confidence in God
 - 2) according to His will
 - 3) believers pray for each other

C. James

1. 1:5-7 - believers confronted with various trials are called on to ask for wisdom without doubting
2. 4:2-3 - believers must ask with proper motives
3. 5:13-18 - believers faced with health problems are encouraged
 - a. to ask elders to pray
 - b. to pray in faith will save
 - c. to ask that their sins will be forgiven

d. to confess sin to one another and pray for one another (similar to I John 5:16)

The key to effective prayer is Christlikeness. This is what praying in Jesus' name means. The worst thing God could do for most Christians is to answer their selfish prayers! In one sense all prayers are answered. The most valuable aspect of prayer is that the believer has spent time with God, trusting God.

4:4 “adulteresses” This is a feminine form. This could refer to (1) literal adultery, (2) but it is probably an OT metaphor for spiritual adultery (examples: Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:20; Hos. 9:1; Matt. 12:39; 16:4). The KJV adds “and adulterers” because the translators understood the term literally, but this is not found in the most ancient uncial manuscripts (ℵ*, A, B) or the Vulgate (Latin), Peshitta (Syriac), or Coptic (Egyptian) versions. It is found in a later corrected copy of Sinaiticus (ℵ^c) and many later Greek manuscripts (mostly minuscules).

▣ **“friendship with the world”** The term “world” is often used metaphorically of “human society, organized and functioning apart from God” (cf. 1:27; 3:6; Matt. 6:24; John 15:19; I John 2:15-17). Even Christian prayer can exhibit “worldly” attitudes and characteristics.

4:5 Verse 5 is very ambiguous because

1. The original reading is uncertain
 - a. the CAUSATIVE form, *katōkisev*, which would mean God has caused His Spirit to be in believers (in MSS P⁷⁴, ℵ, A, B).
 - b. the INTRANSITIVE form, *katōkēsev*, which would mean the Spirit indwells believers (in MSS K, L, P).
2. The punctuation is uncertain
 - a. one question leading to an unknown quote in NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NAB (possibly from a lost Jewish apocalyptic writing)
 - b. two questions leading to the OT quote (Prov. 3:34 from the Septuagint) in v. 6 in ASV, Moffatt and Phillips translations
3. The meaning of “jealously desires” is uncertain
 - a. God yearns for His Spirit to guide believers’ lives (Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 6:14-15). This would mean a positive connotation—“zealous” or “jealous” and a capital “s” Spirit.
 - b. mankind’s fallen nature yearns for worldly pleasures (cf. Rom. 8:1-8). This would mean a negative connotation—“envy” and a small “s” spirit.
4. The verse may refer to
 - a. God’s jealous love for believers’ complete allegiance to Him
 - b. mankind’s total corruption (v. 5), but God’s grace (v. 6, cf. TEV).

4:6 “But He gives a greater grace” In respect to mankind’s sin problem, which seems to interpret v. 5 in a negative sense, God gives even more grace (cf. Rom. 5:20-21).

▣ **“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD”** This is from Prov. 3:34 in the Septuagint (cf. I Pet. 5:5-6). The spiritual battle lines have been drawn. The term “proud” comes from two Greek words: “above” and “to show oneself.” This relates to the haughty teachers of 3:14-16.

▣ **“BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE”** This relates to the teachers with godly wisdom of 3:17-18. It is also a general principle.

4:7 “Submit therefore to God” This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. This is a military term which means “to align oneself under authority” (cf. Eph. 5:21; I Pet. 2:13). Notice the twin aspects of submission (to God) and resistance (to evil). The first VERBAL form (AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE) implies that believers must allow God to enable them to submit in a completed way to His will. (I must mention here that the PASSIVE VOICE was replacing the MIDDLE VOICE in Koine Greek. This text and 4:10 and 5:19 may be explained by this grammatical transition). The second VERBAL form (AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE) implies that the believer must combine God’s work with active participation—resist the devil in a complete way!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION (*HUPOTASSŌ*)

The Septuagint uses this term to translate ten different Hebrew words. Its basic OT meaning was “to order” or “the right of command.” This is picked up in the LXX.

1. God commands (cf. Lev. 10:1; Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8)
2. Moses commands (cf. Exod. 36:6; Deut. 27:1)
3. kings command (cf. II Chr. 31:13)

In the NT this sense continues as in Acts 10:48, where an Apostle commands. However, new connotations are developed in the NT.

1. a voluntary aspect develops (often MIDDLE VOICE)
2. this self-limiting action can be seen in Jesus submitting to the Father (cf. Luke 2:51)
3. believers submit to aspects of culture so that the gospel will not be adversely affected
 - a. all believers (cf. Eph. 5:21)
 - b. believing wives (cf. Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:5; I Pet. 3:1)
 - c. believers to pagan governments (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13)

Believers act out of motives of love, for God, for Christ, for the Kingdom, for the good of others.

Like *agapaō* the church filled this term with new meaning based on the needs of the Kingdom and the needs of others. This term takes on a new nobility of selflessness, not based on a command, but on a new relationship to a self-giving God and Messiah. Believers obey and submit for the good of the whole and the blessing of the family of God.

▣ **“Resist the devil”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is literally “take a stand against” (cf. Eph. 6:13; I Pet. 5:9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons:

1. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness.
2. The concept of a personal arch enemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately) then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or English literature (i.e. Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups:

1. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Gen. 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels

in I Enoch 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e. Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel's strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are focusing on (1) Job 1-2 where Satan is one of the "sons of God" (i.e. angels) or (2) Isa. 14; Ezek. 28 where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezek. 31). However, Isa. 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) believes that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. The two high gods of Iranian (Zoroastrian) dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, good and evil, and this rabbinical concept developed into a Judaic dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the "war in heaven." The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

▣ **"he will flee from you"** Satan will flee before God's provision (cf. Eph. 6:11-18) and our faith, but only for a season (cf. Luke 4:13).

4:8 "Draw near to God" This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This verse reflects OT regulations for the priests that now are applicable to all believers (cf. Ex. 19:22). The collective title for the OT Levitical priests has now been transferred to all of the NT saints (cf. I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). Notice the covenantal reciprocal requirement—believers draw near and God draws near (cf. II Chr. 15:2; Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7).

▣ **"He will draw near to you"** This is not a works-righteousness emphasis, but a promise that God responds to faith (cf. Ps. 145:18).

▣ **"Cleanse your hands, you sinners"** This is another AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. (cf. Ps. 24:3-6; Isa. 1:16). Notice that James calls believers "sinners"! This also relates to the ceremonial purification worship rites of OT priests (cf. Ex. 30:17-21; Ezek. 44:15). It became an OT idiom for the turning from and removal of sin (cf. Deut. 21:1-9; Ps. 24:4; 26:6). The "hand" becomes a revealer of the "heart." We become what we think, what we dwell on mentally. Believers need to have clean hearts and hands, as well as a single commitment to God (which is the exact opposite of a double-minded person, cf. 1:8; 4:5).

There is a good article on "Washing Hands" in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 362-3.

▣ **"purify your hearts"** This is another AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is not just outward ceremonial cleansing but inward spiritual cleansing (cf. Jer. 4:14; I Pet. 1:22; I John 3:3). The covenant has requirements! See Special Topic: The Heart at 1:26.

▣ **"you double-minded"** This same descriptive term is used of believers with unanswered prayers in 1:5-8. Here it is used of believers again. James is clearly asserting that believers' motives and lifestyles make a real difference in the way one experiences the Christian life. Peace, security, joy, and effectiveness are not automatic.

4:9 “Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning” These are four AORIST IMPERATIVES (the first three are AORIST ACTIVE and the last one AORIST PASSIVE). Collectively they refer to the need for spiritual mourning over sin like Matt. 5:3-9. This is a Hebraic way of referring to a repentant attitude and lifestyle. This sorrow must be balanced with the joy of 1:2 and 5:13. Somehow Christianity is both!

4:10 “Humble yourselves” The form is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE but used in the sense of a MIDDLE VOICE (notice the English translation, cf. 4:6; I Pet. 5:6). This may reflect the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14) and/or possibly an OT allusion to Isa. 57:15. Believers’ humility and repentance invoke a promised covenantal response from YHWH.



NASB	“in the presence of the Lord”
NKJV	“in sight of the Lord”
NRSV, TEV, NJB	“before the Lord”

This is a Hebrew idiom for (1) a worship service (cf. Deut. 33:10); or (2) the Lord’s personal knowledge (cf. Gen. 19:13; Judg. 18:6). Since this is not a worship service setting but an emphasis on a repentant attitude, #2 fits best.

▣ **“and He will exalt you”** This also is an idiom meaning (1) God will raise up your spirit and give you joy; (2) God will exalt you among your peers (cf. vv. 11-12; Matt. 23:12); or (3) physical safety (cf. Job 5:11; 22:29). Notice, victory comes through repentance and humility!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this chapter reflect the attitude and actions of believers or their unbelieving Jewish co-worshipers?
2. List the three enemies of mankind. Define them (cf. Eph. 2:2-3)
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. Explain in your own words the different ways that verse 2 has been understood. Check several English translations.
4. Read verse 5 in several English translations and note the differences.
5. What does James want from us in verses 7-10?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT INTO JAMES 4:11-17

- A. James 4:11-12 seems to form some type of closing summary about the improper use of the tongue. The topic is introduced in 1:19 but is developed in 3:1ff.
- B. James 4:17 is also some type of closing summary, but its exact relevance to the context is uncertain. A. T. Robertson says it is the key summary verse of the entire letter.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:11-12

¹¹Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

4:11 “Do not speak against one another” This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act that is in process. The Tyndale translation has “backbiting,” possibly because this same word is used in this sense in the LXX of Ps. 50:20. The church had/has been guilty of this (cf. 5:9; II Cor. 12:20; I Pet. 2:1).

▣ **“brethren. . .brother. . .brother”** See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ **“judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law”** A judgmental attitude among Christians is a major spiritual problem (cf. Lev. 19:16,17-18; Matt. 7:1ff; Luke 6:36-38; Rom. 14:1-12). The term “law” here seems to refer to “the law of love” mentioned in 1:25; 2:8,12.

▣ **“you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it”** In James 1:12 we are told to be doers, not just hearers; here we are told to be doers, not judges.

4:12 “one Lawgiver and Judge” “One” is placed first in the Greek for emphasis. This is another reference to monotheism, as in 2:19.

▣ **“One who is able to save and to destroy”** This phrase is often used of God the Father (cf. Luke 12:4-5; Matt. 10:28). In the OT all causality is attributed to YHWH. This was a theological way of asserting monotheism (cf. Deut. 32:39; I Sam. 2:6-7; II Kgs. 5:7).

▣ **“who are you who judge your neighbor”** This is an emphatic statement (cf. Rom. 14:3-4,10,13). Judging, criticizing, or comparing makes one look better at another’s expense. This is an inappropriate use of the tongue.

In v. 11 James addresses his readers as “brothers” and the object of their criticism as “brothers.” This obviously refers to a Christian setting, but by using “neighbor” (cf. 2:8) in v. 12, he widens the specific admonition into a general command.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

This issue must be dealt with in two ways: (1) believers are admonished not to judge one another (cf. Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37,42; Rom. 2:1-11; James 4:11-12), and (2) believers are admonished to evaluate leaders (cf. Matt. 7:6,15-16; I Cor. 14:29; I Thess. 5:21; I Tim. 3:1-13; and I John 4:1-6).

Some criteria for proper evaluation may be helpful

1. evaluation should be for the purpose of affirmation (cf. I John 4:1 - “test” with a view toward approval)
2. evaluation should be done in humility and gentleness (cf. Gal. 6:1)
3. evaluation must not focus on personal preference issues (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33)
4. evaluation should identify those leaders who have “no handle for criticism” from within the church or the community (cf. I Tim. 3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:13-17

¹³Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” ¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do

this or that.”¹⁶But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.¹⁷Therefore, to one who knows *the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

4:13 “Come now, you who say” It is uncertain to which group of recipients this refers: (1) unbelieving Jews; (2) believing Jews; or (3) a continuing diatribe with a supposed dissenter or objector.

▣ **“Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit”** This refers to the specific plans of Jewish businessmen who do not take God into account. It is a glaring example of practical atheism.

4:14 This seems to relate to Prov. 27:1. This truth is also stated in Jesus’ parable of Luke 12:16-21, called “the Rich Fool.”

▣

NASB, NKJV “vapor”
NRSV, NJB “mist”
TEV “like a puff of smoke”

We get the English word “atmosphere” from this Greek word (*atmis*). The frailty and fleetingness of human life is often alluded to in the Bible as

1. a shadow (cf. Job 8:9; 14:2; Ps. 102:11; 109:23)
2. a breath (cf. Job 7:7,16)
3. a cloud (cf. Job 7:9; 30:15)
4. a wild flower (cf. Ps. 103:15; Isa. 40:6-8; I Pet. 1:24)
5. vanity or mist (cf. Eccl. 1:2,14; 2:1,11,15,17,19,21,23,26; 3:19; 4:4,7,8,16; 5:7,10; 6:2,4,9,22; 7:6,15; 8:10,14; 9:9; 11:8,10; 12:8).

▣ **“that appears for a little while and then vanishes away”** These are two PRESENT PARTICIPLES that sound alike: “appears” (*phainomenē*) and “vanishes away” (*aphanizomenē*). Human plans come and go; only God’s plan remains.

4:15 “If” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL, which means potential action, but with a contingency.

▣ **“the Lord wills”** This type of phrase is used often by NT writers (cf. Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32; I Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Heb. 6:3; I Pet. 3:17). The biblical world-view attributes all knowledge and direction to God. This is a NT idiom affirming monotheism and should not be taken as a theological determinism. Believers know and assert that God is involved in their lives, but this does not link God to evil, tragedy, and random natural acts of violence. We live in a spiritually fallen and “cursed” world. This is not the world that God intended it to be! He is still active in His creation, but there is mystery in the how and why of individual actions and lives.

4:16

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV “you boast in your arrogance”
TEV “you are proud and you boast”
NJB “how boastful and loud-mouthed you are”

Plans apart from God are empty and vain as are human pride and boasting (cf. John 15:5; Rom. 14:8).

▣ **“all such boasting is evil”** Paul states this same truth in I Cor. 5:2 and 6. Mankind’s problem from the beginning has been a desire for independence from God. Life apart from God is sin and rebellion.

4:17 This seems to be a significant independent summary statement, unrelated to the immediate context. This refers to the sins of omission (cf. Matt. 25:31ff). This may reflect the cryptic sayings of Jesus on the relationship between knowledge and sin (cf. Matt. 23:23; Luke 12:47; John 9:41; 15:22,24). In many ways it sounds like Rom. 14:23.

Robert B. Girdlestone’s *Synonyms of the Old Testament* has an interesting remark on this verse:

“An important definition of sin is given by St. James—‘to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin’ (4. 17). It would seem to be implied that where there is no knowledge of what is right or wrong there is no sin; and with this agree the words of our Lord to the Pharisees, ‘If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see;

therefore your sin remaineth' (John 9.41). The profession of knowledge involved responsibility, and caused the Pharisees to be condemned, out of their own mouth, as sinners. Absolute ignorance is excusable, even though it is a missing of the mark, but negligence is not (see Heb. 2:3)" (p. 85).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is judging among Christians such a serious sin?
2. Why is the frailty of human life such a recurring biblical theme?

JAMES 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Warning to the Rich	Rich Oppressors Will be Judged	The Contrast Between Godliness and Worldliness 4:1-5:6	Warning to the Rich	A Warning for the Rich and Self-confident 4:13-5:6
5:1-6	5:1-6		5:1-6	
Patience and Prayer	Be Patient and Persevere	Concluding Encouragement	Patience and Prayer	The Coming of the Lord
5:7-11	5:7-12	5:7-11	5:7-8 5:9-11	5:7-11
5:12	Meeting Specific Needs	5:12	5:12	5:12
5:13-18	5:13-18 Bring Back the Erring One	5:13-18	5:13-18	5:13-18
5:19-20	5:19-20	5:19-20	5:19-20	5:19-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 5:1-6

- A. James' discussion of the inappropriate emphasis on wealth starts in 4:13 and continues through 5:6.
- B. The topic of wealth issued from James' comparison of mankind's desires (*yetzers*) for things and self instead of God (cf. 4:1-5:6).
- C. This paragraph has many terms and forms unique to this context. This causes one to wonder if it might be a quote or catechism possibly taken from unknown Jewish inter-biblical sources.
The context sounds so much like Amos. The illustration is obviously OT.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-6

¹Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. ²Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. ³Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! ⁴Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.

5:1 “Come now” This is parallel to 4:13. It is the literary technique of diatribe. James presents truth by making a statement and then showing how some will abuse this stated truth.

▣ **“you rich”** This refers either to (1) rich believers as in 1:10 or (2) exploiting unbelievers (cf. 2:1-13). Wealth has its unique temptations and problems (cf. Matt. 6; Luke 6:24; I Tim. 6:9-10,17).

▣ **“weep”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which speaks of urgency. It refers to eschatological judgment. In 4:9-10 these commands are related to a call to repentance and humility like Matt. 5:3-9; but this section, 5:1-12, relates to the Second Coming and Judgment Day.

▣ **“howl”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in an IMPERATIVAL sense. This term is used in the OT to describe the pain of certain judgment (cf. Isa. 13:6; 14:31; 15:2,3; 16:7; 23:1,14; 65:14).

▣ **“miseries”** This is a very strong term (cf. Rom. 7:24; Rev. 3:17).

▣ **“which are coming upon you”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This shows the certainty of God bringing mankind to account for his plans as well as his actions! This judgment is not only the future (eschatological) but also present (temporal). We reap what we sow (cf. Gal. 6:7-8).

To fully understand this text two aspects of wealth must be understood: (1) the Jews considered wealth to be an evidence of God’s acceptance and blessing (cf. Deut. 28:1-13), but they ignored the contextual covenantal responsibilities and warnings (cf. Deut. 27: 28:15-68), and (2) the wealthy Jews were often the very ones who persecuted the early Christians.

It is uncertain whether the ones referred to are wealthy Jews or worldly believers. They were expecting God’s blessing, but beheld judgment (cf. Isa. 13:6). They had fattened themselves for judgment (cf. v. 5; Jer. 12:3; 25:34).

5:2-3 “Your gold and your silver” There were three sources of wealth in the ancient world: (1) stored food; (2) clothing; and (3) precious metals. All three types of wealth are described by the PERFECT TENSE verbal forms denoting complete and ongoing destruction: “rotted,” “moth-eaten,” and “rusted” (cf. Matt. 6:19-20).

▣ **“consume your flesh like fire”** Fire is often used as a symbol of God’s judgment. Here it is related to the form of destruction that can happen to accumulated earthly wealth. Humans think that wealth will protect them and help them, but it may well cause their destruction (cf. Luke 12:15-21; 16:19-31).

▣ **“the last days”** This refers to the Jewish concept of two ages, one evil and one righteous. For Christians it relates to the period from the birth of Jesus until His Second Coming. In God’s plan the Messiah comes twice, once as Savior and later as Judge (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). The last days refer to this period between the incarnation (God becoming a human) and the Parousia (Second Coming).

▣ **“that you have stored up your treasures”** This reflects Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 6). James often alludes to Jesus’ words in this sermon. One wonders if he was present or if the early church used Matthew’s Gospel in their training of new believers (catechism).

5:4 “the pay of the laborers. . .which has been withheld by you” The poor needed their money every day in order to feed their families, but the rich withheld it to assure that they returned to work the next day (cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15).

There is a manuscript variant in this verse which is typical of many of the variants in the scribal tradition. One term, *aphustereō*, found in MSS \aleph and B^{*}, means “withhold payment” while *apostereō*, which means “deprive one of something,” is found in MSS A, B² and most later manuscripts. As for an interpretation or understanding of the meaning of the original author, these two options make little difference.

▣ **“cries out”** This is literally “shrieks.” The cries of the exploited believer reach God!

▣ **“has reached the ears of”** The Bible often describes God in human terms: (1) human body parts; (2) human feelings; or (3) human relationships. Humans have no other language than human categories to describe a personal deity. This is called “anthropomorphisms” from the two Greek words *anthrōpos*, meaning man, and *morphē*, meaning form.

This type of language helps us express the biblical world-view that

1. God is a person and that humans made in His image represent “personal” attributes and characteristics. This is why God and mankind can understand and relate to each other.
2. Humans do not ultimately understand God. He is far greater and more majestic than our earth-bound, temporal categories. God has truly revealed Himself and we can trust His revelation, but He has not exhaustively revealed Himself because of the limited capacity and sinfulness of mankind.

▣ **“of the Lord of Sabaoth”** This is an OT title for deity (*YHWH Sabaoth*) which is used well over 250 times, but not in the Pentateuch (Gen. - Deut.). It is used in the OT in several different senses:

1. To discuss all created things (cf. Gen. 2:1; Neh. 9:6; Isa. 45:12).
2. To describe God in ancient royal categories
 - a. palace guards
 - b. royal entourage
 - c. Israel as the unique people of God (cf. II Sam. 7:26-29; Ps. 46:7; 48:8)
3. To describe God’s military aspect
 - a. the leader of Israel’s army (cf. Ex. 12:41; I Sam. 17:45; 60:12; Ps. 24:8-10; Isa. 31:4).
 - b. the leader of the heavenly angelic army (cf. Josh. 5:14-15; Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:26)
4. To describe and refute the ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite belief that the heavenly lights represented angelic powers to be worshiped and placated (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; Isa. 24:21-23; 40:26; Jer. 8:2).

It is true that angels are depicted as stars (cf. Job 38:7; Judg. 5:20 and later Jewish apocalyptic literature), but they are servants of YHWH, not independent powers.

5:5 “lived luxuriously and led a life of wanton pleasure” This is similar to Jesus’ parable in Luke 16:19-31. The same term is used in I Tim. 5:6.

▣ **“fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter”** They were acting like pampered cattle, fattened for the market. This is so reminiscent of Amos’ preaching.

5:6 “You have condemned” This refers to the financial and judicial exploitation of widows, orphans, strangers, the poor, and the socially powerless and outcast. God is on the side of the needy and neglected (cf. Deut. 10:18; 24:17-21; 26:12; 27:19).

▣ **“put to death”** This may possibly be like 3:2 in the sense of violent acts or hateful attitudes (cf. Matt. 5:21-26).

▣ **“the righteous man”** Some link this to Jesus (because of the last phrase and Isa. 53:7), but the context relates it to the suffering children of God, the saints.

▣ **“he does not resist you”** This is possibly a question expecting a “yes” answer [see the modern translations of (1) *The Twentieth Century New Testament*; (2) Edgar J. Goodspeed; and (3) J. B. Rotherham]. If so, it relates to Matt. 5:39. In this age God’s people should not react and retaliate, but they will testify on Judgment Day!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is wealth a sin?
2. List the three sins of these wealthy people.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO JAMES 5:7-12

- A. The imminence of the Second Coming (James 5:1-11)
1. James and other NT authors seem to assume the immediacy of the Lord's return.
 2. There is a tension in the words of Jesus Himself concerning His return. Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30). But every generation so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He is coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) as if He tarries.

Some passages in the gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events which must happen first:

- a. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:10)
- b. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2)
- c. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24;)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last, but plan and train for future ministry.

3. The believers' proper response to the delayed Second Coming is patience. Several examples are given:
 - a. the farmer (cf. v. 7)
 - b. the prophets (cf. v. 10)
 - c. Job (cf. v. 11)
4. The confident assurance and expectation of the return of the Lord is an existential hope of every generation of believers. H. E. Dana's *Jewish Christianity* has a helpful comment:

"James believed in the imminence of Christ's Second Coming. It cannot be justly charged that we have here a 'mistake' in the New Testament. James is faithfully recording the impression of his own religious consciousness, and though the actual extent of time was far beyond anything of which he dreamed, it was right for him to be on the watch for his returning Lord. Inspiration must keep within the verdict of Jesus that, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority' (Ac. 1:7). James could not know how near or distant in time was the Second Coming; he could only express its nearness in his own consciousness—and in that he was honest in his purpose and made no mistake" (pp. 124-125).

- B. There is a continuing emphasis on a negative use of the tongue (James 5:9,12 as 5:13-20 is a positive use of the tongue).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:7-11

⁷Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the

Judge is standing right at the door. ¹⁰As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

5:7 “Therefore” This shows the relationship of this paragraph to the previous one. The emphasis on the Second Coming in vv. 1-6 is continued.

▣ **“be patient”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It is the theme and emphasis of this context (cf. 1:4). The word is used four times: v. 7 (twice), 8, and 10. Its basic meaning is “long-suffering.” This term is used of God’s patience with mankind (cf. Rom. 2:4; I Pet. 3:20), and is also one of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

▣ **“brethren”** See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ **“until the coming of the Lord”** This is literally “until the *Parousia*” which means “presence” and was used of a royal visit. The other NT terms used for the Second Coming are (1) *epiphaneia*, “face to face appearing”; (2) *apokalupis*, “unveiling”; and (3) “the Day of the Lord” and the variations of this phrase. The antecedent of “Lord” in this passage is both YHWH, as in vv. 10 and 11, and Jesus in vv. 7,8, and 14. New Testament authors often used this grammatical ambiguity to assert the deity of Jesus.

The NT as a whole is written within the world-view of the OT which asserted

1. a current evil, rebellious age
2. a coming new age of righteousness
3. brought about by the Spirit’s agency through the work of the Messiah (Anointed One).

The theological assumption of progressive revelation is required because the NT authors slightly modify Israel’s expectation. Instead of a military, nationalistic (Israel) coming of the Messiah, there are two comings. The first coming is the incarnation of deity in the conception and birth of Jesus of Nazareth. He came as the non-military, non-judicial “suffering servant” fulfilling Isa. 53 and as the mild rider on the colt of a donkey (not a war horse or kingly mule), fulfilling Zech. 9:9. The first coming inaugurated the New Messianic Age, the Kingdom of God on earth. In one sense the Kingdom is here, but of course, in another it is still far off. This tension between the two comings of the Messiah is the over-lapping of the two Jewish ages that was unseen, or at least unclear, from the OT. This dual coming emphasizes YHWH’s commitment to redeem all humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Ex. 19:5 and the preaching of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jonah).

The church is not waiting for the fulfillment of OT prophecy because most prophecies refer to the first coming (cf. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, p. 166). What believers do anticipate is the glorious coming of the resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the expected historical fulfillment of the new age of righteousness on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). The OT presentations were not inaccurate, but incomplete. He will come again just as the prophets predicted—in the judicial power and material authority of YHWH.

The Second Coming is not a biblical term, but the concept is the world-view and framework of the entire NT. God will set it all straight. Fellowship between God and mankind made in His image will be restored. Evil will be judged and removed. God’s purposes will not, cannot, fail!

▣ **“The farmer”** This is the first of three examples of patience: (1) a farmer (v. 7); (2) the OT prophets (v 10); and (3) Job (v. 11). The farmer is totally dependent on the weather, over which he has no control, but plows and sows in faith and hope.

▣ **“the early and late rains”** The early rains in Palestine were in October and November and were needed for the seeds to sprout. The late rains came in April and May and were needed for the crops to mature. This may imply that the recipients of James were in or near Palestine or else they knew about its climate.

5:8 “You too be patient” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE repeated from v. 7.

▣ **“strengthen your hearts”** This is another AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (cf. I Thess. 3:13). Trust and wait on God’s promises. See Special Topic: Heart at 1:26.

▣ **“for the coming of the Lord is near”** This is PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which implies He came once, the influence continues, and He will come again (cf. I Pet. 4:7). The NT authors (and possibly Jesus Himself, compare Matt. 16:28 with 24:36) expected the consummation of the Second Coming to happen quickly. The imminence of the Second Coming is meant to encourage

every generation of believers amidst worldly pressures. The time is uncertain, but the event is sure! Believers live every day in expectation of their Lord's glorious return. The major NT word to all believers is "be ready and be active."

SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

This is literally "*Parousia*" which means "presence" and was used of a royal visit. The other NT terms used for the Second Coming are (1) *epiphaneia*, "face to face appearing"; (2) *apokalupis*, "unveiling"; and (3) "the Day of the Lord" and the variations of this phrase.

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The church is not waiting for the fulfillment of OT prophecy because most prophecies refer to the first coming (cf. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 165-166). What believers do anticipate is the glorious coming of the resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the expected historical fulfillment of the new age of righteousness on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). The OT presentations were not inaccurate, but incomplete. He will come again just as the prophets predicted in the power and authority of YHWH.

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5:9

NASB, TEV

"do not complain"

NKJV, NRSV

"do not grumble"

NJB

"do not make complaints"

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act in process (cf. Mark 7:34; 8:12; Rom. 8:23). This could relate to (1) the unequal existential circumstances of some believers suffering and some not; (2) the persecution of faithful believers; or (3) the jealousy among church leaders (teachers).

▣ **"so that you yourselves may not be judged"** The following verses are shocking in their warnings (cf. Matt. 6:14-15; 7:1ff; 18:35; Luke 6:38; James 2:13). Believers are not forgiven by forgiving, but our forgiving does reveal our new heart! Do we want God to treat us as we treat others?

▣ **"the Judge is standing right at the door"** The emphasis is on the immediacy of the Second Coming and its related judgment (cf. Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:29).

5:10 "the prophets" Their lives were far from easy and safe (cf. Matt. 5:10-12).

5:11 "who endured" This is a different word from the one used in vv. 7-10 although it reflects and continues the same emphasis. This word means "voluntary, steadfast endurance" with an emphasis on "remaining under a load." Job is known proverbially for his patience. Believers of the OT and NT have revelation from God. We understand many things about spiritual reality, but there is still much mystery in our individual experiences.

▣ **“the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful”** These are two rare forms of the Greek terms for “pity” and “mercy.” This is a descriptive title of God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13). If God treats us this way, we should treat others the same way (cf. v. 9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:12

¹²But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

5:12 “But above all” This is a logical connector to a new, but related, subject. It is surprising that James saw the truth of v. 12 as “above all.” It may relate to the improper use of the tongue by using the name of God which was sacred (cf. Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11).

▣ **“my brethren”** See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

▣ **“do not swear”** Many modern translations see v. 12 as an independent unit (NASB, NRSV, NJB, NIV). It is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act already in process. This does not refer to profanity but to rabbinical oath-taking which asserted the truthfulness of their statement by the flippant use of God’s name (cf. Matt. 5:34-37). They had developed an elaborate system of binding and nonbinding oaths. This is another negative use of the tongue.

▣ **“so that you may not fall under judgment”** The major problem was taking God’s name in vain (cf. Exod. 20:7). Our words are significant (cf. Matt. 12:34-37), and we will answer for them (cf. Ecclesiasticus 23:9-10). Believers will also stand before Jesus for evaluation of their deeds, motives, and words (cf. II Cor. 5:10). Christ’s death dealt with the sin problem; His Spirit empowers and gifts believers for service; but each of us is responsible for how we have used the gifts and opportunities for ministry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does James emphasize a temporal or eschatological judgment?
2. Explain the title “YHWH Sabaoth” (Lord of hosts).
3. How is James like Amos?
4. How or why is James 5:1-12 related to the Second Coming?
5. Why is v. 12 thought to be a separate unit of thought?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO JAMES 5:13-20

- A. The Church’s role in physical healing (James 5:13-18)
 1. Physical healing is a NT fact, as certain as spiritual healing. Its reality is a sign of ultimate salvation and the New Age.
 2. Physical healing is an ongoing sign of God’s love and care for believers. However, not everyone in the NT was healed:
 - a. Paul (II Cor. 12:7-9)
 - b. Trophimus (II Tim. 4:20)
 - c. Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:27)
 3. The real questions concerning physical healing are not its reality or source but
 - a. Who is to be the recipient?

- b. Who is to be the instrument?
 - c. What form, formula, or guidelines are to be involved?
 - d. When, where, why is it to be done?
4. There is a psychological element involved in healing, as can be seen here and in Mark 8:22-26. Certain cultural actions and symbols are used to encourage faith.
- a. anointing with oil
 - b. spitting and making mud
 - c. laying on of hands in prayer
- B. The Church has an active and purposeful role in reclaiming backsliders (James 5:19-20)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:13-18

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

5:13-17 This entire section is primarily dealing with the importance and power of prayer (as a positive use of the tongue) in all circumstances, not only in healing procedures! It contrasts v. 12 by showing the proper use of the name of God.

In this context there are three questions related to suffering, joy, and sickness, but only the last one is expanded and discussed. The three questions provide guidelines for believers dealing with life's problems: (1) pray; (2) sing praises; and (3) ask for help from mature Christians.

☐ **“he must pray. . .sing praises”** These VERBS are a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE and a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. We get the English word “psalm” from “praises” (cf. Rom. 15:9; I Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Verse 13 may be saying that prayer and praise are due God (cf. Rom. 12:12; I Thess. 5:16-17) in all of our circumstances (suffering or joy).

5:14 “Is anyone among you sick” This is literally “without strength.” The term *astheneia* was used of both lack of physical strength (cf. II Cor. 11:30; 12:5; I Tim. 5:23) and lack of spiritual strength (cf. I Cor. 8:9; II Cor. 11:29) or purity (cf. Rom. 6:19; Heb. 4:15). This ambiguity may have been purposeful in a context where sin is linked to sickness. It is grammatically uncertain whether this should be a question (cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV) or a statement (cf. NJB, New Century Version).

The theological question is whether (1) v. 13's suffering is paralleled to v. 14's sickness or (2) they are two separate experiences of believers in a fallen world. James has discussed “suffering and patience”; now he discusses “prayer and sickness.”

☐ **“call for the elders”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. Notice that it is the responsibility of the sick one to request a visit from the “elders.” These procedures were to be done at the home of the weak one, not necessarily the gathered church, especially if the “anointing” was a medical massage or rubdown. Also this scenario shows the need for women “deacons” or “elders” in the physical ministry to women. Notice that the term “elders” is PLURAL, as it is so often in the NT. The context of James is a believing Jewish fellowship; therefore, “elders” is probably not used in the NT sense of “pastors” (cf. Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7), but in the OT sense of “elders” of the synagogue. The rabbis and designated leaders of the synagogues regularly visited and anointed the sick.

☐ **“of the church”** This is the Greek term *ekklesia*, which literally meant “called out ones.” It was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term *qahal* or “assembly” of Israel. In secular Greek it originally meant a local town assembly (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41). It is interesting theologically that the emphasis here is on local leaders, not itinerant faith healers. Healing is a spiritual gift which is mentioned in I Cor. 12:9, 28 and was widely practiced in the NT and the early church. Notice that the elders were to go to the sick when requested, not the sick to the gathered church meeting. This was to be a private spiritual procedure.

▣ **“they are to pray over him”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. This is the main verb of the context. Prayer is the main subject of this entire context:

- “he must pray” (v. 13)
- “they are to pray” (v. 14)
- “the prayer” (v. 15)
- “pray for one another” (v. 16)
- “effective prayer” (v. 16)
- “in prayer he prayed” (v. 17)
- “he prayed” (v. 18)

▣ **“anointing”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The word *aleiphō* is not the common word for ceremonial, religious anointing (*chriō* or *chrisma*), but it is the common term for rubbing on medicine. Physical touching is always emotionally significant to the sick. This may have been a culturally expected act like Mark 6:13; 7:33; 8:23; John 9:6,11.

There are several Greek terms used of anointing.

- A. *murizō*, used in Mark 14:8 for the anointing with spices for burial. It is the Hebrew root from which we get the name Messiah (an anointed one).
- B. *aleiphō*, also used of anointing with spices for burial (cf. Mark 16:1; John 12:3,7). In addition it was used for
 - 1. anointing the sick (cf. Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34; James 5:14)
 - 2. anointing oneself, apparently daily, as preparation for public activities (cf. Matt. 6:17)
 - 3. the special anointing of Jesus by a sinful woman (cf. Luke 7:38,46)
- C. *chriō* (*chrisma*), the normal term used in a religious sense often associated with the Spirit
 - 1. anointing of Jesus (cf. Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9)
 - 2. anointing of believers (cf. II Cor. 1:21; I John 2:20,27)
- D. *egchriō* and *epichriō*, used exclusively of rubbing on salve (cf. Rev. 3:18)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE

- A. Used for beautification (cf. Deut. 28:40; Ruth 3:3; II Sam. 12:20; 14:2; II Chr. 28:1-5; Dan. 10:3; Amos 6:6; Mic. 6:15)
- B. Used for guests (cf. Ps. 23:5; Luke 7:38,46; John 11:2)
- C. Used for healing (cf. Isa. 6:1; Jer. 51:8; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34; James 5:14 [used in hygienic sense in Ezek. 16:9])
- D. Used for preparation for burial (cf. Gen. 50:2; II Chr. 16:14; Mark 16:1; John 12:3,7; 19:39-40)
- E. Used in a religious sense (of an object, cf. Gen. 28:18,20; 31:13 [a pillar]; Exod. 29:36 [the altar]; Exod. 30:36; 40:9-16; Lev. 8:10-13; Num. 7:1 [the tabernacle])
- F. Used for installing leaders
 - 1. Priests
 - a. Aaron (Exod. 28:41; 29:7; 30:30)
 - b. Aaron’s sons (Exod. 40:15; Lev. 7:36)
 - c. standard phrase or title (Num. 3:3; Lev. 16:32)
 - 2. Kings
 - a. by God (cf. I Sam. 2:10; II Sam. 12:7; II Kgs. 9:3,6,12; Ps. 45:7; 89:20)
 - b. by the prophets (cf. I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1,17; 16:3,12-13; I Kgs. 1:45; 19:15-16)
 - c. by priests (cf. I Kgs. 1:34,39; II Kgs. 11:12)
 - d. by the elders (cf. Judg. 9:8,15; II Sam. 2:7; 5:3; II Kgs. 23:30)
 - e. of Jesus as Messianic king (cf. Ps. 2:2; Luke 4:18 [Isa. 61:1]; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9 [Ps. 45:7])
 - f. Jesus’ followers (cf. II Cor. 1:21; I John 2:20,27 [*chrisma*])
 - 3. possibly of prophets (cf. Isa. 61:1)
 - 4. unbelieving instruments of divine deliverance
 - a. Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
 - b. King of Tyre (cf. Ezek. 28:14)

▣ **“with oil”** Oil had many uses in the Jewish first century.

1. as medicine (cf. Isa. 1:6; Luke 10:34)
2. as a symbol of God’s giftedness and empowerment of OT prophets, priests, and kings
3. as a ceremonial symbol of God’s presence (cf. Mark 8:22-26)
4. as related to exorcism (cf. Mark 6:13)
5. as preparation for daily public activities or special times of joyful events (putting it on one’s face).

▣ **“in the name of the Lord”** This shows the proper use of God’s name. This was a common NT phrase for the personal presence and active power of the Triune God in the church. It was not a magical formula, but an appeal to God’s character.

Often this phrase refers to Jesus as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:11)

1. at the profession of one’s faith in Jesus at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Cor. 1:13,15; James 2:7)
2. at an exorcism (cf. Matt. 7:22; Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 19:13)
3. at a healing (cf. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 9:34; James 5:14)
4. at an act of ministry (cf. Matt. 10:42; 18:5; Luke 9:48)
5. at the time of church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15-20)
6. during preaching to Gentiles (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 9:15; 15:17; Rom. 1:5)
7. in prayer (cf. John 14:13-14; 15:2,16; 16:23; I Cor. 1:2)
8. a way of referring to Christianity (cf. Acts 26:9; I Cor. 1:10; II Tim. 2:19; James 2:7; I Pet. 4:14)

Whatever we do as proclaimers, ministers, helpers, healers, exorcists, etc., we do in His character, His power, His provisions—in His Name!

As a footnote, let me point out that healing is a gift of the Spirit given to some members of the body of Christ for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7,9,11,28, and 30). This context, however, does not refer to these gifted believers, but to the local church leaders. This is a procedure for local church leaders, not a special gift given by the Spirit.

5:15 “the prayer offered in faith” This relates to the prayer of the “elders,” not the sick believer. Healing is not always linked to the faith of the one being healed (cf. Mark 2:5; 5:35-43; John 5:5-9).

This term for prayer (*euchē*) can mean “oath” (cf. Acts 18:18; 21:23) and may involve a public pledge of faith on behalf of the ill person; it may also imply a pledge of availability for God’s service.

▣ **“will restore”** The Greek term *sozō* is used often in the NT for spiritual salvation (cf. 1:21; 2:14; 4:12), but here it is used in its OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. 5:20; Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56). The term literally means “to make whole” (physically and/or spiritually).

▣ **“if he has committed sins”** The “if” is a combination of “and” (*kai*) and the THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL (*ean*) with the SUBJUNCTIVE “to be.” This then is a PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which does not assume that sin is the cause of illness. However, in first century Judaism, sin and sickness had a theological connection (cf. I Cor. 11:30; Mark 2:5-11; John 5:14). However, Jesus’ statements in John 9:3 show that this is not always the case.

This entire context (5:13-18), which deals with the physical restoration of believers, mentions several actions which would encourage first century believers: (1) the elders of the church come; (2) they pray; (3) in Jesus’ powerful name; (4) they anoint (rub down) with oil; and (5) they hear and absolve guilt. God uses a variety of methods in human physical restoration—miracles, exorcisms, prayers of friends, self-limiting illness, positive mental attitude, confession, medicine, medical procedures, and the removal of the heavy weight of sin and guilt.

5:16 “confess your sins” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. “Therefore” shows the connection of v. 16 with the preceding discussion. Confession was and is an important part in the healing process (cf. Lev. 5:5; Num. 5:7; Ps. 51). It is an effective antidote to pride, self-centeredness, and sin.

The major interpretive issue at this point is whether James has moved from a discussion of prayer for the physically ill person to prayer for the spiritually ill person, or whether the context of physical illness and physical healing continues. At issue is the concept of “save.” Does it refer to the OT sense of physical deliverance as in v. 15, or has it moved to the sense of spiritual salvation?

The textual evidence for the NT sense (spiritual salvation) is: (1) generalizing of “elder” to “one another” (v. 16) and (2) the generalized conclusion of vv. 19-20.

On the other hand, the context seems to continue in its emphasis on physical illness (OT sense of physical deliverance): (1) physical illness healed by prayer and confession; (2) Elijah is just another example of answered prayer (vv. 17-18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

- A. There are two forms of the same Greek root used for confession or profession, *homologeō* and *exomologeō*. The compound term James uses is from *homo*, the same; *legeō*, to speak; and *ek*, out of. The basic meaning is to say the same thing, to agree with. The *ex* added to the idea of a public declaration.
- B. The English translations of this word group are
1. praise
 2. agree
 3. declare
 4. profess
 5. confess
- C. This word group had two seemingly opposite usages
1. to praise (God)
 2. to admit sin
- These may have developed from mankind's sense of the holiness of God and its own sinfulness. To acknowledge one truth is to acknowledge both.
- D. The NT usages of the word group are
1. to promise (cf. Matt. 14:7; Acts 7:17)
 2. to agree or consent to something (cf. John 1:20; Luke 22:6; Acts 24:14; Heb. 11:13)
 3. to praise (cf. Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom. 14:11; 15:9)
 4. to assent to
 - a. a person (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 9:22; 12:42; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11; Rev. 3:5)
 - b. a truth (cf. Acts 23:8; II Cor. 11:13; I John 4:2)
 5. to make a public declaration of (legal sense developed into religious affirmation, cf. Acts 24:14; I Tim. 6:13)
 - a. without admission of guilt (cf. I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:23)
 - b. with an admission of guilt (cf. Matt. 3:6; Acts 19:18; Heb. 4:14; James 5:16; I John 1:9)

▣ **“to one another”** Notice that it was not specifically stated to the “elders,” which one would have expected from this context, but the generalized “one another.” Possibly confession is to be made to those wronged. Often the early church dealt with sin corporately and publicly (cf. I Tim. 5:19-20).

▣ **“pray for one another”** This is another PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE.

To summarize, confession is surely first made to God, but then to (1) the elders at the home; (2) the people sinned against; and (3) the whole gathered congregation. Confession cleanses the heart and warns other believers!

In the spiritual battle for purity and wholeness, confession and prayer are the believer's major weapons along with a knowledge of the gospel and the Word of God (cf. Eph. 6:10-20).

In one sense this is similar to the modern “twelve step” movement started by Alcoholics Anonymous. As we admit wrong to God and others, we find peace and acceptance. As we help others find hope and help, we find it ourselves. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

I. Introduction

- A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus' example
 - 1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:29-46
 - 2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
 - 3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4
- B. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf and the behalf of others.
- C. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2).
- D. The major purpose of prayer is fellowship and time with the Triune God.
- E. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.
- F. Prayer can involve several elements
 - 1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
 - 2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
 - 3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
 - 4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
 - 5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father
- G. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

- 1. Some examples of intercessory prayer
 - a. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18:22ff
 - b. Moses' prayers for Israel
 - (1) Exodus 5:22-23
 - (2) Exodus 32:31ff
 - (3) Deuteronomy 5:5
 - (4) Deuteronomy 9:18,25ff
 - c. Samuel prays for Israel
 - (1) I Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
 - (2) I Samuel 12:16-23
 - (3) I Samuel 15:11
 - d. David prayed for his child, II Samuel 12:16-18
- 2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16
- 3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers
 - a. Psalm 66:1
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7

B. New Testament

- 1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry
 - a. Jesus
 - (1) Romans 8:34
 - (2) Hebrews 7:25
 - (3) I John 2:1
 - b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27

2. Paul's intercessory ministry
 - a. Prays for the Jews
 - (1) Romans 9:1ff
 - (2) Romans 10:1
 - b. Prays for the churches
 - (1) Romans 1:9
 - (2) Ephesians 1:16
 - (3) Philippians 1:3-4,9
 - (4) Colossians 1:3,9
 - (5) I Thessalonians 1:2-3
 - (6) II Thessalonians 1:11
 - (7) II Timothy 1:3
 - (8) Philemon, v. 4
 - c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him
 - (1) Romans 15:30
 - (2) II Corinthians 1:11
 - (3) Ephesians 6:19
 - (4) Colossians 4:3
 - (5) I Thessalonians 5:25
 - (6) II Thessalonians 3:1
3. The church's intercessory ministry
 - a. Prayer for one another
 - (1) Ephesians 6:18
 - (2) I Timothy 2:1
 - (3) James 5:16
 - b. Prayer requested for special groups
 - (1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44
 - (2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18
 - (3) rulers, I Timothy 2:2
 - (4) the sick, James 5:13-16
 - (5) backsliders, I John 5:16
 - c. Prayer for all men, I Timothy 2:1

III. Hindrances to answered prayer

- A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit
 1. Abide in Him, John 15:7
 2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24
 3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20
 4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; I John 3:22; 5:14-15
- B. Motives
 1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
 2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14
 3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
 4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3
- C. Other aspects
 1. Perseverance
 - a. Luke 18:1-8
 - b. Colossians 4:2
 - c. James 5:16

2. Keep on asking
 - a. Matthew 7:7-8
 - b. Luke 11:5-13
 - c. James 1:5
3. Discord at home, I Peter 3:7
4. Free from known sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - d. Isaiah 64:7

IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege! What an opportunity! What a duty and responsibility!
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.

▣ **“so that you may be healed”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE which adds an element of contingency. God is the one who heals. As there was ambiguity in the Greek term “sick” in v. 14, the same wide semantic field is found in the term “healed.” It can refer to physical or spiritual healing (cf. Matt. 13:15, quoting Isa. 6:10; Heb. 12:11-13; I Pet. 2:24, quoting Isa. 53:5).



NASB “the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much”
NKJV “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”
NRSV “the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective”
TEV “the prayer of a good person has a powerful effect”
NJB “the heartfelt prayer of someone upright works very powerfully”

This seems to denote two conditions: (1) uprightness; and (2) persistence (cf. v. 17 and Matt. 7:7-8). The effectiveness of intercessory prayer is related to the spiritual life of the intercessor (cf. Prov. 15:29) and primarily to the will and power of God.

There are many questions related to this promise of effective prayer

1. How is the term “righteous” to be understood?
 - a. a believer (position in Christ)
 - b. a church leader (position in the church)
 - c. a godly believer (Christlikeness)
2. How is the term “effective” to be understood?
 - a. all prayers are positively answered
 - b. if we pray in God’s will, all prayers are answered
 - c. offer up our human hopes, dreams, and desires, but trust God is giving His “best,” His will for those believers in need (physical and spiritual)
3. How is this statement related to time?
 - a. the truly righteous pray consistently over a period of time and many times during that period (persistence and repetition)
 - b. time, persistence, and repetition are not the determining factors
4. If prayer is not answered, who is to “blame”?
 - a. the person prayed for (lack of faith or sin)
 - b. the intercessor (lack of faith or sin)
 - c. God’s will (not always God’s will or the right time)
 - d. a combination of all three (the mystery of unanswered believing prayer)
5. Is it possible that this is a proverbial statement which was not meant to be analyzed in detail?

See Special Topic at 1:7.

5:17 “Elijah” He was a very important prophet because of his connection with the coming of the Messiah in Mal. 4:5. James is surely written with an eschatological setting in mind.

☐	
NASB, NKJV	“with a nature like ours”
NRSV	“a human being like us”
TEV	“the same kind of person as we are”
NJB	“a human being as frail as ourselves”

There are no super saints! We are all human (cf. Acts 14:15). Remember Elijah was not a perfect believer. Please read I Kgs. 18-19.

☐ “**prayed. . .three years and six months**” The time element is not recorded in I Kgs. 17:1 but was part of rabbinical speculation (cf. Luke 4:25).

5:18 Elijah is an example of a prayer for no rain and later a prayer for rain, both of which God granted. God used Elijah to accomplish His own will and agenda. Elijah was His instrument. Prayer does not move a reluctant God, but channels His will and purposes through His children.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:19-20

¹⁹My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

5:19 “my brethren” See notes at 1:2 and 1:9.

☐ “**if**” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL contingent on two actions: (1) one believer strays and (2) another believer is willing to help.

☐ “**strays from the truth**” The straying has both doctrinal and moral aspects (cf. Heb. 5:2). The term “strays” comes from a Greek word from which we get the English “planet.” As the ancients watched and mapped the night sky, they saw that certain “stars” did not follow a regular orbit. We know these today as our solar system’s planets. They called them “the wanderers.”

The grammatical form of the VERB is AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The AORIST speaks of wandering. The PASSIVE VOICE is used to assert that the subject is being acted upon. Most translations translate it as a MIDDLE or ACTIVE (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, and NIV). The PASSIVE idea is found in *The Twentieth Century New Testament* and the translation by Henry Alford. The PASSIVE VOICE was replacing the MIDDLE VOICE in Koine Greek (cf. A. T. Robertson’s *Studies in the Epistle of James* p. 196 (footnote #6). This may explain 4:7 and 10 as well.

Believers wander (1) by willfulness; (2) by the trickery of false teachers (cf. Eph. 4:14); and (3) under the influence of the demonic (cf. Eph. 4:14). The exact cause is not the issue, but the need for confession, repentance, prayer, and the help of other believers.

☐ “**one turns him back**” Believers have a responsibility to help one another (cf. II Cor. 2:7; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:32; II Thess. 3:15).

5:20

NASB, NKJV	“let him know”
NRSV	“you should know”
TEV	“remember this”
NJB	“he may be sure”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It is an idiom for confidence in the following statement.

☐ “**turns**” It is significant that the Greek word *epistrephō* is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term for “repentance” (*shuv*). Since Israel was considered the people of God, this “turning” was viewed as “turning back” to God or the renewing of a previous relationship. That same sense is reflected in this text in James.

☐ “**he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death.**” In context this refers to (1) the supposed connection between sin and sickness in v. 15 or (2) the message of the whole book about warnings related to covenant responsibilities.

Our systematic theology tends to interpret passages like this (i.e. 5:19-20) in “acceptable” ways. The fact remains this is a shocking warning written to Christians. Sin causes death, physical death, spiritual death, eternal death. Unconfessed sin is a powerful and beguiling enemy. Flee from it. Confess it!

There is an interesting and insightful footnote in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, published by IVP:

“Neither James nor the rest of the New Testament is concerned to answer the speculative question ‘How could a Christian who had eternal life lose it?’ All of the theological answers given are based on various theological assumptions and either deny the meaning of the various texts (such as ‘The Christian does not really die eternally, but simply loses his or her reward’) or explain the texts according to their theological beliefs (such as the Calvinist ‘They appeared to be Christian, but their lack of perseverance shows that they were not really regenerate,’ or the Arminian ‘Yes, people can fall away from the faith and be lost’). James, like all New Testament writers, is not interested in theological neatness, but in pastoral concern. He simply sees the situation (a Christian on the wrong way), recognizes the danger (death) and goes to the rescue, rather than ask how it fits into his theology. So while theological responses are appropriate in their place, we ought not to expect a New Testament writer to select among them” (p. 708).

▣ **“cover a multitude of sins”** This refers to the forgiving of the wanderer’s sins! Possibly this is related to Ps. 32:1; 85:2; Prov. 10:12; I Pet. 4:8 (a Semitic truism) or I Cor. 13:7 where love refuses to see faults in others. Christians love wounded Christians. The spiritual battle has casualties, but also reclamations.

At this point let us discuss the application of this context to today. It appears from v. 15 that James expected physical restoration. Does that imply that all of the early Jewish believers were healed? If so, how did they die? Verses 19-20 may have been the theological assurance that even those who died had their sins forgiven and possessed eternal life.

Bible-believing believers believe in God’s miraculous presence, care, provision, and healing! The mystery is when, where, how, and who is to be involved and why physical healing often does not occur. Our biblical world-view asserts God’s love, power, and sovereignty even amidst suffering, sickness, persecution, and death. Faith lives even when the body dies. Let us keep on praying, believing, confessing, anointing, encouraging, and loving each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Did the NT writers expect an immediate Second Coming in their lifetime? If so, does that mean the Bible is in error?
2. Why is patience such an important aspect of the believer’s character?
3. How does one take God’s name in vain?
4. Does James 5:13-20 give us a procedure to follow for healing?
5. How is confession of sin related to healing?
6. How are local elders to be involved in healing? Who are these elders?
7. Does wandering from the truth result in physical or spiritual death?

INTRODUCTION TO JUDE

OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Jude is a frightening book about the recurrent danger of error, rebellion, and judgment. Believers must always be on guard. Their protection is
 - 1. the Father's call, love, and keeping power
 - 2. knowledge of the Scriptures, godly living, and mercy toward wounded fellow believers.
- B. Yet, even amidst the warnings, the conclusion of Jude is one of the strongest prayers on the affirmation of the keeping power of God.
- C. The relationship between Jude and II Peter is uncertain as to:
 - 1. which one was written first
 - 2. why they are so similar yet different
 - 3. how one describes a coming heresy and the other a present heresy
 - 4. whether there was an early church document from which both authors drew
 - 5. whether any of the examples of rebellion involved believers
- D. This book illustrates the theological balance between
 - 1. the keeping power of God (vv. 1,24)
 - 2. believers keeping themselves (v. 21)

AUTHOR

- A. Jude (Hebrew, Judah, or Greek, Judas) characterizes himself by two designations
 - 1. "a bond-servant of Jesus Christ" - This is not exactly the same as Paul's usual designation, although they look the same in English. Paul always puts the noun "slave" first, followed by the GENITIVE descriptive phrase. This is also true of II Peter.
However, the word order in Jude is the same as the word order in James (descriptive GENITIVE phrase first).
 - 2. "a brother of James" - There are many persons in the NT named James (Jacob), but the name by itself, without any description, reminds one of James 1:1. James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the leader of the Jerusalem church during Paul's missionary journeys (cf. Acts 15). It has been speculated that both half-brothers chose, out of humility, not to identify themselves as biologically related to Jesus.
- B. The simple opening reflects someone who was well-known and active (cf. I Cor. 9:3) in the early church, but about whom no information has survived. If someone writing at a later period wanted to write in the name of a famous person from the past (pseudography), Jude would not be a good candidate.
- C. The ancient tradition that Jude was a Hebrew Christian and half-brother of Jesus (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) rests on several assumptions
 - 1. a family relationship to James (cf. James 1:1)
 - 2. the extensive use of the OT
 - 3. the characteristic Hebrew literary use of threes
 - a. three OT events of apostasy
 - b. three OT characters
 - c. opening greeting
 - (1) three verbs: "called," "beloved," "kept"
 - (2) three prayer requests: "mercy," "peace," "love"
- D. The Greek style and form of Jude is well-written Koine Greek. Jude must have had a cosmopolitan exposure (cf. I Cor. 9:5).
As far as personality, he is much like James; he uses a no-nonsense, straight-forward approach to the mandate for godly living in this world of sin and rebellion.

DATE

- A. There is no certainty, only speculation.
- B. Let us list some of the parameters
 1. during Jude's lifetime if he was the younger brother of James and half-brother of Jesus
 2. the book of Jude's literary relationship to II Peter. Of the twenty-five verses in Jude, sixteen (vv. 3-18) have some association with II Pet. 2:1-18. If Peter is the author of II Peter, then the date is close to his lifetime (he died in A. D. 64). It is, however, uncertain who quotes who:
 - a. II Peter quotes Jude
 - b. Jude quotes II Peter
 - c. both use early catachistic documents or church tradition
- C. The contents of the book imply a mid-first century date. Enough time had elapsed for heresy to develop. The physical presence of the Apostles had just passed (vv. 18-19). However, a uniform doctrine had not developed. Jude mentions the moral problems of the false teachers, but does not discuss the doctrinal errors. He uses OT examples, not Jesus' teachings (quotes or stories).
- D. In *Historical Ecclesiasticus* III:19:1-20:6, Eusebius mentions a tradition.
 1. that Jude's grandsons were taken to Rome to face Domitian on charges of treason
 2. that they were descendants of Jewish royalty
 3. that they were relatives of Jesus of NazarethDomitian reigned from A. D. 81-96.
- E. A date from the 60's to the 80's is possible.

RECIPIENTS AND OCCASION

- A. The early church was not theologically monolithic; even the Apostles emphasized different aspects of the gospel. As the Apostles began to die (or at least were too few and too far away to be consulted) and the Second Coming continued to be delayed, the early church faced the challenge of "standardizing" acceptable parameters for gospel teachings. The OT, the words and stories of Jesus, and the preaching of the Apostles became the standards.
- B. Jude was written in a day of flux and disruption of clear authority. The believers (whether a local church or geographical area is uncertain) were facing massive invasion of error through speculative theology/philosophy. What is known of the heresy:
 1. the heretics were part of the church meetings ("love feasts" cf. v. 12)
 2. the heretics were immoral, manipulative teachers who were causing divisions among God's people (cf. v. 19)
 3. the heretics seem to have used or discussed "angels" in their theology
 4. the heretics seem to have emphasized "knowledge" (*gnosis*)If one is familiar with the Greco-Roman world of the first and second centuries, these characteristics imply the philosophical/theological movement known as "Gnosticism." It is surely true that the origins of these specific second century heretics were a common element of much near-eastern thought. Elements of the dualism so characteristic of Gnosticism is present in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many of the NT books (Eph. - Col, the Pastorals, I, II John) were written to combat a similar type of false teaching/teachers.

PURPOSE

- A. The author desired to write about their common salvation (cf. v. 3).
- B. The invasion of false teachings and teachers into the inner fellowship times of the church (cf. v. 12) caused the author to address the burning issue of "the faith once and for all given to the church" (cf. vv. 3,20). His goal was orthodoxy, but he approached the subject through godly living (orthopraxy), not doctrine (very similar to James 2:14-24). How people lived was a clear window into their theology.

- C. The author wants to encourage believers to
 1. grow spiritually (cf. v. 20)
 2. be assured of salvation (cf. vv. 21,24-25)
 3. help the fallen (cf. vv. 22-23)

CANONIZATION

- A. This book was initially accepted (cf. quote by Clement of Rome about A.D. 94), then later disputed and finally fully accepted (Council of Nicea, A.D. 325 and Carthage, A.D. 397).
- B. Its major problem in acquiring canonical status was its quote of non-canonical books (I Enoch and the Assumption of Moses). These books, especially I Enoch, circulated widely among the believers of the first century and were theologically influential.
 1. Why is this a problem? Does it imply that the non-canonical books are authoritative?
 - a. the OT quotes non-inspired writing (cf. Num. 21:14-15,26-30 [Balaam's prophecies in Num. 22-23]; Josh. 10:13; II Sam. 1:18ff; I Kgs. 11:41; 14:19,29; 15:7,23,31)
 - b. Jesus used non-canonical sources as illustrative material (cf. Matt. 23:35)
 - c. Stephen used non-canonical sources (cf. Acts 7:4,14-16)
 - d. Paul often used non-canonical sources
 - (1) Rabbinic Midrash concerning Christ as a rock that followed the children of Israel during the wilderness wandering period (cf. I Cor. 10:4)
 - (2) the names of Pharaoh's magicians from Exod. 7:11,22; 8:7 (cf. II Tim. 3:8) were taken from some intertestamental Jewish writings
 - (3) Greek writers
 - a) the poet Aratus (Acts 17:28)
 - b) the poet Menander (I Cor. 15:33)
 - c) the poet Epimenides or Euripides (Titus 1:12)
 - e. James used rabbinical tradition in James 5:17
 - f. John used the mythology of near eastern cosmologies in Rev. 12:3
 2. Why did Jude use these non-canonical sources?
 - a. possibly they were freely used by the false teachers
 - b. possibly they were respected and read by the recipients
- C. Support for Jude's canonicity is supported by
 1. quoted or alluded to by
 - a. Clement of Rome (A.D. 94-97)
 - b. Polycarp (A.D. 110-50)
 - c. Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202)
 - d. Tertullian (A.D. 150-220)
 - e. Athenagoras (A.D. 177)
 - f. Origen (A.D. 185-254)

(These are taken from International Critical Commentary, pp. 305-308)
 2. named in
 - a. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215)
 - b. Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-386)
 - c. Jerome (A.D. 340-420)
 - d. Augustine (A.D. 400)
 3. listed in the canonical lists of
 - a. Muratorian fragment (A.D. 200)
 - b. Baroccio (A.D. 206)
 - c. Athanasius (A.D. 367)
 4. affirmed by Councils
 - a. Nicea (A.D. 325)
 - b. Hippo (A.D. 393)
 - c. Carthage (A.D. 397 and 419)

5. present in the translations of
 - a. Old Latin (A.D. 150-170)
 - b. Syriac Revision, the Peshitta (5th Century A.D.)

- D. The later church was unsure of Jude's canonical (inspired) status. Eusebius listed it among the disputed books (*Hist. Eccl.* III:25). Both Chrysostom and Jerome mention Jude's quoting from non-canonical sources as the reason it is disputed by some as canonical. It was rejected by the early Syrian church along with II Peter, II and III John. This is probably because it was this area of the Empire which was affected by Gnostic use of Jewish angelology. Therefore, Jude and I Peter added fuel to the false teachers' arguments.

- E. Just a word about I Enoch. It was originally written in Hebrew (but is now lost except for fragments in Aramaic among the Dead Sea Scrolls), translated into Greek (only fragments survive) and by A.D. 600 copied into Ethiopian (one copy survives). The book was written in the inter-biblical period, but was edited many times, as the Ethiopian copy shows. It was very influential in the early church; Tertullian quotes it as Scripture. It was cited in the Epistle of Barnabas (as Scripture) and by Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. It had lost favor in the early church by the fourth century.

JUDE

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation vv. 1-2	Greeting to the Called v. 1a vv. 1b-2	Salutation vv. 1-2	Introduction vv. 1-2	Address vv. 1-2
Judgment on False Teachers vv. 3-4	Contend for the Faith vv. 3-4	Occasion of the Letter vv. 3-4	False Teachers vv. 3-4	The Reason for this Letter vv. 3-4
vv. 5-7	Old and New Apostates vv. 5-11	False Teachers vv. 5-7	vv. 5-7	The False Teachers: The Certainty of Punishment vv. 5-7
vv. 8-13		vv. 8-13	vv. 8-13	Their Violent Language vv. 8-10
	Apostates Depraved and Doomed vv. 12-15			Their Vicious Behavior vv. 11-16
vv. 14-16	Apostates Predicted vv. 16-19	vv. 14-16	vv. 14-15 v. 16	
Warnings and Exhortations vv. 17-23		Exhortations vv. 17-23	Warnings and Instructions vv. 17-21	A Warning vv. 17-19
	Maintain Your Life with God vv. 20-23		vv. 22-23	The Duties of Love vv. 20-23
Benediction vv. 24-25	Glory to God vv. 24-25	vv. 24-25	Prayer of Praise vv. 24-25	Doxology vv. 24-25

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the keys in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, Three and Four.

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: v. 1a

¹Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

v. 1 **“Jude”** In Hebrew this is *Judah* and in Greek it is *Judas*. Jesus' half-brother by this name is mentioned in Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:3. From the information we have, all of His brothers and sisters were unbelievers until after the Resurrection (cf. John 7:5).

▣ **“a bond servant”** This may have been used as (1) a sign of humility (cf. Rom. 1:1) or (2) an OT honorific title, “servant of God,” used of Moses, Joshua, and David as well as of the Messiah in Isa. 52:13-53:12. Clement of Alexandria asserts the first usage as the reason Jude, like James, did not call himself “brother of the Lord.” The second usage may follow Paul's use of the phrase (cf. Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1).

It is also interesting to note that although the phrase “a bond-servant (or slave) of Jesus Christ” sounds like Paul in English, it is in reality like James 1:1. Paul always put the NOUN first, followed by the GENITIVE phrase, but not so Jude and James.

▣ **“Jesus”** This is *Joshua* in Hebrew and is the name designated by Gabriel to Mary. It means “YHWH saves” (cf. Matt. 1:21).

▣ **“Christ”** This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *Messiah*, which means “anointed one.”

▣ **“and brother of”** It is unusual in the ancient near-east and Greco-Roman world to designate oneself “brother of”; usually it is “son of.” It is possible that both James and Jude were uncomfortable with the exalted title “brother of the Lord.” Others in the church may have used this designation for them (cf. Matt. 13:55; John 7:3-10; Acts 1:14; I Cor. 9:5; and Gal. 1:19).

▣ **“James”** This is the Hebrew *Jacob*. He was another half-brother of Jesus who became the leader of the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 15) and wrote the canonical book of James.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 1b-2

^{1b}To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: ²May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

▣ **“who are the called”** The term “called” (*klētos*, a DATIVE PLURAL) is placed last in the Greek sentence for emphasis. According to United Bible Societies' new, semantical domains lexicon (vol. 1. pp. 424-425), this term (and its related forms) was used of an urgent call to a particular task:

1. the office of apostle (cf. Rom. 1:1)
2. the life of a believer (cf. Rom. 1:6-7; Eph. 4:1)
3. the call to preach the gospel (cf. Acts 16:10)
4. in Jude the urgent call both to salvation and to live godly lives in faith, hope, and purity.

This theological emphasis on God's call (cf. John 6:44,65) is also found in I Pet. 1:1 and often in Paul's writings. Salvation is not simply a human choice; it is also a response to an initiation from God's Spirit. This is why it is so important that human beings respond immediately to the "still, small voice" of God's leadership in their lives, whether initial salvation or effective ministry or repentance. Humans are always the responders.

▣ **"beloved"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (as is "kept"). The King James Version has "sanctified" and follows the uncial manuscripts K, L, and P and the later Textus Receptus. Many textual scholars assume this follows the wording of I Cor. 1:2. The grammatical forms of "beloved" (*ēgapāmenoīs*) and "sanctified" (*ēgiasmenoīs*) are very similar in Greek. There is overwhelming manuscript evidence against the King James translation as can be seen in manuscripts P⁷², א, A, and B, which have "beloved." God the Father used this title of Jesus in Ps. 2; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; and Eph. 1:6. It is now used for believers (cf. vv. 3,17,20; I Pet. 2:11; 4:12; II Pet. 3:1,8,14,17).

▣ **"God the Father"** YHWH's relationship to Israel was often expressed in family metaphors: (1) as husband; (2) as kinsman redeemer; or (3) as father/mother (parental). These metaphors allow fallen mankind to comprehend an eternal, non-corporeal, holy God. They express the intimacy and intensity of YHWH's love for covenant Israel and the Church. They are not intended to express any temporal significance (i.e. first the Father then later the Son) nor any sense of sexual generation. The virgin birth was not a sexual experience for God or Mary.

Jesus' use of *Abba* for YHWH opens the opportunity for all humans who turn to God in faith and repentance to experience the family love of the Trinity (cf. John 17).

Our hope as believers is in the unchanging, loving character of God our Father. He is our hope, our assurance, our peace, and our life (cf. Eph. 1:3-14; I Pet. 1:2).

▣ **"and kept"** This could mean "guarded" or "preserved." Believers have been and continue to be guarded by God (cf. I Pet. 1:4-5). This is the emphasis of the closing prayer in vv. 24-25. Paul often used the terms "called" and "beloved" in his greetings but never the term "kept!"

The term "kept" is parallel to the PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE "beloved." Believers have been and continue to be loved and kept. What a powerful promise in a book like Jude where so many are falling away! God's keeping power is emphasized in this book in two covenantal ways: (1) it is "of God" (cf. John 17:11; I Pet. 1:4-5) and (2) it must be responded to by repentant, believing humans (cf. vv. 3,20-21). It is both a passive experience (given and maintained by the Spirit) and an active experience (diligent effort on the part of the individual believer and family of faith).

The United Bible Societies' *A Handbook on the Letter from Jude and the Second Letter from Peter* by Daniel Arichea and Howard Hatton, makes an interesting comment about these three designations: "called," "loved," and "kept":

"It should be noted that these three expressions are influenced by and perhaps derived from the passages in Isaiah known as the Servant Songs, where Israel is described in the same manner, that is, called, loved, and kept by God (for "called," see Isa. 41:9; 42:6; 48:12; for "loved," see 42:1; 43:4; for "kept," see 42:6; 49:8)" (p.7).

▣	
NASB, NJB	"for Jesus Christ"
NKJV (footnote)	"in Jesus Christ"
NRSV (footnote)	"by Jesus Christ"
TEV	"of Jesus Christ"

This is an INSTRUMENTAL construction. There seems to be a parallel between believers "beloved by the Father" and "kept by/for/in the Son." Within the DATIVE (five case) form three other options are possible: (1) "kept for Jesus" (cf. Col. 1:16); (2) "kept in Jesus"; or (3) "kept by Jesus."

v. 2 **"may mercy, peace, and love"** Jude uses many triads. Paul's usual triad is grace, peace, and love (cf. I Tim. 1:2). This is a powerful prayer. It is a summary of the whole book.

▣ **"be multiplied to you"** This is a rare AORIST PASSIVE OPTATIVE. It denotes a wish or prayer. It is also SINGULAR, directed to each believer. It expresses Jude's prayer for his readers. The PASSIVE denotes that it is Father/Son/Spirit who produce the mercy, peace, and love.

This very same rare VERB form appears in I Pet. 1:2 and II Pet. 1:2, but with "grace" and "peace."

Verses 1-2 form a typical but Christianized standard opening to a letter. Jude appears to be a combination of a sermon and a letter. There is no characteristic greeting at the conclusion. These one page (one papyrus sheet) letters were common in the

Greco-Roman world as the means of regular communication. Hundreds have been found in the papyri from Egypt, but only three are found in the NT (II, III John and Jude).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 3-4

³Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. ⁴For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

v. 3 **“Beloved”** Jude uses this phrase several times (cf. vv. 1,3,17,20). He emulated God’s love and he truly cared for his readers. There are several possible origins of the term.

1. Old Testament
 - a. used of Israel (cf. Deut. 33:12, who rebelled)
 - b. used of Solomon (cf. Neh. 13:26, who rebelled)
 - c. used of believers (cf. Ps. 60:5; 108:6, who need to be delivered)
2. New Testament
 - a. common title in II Pet. (cf. 3:1,8,14,15,17)
 - b. common title in I and II John (which also deals with heresy, cf. 3:2,21; 4:1,2,11; II John 3,5,11)
 - c. sometimes used by James (Jude’s brother, cf. 1:16,19; 2:5)



NASB “while I was making every effort to write you”
NKJV “while I was very diligent to write to you”
NRSV “while I was eagerly preparing to write to you”
TEV “while I was doing my best to write to you”
NJB “at a time when I was eagerly looking forward to writing to you”

The term *spoudē* means eagerness or zeal. It is used in II Peter twice: 1:5 and 3:12. Jude felt an urgency to write about one subject, but the Spirit and the circumstances mandated another topic.

▣ **“our common salvation”** One wonders what this phrase would have meant to Jude’s readers. It is similar to “a faith of the same kind as yours” in II Pet. 1:2. II Peter 2 and Jude obviously have some literary connection.

Was the commonality in (1) the person of Christ, (2) the gospel about Christ, (3) the way of receiving Christ, or (4) living for Christ?

We may wish the NT writers had given us more information, but the truth is, we have all the information we need (“faith once and for all given to the saints” vv. 3,20). The issue is whether we will respond to what has been given (revelation).

▣ **“I felt the necessity to write”** This shows the Spirit’s leadership in writing (cf. II Pet. 1:21). Notice that the INFINITIVE “to write” appears twice in v. 3. The first is PRESENT TENSE. Jude was in the process of writing about the common salvation, but something happened (an event, a message, an intensification of evil, etc.) and he had to write (AORIST TENSE), which refers to the book of Jude.

▣ **“contend earnestly”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INFINITIVE. This is an athletic term from which we get the English word “agony” (cf. I Tim. 6:12). Believers are to have the ability to articulate their faith before and for others (cf. I Pet. 3:15). In this context it means “to aggressively continue to defend the faith against false teachers.”

▣ **“the faith”** This term is used here in the sense of the body of Christian truth (cf. v. 20; Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Phil. 1:27). It is surprising that Jude mentions this body of Christian truth but then discusses the lifestyle of the false teachers, not their doctrine. Obviously Christianity is both truths about Christ and emulation of the life of Christ. The false teachers of the NT period often tried to separate truth (orthodoxy) from life (orthopraxy). Christianity is not only what we affirm, but how we live out these affirmations.

▣ **“which was once for all handed down to the saints”** The “once for all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, world-view teachings of Christianity. This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT.

This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”

1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)
2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION)

The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately and pleasingly to God.

This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The Greek term “handed down” (*paradidōmi*) meant a passed-on tradition (cf. II Pet. 2:21; I Cor. 11:2; II Thess. 2:15; 3:6). It is used in the sense of “entrusted.” Believers are stewards of the gospel (cf. I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 1:14; I Pet. 4:10) and will give an account (cf. II Cor. 5:10) of how they passed on the faith.

“Saints” always appears in the PLURAL in the NT except once in Phil. 4:21, but even there it is in a corporate context. To be saved is to be part of a family! We are holy because of our relationship with Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:32). This is our positional standing in justification (cf. Rom. 4). Hopefully our position will progress into lifestyle Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 4:1; 5:2; and I John 1:7).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *kadash*, which has the basic meaning of setting some one, some thing, or some place apart for YHWH’s exclusive use. It denotes the English concept of “the sacred.” YHWH is set apart from humanity by His nature (eternal non-created Spirit) and His character (moral perfection). He is the standard by which all else is measured and judged. He is the transcendent, Holy One, Holy Other.

God created humans for fellowship, but the fall (Gen. 3) caused a relational and moral barrier between a Holy God and sinful humanity. God chose to restore His conscious creation; therefore, He calls on His people to be “holy” (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8). By a faith relationship with YHWH His people become holy by their covenantal position in Him, but are also called on to live holy (cf. Matt. 5:48).

This holy living is possible because believers are fully accepted and forgiven through Jesus’ life and work and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their minds and hearts. This establishes the paradoxical situation of

1. being holy because of Christ’s imputed righteousness
2. being called to live holy because of the presence of the Spirit

Believers are “saints” (*hagioi*) because of the presence in our lives of

1. the will of the Holy One (the Father)
2. the work of the Holy Son (Jesus)
3. the presence of the Holy Spirit

The NT always refers to saints as PLURAL (except one time in Phil. 4:12, but even then the context makes it PLURAL). To be saved is to be part of a family, a body, a building! Biblical faith starts with a personal reception, but issues into a corporate fellowship. We are each gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:11) for the health, growth, and well-being of the body of Christ—the church (cf. I Cor. 12:7). We are saved to serve! Holiness is a family characteristic!

v. 4 “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed” False teachers usually come from within the group. This refers to the false teachers who used cunning schemes (cf. vv. 8,10, 11-12,16,18-19) in order to manipulate the people of God. Other false teachers are mentioned in the NT in Matt. 7:15-23; II Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 2:4; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8-23; II Timothy 3:1ff and of course, II Peter 2.

▣ **“those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. A similar concept is found in II Pet. 2:3. This may be (1) an allusion to the non-canonical book of I Enoch (cf. v. 14) or (2) an example of Jude’s following OT examples. False teachers have crept in unnoticed throughout history and the tragedy continues (cf. Eph. 4:14).

▣ **“ungodly persons”** This is the term “godly” (*eusebās*, cf. II Pet. 2:9 or *eusebeia*, cf. II Pet. 1:3,6,7; 3:11) with an ALPHA PRIVITIVE (*asebās*, cf. II Pet. 2:5; 3:7; Jude 5,15 or *asebeō*, cf. II Pet. 2:6; Jude 15). This is a key term in Jude (used six times) and II Pet. 2. It is also a common designation of rebellion in I Enoch. These teachers are doctrinally false, which led to moral ungodliness. “By their fruit you shall know them” (cf. Matt. 7).

▣ **“who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness”** Antinomians/Libertines use God’s grace as a license for the flesh (cf. Rom. 14:16; I Pet. 2:16; II Pet. 2:19), particularly sexual exploitation.

The term “grace” can be understood in two ways. First, as the character of God who loves and receives fallen mankind solely on the basis of His provisions and promises. It has been defined as the undeserved and unmerited love, acceptance, and forgiveness of God. Its synonym would be mercy. Second, it may be another way of referring to the Christian faith, like “the faith once and for all given to the saints.”

Whichever is true, these false teachers are exploiting the loving, forgiving character of God for their own selfish purposes, which is the essence of sin—independence from God. These are wolves in sheep’s clothing. The tragedy is that God’s people often do not recognize them and even yield themselves to them.

▣ **“deny our only Master”** This is the PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE meaning “they continue to deny.” Literally, it means “renounce,” which may refer to renouncing Christ by their lifestyle (cf. Titus 1:16).

This separation of profession from lifestyle was characteristic of the first-century false teachers. Later gnosticism asserted that one is saved by secret knowledge of the angelic spheres (aeons) between a high holy god and physical creation. Salvation was an intellectual concern and did not affect one’s lifestyle. Jude and James respond harshly to this disjunction between faith and life (following Jesus’ teachings in Matt. 5-7).

There is a Greek manuscript variant in v. 4. The NKJV has “deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” The oldest and most reliable Greek texts (P^{72,78}, \aleph , A, B, and C) do not have “God.” One ARTICLE seems to identify one person who is (1) master, (2) Lord, and (3) Jesus Christ.

▣ **“Master”** Literally this is “despot.” This term is also used of Jesus in II Pet. 2:1. If Jesus is master of our lives, we cannot be (cf. Luke 6:46).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 5-7

⁵Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

v. 5 **“Now I desire to remind you”** We need to be reminded over and over again of the truths of God, even the basics (cf. v. 17; II Pet. 1:12-13). Verses 5-7 form one sentence in Greek.

▣

NASB “though you know all things once for all”
NKJV “though you once knew this”
NRSV “though you are fully informed”
TEV “for even though you know this”
NJB “though you have already learnt it once for all”

There is a question among English translations as to which word the ADVERB “once” (*hapax*) should relate:

1. to “knowing” or
2. to “saving”?

Does the verse teach that the readers are fully informed or that the Israelites of the exodus were fully informed? The first option is explained in two ways: (1) Jude is using a Greek idiomatic phrase or (2) Jude is referring to the work of the Spirit in leading believers into truth (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; I John 2:20,27). The second option has in its favor (1) the use of “subsequently” (or “in the second place”) and (2) the manuscript variations of later scribes who moved “once” in the *hoti* clause.

It seems to me that option two (cf. UBS⁴, NRSV, and TEV) fits the context best, but not the best and oldest manuscript tradition.

▣ **“Lord”** Because of the fact that NT authors regularly address Jesus with YHWH, the OT covenant title for deity, there occasionally occurs an ambiguity as to which person of the Trinity is being addressed. This has caused Greek manuscript variations in both v. 4 and v. 5. Some Greek texts add “God” after “master” in v. 4 (cf. NKJV). This term (*despotēn*) normally refers to the Father in the NT, but in II Pet. 1:1 it refers to Christ.

This same ambiguity affects v. 5. There is a wide variety of variations in the Greek manuscripts:

1. “God Christ” in P⁷²
2. “Lord” in \aleph
3. “Jesus” in A, C

4. “the Lord” in C*
5. “the God” in the Vulgate

The best solution is that “Lord” is referring to YHWH’s activity in the Exodus, although some theologians believe that “the angel of the Lord,” who led Israel, could have been the pre-incarnate Christ.

▣ **“saving a people”** This use of the term “save” (*šāzō*) refers to physical deliverance (its OT sense), not spiritual salvation (its NT sense). The Israelites were “called” and “chosen” to be God’s people.

▣ **“subsequently destroyed those who did not believe”** This obviously refers to some historical account from the OT books of Exodus and Numbers (the exodus and wilderness wandering period). Hebrews 3-4 uses this same period as an example of apostasy. The problem is to which event it refers.

1. the first rebellious attempt to enter the Promised Land
2. another period of rebellion
3. Korah’s rebellion
4. Ba’al worship at Shittim

Does this term “destroyed” imply (1) physical death or (2) eternal death? If physical death, then it refers to those who refused to believe the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, the generation of fighting men (20 to 50 years of age) who left Egypt but balked at entering the Promised Land and died in the wilderness (cf. Num. 14). If eternal death, then it probably refers to those who died on the border of the Promised Land, on the plains of Moab at Shittim, where some of the Israeli people participated in fertility worship with the women of Moab. It seems that all three of Jude’s OT examples involve sexual sins (cf. II Pet. 2:2,13-14,18). The context fits option #1 best.

v. 6 “angels” Jude adds “angels” to his lists of those who initially worshiped and later rebelled against YHWH and were thus destroyed or judged. But which “angels”? Some information is given to describe this particular group of angels:

1. they did not keep their own domain
2. they abandoned their proper abode
3. they will be kept in eternal bonds under darkness for judgment day
4. “sinned” (II Pet. 2:4)
5. “committed them into *Tartarus*” (II Pet. 2:4)
6. “committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment” (II Pet. 2:4)

Which angels in the OT rebelled and sinned?

1. angels as powers behind pagan worship
2. the lesser angelic beings, called by specific demonic names in the OT. Examples: Lilith (cf. Isa. 34:14), Azazel (cf. Lev. 16:8), and goat demons (cf. Lev. 17:7).
3. the “sons of God” in Gen. 6 (often discussed in intertestamental apocalyptic writings, I Enoch 86-88; 106; II Enoch 7,18; II Baruch 56; Jubilees 5)
4. angels mentioned in an example from a Jewish apocalyptic inter-testamental writing (because of Jude’s use of other books of this kind in vv. 9 and 14)

SPECIAL TOPIC: “the sons of God” in Genesis 6

- A. There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase “the sons of God.” There have been three major interpretations
 1. the phrase refers to the godly line of Seth (cf. Gen 5, see note at 4:14)
 2. the phrase refers to a group of angelic beings
 3. the phrase refers to the kings or tyrants or Cain’s line (cf. Gen. 4)
- B. Evidence for the phrase referring to Seth’s line
 1. the immediate literary context of Gen. 4 and 5 shows the development of the rebellious line of Cain and the chosen line of Seth. Therefore, contextual evidence seems to favor the godly line of Seth.
 2. the rabbis have been divided over their understanding of this passage. Some assert that it refers to Seth (but most to angels).
 3. the plural phrase, “the sons of God,” though most often used for angelic beings, rarely refers to human beings
 - a. Deut. 14:1; 32:5
 - b. Psalm 73:15; 82:1-4
 - c. Hosea 1:10

- C. Evidence for the phrase referring to angelic beings
1. this has been the most common traditional understanding of the passage. The larger context of Genesis could support this view as another example of supernatural evil trying to thwart God's will for mankind (the rabbis say out of jealousy)
 2. the plural phrase is used overwhelmingly for angels
 - a. Job 1:6
 - b. Job 2:1
 - c. Job 38:7
 - d. Daniel 3:25
 - e. Psalm 29:1
 - f. Psalm 89:6,7
 3. the inter-testamental book of I Enoch (cf. I Enoch 6:1-8:4; 12:4-6; 19:1-3; 21:1-10) and *Jubilees* 5:1, which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls, interprets these as rebellious angels
 4. the immediate context of chapter 6 seems to imply that "the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation
 5. the Septuagint translates the phrase "sons of God" as "angels of God"
 6. I Enoch even asserts that Noah's Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff)
 7. in Ugaritic literature "sons of God" refers to members of the pantheon (i.e. lesser spiritual beings)
- D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants
1. there are several ancient translations that support this view
 - a. Targum of Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates "sons of God" as "Sons of nobles"
 - b. Symmachus (second century A.D.), Greek translation of the OT, translated "sons of God" as "the sons of the kings"
 - c. the term "*elohim*" is used of Israelite leaders (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8; Ps. 82:1,6)
 - d. *Nephilim* linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4, *Gibborim* is from *Gibbor* meaning "a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power"
 - e. this interpretation and its evidence is taken from *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 106-108.
- E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages
1. the phrase refers to Sethites

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cyril of Alexander b. Theodoret c. Augustine d. Jerome 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> e. Calvin f. Kyle g. Gleason Archer
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 2. the phrase refers to angelic beings

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. writers of the Septuagint b. Philo c. Josephus (<i>Antiquities</i> 1:3:1) d. Justin Martyr e. Irenaeus f. Clement of Alexandria 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> g. Tertullian h. Origen i. Luther j. Ewald k. Delitzsch l. Hengstenberg 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> m. Olford n. Westermann o. Wenham
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- F. How are the "Nephilim" of Gen. 6:4 related to the "sons of God" and "the daughters of men" of Gen. 6:1-2?
1. They are the resultant giants (cf. Num. 13:33) of the union between angels and human women.
 2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.
 3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, "to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of *Homo sapiens* and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them."

This implies to me that he sees these two groups as representing differing groups of humanoids. This would imply a later special creation of Adam and Eve, but also an evolutionary development of *Homo erectus*.

G. It is only fair to disclose my own understanding of this controversial text. First, let me remind all of us that the text in Genesis is brief and ambiguous. Moses' first hearers must have had additional historical insight or Moses used oral or written tradition from the Patriarchal period that he himself did not fully understand. This issue is not a crucial theological subject. We are often curious about things the Scriptures only hint at but are ambiguous. It would be very unfortunate to build an elaborate theology out of this and similar fragments of biblical information. If we needed this information God would have provided it in a more clear and complete form. I personally believe it was angels and humans because:

1. the consistent, although not exclusive, use of the phrase "sons of God" for angels in the OT
2. the Septuagint (Alexandrian) translates (late first century B.C.) "sons of God" as "angels of God"
3. the pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book of I Enoch (possibly written about 200 B.C.) is very specific that it refers to angels (cf. chapters 6-7)
4. the theological link to II Pet. 2 and Jude of angels who sinned and did not keep their proper abode

I know that to some this seems to contradict Matt. 22:30, but these specific angels are neither in heaven nor earth but in a special prison (*Tartarus*).

5. I think that one reason many of the events of Gen. 1-11 are found in other cultures (i.e. similar creation accounts, similar flood accounts, similar accounts of angels taking women) is because all humans were together and had some knowledge of YHWH during this period, but after the tower of Babel's dispersion this knowledge became corrupted and adapted to a polytheistic model.

A good example of this is Greek mythology where the half human/half superhuman giants called Titans are imprisoned in *Tartarus*, this very name used only once in the Bible (cf. II Peter 2) for the holding place of the angels that did not keep their proper abode. In rabbinical theology Hades was divided into a section for the righteous (paradise) and a section for the wicked (*Tartarus*).



NASB	"who did not keep their own domain"
NKJV	"who did not keep their proper domain"
NRSV	"who did not keep their own position"
TEV	"who did not stay within the limits of their proper authority"
NJB	"who did not keep to the authority they had"

There is a play on the tense of the verb "keep" in v. 6. The angels did not keep their place (AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) so God has kept them in a place of imprisonment until judgment day (PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE). Those angels who violated God's will faced both temporal and eschatological judgment, just as the rebels of Israel during the wilderness wandering period and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The term "domain" is the Greek term *archē*, which means the "beginning" or "origin" of something.

1. beginning of the created order (cf. John 1:1; I John 1:1)
2. the beginning of the gospel (cf. Mark 1:1; Phil. 4:15)
3. first eyewitnesses (cf. Luke 1:2)
4. beginning signs (miracles, cf. John 2:11)
5. beginning principles (cf. Heb. 5:12)
6. beginning assurance/confidence (cf. Heb. 3:14)

It came to be used of "rule" or "authority"

1. of human governing officials
 - a. Luke 12:11
 - b. Luke 20:20
 - c. Romans 13:3; Titus 3:1
2. of angelic authorities
 - a. Romans 8:38
 - b. I Cor. 15:24
 - c. Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:10
 - d. Col. 1:16; 2:10,15

These false teachers despise all authority, earthly and heavenly. They are antinomian libertines. They put themselves and their desires first before God, angels, civil authorities, and church leaders.

- ☐ NASB “but abandoned their proper abode”
- ☐ NKJV “but left their own habitation”
- ☐ NRSV “but left their proper dwelling”
- ☐ TEV “but abandoned their own dwelling place”
- ☐ NJB “but left their appointed sphere”

These angels left their heavenly domain and went to another (earth). This fits the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6:1-4 very well. This act was a willful rejection of God’s will and authority.

☐ **“in eternal bonds”** This is literally “chains.” Chains are used on angels in I Enoch and Satan is bound with a “great chain” in Rev. 20:1-2. The term “eternal” may mean “powerful,” “adequate,” “sure,” not literally eternal, because these angels are only held until judgment day, when other means of incarceration shall be used (cf. Rev. 20:10,14-15). The point is, some are imprisoned now, so as to control their evil activities.

☐ **“under darkness”** The term *Tartarus* (not used in Jude but present in II Pet. 2:4) was used in Greek mythology for the holding place of the Titans, the half divine, half human giants. This fits the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6. I Enoch describes the new abode of these rebellious angels (cf. I Enoch 10:5,12) as eternal darkness. How different from heavenly brilliance (glory). The rabbis divided *Sheol* into “Paradise” (for the righteous) and *Tartarus* (for the wicked). The term “abyss” (cf. Luke 8:3, Rev. 9:1; 11:7; 20:3) is synonymous with the metaphors of darkness used in verse 13b.

☐ **“the great day”** This is another way of referring to Judgment Day, the day when God will hold all conscious creation responsible for the gift of life (cf. Phil. 2:10-11; Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:10-12).

v. 7 “Sodom and Gomorrah” This is the third OT example of rebellion that involved sexual activities outside of God’s revealed plan of marriage

1. the Canaanite fertility worship at Shittim (cf. Num. 25)
2. the attempt by angels to mix the orders of creation (cf. Gen. 6:1-4; II Pet. 2:4)
3. the homosexual activity of Sodom and Gomorrah toward angels (cf. Gen. 19; II Pet. 2:6)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOMOSEXUALITY

There is much modern cultural pressure to accept homosexuality as an appropriate alternate lifestyle. The Bible condemns it as a destructive lifestyle, out of the will of God for His creation.

1. it violates the command of Gen. 1 to be fruitful and multiply
2. it characterizes pagan worship and culture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and Jude 7)
3. it reveals a self-centered independence from God (cf. I Cor. 6:9-10)

However, before I leave this topic let me assert God’s love and forgiveness to all rebellious human beings. Christians have no right to act hatefully and arrogantly towards this particular sin, especially when it is obvious that all of us sin. Prayer, concern, testimony, and compassion do far more in this area than vehement condemnation. God’s Word and His Spirit will do the condemning if we let them. All sexual sins, not just this one, are an abomination to God and lead to judgment. Sexuality is a gift from God for mankind’s well-being, joy, and a stable society. But this powerful, God-given urge is often turned into rebellious, self-centered, pleasure-seeking, “more-for-me-at-any-cost,” living (cf. Rom. 8:1-8; Gal. 6:7-8).

☐ **“and the cities around them”** These cities are listed by name in Deut. 29:23.

☐ **“same way”** This is an ACCUSATIVE which relates grammatically to the angels (cf. v. 6), not “the neighboring towns.” It has been speculated that Jude used these OT illustrations because as angels took women in Gen. 6, so here men tried to take angels (cf. Gen. 18:22; 19:1). If so, this would be another example of the attempt to mix the orders of creation. However, to me it seems that the inhabitants of Sodom did not know these were angels and thought them to be men (cf. Gen. 18:22).

▣ **“gross immorality and went after strange flesh”** This is in reference to “different kind of (*heteros*) flesh.” This seems to relate both to (1) the angels and women according to Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* 1:3:1 and (2) the homosexuality (cf. Rom. 1:26-27) so prevalent in the area of Sodom.

▣ **“are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire”** Jude uses these OT examples as a clear warning to his readers. Beware of sexual exploitation by anyone.

The NT speaks clearly of eternal punishment (cf. Matt. 25:41,46; II Thess. 2:8-9; Rev. 19:20; 20:11,14-15; 21:28; and also I Enoch 54:1). This subject is difficult to discuss because the Bible does not give much information about heaven or hell. It affirms their reality, but does not reveal specific information, usually describing them in metaphorical language. Jesus uses the “valley of the sons of Hinnom,” which was just south of Jerusalem and was used by the Israelis under Manasseh for the worship of Molech, the Canaanite fire god who required child sacrifice. The Jews, out of shame and regret for their own participation in these fertility rites, turned this locality into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Jesus’ metaphors of fire, smoke, and worms came from this place, Gehenna.

This place of torment was not created for mankind, but rebellious angels (cf. Matt. 25:41). Evil at all levels will be removed and segregated from God’s creation. Hell is the Bible’s way of describing this permanent divide.

Before I leave this topic let me express the pain with which I approach this subject. This is the only suffering in the Bible that is not redemptive. This is not the will of God for anyone. It is a result of willful, continuous rebellion, both angelic and human. It is an open, bleeding sore in the heart of God that will never heal! God’s willingness to allow free will among His creatures results in some painful, eternal losses.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary, vol. II, p. 379 mentions that Jude’s description of the punishment of these angels is very similar to I Enoch 10:4-6,11,13; 12:4; 15:3; 19:1. This seems to confirm Jude’s familiarity with this inter-biblical Jewish apocalyptic work.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 8-13

⁸Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” ¹⁰But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. ¹¹Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. ¹²These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

v. 8 **“Yet in the same way”** The false teachers of Jude’s day had similarities to the rebellious ones of old. The exact nature of the similarity is not specified.

▣ **“these”** This is Jude’s way of referring to the false teachers who had invaded the church (cf. vv. 8,10,12,14,16,19).

▣ **“also by dreaming”** This term is used of OT false prophets (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:25-32), those who claimed special revelations from God (cf. Col. 2:18).

▣ **“defile the flesh”** This is the metaphorical use of the term “stain.” There was obviously an amoral aspect to their teachings and/or lifestyles. All of these OT examples involved some type of sexual sin (cf. II Tim. 3:1ff; II Pet. 2).

▣ **“reject authority and revile angelic majesties”** There are three characteristics of “these”:

1. “defile the flesh”
2. “reject authority” (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)
“despise God’s authority” (TEV)
“disregard Authority” (NJB)
3. “revile angelic majesty” (NASB)
“speak evil of dignitaries” (NKJV)
“slander the glorious ones” (NRSV)
“insult the glorious beings above” (TEV)
“abuse the Glories as well” (NJB)

It is obvious the first has to do with sexual sins, but what of the second and third? The second designation, “reject authority,” has been interpreted at least two ways:

1. the Greek term for “authority” is *kuriotēta*, which is related to the term “Lord” (*kurios*), therefore some link this rejection (although the VERBALS are different) to the denial of Jesus in v. 4 (of God the Father)
2. the Greek term for “authority” is *kuriotēta*, which is related to *kuriotās*, used in II Pet. 2:10 (cf. Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) to refer to angels

This context seems to be referring to angels, so #2 fits best.

The third designation uses an OT term “glory” (*kabod*), which was used of God (cf. vv. 24,25; II Pet. 1:3,17; 3:18) and all things connected to God, especially in heaven or the life to come. In this instance Jude is picking up on the inter-biblical expansion of this OT concept to refer to angelic beings, beings of power and authority.

This might even refer to the rejection of the OT Law because the Jews believed that angels served as mediators for YHWH giving the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai (cf. Acts 7:35).

This point of the context is the out-of-bounds lifestyle of “these” false teachers in the area of morality and authority.

v. 9 “Michael” His Hebrew name means “who is like God” (cf. Dan. 10:13; 21; 12:1). This refers to Israel’s guardian angel in the Septuagint text of Deut. 32:8.

▣ **“archangel”** This term is only used in the NT here and in I Thess. 4:16. In the OT it refers to a national angel (cf. Dan. 10:13,21; 12:1). There are apparently many levels of angelic authority (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 4:21; Col. 1:16), but they are never discussed in detail or defined in the Scriptures. Be careful of curiosity, ambiguous texts, and modern novels.

▣ **“when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses”** This relates to Moses’ death and burial on Mt. Nebo (cf. Deut. 34:6). The issue (according to Jewish tradition, not Scripture) involves Moses’ body, which Satan claimed because he had sinned by killing the Egyptian (cf. Exod. 2:12). Apparently Michael had been sent by YHWH to retrieve the physical remains of Moses, but was hindered by an angelic majesty (Satan, cf. Job 1-2). This seems to parallel II Pet. 2:11.

▣ **“The Lord rebuke you!”** This is the same phrase used by the angel of the Lord to Satan in Zech. 3:2. It could also be a quote from *The Assumption of Moses*, probably written in the first century. We only know of it from a later Latin fragment and quotes from Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Didymus. It is used to show the Archangel Michael’s respect for Satan’s position (with the sons of God, Job 2, and at the right hand of the angel of the Lord in Zech. 3:1), which was so different from “these” false teachers’ comments about the angelic authorities. The term “Lord” refers to YHWH, while elsewhere in Jude it refers to Jesus.

v. 10 This is a difficult verse to understand. It is paralleled by II Pet. 2:12. Verse 10 is a contrast to how Michael handled authority in v. 9.

1. what they do not know, they rail at (or blaspheme)
2. what they know, they know like irrational animals
3. what they know, will destroy (or corrupt) them

Their animal-like instincts for sex, sin, and rebellion (cf. II Pet. 2:13-14) will eventually destroy them (cf. Phil. 3:19). What irony, that this so-called special knowledge is the very thing that causes their demise.

v. 11 This verse is another illustration of Jude’s use of threes (Cain, Balaam, Korah). It is structured in an OT prophetic pattern of a funeral dirge (cf. Isa. 5; Hab. 2) or curse oath (cf. Deut. 27:15-26). Their destruction is sure! They allowed their own jealousy, greed, sensuality, and lust for power to destroy them (and their teachings destroyed others, cf. James 3:1).

▣ **“Cain”** The account of Cain’s jealousy of Abel and his murder are recorded in Gen. 4. The rabbis use Cain as an example of a cynical, materialistic unbeliever in the *Jerusalem Targum* on Gen. 4:7. Philo used Cain as an example of self-centeredness.

▣ **“Balaam”** The record of Balaam, a prophet of YHWH, is found in Num. 22-25; 31:8,16. Balaam is an example of a worldly-minded prophet who led Israel into fertility worship as these false teachers exploited believers to improper sexual activity.

▣ **“Korah”** Korah’s sin was rebellion against God’s appointed authority, Aaron and Moses (cf. Num. 16:1-35).

vv. 12-13 Jude characterizes “these” false teachers as

1. hidden reefs (unseen dangers)
2. clouds without water (promise, but no fulfillment)
3. trees without fruit (promise, but no fulfillment)
4. wild waves (chaos and its debris)
5. wandering stars (metaphor of error and sin)

Numbers 2-5 may reflect I Enoch 2:1-5:4, which describes the orderly working of God’s creation. Jude uses examples of created order that do not fulfill the expected assignment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTEMI*)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the verb also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, the Septuagint of Exod. 32:32; Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness. There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

I. Old Testament

- A. Korah, Num. 16
- B. Eli’s sons, I Sam. 2, 4
- C. Saul, I Sam. 11-31
- D. False prophets (examples)
 1. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22
 2. Jeremiah 28
 3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
- E. False prophetesses
 1. Ezekiel 13:17
 2. Nehemiah 6:14
- F. Evil leaders of Israel
 1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
 3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

- A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:3,9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus’ words in the Parable of the Soils found in Luke 8:13. These false teachers are obviously

not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture true, but immature, believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

1. Judas, John 17:12
2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
3. those spoken of in Matt. 7:21-23
4. those spoken of in Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10
5. the Jews of John 8:31-59
6. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
7. those of I Tim. 6:21
8. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
9. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
10. apparent believers of Heb. 3:16-10
11. false teachers, II Peter 2:19-21; Jude 12-19
12. antichrists, I John 2:18-19

C. Fruitless faith

1. Matthew 7:13-23
2. I Corinthians 3:10-15
3. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural, or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g. Rom. 9:6).



NASB "hidden reefs"
NKJV "spots"
NRSV "blemishes"
TEV "dirty spots"
NJB "a dangerous hazard"

The Greek term *spilas* has two distinct meanings.

1. an older one from Greek literature of "hidden reefs" (i.e. unseen, unexpected danger)
2. a later sense of "blemishes," "stains," or "spots" (cf. Eph. 5:27; James 3:6; II Pet. 2:13; Jude 23).

Option #1 fits the context best. The NASB and NRSV footnotes have "hidden reefs," but the word was also used in the NT of "spots" (cf. II Pet. 2:13).



"love feasts" This was the common communal meal of the early church (cf. I Cor. 11:17-22). II Pet. 2:13-14 reveals the sexual lust practiced by these false teachers even at the Lord's Supper and communal meal.



"caring for themselves" This means "shepherding themselves" (cf. Ezek. 34:2,8-10), driven by passion, not by reason or love for God. This is the essence of sin—independence from God and His love and will for all mankind. God's love is corporate, for the whole. Fallen mankind's love is individual; "what's in it for me?" It is self-directed, self-seeking, self-centered.



"clouds without water. . . autumn trees without fruit" These are metaphors that focus on the promise of something, but without fulfillment—no water, no food! The false teachers made many empty claims (cf. II Pet. 2:17).

▣ **“doubly dead”** This may be (1) a metaphor of apparent physical life, but in reality, a dead spiritual life; (2) a reference to the second death of Rev. 20:14; or (3) both unfruitful and uprooted, thereby doubly dead.

▣ **“uprooted”** The TEV and NJB combined the last two descriptions as relating to the trees. The NJB has “like autumn trees, barren and uprooted and so twice dead.”

v. 13 **“casting up their own shame like foam”** This seems to refer to debris left on the shore after a storm (cf. Isa. 57:20). Its exact metaphorical meaning in this context is uncertain (cf. Phil. 3:19).

▣ **“wandering stars”** This refers to meteors or planets which had no regular orbit like the constellations and, therefore, came to be metaphors for waywardness or lostness. In I Enoch this metaphor relates to seven fallen angels (cf. I Enoch 18-21).

▣ **“black darkness”** The last descriptive clause of v. 13 may reflect v. 6 (cf. II Pet. 2:17b), which refers to eternal judgment as “black darkness” (cf. I Enoch 10:4-5; 63:6; Jesus also uses darkness in Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

▣ **“has been reserved forever”** Here again Jude uses one of his favorite words, “kept” (cf. *tareō* in vv. 1,6,13,21 and *phulassō* in v. 24). It is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. The TENSE and MOOD imply that God kept them imprisoned in darkness in the past and they remain imprisoned.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 14-16

¹⁴And it was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” ¹⁶These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

v. 14 **“Enoch”** Enoch was the person in the genealogical list of Gen. 5 who walked with YHWH. Everyone lived and died, but Enoch was transported to be with God. He became an example of hope and fellowship/intimacy with God. Sometime before the first century a Jewish apocalyptic book entitled I Enoch (part of the pseudepigrapha) was written and became a very influential book among Jews and Christians. The Hebrew original has been lost. All modern readers have is a much later (A.D. 600) copy from Ethiopia which has been edited by Christians. When one reads this long Ethiopian copy it becomes obvious why it was so popular: it speculates on many events that occurred in the OT (such as the flood) as well as future events (heaven, hell).

Jude, like most first century Jewish people, was familiar with the pseudographic apocalyptic writing. His using it as an illustration does not mean he thought it was inspired. But his use of “prophesied” does tend to give the book a credibility. This very issue is the reason that Jude had such a hard time being included in the canon of the NT.

Paul quotes Jewish Midrash, unnamed Jewish inter-biblical sources and Greek poets, but this does not imply a belief that they were inspired. Jude could have used “prophesied” in a non-technical sense.

The phrase “the seventh” was used of Enoch’s lineage from Adam in I Enoch 60:8; 93:3. Jude was familiar with this inter-biblical book.

▣ **“prophesied”** Jude may have accepted I Enoch as true.

vv. 14-15 These verses are a quote from I Enoch 1:9, of which only fragments were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is a play on the term “godless” (*asebeia*). It was used in I Enoch to refer to the punishment of the angels in Gen. 6 (cf. vv. 15,16). The direct quote from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. 1, edited by James H. Charlesworth of I Enoch 1:9 is

“Behold, he will arrive with ten million of the holy ones in order to execute judgment upon all. He will destroy the wicked ones and censure all flesh on account of everything that they have done, that which the sinners and the wicked ones committed against him” (pp. 13-14).

There is a fluidity in Jude between the OT examples and the NT “these” false teachers. This context seems to apply to the contemporary heretics using I Enoch’s terminology “the seventh from Adam” (cf. I Enoch 60:8; 93:3). Because I Enoch viewed Gen. 6 as involving angels and human women does not mean that it is true. The Bible is ambiguous and unspecific at many points, but the central truth of the context is clear. Our problem as modern readers is that we want very specific and detailed information about subjects and issues which revelation chooses not to clarify. These subjects are interesting, but not necessary for salvation and godly living.

▣ **“with many thousands of His holy ones”** This refers to the countless angelic servants that surround YHWH (cf. Deut. 33:2; Dan. 7:10; Jude 14). In this quote from I Enoch “Lord” must refer to YHWH. In the NT Jesus is often predicted as returning on the clouds of heaven with many angels (cf. Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; II Thess. 1:7).

▣ **“have spoken against Him”** One wonders if this phrase from I Enoch, which relates to blasphemy against YHWH, relates somehow to v. 8, “reject authority.” Some English translations (NASB, NKJV, New Berkley Version) capitalize this pronoun, implying a reference to God. It is possible that “grumblers” in v. 16 relates to the Israelite’s words toward YHWH and His chosen leadership (Moses and Aaron) during the wilderness wandering period.

v. 16 “grumblers” This term is used of Israel in the Septuagint to describe the wilderness wandering period (Exod. 15:24; 17:3; Num. 14:29).

Jude characterizes “these” false teachers as he did in vv. 12-13:

1. grumblers
2. finding fault
3. following their own lusts (cf. II Pet. 2:2,14,18; 3:3)
4. speaking arrogantly (cf. II Pet. 2:10,18)
5. using flattery to seek personal gain (sexual, monetary, or power, cf. II Pet. 2:3).

These characteristics are not unique to OT or NT times, but are the result of the fall with its focus on independence and personal freedom/rights/power. When these characteristics appear in the leadership of churches the continuing influence of the Adamic nature and the demonic evil becomes clear.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 17-23

¹⁷But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” ¹⁹These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

v. 17 “But you, beloved” This is a strong logical contrast.

▣ **“ought to remember”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. Believers are called on to remember the spiritual truths given to them by the spoken word (cf. II Pet. 3:2 - Apostles, later preachers, evangelists, and teachers) as well as the later canonized written word (possibly some parts of the NT were circulating at this time).

▣ **“by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”** This relates to the preaching and writing ministry of the select group of disciples called “Apostles.” This verse implies that Jude is addressing second generation believers. Some readers may have heard the Apostles speak, but now that option is not possible. This period of transition from the “spoken gospel” to the “written gospel” was a time of great flux and confusion. Many people claimed to know and speak for God. Jude, like Jesus in Matt. 7, directs believers to evaluate leaders by their words and lifestyles.

v. 18 “that they were saying” This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which refers to recurrent action in past time. Exactly where an Apostle said this is uncertain, but II Pet. 3:3 is similar, as are Acts 20:29; I Tim. 4:1ff; II Tim. 3:10-13; 4:3. It may be an idiom for apostolic truth (i.e. the faith once for all given to the saints).

▣ **“In the last time”** This is parallel to II Pet. 3:3 “in the last days.” Jude and Peter (as most NT authors) thought they were living in the last days. The delayed second coming surprised everyone (cf. II Pet. 3:4). The characterization of the last days in vv. 18-19 are true of every age of fallen human history. Life apart from God is an orgy of self!

The Jews saw history as divided into two distinct periods: a current evil and rebellious period and a coming new age of righteousness, inaugurated by the powerful coming of God’s Anointed One (Messiah). From NT revelation this two-fold time frame has been modified. There is an unexpected overlapping of these two ages. Jesus of Nazareth has inaugurated the Kingdom of God, but it will not be fully consummated until His glorious return. This overlapping period has been described as the “already, but not yet” experience of the church.

vv. 18-19 “there will be. . .” Jude again describes “these” end-time false teachers:

1. mockers (by word and deed)
2. divisive (i.e. causing divisions or making distinctions)

3. worldly-minded
4. devoid of the Spirit

Why do so many follow this kind of person? If the goal of life is to serve self, then this existential “me first” approach makes sense. But, what if there is a God who will demand a personal accounting of the gift of life? The gospel frees believers from the tyranny of self (cf. Rom. 6) and enables them to freely serve the one true God.

v. 19 “devoid of the Spirit” There are several theories as to the meaning of this phrase but the best seems to be that they live on the level of instinct and mere animal appetite (cf. v. 10).

v. 20 “But you” There is a contrast (cf. v. 17) between “the beloved” true believers and “these” false teachers. Jude gives true believers a list of expectations (cf. vv. 20-23):

1. build yourselves up on your most holy faith
2. pray in the Holy Spirit
3. keep yourselves in the love of God
4. wait anxiously for eternal life
5. have mercy on doubters
6. snatch doubters from the fire
7. watch out from being polluted by those you help

▣ **“building yourselves up”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. This is one of a series of PARTICIPLES used as IMPERATIVES in the close of this letter. They represent the believers’ covenant responsibilities. Notice the contrast between

1. the keeping power of God in the introduction (v. 1) and the doxology (vv. 24-25) and
2. these calls to personal action (cf. vv. 20-23)

Believers live/serve as if it all depended on them but rest knowing that it all depends on Him. This same comparison is found in Ezek. 18:31 versus 36:26 (cf. Acts 20:32; Phil. 2:12-13).

The metaphor of the Christian faith as a building is common in the writings both of Paul (cf. Acts 20:32; I Cor. 3:10,12,14,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Col. 2:7) and Peter (cf. I Pet. 2:5). This metaphor is stated in several ways.

1. the believer as a building (or part of the building) or temple
2. the admonition to build ourselves up
3. the concept of a good foundation to build on

▣ **“on your most holy faith”** This grammatical form can mean

1. “on your most holy faith” (cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB)
2. “by means of your most holy faith” (cf. New Century Version)
3. “in your most holy faith” (cf. NEB, NAB, NIV)

The Greek term “faith” (*pistis*) is translated into English by three terms: “faith,” “believe,” or “trust.” Faith is used in three senses in the NT.

1. as personal acceptance of Jesus as the Christ of God
2. as faithfully living for Him
3. as a body of truths about Him (cf. v. 3; Gal. 1:23; 3:23-25).

Mature Christianity involves all three senses.

vv. 20-21 Notice that the Triune God is mentioned: Spirit (v. 20); God (v. 21); Lord Jesus Christ (v. 21). The term “trinity” is not a biblical term, but the concept surely is—“one divine essence” (monotheism) but three personal and eternal manifestations. If Jesus is divine and the Spirit is personal, then “monotheistic” means one divine essence but three personal manifestations—Father, Son and Spirit (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; Acts 2:32-33,38-39; Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10; I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 4:4-6; II Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:4-6; I Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity. The term, “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

1. the Gospels
 - a. Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)

- b. John 14:26
- 2. Acts - Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- 3. Paul
 - a. Romans 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Corinthians 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Corinthians 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Galatians 4:4-6
 - e. Ephesians 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - f. I Thessalonians 1:2-5
 - g. II Thessalonians 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6
- 4. Peter - I Peter 1:2
- 5. Jude - vv. 20-21

It is hinted at in the OT

- 1. Use of plurals for God
 - a. Name *Elohim* is plural, but when used of God always has a singular verb
 - b. "Us" in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
 - c. "One" in the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 is plural (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)
- 2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of deity
 - a. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 - c. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - d. Zechariah 3:1-2
- 3. God and Spirit are separate, Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- 4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Psalm 45:6-7; 110:1; Zechariah 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- 5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zechariah 12:10
- 6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers:

- 1. Tertullian - subordinated the Son to the Father
- 2. Origen - subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
- 3. Arius - denied deity to the Son and Spirit
- 4. Monarchianism - believed in a successive manifestation of God

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

- 1. The full deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, affirmed in 325 A.D. by the Council of Nicea
- 2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.)
- 3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine's work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

v. 20 "praying in the Holy Spirit" This is another PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. What does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit?

- 1. the Spirit prays for the believer (cf. Rom. 8:26-27)
- 2. the believer prays in the power/presence of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 6:18)
- 3. the believer prays in the gift of tongues (cf. I Cor. 12:10, but notice in I Cor. 12:29-30, a series of questions which expect a "no" answer shows that the gift of tongues is not for every believer)
- 4. since there is no ARTICLE with "Spirit," the Greek form is exactly like John 4:23, where Jesus describes true worship to the Samaritan woman as worshipping "in Spirit and Truth" (cf. Phil. 3:3).

In the midst of a series of commands (PARTICIPLES with IMPERATIVAL force) for believers to fight the good fight, there is an acknowledgment of the necessity of the Spirit's power bringing the needed theological balance between the sovereign God and required covenantal response. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at James 5:16.

v. 21 “keep yourselves in the love of God” This is the main verb of the context (this was a favorite concept for Jude [cf. vv. 1,6,13,21]), and another AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. How does one keep oneself in the love of God? The AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE speaks of an urgent act. Salvation is described in the NT as

1. a past completed act (AORIST INDICATIVE)
2. a state of being (PERFECT TENSE)
3. an ongoing process (PRESENT TENSE)
4. a future consummation (FUTURE TENSE).

Evangelicals have been guilty of over-emphasizing the initial act (which is surely necessary), but depreciating the process by neglecting to discuss the paradox of a free gift in Jesus versus a continuing life of faith and service. God has chosen to deal with humans through covenant. There are benefits and requirements. We love the benefits and neglect the requirements. True faith is a faith that perseveres. God's love initially draws us (cf. John 6:44,65) and sustains us, but we must co-operate with Him in covenantal response at every stage (cf. Phil. 2:12-13; I Pet. 1:5-11). The Bible sets the ideal of mature, Christlike Christianity and we are forever trying to minimize the mandated responses.



NASB “waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life”
NKJV “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”
NRSV “look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life”
TEV “as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy to give you eternal life”
NJB “wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life”

This is another PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. It is similar to II Pet. 3:14. An eager expectation of the Second Coming is a characteristic of believers (cf. Rom. 8:19-25; I Cor. 1:7; Titus 2:13). Believers are not “fully” saved until they have their new resurrected bodies (cf. I John 3:2). This refers to the ultimate salvation at the Second Coming. One could describe these stages as: justification (salvation as a free gift in the finished work of Jesus Christ); sanctification (salvation demonstrated by Christlike living— not sinlessness, but surely sinning less); and glorification (salvation from the penalty, power, and even presence of sin at the consummation of the new age).

The expression “eternal life” is a NT metaphor of the new age, the kingdom of God, heaven, or face-to-face fellowship with God forever. It is very common in John's writings, but it also occurs in the other Gospels and in Paul's writings. Notice that eternal life is connected not only with the reception of the gospel, but also with the consummation of the new age at the return of Jesus Christ. So it is both present and future, like the kingdom!

☐ **“mercy”** Jude's unique introduction used “mercy.” There is a play on this term in vv. 21 and 22. Mercy experienced (cf. v. 21) issues in mercy given (cf. vv. 22-23; Matt. 6:14-15; 18:35).

v. 22 “on some” This seems to speak of three groups of church folks who were deceived by the false teachers (ASV, NASB, TEV, NJB, NIV following the ancient Greek manuscripts \aleph and A). Jude is fond of threes (cf. vv. 2,4,8,11).

Other translations see two groups (cf. KJV, NEB, and Williams following the Greek manuscripts P⁷², B, C, K, L). In *Answers to Questions*, F. F. Bruce says:

“I think that most probably two classes are envisaged; those who are responsible for maintaining due order in the churches must use different methods towards those who persist in inculcating subversive and immoral doctrine and those who have been misled by false teachers” (p. 135).

There is also another ancient Greek manuscript variation. The MSS \aleph , B and C² have the PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE PLURAL of “mercy,” while MSS A and C*, have the PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE of “convince” or “refute” (cf. RSV).

☐ **“who are doubting”** This probably refers to those in the church who are being influenced by the false teachers. They are beginning to loosen their grip on “Apostolic truth,” “the most holy faith,” “the faith once and for all given to the saints.” Believers must be proactive, not just reactive in the reclamation and restoration of weak brothers and sisters. This is an admonition not to accept false teachers or teachings, but to show the priority of compassionate love and mercy to wavering covenant partners (cf. Gal. 6:1) by restoring them to godly living and true belief.

The possible structural parallel is II Pet. 2:20-21. If so, the consequences of continual rebellion are catastrophic!

☐ **“save others, snatching them out of the fire”** This could be (1) the fire of God's temporal judgment or (2) the fire of God's eschatological judgment. This may be an OT allusion to Amos 4:11 or Zech. 3:1-5.

One's denominational tradition often determines which judgment option is chosen. If Zech. 3:1-5 is the background which seems to be the case because of

1. the term "snatch"
2. the metaphorical use of "soiled garments" as sin, then the allusion points toward the lives of the High Priesthood, Joshua the companion and helper of Zerubbabel, who is obviously a faithful believer (or even a metaphor himself for the Messiah in Zech. 4).

However, the obvious thrust of the entire book is those who were once faithful to God have rebelled and have been judged. This is a frightful warning.

▣ **"on some have mercy with fear"** This means "fearing contamination" (cf. II Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:1).

▣ **"garment"** This refers to an inner garment worn in the first century. These clothing metaphors are often used of lifestyle characteristics in the Bible (cf. Zech. 3:1-5; Isa. 61:10; Job 29:14; Ps. 109:29; Eph. 4:22,24,25; Col. 3:9,10). The false teachers' converts' lives were "soiled."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: vv. 24-25

²⁴Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

vv. 24-25 This is one of the most beautiful prayers in the entire NT. What a stark contrast between these words of secure and confident faith and the arrogance and immorality of the false teachers.

v. 24 "to Him who is able" This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. God the Father continues to be able to perform His will in an evil world. This is a wonderful title for God:

1. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 16:25)
2. "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20)
3. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling" (Jude 24)

▣ **"to keep you from stumbling"** This metaphor of sure-footed horses is used to describe God's care for faithful believers in Ps. 121:3 (also cf. Ps. 17:5; 66:9; 94:17-18) and stable believers in II Pet. 1:10. The book of Jude is characterized by those who have stumbled, but God is able to stabilize true believers.

▣ **"to make you stand"** We are "guarded by God" so as to stand firm in faith (cf. Eph. 6:11,13,14; Rom. 5:2; I Cor. 15:1).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

Assurance is both a biblical truth and a believer's faith experience and lifestyle.

A. The biblical basis for assurance is

1. God the Father's character
 - a. Genesis 3:15; 12:3
 - b. Psalm 46:10
 - c. Matthew 1:11
 - d. John 3:16; 10:28-29
 - e. Romans 8:38-39
 - f. Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:5,8-9
 - g. Philippians 1:6
 - h. II Timothy 1:12
 - i. I Peter 1:3-5
2. God the Son's work
 - a. His priestly prayer (John 17:9-24, especially v. 12)
 - b. His substitutionary sacrifice

- (1) Romans 8:31
- (2) II Corinthians 5:21
- (3) I John 4:9-10
- c. His continuing intercession
 - (1) Romans 8:34
 - (2) Hebrews 7:25
 - (3) I John 2:1
- 3. God the Spirit's enabling
 - a. His calling (John 6:44,65)
 - b. His sealing
 - (1) II Cor. 1:22; 5:5
 - (2) Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30
 - c. His personal assurance
 - (1) Romans 8:16-17
 - (2) I John 5:7-13
- B. The believer's necessary covenantal response is
 - 1. initial and continuing repentance and faith
 - a. Mark 1:15
 - b. Acts 3:16,19; 10:21
 - c. John 1:12 and Rom. 10:9-13
 - 2. remembering that the goal of salvation is Christlikeness
 - a. Romans 8:28-29
 - b. Ephesians 2:10
 - 3. remembering that assurance is confirmed by lifestyle
 - a. James
 - b. I John
 - 4. remembering that assurance is confirmed by active faith and perseverance
 - a. Mark 13:13
 - b. I Corinthians 15:2
 - c. Hebrews 3:14
 - d. II Peter 1:10
 - e. Jude 20-21

☐ **“in the presence of His glory”** “Glory” is an OT term for brightness. God’s presence is described as a glorious shining. Sinful mankind cannot approach this glorious light of purity and holiness. But now in Christ, believers have been transformed by God’s grace, Christ’s work, and the Spirit’s empowerment to approach and maintain fellowship with the Holy One of Israel. See Special Topic at James 2:1.

☐ **“blameless”** This is an OT sacrificial term used of an animal without blemishes, acceptable for an offering on the altar of sacrifice. This phrase is used of (1) Christ’s blamelessness in I Pet. 1:19; (2) believers’ blamelessness (cf. Eph. 1:4; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22), which is only available in the finished sacrificial work of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:22) and (3) the glorified church in Eph. 5:20-27.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS WITHOUT REPROACH

- A. Opening Statements
 - 1. This concept describes mankind’s original state (i.e. Gen. 1, the Garden of Eden).

2. Sin and rebellion have decimated this condition of perfect fellowship (i.e. Gen. 3).
 3. Humans (male and female) long for the restoration of fellowship with God because they are made in His image and likeness (i.e. Gen. 1:26-27).
 4. God has dealt with sinful mankind in several ways
 - a. godly leaders (i.e. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah)
 - b. sacrificial system (i.e. Lev. 1-7)
 - c. godly examples (i.e. Noah, Job)
 5. Ultimately God provided the Messiah
 - a. as full revelation of Himself
 - b. as the perfect sacrifice for sin
 6. Christians are made blameless
 - a. legally through Christ's imputed (i.e. forensic) righteousness
 - b. progressively through the work of the Spirit
 - c. the goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:4), which in reality, is the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall of Adam and Eve
 7. Heaven is a restoration of the perfect fellowship of the Garden. Heaven is the new Jerusalem coming down out of God's presence (cf. Rev. 21:2) to a purified earth (cf. II Pet. 3:10). The Bible begins and ends on the same themes:
 - a. intimate, personal fellowship with God
 - b. in a garden setting (Gen. 1-2 and Rev. 21-22)
 - c. by prophetic statement, the presence and companionship of animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9)
- B. Old Testament
1. There are so many different Hebrew words that carry the concept of perfection, blamelessness, innocence that it would be hard to name and show all the intricate relationships.
 2. The main terms carrying the concept of perfection, guiltlessness, or innocence (according to Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 94-99):
 - a. *shalom*
 - b. *thamam*
 - c. *calah*
 3. The Septuagint (i.e. the Bible of the early church) translates many of these concepts into Koine Greek terms used in the NT.
 4. The key concept is connected to the sacrificial system.
 - a. *amōmos* (cf. Exod. 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6,9; Num. 6:14; Ps. 26:1,11)
 - b. *amiantos* and *aspilus* also have cultic connotations
- C. New Testament
1. the legal concept
 - a. Hebrew legal cultic connotation is translated by *amōmos* (cf. Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 1:19)
 - b. Greek legal connotation (cf. I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22)
 2. Christ is the sinless, blameless, innocent One (*amōmos*) (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19)
 3. Christ's followers must emulate Him (*amōmos*) (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; II Pet. 3:14; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5)
 4. This concept is also used of church leaders
 - a. *anegklāos*, "without accusation" (cf. I Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6-7)
 - b. *anepileptos*, "above criticism" or "no handle for reproach" (cf. I Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14; Titus 2:8)
 5. The concept of "undefiled" (*amiantos*) is used of
 - a. Christ Himself (cf. Heb. 7:26)
 - b. the Christian's inheritance (cf. I Pet. 1:4)
 6. The concept of "wholeness" or "soundness" (*holoklēria*) (cf. Acts 3:16; I Thess. 5:23; James 1:4)
 7. The concept of "without fault," guiltless innocence is conveyed by *amemptos* (cf. Luke 1:6; Phil. 2:15; 3:6; I Thess. 2:10; 3:13; 5:23)

8. The concept of “not subject to blame” is conveyed by *amōmētos* (cf. I Pet. 3:14)
 9. The concept of “spotless,” “unblemished” is often used in passages that have one of the above terms also (cf. I Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:19; II Pet. 3:14)
- D. The number of words in Hebrew and Greek which convey this concept shows its importance. God has provided our need through Christ and now calls on us to be like Him.

Believers are positionally, forensically declared “right,” “just,” “blameless” by the work of Christ. Now believers are to possess their position. “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (cf. I John 1:7). “Walk worthy of the calling” (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Jesus has restored the image of God. Intimate fellowship is now possible, but remember, God wants a people who reflect His character, as His Son did. We are called to nothing less than holiness (cf. Matt. 5:20,48). God’s holiness, not only legally, but existentially!

▣ **“with great joy”** In this eschatological setting, sorrow, suffering, sin, and temptation are no more. It has always been God’s will that His special creation (mankind) approach Him with joy and thanksgiving (cf. Ps. 100). Mankind’s fear is a terrible sign of the reality of rebellion.

v. 25 **“to the only God”** This is a reference to monotheism (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). It is grammatically parallel to (the DATIVE) “to Him who is able” of v. 24. We must hold to the OT affirmation of the oneness of God but add the NT emphasis on the deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit. We affirm one divine essence but three eternal personal manifestations.

▣ **“our Savior”** This is also used of God the Father (cf. Luke 1:47; I Tim. 1:1; 2:3, 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). It is an example of a title used both for the Father and the Son. Notice the usage in Titus:

1. “God our Savior” (Titus 1:3)
“Christ Jesus our Savior” (Titus 1:4)
2. “God our Savior” (Titus 2:10)
“our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13)
3. “God our Savior” (Titus 3:4)
“Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:6)

▣ **“through Jesus Christ our Lord”** He is the only channel of God’s grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness to fallen mankind (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; I Tim. 2:5). He is God the Father’s agent of creation, salvation, and judgment. Every blessing and provision comes through Him (cf. Col. 1:15-22).

▣ **“glory”** This is the splendor (Hebrew *kabod*) of the holiness of the one true God. This brightness attaches to everything in His presence (cf. I Pet. 4:11). See note at James 2:1.

▣ **“majesty”** The root term is “great.” It is a periphrasis for God (cf. Heb. 3:1; 8:1). A related term is used of Christ in II Pet. 1:16.

▣	
NASB, NKJV	“dominion”
NRSV	“power”
TEV	“might”
NJB	“authority”

Paul and Peter use this term to describe God’s power unto the ages (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:20; I Tim. 1:17; I Pet. 4:11; 5:11). It describes God’s strength to accomplish His purposes (cf. Acts 19:20; Eph. 1:19).

▣ **“authority”** This is the Greek term *exousia*, which means (1) freedom to act; (2) ability to act; (3) right (legal) to act; and therefore, (4) absolute power to act. It is used of God and in a derived sense of angels and human rulers.

This series of powerful terms describes the God who is able (versus the angels and false teachers who are not able) to deliver His promises.

▣ **“now”** God is still able and ready to provide every need through Christ to Jude’s readers.

▣ **“forever”** God’s character and promises are sure and trustworthy unto all the ages (cf. Ps. 102:25-27 [Heb. 1:1-11]; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What did Jude want to write about?
2. Who is he writing against?
3. What is Jude’s relation to II Peter 2?
4. List the two characteristics of the false teachers mentioned in v. 4.
5. Why does Jude talk about angels so much?
6. What were “love feasts” and how are they related to the Lord’s Supper?
7. Who were the mockers? What were they ridiculing?
8. Were these mockers Christians?
9. How do Christians keep themselves in God’s love?
10. List the groups mentioned in vv. 22-23 to whom we are to witness.
11. Does God keep us or do we keep ourselves?

APPENDIX ONE

INTRODUCTION TO WISDOM LITERATURE

I. THE GENRE

- A. Common literary type in the Ancient Near East (R. J. Williams “Wisdom in the Ancient Near East,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, supplement)
1. Mesopotamia (I Kgs. 4:30; Is. 47:10; Dan. 1:20; 2:2)
 - a. Sumeria had a developed wisdom tradition both proverbial and epic (texts from Nippur).
 - b. Babylon’s proverbial wisdom was connected with the priest/magician. It was not morally (focused W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*). It was not a developed genre like in Israel.
 - c. Assyria also had a wisdom tradition, one example would be the teachings of Ahiqar. He was an advisor to Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.).
 2. Egypt (I Kgs. 4:30; Gen. 41:8; Isa. 19:11-12)
 - a. “The Teaching for Vizier Ptah-hotep” was written about 2450 B. C. His teachings were in paragraph, not proverbial, form. They were structured as a father to his son, as were “The Teachings for King Meri-ka-re,” written about 2200 B. C. (LaSor, Hubbard, Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, p. 533).
 - b. The Wisdom of Amen-em-opet, written about 1200 B. C, is very similar to Prov. 22:17-24:12.
 3. Phoenicia (Ezek. 27:8-9; 28:3-5)
 - a. The discoveries at Ugarit have shown the close connection (especially the meter) between Phoenician (basically Canaanite) and Hebrew wisdom. Many of the unusual forms and rare words in biblical wisdom literature are now understandable from the archaeological discoveries at Ras Shamra (Acts of Ugarit).
 - b. Song of Songs is very much like Phoenician wedding songs called *wasps* written about 600 B. C.
 4. Canaan (i.e. Edom, cf. Jer. 49:7; Obad. 8) - Albright has uncovered the similarity between Hebrew and Canaanite wisdom literature, especially the Ras Shamra texts from Ugarit, written about the 15th century B. C.
 - a. both often use the same words appearing as pairs
 - b. both use chiasmus
 - c. both have superscriptions
 - d. both have musical notations
 5. Biblical wisdom literature includes the writings of several non-Israelites:
 - a. Job, possibly from Edom
 - b. Agur, from Massa (an Israelite kingdom in Saudi Arabia, cf. Gen. 25:14 and I Chr. 1:30)
 - c. Lemuel from Massa
 6. There are two Jewish non-canonical books that share this genre form:
 - a. *Ecclesiasticus* (Wisdom of Ben Sirach)
 - b. *Wisdom of Solomon* (wisdom)

B. Literary Characteristics

1. Primarily two distinct types
 - a. proverbial guidelines for a happy, successful life (originally oral, cf. Prov. 1:8; 4:1))
 - (1) short
 - (2) easily culturally understood (common experience)
 - (3) thought provoking - arresting statements of truth
 - (4) usually used contrast
 - (5) generally true, but not always specifically applicable
 - b. longer, developed, special-topic, literary works (usually written) like Job, Ecclesiastes and Jonah.
 - (1) monologues
 - (2) dialogues
 - (3) essays
 - (4) they deal with life’s major questions and mysteries
 - (5) the sages were willing to challenge the theological status quo!
 - c. personification of wisdom is described (always female). The term wisdom was feminine.
 - (1) often in Proverbs wisdom is described as a woman (cf. 1:8-9:18)
 - (a) positively:
 - 1) 1:20-33
 - 2) 4:6-9

- 3) 8:1-36
- 4) 9:1-6
- (b) negatively:
 - 1) 7:1-27
 - 2) 9:13-18

(2) in Proverbs 8:22-31 wisdom is personified as the firstborn of creation by which God created all else (8:19-20). This may be the background of John's use of *logos* in John 1:1 to refer to Jesus the Messiah.

(3) this can also be seen in *Ecclesiasticus* 24

- 2. This literature is different from the Law and the Prophets (cf. Jer. 18:18) in that it addresses the individual not the nation. There are no historical or cultic allusions. It primarily focuses on daily, successful, joyful, moral living.
- 3. Biblical wisdom literature is similar to that of its surrounding neighbors in its structure but not content. The One true God (monotheism) is the foundation on which all biblical wisdom is based (example: Gen. 41:38-39; Job 12:13; 28:28; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Ps. 111:10). In Babylon it was the god *Apsu*, *Ea*, or *Marduk*. In Egypt it was *Thoth*.
- 4. Hebrew wisdom was very practical. It was based on experience and observation (natural revelation), not special revelation (God's specific revelation of Himself). It focused on an individual being successful in life (all of life: sacred and secular). It is divine "horse-sense."
- 5. Because wisdom literature used human reason, experience and observation, it was international and transcultural. It was the monotheistic religious world-view, which is often not stated, that made Israel's wisdom revelatory.

II. POSSIBLE ORIGINS

- A. Wisdom literature developed in Israel as an alternative or balance to the other forms of revelation. (Jer. 18:18; Ezek. 7:26)
 - 1. priest - law - form (corporate)
 - 2. prophet - oracle - motive (corporate)
 - 3. sage - wisdom - practical, successful daily life (individual)
 - 4. As there were female prophets in Israel (Miriam, Huldah), so too, there were female sages (cf. II Sam. 14:1-21; 20:14-22).
- B. This type of literature seemed to have developed:
 - 1. as folk stories around camp fires
 - 2. as family traditions passed on to the male children
 - 3. as documents written and supported by the Royal Palace:
 - a. David is connected to the Psalms
 - b. Solomon is connected to Proverbs (I Kgs. 4:29-34; Ps. 72 & 127; Prov. 1:1; 10:1; 25:1)
 - c. Hezekiah is connected to editing wisdom literature (Prov. 25:1).

III. PURPOSE

- A. It is basically a "how to" focus on happiness and success. It is primarily individual in its focus. It is based on
 - 1. the experience of previous generations,
 - 2. cause and effect relationships in daily life.
 - 3. trusting in God has rewards (cf. Deut. 27-29)
- B. It was society's way to pass on truth and train the next generation of leaders and citizens.
- C. Old Testament wisdom, though not always expressing it, sees the Covenant God behind all of life. For the Hebrews there was no sharp division between the sacred and secular. All of life was sacred!
- D. It was a way to challenge and balance traditional theology. The sages were free thinkers not bound by textbook truths. They dared to ask, "Why," "How," "What if?" (cf. Job and Ecclesiastes)

IV. KEYS TO INTERPRETATION

- A. Short proverbial statements
 - 1. look for common elements of life used to express the truth.
 - 2. express the central truth in a simple declarative sentence.
 - 3. since context will not help, look for parallel passages on the same subject.

- B. Longer literary pieces
 1. be sure to express the central truth of the whole.
 2. do not take verses out of context.
 3. check the historical occasion or reason of the writing.

- C. Some common misinterpretations (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It Is Worth*, p. 207)
 1. People do not read the whole Wisdom book (like Job and Eccl.) and look for its central truth but pull parts of the book out of its context and apply them literally to modern life.
 2. People do not understand the uniqueness of the literary genre. This is a highly compact and figurative Ancient Near Eastern literature.
 3. Proverbs are statements of general truth. They are broad sweeps of the pen not specifically true, in every case, every time, statements of truth.

V. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

- A. Old Testament
 1. Job
 2. Psalm 1, 19, 32, 34, 37 (acrostic), 49, 78, 104, 107, 110, 112, 119 (acrostic), 127-128, 133, 147, 148
 3. Proverbs
 4. Ecclesiastes
 5. Song of Songs
 6. Lamentations (acrostic)
 7. Jonah

- B. Extra biblical
 1. Tobit
 2. Wisdom of Ben Sirah (Ecclesiasticus)
 3. Wisdom of Solomon (Book of Wisdom)
 4. IV Maccabees

- C. New Testament
 1. The proverbs and parables of Jesus
 2. The book of James

APPENDIX TWO

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 B.C.) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 B.C.-A.D. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the ancient near east and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = AORIST
2. It occurred and the results abide = PERFECT
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = PLUPERFECT
4. It is occurring = PRESENT
5. It was occurring = IMPERFECT
6. It will occur = FUTURE

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. AORIST - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. PERFECT - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. PRESENT - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. FUTURE - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the AORIST. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the INDICATIVE MOOD. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. PERFECT TENSE. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the AORIST and PRESENT TENSES. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act. Example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, “you have been and continue to be saved.”
2. PLUPERFECT TENSE. This was like the PERFECT except the abiding results have ceased. Example: “Peter was standing at the door outside” (John 18:16).
3. PRESENT TENSE. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: “Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning,” “everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin” (I John 3:6 & 9).
4. IMPERFECT TENSE. In this tense the relationship to the PRESENT TENSE is analogous to the relationship between the PERFECT and the PLUPERFECT. The IMPERFECT speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: “Then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him” or “then all Jerusalem began to go out to him” (Matt. 3:5).
5. FUTURE TENSE. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: “Blessed are. . .they will. . .” (Matt. 5:4-9).

II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. ACTIVE VOICE was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The PASSIVE VOICE means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
 1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
 2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22).
 3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the INSTRUMENTAL CASE.
 4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the INSTRUMENTAL CASE alone.
- D. The MIDDLE VOICE means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
 1. REFLEXIVE - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: “Hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5).
 2. INTENSIVE - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14).
 3. RECIPROCAL - the interplay of two subjects. Example: “They counseled with one another” (Matt. 26:4).

III. MOOD (or “MODE”)

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author’s own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (INDICATIVE) and that which indicated potentiality (SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE and OPTATIVE).
- B. The INDICATIVE MOOD was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author’s mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened but the chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the FUTURE INDICATIVE. The difference was that the SUBJUNCTIVE expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms “could,” “would,” “may,” or “might.”
- D. The OPTATIVE MOOD expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the SUBJUNCTIVE. The OPTATIVE expressed possibility under certain conditions. The OPTATIVE was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul’s famous phrase, “May it never be” (KJV, “God forbid”), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.

- E. The IMPERATIVE MOOD emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the IMPERATIVE in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the PRESENT and AORIST tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize PARTICIPLES as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as a verbal adjective. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was the normal or “unmarked” way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
 1. The NOMINATIVE CASE was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs “to be” or “become.”
 2. The GENITIVE CASE was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, “What kind?” It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition “of.”
 3. The ABLATIVE CASE used the same inflected form as the GENITIVE, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition “from.”
 4. The DATIVE CASE was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition “to.”
 5. The LOCATIVE CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions “in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside.”
 6. The INSTRUMENTAL CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE and LOCATIVE cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, “by” or “with.”
 7. The ACCUSATIVE CASE was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, “How far?” or “To what extent?”
 8. The VOCATIVE CASE was used for direct address.

VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

- A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.
- B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).
1. Time connectors
 - a. *epei, epeid ē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
 - b. *heōs* - "while"
 - c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
 - d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
 - e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
 - f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"
 2. Logical connectors
 - a. Purpose
 - (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
 - (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
 - (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
 - b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)
 - (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
 - (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
 - (3) *ara* - "so"
 - c. Causal or reason
 - (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
 - (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
 - (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
 - (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"
 - d. Inferential
 - (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
 - (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
 - (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
 - (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"
 - e. Adversative or contrast
 - (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
 - (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
 - (3) *kai* - "but"
 - (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
 - (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
 - (6) *oun* - "however"
 - f. Comparison
 - (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
 - (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)
 - (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
 - (4) *ē* - "than"
 - g. Continuative or series
 - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
 - (2) *kai* - "and"
 - (3) *tei* - "and"
 - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
 - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)
 3. Emphatic usages
 - a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
 - b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
 - c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
 - d. *de* - "indeed"

- e. *ean* - “even”
- f. *kai* - “even,” “indeed,” “really”
- g. *mentoi* - “indeed”
- h. *oun* - “really,” “by all means”

VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A **CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The **FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an “if.” In several contexts it could be translated “since” (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all **FIRST CLASSES** are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The **SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** is often called “contrary to fact.” It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
 - 1. “If He were really a prophet, which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not” (Luke 7:39).
 - 2. “If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not” (John 5:46).
 - 3. “If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am” (Gal. 1:10).
- D. The **THIRD CLASS** speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the “it” clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The **FOURTH CLASS** is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete **FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial **FOURTH CLASS** is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial **FOURTH CLASS** in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The **PRESENT IMPERATIVE** with **NEGATIVE PARTICLE** often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: “stop storing up your riches on earth. . .” (Matt. 6:19); “stop worrying about your life. . .” (Matt. 6:25); “stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . .” (Rom. 6:13); “you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . .” (Eph. 4:30); and “stop getting drunk on wine. . .” (5:18).
- B. The **AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE** with **NEGATIVE PARTICLE** has the emphasis of “do not even begin or start an act.” Some examples: “Do not even begin to suppose that. . .” (Matt. 5:17); “never start to worry. . .” (Matt. 6:31); “you must never be ashamed. . .” (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The **DOUBLE NEGATIVE** with the **SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD** is a very emphatic negation. “Never, no never” or “not under any circumstance.” Some examples: “he will never, no never experience death” (John 8:51); “I will never, no, never. . .” (I Cor. 8:13).

IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article “the” had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of “a pointer,” a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
 - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
 - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
 - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: “God is Spirit” John 4:24; “God is light” I John 1:5; “God is love” 4:8,16.

- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English “a” or “an.” The absence of the definite article could mean
 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. Example: Rom. 6:10 (twice).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
 - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader;
 - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader;
 - c. what the author felt deeply about.
 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
 - a. for linking verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) complement
 - b. for transitive verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) object
 - (4) indirect object
 - (5) prepositional phrase
 - c. for noun phrases
 - (1) noun
 - (2) modifier
 - (3) prepositional phrase
 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
 - a. “right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). The phrase “right hand of fellowship” is split and fronted to show its significance.
 - b. “with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), was placed first. His death was central.
 - c. “It was bit by bit and in many different ways” (Heb. 1:1), was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
 1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb’s inflected form. Example: “I, myself, will surely be with you. . .” (Matt. 28:20).
 2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton (“not bound”). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
 - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
 - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
 - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
 - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
 3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: “to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
 4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
 - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects like “sleep” for death (John 11:11-14) or “feet” for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).

- b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:21) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
 - c. figures of speech
 - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24).
 - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36).
 - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55).
 - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
 - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11).
 - (6) sound plays between words
 - (a) "church"
 - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
 - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (iii) "called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (b) "free"
 - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
 - (ii) "freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
 - (iii) "free" (Gal. 5:1)
 - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
 - (1) This was the figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34).
 - (2) This was the figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61).
 - (3) This was a Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13).
 - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
 - 5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
 - 6. The special use of *autos*
 - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
 - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun—"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
- 1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
 - 2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word for word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV) with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.
 - 3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).
 - 4. The use of a very literal translation
 - a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901
 - b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

APPENDIX THREE

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
 - A. Old Testament
 - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” also called “textual criticism.”
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

I. The textual sources of our English Bible

A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in A.D. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century A.D. and were finished in the ninth century A.D. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from “Letter of Aristeas.” The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman B.C. period (200 B.C. to A.D. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the “Essenes.” The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
 - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, “As many shall be amazed at him.”
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, “Just as many were astonished over you.”
 - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
 - (a) LXX, “so will many nations marvel at him”
 - (b) MT, “so he sprinkles many nations”
 - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, “then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . .”
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, “and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . .”
 - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
 - (1) LXX & DSS, “after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied”
 - (2) MT, “he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied”

B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century A.D., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century A.D., but most are from the third and fourth centuries A.D. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.
3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter א (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine’s monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century A.D. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as “A” or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as “B” or (03), found in the Vatican’s library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century A.D. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.

6. Codex Ephraemi, known as “C” or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as “D” or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called “The Western Text.” It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
 - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
 - (1) P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶ (about A.D. 200), which record the Gospels
 - (2) P⁴⁶ (about A.D. 225), which records Paul’s letters
 - (3) P⁷² (about A.D. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
 - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about A.D. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
 - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
 - (6) other MSS which show this text type are X, C, L, W, 33
 - b. Western text from North Africa
 - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
 - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
 - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
 - (4) Codex D “Bezae” follow this text type
 - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
 - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
 - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria’s church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
 - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
 - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
 - d. the fourth possible type is “Caesarean” from Palestine
 - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
 - (2) some witnesses to it are P⁴⁵ and W

II. The problems and theories of “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.”

A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
 - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
 - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
 - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
 - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.
 - c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.
2. intentional
 - a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
 - b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
 - c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
 - d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
 - e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants
 - a. J. Harold Greenlee’s book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:
 “No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original.”

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted...When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

APPENDIX FOUR

GLOSSARY

Adoptionism. This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

Alexandrian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century A.D. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

Alexandrinus. This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

Allegory. This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

Analytical lexicon. This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

Analogy of Scripture. This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

Ambiguity. This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

Anthropomorphic. Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use. Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

Antiochian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century A.D. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

Antithetical. This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Prov. 10:1, 15:1).

Apocalyptic literature. This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created

and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matt.24; Mark 13; II Thess. 2 and Revelation.

Apologist (Apologetics). This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

A priori. This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

Arianism. Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (A.D. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

Aristotle. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

Autographs. This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

Bezae. This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century A.D. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

Bias. This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

Biblical Authority. This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

Canon. This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Christocentric. This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

Commentary. This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

Concordance. This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *How to Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

Dead Sea Scrolls. This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have

helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early B.C. era. They are designated by the abbreviation “DSS.”

Deductive. This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

Dialectical. This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination—free will; security—perseverance; faith—works; decision—discipleship; Christian freedom—Christian responsibility.

Diaspora. This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

Dynamic equivalent. This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from “word to word” correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a “paraphrase” where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is “the dynamic equivalent” which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher’s Introduction to the TEV.

Eclectic. This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

Eisegesis. This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a “leading out” of the original author’s intent, this term implies a “leading in” of a foreign idea or opinion.

Etymology. This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

Exegesis. This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means “to lead out” (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author’s intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

Genre. This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

Gnosticism. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentinian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

Hermeneutics. This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

Higher Criticism. This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

Idiom. This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: “that was awfully good,” or “you just kill me.” The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

Illumination. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Inductive. This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

Interlinear. This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an “analytical lexicon,” will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

Inspiration. This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

Language of description. This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

Legalism. This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

Literal. This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

Literary genre. This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

Literary unit. This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

Lower criticism. See “textual criticism.”

Manuscript. This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by “MS” (singular) or “MSS” (plural).

Masoretic Text. This refers to the ninth century A.D. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by “MT.”

Metonymy. This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, “the kettle is boiling” actually means “the water within the kettle is boiling.”

Muratorian Fragments. This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before AD 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had “practically” set the canon before the major church councils of the fourth century.

Natural revelation. This is one category of God’s self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God’s specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the “old earth” movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God’s truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God;

it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

Nestorianism. Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

Original author. This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

Papyri. This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

Parallel passages. They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

Paraphrase. This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

Paragraph. This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

Parochialism. This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

Paradox. This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

Plato. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

Presupposition. This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

Proof-texting. This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

Rabbinical Judaism. This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

Revelation. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Semantic field. This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

Septuagint. This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 B.C. (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century B.C.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is “LXX.”

Sinaiticus. This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century A.D. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine’s monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called “*aleph*” [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

Spiritualizing. This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

Synonymous. This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

Syntax. This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

Synthetical. This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called “climatic” (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

Systematic theology. This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

Talmud. This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

Textual criticism. This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called “lower criticism.”

Textus Receptus. This designation developed into Elzevir’s edition of the Greek NT in 1633 AD. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says “the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus.” The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says “the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text” (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus’ third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of 1611 A.D.

Torah. This is the Hebrew term for “teaching.” It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

Typological. This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

Vaticanus. This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century A.D. It was found in the Vatican’s library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital “B.”

Vulgate. This is the name of Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or “common” translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the 380’s A.D.

Wisdom literature. This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed

more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

World picture and world-view. These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "world-view" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Gen. 1-2 deals primarily with the Who, not the how, of creation.

YHWH. This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the CAUSATIVE form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

APPENDIX FOUR

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."