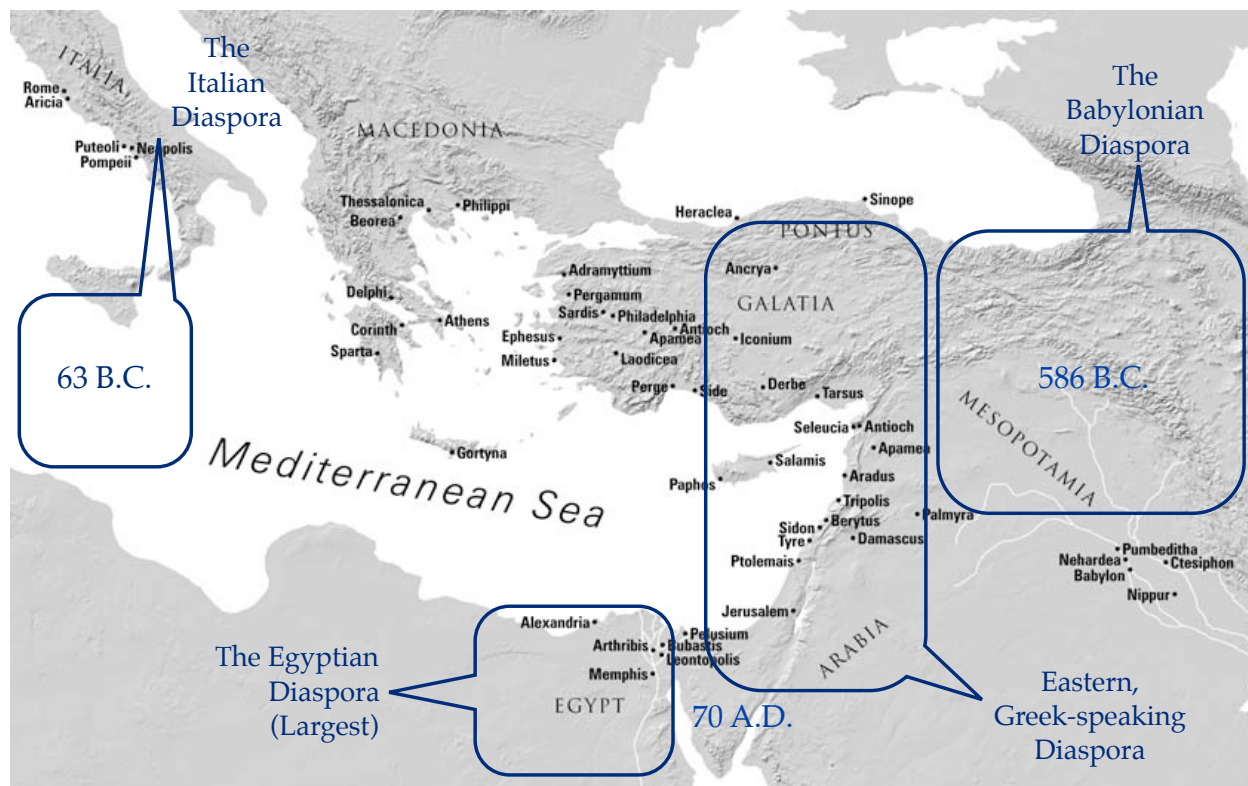


JAMES – BEING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD
Annual Bible Study
January 15, 22, 29, & February 5 2012

Text: *James – Being Right in a Wrong World* by Michael D. McCullar

Below you will find the notes that I used during the 1st session of Annual Bible Study 2012. Time did not permit me to complete the Keynote slide presentation, from which these notes were directly taken. It's my hope that these notes will prove helpful to you as you complete your study of chapter one and prepare for the 2nd session, the topic of which will be, ME VERSUS MYSELF VERSUS I, based on James 2:1-26.



The Babylonian Diaspora

In the early Christian era, Jewish communities were concentrated in the Eastern, Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire, with additional clusters in central Italy and in Babylonia. The largest and most affluent Jewish community outside of their homeland was in Egypt, where the synagogues exercised full internal autonomy. Their archons and elders communicated regularly with Jerusalem leaders. The **Italian Diaspora** originated with slaves Pompey relocated after his campaign against Jerusalem (63 BC); conditions of this community became favorable under Julius Caesar, Roman dictator (49–45 BC). The **Babylonian Diaspora** dates from the Exile (586 BC); these communities flourished under Parthian rule (c. 238 BC–AD 224). By and large, these Diaspora communities prospered but were dependent on Gentile authorities and anxious to preserve good relations with them.

Which James?

The New Testament uses three common means of specifying a person's identity when multiple people had the same name. What are they?

Patronymics (reference to one's paternity)

- James, son of Zebedee (Mark 3:17)
- James, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18)
- Simon Barjona (son of Jonah) - Matt. 16:17 (KJV)

Epithets

- James and John, the Boanerges (Sons of Thunder) - Mark 3:17
- James, the Younger (Mark 15:40)
- Simon Peter (the Rock) (Matt. 16:7)

Other familial qualifiers:

- John, the brother of James (Mark 3:17)
- Jude, the brother of James (Jude 1)
- James, the Brother of Jesus (He needed no other designation.)

Jewish or Christian Epistle?

Hebrew and Christian influences on James are seen in 1:1. (Mention of Lord Jesus Christ and twelve tribes)

James wrote *in* a Jewish environment (highlights ethical behavior of the Torah, exalts Abraham for his faith-works, and highlights Job and Elijah as examples of patient endurance).

James *does not*, however, point to Jesus as the supreme example of patience in the face of injustice.

James shared with other leaders of the early church a belief in the imminent return of Christ (5:7).

Written to a Jewish Christians living somewhere in the Diaspora, but where worship was not yet completely Christ-centered.

Written before believers were known as Christians c.f., Acts 11:26)

“(James) can be placed among those Christian communities where being both Jewish and a follower of Jesus had yet to become regarded as incompatible.”
(Marie Isaacs. *Reading Hebrews and James*. p. 172)

James always grounds his ethical exhortations to his beliefs about the character of God.

Christian behavior must exhibit the character of God: single and consistent.

Believers must live out their covenant obligation to love God and neighbor because of coming judgment (4:11-12).

James was written in a thoroughly Hellenized (Greek-influenced) world. (James is highly Paraenetical.” He uses moral exhortations to pursue or avoid certain behaviors. Greek teachers and philosophers also used this technique widely.

Do not read into James that which is not there. He does not suggest that he is writing to a Christian community that included murderers and adulterers. (i.e., 2:11)

James always grounds his ethical exhortations to his beliefs about the character of God.

Christian behavior must exhibit the character of God; that is, it must be single and consistent (1:5-8).

Believers must live out their covenant obligation to love God and neighbor. If

not, judgment will follow (4:11-12).

Date of Writing

If written by James, which, in this study we assume to be the case, the brother of Jesus, then before A.D. 62, which is when James was martyred.

Written prior to A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed, since there is no mention of that watershed event in the epistle.

Written prior to the Jewish-Gentile controversy (Acts 15), since there is no mention of this great controversy, in which James was intimately involved, in the epistle.

Written prior to A.D. 50, when there was no basic church order (pastors and other leaders). No type of church leadership is mentioned and no leaders are addressed.

Canonization (canon means “measure”; When did James become part of the body of scripture accepted by the church?)

James was omitted from some of the early versions and collections of sacred books (the earliest known collection, the Muratorian fragment of the second century, does not include Hebrews, James, and the epistles of Peter.)

Not until the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. that James appears to be consistently included in the canon.

James was in use from an early date by the churches of Jerusalem and Alexandria and in Asia Minor, but its apostolic authority was not affirmed until 4th or 5th centuries.

A Qualified Acceptance “. . . Saint John’s Gospel and his first epistle, Saint Paul’s epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Saint Peter’s first epistle - these are the books that show thee Christ, and teach

thee everything that is useful and blessed for thee to know even though thou never see nor hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore is Saint James' epistle a right strawy epistle in comparison with them for it has no gospel character to it. . . . Therefore I will not have it in my Bible in the number of the proper chief books, but do not intend thereby to forbid anyone to place and exalt it as he pleases, for there is many a good saying in it." (Martin Luther)

Literary Context of James

James and Wisdom:

James uses the word "wisdom" repeatedly. The word serves to give the epistle its Jewish "feel."

For James, wisdom is the ability to view trials and tribulations as opportunities to grow in faith, even though they are unpleasant (1:2). This wisdom can only come from God. But all who ask for wisdom will receive it without stipulation (1:5). God uses trials to make Christians the kind of people who can honor to His name. Wisdom alone can produce the character of God in Christians.

Political/Social Issues:

It cannot be overstated that the culture of Jerusalem and Judea changed dramatically with the arrival of the Greeks, after Alexander the Great's army conquered the territory. The Jews began gradually to take on the Greek customs, mores, etc., which caused stress for the general populace, and specifically for Jewish religious leaders (i.e., the Pharisees).

Old Testament wisdom & Greek rationality are united in James through the use of "paraenesis."

James' emphasis on "wisdom" and use of paraenesis serve to remind the Jewish Christians who have been forced from their homeland of their need to remain committed to God in the midst of cultures and societies that were antithetical to their own in every way.

Theology of James

Temptation, Sin, and Human Nature (1:2, 12-15, 5:7-11)

Faith and Works (2:14-26)

The Law and the Word in James (1:18-25; 2:10-11; 4:7,10,11-12)

Prayer, Confession, and Healing (1:5; 5:13-14)

Jesus in James

James 1:2 = Matthew 5:10-11

James 1:4 = Matthew 5:16

James 1:5 = Matthew 7:7

James 1:9 = Matthew 5:3

James 1:12 = Matthew 7:14

James 1:20 = Matthew 5:22

Jesus in James

James 1:22 = Matthew 7:24

James 2:5 = Matthew 5:3

James 2:10 = Matthew 5:19

James 2:13 = Matthew 5:7

James 3:10-11 = Matthew 7:16-17

James 3:18 = Matthew 5:9

Grace/Salvation

James, like Paul, affirmed that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

James emphasized more highly than Paul that salvation will lead inevitably to righteous actions.

Paul affirmed that works of the law could not provide salvation (and Paul was opposed by the Judaizer sect in every way.)

James' and Paul's words might be different, but their theology is not.

James, unlike Paul, does not emphasize grace (he uses the word only once [4:6], and then in another context).

In 4:6, grace points to "forgiveness of pride," not forgiveness of sin in general. ■

Law of Moses

To be the most “Hebrew” of all the epistles, James is not legalistic.

For James, righteousness does not come by obedience to law, but by a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ (although he does not specifically state this.)

James’ emphasizes putting one’s faith into practice (1:22ff). He assumes faith and belief more than he expounds upon it.

Major Themes in James

Suffering (trials, temptations, etc.; 1:2,12)

Ethical behavior (true faith, 2:5; tongue, 3:1-16)

Wisdom (Supernatural guidance = Holy Spirit?)

Eschatology (End Times; 5:7)

Poverty/Wealth (2:1-9; 5:1-9)

Perseverance (patiently waiting; 5:7-8)

OUTLINE OF JAMES 1:1-27

1. The Righteousness of Humility, 1:1-27
2. Trials, Temptation, and Perseverance - Joy and Completeness, 1:2-4
3. Wisdom, Doubt, and the Perils of Two Souls, 1:5-8
4. Fuzzy Math, 1:9-11
5. Who's Tempting Whom?, 1:13-18
6. How to Sin with One's Mouth, 1:19-21
7. Verb-Faith, 1:22-27

The Righteousness of Humility, 1:1

Question: When, and under what circumstances, do you think James became the humble leader of the Hebrew-Christian church?

Trials, Temptation, and Perseverance = Joy and Completeness, 1:2-4

Question: How does James say one comes to experience joy in the midst of trials, temptations, and suffering? (v. 2)

Wisdom, Doubt, and the Perils of Two Souls, 1:5-8

Question: What was James getting at when he said the person who doubts is “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”? (1:8)

Fuzzy Math, 1:9-11, 1:13-18

Question: How is James’ “fuzzy math” related to divine wisdom?

Who’s Tempting Whom? 1:19-27

Question: Did James subscribe to the excuse that “the devil made me do it?”

How to sin with one’s mouth, 1:19-21

Question: Why is it better to be quick to hear and slow to speak?

Verb-Faith, 1:22-27

Question: Why did a mirror serve James’ purposes so well in encouraging believers to be “doers of the word and not hearers only?”