Greek-text review of David Kam's structure of James

An independent critical review of David Kam, *Epistle of Straw (Structure of James | Voice of End Times)* (publication details) by AI Perplexity under David KAM's guidance.

Abstract

David Kam proposes a five-pair arrangement of James, first identified in the NASB, that develops what it means to walk daily in the relationship God initiates. This review tests the correspondences against the Greek and asks how other scholars' conclusions illuminate particular parts of that unified account. James 2:14–26 gives the explicit exposition of saving faith; the Lord's nearness gives the life of faith urgency and hope; and 5:19–20 applies both concerns in a final appeal to restore the wanderer. The appeal is not a substitute for the theme. Kam's wider theological proposal is strongest when redemption is understood as secondary **in relation to God's purpose** of restored fellowship, but indispensable as the means of achieving it (Kam's exposition; Greek text of James; Colossians 1:19–23).

Proposal, sources, and method

Kam reports beginning with isolated key words and phrases in the NASB, looking for correspondences of similarity or contrast before delimiting sections. The resulting sequence is A–B–C–D–E–E′–D′–C′–B′–A′. In his reading A–A′ frames the subject of faith in daily life; B and C develop humility, endurance and their opposites; D–D′ gives extended attention to conduct; and E–E′ brings the saving-faith question into focus. The significance of this arrangement is not that an audience must diagram it, but that it helps explain the movement into and out of 2:14–26. This review assesses the argument as publicly presented in Kam's detailed exposition and the publication preview; it is not a page-by-page review of the full edition or its appendices.

The test starts with Kam's published terms and verse ranges. It identifies the corresponding Greek forms, distinguishes identical lemmas from cognates, phrase-level parallels and conceptual contrasts, and checks how often and where the terms occur elsewhere in James. Additional Greek links are treated as corroboration, not retroactively counted as part of the initial NASB-based discovery. Finally, local syntax is examined to see whether it marks a division, carries an argument across one, or does both. This is an independent check of a known proposal, not a blind reconstruction. A recurring word does not establish a boundary, but a distinctive phrase or cluster, especially when joined to a coherent development in sense, is positive evidence of a relationship between passages (Kam's method; MorphGNT tagging conventions; tagged SBL Greek text of James).

Comparative assessment of the five pairs

The other studies do more than corroborate isolated links. Read within Kam's framework, their conclusions explain particular functions: Wendland shows why tested faith must persevere, Jackson-McCabe explains what drives or undermines faithful conduct, Varner shows how wisdom from above takes visible form, and Taylor–Guthrie identify transitions through which the appeals advance. Their conclusions can thus be incorporated as focused explanations within Kam's reading, even when a scholar presents that focus as the organizing principle of the whole letter. Incorporation is not independent confirmation of Kam's ten divisions or his theology of reconciliation. Taylor and Guthrie's 2:12 boundary is assessed as reported by Varner (Kam; Jackson-McCabe; Varner; Wendland).

Kam's major pair	What Kam's grouping explains	What the other readings contribute, and where they differ
A–A′: 1:2–8 and 5:13–20	Asking in faith for wisdom at 1:5–6 returns as prayer in faith at 5:14–18. The progression from one person's need to intercession and then restoration shows why faith governs the whole frame, not merely the petition at its opening (Greek text).	Wendland traces the wider endurance frame across 1:2–4, 12 and 5:7–11, then gives restoration special prominence. This strengthens Kam's progression through A, B, and C: faith tested produces endurance, and the closing community practices that faith for others. Humility and endurance are mutually reinforcing forms of dependence; 1:3 explicitly derives endurance from the testing of faith, not directly from humility. Wendland gives endurance under testing greater thematic weight; Kam gives the movement from dependence to restoration greater weight (Wendland; Greek text).
B–B′: 1:9–11 and 4:6–5:12	B′q′ gives concrete form to the two fundamental virtues Kam identifies: humility before God (4:6b–10) and patient perseverance (5:7–11). The movement from the command to draw near to God to patience in view of the Lord's nearness links those virtues without making one the sole cause of the other. The exposure of arrogance and oppression between those exhortations shows what humility and perseverance have to withstand (Kam's B′q′ analysis; Greek text).	Varner's 4:1–10 account shows how the remedy answers the problem: worldly allegiance yields to grace, submission, and drawing near to God. The particles δέ and διό at 4:6 and οὖν at 4:7 thus support Kam's **C′→B′ transition** as well as Varner's local grouping. Wendland's endurance links help explain why 5:7–11 develops the faith tested in A and C. The exact return of "rich" at 5:1 reinforces the broad B–B′ panel but falls in B′q′, not opposite Bq as the strict diagonal would predict (Varner; Wendland; Greek text).
C–C′: 1:12–15 and 4:1–5	Kam contrasts love for God under trial with friendship with the world. The cognate desire terms develop the relation between inward desire, sin and death in C and desire, pleasure and conflict in C′ (Greek text).	Jackson-McCabe's identification of ἀποκυέω at 1:15 and 1:18 gives Kam's **C→D transition** a precise Greek basis: sin brings forth death; God brings forth people by the word they are then to receive and do. Varner's peace-to-war turn at 3:18–4:1 likewise strengthens **D′→C′**. The disagreement is not the existence of these links, but whether the word–desire or wisdom–passion contrast governs the whole letter, or advances the larger account of saving faith (Jackson-McCabe; Varner; Greek text).

Kam's major pair	What Kam's grouping explains	What the other readings contribute, and where they differ
D–D′: 1:16–2:13 and 3:1–18	Dp develops a good–bad–good progression: good gifts, worthless religion, pure religion. D′q′ develops a comparable progression: good conduct in gentleness, earthly wisdom, pure wisdom. The exact ἄνωθεν anchor connects what God gives to how wisdom is lived. Together the panels are 43 verses (25 + 18), a measure of their extent, not the proof of their role (Kam's scheme; Greek text).	Varner clarifies the heavenly–earthly contrast that gives the second progression its shape and connects it to A's request for wisdom. Jackson-McCabe's account of doing, speech, and gentleness supplies internal links, including the bridle echo at 1:26 and 3:2. Taylor–Guthrie's proposed start at 2:12 recognizes the programmatic appeal to speak and act, but 2:12 also resumes the law argument and 2:13 explains it with γάρ. Those observations do not require D to be an autonomous discourse unit: it functions in Kam's model as extended preparation for E, while its local paragraphs remain identifiable (Varner; Jackson-McCabe; Greek text).
E–E′: 2:14–22 and 2:23–26	Kam identifies the explicit saving-faith question and shows how the difference between speaking and doing mercy in 2:12–13 becomes a concrete case at 2:15–16. The positive examples within the negative frame give content to the answer, and 3:13 carries the challenge to show one's works into wisdom (Greek text).	Jackson-McCabe's two-part chapter 2 explains the continuity Kam needs at D→E. Varner explains why 3:13–18 can be the wisdom peak without taking 2:14–26's place as the explicit exposition of saving faith. Wendland's account of the climactic ending explains how 5:19–20 puts that exposition into action. These are complementary focal points, but the continuation of Abraham's example at 2:23 limits the case for a hard internal E/E′ division (Jackson-McCabe; Varner; Wendland; Greek text).

What each account contributes to a unified theme

Account	Distinctive contribution to the whole	Comparative judgment
Kam: saving faith as a lived relationship	Integrates dependence on God, humility and perseverance, and their practical expression in mercy, speech, and works. The explicit exposition is in 2:14–26; the Lord's nearness accompanies the appeal to persevere, and the closing summons to restore the wanderer follows from the theme (Kam; Greek text).	Its distinctive strength is to put the other readings' local insights to work in a single account of the life of faith. The closing appeal gives that account a consequence for the community; it does not by itself define the theme. The model is less secure as an exclusive map of textual boundaries.

Account	Distinctive contribution to the whole	Comparative judgment
Jackson-McCabe: divine word versus human desire	Organizes the ethical consequences of being brought forth by the word around doing the law of freedom, bridling the tongue, and cultivating gentleness. The same birth verb at 1:15 and 1:18 anchors the contrast in James rather than in a generic theme of good versus evil (Jackson-McCabe).	Supplies Kam's clearest account of competing sources of action and of C→D. It offers a genuinely unified alternative, but makes the explicit saving-faith question one expression of the governing contrast, rather than the point at which the letter defines the quality of faith at issue.
Varner: two kinds of wisdom and the response they demand	Distinguishes the wisdom exposition in 3:13–18 from the exhortational intensity of 4:1–10. It explains how the opposite kinds of wisdom show up as peace, conflict, or repentance (Varner).	Supplies the clearest account of the positive and negative forms of conduct in D′ and their consequences in C′–B′. Kam accounts more directly for why the saving question is posed in chapter 2 and enacted at the close; Varner accounts more directly for the distinct rhetorical prominence of wisdom and repentance.
Wendland: tested faith as a matter of life and death	Brings opening trials, endurance, prayer, the medial discussion of faith and action, and the climactic task of restoration into one reading. Within Kam's account, this explains why suffering and trial are the setting in which one of faith's fundamental virtues is formed and exercised (Wendland; Kam).	Wendland foregrounds the testing of discipleship and the climactic closing appeal. Kam can incorporate that trajectory without making it his theme: the final appeal follows from the life of faith God makes possible and the urgency of the Lord's coming.
Taylor–Guthrie: discourse organization	Their distinctions among opening, body, and closing, and attention to repeated expressions and transitions, offer a check on how the parts are grouped, especially at 2:12 (Varner's account of their proposal).	A useful structural comparator, not a competing one-sentence account of salvation. Their attention to the role of 2:12 can strengthen Kam's D→E transition even where their preferred large-scale division is different.

Greek evidence for the proposed correspondences

Kam proposes three correspondences in the same order for the outer frame (a–a′, b–b′, c–c′) and two crosswise correspondences for each inner pair (p–q′ and q–p′). The table tests those specific claims; it also marks evidence that supports a larger pair without falling on its assigned diagonal (Kam's correspondence scheme).

Proposed subpair	Greek evidence and classification	Why it matters, and what it does not prove
Aa ↔ A′a′ (1:2–4 / 5:13)	πειρασμοῖς and χαράν versus Κακοπαθεῖ and ψαλλέτω. The link is situational, not a lemma match; πίστις is not in 5:13 (tagged Greek text).	Both openings prescribe a God-oriented response to adverse circumstances. But 5:13 tells the sufferer to pray and the cheerful person to sing; it does not command singing in suffering. The case strengthens in sequence with the next subpair, not by treating the individual clauses as equivalent (Greek text).
Ab ↔ A′b′ (1:5–6a / 5:14–18)	Exact πίστις: ἐν πίστει (1:6a), ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως (5:15). αἰτέω and προσεύχομαι are distinct lemmas with corresponding functions. The same noun occurs at 1:3 and throughout chapter 2, but nowhere else in chapters 3–5 (tagged Greek text).	The significant feature is faith attached to a petition directed to God at both ends, not the word "faith" alone. The petitioner's need for wisdom at the opening becomes intercession for the sick and sinful at the close; 4:2–3 supplies a genuine contrasting control, asking without receiving because one asks wrongly (Greek text).
Ac ↔ A′c′ (1:6b–8 / 5:19–20)	διακρινόμενος and δίψυχος versus πλανηθῇ and πλάνης: the key terms for doubt and departure are not the same lemma. The secondary term ὁδός occurs in both 1:8 and 5:20, and also at 2:25. Further echoes elsewhere are δίψυχος at 4:8 and πλανάω at 1:16 (tagged Greek text).	The unstable person "in all his ways" gives way to the person turned from "the wandering of his way." This is intelligible progression, not an equation of doubt and apostasy. If exact verbal reprise of wandering is the test, 1:16/5:19 is stronger than 1:6b/5:19 (Greek text).
Bp ↔ B′q′ (1:9 / 4:6b–5:12)	Exact ταπεινός: ταπεινός / ταπεινοῖς, its only two occurrences. At 4:10 ταπεινώθητε and ὑψώσει recover the cognate language of lowliness and elevation in 1:9 (ὕψει). The words are not all identical lemmas (tagged Greek text).	The distinctive evidence is the two-part reversal, lowliness plus exaltation, not just a general commendation of humility. The early brother's low condition is not simply the same as the later audience's commanded self-humbling; the latter develops the former. The extended B′ adds concrete expressions of dependence and endurance (Greek text).
Bq ↔ B′p′ (1:10–11 / 4:6a)	πλούσιος and ὑπερήφανος are different lemmas. Exact supplementary echoes are πλούσιος at 5:1 (within B′q′, also present at 2:5–6), and ἀντιτάσσεται in 4:6 and 5:6, with a changed subject or referent (tagged Greek text).	The proud and the rich cannot simply be equated. The fading rich person and the rebuke to self-assured merchants and oppressive rich people give the contrast a concrete basis; much of that basis is **cross-grid** rather than tightly confined to B′p′ (Greek text).

Proposed subpair	Greek evidence and classification	Why it matters, and what it does not prove
Cp ↔ C′q′ (1:12 / 4:4–5)	τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν versus φιλία τοῦ κόσμου and ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ. This is an opposition in allegiance, not a strict lemma match. The exact promise formula ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν recurs instead at 2:5 (tagged Greek text).	The comparison turns on opposed objects of allegiance, not an abstract similarity between perseverance and worldliness. The argument works on 4:4 alone and does not require resolving the difficult construction in 4:5. The echo of the promise in 2:5 is a stronger literal reprise of 1:12, and the endurance wording in 5:11 supplies another control (Greek text; Wendland).
Cq ↔ C′p′ (1:13–15 / 4:1–3)	**Cognates:** noun ἐπιθυμία (ἐπιθυμίας in 1:14, ἐπιθυμία in 1:15) and verb ἐπιθυμέω (ἐπιθυμεῖτε in 4:2). The noun ἡδονή in 4:1, 3 is semantic corroboration, not an exact recurrence. The two desire lemmas occur only in these passages in James (tagged Greek text).	This is a distinctive James-internal echo: both passages trace destructive outcomes back to desire within people rather than to God or merely to external causes. The shift from the individual to communal conflict is the development. This pairing passes a word-family test, not the stated exact-content-lemma test on the offered anchor (Greek text).
Dp ↔ D′q′ (1:16–27 / 3:13–18)	Exact ἄνωθεν, all three occurrences: 1:17; 3:15 (negated); 3:17. Exact ἀγαθός (1:17, 3:17) and πραΰτης (1:21, 3:13) corroborate it. The descent verbs καταβαίνω and κατέρχομαι are different; so are καθαρός (1:27) and ἁγνός (3:17) (tagged Greek text).	The good–bad–good progression is from giving (1:17), through worthless religion (1:26), to pure religion (1:27), and from good conduct (3:13), through earthly wisdom (3:14–16), to pure wisdom (3:17–18). It is a meaningful correspondence of argumentative movement, not three identical clauses. The specific 1:26 bridle image is also picked up by 3:2 in **D′p′**, showing that overlapping echoes help carry the argument (Greek text).
Dq ↔ D′p′ (2:1–13 / 3:1–12)	New exact corroboration: πταίω (2:10 πταίσῃ; 3:2 πταίομεν, πταίει), all its occurrences. It clusters with ὅλος (“whole” law / “whole” body). Compare speaking and acting under judgment at 2:12–13 with the teacher’s κρίμα and stumbling in λόγος at 3:1–2. κρίσις and κρίμα are distinct lemmas (tagged Greek text).	A single lapse has consequences for a whole: this is more precise than “favoritism and speech are both wrong.” The formal echo is real without making the whole law and whole body equivalent. Kam’s grid gains support, but the exact ἔλεος link at 2:13/3:17 and the unique χαλιναγωγέω link at 1:26/3:2 show that D–D′ also works by crossing its diagonal pairings (Greek text).

Proposed subpair	Greek evidence and classification	Why it matters, and what it does not prove
Ep ↔ E′q′ (2:14–20 / 2:26)	Exact πίστις and ἔργον with the repeated χωρὶς ἔργων construction (with article at 2:18, 20). νεκρά at 2:17 and 2:26; ἀργή at 2:20 in SBLGNT. The passage 2:14–26 has **11 tokens of πίστις and 12 of ἔργον**, excluding the related verb πιστεύω and other cognates (tagged Greek text).	The combination of dense repetition and the closing body/breath analogy gives strong local framing. The repeated Τί ὄφελος at 2:14 and 2:16 links the salvation question to the practical example; the phrase is not in 2:13. The hinge across 2:13–14 is conceptual and rhetorical, not a repeated sentence spanning the boundary (Greek text).
Eq ↔ E′p′ (2:21–22 / 2:23–25)	Ἀβραάμ in 2:21, 23; exact δικαιόω in 2:21, 24, 25; ἐξ ἔργων across the sequence. The near-identical questions οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη … at 2:21 and 2:25 are especially strong; ὁμοίως explicitly introduces Rahab. In 2:22 faith συνήργει ("was working with") the works and was ἐτελειώθη ("brought to completion") by them (tagged Greek text).	This shows an integrated positive core of exempla within a negative frame. Yet καὶ ἐπληρώθη at 2:23 carries Abraham's illustration forward, and 2:24 draws its general conclusion before the matching Rahab question. The internal midpoint is reasonable as a literary hinge, not obligatory as a text division. The wording asserts cooperation and completion, not a lexical equation of πίστις with σωτηρία (Greek text).

Boundary and rival checks

- **Opening and first turn:** The transitions at 1:9 (Καυχάσθω δέ), 1:12 (Μακάριος), and 1:16 (μὴ πλανᾶσθε plus address) support audible shifts. But 1:12 resumes testing and endurance from 1:2–4, while 1:16 can both warn against the preceding error and lead into God's goodness. The same birth verb in 1:15 and 1:18 is evidence for an intentional linkage across C/D, not evidence that the boundary must disappear (Greek text; Jackson-McCabe).
- **Central approach and reprise:** At 2:12–16 speech versus action turns from command to illustration. At 3:1 a prohibition and address signal a local reset; 3:13 then uses a question and third-person imperative, δειξάτω, to rearticulate 2:18's challenge δεῖξόν … δείξω with the same verb and with ἔργα. This gives positive evidence that wisdom continues the exposition of visible faith, while explaining why Varner independently identifies a peak there (Greek text; Varner).
- **Return and closing:** 4:1 uses the repeated Πόθεν question; 4:6 pivots through grace; 5:7–11 calls for perseverance in light of the Lord's coming; and 5:13 opens practical cases continued at 5:14 and 5:19. This is evidence of progression listeners could follow, not proof that the first audience mentally reconstructed ten units. The suggested connection between the dispersed addressees and the coming of the Lord is a separate interpretive question, not a boundary test for A–A′ (Greek text; Kam's presentation).

What the Greek establishes

The five-pair reading is not an artifact of the NASB. Four pairs have exact matches among their proposed anchors; C has a distinctive cognate anchor; and the πταίω/ὅλος cluster independently strengthens D's second diagonal. Yet the strongest exact echo sometimes lies outside its assigned subpair, and the local syntax sometimes joins material across a proposed boundary. That combination favors a **larger rhetorical arrangement encompassing smaller discourse units**, rather than a rigid chiasm that excludes other patterns. To reproduce the check, filter the seventh column of the MorphGNT data for James by each cited lemma, check the inflected form in the fifth column and verse code in the first, and read the surrounding clauses in sequence in the SBL Greek text.

The unified theme: walking daily in the relationship God initiates

Kam's unified theme is not that restoring a wanderer is the letter's main subject. It is that **the faith that saves is lived daily in the relationship God initiates and sustains**, in humility and perseverance, receiving God's help and putting his word into practice. The ten-part arrangement helps the reader follow that theme at successive stages. Its reading order remains A–B–C–D–E–E′–D′–C′–B′–A′: the primed panels develop or apply what precedes the center, rather than all leading up to it in linear sequence (Kam's account of the theme and structure; Greek text of James).

- **A–A′: faith asks for and receives help.** Opening trials test faith and produce endurance (1:2–4), and readers are directed to God for wisdom (1:5–6). In the corresponding close, faithful dependence is practiced through prayer, confession, and care for one another (5:13–18). Prayer and wisdom are not separate subjects loosely joined by the word "faith"; they show how believers turn to God in concrete circumstances (Kam's A–A′ analysis; Greek text).
- **B–B′ and C–C′: humility and perseverance under pressure.** B′q′ puts the fundamental virtues side by side: humble submission and drawing near (4:6b–10), and patient endurance (5:7–11). C–C′ exposes what perseverance must withstand: personal desire (1:13–15), quarrels driven by pleasure (4:1–3), and allegiance to the world (4:4). Wendland's account of endurance supplies a focused explanation of why testing matters across these panels. It does not require making endurance a rival to humility or the self-sufficient theme of Kam's account (Kam's B′q′ analysis; Wendland; Greek text).
- **D–D′: conduct under the help God gives.** The tests become concrete in receiving and doing the word, showing mercy without partiality, governing speech, and living by wisdom from above. Jackson-McCabe explains the competing sources of such conduct, while Taylor–Guthrie draw attention to the programmatic role of speaking and doing at 2:12. Varner's wisdom analysis explains why D′q′ is more than an inventory of virtues: wisdom from above is divine help made visible in good conduct. In reading order, D prepares the saving-faith question; after E–E′, D′ resumes it by asking that wisdom too be shown through works (3:13; compare 2:18) (Jackson-McCabe; Varner, including his discussion of Taylor–Guthrie; Greek text).
- **E–E′: the explicit account of saving faith.** At 2:14 James asks whether faith without works can save; at 2:22 he says Abraham's faith worked with his deeds and was brought to completion through them. At 2:23, what is expressly "fulfilled" is the Scripture about Abraham's belief, and Abraham is called God's friend. These are the textual grounds for Kam's relational reading of faith. Saying that salvation itself is fulfilled in God's initiating reconciliation is Kam's wider theological synthesis, not a translation of either Greek verb or an assertion that James uses Paul's reconciliation vocabulary (Kam's account of reconciliation; Greek text of James; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

A parallel motif: the Lord's coming is near

The Lord's nearness gives the unified theme urgency and hope without replacing it. The clearest evidence is in 5:7–9 itself. James says to be patient "until the coming of the Lord" and to strengthen one's heart "because" (ὅτι) the Lord's coming "has drawn near" (ἤγγικεν). The same verb, ἐγγίζω, appears at 4:8 in the call to draw near to God and the promise that God will draw near to the readers. These are different referents, reciprocal nearness in 4:8 and the nearness of the coming in 5:8, but their verbal resonance within B′q′ supports Kam's insight that lived fellowship now and hope for the Lord's coming belong together. The crown of life for the one who endures (1:12) and the promise that the Lord will exalt the humble (4:10) give the exhortation its positive force. The Judge at the door in 5:9 supplies a genuine warning alongside that encouragement. Whether a sentence functions as exhortation or warning is shown by its wording and role in context, not by whether it has an exact lexical partner elsewhere (Greek text of James; Kam's distinction between exhortation and warning).

Kam's suggested link between "the twelve tribes in the Diaspora" (1:1) and the Lord's near coming (5:8b) can be read as a conceptual complement outside the five-pair scheme. On this reading, the greeting identifies those now dispersed, while the Lord's coming gives their present life a future horizon; the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 supplies the wider biblical association Kam invokes. James 5:8 does not itself say that the dispersed will be gathered. Nor is 5:8b literally unattached in the sentence: it gives the reason for the preceding exhortations and reprises the coming already named in 5:7. "Unpaired" is therefore best understood as a description of the clause's place in Kam's correspondence scheme, not of its grammatical or rhetorical role. The greeting also has an independent function in identifying the audience; Kam's proposed link gives that address additional theological significance rather than making it relevant for the first time. The parallel motif stands on 5:7–9 whether or not 1:1 and 5:8b are called bookends (Kam's reading of 1:1 and 5:8b; Greek text of James; Joel Marcus on the Diaspora address; Matthew 24:31).

The closing pastoral reminder: James 5:19–20

Kam's distinction is between **the theme and what the theme calls the community to do**. If faith is lived within God's relationship and with God's help, the reader is to act when another person wanders. If the Lord's coming is near, that responsibility must not be postponed. James 5:19–20 does not repeat the announcement that the Lord is near; the preceding exhortation supplies its horizon and urgency. The final appeal is therefore a practical consequence of the theme, not a second formulation of it or the starting point from which to reconstruct the whole letter. Wendland's characterization of the close as climactic is compatible with that distinction: a pastoral appeal can have climactic force without itself being the letter's governing theme (Kam; James 5 in Greek; Wendland).

The argument begins with the closing case itself: someone wanders from truth, is called a sinner, and, if turned back, is saved from death and has sins covered. The pairing of death with forgiveness makes an eschatological reading stronger than either a merely physical reading or one that reduces death to present moral decline. The echoes of sin producing death in 1:15 and of saving souls in 1:21 help identify the kind of peril in view; the question in 2:14 situates the close within the letter's larger argument about saving faith. None of those earlier texts establishes whether this person once believed, what the act of wandering did to that person's standing, or when a change of status occurred. Those issues must be argued from 5:19–20 itself and, where relevant, from the wider canonical case (James 5:19–20 in Greek; full Greek text of James; Wendland's reading of the close).

Testing the argument from departure to restoration

Step in Kam's argument	What the text warrants
Previously in the truth	James addresses "my brothers and sisters" and imagines someone "among you" wandering "from the truth" (ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας). The natural pastoral reading is a person who had genuinely stood in relation to the truth, not an outsider encountering it for the first time. An interpretation that assumes the person never truly believed needs positive justification; James does not add that qualification. Reading the starting point as genuine saving faith is a reasonable inference, strengthened by Colossians' address to people already called reconciled. It is not the same as a grammatical proof that James here specifies the individual's prior forensic status (James 5:19–20 in Greek; Colossians 1:22–23 in Greek).
Departure makes death the issue	The person's former relation to the truth does not make the departure harmless. On the eschatological reading, death is the outcome from which the person must be rescued, not another way to say that their discipleship has weakened. If "considered dead" means now alienated and on a course whose end is death unless reversed, it captures the force of Kam's reading. No date of judgment is needed for that conclusion (James 5:19–20 in Greek; Wendland).
Must the soul already be dead?	No: the premise that rescue from death requires death already to have occurred does not follow from the expression. Psalm 32:19 LXX (33:19 English) speaks of rescuing people's souls "from death" (ἐκ θανάτου) and keeping them alive in famine. That is a counterexample about what the construction can mean, not evidence that James means physical death. Luke 15:24, 32 shows that a returned person can indeed be called "dead" in a relational sense, but Luke explicitly says the person "was dead and came to life"; James does not use those words. The difference is not an attempt to defer or deny death. It distinguishes **being in a condition that leads to death without rescue** from **already having undergone the death from which one is rescued** (Psalm 32:19 LXX; Luke 15 in Greek; James 5:19–20 in Greek).
A genuine return will save	In 5:19 the wandering and return are posited as conditions. In 5:20, within what the readers are told to know, σώσει ("will save") and καλύψει ("will cover") state the assured result of successfully turning the wanderer back. James does not say "may save," nor does he promise that an opportunity for return will always remain available or that a merely outward profession constitutes a return. The certainty concerns the result **if the person is in fact brought back** (James 5:19–20 in Greek).

This makes Kam's reasoning coherent if "loss" means a genuine rupture of fellowship with saving consequences, and "regaining" means restoration to the truth with the promised rescue from death. The text is less determinate if "loss" is defined as a discrete juridical cancellation or if "dead" means that final death has already been undergone. Ezekiel 18:24–28 offers a pertinent biblical analogy: past righteousness does not shield someone who turns away, and turning back changes the outcome from death to life. It strengthens the logic of departure and return without making James specify a legal mechanism that he does not name (James 5:19–20 in Greek; Ezekiel 18; Kam's soteriological argument).

Reading “cover sins” as forgiveness is well supported by 5:15’s explicit ἀφεθήσεται and by Psalm 31:1 LXX (32:1 English), also quoted in Romans 4:7, which parallels forgiven lawlessness and covered sins. The very close wording of 1 Peter 4:8, however, makes love the subject of “covers a multitude of sins” in a context of mutual care. So the idiom does not by itself name the mechanism of forgiveness. In James, the person who turns the sinner back is the grammatical subject of both verbs; that person can be the human instrument of restoration without becoming the source of forgiveness. Kam can coherently name Christ’s blood as its ground in a canonical reading, particularly in light of 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 9:22. That is a theological inference, not the lexical meaning of καλύψει or an explicit claim made by James in this verse (James 5 in SBLGNT; Psalm 31 LXX; Romans 4; 1 Peter 4:8–10 in SBLGNT; 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 9:22).

Colossians and the condition of continuance

Colossians 1:22–23 is more directly relevant to this question than Romans 5:9–11. It addresses people as already reconciled through Christ’s death, names the purpose of presenting them holy and blameless, and adds εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει, “if indeed you continue in the faith.” The issue is not whether people must earn reconciliation, but whether the promise of final presentation may be claimed independently of continuance. On the conditional reading, steadfast faith is not optional. Kam’s claim about unilateral renunciation is best stated in this sense: **God does not promise the stated outcome to those who persist in repudiating the faith; that is not a defect in God’s righteousness or faithfulness**. It does not mean God cannot intervene to bring a person back. James explicitly contemplates an intervention, and his assurance applies when it succeeds. Colossians speaks to continuance and James to restoration; neither promises the benefits of continued faith while departure persists (Colossians 1:22–23 in Greek; study of the conditional construction in Colossians 1:23; James 5:19–20 in Greek; Kam’s argument).

Reconciliation and the purpose of salvation

Kam’s distinctive proposal is that salvation should be understood from **God’s initiative to restore fellowship with us**, rather than exhausted by the removal of guilt or by a person’s initial profession of faith. The emphasis on God’s relationship “with us” is most defensible as a statement about who initiates reconciliation, not as a denial that we are reconciled *to God*. James gives this emphasis substance: the Father gives from above and brings people forth by the word of truth (1:17–18), God gives grace to the humble (4:6), and the invitation to draw near rests on the promise that God will draw near in turn (4:8). Divine initiative does not make the human response inert: patience, mercy, obedience, and restoration are the forms that responsive faith takes in the letter (Kam’s theological proposal; Greek text of James; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

A clarification of faith, not a new dictionary definition

James calls out a person who says he has faith but has no works (2:14), distinguishes such a claim from the deeds that would show faith (2:18), and rejects the idea that correct belief by itself suffices, since demons also believe (2:19). Yet 2:22 does more than make works a visible sign: they work together with faith and bring it to completion. This supports Kam’s account of saving faith as lived trust and fidelity in a relationship God initiates. It is not a claim that πίστις lexically means “relationship” or that πίστις and salvation are synonyms. Crucially, Kam’s proposal runs from divine reconciliation toward human action, not from human performance toward something earned from God. Works are how faith acts and matures within the fellowship God makes possible (James 2 in the Greek text; Kam’s exposition).

Redemption as secondary in purpose, not optional as means

Kam's "incidental" can be read in the legal sense of secondary or subordinate to a principal matter, not in the everyday sense of accidental or unimportant. So defined, it makes a defensible claim about the ordering of ends: from the point of view of God's purpose, restored fellowship is primary, and the juridical treatment of sin serves that purpose. It does not follow that redemption is dispensable, occurs after fellowship, or is caused by human fidelity. Colossians 1:19–23 links peace and reconciliation to the blood of the cross; Romans 5:9–11 likewise joins justification by blood, reconciliation through the Son's death, and salvation through his life. Romans is relevant to the relation of means and end, not to adjudicating renunciation. The wording "secondary in purpose, indispensable as means" preserves the legal sense Kam intends and makes its limits explicit (FindLaw's legal definition of "incidental"; Kam's formulation; Colossians 1:19–23; Romans 5:9–11).

A defensible formulation of the proposal is: **Saving faith is lived trust in the God who takes the initiative to reconcile us to himself through Christ. God's purpose is fellowship with us, already lived in humility, obedience, mercy, prayer, and perseverance as believers await the Lord.** Reconciliation is the wider canonical category; James gives that life its concrete shape. As a contribution to post-Reformation theology, Kam changes the leading question from how sinners are put right to what God puts them right for. That is a shift of emphasis, not a claim that earlier Protestant theology had no relational account: Calvin, for example, described justification and sanctification as gifts flowing from union with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18–21; Greek text of James; Kam's stated aim; Calvin's account of union with Christ and the twofold grace).

Editorial judgment

Kam's substantive contribution is to give the insights identified by other readers defined roles in the account of lived faith. Jackson-McCabe explains competing sources of action; Varner explains wisdom from above as both help and a pattern of conduct; Wendland explains why faith under trial must persevere; and Taylor–Guthrie help explain how the exhortations advance across local boundaries. Their conclusions can be incorporated at those points without claiming that they endorse the complete scheme. James 2:14–26 remains the explicit center of this account; the Lord's nearness sets its parallel horizon; and the appeal to restore a wanderer is its closing practical consequence (Kam; Jackson-McCabe; Varner; Wendland).

The theological argument is strongest when it does not depend on reconstructing a moment of formal revocation: a real departure makes death the issue, and a genuine return is promised to save. Read with Colossians, this gives weight to Kam's proposal that God's reconciling purpose concerns a life of faith that begins now and must not be treated as irrelevant once a profession has been made. The five-pair reading deepens the understanding of this theme; it does not serve as the sole evidence for it (James 5:19–20 in Greek; Colossians 1:22–23 in Greek; Kam's theological proposal).