

James:
Gospel
Preacher
to the
Hebrews

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INTRODUCTION

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:

There are two books in the New Testament that are directed specifically to the people of the Old Testament. One is obviously the book of Hebrews, the second is the book of James. In introduction I must say that James is the most misunderstood and misapplied epistle in the New Testament. Luther called it the "epistle of straw"¹ because he saw it as a contradiction to his work of 'Salvation by Faith Alone'. James appears to imply that the believer's works are credible for salvation in addition to faith, (if as Luther did, we apply what James has written to believers). You would in fact think that there is a point of contention between Paul in his epistles and James in his epistle if your were to take them at face value. Paul to the gentile Ephesian Church says in Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

James to the twelve Hebrew tribes which are scattered abroad in 2:24..

You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

There is no such record of division between Paul and James in the Book of Acts. There is a point of contention between Peter and Jesus over Gentile inclusion to the fledgling Church, where Jesus easily prevails. God explained to Peter that he should not call any man common or unclean. (Acts 10:9) There is again a point of contention between Paul and Peter, where Peter earns his rebuke from Paul for holding back from, and not eating with Gentile believers. (Gal 2:11) The unity of the Church is dealt with at the Council of Jerusalem under the united input of Peter and Paul and under the presidency of James in Acts 15. *The enormity of the inclusion of the Gentiles and their food consumption and the issues that it raised for early Jewish Christians from within a Jewish world-view would be a minor debate compared to salvation by anything but faith alone.* You can believe that Jesus is the Messiah, but you must believe *in him* to be saved! Faith in the Messiah Jesus (*the incarnate Word of Almighty God*) is dependency (faith) upon God's Word that reverses the independence from God that Adam achieved in the Garden of God by disobeying that same Word at the very beginning of human existence. So why did Luther

¹'epistle of straw' is to say that it is of no nutritional value to the inner man.

consider the Book of James to be the 'epistle of straw'? He chose to believe for traditional reasons² that the epistle was written to the church when on the contrary James' epistle is an aggressive exposition for all Hebrews everywhere in the world to believe in the personal and perfect mediatorship of Messiah Jesus!

...to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:

Now nearly all of Paul's letters begin with the words 'unto the Church', (GK ecclesia) or 'unto the saints that are in...' In John's Revelation of the Messiah, Jesus speaks 'unto the Angel of the Church (GK ecclesia) that is in...' James' epistle is written to unbelievers of a special kind. James is writing to his unbelieving Hebrew brethren, the twelve tribes - his fellow Jews. It is addressed to a people who believe in 'a Messiah' but not in 'The Messiah' - Jesus of Nazareth. The 'works' that make faith active in the human heart are repentance and believing in the person of the Messiah Jesus whom we Gentiles have come to call 'the Christ'. It's a bit like preaching to the converted to take what is written in James and apply it to Bible believing Christians. All true Christians will say, 'Amen' to what James has written no doubt, but to apply this polemic to believe in the Messiah cannot be addressed to a Church that already does. These 'works' required by James to evidence faith - a Bible believing Christian has already done. James is preaching to his Jewish brethren to repent and have living faith in the resurrected and living Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth, the Righteous One whom they killed but who rose from the dead in victory over sin and death - *the fundamental enemies of every man, both Jew and Gentile.*

In a preaching style of writing, James at the very start of the epistle begins his rebuke of those who attend the synagogue.

2:1-2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your (Jewish) assembly (GK 'synagogue'), and a poor man in shabby clothing...

At the end of his epistle he exhorts them to attend a church for the benefits of living faith.

5:13 Is anyone among you (Hebrews) suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you (Hebrews) sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, (GK ecclesia - not the synagogue now) and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the

² An unbiblical doctrine called 'replacement theology' where the Church as a papal 'kingdom' in the here and now, replaces the Jews as the nation of God that was in exile until 1948. Hosea 3:4

Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

'Come to Church' and get saved is the Gospel of James to his Jewish brethren, and our message to them as well if we love the Jew through whom the Old and the New Testament have been gifted to us.

THE SETTING OF THE LETTER BY JAMES TO THE HEBREWS.

In the historic setting for the letter of James to the Hebrews are several points of contention between the Biblical Believers of the Old Covenant under Moses with their Temple and their traditions, and the new Jewish sect called 'The Way', who were later to become the 'Christians'. The first camp are looking for the Messiah to fulfil the full account of Old Testament prophecy. They are zealous for the Messiah to make the nations of the world subject to their Temple, the city of Jerusalem and the tribes of Israel. They are wrongly zealous for the Messianic establishment of Mosaic Law that cannot free people from the law of sin and ensuing death. James in addressing the adversaries of Jesus the Messiah as Saviour from sin and death points rather bluntly to the discrepancy of Temple practice and the Law. He then subtly puts forward the case of Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfilment of all Old Testament prophecy as 'The One' and 'Only Just and Righteous Man' who can fulfil all expectations and typologies of the Old Testament offices and prophecies. Jesus the very Word of God came in the flesh of a Man to make substitutional atonement for the sins of the world. The two times that this contention comes to a head are in the two visits of the apostle Paul to Jerusalem. The first is to deal with the Church's attitude to the Gentile believers at the Council of Jerusalem. (Acts 15) The second is at the urging of the Spirit for Paul to testify of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem and then on to Rome in chains. (Acts 22). To lay a foundation, lets look more closely at the historic setting of the book of James to his Hebrew brethren in the book of Acts. We will begin to see three distinct camps of 'Bible believers'.

Acts 15:1 *And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be*

saved." (OT Jewish believers) ²Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. ³So, being sent on their way by the church, (NT Jewish believers) they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. ⁴And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. ⁵But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (OT Jewish believers)

⁶Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. (NT Jewish believers) ⁷And when there had been much dispute, **Peter rose up** and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸"So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹"and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."¹²Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to **Barnabas and Paul declaring** how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. ¹³And after they had become silent, **James answered**, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: ¹⁴"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. ¹⁵"And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

¹⁶ 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; ¹⁷ So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.' (Amos 9:11)

¹⁸"Known to God from eternity are all His works. ¹⁹"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, (NT Gentile believers) ²⁰"but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. ²¹"For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues, (GK synagogue) every Sabbath." ²²Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, (GK ecclesia) to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. ²³They wrote this letter by them:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren; To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴Since we have

heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no such commandment—²⁵it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

³⁰*So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. ³¹When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement..*

There are three distinct groups under discussion here, the 'Jewish Old Testament believers', the 'Jewish Old and New Testament believers' and the newly arriving 'Gentile, Old and New Testament believers'. The division becomes sharp for the fellowship of believers in Jesus as the Messiah, causing a clear distinction between them and the Pharisees. The Church however is undivided in it's acceptance of the Gentiles. The next time these divisions are highlighted will be when Paul next returns to Jerusalem nine years later in or around 60AD.

Acts 21:17 *And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren (NT Jewish believers) received us gladly. ¹⁸On the following day **Paul** went in with us to **James**, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; (OT Jewish believers) ²¹"but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. ²²"What then? The assembly must certainly meet: (NKJV), (the multitude must needs come together: - KJV), (or in literal language, 'there will be a mob') for they will hear that you have come. ²³"Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴"Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. (James is asking Paul to preach Jesus Messiah to the Jews, as a Jew). ²⁵"But concerning the Gentiles who believe, (NT Gentile believers) we have written and decided that they should observe*

no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." (This is the letter spoken of in Acts 15) ²⁶Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. ²⁷Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."²⁹(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) ³⁰And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³²He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. ³⁵When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. ³⁶For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

³⁷Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?" ³⁸"Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" ³⁹But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."⁴⁰So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying, 22:1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defence before you now."²And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: ³"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. ⁴"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵"as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. ⁷"And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' ⁸"So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹"And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. ¹⁰"So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' ¹¹"And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. ¹²"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, ¹³"came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴"Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. ¹⁵'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' ¹⁷"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance ¹⁸"and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they (OT Jewish believers) will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' ¹⁹"So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those (NT Jewish believers) who believe on You. ²⁰'And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' ²¹"Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' " (NT Gentile believers) ²²And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" ²³Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air...

It is upon this word, 'Gentile' that the mob which James told Paul would form, goes into uproar. It is to this 'mob' of devout Old Testament believers in a Messiah that was still to come and establish Israel as the pre-eminent nation above all other nations, that James writes his epistle.. (Sadly they were unbelieving in Messiah Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour of the world from sin and death, a world that includes Gentiles). The reference to Jesus Christ as the 'Just One' (vs. 14) is a doctrinal way of referring readers to the sinless Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. James uses the same means in his epistle to subtly point his Jewish readers to Jesus of Nazareth many times.

I have divided James' letter to the Hebrews under three headings.

The Paradox for Old Testament Jews without the Messiah Jesus.

The Doctrinal Exposition as to the Person of Messiah Jesus.

The Exhortation for Hebrews to Live Out Salvation in Messiah Jesus.

In all cases the scriptural text is complete and my comments are in continuous flow rather than as footnotes so that the understanding follows concurrently with the reading of the Scripture. One thing you will read repeatedly is the word (Hebrew) before the scriptural word 'brothers' so as to keep the reader from falling into the trap of replacing the Hebrew people of God, the Old Testament believers with the New Testament believers 'the brethren' as used elsewhere in Scripture.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES

James: a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Messiah,

(Not just a servant of the Lord God but of the Lord Jesus Christ. James makes no contrivance as to his allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus of Nazareth, as the long awaited Messiah of Israel. In saying this he plainly puts forward his intention of convincing his brother Hebrews of the authenticity of his Lord Jesus as the One Righteous Man, - the Anointed One prophesied to come as Saviour of Israel and the world throughout the Old Testament).

TO: THE TWELVE TRIBES IN THE DISPERSION:

(Remember, not to the Church! But to unbelieving Old Testament Hebrews all over the world! As I have said, to say this is written to the Church is 'replacement theology'. It doesn't make sense if it is directed at New Covenant Christians as the epistles of Paul are, hence Luther in his replacement theology called it 'the epistle of straw' not understanding it's Jewish root and direction).

Greetings...

PART ONE: THE PARADOX FOR OLD TESTAMENT JEWS WITHOUT THEIR MESSIAH - JESUS

² Count it all joy, my (Hebrew) brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you (Hebrews) know that the testing of your (Jewish) faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you (Hebrews) may be **perfect and complete**, lacking in nothing.

James has declared his allegiance to the God of the Old Testament and to the Messiah Jesus of Nazareth right at the beginning. James is saying then by implication that the full effect of steadfastness in Old Testament faith will lead you to faith in the Word of God as Messiah Jesus of Nazareth for salvation and perfection! Paul tells the Colossian New Testament believers to stand perfect and complete 'in the will of God'. (Colossians 4:13).

⁵ If any of you (Hebrews) lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

In 1Corinthians 1:30 Paul tells the Corinthians that Christ is our wisdom. James again cleverly infers that this 'Wisdom' can be asked for from God. Without faith in the Word of God, as the 'Wisdom' of God for salvation you have nothing but uncertainty! James the preacher is beginning to 'rock their boat'.

⁹ Let the lowly (Hebrew) brothers boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich (Hebrew) in his humiliation, because;

like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. (This is a general quotation as application from five passages in the OT)

Death is the great leveller of human achievement. Faith in temporal riches is contradictory to faith in the Word of God for eternal salvation. Without perfect and complete 'Wisdom' that comes from God - the only certainty you have is death!

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive 'the crown of life', which God has promised

to those who love him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The 'Man Who Remains Steadfast' is again a subtle inference to the man 'Lord Jesus' as James' Messiah. Now James is a preacher and he's trying to get a 'grip' on his readers. His honest Jewish brother will admit that he himself is not joyful in trials, that he is not steadfast, perfect or complete, and will admit that he lacks many Godly attributes especially wisdom, and that he sins from his own desires, blames God every time and does not deserve a crown of life at all. Without steadfast faith in Him, 'Who Remains Steadfast under Trial' for salvation and resurrection, the only certainty you have is sin and death!

*¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved (Hebrew) brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every **perfect** gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we (Hebrews) should be a kind of firstfruits of his creation.*

The Hebrew people by the Word of God with the Old Testament - *the Word of Truth* are a *firstfruits of his creation* that anticipates the new perfect and complete creation that we all need and by implication, are not, if we have not accepted the Lordship of Jesus Messiah! (James is steadily turning up the heat.)

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved (Hebrew) brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

'Know this' (the preacher is pounding his fist now), and points to the historical Old Testament inability of the Jewish nation in it's sinful condition to satisfy even the intention of the Law. 'The Implanted Word', is here again an actual reference to James' Messiah the Lord Jesus. The preacher is again saying to his unbelieving Jewish brethren to repent and receive the Word of God, Jesus Messiah for the salvation of your eternal soul!

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who

*looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the **perfect** law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

The Mosaic Law that set Israel apart from the pagan degradation of its neighbouring nations is the Word of God. But the Old Testament by the Law and the prophets (now as their history), reveals their repeated sinful humiliation. James is saying you can't help but see that, but you can't stop there. He wants his brethren to persevere and take action in receiving the fulfilment of their expectation of the Messiah. He is 'The One' who in the literal Greek '*looks into the perfect law of liberty*' would again infer the one perfect person of Jesus the Messiah. Again the reference to his Messiah is subtle. As, 'the One' in verse twenty five Jesus is the only person who fulfils the Mosaic Law. He 'sees and acts' according to the Mosaic Law and overcomes sin and death in the perfection of his suffering. The Law of Messiah, the Law of liberty has made the New Testament believer free from the Law of sin and death. The Word of God that condemned to death the first man and every man since as sinful, became flesh and was condemned in our place. God has sacrificed his Word to save us! The Law that convicts us as Law breakers chose to become sin for us and die in our place. This is the perfect and complete substitutional atonement of the Word of God as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James the preacher to Hebrews finishes his discourse to individual readers with the climax of the knowledge of God which is to keep oneself unstained by the world. He has pounded his Jewish brothers with the intention of God for Israel – 'being joyful in trials', 'being steadfast, perfect and complete', 'not lacking wisdom', 'the revelation of the righteousness of God', 'the perfect law', 'the law of liberty', the desire of God for Hebrews to be 'the first fruit of creation'; in 'pure and undefiled religion', and 'keeping themselves unstained by the world'. In contrast to all the loving desire of God their 'Father' the Giver of perfect gifts, he presents the intermittent individual condition of their personal sin, 'the one who lacks wisdom', 'the doubter - unstable and double-minded man', 'the boaster in his exaltation or his

humiliation', 'the tempted - lured and enticed man by his own desire', 'the deceived man', 'the angry man', 'the man who hears only deceiving himself', 'the man's religion that is worthless - stained by the world', 'the filthiness and rampant wickedness of men', and 'the perishing beauty and finality of the sinful, dying condition of all men'. And on top of all of this the abject failure of Messianic temporal achievement in that he writes to the Hebrew children as 'dispersed'. The Old Testament by and of itself can only reveal the nation's failure, and can never make a Hebrew man clean, no matter how devout he may be at times. The Law by itself can only slay him, it can't make him righteous. The history of Israel only highlights the nation's, and the individual Jew's present failure as well. James is making no uncertainties about the need of his brethren to receive the 'Wisdom' of God, the one 'Implanted Word', the 'Word of Truth', the only 'Steadfast Man' the 'One Righteous Man' and by that he means his Lord Jesus the Messiah. But James is not finished with his brethren yet. He now begins to denounce the religious culture of their meeting places – the synagogue.

2:1 My (Hebrew) brothers, show no partiality ('hypocrisy' Aramaic) as you hold (lit – 'have the faith of us in our Lord Jesus MESSIAH, the Lord of glory').² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your (Jewish) assembly (lit 'synagogue'), and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet,"⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?⁵ Listen, my beloved (Hebrew) brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?⁶ But you have dishonoured the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honourable name (Yahweh) by which you were called?⁸ If you (Hebrews) really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture,

"You shall love your neighbour as yourself,"

you are doing well.⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.¹¹ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no

mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What good is it, my brother (Hebrews), if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well.

(The Jewish 'Shemà' or creed of Deut. 2:4. To this day if you preach Jesus as God, to Jewish folks they will repeat the Shemà' to you. They still to this day cannot see, 'the Father and the Son', as Almighty God and his eternal Word).

Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father (brother Hebrews again) justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"— and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

CHAPTER 2

	80	3450/3361/1722/	4382	2192	4102
1	'Αδελφοί μου, μὴ ἐν προσωποληψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν				
	Brothers of me, not in respects of persons have the faith				
	2962	2257	2424	5547	1391 1437/1063/1525
2	τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης. ἐὰν γὰρ εἰς-				
	the Lord of us, Jesus Christ, of the(Lord) of If For				
	1519	4864	5216	435	glory. 5554 1722
	ἔλθῃ εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν				
	comes into the synagogue of you a man gold-fingered, in				

Now the first word of chapter two is 'brothers'. Not Christians, they are Jewish Old Testament believers meeting in a synagogue. James tells them literally in view of all that he has said up until now, not to be hypocrites and he plainly tells them to 'have the faith of the Lord of us' (that's in contrast to their respect of persons) - the glorious Messiah Lord Jesus'. This sadly in many translations is not reflective of James' epistle being directed to his Hebrew brethren by inserting the word 'as' instead of continuing the exhortation to conversion. We see this difficulty quite often in the book of James due to the translators

attempting to Christianize the epistle and the pure unbelief of the very first verse that it is written to the Jews of the Diaspora, not the church. This is an incursion of replacement theology that seeks to replace the Jewish people with the Church and redirect the Scriptures that God intended for the salvation of the Jew first. James is saying to his brethren to have faith in the glorious Messiah - Jesus of Nazareth as the Word of God for the salvation of your soul, not in the elevation of men, especially in your meetings. To elevate one man over another is an offence against the royal law of, "*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*". To transgress this simple law is to transgress the Law as a whole. The social structure was all askew in the synagogue contrary to the intention of God's law.

In verse five he says, '*Listen my beloved brethren, (the preacher is pleading now), has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?*' This is the first reference to the New Testament believers, 'the poor'. They held their property and possessions in mutual sustenance in the face of continuous even murderous persecution from their Old Testament brethren. James is pleading their case and their Cause. Verse 12 says '*So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*' This speaking and acting is the works of the Law of Liberty according to James' Messiah Jesus who said, 'Judge not, lest you be judged'. James is pleading now for his Hebrew brethren to have faith in Messiah Jesus of Nazareth by being merciful. The Word of God who fulfilled the Law of Moses that condemns us, can now through the Law of Liberty give us life for salvation. Not in the works of faith in the Mosaic law by us, but by works of faith in the law of liberty. James now having dealt with his individual brethren and their behaviour in their synagogue, now preaches repentance to the Rabbis and the rulers of the synagogue.

*3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my (Hebrew) brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (In New Testament Christianity the ability to teach is a gift of the Holy Spirit that we are commanded to 'desire').² For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a **perfect** man, able also to bridle his whole body.³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by*

a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My (Hebrew) brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brother (Hebrews), bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. ¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you (Jewish Teachers) have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (In New Testament Christianity the ability to be temperate or to have a controlled self is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that we are commanded to 'grow in'). ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Once again James contrasts 'the Perfect Man' (vs. 2) this time with the imperfect Rabbinical teachers of the synagogue. The Perfect Man is in perfect control of his tongue, something in verse eight James says no human being can do. James again appeals for the '*wise and understanding among you*' that by '*good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom*' that he may find '*the wisdom from above that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace*'. He is in an indirect way saying be filled with the Spirit of Messiah Jesus the Prince of Peace. He contrasts this with something entirely the opposite, '*bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice*'. Unspiritual? Demonic? These things are never referred to as being of the Messianic Church of the Lord Jesus in any other epistles regarding the Church, except in reference to false brethren, or false teachers.

4:1 *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you (Hebrews)? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?* ² *You (Hebrews) desire and do not have, so you murder. You (Hebrews) covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You (Hebrews) do not have, because you do not ask.* ³ *You (Hebrews) ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* ⁴ *You (Hebrews) adulterous people! Do you (Hebrews) not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* ⁵ ***Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?***

Now there is a major translational difficulty here in verse 5. Compare the following...

James 4:5 KJV Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

James 4:5 NKJV Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

James 4:5 1901 ASV Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?

James 4:5 RSV Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"?

James 4:5 ESV Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?

James 4:5 NLT What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful?

Verse 5 is one of the most difficult in the Epistle: Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? The first difficulty is that James seems to be quoting from the OT; yet these words are not found anywhere in the OT, or even in the Apocryphal books. There are two possible explanations. First of all, while the exact words are not found in the OT, James may have been quoting them as being the general teaching of the Scripture. The second solution of the problem is given by the RV. There the verse is broken into two questions: "Or think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?" Here the thought is that in condemning the competitive, worldly spirit, the Bible is not wasting words. The second major difficulty in verse 5 is the meaning of the second part of the verse. The problem is whether the spirit is the Holy Spirit (as in the NKJV) or the spirit of passionate jealousy. If the former is meant, then the thought is that the Holy Spirit whom God caused to dwell in us does not originate the lust and jealousy which cause strife; rather He yearns over us with jealousy for our entire devotion to Christ. If the latter is intended, then the meaning is that the spirit that dwells in us, that is, the spirit of lust and envy, is the cause of all our unfaithfulness to God.

Bible Believers Commentary

Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" v. 5. KJV The account given in the holy scriptures of the hearts of men by nature is that their imagination is evil, only evil, and that continually, Gen. 6:5 'every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. Natural corruption principally shows itself by envying, and there is a continual propensity to this. The spirit which naturally dwells in man is always producing one evil imagination or another, always emulating such as we see and converse with and seeking those things which are possessed and enjoyed by them.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

The difficulty for the translators is the word, 'spirit'. Is it the Spirit of God in us as if the person being spoken too is a regenerated Christian, or is it the spirit of the man as in an 'unregenerate man'. Once again in so many of the translations the replacement theology demands that the letter is written to Christians in ignorance to the fact that James says that he is writing to the Hebrews. Now if you were writing to the Hebrews of the day then you wouldn't write in Greek, you would write in the 'day to day' language that Jesus, the disciples and the Jewish people spoke, namely Aramaic. The Aramaic 'Peshitta' Bible says...

*Vs 5 Or do you think that the scripture said in vain, 'the **pride** that dwells in us is provoked by jealousy?'*

The quotation in the Old Testament is then...

Deuteronomy 32:21 They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation;

Read in context...

James 4:1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The pride that dwells in us is provoked by jealousy"?
(Deuteronomy 32:21a I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation).

The idea James is putting forward to his Jewish brethren is that if they want to continue as a nation politically but idolatrously within the pluralism of the Roman Empire of nations, then God will provoke them by a people who are not a nation, namely the followers of Jesus the Messiah and their Kingdom that is 'in them' and 'not of this world'.

(Paul spells this out in the book of Romans).

The translation of James' letter from Aramaic into Greek is probably the root of the difficulty for translators in verse five. The two words for 'pride' and 'spirit' in Aramaic are almost identical.

The Strong's Dictionary reads...

7313 (Aramaic) {room}

AV - lift up 2, extol 1, set up 1; 4 1) to rise

1a) to be lifted up, 1b) to exalt, 1c) to lift oneself up

7308 (Aramaic) {roo'-akh}

AV - spirit 8, wind 2, mind 1; 11 - 1) spirit, wind

Here again is further evidence that James is writing to his brethren, the Jewish Old Testament believers of the synagogue and not the Church. The original epistle must have been in Aramaic as it is there that the solution is found for the Greek translators quandary. James is preaching to unregenerate Jews as a whole. There is no evidence of the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and the crucified life of Biblical Christianity in these people – they are simply not Christians, (yet!) James is talking to the corrupted world of adulterated Old Testament religion of the day and all the Herodian style compromise with pagan Rome, and the compromising Sadducees with Greek philosophy and the Zealot nationalism. James the preacher now begins to call his brethren to repentance. He has slain them by their own law, and now he begins to save them.

⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (Hebrews). ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. ¹¹ Do not speak evil against one another, (Hebrew) brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you (Hebrews) judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbour? ¹³ Come now, you (Hebrews) who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— ¹⁴ yet you (Hebrews) do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we (Hebrews) will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you (Hebrews) boast in your arrogance. All such

boasting is evil. ¹⁷ *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* 5:1 *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.* ² *Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.* ³ *Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you (Hebrews) and will eat your flesh like fire. You (Hebrews) have laid up treasure in the last days.* ⁴ *Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you (Hebrews), and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. (Kyrios Sabaoth – the Hebrew title for God)* ⁵ *You (Hebrews) have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You (Hebrews) have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* ⁶ *You (Hebrews) have connived; you have murdered the righteous person. **He does not resist you. (Tense – Aorist).***

*(The English reader need not concern himself with most of the finer points concerning the aorist tense, since in most cases they cannot be rendered accurately in English translation. The common practice of rendering an aorist by a simple English **past tense** should suffice in most cases).*

Vines Expository Dictionary

James here says in 5:6, 'You Jews have murdered the 'Righteous One'. He did not resist you!' That is past tense. Compare this with how Peter preaches to his 'brethren' in his sermon after the healing of the lame man in Acts 3:14. 'You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The Author of Life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead'. Compare again James' preaching style of writing to the blasting that Stephen gives his 'brethren' as they are about to kill him in Acts 7, 'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the Holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors'. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become'. James, Peter and Stephen were preaching to a Jewish community that were in opposition to the Law of Christ. Compare their preaching with the apostle John's reproach of believers in 1John 2:1 'My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One'. The attitude of John is entirely different when speaking to the 'little ones' of the Church. James is saying to have faith in the one Righteous Person, Messiah Jesus of Nazareth as the Word of God for salvation, not in the Jewish ability to make a profit, boasting in your arrogance, or in riches, not by fraud, not in luxury and not in self-indulgence. You Hebrews have

condemned; you Hebrews have murdered the Righteous Person. He did not resist you. (*He rather desires you to come to him for mercy*).

⁷ *Be patient, therefore, (Hebrew) brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.* ⁸ *You (Hebrews) also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.* ⁹ *Do not grumble against one another, brother (Hebrews), so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*

'*The early and the late rains*' is an allusion to the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament was never able to bring the harvest of souls for God without the New. The Judge is standing at the door and He is knocking. James in his letter is about to start knocking on the door of the Jewish heart as well.

PART TWO:

THE DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION AS TO THE PERSON OF MESSIAH JESUS

JESUS SUPERIOR TO THE PROPHETS IN HIS SUFFERING, HIS PERSON AND HIS SPEAKING

James 5:10 As an example of suffering and patience, (Hebrew) brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ *Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.* ¹² *But above all, my brother (Hebrews), do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.* ¹³ *Is anyone among you (Hebrews) suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.* ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you (Hebrews) sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, (GK ecclesia - not the synagogue now) and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* ¹⁵ *And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* ¹⁶ *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for*

*one another, that you may be healed. ^{16a} The prayer of the righteous one has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a (weak) nature like ours, (unlike the Righteous **One**) and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. ¹⁹ My brother (Hebrews), if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (That is what the Old Testament prophets did). From of old (Aramaic), at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our (Hebrew) fathers by the (Hebrew) prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us (Hebrews) by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

James the preacher is now giving the first call for his brethren to see the superiority of Jesus as the Son of God over all the previous prophets of the Old Covenant. He then gives the first invitation for his brethren to come to Jesus and to the assembly of New Covenant believers called, 'the church' and to enjoy the superior benefits of true Messianic fellowship. The prayer of the Righteous Person has great power as it is working. More than a prophet who repeats the Word of God, Jesus is the very Word of God's power in the person of human flesh. (John 1). James is preaching the contrast of Old and New Covenants something he continues to do throughout his letter to his Hebrew brethren. From of old at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our (Hebrew) fathers by the prophets, *but in these last days* he has spoken to us by his, 'Son'. There in that 'One Word' James enjoins all of what he has previously said in his epistle. Look at the titles he now lavishes on his Master, 'Appointed Heir', 'Creator of the World', the 'Radiance of God's Glory', the 'Imprint of God's Nature', and the 'Upholder of the Universe'. James' Lord as the Son of God, is the very 'Word of His Father's Power'. By that Word his Son, God the Father gave us our genetic existence and environment in all it's complexity and completeness. By that same Word he gave us the ability to choose right from wrong, good from evil. This entrusting of his Word, his 'Son' to our father Adam that the animals did not share gives us as human beings the ability to willingly love God our Father and one another. It is this Word that we have all disobeyed, and it is this Word that becomes flesh and is sacrificed in our place. If God is altogether just and righteous, perfect love and his Word is eternal

Truth, then the sentence on all humanity as sinful flesh abides forever. Either that Word comes in the flesh, dies and rises again from the dead in our behalf, or we stay forever dead. The Gospel of our Messiah Redeemer is as simple as that. He has redeemed us by his precious blood and resurrection power.

Now the more astute Bible reader will have noticed that I just ran the end of the Epistle of James into the beginning of the book of Hebrews and what do you know? It knits perfectly! James has no doxology, (ending), and the book of Hebrews has no beginning nor even a greeting. (It might be better to be an earnest Hebrew preacher with a deep appreciation of Jewish people than a traditional theologian to see how plainly they run together). In a very Jewish technique of writing called, 'typology' James 5:10 says, 'As an example...' This style of comparative example is repeated on through into the Book of Hebrews three more times - Hebrews 4:11, 8:5 and 9:23. Did James write the book of Hebrews? In view of the high comprehension of the Person of Jesus Christ as the Word of God, the apostle John may have been of a great influence. Hebrews could be a combination of authors including Peter when you consider similarities that exist between the Book of James and the first epistle of Peter. For me there is something of Paul in the book of Hebrews as well. Now I cant prove that James wrote the Book of Hebrews so I don't care to try. 'Take it or leave it as they say', or better still, 'if the cap fits wear it', and the cap fits very well on the heads of James, John, Peter and Paul *together!*

JESUS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

Hebrews 1:3 *After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

⁵ *For to which of the angels did God ever say,*

"You are my Son, today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son"?

⁶ *And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,*

"Let all God's angels worship him."

⁷ *Of the angels he says,*

"He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."

⁸ *But of the Son he says,*

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

¹⁰ *And,*

"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹ they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹² like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

¹³ *And to which of the angels has he ever said,*

"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

¹⁴ *Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? 2:1 Therefore we (Hebrews) must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, (the Old Testament) lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we (Hebrews) escape **if** we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

Just as the prophets of the Old Testament conveyed the Word of God to the people of Israel, so angels as messengers of God communicate the Word as well. But Jesus as the Word of God is far superior and as the Word of God incarnate is also the Son of God through whom God and for whom God created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God, (not a reflection as are prophets and angels) but the exact imprint of his nature, as John says, the Word was God. (John 1:1-3)

Now gospel preaching is the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with the believer's testimony as a shared ministry. (2 Corinthians 5:18) In God's declaration or preaching to his Hebrew people, he uses James to now draw his beloved Jewish brethren close to James in personal sympathy by using the affectionate term 'we'. James has shifted from his pointing finger at their rejection of Jesus to his open

arms of invitation. He has gone from, '**you** murdered the Righteous One', to '**how shall we** escape if **we** neglect such a great salvation?' James used the 'if' word as a conditional in the first part of his letter to demonstrate to the Jews how they could not fulfil the Law for righteousness sake. (*'If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue...'*) But the 'if' word here in vs. 3 is the 'covenant conditional'. (A covenant is a kind of contractual agreement between two parties. *If you... then I will...*) James from now on uses the 'if' word to spell out the New Covenant to all his Jewish hearers, Old and New Covenant believers alike. (The believing and unbelieving gentiles should be listening very carefully as well because the inclusiveness of the word 'we' that James now uses, *means all of us*). In his preaching here James is preaching to the Old Testament believers to not neglect the revelation of the New Covenant, and teaching the New not to neglect their standing, 'in Christ' or cede their position with Jesus at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. We must not neglect so great a salvation! All authority is His, and ours in his Name if we persevere as we are about to see.

Hebrews 2:5 Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶ It has been testified somewhere,

"What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that you care for him? ⁷ You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honour, ⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (Jew and gentile), ¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹² saying,

"I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

¹³ *And again,*

"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Behold, I and the children God has given me."

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brother (Hebrews) in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Now Jesus was born the 'King of the Jews' and he died the 'King of the Jews' and it is to the Jewish people as the offspring of Abraham he was sent. He was made like his Jewish brothers in every respect to fulfil all the typology in the Old Testament and make propitiation for the sins of the people. James again is not talking to the Church, he is preaching and now teaching his fellow Jews that angels conveyed the Message of God to the prophets, who then in turn conveyed the Word to men. James is saying that Messiah Jesus the 'Son of God, as the very 'Word of God' is superior to both Old Testament prophets and angels who bore the burden of the Word from heaven. He himself, the 'Son of God, the 'Word from Heaven' came in the flesh. *We see him now as, the 'Son of Man' who for a little while was made lower than the angels, the Messiah from Heaven is Jesus from Nazareth.*

JESUS SUPERIOR TO MOSES

*Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, you (Hebrews) who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of **our** confession, ² who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Messiah is faithful over God's house as a Son. And we (Hebrews) are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*

James first invites his fellow Jews to 'consider Jesus', the apostle and high priest of **our** confession and having contrasted the prophets and angels of the Old Testament to Jesus the Messiah, James is now contrasting Jesus to Moses, the Law giver. Just as the Word is greater than the angel of prophet who bear it to men, so now Jesus as the

builder of the house is greater than the house itself. In saying Jesus to be the Messiah he means Him to be the Messiah of the Old Testament and the New Testament together. James is trying to take the hope of the Old Covenant believer in the Messiah to come and point him to his brother, Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah that has now come. We are his house if... Again there appears the 'if' word as the 'conditional' in the New Covenant but only this time James has taken his hearers from the sombre tone of, 'how shall **we** escape **if we** neglect such a great a salvation?' to the more inclusive and encouraging note of, 'we are his house **if** indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope'. James is trying to drag his beloved Jewish brethren closer to their Messiah. Jesus through James is trying to embrace them and save them all.

JESUS IS OUR SUPERIOR REST

Hebrews 3:7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works ¹⁰ for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'

¹² *Take care, brother (Hebrews), lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we share in MESSIAH, **if** indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said,*

*"Today, **if** you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

¹⁶ *For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ² For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ³ For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,*

"As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,' "

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." ⁵ And again in this passage he said,

"They shall not enter my rest."

⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

*"Today, **if** you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹² For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

*'For we share in MESSIAH, **if** indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end'. Now a Christian today can be holding to many different types of 'Christ'. Some may even call themselves Christians yet be holding to an Antichrist. The measure of who Jesus is or isn't as the 'Christ' is the history of his person and his commands in the New Testament. The New Testament is the benchmark for the real relationship with the real Jesus Christ. Now James expresses this same expectation of validity, *'For we share in Messiah, **if** indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.* Our 'original confidence' is to find in the Old Testament the prescription as to who and what the Messiah would be, and then not to lose this prescription in the translation to the New Covenant. Anything less would be an Anti-Messiah. (The apostle John warns Christians that many such anti-messiahs had already come before the end of the first century). As New Covenant believers we cannot lose the Old Covenant prescription for our 'Christ' that James is outlining in his epistle). As gentile believers we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. The original pattern, typology or midrash*

for Messiah is hidden in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the New Testament to be no one else other than the person of Jesus Christ the Lord, the man of Nazareth –the very Word of God. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, no other sacrifice is sufficient for us to enter into Him as our rest.

James expressly tells his Jewish brethren not to harden their heart against the invitation of Jesus of Nazareth to enter his rest from works of the Old Covenant Law that cannot save their souls from death. To harden your heart is to offend the urgency of the invitation that is conveyed with great love to the individual hearer. Today is the day of salvation. To harden one's heart is an offence against today, and an offence against the One Almighty God who gave us the day in the beginning, and who will judge all mankind in that final day, the 'Day of the Lord'. In verse 11 James underscores the authority of Jesus Messiah as the Word of God who will judge every intention of our entire being. James the preacher to Hebrews has begun his 'altar call'.

JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Hebrews 4:14 Since then we (Hebrews) have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 5:1 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Messiah did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

"You are my Son, today I have begotten you";

⁶ as he says also in another place,

"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was the Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being

designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

James in his preaching has become even more inclusive of his Hebrew brethren; *'Since then we (Hebrews) have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession'*. Jesus who suffered as we suffer is sympathetic towards us. *'Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need'*. Without any soft music for his reader, James has softened his stance and his voice if only for the moment; Now is the time. Today is the day. Come to the throne of Grace; Come oh Jewish brother - to the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, a place where God's Word intercedes for you, suffers for you, and rends for ever the veil of separation between you and the Father in heaven!

¹¹ About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

From James' utter rejection of them when they were stuck in their Old Testament rejection of Jesus the Messiah; *'not many of you ought to be teachers'*, he is now gently reproaching them that; *'though by this time you ought to be teachers'*. Instead of, *'From the same mouth come blessing and cursing'*, he like a true preacher has borne them to the point where; *'you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God'*. James is marvellously moving his Hebrew readers beyond the altar call, and on to discipleship.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Messiah and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits. ⁴ For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if

it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

James changes up a gear yet again and this time is in complete presumed confidence of the their conversion and stating that we are not going back to the elementary doctrine of Messiah, (that his whole letter has been about thus far) - and are moving on to maturity. He is not in the rest of his letter laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. In his preaching letter repentance and faith is what he has sought to achieve in his readers from the very first verse, '*James: a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Messiah*'. These are 'the works' that everyman must do to enter into salvation. It's been a long road for the readers of James' letter. James gives a very stern reason never to go back beyond the point of conversion and has reached the tipping point of his very hearty sermon to his unbelieving brethren. They are by now either tearing it up in utter rejection of his plea, or they are hearty in repentance and faith toward Messiah Jesus of Nazareth, *escaping as it were, the thunderous roar of burning thorns.* (Vs. 8)

⁹ Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

James is now seeking to secure the position of the converted. Notice in this final conciliatory word the separation of two distinct groups. There are those who are called the 'saints' and those who are called 'beloved' and who have served the saints in the past and who still do at the time James was expecting this epistle to be read. If this letter and this particular passage was directed at the Church it would imply a separation of 'Saints' from common serving people. In Biblical Christianity there is no such separation of the laity. The Master says the one who wants to lead must serve - all the way down to washing one another's feet, as was the necessity of their day. The New Covenant saints were about team work born out of a mutual dependency caused by strong persecution. There was an even stronger recollection of, and spiritual relationship with, their Messiah and Lord who had transformed their lives and whom they earnestly desired to love, serve and die for in the preaching of his gospel. Within

a hundred years of the death and resurrection of their Jesus, they would span the world from China to Britain laying down their lives for their enemies, shedding their blood as they went. This zeal for conversion began in the synagogue where this new Jewish sect called 'The Way' made up varying percentages of the overall fellowship of synagogues. In more remote synagogues they were more often tolerated but in others they were expelled. Where they were tolerated they enjoyed the fellowship of Jewish community and were served by Jews as Jews who were not yet converted or perhaps just undecided – (searching the Scriptures for evidence like the good Bereans perhaps). James addresses them all simply as beloved brethren, but the converted he calls 'saints'. The meat of the Word of God that follows is for both of them. He does not return to preaching to the unsaved Old Covenant Jewish brethren who were resisting the Lordship of Messiah Jesus. James is now a teacher of the New Covenant to people who are willing to learn, believe and persevere to the end for salvation.

JESUS THE SON OF GOD OUR SUPERIOR WORD OF PROMISE

Hebrews 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,¹⁴ saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Now at this mention of Melchizedek we must consider the fuller meaning of the word, 'Messiah'. Messiah means the 'Promised One', 'Anointed One', the 'One Man' who would be holy and set apart to restore all things to God. Melchizedek predates the Abramic covenant through whom the Messiah was promised as the 'Seed of Abraham'. To the Hebrews the Messiah has his beginnings in Abraham their father. Their Scriptures go on to restate the expectation of a national

and spiritual saviour. The 'Seed of Isaac', (Abraham's son) received the promise from God as well. There is the prophecy of the 'Star out of Jacob', (Isaac's son) - the father of the twelve tribes. A 'Prophet like unto Moses' the great law giver and the 'Seed of David' the great king of Israel. These are all prophetic references to the Messianic expectation of the Jewish people. But this Melchizedek is unique. His faith in God for restoration comes through the first genetic construct of man, 'Adam' and God's promise to destroy sin and death via the 'Seed of the Woman'! Straight away that promise infers a second and final 'Adam' with no natural parentage to the first Adam, and that would require a virgin birth. Messiah Jesus as the fulfilment of all Old Testament typology regarding the 'Promised One' and as the very Word of God incarnate is - 'The Promise'. The same Word that condemns the first man Adam and us and is condemned in our place, is the very 'Word of Promise' that rises from the grave in victory over sin and death. If we call him Lord, and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead we shall be saved!

Hebrews 7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! ⁵ And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸ In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹ One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. ¹¹ Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ¹² For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. ¹³ For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about

priests. ¹⁵ This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

JESUS OUR SUPERIOR MEDIATOR AND IN HIS MINISTRY IS OUR BETTER PROMISE, HOPE AND COVENANT

¹⁸ On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. ²⁰ And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹ but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.

²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. 8:1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ² a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵ They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." ⁶ But as it is, Messiah has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³ *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away*

The Temple and Jerusalem and the Jewish national hopes for a Messianic deliverer were destroyed eight to ten years after this letter was written, by the pluralist Roman Empire in 70AD. What was obsolete and growing old, *vanished away*. James' letter was prophetic in it's utterance, and in his preaching here he nails the coffin of dead works and dead religion shut forever. Brother Jew he says almost gently to his converts, *you can't go back*. It's dead and finished in the death and resurrection of Lord Jesus Messiah, the very Word of God.

JESUS' BODY AND BLOOD SUPERIOR TO THE OLD COVENANT TYPES

Hebrews 9:1 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. ² For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. ³ Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, ⁴ having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. ⁵ Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. (I wish he had). ⁶ These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷ but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and

sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.¹¹ But when Messiah appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.¹³ For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood.¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you."²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

JESUS' SACRIFICE SUPERIOR TO THE OLD COVENANT SACRIFICE

Hebrews 9:23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.²⁴ For Messiah has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. 10:1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it

can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? ³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Consequently, when Messiah came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.' "

⁸ When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Messiah once for all. ¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Messiah had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. ¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"

¹⁷ then he adds,

"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

PART THREE: NOW BEGINS THE EXHORTATION FOR HEBREWS TO LIVE OUT SALVATION IN MESSIAH JESUS.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brother (Hebrews), since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This is a splendid summary of James' 'meaty' expositional teachings as to the office and person of Jesus the Messiah and the wonderful benefits for those who have put their faith in his redemptive work. The warning to follow is to not fail to see their Messianic expectation fulfilled in the sacrifice of God's Son, the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 10:26 For if we (Hebrews) go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?³⁰ For we know him who said,

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

And again,

"The Lord will judge his people."³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you

yourself had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For,

"Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸ but my righteous one (Old Covenant Israel) shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

Jews throughout the 'former days' the pre-Christian period have always struggled. They struggled with their Egyptian overlords in bondage, in the wilderness with God, in the promised land with each other and other nations. Always at the head of their national and personal expectation was the coming Messiah with a better and more abiding possession. Another encouragement to the Hebrew hearers (vs, 32) to endure in receiving and joining the struggle for the Gospel of Jesus sets the scene for the great exposition of the faith of the heroic Old Testament Hebrew people of faith.

Hebrews 10:39 But we (New Covenant Church) are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

FAITH IN CHRIST SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE OLD COVENANT FAITH

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs

with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. ²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. ²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Messiah greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. ²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. ³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a

*better life.*³⁶ *Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.*³⁷ *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—*³⁸ *of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*³⁹ *And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,*⁴⁰ **since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.**

There again is that word 'perfect'. Jesus Messiah, the Perfect One our hope of eternal perfection. Where as James began by goading his brethren for their inability to be perfect under the Law he shows now that should they aspire to be as one of the heroes of old Israel to bring deliverance to the nation of the day struggling under the pagan Roman Empire they would be less than perfect still. God had provided something better for us, in the New Covenant that apart from us they should not be made perfect. James is calling his brethren to come.

THE WORK OF CHRIST IN US SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE OLD COVENANT

*Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, (the people of faith in the Old Testament) let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*² *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our (Old Testament) faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*³ *Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*⁴ *In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*⁵ *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?*

*"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.*⁶ *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."*

⁷ *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*⁸ *If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*⁹ *Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?*¹⁰ *For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.*¹¹ *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*¹² *Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,*¹³

and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴ *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* ¹⁵ *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;* ¹⁶ *that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.* ¹⁷ *For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.*

THE FINALITY OF MESSIAH'S SECOND COMING IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE OLD COVENANT

Hebrews 12:18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ *and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.* ²⁰ *For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."* ²¹ *Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."* ²² *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,* ²³ *and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* ²⁴ *and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.* ²⁵ *See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.* ²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised,*

"Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

²⁷ *This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.* ²⁸ *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,* ²⁹ *for our God is a consuming fire.*

One Messiah, two comings. The first to destroy the enemies of all men that is sin and death with the second coming to destroy the rebellion of the nations against the LORD and his Anointed One, (Psalm 2:1)

PARTING ADVISE:

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. ² *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* ³ *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.* ⁴ *Let*

marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. ⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Messiah is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. ¹⁸ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things. ¹⁹ I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

BENEDICTION:

Hebrews 13:20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Messiah, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. ²² I appeal to you, brothers bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with all of you.

The Old Testament point of contention is the unwillingness of the pro-Moses group to accept a reformation of Hebrew religion to fully accommodate Gentiles as fellow believers as well.

CONCLUSION:

Now funny enough if you have a different messiah to the One in Scripture Old and New Testament, then the Book of Hebrews applies to you as well. Do you call yourself a 'Christian' but agree with the killing of your countries enemies? Jesus says you must love them across international gentile boundaries! Is your kingdom in the 'here and now' on earth or from Heaven? The Real Messiah must save us from sin and death as the true enemies of our eternal soul. What is temporal power has no consequence to God's Eternal Word and Kingdom. God is love and he is just. All mankind must surrender to the love and the justice of God. The Jews rejection of James by throwing the preacher from the pinnacle of the temple mount ended the authority of Hebraic religion and it's ability to destroy the sect of Jesus the Messiah's faithful. Judgment followed that led to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD and a temporal Temple forever.

NOTES:

