

Contents

1	James, the Lord's Brother — <i>September 27–October 3</i> —————	6
2	The Perfecting of Our Faith — <i>October 4–10</i> —————	14
3	Enduring Temptation — <i>October 11–17</i> —————	22
4	Being and Doing — <i>October 18–24</i> —————	30
5	Love and the Law — <i>October 25–31</i> —————	38
6	Faith That Works — <i>November 1–7</i> —————	46
7	Taming the Tongue — <i>November 8–14</i> —————	56
8	The Humility of Heavenly Wisdom — <i>November 15–21</i> —————	64
9	One Lawgiver and Judge — <i>November 22–28</i> —————	72
10	Weep and Howl! — <i>November 29–December 5</i> —————	80
11	Getting Ready for the Harvest — <i>December 6–12</i> —————	88
12	Prayer, Healing, and Restoration — <i>December 13–19</i> —————	96
13	The Everlasting Gospel — <i>December 20–26</i> —————	104

Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our Web site: <http://www.absg.adventist.org>

Principal Contributor
Clinton Wahlen

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

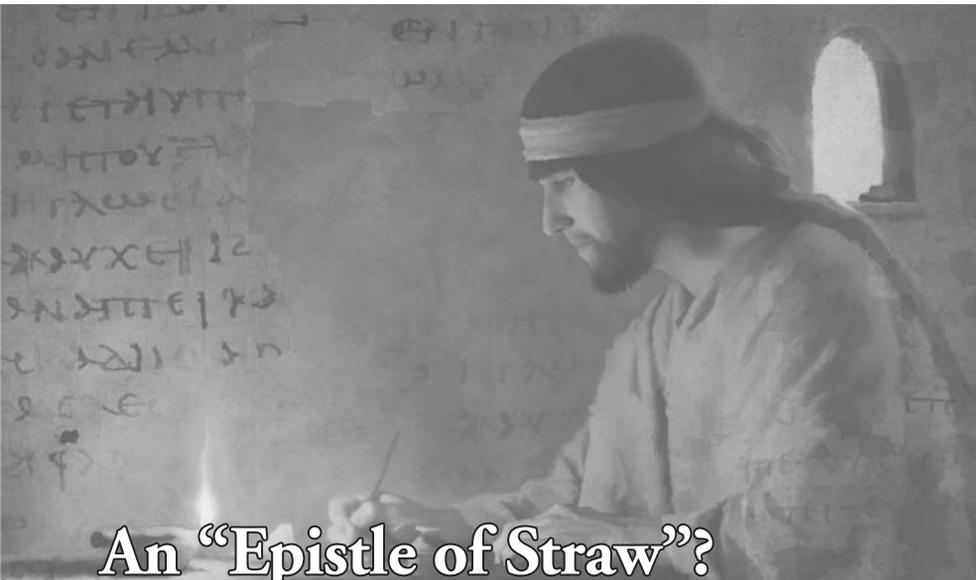
Editorial Assistant
Sharon Thomas-Crews

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Wendy Marcum

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Design
Justinen Creative Group

© 2014 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. All rights reserved. No part of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* may be edited, altered, modified, adapted, translated, reproduced, or published by any person or entity without prior written authorization from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. The division offices of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® are authorized to arrange for translation of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, under specific guidelines. Copyright of such translations and their publication shall remain with the General Conference. "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist," and the flame logo are registered trademarks of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® and may not be used without prior authorization from the General Conference.



An “Epistle of Straw”?

The epistle of James has been one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. In the Leipzig Debate of 1519, Roman Catholic scholar Johann Eck used it to challenge Martin Luther’s view of justification by faith alone, insisting that works needed to be added to the equation.

Luther, in response, eventually denied the epistle’s inspired authorship, mainly on the mistaken claim that it taught justification by works. In the introduction to his 1522 German translation of the New Testament, Luther indicated his preference for books like John, 1 John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter, which reveal Christ and teach “everything that is needful and blessed . . . to know.”

His preface to the book of James was even more negative. Luther called it “really an epistle of straw” because it had “nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.” Although Luther never removed it from the canon of Scripture, he separated it from what he considered the core of the canon.

Luther’s emphasis on Paul’s epistles, especially Romans and Galatians, and his rejection of James for anything more than devotional value, has influenced a large segment of Christian thinking through the centuries.

Who was James anyway? Was he a legalist, combating Paul’s idea of justification by faith by teaching that justification is really by works? Or was he simply providing a slightly different perspective on the subject, similar to the several perspectives on the teachings of Jesus that we find in the Gospels? The answer is, clearly, the latter.

Not all of the Reformers shared Luther's low opinion of James. No less a luminary than Melancthon, Luther's closest associate, believed that the writings of Paul and James were not in conflict.

James had a firsthand knowledge of Jesus. In fact, his epistle, of all the epistles, may very well be the earliest Christian writing in existence, and, of all the epistles, reflects most closely the teachings of Jesus that we find in the Gospels. As in the parables of Jesus, imagery from agriculture and the world of finance is abundant. Other important themes include wisdom, prayer, and above all, faith.

James is unique in other ways, too, thereby opening a window for us into some of the struggles that the earliest Christian congregations faced. With envy, jealousy, and worldliness creeping into the fold, there seems to have been societal and cultural pressures that pitted wealthier Christians against poor ones. We also see the great controversy being played out as James attacks counterfeit forms of wisdom and faith.

Most important for Seventh-day Adventists, the epistle of James exudes confidence in the return of Jesus; it also provides crucial perspectives on the law, the judgment, and the Second Coming. Elijah is even presented as a model for us to emulate. This has special relevance for us, as Seventh-day Adventists, who are entrusted with preparing the way for Christ's second advent.

Thus, in some ways, our journey this quarter spans the entire Christian era, as it includes some of the earliest preaching, as well as special insights for these last days.

Most important for Seventh-day Adventists, the epistle of James exudes confidence in the return of Jesus; it also provides crucial perspectives on the law, the judgment, and the Second Coming.

Clinton Wahlen, PhD, is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference headquarters. His expertise is in the New Testament and its relation to ancient Judaism. An American, he has lived and worked in Russia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the Philippines. He and his wife, Gina, who works at Adventist Mission, have two children, Daniel and Heather.

Join us in

10 days of PRAYER

January
7-17 2015

www.TenDaysofPrayer.org

A PLACE TO BELONG



Of the 38,000 Seventh-day Adventists in Belize, 70 percent are young people. Once each summer, a few hundred meet on rented ground to worship, fellowship, and play. The place is too small to host more. Their dream is to have a place to call their own—a Seventh-day Adventist youth camp in Belize.

In Jamaica, the dignity of thousands of street-dwelling men, women, and children has been restored at the Good Samaritan Inn, where they receive a hot meal and have the opportunity to shower, get

a haircut, and do laundry. The inn also provides a safe night shelter for women and children. Now they hope to build a clinic, providing pre- and post-natal care, along with dental services for children and adults.

Thank you for making these projects a reality through your generous gifts to this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

**MADVENTIST
MISSION**
WWW.ADVENTISTMISSION.ORG