

New Testament Timeline

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The following chart provides a detailed New Testament timeline. Most of the dates can be determined precisely by correlating biblical events with extensive historical documents and archaeological evidence. Dates with an asterisk denote approximate or alternative dates. The extensive external confirmation of New Testament dates and events encourages great confidence in the truth and historicity of both the Old and New Testaments.

5 b.c.* Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

4 b.c. Jesus' family flees to Egypt to escape from Herod's plan to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:13-18); Herod dies; Judas (of Sepphoris) and others rebel, requiring the Syrian Governor Varus to intervene throughout Palestine; Sepphoris, a city four miles from Nazareth, is destroyed by Roman soldiers; Judea, Samaria, and Idumea are given to Herod's son, Archelaus; Galilee and Perea are given to his son Antipas; Jesus' family, after returning from Egypt, resides in Nazareth (Matt. 2:19-23), a small village in southern Galilee.

a.d. 6 Archelaus is exiled for incompetence; Judea becomes a Roman province; Judas the Galilean (of Gamla) leads a revolt against the tax census; the governor of Syria, Quirinius (a.d. 6-7), appoints Annas high priest (6-15).

8* Jesus (age 12) interacts with the teachers in the temple (Luke 2:41-50).

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28/30 Jesus works as a carpenter in Nazareth (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) and probably in neighboring villages and Sepphoris, which was being rebuilt.

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29* John the Baptist begins his ministry around the Jordan River (John 1:19).

28-
30* Jesus begins his ministry in Judea, but soon focuses his efforts in Galilee. In Jerusalem, Pharisees (like Gamaliel) train disciples (like Paul) in their tradition. They send a delegation to Galilee, but the delegation rejects Jesus' teaching. In Alexandria, Philo (20 b.c.-a.d. 50) attempts to unify Greek philosophy with Hebrew Scripture.

33 (or 30)	Jesus returns to Judea, is crucified, and resurrected. James the brother of Jesus becomes a believer after witnessing the resurrected Jesus (<u>1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 12:17</u>). Jesus ascends to the Father's right hand (<u>Acts 1</u>). Jesus' first followers receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and begin to proclaim the gospel (<u>Acts 2</u>).
33/34*	Paul witnesses the resurrected Lord on the way to Damascus and is commissioned as an apostle to the nations (<u>Acts 9; Gal. 1:15-16</u>).
34-37	Paul ministers in Damascus and Arabia (<u>Acts 9:19-22; 26:20; Gal. 1:16-18</u>).
36	Pilate loses his position for incompetence.
36/37*	Paul meets with Peter in Jerusalem (<u>Acts 9:26-30; Gal. 1:18</u>).
37-45	Paul ministers in Syria, Tarsus, and Cilicia (<u>Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21</u>).
38*	Peter witnesses to Cornelius (<u>Acts 10</u>).
39	Antipas is exiled.
40-45*	James writes his letter to believers outside Palestine (see <u>James 1:1</u>).
41-44	Agrippa, Herod the Great's grandson, rules Palestine; he kills James the brother of John (<u>Acts 12:2</u>) and imprisons Peter (<u>Acts 12:3</u>).
42-44	Paul receives his "thorn in the flesh" (<u>2 Cor. 12:7</u>).
44	Peter leaves Jerusalem; Agrippa is killed by an "angel of the Lord" (<u>Acts 12:23</u>).
44-46	Theudas persuades many Jews to sell their possessions and follow him into the wilderness where he claimed he would miraculously divide the Jordan River; Roman procurator Fadus dispatches his cavalry and beheads the would-be messiah.
44-47*	Paul's Second Visit to Jerusalem; time of famine (<u>Acts 11:27-30; Gal. 2:1-10</u>).
46-47	Paul's First Missionary Journey (with Barnabas) from Antioch to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra (<u>Acts 13:4-14:26</u>).

46–48	Roman procurator Tiberius Alexander crucifies two sons (Jacob and Simon) of Judas the Galilean.
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48*	Paul writes <i>Galatians</i> , perhaps from Antioch (see Acts 14:26–28).
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48– 49*	Paul and Peter return to Jerusalem for the Apostolic Council, which, with the assistance of James, frees Gentile believers from the requirement of circumcision in opposition to Pharisaic believers (Acts 15:1–29); Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (Acts 15:30) but split over a dispute about John Mark (Acts 15:36–40).
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48/49– 51*	Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (with Silas) from Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, southern Galatia, Macedonia, notably Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea; and then on to Achaia, notably Athens and Corinth (Acts 15:36–18:22).
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49	Claudius expels Jews from Rome because of conflicts about Jesus (Acts 18:2); Paul befriends two refugees, Priscilla and Aquila, in Corinth (Acts 18:2–3).
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49– 51*	Paul writes <i>1–2 Thessalonians</i> from Corinth (Acts 18:1, 11 ; also compare Acts 18:5 with 1 Thess. 1:8).
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51	Paul appears before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12–17).
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50– 54*	Peter comes to Rome.
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52– 57*	Paul’s Third Missionary Journey from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece (Acts 18:23–21:17).
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52–55	Paul ministers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20).
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53– 55*	Mark writes his Gospel, containing Peter’s memories of Jesus; perhaps within a decade, Matthew publishes his Gospel, which relies on Mark and other sources. Paul writes <i>1 Corinthians</i> from Ephesus (Acts 19:10).
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54	Claudius dies (edict exiling Jews repealed); Priscilla and Aquila return to Rome and host a church in their home (see Rom. 16:3–5).
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54– 68	Nero reigns.
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55– 56*	Paul writes <u>2 Corinthians</u> from Macedonia (<u>Acts 20:1, 3; 2 Cor. 1:16; 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2, 4; see 1 Cor. 16:5</u>).
57*	Paul winters in Corinth and writes <u>Romans</u> (<u>Acts 20:3; see Rom. 16:1–2; also see Rom. 16:23 with 1 Cor. 1:14</u>); travels to Jerusalem (<u>Acts 21:1–16</u>), visits with James the brother of Jesus (<u>Acts 21:17–26</u>), and is arrested (<u>Acts 21:27–36; 22:22–29</u>).
57– 59	Paul is imprisoned and transferred to Caesarea (<u>Acts 23:23–24, 33–34</u>).
60	Paul begins voyage to Rome (<u>Acts 27:1–2</u>); he is shipwrecked for three months on the island of Malta (<u>Acts 27:39–28:10</u>).
60– 70*	Letter to the <u>Hebrews</u> is written.
62	James the brother of the Lord is executed by the Sadducean high priest Ananus.
62– 63*	Peter writes his first letter (<u>1 Peter</u>) from Rome (<u>1 Pet. 5:13</u>).
62*	Paul arrives in Rome and remains under house arrest (<u>Acts 28:16–31</u>); he writes <u>Ephesians</u> (see verses for <u>Colossians</u>), <u>Philippians</u> (<u>Phil. 1:7, 13, 17; 4:22</u>), <u>Colossians</u> (<u>Col. 4:3, 10, 18; see Acts 27:2 with Col. 4:10</u>), <u>Philemon</u> (see <u>Philem. 23 with Col. 1:7; Philem. 2 with Col. 4:17; Philem. 24 with Col. 4:10; also see Col. 4:9</u>). Luke, Paul's physician and companion (see <u>Col. 4:14</u>), writes <u>Luke</u> and <u>Acts</u> .
62– 64	Paul is released, extends his mission (probably reaching Spain), writes <u>1 Timothy</u> from Macedonia (see <u>1 Tim. 1:3</u>) and <u>Titus</u> from Nicopolis (<u>Titus 3:12</u>); he is rearrested in Rome (<u>2 Tim. 1:16–17</u>).
63– 64	Work on the temple complex is completed.
64 (July 19)	Fire in Rome; Nero blames and kills many Christians.
64– 67*	Peter writes his second letter (<u>2 Peter</u>). Jude writes his letter. Paul writes <u>2 Timothy</u> (see <u>2 Tim. 4:6–8</u>). Paul and Peter are martyred in Rome.

66	First Jewish-Roman War begins with a riot between Greeks and Jews at Caesarea; Roman procurator Gesius Florus (a.d. 64–66) is murdered and a Roman garrison wiped out; Menahem, son or grandson of Judas the Galilean, murders the high priest Ananias and seizes control of the temple; Nero dispatches Vespasian with three legions.
67*	Romans destroy the Qumran community, who beforehand hid the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls in nearby caves; the church in Jerusalem flees to Pella (<u>Matt. 24:15–16</u> ; <u>Mark 13:14</u> ; <u>Luke 21:20–22</u>); John migrates to Ephesus with Mary, Jesus' mother.
68	Nero commits suicide; year of the three emperors.
69	Rebellion quelled in Galilee and Samaria; Vespasian summoned back to Rome to become emperor.
70 (Aug. 30)	Titus, Vespasian's son, after a five-month siege of Jerusalem, destroys the temple after desecrating it; the temple's menorah, Torah, and veil are removed and later put on display in a victory parade in Rome; the influence of the Sadducees ends; the Pharisee Johanan ben Zakkai escapes and convinces the Romans to allow him and others to settle in Jamnia, where they found a school.
73 (May 2)*	Before Roman general Silva breaches the fortress atop Masada following a two-year siege, 936 Jewish rebels commit suicide.
75	Titus has an affair with the Jewish princess Berenice, sister of Agrippa II (<u>Acts 25:13, 23</u>), whom he later abandons because of the scandal.
77	Pliny the Elder writes <i>Natural History</i> .
77– 78	Josephus publishes <i>Jewish War</i> in Rome.
79	Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by eruption of Vesuvius; Pliny the Elder dies attempting to investigate.
81	The Arch of Titus, celebrating his destruction of the temple, is erected in Rome.
81– 96	Domitian, Titus's brother, persecutes Christians among the Roman nobility, including his own relatives Clemens and Domitilla.

85– John writes his letters (*1–3 John*), probably in Ephesus.
95*

89– John writes his Gospel, probably in Ephesus.
95*

93– Josephus publishes *Jewish Antiquities* in Rome.
94

94 Domitian exiles philosophers from Rome.

95* Amidst persecution, Clement, a leader in the Roman church, writes his *Letter to the Corinthians (1 Clement)* appealing for peace between the young men and elders.

95– Exiled by Domitian to Patmos, John writes *Revelation (Rev. 1:9)*.
96*

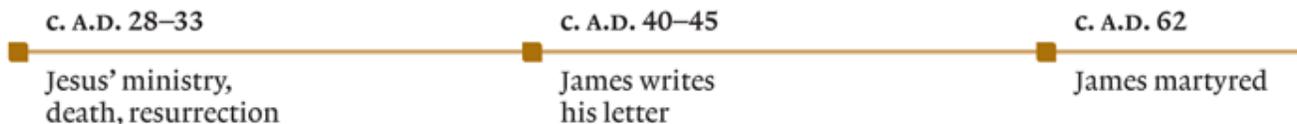
96– Nerva, the first of five “good” emperors, ends official persecution.
98

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or

Introduction to James

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Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

This letter was written by James, the brother of Jesus ([Matt. 13:55](#)) and leader of the Jerusalem church ([Acts 15](#)). It was probably written about a.d. 40–45 to Jewish Christians living outside Palestine.

Theme

Christians must live out their faith. They should be doers, not just hearers, of God's Word.

Purpose

James's readers were suffering persecution and living in poverty. They were in social and spiritual conflict. Many believers were living in a worldly manner. James corrects them and challenges them to seek God's wisdom to work out these problems.

Key Themes

1. God is a gracious giver, the unchanging Creator, and merciful and compassionate. He is also a Judge, the one and only God, a jealous God, a gracious God, and a healing God ([1:5, 17–18](#); [2:5, 13, 19](#); [4:5–6](#); [5:1–3, 9, 15](#)).
2. Wisdom comes "from above." It enables believers to withstand trials and to have peace rather than divisions among themselves ([1:5](#); [3:13, 17](#)).
3. God allows tests and trials ([1:2–4](#)), but temptation comes from self and Satan. The required response is patient endurance ([1:3, 13–14](#); [4:7](#); [5:7–8](#)).
4. These trials include poverty and mistreatment by the rich. The poor are the special focus of God's care. They must be cared for by his people. They must not be taken advantage of or ignored. The wealthy are condemned for pride and for stealing from the poor ([1:9, 27](#); [2:1–5, 15–16](#); [4:13–17](#); [5:1–6](#)).
5. There is both future judgment and future reward ([1:12](#); [2:5, 12–13](#); [3:1](#); [4:12](#); [5:1–7, 9, 20](#)).

6. What a person says has power both to destroy and to bring peace (3:1–4:12).
7. Rather than merely hearing God’s word, believers must obey it in their daily actions (1:19–27; 2:14–26).
8. Prayer is the proper response to trials, but it must not be self-seeking. It is to be central in all of life’s circumstances, good or bad. God has great power to heal physical and spiritual problems (1:5–7; 4:2–3; 5:13–18).
9. James and Paul agree that justification comes only by God’s grace through faith, and that true faith always results in good works. If no works result, there was no justification in the first place (2:14–26).

Outline

1. Greeting (1:1)
2. The Testing of Faith (1:2–18)
3. Hearing and Doing the Word (1:19–27)
4. The Sin of Favoritism (2:1–13)
5. Faith without Works Is Dead (2:14–26)
6. The Sin of Dissension in the Community (3:1–4:12)
7. The Sins of the Wealthy (4:13–5:12)
8. The Prayer of Faith (5:13–18)
9. Concluding Admonition (5:19–20)

The Setting of James

c. a.d. 40–45

The letter of James was likely written to predominantly Jewish Christian house churches outside of Palestine, based on its mention of the “twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (1:1), its distinctly Jewish content, and its focus on persecution and poverty. This would mean it was sent throughout most of the ancient Mediterranean world. The author has traditionally been believed to be James, the brother of Jesus and an early leader of the church in Jerusalem.



The Global Message of James

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The message of James is that those who have been truly saved through the gospel must manifest that salvation in practical ways in their lives. A transformed life of love for others should be the result of experiencing God's love.

James and Redemptive History

The grand theme of the book of James is wisdom. Much like Proverbs in the Old Testament, James should be seen as an example of Jewish wisdom literature. Wisdom in Jewish tradition and Scripture does not refer to intelligence in a strictly intellectual way but rather to upright living. A wise person exhibits a godly kind of skill in the practical matters of everyday life. To live wisely is to act with humble integrity.

The letter of James enables God's people to flourish as they journey through life in this fallen world. It is for those who, though sinners, have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. Indeed, Jesus himself is the true and ultimate embodiment of wisdom: he is the one "who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Global Exhortations from James

As with Proverbs, the main point of James is that godly wisdom works. True wisdom does not sit still. Throughout James the church is confronted with several strong exhortations as to how wisdom works, all of which speak clearly to the church today.

*Trial*s. James begins by urging his readers to gladly receive the trials that wash into their lives, since these trials produce steadfastness (James 1:2-4). James returns to this theme at the end of the letter, and there too he links suffering with steadfastness (5:7-11). In 1:2 James refers to hardships "of various kinds." Whatever global Christians are suffering today, they must be patient and steadfast (5:7-11).

Wealth and poverty. Throughout his letter James raises the issue of wealth (James 1:9-11; 2:1-7; 5:1-6). Each time, he says just the opposite of what the world says about money. "Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation" (1:9-10). "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?" (2:5). "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you" (5:1). To a contemporary world drunk with the desire for material wealth, James reminds us of the emptiness of such pursuits and the final judgment that is fast approaching.

A living faith. James is impatient with those who hear the word but do not do it (James 1:22–25) and those who profess faith but do not live it out (2:14–26). Healthy believers display “conduct . . . in step with the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14). The question here is not whether we are saved by faith alone or by faith plus works. The apostle Paul and James agree that it is faith alone that saves. The question James raises is, what *kind* of faith saves (James 2:14)? Authentic religion, expressing authentic faith, consists of not only orthodox theology but also upright living (1:26–27).

The tongue. James mentions the use of the tongue a few times in chapters 1 and 2 (e.g., James 1:19; 2:12) then in chapter 3 he turns his full attention to this important topic. With striking imagery, he shows how the impact of what we say with the tongue is all out of proportion to the size of this small body part. Like a rudder on a ship or a bit in the mouth of a horse, the tongue is small but is able to direct the whole course of our lives. Echoing the teaching of Jesus, James reminds us that our words are simply the overflow of what is within us (3:10–12; compare Matt. 7:16; 12:37).

Worldliness. Chapter 4 of James deals with the quarrels and fights and pride that come from worldliness. James reminds us that “friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). The global church does well to remember that we are called to be in the world but not of it (John 17:14–16).

Humility. James has much to say about the beauty of humility. Those who are truly wise are also humble (James 3:13–15). God gives special grace to the humble (4:6). Humble people understand the fragility of life and the sovereignty of God (4:13–17). James encourages the church, today as in his day, to take comfort in the small, humble life of faithfulness which, judged by the world’s standards, is insignificant. For, on the contrary, this is where God’s power lies (4:7–8). Such humble faithfulness will one day result in true glory (1:12).

Prayer. James teaches the value of prayer throughout his epistle. He encourages prayer for wisdom (James 1:5–8), rebukes prayer that is motivated by impure motives (4:2–4), and advises believers to pray in a variety of life situations, assuring them that under God prayer changes things for the better (5:13–18).

In all these matters, James calls his readers to cultivate the kind of wisdom that should characterize all those who have been truly born again through the gospel (James 1:18). Believers everywhere are summoned to receive James’s words with receptive ears, living out in their own corner of the world the life of authentic faith that James describes.

Responding to James: Both Realism and Love

The church today does well to pay heed to the exhortations of James. Confronted with a host of global issues and concerns, it is not hard to find tangible ways to live out the teaching of James.

However, the summons of James must be handled with care. On the one hand, it would be easy for global Christians to feel unduly guilty for not doing more to alleviate the world's needs. We must be realistic. While concerted sacrificial efforts by a united Christian church will go a long way to reducing the tangible miseries of the world, there will always be more to do.

On the other hand, the letter of James issues a resounding call to believers around the world to engage the world around them, especially fellow believers. This is the path of love, as we have been loved. "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well" ([James 2:8](#)). James rebukes those who speak peace to the needy but do not provide "the things needed for the body" ([2:16](#); see also [1:27](#)). Believers around the world are called by the letter of James to examine themselves, consider their actions, and adjust their lives accordingly.