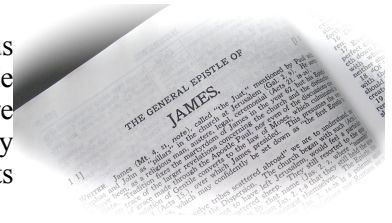


# Books of The Bible

## A Survey of The Epistle of James

### The Recipients of James Epistle

At first glance this seems to be an open and closed question for James informs us who it was written to, “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (ch 1:1). He was not writing to the Gentiles, consequently the tone is quite Jewish, yet there are few Old Testament quotations or allusions, however it was written specifically to individuals but it is Catholic in it’s outlook, that is, it’s message is for all saints of all ages.



However, some questions still remain, such as:

- a) Was it to believers or unbelievers, or a mixture of both?
- b) Was it to the twelve tribes at large or those who were in the assembly/synagogue in a particular place, or places?
- c) On this same topic, since the epistle was written to the twelve tribes, it is evident that Gentiles are not part of the twelve tribes of Israel, therefore:
  - i) By what authority have we any claim to any of its teachings?
  - ii) Or, can we take the truths within it and live by them and take heed to the warnings, or are they only for the twelve tribes?

Like the books of Hebrews and Peter, this book is specifically Jewish and written to that segment of society, but Peter is somewhat narrower in his outreach. He writes to, “The strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1) whereas Hebrews has no limitations, and James has to the, “Twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam. 1:1). By the time James was written, Israel had experienced three national scatterings. They are:

- a) The Assyrians under Shalmaneser in 723 B C who took the tribes of Reuben, Gad, half of Manasseh the Samaritans and some of Judah into upper Mesopotamia (1 Chron. 5:26; 2 Kgs. 17:4-6; 18:13).
- b) The tribes of Judah and Benjamin were brought into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B C (Dan. 1:1-2; 2 Kgs. 24:14-16; 2 Chron. 36:9, 10; Jer. 24:1-5; 52:28).
- c) Those who went down into Egypt (2 Kgs. ch. 25-26)

It was after the Babylonish captivity and before James was written the Lord came and offered His sacrifice for sins, rose from the dead, ascended and the Spirit came down at Pentecost. Many Jews from the early “scatterings” came to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost for Acts informs us of, “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians” (Acts 2:9-11). Therefore, whither by compulsion or voluntarily, there were Jews by “nationality” in every part of the then world. This was a great advantage for when Paul went preaching the gospel in Asia, etc., there were already Jewish communities and synagogues.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit thousands were saved (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4, 32), yet it was a considerable time before they would become New Testament churches as we know them. The synagogue was still the meeting place for Jews (Acts 2:46; 3:10, 11; 5:12, Solomon’s porch was part of the temple buildings) and the result was there were two groups of people in the Temple, those who denied the resurrection of the Lord and those who believed it. This resulted in animosity toward believing Jews, an animosity which ultimately spread through the known world. There was a degree of separation for reference is made to their assembly (sunagōgē) (ch. 2:2) in which those who were wealthy, though not believers, came. Thus, the book was written to the saints in the local synagogue who had accepted Jesus as Messiah and to the broader number who professed, yet maintained tight association with the law. Paul was told about such by the brethren in Jerusalem and James, “And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law” (Acts 21:20).

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Since James was written to the twelve tribes, what right have we Gentiles to take the instructions and apply them to ourselves? My response to the question is that there are instructions, encouragements, and admonitions in James which are not dispensation or national, but applicable to all saints irrespective of time or age. Truths such as:

- a) What true religion is (ch. 1:27)
- b) Such religion leaves no place for discrimination toward any saint based on material wealth (ch. 2:2-4)
- c) It expects evidences of salvation to be manifested in the life, without which it indicates the individual is not a believer (ch. 2:14-26)
- d) The control of the tongue (ch. 2:6-12)
- e) And the not withholding of ones due wages (ch. 5:4).

Such are the evidences of salvation and applicable to all who profess salvation.

### The Various Men Called “James” In The New Testament

There are five men called James in the New Testament. They are:

- a) James, who is specifically referred to as the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19).
- b) James, who was the father of the disciple Judas, but was not Judas Iscariot (Lk. 6:16).
- c) James, the son of Alphaeus who was an apostle (Matt. 10:2-3).
- d) James, the son of Zebedee who also was an apostle (Matt. 10:2).
- e) James, the younger (Mk. 15:40). In the gospel narratives he is always mentioned with his brother John (Matt. 4:21; 17:1).

### The Author

- 1) As a man he is by his readers sufficiently distinguished from the other Jameses that no further data is needed. The words, “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”, were relevant to a number of men of that time period. That which we can gather about the man is:
  - a) He was a man of great influence and character and whose life did not exhibit the discrepancies which needed rectified. It would have been hypocrisy for him to write to others what they were not to do if he was doing those very same things, i.e. uncontrolled tongue, impatient, etc.
  - b) He was a man deeply conscious of the Old Testament and the characteristics of the people of it and the Apocrypha. Graham Scroggie writes of at least fifteen allusions, and possibly as many as thirty-two, to the Apocrypha found in James. From the Old Testament he mentioned Abram, Rahab, Job, Elijah, and quotes from the Pentateuch, Joshua, 1 Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi.
- 2) Was he the Lord’s brother?
  - a) If we accept that James was a physical brother of the Lord then we are listening to a man, who unlike the disciples, lived in association with Christ for three years, for he was brought up in the same home, having an earthly perspective and the same father and mother. He would have known, on the fraternal level, the Lord in an almost unique way. He saw lived out before him a holy life which would have been very uncomfortable to live with due to His integrity and perfections. This being so, his writing was not politically correct or beautifully written in polished language, but stark, blunt, and factual.
- 3) Where did the teaching originate that James, the Lord’s brother, was the author?
  - a) The first connection of him with this letter was by Origen in the early to mid 200’s, and to this day Roman Catholicism ascribes the book to him. This is because the Council of Trent in 1546 states distinctly that James was written by an apostle. If we pursue this more carefully we observe the ancient historian, Clément of Alexandria, goes further and says that James was chosen for the office by Peter and John, yet they do not in anyway connect James with the writing of this epistle. If it could be proved conclusively that James, who wrote the book, was not the Lord’s brother but James the disciple, would it make any difference to the inspiration and relevance of the book? The answer is

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“no”. Inspiration and relevance does not depend on the author but on the Spirit of God, consequently, it does not matter if the writer was the brother of the Lord or not.

- b) Furthermore, another writes, “let us then collect the evidence about this James”, and then goes on to describe all we know about a man called James in the New Testament, and makes the assumption that it was the brother of the Lord whom the multiple passages are speaking about.
  - c) It would seem to me that there's another possibility that it was not James, the Lord's brother, who wrote the epistle, but one of the other James of the 12 disciples, for there were two of them called James. It does seem strange to me that a man who wasn't a believer until after the Lord's death and resurrection (Jn. 7:5) became so predominate so early on in the church's history, especially when a leader must not be a novice (1 Tim. 3:6).
- 4) One of the things which has me tend to think that it was another James and not the Lord's half brother, is the multiple references to the sermon on the mount which James, the disciple, would have heard.

Matthew	James	Matthew	James
ch. 5:4	ch. 4:9	ch. 5:7	ch. 2:13
ch. 5:9	ch. 3:18	ch. 5:10-12	ch. 1:2
ch. 5:12	ch. 5:10	ch. 5:22	ch. 1:20
ch. 5:34-37	ch. 5:12	ch. 5:48	ch. 1:4
ch. 6:14-15	ch. 2:12-13	ch. 6:19	ch. 5:1-3
ch. 6:24	ch. 4:4	ch. 6:34	ch. 4:13-14
ch. 7:1-5	ch. 4:11-12	ch. 7:7-8	ch. 4:2-3
ch. 7:7-11	ch. 1:5, 17	ch. 7:16	ch. 3:12
ch. 7:16-20	ch. 3:11-13	ch. 7:24-27	ch. 1:22

If we accept that James was a physical brother of the Lord, then we are listening to a man who, unlike the disciples, lived in association with Christ for three years, was brought up in the same home having an earthly perspective, and the same father and mother. He would have known, on the fraternal level, the Lord in an almost unique way. He saw lived out before him a holy life which would have been very uncomfortable to live with due to His integrity and perfections. This being so, his writing was not politically correct or beautifully written in polished language, but stark, blunt, and factual.

The decision as to which James wrote the book is veiled in obscurity. We are not given sufficient preciseness of data to assuredly say who the James was. Several can be excluded and several hypothesis can be excluded, but there are still several “James” and there are pointers to each of them. We must be careful not to make a decision based on assumptions, for assumptions are not necessarily facts. Furthermore, we must permit God the option of keeping some things as His secret, things that He alone knows. The exclusion of certain data we would like to know does not deprive us of relevant and vital information but forces us to see the truth God is seeking to emphasize. For instance, the twenty-four elders in Revelation chapter five, who are they? We are not told the answer. We can conjecture and assume but we do not know. The bigger picture is they are a manifestation of the grace of God who has brought others into judgment with Him, and they are individuals who have sided with God

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at an earlier date for they are over-comers. So when it comes to the author of this book, who the James was, we just do not know.

### Key Words and Phrases

- 1) Faith (ch. 1:3, 6; 2:1, 5, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26; 5:15)
- 2) Temptation/s (ch. 1:2, 12)
- 3) Law (ch. 1:25; 2:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 4:11)
- 4) Works (ch. 2:14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26; 3:13)
- 5) Doer (ch. 1:23, 25; 4:11)

### That Which Is Apparently Strangely Omitted

Because of the focus of James, matters spoken of or developed in other books relative to the Person and consequential blessings from His work are omitted. There is no reference to the word “gospel”; “incarnation”; “cross”; “sufferings”; “resurrection” or “ascension”.

### James Usage Of Christ

That which is very interesting about the way James encourages the saints is, not only how he speaks of the Lord, but when he does not lift the Lord up as the supreme example.

- a) James only makes two specific references to the Lord (ch. 1:1; 2:1), and possibly third obscure reference in ch. 5:6.
- b) We would expect that for examples of christian virtues the Lord would be presented as the supreme example, yet James uses men as examples. For instance:
  - i) In speaking of patience and endurance James illustrates this from the Psalmist, Job, and the prophets of the Old Testament.

### James Similarity To The Old Testament

In this case the words are not repeated, it is not a quotation but similarity of truths.

James	Expression	Old Testament	James	Expression	Old Testament
ch. 1:10	Made low	Isa. 57:15; 66:2	ch. 1:19	Swift to hear	Prov. 8:33; Ecc. 5:1
ch. 2:1	Respect of persons	Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; Prov. 24:23	ch. 2:8	Love thy neighbor	Lev. 19:18, 34
ch. 2:11	The various sins	Ex. 20:13-15; Deut. 5:17-21	ch. 2:21	The offering of Isaac	Gen. 22:2, 9
ch. 2:23	Abraham believed God	Gen. 15:6	ch. 2:25	Rahab	Josh. 6:17, 23
ch. 3:9	Man made in the image and likeness of God	Gen. 1:26	ch. 4:6	God resisted the proud	1 Sam. 2:3; Job 22:29; 40:12; Prov. 3:34
ch. 5:4	Defrauding	Deut. 24:14; 15; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5	ch. 5:5	Lived in pleasure on the earth	Job. 21:13, 14; Psa. 73:7; Isa. 47:8

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ch. 5:7	The rain	Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1	ch. 5:11	The enduring of Job	Job 1:22; 23:10
ch. 5:17, 18	Elijah (Elias)	1 Kgs. 17:1	ch. 5:20	Save the sinner	Prov. 11:4, 30; 10:2

**The Relationship of James To It's Side-by-side Epistles**

The order of the New Testament books is no doubt inspired by God and any doubts concerning the divine inspiration of James is removed when its balancing and developing relationship to other books is seen.

a) **James and Romans**

- i) Romans and James are complementary in the matter of salvation. Romans emphasizes that salvation is without the works of the law as does Galatians, but James emphasizes that a profession of salvation without consequent works indicates the individual has only a profession.
- ii) Romans teaches Christ is the only way of salvation, Hebrews teaches Christ is the superior way of salvation, and James teaches that a superior way of salvation necessitates a superior lifestyle to complement that superior sacrifice and salvation.

**Aspects of God**

God is the true God, therefore He expects reality. Mere mouth service means little to God, the life must be seen.

**Words Peculiar to James**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Chapter and Verse</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Chapter and Verse</b>
Enticed	ch. 1:4	Driven	ch. 1:6
Tossed	ch. 1:6	Double minded	ch. 1:8
Flower	ch. 1:10	Fade away	ch. 1:11
Burning	ch. 1:11	Neither tempteth He any man	ch. 1:13
Drawn away	ch. 1:14	Shadow	ch. 1:17
Turning	ch. 1:17	Gold ring	ch. 2:2
Vile	ch. 2:2	Have respect	ch. 2:9
Without mercy	ch. 2:13	Daily	ch. 2:15
Needful	ch. 2:16	Tremble	ch. 2:19
Boasteth	ch. 3:5	Matter	ch. 3:5
Course	ch. 3:6	Deadly	ch. 3:8
Similitude	ch. 3:9	Endued with	ch. 3:13
Devilish	ch. 3:15	Easy to be intreated	ch. 3:17

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Word	Chapter and Verse	Word	Chapter and Verse
Without partiality	ch. 3:17	In vain	ch. 4:5
Laughter	ch. 4:9	Lawgiver	ch. 4:12
Motheaten	ch. 5:2	Corrupted	ch. 5:2
Cankered	ch. 5:3	Reaped down	ch. 5:4
Lived in pleasure	ch. 5:5	Latter	ch. 5:7
Count them happy	ch. 5:11	Very pitiful	ch. 5:11
Tender mercy	ch. 5:11		

### The Major Problems Showing Immaturity

Among the various evidential problems there was one underlying one, “immaturity”, and this was being manifested in a number of ways such as:

a) Casualness or sloppy spirituality

- i) A lack of resoluteness, endurance in the testing, and yielding to temptations (ch. 1:2-4)
- ii) Having a distorted perception of God (ch. 1:17)
- iii) Having a false view of true values:
  1. Manifested by the practice of favoritism and selectiveness (ch. 2:1-4)
  2. Manifested by spiritual ignorance of the Lord of glory.
- iv) Professing to have faith but an absence of it in life (ch. 2:14-16)
- v) A schizophrenic tongue that talks falsehood and truth, cursing and blessing, evil and good (ch. 3:1-12)
- vi) An earthly sensual, devilish wisdom which results in envy, strife, and unrest (ch. 3:14-15)
- vii) Friendship with the world (ch. 4:4)
- viii) Self supremacy which results in:
  1. Fighting and coveting (ch. 4:1-2), irrespective of the will of God will trample on anyone to get what one wants.
  2. Insubordination to God, with its non-resistance to the devil, corruption of hands, and maintained corruption of heart (ch. 4:6-7)
- ix) The seeking to degrade others by false speaking (ch. 4:11) thus, exalting self (ch. 4:10) and not the Lord (ch. 4:10-12)
- x) Blatant presumptuousness (ch. 4:13-17)
- xi) The greed of materialism (ch. 5:1-3)
- xii) Holding that which belongs to another (ch. 5:4)

b) Failure to stand against the temptations of:

- i) Failing to endure (ch. 1:3)
- ii) A doubtful mind (ch. 1:6)
- iii) Seeing only the present affliction and not the eternal benefits (ch. 1:12)
- iv) Having a distorted perception of God, excusing oneself from the happenings and blaming of God, its all God’s fault, it was the Lord’s will (ch. 1:13)
- v) A distorted perception of the source and strength of sin (ch. 1:13-16)
- vi) Responding naturally in agitation against God’s discipline (ch. 1:19-20)
- vii) Responding naturally against God’s word (ch. 1:21-25)
- viii) An unbridled tongue, in this context against God (ch. 1:26)
- ix) A distorted religion (ch. 1:26-27)



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- x) Fleishy catering to the influential (ch. 2:1-9)

Count it all joy when you are surrounded by many testings (ch. 1:2). This begs the question, “Why should I count trials and temptations a joy?” Simply because they help produce spiritual maturity by:

- a) Bringing me into a spiritual conflict where I am faced with the decision whether to endure or take the easy way out (ch. 1:3-4)
- b) Causing me to recognize my own spiritual deficiencies in understanding as to why they come and how to deal with them. Thus, I am forced to pray (ch. 1:5) which leads to the awareness that God hears and answers prayer and I am helped to appreciate the character of God in his liberal giving (ch. 1:5) and praying becomes:
  - i) A test of my confidence in the ability God (ch. 1:5)
  - ii) A test of my knowledge of the will of God (ch. 1:5; 1 Jn. 5:12-15) which results in spiritual maturing and a clearer perspective regarding providential happenings (ch. 1:9-11)
- c) They force me to look beyond the present (ch. 1:12)
- d) They make me aware of:
  - i) Unchanging moral perfections of God (ch. 1:13)
  - ii) Unchanging immoral corruptions in myself (ch. 1:14-15) as I see where sin leads to, therefore, heed the warning, “Do not err” (ch. 1:16).

Temptations and trials are God’s way of bringing me to spiritual maturity which is manifested in:

- a) Attitude (ch. 1:19-20)
- b) Acceptance (ch. 1:21)
- c) Actualization (ch. 1:22-2:13) by:
  - i) Living out the word of God (ch. 1:22-25) which, like a graft (ch. 1:21), will affect our communication (ch. 1:19-20); our conduct (ch. 1:21-22); and which like looking in a mirror (ch. 1:23) will challenge me (ch. 1:23-24). If I respond to the challenge I shall be changed (ch. 1:25-27), thus, living out true religion (ch. 1:26) by assisting the needy (ch. 1:27); by deliberate separation from the world (ch. 1:27); by not being partial (2:1-4), an attitude which is the opposite to the character of the Lord (ch. 2:1); contrary to reason (ch. 2:6-7); contrary to the law (ch. 2:8-11); and is acting without thought of the future judgment (ch. 2:12-13).
  - ii) Living out true faith (ch. 2:14-5:20) which is illustrated by: works (ch. 2:18); demons (ch. 2:19-20); Abraham (ch. 2:21-24); Rahab (ch. 2:25); and the body (ch. 2:26).
  - iii) The sham of a verbal profession (ch. 2:14-17) and the danger of verbal profession (ch. 3:1).

Spiritual maturity is seen in governing:

- a) The tongue (ch. 3:2) which must be:
  - i) Dominated against inside insubordination (ch. 3:3-4) and directed against outside agitation (ch. 3:5-6) because the tongue has power to destroy, it is untamable (ch. 3:5-8); has the power of death, it is poisonous (ch. 3:8); has the power to curse or bless, it is contrary to nature (ch. 3:9-10); a truth illustrated by a fountain (ch. 3:11, 12) and fig tree (ch. 3:12).
- b) The conduct (ch. 3:13-18) which necessitates true wisdom manifested in meekness of conduct (ch. 3:13).
  - i) False wisdom:
    - 1. Is the natural outflowing of the heart (ch. 3:14)
    - 2. Is not from above, thus not from God (ch. 3:15 with ch. 1:17)
    - 3. Is earthly, sensual, and devilish (ch. 3:15)
    - 4. Results in conflict (ch. 3:17)
  - ii) True wisdom:
    - 1. Is from above (ch. 3:17)
    - 2. Is pure; peaceable; gentle; easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality; and without hypocrisy (ch. 3:18). This is the fruit of righteousness and results in peace (ch. 3:18).

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The results of insubordination to God is fleshy wisdom:

- a) This results in inward conflict which:
  - i) Arises from the lusts in your members (ch. 4:1)
  - ii) Is expressed externally and is damaging to others (ch. 4:2)
  - iii) Is expressed in opposition to God and manifested by:
    1. Asking, but not according to the will of God (ch. 4:3)
    2. Adulterous relationships in opposition to the friendship of God (ch. 4:4)
    3. Agitation against the Spirit of God (ch. 4:5)

The results of subjection to God and spiritual maturing is:

- a) Accept the overcoming grace of God (ch. 4:6)
- b) Submit under the overwhelming power of God (ch. 4:7)
- c) Draw near to God in conflict and lay hold on His presenced ability (ch. 4:8) therefore, heed the admonition concerning: (Note that the structure of James can now be illustrated by a book shelf on which there are two bookends. His two bookends deal with “what must be done”, and in the middle “what should not be done”. This being so, there is emphasis thrown on the middle section)
  - i) What must be done:
    1. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners (ch. 4:8)
    2. Purify your hearts, ye double minded (ch. 4:8)
    3. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep over immaturity (ch. 4:9)
    4. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and joy to heaviness (ch. 4:9)
    5. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord (ch. 4:10)
    6. Let Him lift you up (ch. 4:9-10) (cp self exaltation in position ch. 3:1; in self domination over others ch. 4:2)
  - ii) What should not be done:
    1. Not speak evil of another (ch. 4:11)
    2. Not usurp ones position to that of judge by speech (ch. 4:11)
    3. Not usurp ones self above the Lawgiver by speech (ch. 4:12)
    4. Not usurp ones self above the prerogatives of God by presumptuous statements (ch. 4:13-17)
  - iii) What must be done:
    1. Live in the reality of a future judgment, therefore:
      - (i) See your riches against the dark days that are to come (ch. 5:1-2), for they will witness against you (ch. 5:3); they will consume you (ch. 5:3); in the day of judgment (ch. 5:3) for:
        - 1) You kept others from that which was theirs (ch. 5:4)
        - 2) You lived in personal ostentatiousness (ch. 5:5)
        - 3) You have been fattened for your own slaughter (ch. 5:5)
        - 4) You condemned and killed the just, and He doth not resist (ch. 5:6)
    2. Patient endurance until the coming of the Lord (ch. 5:7-8)
      - (i) **Example No. 1:** The husbandman is waiting for the precious fruit you are producing (ch. 5:7), in your endurance establish your hearts (ch. 5:8) and grudge not one against another (ch. 5:9) lest ye be condemned, for the Judge is at the door (ch. 5:9).
      - (ii) **Example No. 2:** The prophets who spoke for God endured suffering and were patient (ch. 5:10-11).
      - (iii) **Example No. 3:** Consider Job, and see the end blessings of the Lord (ch. 5:11).
      - (iv) Use the tongue in a proper way: when in affliction pray, and when in merriment,



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sing; for the sick, pray (ch. 5:14-15), but there must be recognition of the possible discipline of God on the individual personally (ch. 5:15-16). Effective prayer only comes from a righteous man (ch. 5:16), but that does not mean a perfect man, as illustrated by Elijah (Elias) (ch. 5:17-18)

3. Recognition of the erring one (ch. 5:19) and restoring the erring one (ch. 5:19), thus rescuing them from death (ch. 5:20).

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia