

The inspired writer(s) of the *Letter of James* constructed the letter in the same well-defined teaching, literary form that was used throughout the OT and NT. It is a series of parableStories each of which gives meaning to the one preceding it and prepares the reader for the one that follows it. I am not showing the twins within the Greek text in this example. They are shown however in bold print in English with a superscript identifying the location of its partner. You will immediately notice that a twin exists in an *unshaded* statement of every section.

This letter was constructed as seven parableStories. Biblical scholars, unaware that the letter was written in a literary form, have taught us for centuries that the letter does not address a particular event or cite a cause or reason for why the inspired writer addressed and sent it to the dispersed Jewish Christian communities. The following is the middle parableStory of the seven.

#### **Focus Section of parableStory 4**

**fF** <sup>26</sup>For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead<sup>2:17</sup>

**sF** **3** <sup>1</sup>Not many of you should become<sup>1:22</sup> teachers my brothers and sisters, for

**rF** you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness,  
<sup>2</sup>For

**wF** all of us make many mistakes.

The leaders of the dispersed Jewish Christian communities are being addressed by James, ‘Just as the body without the spirit is dead [or better, just as Church without the Spirit is dead], so faith without works is also dead.’

This **fF**, then, implies that James is addressing some specific Jewish Christian communities whose actions are not being led by the Holy Spirit. This *sets the stage* for James to address the leaders of the Jewish Christian communities with the sobering statement that not many of them should become teachers of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the **sF**.

‘You know that we who teach [the Good News] will be judged with greater strictness.’ This *rF* reflects on the *sF* where James is addressing one or more of the communities of Jewish Christians with the sobering statement that not many of them should become teachers of the Good News.

The wisdom of the focus Section, the *wF*, is a statement of truth that all make mistakes [if they do not choose to be led by the Spirit as they teach]. It gives meaning to the *sF*, the sobering statement that not many of these Jewish Christians whom James is addressing should become teachers of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Since this *Focus* section must set the stage for the *Story* section, we know before reading further that this parableStory 4 is going to address, in some way, a wretched teaching, given by some Jewish Christian teachers of the Word, who have chosen not to be led by the Spirit!

#### Story Section of parableStory 4

*fS* Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking<sup>1:18</sup> is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

*sS* <sup>3</sup>If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies.

*rS* <sup>4</sup>Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever<sup>3:16</sup> the will of the pilot directs.

*wS* <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

If a teaching is perfect, it comes from God; therefore, *it is an inspired teaching*. Since most of you have likely read my book about ‘*the fish*,’ that is primarily on parableStories from the John gospel, you are already aware that some of the gospel parableStories are filled with metaphors. Here in the *fS*, the bridle is a metaphor for the *inspired teaching* that is meant to keep the whole body, a metaphor for *the Church*, under control.

So, when someone makes no mistakes in speaking [about the Good News of Jesus Christ], that *certain* person is able to keep the *Body of Christ* in the world, *the Church*, in check with a bridle, *an inspired teaching*. This *fS* sets the stage for the dilemma of this parableStory [and the particular event and reason why James has written this Letter to the Jewish Christian communities]. He is restraining those who are giving a wretched teaching with one that is inspired, *this parableStory 4*, the bits he is now placing into the big mouths of certain mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers, the *sS*.

We will come to see that the *wW* is a statement of truth from James that from the same mouth of the mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers come words blessing [God] and words cursing [their gentile brothers in Christ]. Since this statement must *give specific meaning to the sS*, the dilemma of this parableStory, we know that James, the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, is the inspired teacher who speaks for the Church and is able to keep the mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers in check with this inspired parableStory 4.

James, therefore, is the *pilot* spoken of in the *rS* [a metaphor for the leader of the Church] who is turning about the large ship, the Church, through the strong winds [the controversy being caused by some Jewish Christian teachers of the Word] with a very *small rudder*. This *rS*, reflects on the metaphor of the *sS*, where James is restraining those who are giving a wretched teaching by using *the bit*, the inspired teaching *that James is placing into the big mouths* of some of the mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers [for these leaders had the responsibility of reading the entire letter to their communities].

The truth given by the *wS* is that the symbolic *tongue* [a metaphor for these mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers who are giving a wretched teaching], is a small part of the one *body* [the Church] yet is filled with arrogance [for these Jewish Christian leaders are teaching that the Law of Moses must also be kept by the baptized gentiles who have and are becoming believers].

With arrogance, these Jewish Christian leaders have ignored Jesus Christ's command to Jew and gentile alike to love one another as he has loved them. *This perfect law*, spoken of within this letter, fulfills the entire Law of Moses]. This **wS** gives meaning to the **sS** where James is taking action to control the *tongue* that is giving their arrogant teaching, so that he can guide their local assemblies.

Yes, in the year 50 in Acts 15:20, the apostles convened the Council of Jerusalem, to reconcile Jewish Christians with the Gentile converts to Christianity. The Council of Jerusalem taught that the Gentile converts were not required to be circumcised. I suggest that James wrote this letter sometime later, because some of the Jewish Christian communities were still not following the decree that had come from The Council.

#### Reflection Section of parableStory 4

**fR** How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

**sR** <sup>6</sup>And the tongue [is] a fire.

**rR** The tongue **is**<sup>4:4</sup> placed among our **members**<sup>4:1</sup> as a world of iniquity;

**wR** it stains the whole body,

The Reflection Section must reflect on the Story Section, so the *forest* is also a symbol for the Church.

‘Consider how a great forest [the Church] could be set ablaze by a small fire’ [this disruptive, wretched teaching of an arrogant few]! *This fR sets the stage for the sR*, that *the tongue* [some mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers of the Word] is a fire [a disruptive force].’

These mistake prone Jewish Christians are setting before the members of their Jewish Christian communities a teaching that is a world of iniquity [a grave injustice]. The **rR** reflects on the **sR**, that ‘the tongue is a fire,’ a disruptive force.

The truth of the **wR** is that the wretched teaching defiles the Church, the Body of Christ in the world. It gives meaning to the **sR**, where this tongue is a fire [capable of causing a terrible dissension among its members who are called to be one body, unified to Christ].

## Wisdom Section of parableStory 4<sup>1</sup>

*fW* sets on fire the cycle of *nature*<sup>1:23</sup>, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beast *and* bird, of reptile *and* sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, <sup>8</sup>but

*sW* no one *can*<sup>3:12</sup> tame the *tongue*<sup>1:26</sup>—a restless evil,

*rW* *full*<sup>3:17</sup> of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With *it* we bless the Lord and Father, and with *it* we curse those who are made *in*<sup>2:17</sup> the likeness of God.

*wW* <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

That bird, reptile and sea creature can be and have been tamed by humans. This *fW* sets the stage for the *sW*, that no one can constrain the words spoken by the human tongue—a restless evil [when one chooses not to be led by the Spirit that flows forth from the *Good News*]. The human *tongue* of one's mouth, used here, has its twin in an *un-shaded* statement in verse 1:26.

‘Full of deadly poison, with it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God,’ This *rW* reflects on the *sW*, where man, who is not being led by the Spirit, cannot tame the words that are coming forth from his heart.

In the *rW*, the word *those*, in Greek [*certain people*] identify the ones being cursed, that they are different in some way from these Jewish Christians. The English *made* [in *made* in the likeness of God], in Greek means *to become*, or *to be born*. So, those *certain people*, who have been *born*, [through baptism] *in the likeness of God* and filled with the Spirit to be the image of Christ in the world, are the *gentile converts to Christianity* that *are being cursed* by what's coming forth from the arrogant Jewish Christian teachers.

‘From the same mouth comes blessing [God] and cursing [their gentile brothers in Christ].’ This *wW*, gives meaning to the *sW* where [without the Spirit] man cannot tame the words that come forth from his heart.

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<sup>1</sup> Recall that the only exception to the *rule of two*, the fact that twins must be in both stories, is when both twins are in the same statement and can not be separated by using one as a fragment. Here in the Wisdom statement there are two such exceptions, terribly uncommon but sometimes present in statements that are difficult to understand. They are shown in bold print; but without superscripts and with no underlining.

The truth of the *wW*, ‘From the same mouth comes blessing [God] and cursing [the baptized gentiles],’ *gives specific meaning to the sS* where James, to guide the local assemblies, is forced to place his inspired letter [that contains this parableStory 4] into the big mouths of these mistake prone, Jewish Christian teachers.

#### **Appropriating the Wisdom Section of parableStory 4**

*fAW* My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.

*sAW*<sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour forth from the same<sup>5:18</sup> opening both fresh<sup>3:12</sup> and brackish water?

*rAW*<sup>12</sup> Can<sup>3:8</sup> a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, *yield* olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water *yield fresh*<sup>3:11</sup>.

*wAW*<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you?

This Section is how and/or why the truth of the Wisdom Section is to be appropriated or put into practice, so the words, *living water*, *olives*, *figs*, and *grapevine* must be understood in the context of the newly baptized gentiles.

My brothers and sisters in Christ this [blessing God and cursing the baptized gentile converts] ought not be so! *This fAW sets the stage for the sAW*, ‘Can a spring pour forth from the same opening, both fresh [the *living water* from which one receives the Holy Spirit] and brackish water [a symbol for being spiritually unclean]?’ [No way; they cannot coexist!]

The fig tree [a gospel symbol for the old temple cult that had been fulfilled by Christ] can not yield olives [whose oil will be used to anoint the forgiven in parableStory 7], nor can the branches of the grapevine [that symbolize the union of the baptized with Christ] yield figs, and no more can salt water yield fresh [the *living waters*, the good news of Jesus Christ]. This *rAW*, *reflects on the sAW*, the question of whether a spring can pour forth from the same opening *living water* and brackish water.

The exhortation to the mistake prone, Jewish Christian teachers to come to their senses and be wise, *the wAW*, *gives meaning to the sAW*, ‘Can a spring pour forth from the same opening, both fresh [the *living water* from which one receives the Holy Spirit] and brackish water [a symbol for being spiritually unclean]?’ [No way; again, they cannot coexist!]

The exhortation given to this sect of Jewish Christians by James, is to come to their senses regarding this controversy and choose to be wise. This *wAW*, is how the mistake prone Jewish Christian teachers *can come to understand*, that blessing God and cursing the gentile Christians with circumcision are presently coming forth from their mouth at the same time, the *wW*.

Using the literary form of the parableStory, we have received the intended meaning of the text of parableStory 4 from *The Letter of James* and the reason James has written his letter to the Jewish, Christian communities in diaspora.

[The next of the parableStories that I will be presenting here at *inparables.com* will be parableStory 7 of *The Letter of James*.]