

## INTRODUCTION

*Removing the Mask* is a commentary on the book of James. It provides a key to understanding the book of James that has gone unseen by most of the commentators on the book. Please do not misconstrue this statement to be idle boasting. The fact is, in modern times, the book of James has been misunderstood by almost everyone who has ever read it. The misunderstandings and mysteries surrounding the book of James, despite the confusion, can be solved if the student of the Scriptures diligently applies the rules of interpretation in his approach to the book. The student of the Scriptures must pay close attention to the opening remarks in the book of James. There he will learn James wrote to *the twelve tribes scattered abroad*.

Despite this clear statement, all of the commentators I have read on James have assumed James was written to Christians. Dr. C. I. Scofield, along with eight consulting editors, included the following statement in the introduction to the book of James in the Scofield Reference Bible: *By "the twelve tribes scattered abroad" we are to understand, not Jews, but Christian Jews of the Dispersion.* This assumption, made by Scofield and virtually all others, has not aided in our

understanding of the book of James, but has perpetuated the confusion surrounding the book.

Confusion often reigns when men of reputation make erroneous statements. This was the basis for the Jews' rejection of *the commandments of God for the traditions of men*. If James wrote to Christians as the commentators said, I found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the writings of James with the writings of Paul, even though I knew both James and Paul had written their epistles under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Consequently I avoided preaching from the book of James for many years because I was not comfortable with the book. I continued to read James, along with my other reading of the Scriptures, but the book as a whole was closed to me. Then a member of our church asked a question about James 5:14. I told him I thought I knew the answer, but before I gave it to him I would like to do a more detailed study. Seeking to answer his question, I approached the book of James afresh. I enlisted the rules of interpretation as I once again read and attempted to analyze the book. It was then evident by the statement, *to the twelve tribes scattered abroad*, James wrote to the Jews of the *diaspora* and not to Jews who had made a profession of faith in Christ. This very obvious truth, distorted by the commentators, made the book of James come alive and dispelled the notion there was a difference of opinion between James and Paul.

It is this unrecognized fact that James wrote to Jews and not to Christians that has perpetuated the confusion surrounding the book. We must remember the Jews, as well as Christians, are the elect of God. The Jews had been the custodians of the truth until *their house was left unto them desolate*. The faith that had been committed to their trust is the faith that has been committed to our trust. They had been given the law to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith, and this faith had been foreshadowed in the sacrificial system, which they

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also corrupted. Thus David wrote:

Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. (Romans 11:9-10)

The difference between the faith committed to the Jews and the faith committed to the church is point of time. They were the writers of all of the Old Testament Scriptures, which contain *the faith once delivered unto the saints*. This faith was to find its realization in Jesus Christ in the fullness of time. The sad part was Israel had become so steeped in their traditions and a corruption of the faith which had been delivered unto them that they did not recognize Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, promised in their Scriptures. Thus their *house was left unto them desolate*. With this the faith was committed unto the church, all of which were Jews until about fifteen years after the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord from the dead.

There is a theory which has arisen because of the assumption James wrote to Christians. This theory declares James wrote much earlier than Paul, before Paul's theology of salvation by grace apart from the deeds of the law had been fully developed. This theory borders on blasphemy. It completely denies the inspiration of Scripture by an omniscient and immutable God and requires God to act contrary to the revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. The Bible clearly states *God is not the author of confusion*. When there is confusion regarding the Scriptures, it is the result of the misunderstandings of men and not because of the Scriptures themselves. A proper view of the Scriptures through the attributes of God, as well as the rules of interpretation, will enable us to steer the course of *rightly dividing the word of truth*.

Once I came to understand James did not write to Christians, I had the key to unlock the

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book so that the difficulties in the book of James vanished. Once I understood James wrote to unsaved Jews, it became obvious James was written as an aid to evangelize the Jews of the *twelve tribes scattered abroad*. This piece of information provided the key to harmonize Paul's statements about the grace of God with James's statements about the law. It also enabled me to see James fully understood and believed in the gospel of the saving grace of God apart from the deeds of the law.

At the time of the writing of the epistle of James, James was not legalistic and formal as the commentators have said. There is no doubt James and the church at Jerusalem clung to things Jewish for a number of years. This was quite natural because they were all Jews or Jewish proselytes. However, when the gospel began to go to the Gentiles, they were forced to rethink their position as Peter did when the Lord told him to *Rise Peter, kill and eat*. As they grew in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, they began more and more to divorce themselves from things Jewish, but this took a considerable amount of time. Despite this, by the time James wrote his epistle, James fully understood the believer's, as well as the Jew's, relationship to the law. Consequently James used the law in his epistle as our Lord and the apostle Paul used it; he used the law *lawfully* in its *schoolmaster* role to bring the Jews to Christ so that they might be *justified by faith*.

Once I understood James did not write to Christians, the mask which veiled the book of James was removed. I sincerely hope *Removing The Mask* will remove the mask of misunderstanding and ignorance that has shrouded the book of James. I hope it will do for you what it has done for me. If it does so, it will reveal James is a wonderful book. It is a book which is in

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complete alignment with the teachings of the apostle Paul, and there was no schism between them. When we understand James, it will teach us something of human nature and religion. It will teach us something about a people (the nation of Israel: the natural brethren of both James and Paul) *who were ignorant of God's righteousness and went about trying to establish their own righteousness.*

These people, whether they are the Jews of the diaspora to whom James wrote or someone in your community who works hard at religion, are ignorant of the grace of God that is available in Christ Jesus. These people work hard in an attempt to make themselves fit for the presence of God. They may give lip service to faith in Jesus Christ, but they have never fully submitted to the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. These are the people of James's epistle, which makes the book of James an aid in evangelistic attempts to reach the unsaved religious folk of James's day, as well as ours.

It was written to cause the Jews to examine their faith in the light of the events that had taken place in Jerusalem when Christ died for their sins according to the Scriptures, which fulfilled all that was written by *Moses and all of the prophets* concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in His Person and work.

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