

Study Guide for the Book of James

Luther on the Book of James

The primary commentary and resource used for the basis of this study is the *Concordia Commentary* on **James** by Curtis P. Giese, M.Div., Ph.D., a professor in the theology division of Concordia University in Austin, TX. Dr. Giese comments extensively in his Introduction to his Commentary on **James** regarding Dr. Martin Luther's well known "sound bites" on **James**. Probably the most famous of Luther's comments is this excerpt from Luther's Preface to the New Testament:

In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and good for you to know, even though you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' Epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to them; for it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it. But more of this in other prefaces.

However, Dr. Giese and other Lutheran scholars point out the following about Luther's attitude toward **James**:

1. The **Book of James** was being used by the Roman Catholic Church at the time of Luther (and probably still is being used by RCs) as a "proof text" that works must accompany Christ's saving work in order to be saved. This struck at the heart of the Luther's position as well as the Protestant Reformation that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ without the deeds of The Law. Thus, **James** created a "burr under Luther's saddle".
2. Luther questioned the authorship of **James**. He did not think it was authored by the James, half-brother to Jesus. However, he never questioned its inclusion in the Canon of Scripture (more on that later).
3. Luther never questioned **James'** authority as Scripture.
4. Luther seems to have a split opinion on **James**. Note the beginning of Luther's preface to **James** and **Jude**:

Though this Epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients, I praise it and hold it a good book, because it sets up no doctrine of men and lays great stress upon God's law. But to state my own opinion about it, though without injury to anyone, I consider that it is not the writing of any apostle.

It is notable that the early Lutheran scholars, Philip Melancthon and Andreas Althamer had a more positive view toward **James** than Luther. As we go through **James**, we will revisit Luther's thoughts on the verses that were of greatest concern to him. Comments anyone?

Inclusion of James into the Canon of Scripture

James is one of seven books of the NT referred to as “The Catholic Epistles” because these Epistles were not addressed to any specific congregation. Catholic in this sense means general or universal. The other Catholic Epistles are **1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John,** and **Jude**. In general, the Catholic Epistles were the last books of the NT to be included in the Canon i.e. accepted by all of the divisions of the Christian Church around the Mediterranean Sea. However, it should be noted that Churches in the Eastern Mediterranean accepted **James** as authoritative much earlier than the Church at large. It is also important to note that within the history of the early Church, the NT was developed with a “Canon within the Canon”. That means that there are core books of the NT, namely the Epistles of Paul and the Gospels that are recognized as being the core books of the NT and as other books were considered, it was important that additional books did not conflict with the core books. That does not mean that the later books are considered any less inspired by God. It just means that there was more/longer debate on their inclusion.

Authorship of the Book of James, the person of James, and Date of Authorship

The authorship of **James** has long been disputed. That was one of the main reasons for its delay in being accepted into the Canon of Scripture. Luther had his doubts about its authorship that were likely influenced by the writings of Eusebius (c. 265 – 339) who is considered the Christian Church’s second historian with Luke being the first. Eusebius wrote that the author of **James** was disputed at that time in history. However, Dr. Giese’s position in his *Concordia Commentary* is that later scholarship and analysis of **James** indicates that the most likely author is James the half-brother of Jesus. As we study **James**, we will look at the internal evidence that he is the author.

With that in mind, what do we learn about Jesus’ half-brother, James, from the following passages?

Matthew 13:53 – 56 _____

John 7:2 – 5 and Mark 3:13 – 35 _____

What comfort or insight do these verses give us as we pass through this life?

Going forward note **Mark 3:34 and 35** and how it relates to our study of **James**. Any preliminary comments?

1 Corinthians 15:3 – 8 _____

What do these verses tell us about the Resurrection and post-Resurrection accounts in the Gospels and in Acts? Hint: See **John 20:30 – 31**.

Acts 1:6 – 14 _____

Acts 12:1 – 17 _____

Acts 15:12 – 20 _____

Galatians 1:15 – 19 _____

Galatians 2:7 – 14 _____

Note/remember verse 10 and how that theme recurs in **James** as we proceed in our study.

1 Corinthians 9:1 – 5 _____

Dr. Giese in the Concordia Commentary relates the following points about extrabiblical literature that gives further illumination on James' life and position:

Christian historian, Eusebius relates or quotes the following sources:

- Clement of Alexandria recorded *“Peter and James and John, after the Saviour’s ascension, though pre-eminently honoured by the Lord, did not contend for glory, but made James the Just bishop of Jerusalem.”*
- Church father Hegesippus describes James *“as the head of the church’s government and likening him to a Nazārite.”* And Eusebius describes

James' role as *“James, the brother of the Lord, to whom the episcopal seat at Jerusalem has been entrusted by the apostles.”*

Dr. Giese notes that the Jewish historian Josephus *“records the events surrounding the tragic death of James in AD 62 after he had served many years as leader of the Jerusalem church, an account typically recognized in scholarship as authentic. According to Josephus, with the death of the Roman governor Festus and the newly appointed Albinus forthcoming to assume power, the high priest Ananus used this power vacuum to dispose of Christian leaders:*

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others [or, some of his companions]: and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.

Josephus subsequently records how leading citizens, Albinus, and King Agrippa vehemently disagreed with this act and, therefore, Agrippa deposed Ananus from the office of high priest. It is noteworthy that Josephus does not record the death of any other early Christian leader, such as Peter, James, or John (the sons of Zebedee), or Paul. Nor does he mention these individuals at all. Such may again indicate the prominence of James, here from a source outside of Christianity.”

Dr. Giese advocates that the **James** was likely written about 48 A.D by James, the half-brother of Jesus. However, there are those who disagree, and Giese summarizes those arguments against James being the author and then counters those arguments. One fundamental area of the discussion on date of authorship centers on whether **James** was written in the late first or early second century as a “Reaction against Paul” by a pseudonymous writer. Dr. Giese strongly advocates that pitting Paul against James is not appropriate. His arguments in support of the opinion are very helpful as we go forward in our study of **James** and are worth quoting at length as follows:

*[James] depicts the Christian faith with a somewhat different focus and use of terminology. He speaks to those already regenerated, reborn into Christ and bearing the first fruits of the new creation (1:16-18). **James** here revisits a concern of Jesus that one claims to belong to Christ but does not demonstrate the fruit that flows from faith. **James** uses the terminology “justify” not in opposition to Paul but rather with a different application: to validate a Christian’s regeneration through deeds. Whereas Paul wishes to exclude “works of the Law” in regeneration, James speaks about the deeds that flow from faith. Whereas Paul is more concerned about how Gentiles are brought to salvation in Christ, the Jew-Gentile controversy does not appear at all in **James**, thus additionally attesting to **James’** early date. Scaer aptly states*

*the detriment of pitting Paul against James: “The cross references and allusions common to **James** and Paul are obvious to most scholars, but the meaning of **James** remains hidden as long as the alleged antagonism between the two apostles is perpetuated as the one effective key to unlocking its meaning.”*

Let’s now start reading the **Book of James** with **James 1:1**.

What is the significance that James calls himself a “servant of God” and “Jesus” rather than identifying himself as the brother of Jesus?

What is the significance that he does not identify himself as an apostle or the leader of the church in Jerusalem?

Therefore, how does this first verse lead credence that **James** was written by James the Just, half-brother to Jesus?

Considering that the twelve tribes of Israel ceased to exist as identifiable groups following the invasion and conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians around 721/722 B.C. why would James address his epistle to the “twelve tribes in the Dispersion”?

Read **James 1:2 – 4**.

What do these verses say about the likelihood of encountering trials in life?

In contrast, how does our western society (and even the Declaration of Independence) program us to think about trials in life and what our reaction should be to trials?

What can happen to people (including Christians) in response to trials?

What is meant by “the testing of your faith” in verse 3? Compare with **1 Corinthians 3:10 – 15** (esp. in the NIV) and **Matthew 7:24 – 27**.

Looking at the big picture, what is (are) the purpose(s) of trials in our life in relationship to God?

Why is perseverance or steadfastness important? To what aspect(s) about Jesus is that pointing us? See **1 Peter 1:6 – 7**.

Relative to this question what does it mean in verse 4 when it says that you “may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”? See also **Matthew 25:20 – 23**.

How do our own personal trials, in this life, make us more useful to:

Our family and friends? _____

Our local congregation? _____

How do the trials of a congregation help the congregation?

Our society? _____

What does it mean (and not mean) to “count it all joy” when we encounter trials and how do we do that? Compare **Romans 5:1 – 5**.

How could this verse be used in a counterproductive manner when trying to comfort someone going through trials?

Let’s read **James 1:5 – 8**.

Dr. Giese, as well as other prominent commentators, point out that **James 1:2 – 18** pertains to trials in life: how we discern their purpose, our attitude toward them, and the need for God’s strength and understanding to endure them. For instance, the “wisdom” being referred to in verse 5 refers to understanding the big picture as we endure trials. With this basic understanding how would answer the following questions:

How do we gain this wisdom? See also **Proverbs 9:9 – 10**.

What do your commentaries say about having doubts and being double minded relative to receiving wisdom? Understanding what this means is crucial to our walk with Jesus. See also **Matthew 6:24** and **Matthew 7:24 – 27** for “wisdom” on this question. 😊

In practical application, how does this concept help us through trials?

How can these verses be taken out of context and be harmful for those struggling?

Let's read **James 1:9 – 11**.

At first glance it would seem that these verses appear out of context from the previous verses by addressing the attitudes of the poor and wealthy. However, how do these verses still apply to persevering through trials?

Why is it so difficult for the poor and the wealthy to endure their trial?

Who in each situation is their god and how do we fall into the same trap?

Dr. Giese points out that **James 1:12** is a transitional verse that points us back to the previous verses and forward to the next topics. How does this verse point us back to (or summarize) what we have been studying?

What is the "Crown of Life"? See also **Revelation 2:9 – 11**.

Let's read **James 1:13 – 15**.

What is meant by tempted or temptation in these verses?

What does verse 13 say about the character of God and thus the purpose of trials?

Therefore, what does it mean in The Lord's Prayer when we say, lead us not into temptation?

What human analogy is James using in verses 14 – 15?

These verses could imply that the desire is not sinful and that it is only sin when the desire is acted upon. Do you agree or disagree and why?

How do your commentaries and/or translations define or translate “desire” in verses 14 and 15?

Let's read **James 1:16 – 18**.

Considering the context of verses 13 – 15, what deception is James talking about in verse 16?

What is the significance of “every” being stated twice in verse 17?

What is the significance of the gifts coming down from above?

What is the meaning of the very poetic imagery and message in “coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (ESV)? See NIV.

What is the meaning of verse 18?

Since we are God's firstfruits, what does that say about ownership of our lives?

Let's read **James 1:19 – 21**.

Note James' use of "my dear brothers" in verse 19 and also similar use in previous verse we have read (verses 2 and 16). We will continue to see that phrase repeated throughout **James**. Who is included in "my dear brothers"?

Of what other book(s) of the Bible does the content and style of these verses remind you? What type of Biblical writing is this?

What is the significance of anger in our lives?

How do we "get rid of all moral filth" as stated in verse 21?

What should be our response or action if we do not see ourselves becoming less angry or quick tempered?

James 1:22 – 25 is a fairly well-known passage of Scripture. How do we often fall into the trap of which James is warning us?

Describe in your own words what is meant by the analogy in verses 23 – 24?

How can the “perfect law” give freedom? (Hint: Our concept of freedom being defined as “absence of restriction” might get in the way of how we think about the Law.)

The NIV translates verse 25 as:

“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.” NIV

Both Lutheran and non-Lutheran commentators point out that the Greek verb (and participle for all of you grammarians 😊) in this verse for “looks intently” is the same verb used to describe how the Apostle Peter looked into the tomb on Resurrection Day (**Luke 24:12**). Dr. Giese points out that the verb is also used five times in the NT. Besides Peter at the tomb, the verb is used to describe how the Apostle John (**John 20:5**) and Mary Magdalene (**John 20:11**) each looked into the tomb. He also points out that the verb is used in **1 Peter 1:12**. Let’s read **1 Peter 1:10 – 12** to gain some context. How does this help give insight on how to interpret **James 1:25**?

If we look intently into the mirror of God’s Law, what will we see and what “will be the outcome” as opposed to what “should be the outcome”? See also **Hebrews 4:12**.

Why will be blessed if we do not forget what the “perfect law” says and do what it says? What will that blessing look like?

Let’s read **James 1:26 – 27**.

Dr. Giese in the *Concordia Commentary* states:

With 1:26 – 27, James revisits and encapsulates major points of chapter 1; he also inaugurates chapter 2. Having stated the gifts of God, especially the gift of salvation

and thereby possession of the firstfruits of the new creation (1:17 – 18), James then described how that new creation looks (or fails to look) as it unfolds in the Christian life (1:19 – 25).

Therefore, these verses are transitional in the book of **James**. Dr. Giese notes that James uses the word, “religious” in verse 26 rather than “Christian” indicating a wider application in society.

How is not holding our tongues a sign of not being “religious” as well as not Christian?

What does it mean to keep ourselves “unstained from the world”? What does that look like in day-to-day living?

How does **Amos 2:6 – 7** correlate and help illuminate **James 1:27**?

“Liberal Christian Churches” are often known for their work with the poor and other “social ministry” while being lax on issues of “moral purity” (sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, abortion, etc.). At the same time “Conservative/Evangelical Christian churches are known for being “strict” on issues of moral purity but yet weak on taking care of the poor and downtrodden in their surrounding community. This even seeps into our politics. What should the life of a Spiritually healthy individual look like on these issues?

A Spiritually healthy congregation?

What does “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God” mean for the individual and the congregation? How is that achieved?

Let's read **James 2:1 – 13**.

Note the extreme difference between the two individuals described in verse 2. What corollaries are there from Jesus' teachings?

How do these verses apply beyond the church?

Why is it so important to not show favoritism toward one "class" of people over another and why is it so difficult for us to not do that?

Verse 5 begins with "**Listen, my beloved brothers**". Dr. Giese points out that James is using the same language found in the Septuagint for many passages in the OT including **Deuteronomy 5:1**. Compare the two verses. What is the significance of what James is saying?

How would you explain verse 5? What is God saying here and how does it apply to us?

How, in verse 7, do the rich defame the name of Christ Jesus and what is the implication if we defer to rich?

To what does the last part of verse 1 along with verse 13 point? Why is that perspective important in understanding **James**?

In commenting on verses 12 and 13, Dr. Giese describes us as having an “eschatological identity”. What does that mean and what is the significance of that?

James 2:14 – 26 probably creates the most controversy in the book, or at least some of the most well-known controversy in the book of **James**, especially verse 24. Let’s read **James 2:14 – 26**.

Note the reference to “brother or sister” in verse 15. How does this help illuminate the many previous and subsequent references in James to just “brothers”?

Why is the specific reference to “sister” an important one in the application of verse 15 in the life of the congregation?

Compare **James 2:22 – 26** to **Romans 4:13 – 25**. How do you reconcile the apparent contradiction?

How does **Matthew 25:31 – 40** and **Ephesians 2:8 – 10** help us understand James’ point and help with the reconciliation of Paul’s and James’ teaching?

How does this help us understand the ending of the Athanasian Creed which reads:

He suffered for our salvation;
he descended to hell;
he arose from the dead;
he ascended to heaven;
he is seated at the Father's right hand;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
At his coming all people will arise bodily
and give an accounting of their own deeds.
Those who have done good will enter eternal life,
and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.

What point is James making in **James 2:18 – 20**?

When read in a superficial manner, and especially out of context with the rest of **James**, verses 21 – 25 probably give the most “heartburn” to Lutherans (and many other Christians). Compare these verses to **Romans 4:1 – 8**. How do you explain the apparent contradiction between the two passages? Hint: Go back and read **James 1:16 – 18** and **James 1:21**.

Any other thoughts/concerns on this section of Scripture?

Let’s read **James 3:1 – 12**.

These verses deal with how our Christian faith should impact our speech. In essence, looking at what is on our tongues indicates what is in our hearts.

What do your commentaries say about the word, “teachers” in verse one and what is (are) the implication(s) for us?

Dr. Giese points out that verse 2 is transitional in that the topic is moving from teachers to Christians in general in their daily conduct in life pertaining to speech. What is the meaning as well as the significance of saying that if one does not “stumble” in their speech they are a “perfect man”?

Compare **Matthew 12:33 – 37** to this section of **James** recalling that James is the younger half-brother of Jesus and that the **Book of James** parallels Jesus’ sermons. What similarities do you see and how does the **Matthew** passage help illuminate this passage in **James**.

Looking at these verses and life in general, what is the power of words in our lives and society? How do words impact us?

How does **Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, and 24** relate to this passage in **James**?

How does **Genesis 1:26** also help illuminate the power of the tongue?

Is the adage “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” true? Why or why not?

In the previous passage we read, **Matthew 12:33 – 37**, Jesus refers to the Pharisees as a “brood of vipers”. How does this square with how we are instructed to speak in **Ephesians 4:11 – 16** as well as **James 3:9 – 10**?

How does **Proverbs 25:15** relate to this topic and what is this passage mean?

On the subject of our speech and truth, one commentator points out that the intent and goal of our speech matters. Relative to these passages is **James** he states:

“Love without truth is a lie...and truth without love is not really committed to the truth...Only when our tongues are both truthful and loving are our tongues truly life-giving”.

The first part of the quote easily makes sense. How do the second and third parts of the quote relate to the passage in **Proverbs** and thus make sense?

What is the warning for us in verses 6 – 8 and how do we “tame” our tongues?

How does **James 3:2 – 3** seem to be somewhat contradictory to **James 3:10 – 12** and yet how are the verses complimentary to each other?

Let’s read **James 3:13 – 18**.

What problem(s) is(are) James addressing in these verses that appears to exist among the recipients of James’ book/letter?

What warning is there for us in the Church and in society as we assess/interact with those who seem to have wisdom?

Understanding James’ Jewish/OT roots, who, specifically, is the source of the “wisdom that comes down from above”?

How many characteristics are listed that describe the “wisdom that comes down from above” and what is the significance of that, especially to an audience of Jewish background?

Of the things listed, which of those characteristics really hit home for you or the Church in terms of conviction (The “mirror” of the Law).

What one characteristic is emphasized multiple times in verses 17 and 18 and what is the significance of that for the Church? Also take note how this verse leads into Chapter 4.

This next section deals with quarrels in the Church. Satan works overtime in all Christian congregations to cause “quarrels” and Lutherans are certainly not exempt. One commentator states that the source of almost every fight is that “we want to please ourselves”. We want our own way and others want theirs. He goes on to state that this selfishness is the basic cause of the breakdown of community in any setting and its source is pride. As we read **James 4:1 – 10** generally reflect on your own experience(s) in the church when divisions have arisen. Note whether any of the verses ring true to the situations you recall and whether you can identify how people (maybe including yourself) were trying to “please themselves” and how pride plays into that. Do you have any experiences you want to share? We will revisit this question later.

Beginning at **James 4:1** note James’ change in tenor in this section to a harsher tone compared to the previous verses. Dr. Geise points out that the word used for “quarrels” in the ESV and NIV in verse one is actually a word for “war” and the KJV translates it as such. Biblical scholars agree that this is a figurative use but it shows the level and severity of the conflicts within the congregation(s) to whom **James** is written.

Compare verses 1 and 2 to Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5:21 – 26**. How do these verses help interpret **James**?

What does “friendship with the world” mean/look like?

How does **John 17:20 – 23** relate to these verses in **James** and emphasize their importance?

When is it appropriate/necessary to disagree in a congregation? How does one do that in a God-pleasing fashion?

The famous revivalist preacher, Jonathan Edwards noted how spiritual pride hurt the development of community in the Church squelching the growth of congregations that were born out of the revivals he led. He made a list comparing spiritual pride to humility. A paraphrase of his list follows.

1. Spiritual pride makes you more aware of others' faults than you are of your own, but humility disposes you to be far more aware of your own faults than of others.
2. Therefore, pride leads you, when you speak of others' faults, to have an air of contempt and disdain, but humility means that whenever you do speak of others' faults you only ever do it with grief and mercy.
3. Pride leads you to quickly separate from people who you have criticized or who have criticized you, but Spiritual humility means that you stick with people even through difficult relationships. You don't give up on them.
4. A proud person is dogmatic and sure about every point of belief. Proud people cannot distinguish between major and minor points of belief because everything the proud person believes is major.
5. A proud person either loves to confront because he/she likes winning or proud people refuse to confront because he/she does not want criticism and controversy. (Both actions are self-centered.) A humble person confronts when it is necessary.
6. A proud person is often unhappy and sorry for themselves. Proud people are filled with self-pity because a: they are so sure how life ought to go; and b: they are sure they deserve a good life. But humble people say "I deserve to be cast off but only by only God's grace am I living and I don't know what is best for me." As a result proud people are filled with self-pity and unhappy with life and humble people very seldom are.

Do you agree or disagree with his points? Do any points particularly hit home for you personally or for what you have witnessed in Christian congregations?

How is humility different from low self-esteem?

How do the following verses provide solutions for quarreling?

Matthew 5:23 – 26: _____

James 3:16 – 18 _____

James 4:5 – 10 _____

What is the meaning of verses 7 - 8?

Let's read **James 4:11 – 12**. In general, what is God telling us in these verses?

More specifically, what is the meaning of the last two sentences of verse 11?

In what situation should we be judging each other? See **1 Corinthians 6:1 – 8**.

Let's read **James 4:13 – 17**.

Dr. Giese in *Concordia Commentary* on **James** notes that the Greek for “Come now” (ESV) or “Now listen” (NIV) in verse 13 (and also 5:1) is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. However other Greek works/writings of the time help us understand that James is using an “upbraiding call to attention”. Another commentator states that it is like us saying, “Woe to you” or more in current vernacular, “look you” to someone. Therefore, this opening is not a pleasant or pleading concept but rather a harsher beginning to the challenge of the behavior subsequently described.

How do you differentiate normal planning of projects in life or business from what is being said here – or do you? See **Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 16:9, and Jeremiah 9:23 – 24**.

Relative to these verses, one commentator points out that it is commonly heard throughout our culture in school classrooms, movies, TV shows, motivational speeches, etc. that “you can achieve anything you want” or “you can become anyone you want to be. Don't let anyone hold you back”. He describes this as the Life Control Illusion. Under this illusion is

the belief that you can control your future with careful planning, research, education, due diligence, and strategizing. This concept is also integral to business and even the church. Why is this an illusion and how do we balance this with encouraging and promoting education and proper planning and not becoming fatalistic in:

Our lives: _____

Our business/occupation: _____

Our church: _____

How then should a true leader faithfully challenge or inspire others to take on a challenge? Or how do you identify the source of our confidence?

What are the implications of verse 14 and why is James inserting this thought here?

In light of verse 14, how do we defend that our lives have any significance?

How does verse 17 fit into the context of the arrogant/boastful merchant that James is addressing?

What would be examples of “sins of omission” in the day-to-day world in which you live?

Let's Read **James 5:1 – 6.**

What kind of warning or language is being used in these verses and what are some examples of the language in this text? Compare **Isaiah 13:6 – 10.**

Starting with last sentence in verse 3 and continuing through verse 5, against what aspects of the wealthy is James giving such dramatic and dire warnings?

Does the last sentence of verse 3 have any application in the building of foundations to fund Christian activities only from the earnings/interest? Why or why not?

What is the meaning of verse 6? To whom does it refer?

As we read **James 5:7 – 11** note the quick shift from the harsh judgments of **James 5:1 – 6** to an encouraging tone to the “brothers” in these verses.

How do verses 1 – 6 relate to 7 – 11 considering the “therefore” in verse 7?

How can James say “the coming of the Lord is at hand” considering Jesus has not come for 2000 years since then?

What does verse 9 mean, especially the last sentence?
