

THE WHY AND HOW OF PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Ursula Kemp, 1977

Lesson 12

REVIEW: QUIZ!

1. Apart from your Bible, which two study helps would benefit you the most in a character study? (Bible Dictionary, Concordance.)
2. When more than one person becomes the subject of character study, how might you go about examining them? (By comparing them.)
3. State the major purposes of character study. (To discover known facts about a Bible character; to learn from his/her experiences.)
4. Name some of the facts you would want to establish concerning any given character. (Background, events, attitudes, actions, characteristics--strengths, weaknesses, problems and how solved.)

OUTLINE:

I. GENERAL RULES FOR BOOK STUDY

A. OBJECTIVE

1. Survey
2. Topical study
3. Verse by verse exegesis

B. STUDY HELPS

II. BACKGROUND

A. AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF WRITING

1. James, the Author
2. James, the Book

B. OCCASION, PURPOSE OF WRITING

C. RECIPIENTS

D. MESSAGE

III. CHAPTER OUTLINE

IV. GENERAL RULES APPLIED

APPROACH:

From the earliest Hebrew writings to the last book of Scripture, the Bible is the written revelation of God's plan and purpose for time and eternity. Over a thousand years in the making, and penned by forty human authors of diverse backgrounds, the sixty-six books of the Bible contain the complete and connected thought of God as revealed to mankind. Each book has its own message, and each is profitable to the serious student of Scripture. One of the amazing features of the Book of Books is that it is timeless in its outreach, as practical and pertinent to the believer of the twentieth century as it was to those who first received it. You see, the nature of man has not changed. Although culture and technological advance have given man a thin veneer of apparent refinement, this is only superficial!

Man's problem is deeply rooted in sin and the resultant sin nature, and his remedy is ever found in the Son of God and the salvation He offers, both from the penalty and the power of sin! And the instructions for living the abundant life are contained in the pages of God's Word.

One section of our Personal Bible Study Course is the study of a book. Because it is so intensely practical in daily living, we have selected the BOOK OF JAMES.

I. APPROACH TO BOOK STUDY

A. Objective.

Regardless of the book you have chosen the approach to your own study of a book is essentially the same. You should ESTABLISH AN OBJECTIVE, which you can follow systematically and methodically! There are **three basic types of book study**:

1. **SURVEY** -- In survey, you examine a book in its entirety. You get an overlook, note its boundaries, content, main theme and key lessons.
2. **TOPICAL STUDY** -- In a topical study, you deal mainly with the key subjects, from which you draw spiritual and practical lessons.
3. **VERSE BY VERSE EXEGESIS** -- This type of study is the most detailed but requires a knowledge of the original languages of the Scriptures and years of experience. Or else, reliance on a sound biblical expositor; i.e. the pastor-teacher who rightly divides the Word of Truth, or a trustworthy commentator.

B. Study Helps. Study helps which will best serve you in your own personal study of a book of Scripture are a CONCORDANCE, BIBLE DICTIONARY OR HANDBOOK,

COMMENTARIES, (LEXICONS, if you can use them), a BIBLE ATLAS (if indicated in your study), a HISTORY BOOK!

The **Concordance** will aid you in **cross-referencing a passage** to a similar text elsewhere in the Bible, and it will tell you **the meaning of the original word** used by the writer. **The Bible Dictionary** will not only give you **the personal history of the human author of the book**, it will also state the **purpose and theme of the book** in summary form. You may also find additional valuable information regarding the book you want to study, i.e., the place of the book in the Canon, an Outline of the book or any particular problem you might encounter, and how it is resolved. A **Bible Handbook** is your **guide in understanding the Scripture** in that it provides you with a **chapter analysis** in addition to the facts listed in your Bible Dictionary.

Reliable Commentaries furnish **detailed analysis of the text** and its **implications and applications**. They present **historical backgrounds, explanations of idioms and metaphors** (figures of speech in use at the time of writing). They are often the result of years of intensive study on the part of great Bible scholars. A good **Bible Atlas** is helpful in tracing historical events in the ancient world. (A very excellent atlas is **MACMILLAN BIBLE ATLAS**, prepared by two Jewish professors of archeology and art from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem--Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah. A fine ancient history book to obtain is **THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS**.)

II. BACKGROUND

It is essential that you establish a BACKGROUND for all types of Bible study. You must have the setting for what you are about to examine. Some will question whether or not such details are indeed necessary. They are, for they supply the correct frame of reference from which you can draw the proper applications. Moreover, they will give you deeper insight into the problems that prompted the writing of each book in the Bible; and they will show you that God is truly concerned with **all** that happens in the lives of His people!

What constitutes the background for book study? Well, there is **the question of authorship**. Find out who wrote the book! Discover **the occasion for its writing** and **the date** it was written. Determine **the author's purpose**. Why did he write these things, and what did he have in mind? From **where did he write**? Who were **the original recipients**? What was **the author's message**? What is the **historical setting** for the book?

SATURATE YOUR MIND WITH THE BOOK YOU WANT TO STUDY! Read it repeatedly, daily! Become familiar with **its theme**! Note the **key phrases** which occur!

III. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Examine the Outline of the book you want to study. Note the Outline given in your Bible; compare it to that given in your study helps. REMEMBER THAT IN ADDITION TO A GENERAL OUTLINE, THERE SHOULD BE A DETAILED OUTLINE. (I refer you back to our lesson on Psalm 19.) Try to **substitute your own Outline**. ANY ONE CAN PARROT! It is not until you can give back something you have learned in your own words that you have really mastered it!

LET ME REMIND YOU OF OUR FIRST LESSON: YOU CAN LEARN AND YET NOT KNOW HOW TO LEARN! Personal Bible study is the "HOW" of learning!

IV. GENERAL RULES APPLIED

Now let us apply these general rules to our study of the Book of James! For our purposes we will combine a survey of the Book with a topical study. (This would be the most likely route you would take on your own.) The study helps for this lesson are: **Unger's Bible Dictionary, Unger's Bible Handbook, Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, G. Campbell Morgan's Living Messages of the Books of the Bible**, and an **Analytical Greek and Hebrew Lexicon**. Feel in no wise limited to these study helps!

BACKGROUND: AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF WRITING OF JAMES

James, the Author. The authorship of this epistle is easily established. In the traditional style of Greek letter writing, the writer identifies himself and his recipients at the beginning of his letter. His name is James (Jas. 1:1), and he is the half-brother of our Lord (Unger's Bible Dictionary.)

Let us meet this great man, as we examine the biographical sketch which the inspired Word of God gives us. Coming to know James will be a good refresher on our lesson on character study. We will list the references, look them up and briefly comment on them as we go along.

BIBLICAL DATA:

Mark 6:3 is our **introduction to James**. The setting for this verse is the only clue we have to the eighteen silent years of our Lord's life, from His twelfth to His thirtieth year. Jesus had returned "home", to Nazareth. His disciples came with Him. He astounded His hearers by His teaching and the reports of His many miracles. (**Read vs. 1-6**). Note: "among his own kin, and in his own house". **JAMES and JUDA** (the author of "JUDE") **were unbelievers at that time**, and so were **JOSEPH Jr. and SIMON**.

John 7:5 is a statement of that fact! **Application:** Witnessing to one's family is a very difficult proposition! Crucial importance of conduct; they see you under all circumstances!

I Cor. 15:7 records that **Christ appeared to James** in one of the post-resurrection appearances. By that time **James had become a believer**. What the perfect life of Christ had not been able to accomplish, His death on the cross and His resurrection had done!

Acts 1:14 states that James was among those who waited for Pentecost in the upper room.

Galatians 1:18, 19 records a visit from Paul (three years after the latter's conversion; ca. A.D. 35 or 36.) By then James was called an "**apostle**" (v. 19).

Acts 12:17, Peter sent word to James of his miraculous deliverance from prison.

Acts 15:13-21 takes us to ca. A. D. 44. James had become one of the prominent leaders of the early Church, in Jerusalem. He presided over the first Church council (Acts 15:6) and helped settle the questions of circumcision and the ceremonial Law. He established a policy of what must and must not be expected of Gentile believers under grace. Note **his gracious attitude, vs. 13, 19!**

Galatians 2:1, 9, 10, Note order of mention of names: James is first! (No claim to Peter's primacy.) James is mentioned as one of the outstanding leaders of the Churches in and around Jerusalem. Again, note his gracious conduct: he pledges fellowship on an equal basis, support in every way. There is no professional jealousy!

Acts 21:18-25 Paul's last visit to Jerusalem and James. He receives and complies with bad advice.

EXTRA-BIBLICAL INFORMATION: According to **Eusebius**, the noted "father of Church History," James was surnamed "the Just" because he was held in high regard for his eminent virtue.

Also, according to **Eusebius and Josephus**, James died a martyr in Jerusalem, approximately A D. 62 or 63. Josephus, Book XX, Chapter IX, page 598 tells that after the death of Festus, Albinus was made Procurator of Judea. During his tenure of office, Ananus, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, became the high priest. A Sadducee by sect, he assembled the Sanhedrin and brought James to trial on trumped-up charges. James was found to be a "Law-breaker" and condemned to be stoned to death.

However, the **sentence was not carried out**. You will recall that the Sanhedrin was virtually powerless during the time of Roman occupation of the Land. The **Sanhedrin could not assemble without the consent of the Romans**, and a **death sentence**

imposed by the Jews **could only be executed with Roman approval**. Hence, the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus Christ, but it took Pilate to order His death by crucifixion.

Irate at their high priest's rash actions, the righteous citizens of Jerusalem appealed the case to King Agrippa, who had appointed him. Albinus was notified of the case upon his return from Alexandria, and the high priest was removed from power and replaced by Jesus the son of Damneus. Albinus never approved of the sentence of James, and James is said to have lived for many years. Tradition holds that he died long after by crucifixion. (A. D. 62 or 63.)

From the passages we have already examined, **James emerges as a stable, gracious believer**. We see his **conciliatory nature, friendliness, practicality** and **his earnest desire that every believer demonstrate FAITH IN ACTION!** Another admirable quality of James is that **he is considerate**. Notice that when he rebukes believers, he is careful not to lump together their failures, nor to accuse all of the failures of some. In fact, he puts it this way, "If the shoe fits, wear it!" As we go through his epistle, watch how frequently James says, "IF ANY AMONG YOU...LET HIM." There is no ranting or raving at the Lord's scattered flock, just a cautioning and counseling!

James has a **poetic soul and a heritage which is rich in Judaic culture**. Although **he writes in the Greek**, his **thinking is Judaic**. Moreover, he is deeply impressed and influenced by the sagacious writings of Proverbs and Wisdom of Solomon. His thoughts carry over into his letter, and we find this letter rich in oriental imagery. His style appeals to the senses and to impressions. He draws vivid pictures and speaks in parabolic form. And all through his words flows love-and sensitivity for the needs of the dispersed early Christians. It is his concern that they mature and show the validity of their faith! How this may be accomplished is apparent from his letter.

JAMES, THE BOOK: Although JAMES IS THE EARLIEST EPISTLE (A.D.45-46) it was not accepted as part of Scripture until the end of the fourth century. (Declared to be canonical in A.D. 397, at the Third Church Council of Carthage.) Prior to that date, the early Church fathers argued against the inclusion of James into the Canon because of its **absence of doctrinal content**. Indeed, there is **no mention of Church-related truth**, yet the truths contained in the Epistle are clearly centered in the teaching of Christ. However, those who argued against the canonicity of James cited such **controversial verses** as **James 2:14!** Even after its inclusion into the Canon, James drew unfavorable comment. **Martin Luther** called it "**a right strawy epistle.**" We will see that it is not in the least "strawy" as we get into this book.

What we have learned about James, the man harmonizes beautifully with James, the Book. Now let us see the occasion upon which he wrote his letter, and the purpose he had in mind!

OCCASION, PURPOSE OF WRITING: Since the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, members of the twelve tribes of Israel and their descendants lived in every major country and city of the then civilized world. In order to preserve their national and spiritual heritage they clustered in Jewish settlements and established independent communities, with their own synagogues and public officials. For the most part, they enjoyed the protection of their conquerors and became a prosperous people wherever they lived. It was unavoidable that their daily contact with the heathen world left its effect upon these Jews. In manner, bearing and speech they became cultured Greeks (Hellenistic Jews) and adopted foreign names. But deeply embedded in their hearts was their love for their native land and the faith of their fathers. Whoever could afford to do so made his annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the Holy City at the time of the Passover. **Acts 2:9-11** lists some of the countries from which pilgrims had come to visit Jerusalem.

It was here, on the Day of Pentecost that they first heard the Gospel declared to them in their adopted languages. Many believed the Good News and returned to their homes, taking the Gospel with them. Christianity began to make inroads in the inhabited world of antiquity. What a testimony those Christians had; they were reported to "HAVE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN" (Acts 17:6)! Wish this could be said of us!

But **as the Gospel spread, so did opposition to Christianity.** Not only had these saved Jews a problem trying to reconcile their Jewish background and acquired culture and customs to this totally new concept of living, but they also encountered intense animosity from their Jewish countrymen. Christians were considered traitors to the faith, turncoats, and they were ostracized from Jewish religious life and society. Because they were new in the faith they lacked stability. Pressures and worldliness became roadblocks to their growth, and they needed support from their "home base."

Even as Paul's chief burden was for his unsaved Jewish brothers (Rom. 9:3), so James felt constrained to help those believing Jews overcome their problems. He must reach them where they lived, speak to them in a way they could understand. He was in Jerusalem; they were scattered, but the life-line must be kept open. Too much was at stake! Hence, James sat down and wrote them a lengthy letter.

RECIPIENTS

Unlike most of the other epistles, which were addressed to either an individual or one or more churches, the letter bearing James' name is addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Thus the letter is relevant to them all, and to us by application! How very timely and apropos it is will shortly become obvious to you!

MESSAGE

The message of James deals with the practical aspect of Christianity, with Faith, tried and proven valid; with Faith manifest in living and strengthened in suffering! Let us pray that we will be open and alert to the living message of the Word of Truth and profit from it, as doubtless, they did!

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Lesson 12

FIRST THINGS FIRST! (Read these statements and fill in the blanks.)

1. As in all other Bible studies, in Book study there must be a definite_____.
2. Assemble your study helps; then establish the _____of the Book/Epistle.
3. This should consist of:
 - (1) _____
 - (2) _____
 - (3) _____
 - (4) _____
 - (5) _____
4. State these as they apply to JAMES!
 - (1) _____
 - (2) _____
 - (3) _____
 - (4) _____
 - (5) _____
5. Each Book study should consist of a _____and a _____outline.
6. As in all Bible study, employ these three faithful "servants":
 - (1) O _____
 - (2) I _____
 - (3) A _____
7. Under "OBSERVATION," list, (your choice)
 - (1) a stated truth from James 1: _____.
 - (2) its illustration: _____.
 - (3) from what is the illustration drawn? _____.
8. Under "INTERPRETATION," the interpretation of above truth.
_____.
9. Under "APPLICATION," its practical application in your own life.
_____.