

James: An Introduction to Wisdom (James 1:1)

Wisdom & Faith

- The Bible is filled with words of wisdom
 - Wisdom: To live life with God as our focus (Pro 9:10)
 - It is putting our faith in God into action
- There 5 OT books that are Wisdom Literature
 - Job
 - Psalms
 - Proverbs
 - Ecclesiastes
 - Song of Songs
- The book of James is often called the NT's Wisdom Literature
 - Two of the main themes of the book of James are wisdom and faith
 - Taking the truth of Jesus' teachings and applying them to life
 - There are many parallels between this book and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)
- Wisdom throughout James is spoken of in the same way that the Holy Spirit is throughout the rest of Scripture (cf. Jas 3:13-17; Gal 5:13-26)
 - This is because living out godly wisdom requires the Holy Spirit's aid

The Form & Place in the Canon

- This book is written as a letter to a wide audience
 - Though it reads like a sermon
- It is part of the section of the New Testament called the General Epistles:
 - James (faith)
 - 1 & 2 Peter (hope)
 - 1, 2, & 3 John (love)
 - Jude

The Author (v. 1a)

- The half-brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55)
- Originally a skeptic of Jesus' Messiahship (John 7:5)
- But he put his faith in Jesus shortly *after* the resurrection (Acts 1:14)
- He became a central leader in the early Church
 - The style of James is reflective of the letter from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23-29)
- However, notice that James introduces himself as a servant of Jesus, not His brother
 - James understood his place
 - Biology does not determine one's place in God's family; real faith does (Matt 12:46-50)

The Audience (v. 1b)

- "The twelve tribes scattered among the nations"
 - Jewish Christians
- This is one of the earliest books of the NT (c. AD 45-48)

- Possibly written after the dispersion of Christian Jews from Jerusalem following the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7-8)

The Purpose

- James wrote to instruct these Christians on how to live out their new faith in Jesus, even amid hardships
- The first chapter lays out the themes that will be expanded on later in the letter
 - Trials & temptations (1:2-4, 12-15; 5:7-11)
 - Wisdom & faith (1:5-8, 16-18; 3:13-4:10)
 - Rich & poor (1:9-11; 2:1-13; 4:13-17; 5:1-6)
 - Faith & deeds (1:19-25; 2:14-26; 4:11-12; 5:12)
 - Taming the tongue (1:26-27; 3:1-12)

So What?

- We will spend the next few months studying James to learn how to better live out godly wisdom as we exercise real faith in Jesus

Meditation Verse: *James 1:22*