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## James

### The General Epistle Of James

#### Section 1. The Question: Who Was the Author of this Epistle?

There have been more difficult questions raised in regard to the Epistle of James than perhaps any other portion of the New Testament. Those questions it is of importance to examine as fully as is consistent with the design of these notes; that is, so far as to enable a candid inquirer to see what is the real difficulty in the case, and what is, so far as can be ascertained, the truth.

The first question is, Who was the author? It has been attributed to one of three persons: to James “the elder,” the son of Zebedee, and brother of John; to James “the less,” son of Alphaeus or Cleophas; and to a James of whom nothing more is known. Some have supposed, also, that the James who is mentioned as the “Lord’s brother,” [Gal 1:19](#), was a different person from James, the son of Alphaeus.

There are no methods of determining this point from the Epistle itself. All that can be established from the Epistle is:

- (1) That the name of the author was James, [Jam 1:1](#)
- (2) That he professed to be a “servant of God,” [Jam 1:1](#)
- (3) That he had been probably a Jew, and sustained such a relation to those to whom he wrote, as to make it proper for him to address them with authority; and,
- (4) That he was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, [Jam 2:1](#); [Jam 5:8](#)

There are two persons, if not three, of the name of James, mentioned in the New Testament. The one is James, the son of Zebedee, [Mat 4:21](#); [Mar 3:17](#); [Luk 6:14](#); [Act 1:13](#), et al. He was the brother of John, and is usually mentioned in connection with him; [Mat 4:21](#); [Mat 17:1](#); [Mar 5:37](#); [Mar 13:3](#), et al. The name of their mother was Salome. Compare [Mat 27:56](#), with [Mar 15:40](#). He was put to death by Herod Agrippa, about 41 a.d. [Act 12:2](#). He was called the major, or the elder - to distinguish him from the other James, the younger, or the less, [Mar 15:40](#); called also, in ancient history, James the Just.

The other James was a son of Alphaeus or Cleophas; [Mat 10:3](#); [Mar 3:18](#); [Act 1:13](#); [Luk 24:18](#). That Alphaeus and Cleophas was the same person is evident from the fact that both the words are

derived from the Hebrew [????](#) h-l-p-y. The name of the mother of this James was Mary, [Mar 15:40](#); and James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, are mentioned as brethren; [Mat 13:55](#). There is also a James mentioned in [Mat 13:55](#); [Mar 6:3](#); and [Gal 1:19](#), as a “brother of our Lord.” On the meaning of this expression, see the notes at [Gal 1:19](#)

It has been a question which has been agitated from the earliest times, whether the James who is mentioned as the son of Alphaeus, and the James who is mentioned as the “Lord’s brother,” were the same or different persons. It is not necessary for the purposes of these notes to go into an examination of this question. Those who are disposed to see it pursued, may consult Hug’s *Introduction*, Section 158, and the works there referred to; Neander’s *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, vol. ii. p. 2, following, Edin. Ed.; and Michaelis’ *Introduction*, vol. iv. 271, following. The question, says Neander, is one of the most difficult in the apostolic history. Hug supposes that James the son of Alphaeus, and James the brother of the Lord, were the same. Neander supposes that the James mentioned by the title of the “Lord’s brother” was a son of Joseph, either by a former marriage, or by Mary, and consequently a “brother” in the stricter sense.

It is remarked by Michaelis, that James may have been called “the Lord’s brother,” or mentioned as one of his brethren, in one of the following senses:

- (1) That the persons accounted as the “brethren of the Lord” ([Mat 13:55](#), et al.) were the sons of Joseph, not by Mary the mother of Jesus, but by a former wife. This, says he, was the most ancient opinion, and there is in it nothing improbable. If so, they were older than Jesus.
- (2) It may mean that they were the sons of Joseph by Mary, the mother of Jesus. Compare the notes at [Mat 13:55](#). If so, James was an own brother of Jesus, but younger than he. There is nothing in this opinion inconsistent with any statement in the Bible; for the notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary is not founded on the authority of the Scriptures. If either of these suppositions were true, however, and James and Judas, the authors of the Epistles which bear their names, were literally the brothers of Christ, it would follow that they were not apostles; for the elder apostle James was the son of Zebedee, and James the younger was the son of Alphaeus.
- (3) A third opinion in relation to James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, is, that they were the sons of Joseph by the widow of a brother who had died without children, and to whom, therefore, Joseph, by the Mosaic laws, was obliged to raise up issue. This opinion, however, is entirely unsupported, and is wholly improbable, because:
  - (a) The law which obliged the Jews to take their brothers’ widows applied only to those who were single (Michaelis); and,
  - (b) If this had been an instance of that kind, all the requirement of the law in the case would have been satisfied when one heir was born.
- (4) It might be maintained that, according to the preceding opinion, the brother of Joseph was Alphaeus, and then they would be reckoned as his sons; and in this case, the James and Judas who are called the brothers of Jesus, would have been the same as the apostles of that name. But, in that case, Alphaeus would not have been the same as Cleopas, for Cleopas had a wife - the sister of Joseph’s wife.
- (5) A fifth opinion, and one which was advanced by Jerome, and which has been extensively

maintained, is, that the persons referred to were called “brethren” of the Lord Jesus only in a somewhat lax sense, as denoting his near kinsmen. See the notes at [Gal 1:19](#). According to this, they would have been cousins of the Lord Jesus, and the relationship was of this kind: James and Judas, sons of Alphaeus, were the apostles, and consequently Alphaeus was the father of Simon and Joses. Further, Alphaeus is the same as Cleopas, who married Mary, the sister of the mother of Jesus [Joh 19:25](#), and, consequently, the sons of Cleopas were cousins of the Saviour.

Which of these opinions is the correct one, it is impossible now to determine. The latter is the common opinion, and perhaps, on the whole, best sustained; and if so, then there were but two Jameses referred to, both apostles, and the one who wrote this Epistle was a cousin of the Lord Jesus. Neander, however, supposes that there were two Jameses besides James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, and that the one who wrote this Epistle was not the apostle, the son of Alphaeus, but was, in the stricter sense, the “brother” of our Lord, and was trained up with him. *History of the Planting of Christianity*, ii., p. 3, following.

It is a circumstance of some importance, in showing that there was but one James besides James the brother of John, and that this was the apostle, the son of Alphaeus, that after the death of the elder James [Act 12:1](#), no mention is made of more than one of that name. If there had been, it is hardly possible, says Hug, that there should not have been some allusion to him. This, however, is not conclusive; for there is no mention of Simon, or Bartholomew, or Thomas after that time.

There is but one serious objection, perhaps, to this theory, which is, that it is said [Joh 7:5](#) that “his brethren did not believe on him.” It is possible, however, that the word “brethren” in that place may not have included all his kinsmen, but may have had particular reference to the larger portion of them [Joh 7:3](#), who were not believers, though it might have been that some of them were believers.

On the whole, it seems probable that the James who was the author of this Epistle was one of the apostles of that name, the son of Alphaeus, and that he was a cousin of our Lord. Entire certainty on that point, however, cannot be hoped for.

If the author of this Epistle was a different person from the one who resided at Jerusalem, and who is often mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, then nothing more is known of him. That James was evidently an apostle [Gal 1:19](#), and perhaps, from his relationship to the Lord Jesus, would have a special influence and authority there.

Of this James, little more is certainly known than what is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Hegesippus, as quoted by Neander, says, that from childhood he led the life of a Nazarene. He is described by Josephus (*Archaeol.* xx. 9,) as well as by Hegesippus and Eusebius, as a man eminent for his integrity of life, and as well meriting the appellation or surname which he bore among the Jews, of [???? tsadiyq, d?^a??? dikaios](#), “the Just.” He is mentioned as one who set himself against the corruptions of the age, and who was thence termed the bulwark of the people - [?? ??? òpel àm - pe????? t????a????perioche tou laou](#). His manner of life is represented as strict and holy, and such as to command in an eminent degree the confidence of his countrymen, the Jews. Hegesippus says that he frequently prostrated himself on his knees in the Temple, calling on God to forgive the sins of his people, praying that the divine judgments on the unbelievers might be averted, and that they might be led to repentance and faith, and thus to a participation of the kingdom of the glorified Messiah. Neander, as quoted before, p. 10.

In the New Testament, James appears as a prominent and leading man in the church at Jerusalem. In

later times he is mentioned by the ecclesiastical writers as “Bishop of Jerusalem;” but this title is not given to him in the New Testament, nor is there any reason to suppose that he filled the office which is now usually denoted by the word bishop. He appears, however, from some cause, to have had his home permanently in Jerusalem, and, for a considerable portion of his life, to have been the only apostle residing there. As such, as well as from his near relationship to the Lord Jesus, and his own personal worth, he was entitled to, and received, marked respect. His prominence, and the respect which was shown to him at Jerusalem, appear in the following circumstances:

(1) In the council that was held respecting the rules that were to be imposed on the converts from the Gentiles, and the manner in which they were to be regarded and treated Acts 15, after the other apostles had fully delivered their sentiments, the views of James were expressed, and his counsel was followed. Acts 15:13-29

(2) When Peter was released from prison, in answer to the prayers of the assembled church, he directed those whom he first saw to “go and show these things to James, and to the brethren.” [Act 12:17](#)

(3) When Paul visited Jerusalem after his conversion, James is twice mentioned by him as occupying a prominent position there. First, Paul says that when he went there on the first occasion, he saw none of the apostles but Peter, and “James the Lord’s brother.” [Gal 1:18-19](#). He is here mentioned as one of the apostles, and as sustaining a near relation to the Lord Jesus. On the second occasion, when Paul went up there 14 years after, he is mentioned, in enumerating those who gave to him the right hand of fellowship, as one of the “pillars” of the church; and among those who recognized him as an apostle, he is mentioned first. “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.” [Gal 2:9](#)

(4) When Paul went up to Jerusalem after his visit to Asia Minor and to Greece, the whole matter pertaining to his visit was laid before James, and his counsel was followed by Paul. [Act 21:18-24](#)

The leading points in the character of James seem to have been these:

(1) Incorruptible integrity; integrity such as to secure the confidence of all men, and to deserve the appellation of “the Just.”

(2) An exalted regard for the rites and ceremonies of the ancient religion, and a desire that they should be respected everywhere and honored. He was more slow in coming to the conclusion that they were to be superseded by Christianity than Paul or Peter was (compare [Act 21:18](#); [Gal 2:12](#)), though he admitted that they were not to be imposed on the Gentile converts as absolutely binding. [Act 15:19-21](#), [Act 15:24-29](#). Repeated intimations of his great respect for the laws of Moses are found in the Epistle before us, thus furnishing an internal proof of its genuineness. If he was educated as a Nazarene, and if he always resided with the Jews, in the very vicinity of the Temple, this is not difficult to be accounted for, and this might be expected to tinge his writings.

(3) The point from which he contemplated religion particularly was, conformity to the law. He looked at it as it was intended, to regulate the life, and to produce holiness of deportment, in opposition to all lax views of morals and low conceptions of holiness. He lived in a corrupt age, and among corrupt people; among those who sought to be justified before God by the mere fact

that they were Jews, that they had the true religion, and that they were the chosen people of God, and who, in consequence, were lax in their morals, and comparatively regardless of the obligations to personal holiness. He therefore contemplated religion, not so much in respect to the question how man may be justified, as to the question to what kind of life it will lead us; and his great object was to show that personal holiness is necessary to salvation. Paul, on the other hand, was led to contemplate it mainly with reference to another question - how man may be justified; and it became necessary for him to show that men cannot be justified by their own works, but that it must be by faith in the Redeemer. The error which Paul particularly combats, is an error on the subject of justification; the error which James particularly opposes, is a practical error on the influence of religion on the life. It was because religion was contemplated by these two writers from these different points of view, and not from any real contradiction, that the apparent discrepancy arose between the Epistle of James and the writings of Paul. The peculiarity in the character and circumstances of James will account for the views which he took of religion; and, keeping this in mind, it will be easy to show that there is no real contradiction between these writers. It was of great importance to guard against each of the errors referred to; and the views expressed by both of the apostles are necessary to understand the nature and to see the full developement of religion.

How long James lived, and when and how he died, is not certainly known. It is agreed by all that he spent his last days in Jerusalem, and that he probably died there. On the subject of his death there is a remarkable passage in Josephus, which, though its genuineness has been disputed, is worth transcribing, as, if genuine, it shows the respect in which James was held, and contains an interesting account of his death. It is as follows: "The emperor (Roman) being informed of the death of Festus, sent Albinus to be prefect of Judea. But the younger Aranus, who, as we said before, was made high priest, was haughty in his behavior, and was very ambitious. And, moreover, he was of the sect of the Sadducees, who, as we have also observed before, are, above all other Jews, severe in their judicial sentences. This, then, being the temper of Ananus, he, thinking he had a fit opportunity, because Festus was dead, and Albinus was yet on the road, calls a council.

And, bringing before them James, the brother of him who is called Christ, and some others, he accused them as transgressors of the laws, and had them stoned to death. But the most moderate men of the city, who were also reckoned most skillful in the laws, were offended at this proceeding. They therefore sent privately to the king (Agrippa the younger), entreating him to send orders to Ananus no more to attempt any such things." - Ant., B. xx. A long account of the manner of his death, by Hegesippus, is preserved in Eusebius, going much more into detail, and evidently introducing much that is fabulous. The amount of all that can now be known in regard to his decease would seem to be, that he was put to death by violence in Jerusalem, a short time before the destruction of the Temple. From the well-known character of the Jews, this account is by no means improbable. On the subject of his life and death, the reader may find all that is known in Lardner's *Works*, vol. vi. pp. 162-195; Bacon's *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 411-433; and Neander, *History of the Planting of the Christian Church*, ii., pp. 1-23, Edin. Ed.

The belief that it was this James, the son of Alphaeus, who resided so long at Jerusalem, who was the author of this Epistle, has been the common, though not the unanimous opinion of the Christian church, and seems to be supported by satisfactory arguments. It must evidently have been written either by him or by James the elder, the son of Zebedee, or by some other James, the supposed literal brother of our Lord.

In regard to these opinions, we may observe:

I. That the supposition that it was written by some third one of that name, “wholly unknown to fame,” is mere hypothesis. It has no evidence whatever in its support.

II. There are strong reasons for supposing that it was not written by James the elder, the son of Zebedee, and brother of John. It has been indeed ascribed to him. In the old Syriac version, in the earlier editions, it is expressly attributed to him. But against this opinion the following objections may be urged, which seem to be conclusive.

(1) James the elder was beheaded about the year 43 or 44 a.d., and if this Epistle was written by him, it is the oldest of the writings of the New Testament. It is possible, indeed, that the Epistle may have been written at as early a period as that, but the considerations which remain to be stated, will show that this Epistle has sufficient internal marks to prove that it was of later origin.

(2) Before the death of James the elder, the preaching of the gospel was chiefly confined within the limits of Palestine; but this Epistle was written to Christians “of the dispersion,” that is, to those who resided out of Palestine. It is hardly credible that in so short a time after the ascension of our Lord, there were so many Christians scattered abroad as to make it probable that a letter would be sent to them.

(3) This Epistle is occupied very much with a consideration of a false and perverted view of the doctrine of justification by faith. It is evident that false views on that subject prevailed, and that a considerable corruption of morals was the consequence. But this supposes that the doctrine of justification by faith had been extensively preached; consequently that considerable time had elapsed from the time when the doctrine had been first promulgated. The perversion of a doctrine, so as to produce injurious effects, seldom occurs until some time after the doctrine was first preached, and it can hardly be supposed that this would have occurred before the death of James, the son of Zebedee. See these reasons stated more at length in Benson.

III. There are strong probabilities, from the Epistle itself, to show that it was written by James the Less.

(1) His position at Jerusalem, and his eminence among the apostles, as well as his established character, made it proper that he should address such an epistle to those who were scattered abroad. There was no one among the apostles who would command greater respect from those abroad who were of Jewish origin than James. If he had his residence at Jerusalem; if he was in any manner regarded as the head of the church there; if he sustained a near relation to the Lord Jesus; and if his character was such as has been commonly represented, there was no one among the apostles whose opinions would be treated with greater respect, or who would be considered as having a clearer right to address those who were scattered abroad.

(2) The character of the Epistle accords with the well-known character of James the Less. His strong regard for the law; his zeal for incorruptible integrity; his opposition to lax notions of morals; his opposition to all reliance on faith that was not productive of good works, all appear in this Epistle. The necessity of conformity to the law of God, and of a holy life, is everywhere apparent, and the views expressed in the Epistle agree with all that is stated of the early education and the established character of James. While there is no real contradiction between this Epistle and the writings of Paul, yet it is much easier to show that this is a

production of James than it would be to prove that it was written by Paul. Compare Hug, *Introduction*, Section 159.

## Section 2. To Whom Was the Epistle Written?

The Epistle purports to have been written to the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” - or the “twelve tribes of the dispersion” - [e? t?d?asp??a?en te diaspora, Jam 1:1](#). See the [1Pe 1:1](#) note, and the [Jam 1:1](#) note. No mention of the place where they resided is made; nor can it be determined to what portion of the world it was first sent, or whether more than one copy was sent. All that can be conclusively determined in regard to the persons to whom it was addressed, is:

- (1) That they were of Jewish descent - as is implied in the phrase “to the twelve tribes” [Jam 1:1](#), and as is manifest in all the reasonings of the Epistle; and,
- (2) That they were Christian converts, [Jam 2:1](#).

But by whose labors they were converted, is wholly unknown. The Jewish people who were “scattered abroad” had two central points of union, the dispersion in the East, of which Babylon was the head, and the dispersion in the West, of which Alexandria was the head, Hug. Section 156. Peter wrote his Epistles to the latter [1Pe 1:1](#), though he was at Babylon when he wrote them [1Pe 5:13](#), and it would seem probable that this Epistle was addressed to the former. Beza supposed that this Epistle was sent to the believing Jews, dispersed all over the world; Grotius, that it was written to all the Jews living out of Judea; Lardner, that it was written to all Jews, descendants of Jacob, of every denomination, in Judea, and out of it. It seems plain, however, from the Epistle itself, that it was not addressed to the Jews as such, or without respect to their being already Christians, for:

- (a) If it had been, it is hardly conceivable that there should have been no arguments to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, and no extended statements of the nature of the Christian system; and,
- (b) It bears on the face of it evidence of having been addressed to those who were regarded as Christians; [Jam 2:1](#); [Jam 5:7](#), [Jam 5:11](#), [Jam 5:14](#).

It may be difficult to account for the fact, on any principles, that there are no more definite allusions to the nature of the Christian doctrines in the Epistle, but it is morally certain that if it had been written to Jews as such, by a Christian apostle, there would have been a more formal defense and statement of the Christian religion. Compare the arguments of the apostles with the Jews in the Acts, passim. I regard the Epistle, therefore, as having been sent to those who were of Jewish origin, but who had embraced the Christian faith by one who had been himself a Jew, and who, though now a Christian apostle, retained much of his early habits of thinking and reasoning in addressing his own countrymen.

## Section 3. Where and When Was the Epistle Written?

There are no certain indications by which it can be determined where this Epistle was written, but if the considerations above suggested are well founded, there can be little doubt that it was at Jerusalem. There are indeed certain internal marks, as Hug has observed (*Introduction*, Section 155), pertaining to the country with which the writer was familiar, and to certain features of natural scenery incidentally alluded to in the Epistle. Thus, his native land was situated not far from the sea [Jam 1:6](#); [Jam 3:4](#); it was blessed with valuable productions, as figs, oil, and wine [Jam 3:12](#); there were springs

of saline and fresh water with which he was familiar [Jam 3:11](#); the land was much exposed to drought, and there were frequently reasons to apprehend famine from the want of rain [Jam 5:17](#), [Jam 5:18](#) there were sad devastations produced, and to be dreaded, from a consuming, burning wind [Jam 1:11](#); and it was a land in which the phenomena known as “early and latter rains” were familiarly understood; [Jam 5:7](#). All these allusions apply well to Palestine, and were such as would be employed by one who resided in that country, and they may be regarded as an incidental proof that the Epistle was written in that land,

There is no way of determining with certainty when the Epistle was written. Hug supposes that it was after the Epistle to the Hebrews, and not before the beginning of the 10th year of Nero, nor after the accession of Albinus; i. e., the close of the same year. Mill and Fabricius suppose it was before the destruction of Jerusalem, and about a year and a half before the death of James. Lardner supposes that James was put to death about the year 62 a.d., and that this Epistle was written about a year before. He supposes also that his death was hastened by the strong language of reprehension employed in the Epistle. It is probable that the year in which it was written was not far from 58 or 60 a.d., some 10 or 12 years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

#### Section 4. The Canonical Authority of the Epistle

On the question generally respecting the canonical authority of the disputed Epistles, see the Introduction to the Catholic Epistles, Section 2. The particular proof of the canonical authority of this Epistle is contained in the evidence that it was written by one of the apostles. If it was written, as suggested above (Section 1), by James the Less, or if it be supposed that it was written by James the elder, both of whom were apostles, its canonical authority will be admitted. As there is no evidence that it was written by any other James, the point seems to be clear.

But there are additional considerations, derived from its reception in the church, which may furnish some degree of confirmation of its authority. These are:

- (a) It was included in the old Syriac version, the Peshita, made either in the first century or in the early part of the second, thus showing that it was recognized in the country to which it was probably sent;
- (b) Ephrem the Syrian, in his Greek works, made use of it in many places, and attributed it to James, the brother of our Lord (Hug);
- (c) It is quoted as of authority by several of the Fathers; by Clement of Rome, who does not indeed mention the name of the writer, but quotes the words of the Epistle [Jam 3:13](#); [Jam 4:6](#), [Jam 4:11](#); [Jam 2:21](#), [Jam 2:23](#); by Hermas; and by Jerome. See Lardner, vol. vi. pp. 195-199, and Hug, Section 161.

#### Section 5. The Evidence that the Writer Was Acquainted with the Writings of Paul; the Alleged Contradiction between Them; and the Question How They Can Be Reconciled

It has been frequently supposed, and sometimes affirmed, that this Epistle is directly contradictory to Paul on the great doctrine of justification, and that it was written to counteract the tendency of his writings on that subject. Thus Hug strangely says, “In this Epistle, Paul is (if I may be allowed to use so harsh an expression for a while) contradicted so flatly, that it would seem to have been written in opposition to some of his doctrines and opinions.” Section 157. It is of importance, therefore, to inquire into the foundation of this charge, for if it be so, it is clear that either this Epistle or those of

Paul would not be entitled to a place in the sacred canon. In order to this investigation, it is necessary to inquire to what extent the author was acquainted with the writings of Paul, and then to ask whether the statements of James are susceptible of any explanation which will reconcile them with those of Paul.

(1) There is undoubted evidence that the author was acquainted with the writings of Paul. This evidence is found in the similarity of the expressions occurring in the Epistles of Paul and James; a similarity such as would occur not merely from the fact that two men were writing on the same subject, but such as occurs only where one is acquainted with the writings of the other. Between two persons writing on the same subject, and resting their opinions on the same general reasons, there might be indeed a general resemblance, and possibly there might be expressions used which would be precisely the same. But it might happen that the resemblance would be so minute and particular, and on points where there could be naturally no such similarity, as to demonstrate that one of the writers was familiar with the productions of the other. For example, a man writing on a religious subject, if he had never heard of the Bible, might use expressions coincident with some that are found there; but it is clear also that he might in so many cases use the same expressions which occur there, and on points where the statements in the Bible are so peculiar, as to show conclusively that he was familiar with that book. So also a man might show that he was familiar with the Rambler or the Spectator, with Shakespeare or Milton. Such, it is supposed, are the allusions in the Epistle of James, showing that he was acquainted with the writings of Paul. Among these passages are the following:

James	Paul
<a href="#">Jam 1:2</a> "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."	<a href="#">Rom 5:3</a> "We glory in tribulations also."
<a href="#">Jam 1:3</a> "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."	<a href="#">Rom 5:3</a> "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience."
<a href="#">Jam 1:4</a> "Wanting nothing."	<a href="#">1Co 1:7</a> "Ye come behind in no gift."
<a href="#">Jam 1:6</a> "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed."	<a href="#">Eph 4:14</a> "Tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine."
<a href="#">Jam 1:12</a> "When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life ..."	<a href="#">2Ti 4:8</a> "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."
<a href="#">Jam 1:15</a> "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."	<a href="#">Rom 7:7-8</a> "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence."
<a href="#">Jam 1:18</a> "That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."	<a href="#">Rom 8:23</a> "Ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit."
<a href="#">Jam 1:21</a> "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness", etc.	<a href="#">Col 3:8</a> "But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications out of your mouth."

<a href="#">Jam 1:22</a> “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”, etc.	<a href="#">Rom 2:13</a> “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law.”
<a href="#">Jam 2:5</a> “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith”, etc.	<a href="#">1Co 1:27</a> “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise”, etc.

Compare also, on this subject, the passage in [Jam 5:14-16](#), with [Rom 3:20](#) ff; the examples of Abraham and Rahab, referred to in [Jam 2:21](#), [Jam 2:25](#), with the reference to Abraham in Rom. 4; and [Jam 4:12](#), with [Rom 2:1](#); [Rom 14:4](#)

These passages will show that James had an acquaintance with the writings of Paul, and that he was familiar with his usual method of expressing his thoughts. These allusions are not such as two men would be likely to make who were total strangers to each other’s mode of speaking and of writing.

It may be added here, also, that some critics have supposed that there is another kind of evidence that James was acquainted with the writings of Paul, than that which arises from mere similarity of expression, and that he meant to refer to him, with a view to correct the influence of some of his views. Thus, Hug, in the passage already referred to (Section 157), says, “In this Epistle, the apostle Paul is (if I may be allowed to use so harsh an expression for a while) contradicted so flatly, that it would seem to have been written in opposition to some of his doctrines and opinions. All that Paul has taught respecting faith, its efficacy in justification, and the inutility of works, is here directly contravened.” After citing examples from the Epistle to the Romans, and the Epistle of James, in support of this, Hug adds, “The Epistle was therefore written of set purpose against Paul, against the doctrine that faith procures man justification and the divine favor.” The contradiction between James and Paul appeared so palpable to Luther, and the difficulty of reconciling them seemed to him to be so great, that for a long time he rejected the Epistle of James altogether. He subsequently, however, became satisfied that it was a part of the inspired canon of Scripture.

(2) It has been, therefore, an object of much solicitude to know how the views of Paul and James, apparently so contradictory, can be reconciled; and many attempts have been made to do it. Those who wish to pursue this inquiry to greater length than is consistent with the design of these notes, may consult Neander’s *History of the Planting of the Christian Church*, vol. ii., pp. 1-23, 228-239, and Dr. Dwight’s *Theology*, serm. lxxviii. The particular consideration of this pertains more appropriately to the exposition of the Epistle (see the remarks at the close of James 3); but a few general principles may be laid down here, which may aid those who are disposed to make the comparison between the two, and which may show that there is no designed, and no real contradiction.

(a) The view which is taken of any object depends much on the point of vision from which it is beheld - the stand-point, as the Germans say; and in order to estimate the truthfulness or value of a description or a picture, it is necessary for us to place ourselves in the same position with him who has given the description, or who has made the picture. Two men, painting or describing a mountain, a valley, a waterfall, or an edifice, might take such different positions in regard to it, that the descriptions which they give would seem to be quite contradictory and irreconcilable, unless this were taken into the account. A landscape, sketched from the top of a high tower or on a level plain; a view of Niagara Falls, taken above or below the falls - on the American or Canada side; a view of St. Paul’s Cathedral, taken from one side or another, from the dome or when on the ground, might be very

different; and two such views might present features which it would be scarcely possible to reconcile with each other. So it is of moral subjects. Much depends on the point from which they are viewed, and from the bearings and tendencies of the doctrine which is the particular subject of contemplation. The subject of temperance, for example, may be contemplated with reference, on the one hand, to the dangers arising from too lax a view of the matter, or, on the other, to the danger of pressing the principle too far; and in order to know a man's views, and not to do injustice to him, it is proper to understand the particular aspect in which he looked at it, and the particular object which he had in view.

(b) The object of Paul - the "stand-point" from which he viewed the subject of justification - on which point alone it has been supposed that he and James differ - was to show that there is no justification before God, except by faith; that the meritorious cause of justification is the atonement; that good works do not enter into the question of justification as a matter of merit, or as the ground of acceptance; that if it were not for faith in Christ, it would not be possible for man to be justified. The point which he opposes is, that men can be justified by good works, by conformity to the law, by dependence on rites and ceremonies, by birth or blood. The aim of Paul is not to demonstrate that good works are not necessary or desirable in religion, but that they are not the ground of justification. The point of view in which he contemplates man, is before he is converted, and with reference to the question on what ground he can be justified: and he affirms that it is only by faith, and that good works come in for no share in justification, as a ground of merit.

(c) The object of James - the "stand-point" from which he viewed the subject - was, to show that a man cannot have evidence that he is justified, or that his faith is genuine, unless he is characterized by good works, or by holy living. His aim is to show, not that faith is not essential to justification, and not that the real ground of dependence is not the merit of the Saviour, but that conformity to the law of God is indispensable to true religion. The point of view in which he contemplates the subject, is after a man professes to be justified, and with reference to the question whether his faith is genuine; and he affirms that no faith is of value in justification but that which is productive of good works. By his own character, by education, by the habits of his whole life, he was accustomed to look on religion as obedience to the will of God; and everything in his character led him to oppose all that was lax in principle, and loose in tendency, in religion.

The point which he opposed, therefore, was, that mere faith in religion, as a revelation from God; a mere assent to certain doctrines, without a corresponding life, could be a ground of justification before God. This was the prevalent error of his countrymen; and while the Jews held to the belief of divine revelation as a matter of speculative faith, the most lax views of morals prevailed, and they freely indulged in practices entirely inconsistent with true piety, and subversive of all proper views of religion. It was not improper, therefore, as Paul had given prominence to one aspect of the doctrine of justification, showing that a man could not be saved by dependence on the works of the law, but that it must be by the work of Christ, that James should give due prominence to the other form of the doctrine, by showing that the essential and necessary tendency of the true doctrine of justification was to lead to a holy life; and that a man whose life was not conformed to the law of God, could not depend on any mere assent to the truth of religion, or any speculative faith whatever. Both these statements are necessary to a full exposition of the doctrine of justification; both are opposed to dangerous errors; and both, therefore, are essential in order to a full understanding of that important subject.

(d) Both these statements are true:

(1) That of Paul is true, that there can be no justification before God on the ground of our own works, but that the real ground of justification is faith in the great sacrifice made for sin.

(2) That of James is no less true, that there can be no genuine faith which is not productive of good works, and that good works furnish the evidence that we have true religion, and are just before God. A mere faith; a naked assent to dogmas, accompanied with lax views of morals, can furnish no evidence of true piety. It is as true, that where there is not a holy life there is no religion, as it is in cases where there is no faith.

It may be added, therefore, that the Epistle of James occupies an important place in the New Testament, and that it could not be withdrawn without materially marring the proportions of the scheme of religion which is there revealed. Instead, therefore, of being regarded as contradictory to any part of the New Testament, it should rather be deemed indispensable to the concinnity and beauty of the whole.

Keeping in view, therefore, the general design of the Epistle, and the point of view from which James contemplated the subject of religion; the general corruptions of the age in which he lived, in regard to morals; the tendency of the Jews to suppose that mere assent to the truths of religion was enough to save them; the liability which there was to abuse the doctrine of Paul on the subject of justification - it will not be difficult to understand the general drift of this Epistle, or to appreciate its value. A summary of its contents, and a more particular view of its design, will be found in the "Analyses" prefixed to the several chapters.