



Introduction

The aim of this course is to help you read the Letter of James and see the practical lessons he gives us for our lives. We shall see how he was guided by the Holy Spirit to use or 'echo' words spoken by Jesus in the gospels.

At the end of each lesson there are questions. Please think carefully about how each lesson and the Bible chapter it looks at to see how its message applies to you before you answer the questions.

Background

Soon after Jesus ascended to heaven, following his wonderful resurrection, the disciples faced great problems.

"And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 8:1-3).

The first disciples of Jesus were hated by non-believing Jews amongst whom they lived, and were later persecuted by the Romans. Some of them fled for their lives, others were beaten and imprisoned. In such circumstances it must have been wonderful to receive a letter sent by God through His servant, James, to help and encourage them. It has lots of practical advice about what a disciple is and how he or she should live. Today some disciples are still hated and persecuted for their faith but even if we live in countries that allow us to worship peacefully we may still have problems in our lives that trouble us and in the Letter of James we find practical advice to help us wherever we live.

We are not sure who wrote this letter, as there were several disciples called James. Of course, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, so the human writer is not really important to us. However, it is interesting to consider the possible authors

One possible writer was James, the brother of John. James and John were cousins of Jesus and faithful disciples of him, they had heard most of the teaching of Jesus during his ministry. This James was murdered for his faith, so if he did write this letter it would be fairly early in the history of the Christians.

Another possibility is that it was written by a half-brother of Jesus, also called James. He was a son of Mary and Joseph. He was only a half-brother because, although they shared the same mother, Mary, Jesus was the Son of God. During the ministry of Jesus his brother, James, mocked Jesus and his teaching. However, it does not matter what we have done if we repent and change. This half-brother James was converted and it is believed that he also suffered a violent death for his faith.

About the Course

This Bible course consists of 5 lessons. Each lesson has a question paper. Your tutor will send you the course. When you have studied a lesson and answered the questions, please send your answers to your tutor, who will mark them and return them to you. You may also ask your tutor questions about the Bible and this course. Please only write to your tutor, even though you may see other addresses on our literature.

Your tutor is:

Your reference number is:

Please use this number on **all** correspondence, answers etc.





If you have not been given a tutor and reference number in the box above, please send your answers using the address or envelope provided. Your answers will be passed on to a tutor who will write to you with the information you need.

The Bible passages in this course are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV). Other versions may be available in your country. Three good modern versions are the New King James Version (NKJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV) and New International Version (NIV). The King James Version (KJV), also known as the Authorised Version (AV), is another good version to use, although it is sometimes difficult to understand because of its old language.

This Bible course is free. Our aim is to help you to enjoy reading the Scriptures. We want you to discover the wonderful message of salvation through Jesus Christ. We do not provide certificates for taking the course, but after the 40 lessons we can send other Bible courses to help you.

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