

November 18-24  
New Testament Lesson # 45  
“Be Ye Doers of the Word and Not Hearers Only”  
(James)  
By Lenet Hadley Read

(This material helps us recognize that James not only influenced the Restoration, but also **foresaw and foretold both the apostasy and the Restoration**).

I. Note that James addressed this epistle to the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” (1:1).

A. James is believed to be speaking **to the gathered tribes in the last days**.

1. Elder Bruce R. McConkie says, “James... took upon himself the awesome responsibility to write an epistle to the saints in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

“... James addressed himself to those of the twelve scattered tribes of Israel who belonged to the Church; that is, to a people yet to be gathered, yet to receive the gospel, yet to come into the fold of Christ; ...” (Bruce R. McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:243).

B. **Thus it was likely not accidental that James sent guidance to the last days on how to obtain revelation from Heaven** (1:5-6). “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (1:5).

It was as if James deliberately set forth this pearl, **knowing that through the clouds of time, Joseph Smith would discover it**. [After all, many prophets sent prophecies to the last days and to Joseph Smith himself. See Isaiah 11:11-13; 2 Nephi 3:11, 15; Romans, Ch. 11: 26, as examples].

C. James’ counsel applies to **all** of us in the latter days **who must find through revelation whether Joseph Smith is a true prophet and if the Book of Mormon is true**.

D. James also emphasized what great faith would be required to rend the heavens in that future dispensation. “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering....”

1. **Such unwavering faith is more likely found in a young boy**.

II. **Joseph Smith must indeed have been a person of great faith.**

**A. It is possible that through the miraculous blessing of his leg, saved from amputation and healed, thus saving his life, was a strong faith building experience.**

B. In fact, at first doctors wanted to amputate, for Joseph’s very bones were infected. But Joseph’s leg was saved due to a faith-filled mother and the miracle of a technique developed and performed by **the only doctor in the world who could have done it, who just happened [?] to work not too far away, and was willing to come**. This procedure was almost never used even for a long time after its success on Joseph.

C. We should realize how such a miraculous blessing in his life must have impacted an impressionable young boy. From this faith-assuring experience He knew that God lived, and had healed him. He knew that God cared about the fate of a young boy! God had intervened --- and saved his life. He knew he could trust in the Lord.

III. James added this important understanding to his counsel on prayer, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and **cometh down from the Father of lights**, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1: 17).

- A. After the First Vision, Joseph received a vast amount of light and intelligence. He **never** made claim to having obtained his vast knowledge through his own intelligence, but always in this way --- through revelation from the heavens.
- B. His steadfast testimony that his wisdom came from the Heavens had consequences.
  - 1. Harold Bloom, a Yale professor, who has written over one hundred books examining the greatest of minds and their works, said this about Joseph Smith:
    - “Joseph Smith was a great religious genius and perhaps the only one this country [the United States] has ever produced.” (Hal Boyd, “Bloom makes case for Bible as high literature,” Deseret News, Friday September 23, 2011, p. A10.)
  - 2. This appreciation for the new ideas which came from Joseph Smith, shows that most of **Joseph Smith’s ideas would likely have been accepted by the world as genius, if he had attributed them to his own mind, rather than to revelation.**
    - a. In fact, one of the reasons C.S. Lewis is quoted by General Authorities so often, is that he later developed many of the same ideas on his own which were previously revealed to Joseph Smith. Lewis is acclaimed by most of the world as a great thinker.
    - b. However, the same truths which came to Joseph Smith much earlier, were acknowledged by him to have come only through revelation, **and Joseph was faithful in testifying of that source, in spite of its bringing him great persecutions.**

IV. James also sent the message that spiritual truths *would be* received in the last days.

A. “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman [God] waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive **the early and latter rain**” (James 5:7).

1. Most of us do not recognize what James is saying here.

2. The land of Israel has two periods of rain, one in the spring and one in the fall. James is testifying that just as Israel receives an early and a latter rain for the physical harvest, so it had received an early rain or “spiritual nurturing” --- **and should expect a another rain or “latter day spiritual nurturing,” which he clearly places just prior to Christ’s return.**

3. **James urges men to receive this “latter rain” for after it the Lord would come.**

“Be ye also patient... for [then ] the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (5:8).

B. Significantly, like Malachi, James closed his epistle by referring to Elijah.

1. He is again referencing the Restoration when he reminds that Elijah closed the heavens and then reopened them after 3 ½ years (James 5:17-18).

2. James understood, this **closing of the heavens for a time [symbolized by 3 1/2 years] was a prophecy of the apostasy --- the time between the early rain and the latter rain when the Heavens would be closed, and God’s nurturing word cut off from man.**

a. Both Daniel and John also represented the time of the apostasy by the symbolic number of 3 ½ (See Daniel 7:23-26; Revelation 11:2; 13:5). Scholars, LDS and other, [including the translation in the Oxford Edition of *The New English Bible*], show “time, times and half-a-time,” and other time equations are all equivalent to 3 ½. In the last days, after that time period, God would reopen the Heavens. The spiritual drought would be over, and the spiritual “latter rain” would fall. [For additional information on how Elijah witnessed of the apostasy and restoration, see Lenet Hadley Read, “Elijah and Elisha: Foreshadowing the Latter-day Work” *The Ensign*, March 1988].

- V. James emphasizes how to be better saints **and thus prepared for Christ's return.**
- A. Like Paul, he teaches that our trials can teach us patience, and patience can perfect us (1:1-4).
  - B. He repeatedly warns about the dangers of riches (1: 10-11; Ch. 5:1-6).
  - C. A major focus of his teaching is to get greater control of our tongue (1:19-21; Ch. 3).
    - 1. Right words are born in the heart.
      - a. Covetousness is one thing that leads to conflict through the tongue.
    - 2. He warns to speak no evil of another (4:11).
      - a. We are incapable of judging each other (4:12-17).
    - 3. In fact we should *confess our faults* one to another.

VI. James taught "faith without works is dead" (1:12-26). And the works he spoke of had meaning for the Last Days.

- A. "What doth it profit" to say one has faith, and not works (2:14-20).
- B. James taught "pure religion is to visit the widow and fatherless" (1: 27).
  - 1. James is obviously encouraging all saints to care for the widow and the fatherless.
  - 2. But he is likely also making reference to Christ's Church in the last days.
  - 3. The **Lord previously portrayed Israel itself as a "widow" and her sons as "fatherless" --- because of the apostasy.**
    - a. "... [Thou] shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; ...For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isaiah 54:4-8).
    - b. Note one of the works of Elijah was to raise a fatherless child from the dead.
  - 4. So James is also asking the leaders of Christ's Church in the Latter-days to seek after and minister to "widowed" Israel, who had been cut off from her true husband, the Savior. And to bring back to spiritual life those who are fatherless, because they have lost contact with their Spiritual Father, the Lord.
  - 5. **Thus all the teachings of James had a consistent message for the Restoration!**
  - 6. This helps us understand that Joseph Smith's finding the counsel in James to pray was not accidental. Many things in James writings were all there to inspire him.
  - 7. And it should inspire us as well, to seek for revelation from above, and to know that the Restoration, like the apostasy, was foreseen and foretold by the apostles of Jesus Christ in the Meridian of Time.

VII. We should not ignore the likelihood that James was also writing to the Twelve Tribes **of his day.**

- A. We should remember Jesus told the Nephites as He was departing, He was going to visit "other sheep" of the House of Israel (3 Nephi 16:1-3).
- B. This means there were identifiable groups of those tribes! There is a distinct likelihood that the apostles in the ancient world knew of them and visited them as well.
- C. In fact there is much evidence that this did in fact occur.

VIII. There is significant evidence in writings outside of the scriptures but by ancient historians, that disciples of Jesus visited the peoples of the British Isles, and established a church among them, for many there were descendants of Israel.

- A. That these people are of Israel should not surprise us, for it is witnessed by the

great number of converts from those nations who have joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when it was established, and learned through revelation that they are descendants of Ephraim.

B. These evidences come from some of the most respected of ancient historians.

However, due to lack of interest, apparently, most people ignore these histories.

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