

THE EPISTLE OR LETTER OF JAMES

The letter of James is one of the New Testament books referred to as Catholic letters or Universal letters.

It is a universal letter because it is not addressed to any specific audience but instead it is addressed to all scattered Christians across the world.

It is a practical letter that calls upon Christians to put their faith into good action.

The letter is believed to have been a sermon but was later transformed into a letter.

It contains few specific references to Jesus Christ.

It also contains few direct quotations from Jesus' teachings.

This letter was addressed to the twelve tribes of Israel in Diaspora, that is, the New Israel scattered all over the world.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE LETTER OF JAMES

The authorship of the letter of James is unclear, the writer only identifies himself as "James" yet during the apostolic age; there were three different people known as James as discussed below;

There was James the disciple of Jesus Christ as well as the brother of John the disciple the sons of Zebedee.

However, James the disciple and brother of John cannot be given authorship of the letter of James because he was martyred by King Herod Agrippa around 44AD.

The letter of James is believed to have been written around 62AD after the death of James the brother of John.

There was also James the disciple of Jesus Christ the son of Alphaeus.

However James the son of Alphaeus cannot be given the authorship of the letter of James because he played a minor role during the apostolic age as he is mentioned a few times.

Yet the author of this letter appears to have played a great role during the early Church period.

There was also James the servant of God as well as the brother of Jesus Christ.

James the brother of Jesus is the one who wrote this letter because of the following reasons;

The traditional church attributes the authorship to James the brother of Jesus because he had great influence during the early church.

James the brother of Jesus Christ was a Bishop of the church of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15:13

James the brother of Jesus Christ was among the eye witnesses of the risen Jesus Christ leading to his conversion to Christianity.

James the brother of Jesus Christ was the head of the Jerusalem council meeting that resolved how Gentiles were to become Christians.

He was also among the people who waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 1:14.

Much as James the brother of Jesus Christ had not been a devoted follower during Jesus' public ministry, he was later converted to Christianity on the day of Pentecost.

Despite such disagreements on the authorship of James' letter, James the servant of God as well as the brother of Jesus Christ is the most suggested author of the letter of James.

Question

1. Comment on the authorship of the letter of James
2. Discuss the authorship of the epistle of James.
3. "James is the author of the epistle of James" Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. (Here give a stand point that; No, James is not the author of the epistle of James, then give the above argument)

Aims/Purpose of writing the letter of James

To encourage Christians to back up their faith with good action

To encourage Christians to control their tongue otherwise they would face the judgement of God

To encourage Christians to endure trials, troubles and temptations instead of blaming God to be the cause

To encourage them to put the word of God they had heard into practice

To call upon his readers to treat all people equally instead of discriminating the poor basing on their appearance

To teach them about the true wisdom that comes from God which is characterized by virtues like love, humility, peacefulness, etc.

To encourage the rich Christians to give assistance to the widows and orphans instead of just wishing them well.

To encourage the rich Christians to trust in spiritual wealth instead of earthly wealth which wither like a flower of wild a plant.

To also encourage rich Christians to involve God in their business plans

To encourage Christians to pray to God with faith in times of trouble and happiness

To encourage them to practice the love for one another in society

To encourage the poor Christians to have hope for the return of Jesus Christ

To encourage them to continue being patient until the day Jesus would come back instead of being impatient.

To encourage them to be friends of God instead of being friendly to the world which was even the cause of wars, fights and quarrels in society

To encourage them to speak the truth by saying yes to mean yes and no to mean no

To caution the preachers to be careful when using the tongue because they will be judged with greater strictness

To advise Christians to be quick to listen but slow to answer

To warn the Church leaders who used to show warm welcome to the rich yet telling to stand behind.

He wanted to give moral instructions to Christians that had been scattered all over the world

He wanted to counter the false teachings on faith alone without action

To encourage Christians to help fellow Christians who backslide and bring them back to God.

Question

1. Discuss the purpose for which the letter of James was written.
2. Comment on the aims of writing the epistle of James.
3. Justify the need of writing the letter of James.

Why the epistle of James took long to be accepted into the New Testament Canon

The letter of James took long to be canonized because of unclear authorship i.e. the author only identifies himself as James yet there were three personalities with the same name James in the early church.

It appeared to contradict with the letter of Paul to the Galatians on the subject of faith yet Galatians was in circulation before James' letter. Paul had taught that a person is put right with god by faith and faith alone but James' letter stressed that a person is put right with god by his faith and actions instead of faith alone.

The letter of James gives few specific references to Jesus Christ as the central figure yet for the book to be canonized it had to emphasize Jesus Christ as the central figure.

It hardly gives any direct quotations from the teaching of Jesus Christ compared to the New Testament books.

It gives few references to the Old Testament scriptures yet for the book to be canonized had to refer to the Old Testament scriptures.

The letter hardly contains the message of the kerygma yet for a book to be canonized had to contain the good news.

James the brother of Jesus Christ was not among the original disciples of Jesus Christ during his public ministry.

James' writer was at first a devout follower of Judaism instead of Jesus.

The letter is more of a practical letter than a doctrinal letter i.e. it leaves out the most important Christian doctrines like baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Question;

Account for the delayed canonization of the letter of James in the New Testament canon.

Concerns of the letter of James

James is concerned with a number of issues that were prevailing in the Christian community at his time and he raises these issues in his letter namely;

Temptations and trials; James calls upon the Christians to endure during temptations and trials as a test of faith.

Poverty; he advises the poor to be glad when God lifts them up and to keep their hope in the return of Jesus.

Riches/wealth; He advises the rich to be glad when God brings them down for not taking care of the poor. To him earthly wealth is temporal and Christians should struggle to accumulate their wealth in heaven where rust never riches.

Discrimination/Prejudice; He encourages them to treat others equally in church instead of discriminating the poor because of their outward appearance.

Boasting about tomorrow/pride; He advises the rich to always put God in their business plans.

Faith and Action; He encourages Christians to back up their faith and actions like Abraham who backed his faith with action by living a righteous life. To him faith without action is dead.

Hearing and Doing; He advises them to be quick at listening but slow to act. In other words he calls upon Christians to think before they act.

Peace and stability; He advises his readers to desist from giving in to bodily desires for the sake of preserving peace. To James all wars, quarrels and fights result from people struggling to fulfil the desires of the flesh.

Wisdom from above; He advises those who lacked wisdom to pray and ask for it from God. He further explains the characteristics of wisdom like peacefulness, patience and goodness.

Prayer; He encourages Christians to pray with faith to God for each other both in times of trouble and happiness.

Patience; He encourages Christians to keep waiting patiently until the day of the return of Jesus Christ instead of being impatient.

Judging one another; He advises them to leave judgement of fellow Christians to God who is the supreme judge.

The control of the tongue; He advises them to control the tongue instead of using it to praise God and curse fellow mankind.

Swearing falsely in the name of God; He advises them to speak the truth by saying yes to mean yes and no to mean no instead of swearing falsely in God' name.

Friendship with the world; He advises them to be friends of God by submitting to Him instead of being friendly to the world which was the cause of wars, fights and killings in the society.

Question

1. Discuss the major concerns of James in his letter
2. Discuss the concerns of James' letter
3. Explain the concerns of the epistle of James

Particular evils/immorality James taught about

There was absence of love for one another among Christians

The Christians created class distinctions between the poor and the rich basing on outward appearance

There was exploitation and oppression of the poor by the rich.

The rich Christians had failed to take care of the poor Christians and yet they lived in luxury.

Christians especially the rich ones were boasting about tomorrow.

The poor Christians were being dragged to courts of law by the rich Christians

Christians had fights, quarrels, wars and killings among themselves.

The Christians failed to put the word of God they heard into action

The Christians failed to put their faith into good actions.

The Christians had failed to resist the temptations and trials that they were facing in life.

The Christians were attributing the origin of trials and temptations from God yet they came from evil desires within them.

There was trusting in worldly wisdom instead of trusting in the wisdom of God.

There was trusting of worldly wealth instead of trusting in God' providence.

The Christians had become impatient about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Christians misused the tongue by using it to praise God and at the same time to curse people.

The Christians were speaking evil of the good name of God (blasphemy).

Christians had taken up God's work of Judging by judging fellow Christians.

Christians were swearing falsely in the name of God instead of speaking the truth when making promises.

Christians were friends to the world instead of being friendly to God by submitting to Him.

Christians prayed to God without faith yet they were expected to pray with faith.

Question

1. What evils of his time does James talk about?
2. Examine the particular evils of his time that James speaks against in his letter.
3. Comment on the nature of immorality that existed in the audience of James' letter.
4. Account for the teaching of James on faith in his letter.

How the church attempts to overcome such evils at James' time when they surface in Uganda today

Church has encouraged prayer to God when evil manifests

Church calls upon Christians to remain firm amidst such evils

Church calls upon Christians to live holy lives

Church calls upon Christians to have love for one another

Church encourages Christians to be submissive to God.

Church encourages the Christians to put the word of God into practice instead of just listening.

Church encourages the Christians to be friends to God than befriending the world.

Church encourages the Christians to keep their hopes in the return of Jesus Christ.

Church encourages the Christians to use their tongue to glorify God and not to curse people.

Church encourages the Christians to trust in Godly wisdom other than human wisdom.

Church encourages the Christians to acquire material wealth in the right way through hard work instead of exploiting others.

Church encourages the Christians to humble themselves before others instead of being proud.

Church encourages unity among Christians instead of creating distinctions between the rich and poor in the society.

The church calls upon Christians to work for peace, harmony and justice in society.

Question

1a) What particular evils of his time did James teach against?

b) How does the church attempt to overcome such evils in Uganda today?

Relevance of James' letter to Christians today

Christians should speak the truth by saying yes to mean yes and no to mean no instead of swearing falsely.

Christians should be quick to listen but slow to speak back.

Christians should seek spiritual wisdom since James says that earthly wisdom is useless before God.

Christians should be friends of God instead of being friends to the world.

Rich Christians should involve God in their future business plans instead of boasting about tomorrow.

The poor Christians should maintain their faith in God and be glad when God makes them rich.

Christians should balance between earthly wisdom and the Godly wisdom that comes from above.

Christians should remain patient until the day Jesus Christ comes back.

They should be patient just like a gardener who waits for his crops to yield fruits as put by James

Christians should copy the example of Abraham who put his faith into actions and God accepted his righteousness.

Christians should pray in times of trouble for James says God answers the prayer of a faithful man.

Christians should obey all God's commandments since to James breaking one commandment is like breaking all of them.

The rich Christians should use their wealth to bring happiness to those who are poor.

Christians should pray for the sick and even anoint them with oil where necessary.

Christians should exercise equality irrespective of sex, race, status, religion, colour and so on.

Christians should work for peace and friendship through proper use of the tongue.

Christians should accompany their faith with actions for James says that faith without action is dead.

How James' letter is irrelevant to modern Christians today

James advises the rich to take care of the poor but this could encourage laziness among the poor because they expect help.

James advises the rich to be glad when God brings them down but no human being can rejoice when his wealth is taken away.

He advises the sick Christians to be taken to Church elders to be prayed for however people will always first go to the hospital.

He also advises Christians to confess their sins to one another in public which irrelevant to avoid arrests and shame.

James discourages discrimination among Christians however when very important people like presidents attend some functions they have to be given their place of honor.

James advises Christians to remain patient until the return of Jesus Christ however one cannot be patient without salary, shelter, food, clothe and so on.

James advises Christians to judgement of human beings to God but this would render Christian judges in courts of law jobless.

Question

1. What is the relevance of this letter of James for Christians today?
2. To what extent is the letter of James relevant to Christians in Uganda today?
3. How far is James' epistle applicable / valid to the life of modern Christians in Uganda?

JAMES' TEACHING ON TRIAL AND TEMPTATIONS 1:2-4, 12-18; 5:11

Suffering in form of difficulties and trials is part of Christian life because even Jesus Christ suffered. Christians who suffer share the suffering of their master Jesus Christ.

He advised them to resist trials and temptations just as Jesus Christ did in order to triumph.

He advises Christians to consider themselves fortunate when faced with trials and temptations because they develop endurance

To James, trials and temptations are meant to test the strength of the Christian faith in God.

He encourages the Christians to endure trials and temptations.

He says that those who endure trials and temptations with patience become perfect and complete in the eyes of God.

He advises Christians to pray to God to give them wisdom to endure when faced with trials and temptations.

As they pray, James encourages them to do it without doubt so as to receive wisdom from God to overcome temptations.

Those who endure trials and temptations to the end would be rewarded with eternal life from God.

He called upon them to copy the example of Job who successfully endured the trials of his faith.

To James, trials and temptations do not come from God but from people's evil desires. So people should not blame God for God cannot be tempted by God.

He called upon his readers to avoid evil desires because they lead to temptations, temptations leads to sin and sin leads to death.

He teaches that God only gives good things. So every perfect gift is from God.

He called upon them to maintain love for one another and God whenever in trouble.

He advises them to remain happy and faithful during times of trials and temptations.

He also called upon Christians to have complete dependence on God at all times.

Question

1. Discuss the teaching of James on trials and endurance in times of difficulties.
2. Examine James' teaching on temptations and trials in his letter.

Relevancy/Lessons modern Christians learn from the teachings of James on temptations and trials

Christians should pray for wisdom from God when they are faced with trials and temptations.

Christians should expect trials and temptations in their lives since to James they are part of life.

Christians should avoid tempting situations that may lead them to sin.

Christians should thank/praise God for every perfect gift they have since to James everything good comes from God.

Christians realize that trials and temptations are meant to strengthen their faith and make them perfect.

Christians should try and overcome trials and temptations just like their master Jesus Christ did.

Christians are called upon to be patient during trials and temptations so as to overcome them at the end.

Christians realize that temptations are not from God but they originate from man' evil desires. So they should not blame God as the cause of temptations.

Christians realize that those who endure and overcome trials and temptations will be rewarded with the gift of eternal life at the end.

Christians are called upon to remain faithful to God through their trials and temptations.

Christians should maintain love for one another and God whenever in trouble.

Christians should be happy and full of joy when faced with trials and temptations.

Christians are called upon to have self-control over their bodily desires because giving in to those bodily desires leads to sin and death.

Question

1. How relevant is James' teaching about trials and temptations to Christians in Uganda today?

JAMES' TEACHING ON PREJUDICE/ PREJUDICE BEHAVIOUR (2:1-13)

There was the problem of discrimination among Christians based on wealth during James' time.

James advises Christians not to treat people according to their outward appearance.

He gives an example of the rich man who enters the Church well-dressed followed by a poor man dressed in rags and the Church ushers/officers rush to find the best seat for the rich but order the poor man to stand or sit on the floor.

James says that when Christians do that they are guilty of making judgement based on evil motives.

James condemns such behavior as prejudice because it is based on outward appearance or wealth.

He calls it false respect for worldly wealth which is temporary.

He says such actions contradict Jesus' life style for he associated with people of all kinds.

He says that God chose the poor Christians of the world to be rich in faith.

God also chose the poor Christians to inherit the kingdom of heaven and so they should thank God for what they are.

He advises Christians to desist from dragging the poor to courts of law and thereby spoiling the name of God.

He advises them to love one another as they loved themselves.

He emphasizes that all people are equal before God, so there was no need to discriminate against the poor.

James says those who made distinctions between the poor and the rich were supposed to leave the work of judgement to God the only Judge.

To James riches cannot bring man closer to God and poverty cannot distance man from God. Both poverty and riches are the same in the eyes of God.

He advises that Christians should not favor the rich at the expense of the poor because if they did so, the rich would mistreat the poor.

He advises them to judge others with mercy so that God also judges them with mercy.

He reminds them that the rich whom they gave respect were the very people who caused trouble and oppressed the poor by dragging them to courts of law.

He also reminds them that the rich were the ones who spoke evil of the good name of God.

He reminds the rich people to speak and act as people who will also be judged by Jesus Christ.

He says that treating people according to their outward appearance is sin against God.

He says that the same God who says do not commit adultery was the same God who says do not kill

That whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all.

Relevance/Lessons/Applications of James' teaching about prejudice/discrimination to modern Christians

Christians should treat both the rich and poor people equally.

Christians should love one another without discrimination.

Christians should associate with all kinds of people irrespective of their status.

Christians especially the poor should appreciate their status because they will inherit the kingdom of God if they remain faithful to God.

The Rich Christians should treat the poor people fairly in the society

The Rich Christians ought to use their wealth to bring happiness to the poor.

The Rich Christians ought to glorify the name of God instead of speaking evil of it.

The Poor Christians should maintain their faith in God despite being poor.

Christians should respect and follow all commandments of God.

Christians should work for peace, harmony and justice in society.

Christians should promote unity amongst themselves instead of creating distinctions/divisions in society.

Christians should put their trust in God instead of trusting in material wealth which is temporal.

Christians should accept the poor people in their homes and public places.

Christians ought to make judgement based on good motives and evidence instead of outward appearance and evil motives.

Christians ought to have mercy when passing judgement to other Christians.

Christians ought to settle their differences amicably instead of dragging each other especially the poor to courts of law.

Christians should appreciate that God can chose to make some rich and others poor and hence give support to each other.

Christians realize that sincere judgement belongs to God who is the supreme judge. They should always give room for God's final judgement since He can see the heart.

Irrelevance of James' teaching on discrimination in some modern situations

James calls for equal treatment of people which is not applicable in modern situations like when a president attends a function. Special seats have to be reserved for him and his security.

James condemns the rich for dragging the poor to courts of law which is irrelevant because the courts of law are there to ensure justice.

James calls upon the poor to be grateful to God because they are rich in faith and the kingdom of God belongs to them however this is irrelevant because they must work hard to provide for their basic needs.

Questions

1. Comment on James' teaching on discrimination in the Church of his time.
2. Analyze James' teaching on prejudiced behavior in the church.
3. Examine the teaching of James on preferential treatment in the church of his time.
4. What lessons does the modern church learn from James' teaching on prejudiced behavior?
5. To what extent is James' teaching on discrimination applicable to modern situations in Uganda?

Reasons why James taught about Discrimination/Prejudice

There was class distinction between the poor and the rich Christians.

There was discrimination practiced in Church based on outward appearance on wealth.

This act of discrimination was sin before God.

Some Christians were judging others without mercy.

Christians were not showing love for one another.

The rich were blaspheming the good name of the Lord.

Christians judged others basing on evil motives.

Christians were giving more respect to the rich and well-dressed than the poor dressed in rags.

Church ushers or officers gave special seats to the rich while the poor were ordered to stand or sit on the floor.

He wanted to encourage Christians to treat each other equally before God

He wanted to discourage people from trusting in worldly wealth which is temporal.

He wanted to encourage the poor to maintain their faith in God despite being discriminated.

He wanted to encourage the poor who were being discriminated that the kingdom of God belongs to them.

He wanted to remind Christians that the rich whom they gave respect were the very people who oppressed the poor.

Question

1. "My brothers, as believers in Lord Jesus Christ, the lord of glory, you must never treat people in different ways according to their outward appearance" James 2:1 (GNB).
 - a)What led James to utter/make this statement?
 - b)Examine what Christians in Uganda can learn from this teaching.
2. Account for James' teaching on discrimination in his letter.

JAMES' TEACHING ON POVERTY AND RICHES/WEALTH 1:9-11; 2:5-7; 5:1-6

He advises the poor to be glad when God lifts them up and the rich should also be glad when God brings them down.

He advises the poor not to despair or give up but to be happy and thankful to God in their poverty because they will inherit the kingdom of God.

He says that God chose the poor to be rich in faith and heirs to his kingdom.

He advises the poor Christians to be patient and endure in their poverty.

He advises the poor to pray to God for what they do not have because he will provide for them.

Advises the poor Christians to pray to God with the right motives instead of bad motives

He says that the cries of the poor whom the rich oppress had reached God and that God would answer by punishing the rich.

James warns the rich who were using their wealth to oppress the poor that they would face misery in future.

He says that their wealth will be eaten up by moths and their gold and silver be destroyed by rust.

He says the riches will be destroyed in the same way the sun burns a wild plant, its flower to fall off and its beauty destroyed.

He says that the rust on their wealth would bear witness against them and at the end be destroyed with their wealth.

He says that by the rich living a life of luxury and pleasure, they were like cattle fattening themselves for the day of slaughter.

He told the rich to weep and wail for the misery that will come upon them.

He says that wealth is temporary as it fades away as flowers beauty due to the sun's heat.

He calls upon the rich to use their wealth for the benefit of the whole society by helping the widows and orphans.

He advises the rich to show love to the poor Christians.

He says that discrimination basing on riches is a sin before God.

He also calls upon the rich Christians to use their wealth to serve God so as to avoid judgement.

To James, everyone would have to give account of how he used his wealth on day judgement.

He warns Christians not to make wealth out of dubious ways especially by oppressing the poor.

He warned the rich against boasting about their riches and business because wealth is nothing before God.

He advises the rich to involve God when making their business plans instead of boasting about tomorrow.

He also advises the rich to pay the wages of the poor who worked for them instead of exploiting them.

He calls upon the rich to be thankful to God for giving them riches knowing that all good gifts like wealth come from God.

He calls for equal treatment between the rich and the poor because all of them are equal before God.

He condemns the rich people for blaspheming the name of God by speaking evil of the good name of God.

He advises the rich to speak and act as people who will also be judged.

He says that the desire for riches as a source of pleasure was one of the causes of wars, fights and quarrels in society.

He says riches made the rich befriend the world yet friends of the world are God' enemies.

He says that the rich whom they gave respect were the very people who oppressed the poor by dragging them to courts of law.

He advises Christians not to trust in earthly riches which can be destroyed by moths and rust but to keep their wealth in heaven where there is no rust.

Questions

1. Discuss the teaching of James on poverty and wealth.
2. Justify the view that the letter of James is important to both the rich and poor Christians.
3. "The letter of James is concerned with the rich and the poor Christians in society"
Comment.

4. "There is no permanent security in wealth"

Examine the statement in light of what the book of James teaches on poverty and riches.

Relevance/Applications /Lessons of the teaching of James on poverty and riches to modern Christians

Christians should assist people who are in need like widows and orphans.

Christians should pay the salaries and wages of people who work for them

Christians should trust in spiritual gifts instead of material gifts as the former is permanent.

Christians should treat all people equally regardless of their economic status.

Christians should put their trust in God instead of trusting in earthly wealth which is temporary.

Christians should involve God in making their business plans instead of boasting about tomorrow.

Christians should treat the poor fairly instead of exploiting them.

The rich Christians should be glad even when God brings them down.

The rich Christians should thank God since wealth is one of the good gifts given by God.

Christians should promote peace and justice in society instead of dragging the poor to courts of law.

Christians should be friends of God instead of being friends of the world.

Christians should humble themselves before others instead of being proud.

Christians should speak well of the good name of God instead of speaking evil about God.

Christians should use their wealth for the benefit of the society like helping the widows and orphans.

Christians should acquire their wealth through sincere means by working hard instead of exploiting the poor and stealing.

The poor Christians should be glad with their situation and thank God for he has chosen them to be rich in spirit to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Christians should use their wealth to serve God because riches come from God.

Rich Christians should live holy lives in order to avoid God's judgement.

Christians should respect and honor the poor in society.

Question

1. What is the relevance of James' teaching on wealth to the rich Christians in Uganda today?
2. What should be the attitude of the rich Christians in Uganda according to the letter of James?
3. How can James' teaching on wealth help the rich Christians in Uganda to live a proper Christian life?

Reasons why James taught about Poverty and Riches in his letter

The rich Christians were discriminating against the poor Christians.

The rich Christians were being given more respect than the poor in the Church.

The rich Christians trusted more in their wealth than in God the provider.

The rich Christians were not using their wealth to show love to the poor Christians.

The rich Christians were oppressing the poor by dragging them to courts of law.

The rich Christians were exploiting the poor by not paying them the wage they had worked for.

The rich Christians had failed to share their wealth with the poor Christians.

The rich were blaspheming the good name of the Lord.

Some rich people had acquired their riches using dubious ways like stealing.

The rich Christians were making business plans without involving the will of God and boasting about tomorrow.

The rich thought that their wealth was permanent yet it was temporary.

The rich never showed mercy when judging the poor people.

The rich were living luxurious and extravagant life at the expense of the poor.

He wanted to show his readers that both the rich and poor Christians were equal before God
He wanted to encourage the poor that they would inherit the kingdom of God.

Question

1. Account for James' teaching on wealth and poverty.
2. Why did James condemn the rich Christians in his letter?

James' teaching about the dangers of wealth/warning against the snares of riches 5:1-16

Wealth would make the rich people to weep and wail upon the miseries that were coming upon them

Wealth made Christians to create distinctions in the church between the poor and rich Christians.

Riches exposed the rich to the judgement of God.

Riches made the rich people to oppress the poor by dragging them to courts of law.

Riches led to the exploitation of the poor by the rich to make more riches through not paying them their wage.

It made the rich to be friends of the world instead of being friends of God.

Wealth tempts Church leaders to give false respect to some church members.

It made the rich to live luxurious and extravagant life at the expense of the poor.

It led to discrimination based on outward appearance.

Riches made the rich people proud of themselves and boasting about tomorrow.

It made the rich to neglect the power of prayer to God.

It made the rich to trust more in their material wealth than God.

It made the rich to speak evil about the good name of the Lord (blasphemy).

The desire for riches led to neglect of the poor in the society.

The rich were fattening themselves for the day of slaughter.

Riches made the rich to have self-confidence and complacency.

Riches are temporary instead of being permanent.

It can make one miss heavenly reward since one enjoys his life while still on earth.

Question

1. Comment on the teaching of James about the danger of wealth.
2. What justification is there in James' letter to show that material wealth is dangerous for Christians?
3. Discuss the dangers of riches as recorded in the letter of James.
4. Analyze James' teaching on the snares of riches in his letter.

How the Church in Uganda has tried to reduce the gap between the rich and poor

The church has established vocational institutions to train some of its members some skills.

The church has provided some social services like education and medical care to the needy.

The church has founded some youth and women associations which have given basic life skills to some of its members.

The church has funded youth and women associations like mothers' union and YMCA to empower the youth and women.

The church has extended financial assistance to some needy people.

The church preaches the gospel of love for all the people whether rich or poor.

The church also teaches that all people rich or poor are equal before God.

The church has established some projects like banks, hospitals and schools which provide jobs to people, e.g. Centenary bank of the Roman Catholic Church.

In some cases the church organizes and demonstrates against mistreatment of the poor.

The church has established orphanages to support the orphans with basic needs.

Question

1. What steps has the Christian church in Uganda taken to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor?

Attitude of the church leaders about riches today in Uganda

Church leaders have both positive and negative attitudes towards wealth or riches as discussed below;

Positively some church leaders consider wealth as a gift from God.

Some consider riches as a means to serve God and fellow man.

Some church leaders have encouraged the poor people to work hard and get rich.

Some church leaders are kind and sympathetic to the poor.

Some have set up economic projects out of their wealth to help the church and to spread the gospel.

Some church leaders have set up charitable organizations to help the poor like giving paying tuition for the needy students.

Some have emphasized spiritual wealth more than the earthly wealth.

Negatively however, some church leaders have put more trust in worldly wealth than spiritual wealth or God.

Some have commercialized church services to get more wealth for example some ask for money from the sick people before praying for them.

Some church leaders discriminate the poor in the society and favor the rich.

Some church leaders have misused church funds for their personal benefits.

Some have misled the Christians to sell their material property and bring the proceeds to church.

Question

1. Examine the attitude of the church leaders about riches today in Uganda.

JAMES' TEACHING ON HEARING AND DOING 1:19-27