

James 1:1 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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See also [Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

NEXT

JAMES

Faith for Living

Motives for Works	The Place of Works: Outward Demonstration of Inner Faith						Outreach of Works
Jas 1:1-18	Jas 1:19-2:13		Jas 2:14-25	Jas 3:1-12	Jas 3:13-4:12	Jas 4:13-5:12	Jas 5:13-19
Trials & Temptations	Word & Works		Faith & Works	Tongue	Wars	Future	Others
Faith In Testings	Fulfill	Favor	Fallacy	Fountain	Factions	Faith and the Future	Faith and our Fellowship
	FAITH AT WORK						

The Theme: The Testings of Personal Faith

The trials of the believer (James 1:2–12)

- A. The proper attitude toward trials (James 1:2–4)
 - 1. The attitude commanded (James 1:2)
 - 2. The reason indicated (James 1:3)
 - 3. The outcome to be realized (James 1:4)
- B. The use of prayer amid trials (James 1:5–8)
 - 1. The need for wisdom (James 1:5a)
 - 2. The request for wisdom (James 1:5b)
 - 3. The bestowal of wisdom (James 1:5c–8)
 - a. The divine response (James 1:5c)
 - b. The human obligation (James 1:6–8)
 - (1) The necessary attitude (James 1:6a)
 - (2) The rejected character (James 1:6b–8)
- C. The correct attitude toward life by the tried (James 1:9–11)
 - 1. The attitude of the lowly brother (James 1:9)
 - 2. The attitude of the rich (James 1:10–11)
 - a. The reason for the attitude (James 1:10a)
 - b. The illustration from the flower (James 1:11a)
 - c. The application to the rich (James 1:11b)
- D. The result of enduring trials (James 1:12)
 - 1. The blessedness of endurance (v 12a)
 - 2. The reward of endurance (James 1:12b)

The nature of human temptation (James 1:13–16)

- A. The source of human temptation (James 1:13–14)
 - 1. The repudiation of a divine source (James 1:13)
 - a. The rejection stated (James 1:13a)
 - b. The rejection vindicated (James 1:13b)
 - 2. The reality of the human source (James 1:14)
- B. The consequences of yielding to temptation (James 1:15)
- C. The warning against being deceived (James 1:16)

The activity of God in human affairs (James 1:17–18)

- A. The Giver of all good gifts (James 1:17)
- B. The Author of the believer's regeneration (James 1:18)

The Test Marks of a Living Faith

Faith tested by its response to the Word of God (James 1:19–27)

- A. The reactions to the Word (James 1:19–20)
 1. The knowledge possessed (James 1:19a)
 2. The reaction demanded (James 1:19b)
 3. The reason stated (James 1:20)
- B. The reception of the Word (James 1:21)
 1. The stripping off of sins (James 1:21a)
 2. The appropriation of the Word (James 1:21b)
- C. The obedience to the Word (James 1:22–27)
 1. The demand for active obedience (James 1:22–25)
 - a. The statement of the requirement (James 1:22)
 - b. The illustration of the requirement (James 1:23–25)
 - (1) The negative portrayal (James 1:23–24)
 - (2) The positive portrayal (James 1:25)
 2. The nature of acceptable obedience (James 1:26–27)
 - a. The futility of activity without inner control (James 1:26)
 - b. Acceptable service with inner control (James 1:27) (from Hiebert - James Commentary)

James 1:1 [James](#), a [bond-servant](#) of [God](#) and of the [Lord Jesus Christ](#), To the [twelve tribes who](#) are [dispersed](#) abroad: [Greetings](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [Iakobos theou kai kuriou Iesou Christou doulos tais dodeka phulais tais en te diaspora chairein](#). ([PAN](#))

Amplified: JAMES, A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered abroad [among the Gentiles in the dispersion]: Greetings (rejoice)! ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

NLT: This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is written to Jewish Christians scattered among the nations. Greetings! ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, sends greetings to the twelve dispersed tribes. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: James, a bonds slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, those in the dispersion. Be constantly rejoicing.

Young's Literal: James, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ a servant, to the Twelve Tribes who are in the dispersion: Hail!

JAMES, A BOND-SERVANT OF GOD AND OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: [Iakobos theou kai kuriou Iesou Christou doulos:](#)

- James - Matthew 10:3; 13:55; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9,12; Jude 1:1)
- Servant - John 12:26; Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; 2Peter 1:1
- Exodus 24:4; 28:21; 39:14; 1Kings 18:31; Ezra 6:17; Matthew 19:28; Acts 26:7; Revelation 7:4
- Related Resources: Article by Douglas Moo on [Theology of James](#)
- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [James 1:1-4 A Radical Approach to Trials](#) - Steven Cole
- [James Introduction](#) - John MacArthur
- [James 1:1 An Introduction to James, Pt. 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [James 1:1 An Introduction to James, Pt. 2](#) - John MacArthur

Vine's Analysis of James...

- I. Concerning trials (Jas 1:1–18).
- II. Concerning obedience to the Word of God (Jas 1:19–27).
- III. Concerning the royal law (Jas 2:1–13).
- IV. Concerning a working faith (Jas 2:14–26).
- V. Concerning the control of the tongue (Jas 3:1–12).
- VI. Concerning strife and worldly-mindedness (Jas 3:18–4:6).
- VII. Concerning patience, prayer and power (Jas 5:7–20).

Pastor Steven Cole opens his sermon series on James with this introduction...

One of the popular TV shows when I grew up was “Dragnet,” starring Jack Webb as Joe Friday, a detective with the Los Angeles Police Department. Joe Friday was a no-nonsense cop. His famous line was, “Just the facts, Ma’am.” He didn’t want to hear anything irrelevant to solving the case. If somebody went off on a tangent, he cut to the quick with, “Just the facts, Ma’am.” James is the Joe Friday of the New Testament. He cuts to the bottom line without messing around. He’s not really interested in hearing your profession of faith. He wants to see your practice of the faith. Several writers refer to James as the least theological epistle in the New Testament, except for Philemon. It’s not that James discounts the importance of sound doctrine, but rather that he wants to see that doctrine affecting how we live. Talk is cheap; James wants to see results. Of the 108 verses in the book, 54 (half) contain imperative verbs. James is like a crusty sergeant barking orders at the troops. He wants to see some action!

Who was James? There are several men in the New Testament by that name. We know that this James was not the apostle James, brother of John, because he was martyred in A.D. 44, too early for this epistle. The vast majority of scholars agree that the author of James was the half-brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55). Apparently he did not believe in Jesus as Lord until after the resurrection, when the risen Savior appeared to him (see John 7:5; 1Co 15:7). He became the leader of the church in Jerusalem in the years following the Day of Pentecost (Gal. 2:9; Acts 15:13-29; 21:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25). He became known as “James the Just” (or, “Righteous”) because of his well-known holiness. James could have pulled rank by opening the letter, “James, the son of the virgin Mary, brother of none other than Jesus Christ. I grew up with Him! I knew Him long before He became famous!” But James (1:1) and his brother, Jude (Jude 1:1), both opened their letters by calling themselves **bond-servants**. The word means, “slaves,” and refers to those who are the property of their masters. They had no rights. They lived to do their masters’ will. James adds, “a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” By mentioning God and Jesus Christ on equal terms, and adding “Lord,” the Old Testament word for God, to Jesus, James affirms the deity of Jesus Christ. ([Steven Cole - James 1:1-4 A Radical Approach to Trials - Excellent Resource - His Sermons are highly recommended](#))

Douglas Moo makes the point that...

Many readers skip the opening verses of NT letters, treating them as unimportant formal details. But this is a mistake. For the letter introductions usually contain more than bare names. They also describe the writer and the recipients in ways that provide us with important clues about the nature and purposes of the letter that follows. The introduction of James is no exception. (Moo, D. J. The letter of James. The Pillar New Testament commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: Eerdmans)

James ([2385](#)) (**Jakobos**) ([Several dictionary articles](#)) means supplanter and is transliterated as Jacob. In English we have two names, **Jacob** and **James**, both coming from the common Hebrew name Jacob.

James was a common name among Palestinian Jews during the first century so it is not surprising to find that the NT uses it to refer to 5 individuals -

(1) **James**, the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles (Mt 4:21) and one that with Peter and John were with Jesus privately on 3 occasions (Mk 5:37, Lk 8:51), the transfiguration (Mt 17:1, Mk 9:2, Lk 9:28) and at Gethsemane (Mt 26:37, Mk 14:33).

(2) **James**, the son of Alphaeus (always added to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee), and also one of the 12 apostles, always mentioned ninth in the 4 lists (Mt 10:2, 3; Mk 3:16, 17, 18; Lk 6:13, 14, 15; Acts 1:12, 13, 14).

(3) **James** the Less (Mk 15:40)

(4) **James**, father of Judas (not Iscariot) (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13),

(5) **James**, the oldest of Jesus' four younger (half) brothers (Mt 13:55, Mk 6:3, cp 1Co 9:5). He is generally considered to be the James who authored the epistle by his name. Eerdmans adds that this latter James "While not a follower of Jesus during his ministry, James seems to have been converted shortly afterwards, perhaps when the risen Jesus appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:7; cf. Acts 1:14). James gradually took over the leadership of the Jerusalem church from the leaders among the Twelve, becoming one of the most important leaders in the 1st-century Church" (Acts 12:17; 15:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12). According to Josephus, James was stoned to death by order of the Jewish high priest Ananus II in 62 c.e. ([Antiquities of the Jews. Book 20. Chapter 9 - scroll down](#)), while according to Eusebius he was killed just before Vespasian invaded Jerusalem in 67 (He 2.23.18).

It should be noted that Jerome considered the author of the present epistle to be James, son of Alphaeus, but most evangelical scholars favor James, the younger brother of Jesus.

The name **Jakobos** is used 42 times in the NT to refer to 5 different individuals thus calling for careful attention to the context (or the paternal description "of Zebedee" or "of Alphaeus") in order to accurately interpret which specific James is being described -

Mt. 4:21; 10:2, 3; 13:55; 17:1; 27:56; Mk. 1:19, 29; 3:17, 18; 5:37; 6:3; 9:2; 10:35, 41; 13:3; 14:33; 15:40; 16:1; Lk. 5:10; 6:14, 15, 16; 8:51; 9:28, 54; 24:10; Acts 1:13; 12:2, 17; 15:13; 21:18; 1Co. 15:7; Ga 1:19; 2:9, 12; Jas. 1:1; Jude 1:1

Regarding the description of bondservant, **Hiebert** comments that...

He prefers to speak only of his status as a Christian man. When after His resurrection Jesus appeared to James (1Cor. 15:7), and James became convinced of His true nature as the Messiah, the spiritual identity of the One whom he had previously regarded as his physical brother became so important to him that the physical relations receded into the background. While others in the church might have referred to him as "the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19), he preferred to speak of himself as a "servant" rather than the "brother" of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mayor observes: "We find here an example of the refusal "to know Christ after the flesh" (2Co 5:16) which appears in ii. 1; the same willingness to put himself on a level with others which appears in iii. 1,2." ([D Edmond Hiebert - James. Moody](#))

Bondservant(1401)(**doulos** from **deo** = to bind) (**Click** additional notes on **doulos**) was an individual bound to another in servitude and conveys the idea of the slave's close, binding ties with his master, belonging to him, obligated to and desiring to do his will and in a permanent relation of servitude. In sum, the will of the **doulos** is consumed in the will of the master.

In using the term bondservant James is not declaring any outstanding personal qualification other than the expression of his complete devotion and subservience to his heavenly Masters. In other words, **James** as a **bondservant** is saying he was surrendered wholly to God's will and thus devoted to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. **James** recognized that as a redeemed soul, he was no longer his own but had been bought with the price of the blood of Christ (1Co 6:20, 7:23, Acts 20:28, Gal 3:13, Titus 2:14-note, 1Pe 1:18,19-note, 2Pe 2:1-note, Ep 1:7-note, Heb 9:12-note, 1Pe 2:9-note; Ro 3:25-note, cp Mt 20:28 Mark10:45, Rev 5:9-note). He was now the property of his Lord Jesus Christ, the one who on earth was his half-brother. His relationship as a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ so much overshadowed his earthly family relationship that he does not even make mention of it in this introduction.

Beloved, does your (my) attitude and actions (thoughts, words, deeds) reflect the eternal truth that you are no longer your own, but that your body is actually a holy temple of God and that this privilege was purchased and made possible at infinite cost to God? Let us meditate on these profound principles and privileges, that the Spirit might renew our minds and empower of walk that it is indeed worthy of such a high and holy calling.

Hiebert comments that "Christianity found the term **doulos** appropriate in setting forth the essence of the believer's true relationship to God. It aptly set forth the Christian consciousness that **believers are totally dependent upon God, belong wholly to Him, and are convinced that His will is the only true rule for all of His people**. Because believers voluntarily and joyously accepted this relationship, the term was commonly used in the New Testament of the believer's relationship to God without any implication of involuntary servitude. For them the term did not suggest any degradation, but only **their total surrender to their spiritual Master**. (Ibid) (Bolding added)

Why is this concept of bondservant so important? For one thing as Jesus taught, no man can serve two masters (Mt 6:24 - note). James before his new birth by grace through faith (Eph 2:8, 9-note), had been a slave of Sin (see note on "**the Sin**"), by virtue of his physical birth in Adam's likeness (cp 1Co 15:22, Ro 5:12-note), but now by virtue of his spiritual birth (John 3:3, 2Cor 5:17),

James had become a slave of Christ (cp "Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once.") In sum, James had no will of his own, no business of his own, no time of his own and was now devoted to his Master, Christ; dependent upon Him and obedient to Him. **Click** the convicting poem **He Had No Rights** written by Mabel Williamson a missionary to China.

As someone has well said no man's life is for his own private use. We can either spend our days for time or spend them for eternity. We all serve someone whether we realize it or not. If we are not born again, we are bondservants of **Sin** (Jn 8:34, 1Ki 21:25, Pr 5:22-note, Acts 8:23, Ro 6:6-note, Ro 6:16, 17, 18, 19-notes, Ro 7:14-note, Ep 2:2-note, Titus 3:3-note, 2Pe 2:19-note) and Satan (Jn 8:44, 1Jn 3:8, 9, 10, 1Jn 5:19). If we are born again we have a new Master, God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (Master) (Ro 6:22-note, Ro 8:2-note, Jn 8:32, 2Cor 3:17, Gal 5:1, 5:13, 1Pe 2:16-note)

Doulos - 124x in 120v - NAS translates *doulos* as - bond-servant(11), bond-servants(12), bondslave(3), bondslaves(3), men(1), servants(1),slave(58), slave's(1), slaves(39), women(1).

Matt. 8:9; 10:24, 25; 13:27, 28; 18:23, 26, 27, 28, 32; 20:27; 21:34, 35, 36; 22:3, 4, 6, 8, 10; 24:45, 46, 48, 50; 25:14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30; 26:51; Mk. 10:44; 12:2, 4; 13:34; 14:47; Lk. 2:29; 7:2, 7:3, 8, 10; 12:37, 43, 45, 46, 47; 14:17, 21, 22, 23; 15:22; 17:7, 9, 10; 19:13, 15, 17, 22; 20:10, 11; 22:50; Jn. 4:51; 8:34, 35; 13:16; 15:15, 20; 18:10, 18, 26; Acts 2:18; 4:29; 16:17; Ro 1:1; 6:16, 17, 20; 1Co. 7:21, 22, 23, 24; 12:13; 2Co. 4:5; Gal. 1:10; 3:28; 4:1, 7; Ep 6:5, 6, 8; Phil. 1:1; 2:7; Col. 3:11, 22; 4:1, 12; 1Ti 6:1; 2Ti 2:24; Titus 1:1; 2:9; Philemon. 1:16; James. 1:1; 1Pe 2:16; 2Pe 1:1; 2:19; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1; 2:20; 6:15; 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 13:16; 15:3; 19:2, 5, 18; 22:3, 6.

In the Greek culture **doulos** usually referred to the involuntary, permanent service of a slave, but the use in the epistles of Paul and Peter elevates the meaning of **doulos** to the Hebrew sense which describes a servant who willingly commits himself to serve a master he loves and respects (cp Ex 21:5, 6 Dt 15:12, 13, 14, 15, 16). By Roman times, slavery was so extensive that in the early Christian period one out of every two people was a slave! From at least 3000BC captives in war were the primary source of slaves.

Doulos speaks of submission to one's master The **doulos** had no life of his own, no will of his own, no purpose of his own and no plan of his own. All was subject to his master. The bondservant's every thought, breath, and effort was subject to the will of his master. In sum, the picture of a **bondservant** is one who is absolutely surrendered and totally devoted to his master (cp single mindedness and purity of devotion in 2Co 11:3). What a picture of James' relation to his Lord! What an example and challenge for all believers of every age to emulate!

By using **doulos** James is saying

I am a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am absolutely sold out to His will. I am willing to do whatever He tells me to do. I am willing to say whatever He tells me to say. I am willing to go wherever He leads me. I am a man who has made a choice. I am going to serve Him for all eternity."

Matthew Henry adds that...

The highest honour of the greatest apostle, and most eminent ministers, is to be the servants of Jesus Christ; not the masters of the churches, but the servants of Christ.

Kenneth Wuest explains that a **doulos** as

the most abject, servile term used by the Greeks to denote a slave. The word designated one who was born as a slave, one who was bound to his master in chords so strong that only death could break them, one who served his master to the disregard of his own interests, one whose will was swallowed up in the will of his master. Paul was born a slave of sin at his physical birth, and a bondslave of his Lord through regeneration. (Note: There was another word, andrapodon which was person taken prisoner in war and sold into slavery) The chords that bound him to his old master Satan, were rent asunder in his identification with Christ in the latter's death (Ro 6:1,2,3, 4, 5, 6 -notes Ro 6:11-note; Ro 7:4-note). The chords that bind him to his new Master will never be broken since the new Master will never die again, and is Paul's new life (Php 1:21-note, Col 3:3,4-notes). He has changed masters because he has a new nature (2Cor 5:17, 2Pe 1:3,4 - note), the divine, and the evil nature which compelled him to serve the Devil has had its power over him broken (Col 1:13-note, Heb 2:14, 15-note). Paul's will, at one time swallowed up in the will of Satan, now is swallowed up in the sweet will of God.

The reader will observe how wonderfully God has watched over the development of the Greek language so that at the time it was needed as the medium through which He would give His New Testament revelation to the human race, its words were fit receptacles and efficient instruments for the conveyance of His message to man. Paul calls himself a **bondslave of Christ Jesus**... The apostle is proud of the fact that he is a slave belonging to his Lord. There were certain individuals in the Roman empire designated "Slaves of the Emperor." This was a position of honor. One finds a reflection of this in Paul's act of designating himself as a slave of the King of kings. He puts this ahead of his apostleship." ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek](#)

In summary, the *doulos*...

- Was owned by and totally possessed by his master.
- Existed for his master and no other reason.
- Had no personal rights.
- Was at the master's disposal "24/7".
- Had no will of his own but was completely subservient to the master.

Paradoxically a bondservant of the Most High God is one of the most privileged, noblest professions in the world. Little wonder that notable men of God in the have always been called the servants of God. The list of names includes

- **Moses** (Dt 34:5 Ps 105:26 Mal 4:4)
- **Joshua** (Josh 24:29)
- **David** (2Sa 3:18 Ps 78:70)
- **Paul** (Ro 1:1; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1)
- **Peter** (2Pe 1:1)
- **James** (James 1:1)
- **Jude** (Jude 1:1)
- **Prophets** (Amos 3:7; Jer 7:25).
- **Ideally believers** (Acts 2:18; 1Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6; Col 4:12; 2Ti 2:24).

Guy King comments on the phrase **bondservants of Christ Jesus** writing...

Let it be said at once that the word here is the same as **bond-slaves** - a conception which would be vividly familiar to every reader of this Letter. Quite a number of them were, or had been, slaves themselves - and the word would catch their attention at once. I say "had been" of some, because the law of manumission (process of releasing from slavery) would have operated in their case - a price would have been paid, and the slave set free.

In his fascinating *Light from the Ancient East*, Dr. Deissmann, pp. 319 ff., has some most interesting paragraphs on this releasing of slaves (see note that follows); and, with his quick and ready mind, the late Archbishop Harrington Lees, in his *CHRIST and His Slaves*, made use of the learned Doctor's discoveries to point many a moral concerning spiritual servitude and release.

Paul's writings abound in allusions to this last phenomenon. The material and the spiritual are found together in such a passage as 1Corinthians 7:22,

He that is called in the LORD, being a servant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

When a man becomes a Christian, though materially bound as a slave, he is spiritually freed from bondage to Satan and sin; on the other hand, such a man, though materially set at liberty, is, in the spiritual sense, bound hand and foot to CHRIST.

How Paul himself rejoiced - and even gloried - in this New Slavery. In his letters he so constantly uses the word as indicating his relationship to JESUS CHRIST. He would so readily enter into the attitude of the well-satisfied slave of Exodus 21:5, "I love my Master ... I will not go out free."

From the bondage of sin, the believer has, by the manumission price of "the precious Blood", (1Pe 1:18, 19, see **notes** 1P 1:18; 19), been set free-only to find himself thereby committed to a bondage more binding than ever. Yet, this time the "service is perfect freedom", the bonds are honourable and sweet.

And, for our encouragement, let us remember that

(i) The Master is responsible for His slaves' needs - feeding, housing, clothing, and all else is the slaveowner's concern. It is because we are GOD'S servants (slaves) that our Lord says "Therefore ... take no thought ... ", (Mt 6:24,25, see **notes** Mt 6:24; 25), for the ordinary needs of life. Our apostle will say later in this very Epistle, "My GOD shall supply all your need." (see **note** Philippians 4:19)

Also

(ii) **The Master is responsible for His slaves' duties** - they will not choose their own task, or their own sphere. Whether ours is to be the more menial, or the more genial, work is in His plan, not ours. It is the Christian's wisdom to stand before Him as those in 2Samuel 15:15, "Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint", or as Gabriel in Luke 1:19, "I ... stand... and am sent ...".

Then, too

(iii) **The Master is responsible for His slaves' supplies** - "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" asks 1Corinthians 9:7: the soldier has all his military equipment provided; and likewise, the slave is supplied with everything needful for the adequate discharge of all his duties. Whatever He tells us to do, we can do - "If ... God command thee ... thou shalt be able to ... " Exodus 18:23 - because all supplies are at our disposal. And as Paul records, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee". (Ibid)

Regarding the setting free of slaves in Paul's day, **Deissmann** records the following custom which has clear parallels with Paul's teaching on saints as bondslaves of Christ...

Among the various ways in which the manumission of a slave could take place by ancient law we find the solemn rite of fictitious purchase of the slave by some divinity. The owner comes with the slave to the temple, sells him there to the god, and receives the purchase money from the temple treasury, the slave having previously paid it in there out of his savings. The slave is now the property of the god; not, however, a slave of the temple, but a protégé of the god. Against all the world, especially his former master, he is a completely free man; at the utmost a few pious obligations to his old master are imposed upon him. The rite takes place before witnesses; a record is taken, and often perpetuated on stone. (Deissmann, A., & Strachan, L. R. M. *Light from the Ancient East the New Testament illustrated by recently discovered texts of the Graeco-Roman world*. Payer 326. London: Hodder & Stoughton. 1910).

Dr Wayne Barber has an excellent practical explanation of the significance of a bondservant asking the practical question...

"Why do you serve the Lord Jesus Christ? "Well, I had better. God will kill me if I don't." You know, I've talked to a lot of people who have that mentality. It is as if God has a big club and if you don't do what He wants you to do, then He will hit you over the head with it. Yet God says, "Wait a minute. I have set you free. You are free now to be what you ought to be. Make up your mind. No man can serve two masters." The person who has any sense at all will say, "Lord, You have overwhelmed me. I am making a choice out of love for You to be Your slave. I know I am no longer Your slave, but I choose to be Your slave." Do you want to be used by the Lord? Come to the place in your life that you are willing to say, "God, it doesn't matter what You tell me to do, I am willing to be submissive to Your will." When you come to that place, God will do things through you like He did through Paul. One picture of that is beautiful, and it is found in Dt 15:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17: "If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. And when you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. And it shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. And also you shall do likewise to your maidservant." What a gorgeous picture. Slavery in that day and time was nothing like we know today. The slaves had to be treated as if they were your own children in your own family. You had to treat them with dignity and integrity. After they had served you for a period of time, you had to set them free. But the beautiful picture here is of a slave. He served a master for seven years. The master has loved him, provided for him, been kind to him, helped him, all the things that you would look for. Now the day comes that he has been set free. He is given of the flock, given of the threshing floor, given of the wine vat. This servant stands there, and he says, "You know, I have been so cared for during the seven years that I have worked with you, where would I go? I don't know where I am going to go. Nobody would love me like you have loved me. Nobody would do for me what you have done for me. Why, I am going to choose to be your slave. I know you have set me free, but because of who you are and because of my love for you, I want to continue to be your slave. I want to do for you not because I have to but because I just want to." What a gorgeous picture. They had a public ceremony and they would take that little instrument and put it up by their ear and drive it through the ear into the door, leaving a hole in the ear. What a gorgeous picture when you see this slave walking alongside his master, smiling. You would see that man and you knew he had been with him seven years, maybe it is three years down the road past that seven years and you say, "Isn't that wonderful! That

man was set free and now that man has chosen to serve out of love for his master." Man looks on the outside. God looks at our heart. Why are you serving the Lord Jesus? If you don't love Him, if you haven't understood that nobody else will ever treat you like Jesus, then no wonder you are not being used of the Lord in the task He has assigned to His church. A man that God can use is a person who is willing to bow, a person who is willing to say, "God, I just want what You want in my life." ... God is waiting on us to love Him and to bow before Him and to make conscious choices. "God, you have given me everything. If I left you, where would I go? Lord, I want to serve you. No man can serve two masters. I want to serve You. I want to be usable in the kingdom of God." That is the Apostle Paul. He was a man who was willing, sold out to the will of God." (Click for additional notes by Dr. Barber on "bondservant")

A businessman once asked his Bible study group,

"How can you tell if you have a servant attitude?"

The reply came back...

"By the way you react when you are treated like one."

It's not easy to find an attitude like that. But for a disciple, servant-hood is one of the keys to growing in Christ-likeness.

Describing His own ministry, Jesus said:

"For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" ([Mark 10:45](#))

Thomas Manton asks...

But why not "**apostle**"? He does not mention his apostleship, first, because there was no need, as he was eminent in the opinion and reputation of the churches; therefore Paul says he was reputed to be a pillar of the Christian faith (Galatians 2:9). Paul, whose apostleship was openly questioned, often asserted it. Secondly, Paul himself does not call himself an apostle in every letter. Sometimes his style is, "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus" (Philemon 1); sometimes "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:1); sometimes nothing but his name Paul is prefixed, as in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

Of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ - This order makes prominent the identity of his heavenly Masters. The description in this verse was utilized by the Greek fathers to argue against the Arians for the divinity of Jesus Christ. Think for a moment of what James is saying here - it is as if he could think of no higher honor than being the bondservant of such glorious Masters. And should not every believer adopt such a heavenly mindset? What a privilege to be in the service of such holy and loving Masters. Beloved of the Father and the Son, think about the work God has called you to today and rejoice in your high position and privilege to carry out His good and acceptable and perfect will, which will bear fruit not just in this life but he life to come! (cp 1Ti 4:8-note) Hallelujah!

Commenting on the name **the Lord Jesus Christ**, Hiebert writes that...

All three names serve to unfold the true nature of this Master. "**Jesus**" is His human name. It was the name given Him before His birth and speaks of His saving work in incarnation (Mt 1:21). **iesous** is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua meaning "salvation." This name embodies the entire gospel story concerning the historic Man of Nazareth. "**Christ**" (Christos) is the Greek rendering for the Hebrew "Messiah" (Ps. 2:2; Acts 4:26), both meaning "the anointed one." For Jewish readers, the term Christos, whether placed before or after Jesus," meant that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic promises. For James and the early church, the name "Jesus Christ" embodied the faith that the messianic redemption was realized in the incarnate Jesus.

Thus, "**Jesus is the Christ**" became the earliest Christian confession (Acts 2:36; 3:20; 5:42; cf. John 20:30, 31). This faith arose in the hearts of His disciples from their associations with Jesus during His earthly ministry (John 1:41; Mt. 16:16) and received unshakable confirmation from His resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:32, 36). The Christian church proclaimed this incarnate and risen Savior as its "**Lord**" (kurios). As her **Savior** and **Master**, He received her full allegiance and whole-hearted service. For Jewish readers, the title "**Lord**" carried with it implications of deity. In the Septuagint, it is the translation for the ineffable Name (**Yahweh**) and speaks of His sovereignty. Various quotations from the Old Testament referring to Jehovah are applied directly to Jesus in the New Testament, where they were "understood of the new Lord of the Christian church. The term **kurios** occurs fourteen times in this epistle (Jas 1:1, 7, 12; 2:1; 4:10, 15; 5:4, 7, 8, 10, 11 twice, Jas 1:14, 15). Only here and in Jas 2:1 does James connect it directly with **Jesus Christ**, and it is not always clear in the other places whether his reference is to God or to Christ." (Ibid)

When we give Jesus Christ His rightful place as Lord of our lives, His Lordship will be expressed in the way we serve others - no longer as a duty, but as a delight to please and imitate our Lord (Mk 10:45, Php 2:3, 4, 5, 6, 7-see notes). Therefore, one of the best ways we can demonstrate our love for God is by showing love for our fellow man. We demonstrate love for others by helping them, by sharing their problems, and by doing what we can for them. Why should we serve? For Jesus' sake that men might see our good works and glorify (as they observe our godly attitude and actions they might thereby obtain a proper opinion of) our heavenly Father (Mt 5:16-note).

TO THE TWELVE TRIBES WHO ARE DISPERSED ABROAD: GREETINGS: tais dodeka phulais tais en te diaspora chairein. (PAN):

- **Dispersed** - Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:64; 30:3; 32:26; Esther 3:8; Ezekiel 12:15; John 7:35; Acts 2:5; 8:1; 15:21; 1 Peter 1:1
- **Greetings** - Acts 15:23; 23:26; 2Timothy 4:21
- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [James 1:1-4 A Radical Approach to Trials](#) - Steven Cole
- [James Introduction](#) - John MacArthur
- [James 1:1 An Introduction to James, Pt. 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [James 1:1 An Introduction to James, Pt. 2](#) - John MacArthur

The twelve tribes (10 times in OT/NT - Ge 49:28; Ex 24:4; 28:21; 39:14; Ezek 47:13; Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Acts 26:7; Jas 1:1; Rev 21:12-note) - Clearly addressed to Jews and in context those who have received Jesus as their Messiah (Jn 1:11, 12, 13). The phrase **the twelve tribes** in context is clearly a Jewish expression denoting the Jewish people as a whole (Mt 19:28; Acts 26:7). While tribal divisions had been lost to many Jews, nevertheless even in New Testament times many of the Jews were still able to establish their tribal descent (cp the importance of the tribal lineage of the Messiah in Mt.1:1-16; Lk 1:5, 2:36; cp Php 3:5-note). It is interesting to note that James does not say to the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and the "ten lost tribes". They are all "lost" spiritually without Christ and none are lost who are in Christ. Though the "twelve tribes" were scattered (and are to this day), they are not "lost" in another since for members of each tribe (except Dan) are listed at the close of biblical history in the Revelation (Re 7:5, 6, 7, 8 - see **notes** [Re 7:5](#); [7:6](#); [7:7](#); [7:8](#)). The OT prophets repeatedly spoke of the reunification of the divided nations of Israel and Judah under the coming Messiah (e.g., Isa 11:11, 12, 13; Jer 3:18; 50:4; Ezek 37:15-23; Zec 10:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), and there was a strong Jewish expectation that when the Messiah came, He would reestablish the chosen people (Is 43:20) in their correct tribal divisions (Ezek 48:1-29).

Tribes ([5443](#)) (**phule** form **phúlon** = race, tribe, class) refers to a nation or people descended from a common ancestor. In this context phule refers to all the persons descended from one of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob.

Phule- 31x in 23v -

Matt 19:28; 24:30; Luke 2:36; 22:30; Acts 13:21; Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5; Heb 7:13, 14; Jas 1:1; Rev 1:7; 5:5, 9; 7:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 21:12

Dispersed abroad ([1290](#)) (**diaspora** [word study] from **diaspeiro** = to scatter abroad - from dia = through + spora = a sowing) is a noun describing the condition of being scattered and thus refers to a scattering or dispersion as one would scatter seed in a field. In John 7:35 **diaspora** is used with its literal meaning to refer to those Jews who were living outside Palestine, while the other NT use in Peter is figurative (1Pe 1:1-note)

James used **diaspora** as a technical term to refer to Jews outside of Palestine, scattered like seed throughout the Gentile world. Over the previous several hundred years, various conquerors (including the Roman Pompey in 63 BC who carried hundreds of Jewish captives back to Rome) had deported Jews from their homeland in Palestine and spread them throughout the known world. In addition, other Jews had voluntarily moved to other countries for business or other reasons (cf. Acts 2:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). And so by NT times, many Jews lived outside of their homeland. In fact Philo (20BC to 50AD), a Jewish philosopher estimated that up to one million Jews lived in Alexandria, Egypt. An equal number had settled in both Persia and Asia Minor, and about 100,000 lived in Cyrenaica and Italy. The Jews who were dispersed throughout the world in this manner outnumbered the Jews who remained in their native land.

At various times and for various reasons, the Jews were **scattered** into foreign countries "to the outmost parts of heaven (cp Dt 30:4). (Additional resources on **dispersion** [Easton](#), [ISBE Smith](#)) Some of these **dispersions** were voluntary (of great importance during the Greco-Roman period when Jews voluntarily migrated to all the chief towns of the civilized world, chiefly for the sake of

trade), while others were forced upon them by the conquering nations (see below: **Assyria** [2Ki 17:6], **Babylon**, [cp 2Chr 36:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21] **Rome** [Lk 21:20, 21, 22, 23, 24 - describes destruction of Temple in 70AD]). The Jewish **dispersions** were predicted and sovereignly decreed by God in the Pentateuch (5 books of Moses = The Torah) where he warned Israel what would transpire if she rejected His statutes and abhorred His ordinances so as not to carry out all of His commandments.

In Leviticus we read God's warning to Israel

You however, I will **scatter** (diaspeiro in the Greek translation of the Hebrew) among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste. (Lev 26:33, cp Lev 26:33)

Moses warned Israel again that

Jehovah will **scatter** (diaspeiro in the Greek translation of the Hebrew) you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where Jehovah drives you. (Dt 4:27, cp Dt 28:64, 30:3, this latter passage [Dt 30:1, 2, 3] prophetically promising restoration of the believing Jewish remnant at the end the Great Tribulation and inauguration of the Millennial reign of Christ in the Messianic Kingdom)

So clearly the various Jewish **diasporas**, especially those secondary to foreign conquest, were the result of the sovereign outworking of the righteous justice of Jehovah (see attribute - Justice). He is faithful (see His attribute - Faithfulness) to keep all of His "promises", even the ones we don't particularly want Him to keep!

God speaking to His prophet **Ezekiel** in exile in Babylon explained that

I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered (Greek word = diaspōrismos = dispersion, scattering dispersal) among the countries. (Ezek 6:8)

The majority of the nation of Israel proved not to be believers, but God's grace and mercy continued to preserve a godly **remnant** of believing Jews (saved by grace through faith). Contrary to popular opinion there never has been nor ever will be a complete end to Israel (cp Ro 11:25, 26, 27, 28, 29-see notes). **Click** study of doctrine of the remnant (believing Israel).

One of the most interesting and strategic "**dispersions**" occurred in Acts 8, after the stoning of Stephen, at which time

a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem and they were **scattered** (diaspeiro) throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1) and

those who had been **scattered** (diaspeiro) went about preaching (euaggelizo/euangelizo = "evangelizing") the word. (Acts 8:4)

The believers in Jerusalem (remember the church initially was almost 100% Jewish) were scattered like seed so that they might spread the "seed" of the Word of God, the Gospel.

Motyer writes...

If James were to post his letter today it would be marked 'Return to sender' on the ground of being insufficiently addressed. He names no names and specifies no place as destination: twelve tribes contain a lot of people and the Dispersion, in its special sense of the scattered people of God, was in principle world-wide. (Motyer, J. A. The Message of James: The Tests of Faith. The Bible Speaks Today. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A.: InterVarsity Press)

Hiebert asserts that

Through their contacts with other people, the Jews of the Dispersion generally had a larger outlook on life and a greater openness to new ideas, whereas their contacts with the surrounding paganism generally made them more strongly convinced of the immeasurable superiority of Judaism over the pagan religions. As the gospel spread in the Gentile world, it was seen that wherever there was a colony of Jews with their synagogue, their message of ethical monotheism had become a strong preparatory force for Christianity. Scattered abroad as seed, they had "become the seed of a future harvest." (James)

Greetings (5463) (**chairō** - a primary verb) in some contexts means to rejoice or be glad (e.g., Jn 16:20, Ro 12:15-note, Mt 5:12-note) but here in James is used as a formalized greeting wishing the readers well. BAGD says that the idea can connote "that one is on good terms with the other". The Gospels render **chairō** as "hail" (Mt 26:49, 27:29). Luke uses **chairō** much like James to convey the idea of "Greetings" (Acts 15:23, 23:26).

Chairō - 74x in 68v -

Matt 2:10; 5:12; 18:13; 26:49; 27:29; 28:9; Mark 14:11; 15:18; Luke 1:14, 28; 6:23; 10:20; 13:17; 15:5, 32; 19:6, 37; 22:5; 23:8; John 3:29; 4:36; 8:56; 11:15; 14:28; 16:20, 22; 19:3; 20:20; Acts 5:41; 8:39; 11:23; 13:48; 15:23, 31; 23:26; Rom 12:12, 15; 16:19; 1 Cor 7:30; 13:6; 16:17; 2 Cor 2:3; 6:10; 7:7, 9, 13, 16; 13:9, 11; Phil 1:18; 2:17f, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 10; Col 1:24; 2:5; 1Th 3:9; 5:16; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 4:13; 2 John 1:4, 10f; 3 John 1:3; Rev 11:10; 19:7.

NAS translates **chairo** = am glad(1), glad(7), gladly(1), greeted*(1), greeting(2), greetings(4), hail(4), joyfully(1), make(1), rejoice(33), rejoiced(8), rejoices(2), rejoicing(10).

Note that the verb **chairo** is related to the word **joy (chara)** in the next verse, suggesting James was in some sense preparing his readers for the radical command to **consider it all joy**.

John MacArthur makes a good point emphasizing that James uses **chairo** not as a...

mere formality; he expected what he wrote to gladden his readers' hearts by giving them means to verify the genuineness of their salvation. That, James knew, would provide great comfort to them in their trials, which Satan persistently uses to try to make Christians doubt they are indeed God's children and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. ([Macarthur J. James. Moody](#))

Steven Cole comments that...

Many writers claim that there is no unifying theme to James, but that it is just a series of unrelated, random exhortations. But, as difficult as it may be to outline the book, I think that the contents may be arranged under this theme of true faith. James is giving a series of tests by which one may determine whether his faith is genuine or false ([D. Edmond Hiebert "The Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James." Bibliotheca Sacra \[135:539, July-September, 1978\], pp. 221-231](#)). I offer this outline:

Introduction: Author and recipients (Jas 1:1).

1. True faith responds with practical godliness under testing (Jas 1:2-27).

- A. True faith responds with joy when it faces testing (Jas 1:2, 3, 4).
- B. True faith seeks God for wisdom in times of testing (Jas 1:5, 6, 7, 8).
- C. True faith adopts God's eternal perspective in both poverty and riches (Jas 1:9, 10, 11).
- D. True faith perseveres under testing, not blaming God for temptations (Jas 1:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).
- E. True faith obeys God's word, even when provoked (Jas 1:19-27).

2. True faith shows itself in practical obedience (Jas 2:1-26).

- A. True faith does not show partiality (Jas 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).
- B. True faith practices biblical love (Jas 2:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13).
- C. True faith proves itself by its works (Jas 2:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26).

3. True faith controls the tongue and acts with gentle wisdom (Jas 3:1-18).

- A. True faith controls the tongue (Jas 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).
- B. True faith acts with gentle wisdom (Jas 3:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

4. True faith resists arrogance by humbling oneself before God (Jas 4:1-5:18).

- A. True faith practices humility in relationships (Jas 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).
- B. True faith practices humility with regard to the future (Jas 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17).
- C. True faith practices humility by waiting for God to judge the wicked who have wronged us (Jas 5:1-11).
- D. True faith practices humility by speaking the truth apart from self-serving oaths (Jas 5:12).
- E. True faith practices humility by depending upon God through prayer (Jas 5:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

Conclusion: True faith practices biblical love by seeking to restore those who have strayed from the truth (Jas 5:19, 20). ([James 1:1-4 A Radical Approach to Trials](#) His Sermons are highly recommended)