

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 29 Hebrews and James

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture 29 on Hebrews and James.

Last class period, I think we ended by, as you realize in your syllabi, in several places we actually have an excursus where I touch on a theme that's important for that book, but one that has roots in the Old Testament.

So, we talk a little bit about that and then we'll also then move on to the next book, which is James. All right, let's open with prayer.

Father, we thank you for this day and for a new week. And again, as the end of the semester draws closer, we ask for your enablement and help to make it to that point and to finish everything that we need to. Father, I pray now that we'll be able to think clearly and critically, but also spiritually about what is nothing less than your very revelation to us. As we think about just one part of that, help us to be able to understand what you intended to communicate to your first reader so that we might be prepared to bridge that gap to understand how your word continues to address us as your people today. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

All right. The new covenant, I suggested to you last class period that actually the theme of covenant begins all the way back in creation in Genesis chapters one and two, where God's relationship with Adam and Eve is predicated upon a covenant that he establishes with them. Subsequently, the Old Testament, the rest of the Old Testament in a sense is structured around a series of covenants that God establishes with his people as he attempts to restore his relationship beginning creation, but is thwarted because of sin. The Old Testament though ends with God anticipating, with the prophets anticipating that God will one day establish a new covenant relationship that will structure and determine his relationship with his people.

And that covenant relationship is indicated in a number of Old Testament texts. For example, one of the texts is Jeremiah chapter 31 which actually gets quoted in the book of Hebrews that we just got done looking at, where the author is clear that the new covenant that God promised in Jeremiah 31 now gets inaugurated and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. But other prophetic texts, even those that don't use the term covenant or new covenant, also anticipate the establishment of a new covenant relationship that will restore God's intention for his creation and his intention for establishing a relationship with his people where he will dwell with them once again.

They will be his people and he will be their God. One of the Jeremiah, I'm sorry, Ezekiel chapter 37, although it does not use the term covenant, clearly implies and anticipates the establishment of God's covenant relationship with his people and has all the elements of a covenant relationship. So, starting, this is chapter 36 and God speaking through his prophet to his people and anticipating a day when God will restore his people to a relationship with himself.

He begins by saying, I will take you from the nations, referring to Israel, and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe the ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors and you shall be my people and I will be your God. I will save you from your uncleanness, etc., etc.

So, this is Ezekiel's version of the new covenant. So, when one asked why a new covenant, what is so new about the new covenant in comparison to the previous covenant relationships God had established with his people? First of all, God promises a new relationship with his people. No longer will knowledge of God be mediated, and this is especially clear in Jeremiah chapter 31.

No longer will knowledge of God be mediated or God's presence be mediated, but now will be directly experienced by God's people. Second, the complete forgiveness of sins. So, you notice that language even in Ezekiel of God giving them a clean heart and God cleansing them and forgiving them from their uncleanness and their idolatry, the very things that got them into exile, the nation of Israel into exile in the first place, God will now completely deal with sin.

It's not that the old covenant relationship did not deal with sin at all, but now God anticipates an ultimate final cleansing that he will enact by instituting this new covenant. So, a complete forgiveness of sins. And finally, the ability to obey God's law, the fact that God says, I will put my spirit within you, I will enable you or cause you to keep my decrees and my commandments.

So, with the new covenant now, God himself will provide the enablement and the motivation for his people to keep his commands, as opposed to the first covenant which Israel disobeyed, which again is what ended them up in exile. So at least these things seem to be at the heart of what is new with the establishment of this new covenant that we read about in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Now, one thing important to remember, when we get to the New Testament, all of the blessings or benefits of salvation that God's people enjoy are inextricably tied to the new covenant.

So, when we talk about, in my opinion, as I've said before, whenever the New Testament authors refer to the Holy Spirit and talk about the Holy Spirit, that is part of the covenant. Again, Ezekiel chapter 36 that we just read promises that God promises he will pour out his spirit on his people. He will give them his spirit.

So, when we think about, and even thinking about the language that we read in the New Testament and how we talk today, we talk about being filled with the spirit or receiving the spirit, or Paul uses the language of being baptized with the spirit or being sealed with the spirit. All of that goes back to the old, the new covenant. So, the presence of the Holy Spirit with his people, the reception of the Holy Spirit by God's people, the church today, is tied to the new covenant.

Obedience to Christ, when we talk about salvation or being justified by faith, all the language that we use or find in the New Testament to refer to the blessings of salvation that we participate in are all linked to the new covenant salvation. In other words, we do not enjoy the blessings of salvation apart from the new covenant that Jesus Christ has now inaugurated. So that's very important to remember.

All the benefits, when we talk about salvation, justification, redemption, receiving the spirit, obedience to Christ, all that language we use from the New Testament, it all goes back and is all tied into the fulfillment of the new covenant. There is no salvation apart from the inauguration and the fulfillment of the covenant promise that God makes with his people under the new covenant. Now, the new covenant also participates in the already but not yet structure that we've seen in the New Testament.

Going back to the kingdom of God, in the gospel of Matthew, we talked a little bit about the theme of the kingdom, where the future kingdom, when God would invade history and his reign would break into history and defeat the power of evil, and where God's sovereignty would be fully acknowledged and his rule would extend over all the earth, Jesus Christ already inaugurates that kingdom so that men and women can experience God's rule and enter into God's rule already. Yet, there's a not yet aspect. The kingdom has not yet arrived in its fullness.

The kingdom of God has not yet arrived in full force to completely wipe out the powers of evil and that which opposes God's kingdom. So, God's kingdom is already present. So, Jesus can say, if I cast out demons by the power of Satan, God's kingdom is upon you.

Yet, he can still talk as if the kingdom is something yet future. And it's God's kingdom has already arrived and been inaugurated, yet it has not yet come to its fullness.

The new creation is already present. Paul can say, that if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of a new creation. Yet, the new creation has not yet arrived.

The same is true of the covenant. The new covenant has already been inaugurated, yet it has yet to be inaugurated in all its fullness in the future. So, for example, in the book that we're looking at, Hebrews chapter 8. In Hebrews chapter 8, we find the already aspect of the new covenant.

The author of Hebrews is convinced that Jesus Christ has already inaugurated this new covenant that brings a new, immediate relationship with God. A covenant that deals completely with sins and completely forgives sins. A covenant that now brings the Holy Spirit and the ability to obey God's law.

That covenant has now been inaugurated through the coming of Jesus Christ. However, I can skip to the very end of the New Testament, in Revelation chapter 21 and verse 3, which is a part of an elaborate vision. We'll hopefully have time to talk more about this at the end of the semester.

But in chapter 21 and verse 3, I want you to notice the covenant language. In fact, this language comes right out of Ezekiel 37, the section we've just been reading from. The author says, I heard a loud voice from the throne, and this is John's vision of the not-yet.

Now the not yet, the eschaton has arrived. And John says, see, the dwelling of God is with human beings. He will dwell with them.

They will be his people and he will be their God. God himself will be with them. That is the language of the covenant.

That again, they will be his people and he will be their God. Now John sees that as consummated and reaching its full climax and fulfillment in the book of Revelation. So, the new covenant, like most of the other blessings of salvation, participates in this already, but not-yet structure.

They've already been inaugurated with the first coming of Christ in advance of the final fulfillment and the final manifestation of the ultimate new creation. So again, that's why you'll find, even with the Holy Spirit, you'll find language like Paul will tell you, the Holy Spirit is a down payment of our final redemption. That's that already, but not-yet structure.

So, the new, we already experienced all the blessings of the new covenant to which all the blessings of salvation are tied because it's already been inaugurated in Christ. Yet that is only a down payment of an anticipation of its final fulfillment that has yet to come. All right, one, two, to kind of take another excursus in a way, although it's

not in your notes, I haven't been a real big one for you learning a lot of dates, at least with the New Testament, because most of the stuff occurs in about a 40 or 50 year period, 60 years maybe, at least the writings of the book, the events.

The events, of course, go back much earlier, starting with the birth of Christ. So, I haven't had you learn a whole lot of dates because if you just guessed the first century, you'd be right on just about everything. But at times we need to be more precise than that.

It's not that the dates aren't important. There's one date that you do need to know, and that is 70 AD or 70 CE, the common era. And anyone know why I mentioned that date? The destruction of the temple.

The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem occurred in 70 AD. So, the conflict, remember back in 63 BC, Rome became a power that again subjugated Jerusalem and all of Judea, once again under foreign influence, after Israel enjoyed a very brief time of independence. But now things finally come to a head, and in 70 AD or 70 CE, Jerusalem is once again destroyed.

And Rome goes in and sacks the city, and it was a climax and turning point in Israel's history, literarily as well. So, I do want you to recognize that date. Often, for example, the book of Hebrews is one book where some suggest that because there's no mention of the temple in Hebrews because Hebrews is interested in God's dwelling and sacrifice and the high priesthood, but there seems to be little mention of the temple.

Instead, the author focuses more on the tabernacle that accompanied Israel as they wandered through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. But some have suggested because of the lack of reference to the temple, that perhaps Hebrews could have been written during or before it was destroyed. In other words, the assumption is any New Testament document that doesn't mention such a significant event like the destruction of the temple in 70 AD must have been written before because anyone living through that or writing shortly after that certainly would have mentioned an event like the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

So, some use that event in attempts to date certain documents as to whether they seem to be aware of the destruction of Jerusalem. However, so I want you to keep that date. You need to know that.

Again, historically, religiously, and literarily, 70 AD was a crucial turning point in the history of Jerusalem and of God's people. However, again, I suggested that the main reason Hebrews does not refer to the temple is not because it hadn't been destroyed yet. It could have been, but the main reason he refers to the Tabernacle is because he's using the wilderness generation as his primary model.

So that's one date that I do want you to be aware of, 70 AD or 70 CE, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple during that time.

All right. Well, let's open up another piece of the early church's mail, and this is, again, exactly what James looked like.

But, oh, interesting. I never noticed that before. The book of James is unique in a number of ways, as we'll see.

First of all, although we realize the value of the book of James and we're familiar with it when you stop and think about it, when's the last time you heard a sermon or a series of sermons preached on the book of James? We'll see why that might be the case. But the first thing to do when we look at the book of James and ask what we should do with it is to ask what the church has done with it. One of the watersheds for the way that the book of James has been treated goes back to Martin Luther's treatment of the book of James.

And if you remember, when we looked at Martin Luther in relationship to Galatians and Romans, Luther was so focused on the teaching in James and Romans that justification came only by God's grace through faith and had nothing to do with human ability. Because humans are so sinful, we cannot hope to earn God's favor. We cannot stand before a holy God by relying on our good work.

So, the only option is to trust in God's grace and rely on God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Now, having emphasized that you can almost imagine what Martin Luther would think when he got to the book of James. And when he looked at James and actually read this passage, this is James chapter 2. He says you see that faith was active along with works.

That's interesting. And faith was brought to completion by works. Thus the scripture fulfilled that said, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

And Abraham was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by his faith alone. So, you can imagine Luther's response or what's perhaps what he may have been thinking in reading a text like that and how he may have responded to James.

Understandably, in light of his emphasis on Romans and on the Pauline teaching of justification by faith alone, apart from any works that one can do, as you can imagine perhaps Luther's response when he gets to James and reads that we're justified not by faith alone, but by works also. So, Luther actually questioned the value of James as belonging to the New Testament because it seemed on the surface of things to

conflict with Paul's teaching that justification is only by grace through faith. And now James says justification is by works and not by faith alone.

We'll talk about that later as to how James and Paul might relate to each other. But I would suggest that in some sense Luther's legacy has continued today. If you hear anything about James, it's usually going to be confined to chapter one where James talks about patience and endurance in the midst of trials, and that's a biblical theme that we're all aware of and sounds good and something that we need to hear.

But James has other things like the text we just read. You're justified by works and not by faith alone. Or later on, he'll say the prayer of faith heals someone.

If you're sick, call the elders to pray and when they pray, you will be healed. Or he says, James says, he's the one that says, not many of you should consider being teachers because you will be subject to a stricter judgment. Now, I mean, what do we make of statements like that? So, you can understand while James would get our vote perhaps as, yes, that's a book that should be in the New Testament, most of the time we probably ignore it and we retreat to the safer ground again of Paul's letters.

And I have nothing against Paul, it's just often Paul's teaching becomes a filter through which we measure everything else. Interestingly, and this is true not only living in the light of the legacy of Martin Luther, but even in the order in which our New Testament appears, is after the gospels which tell us all these stories about Jesus and then Acts, the largest section, or I shouldn't say the largest section, but most of the documents that we encounter, the largest number of documents we encounter come from Paul's pen. And it's not till after you have been steeped in Paul that you finally get to Hebrews, James.

And so, it's almost as if you're set up by the way the New Testament is arranged for reading James or other books in light of what you know about Paul. And in light of Martin Luther, we've been taught to read the New Testament that way. Paul, whether we realize it or not, it's almost as if Paul's letters become kind of a litmus test or a lens through which we read the rest of the New Testament.

It's interesting though that some of our early fourth-century, fifth-century manuscripts of the New Testament that include the entirety of the New Testament, there's some of them that actually have James coming before Paul's letters. It'd be interesting to see what it would be like to read the New Testament, to read Paul's letters after having read James rather than the other way around. But again, it seems like we've become so familiar with and used to Paul's letters that when we get to James, we're either not sure what to do with it or we quickly try to conform it to sound like what we're used to from reading Paul's letters.

But we'll look at that. How do we reconcile or how do we relate James' teaching and Paul's teaching? But before we do that, let's talk a little bit about the letter itself and why it's important, who wrote it, why it was written, and what's it doing. First of all, what we know about the author is that James, there are at least three possible, from the New Testament, there are at least three possible candidates for the authorship of James.

Two James' that we know about were Jesus' apostles. A third James that we know about from the book of Acts was Jesus' brother who was also known as the leader of the Jerusalem church. You read about him in Acts 12, Acts 15, and maybe one or two other places in Acts.

Church history has basically supported and has been overwhelmingly in favor of assigning the readership or the authorship of this book to James, the brother of Jesus. And for a good reason, James being both one of Jesus' relatives or Jesus' brother, and on top of that, being a leader in the Jerusalem church would make a letter from him a prime candidate for being considered as New Testament scripture and being included in the canon of the New Testament. So, I'm not going to provide argumentation or anything, but simply assume that most likely the author, the James that is referred to in the first verse of this book was Jesus' brother and who in the first century became the leader of the Jerusalem church as we read about in the book of Acts.

Who are the readers of James? Actually, and here you can see why James is included in a collection of letters along with Hebrews as one of the general epistles, because James too seems to have a fairly wide audience. It begins, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, it begins like a typical first-century letter, but then it says, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings. The key is understanding who the twelve tribes are because there are no specific references to the readership throughout the rest of the letter.

So, who are the twelve tribes? Some have suggested that we take this reference more metaphorically, that is, in the same way that the New Testament uses language referring to Israel in the Old Testament to refer to the church. You find that in a number of books. You find, for example, that we already saw that Paul labeled anyone who was in Christ as a seed of Abraham.

So he's taken language that referred to physical Israel in the Old Testament and now applies it through Jesus Christ of the church. Some have suggested that is true here, that the reference to the twelve tribes from the dispersion is a reference metaphorically to the church, to all of God's people who through Christ are now the new Israel. However, the other option, which is probably more likely, is that this is an actual, physical, or literal reference to Jewish Christians who are actually dispersed or spread out or removed from their homeland, which is Jerusalem.

So, these are, James then is addressing Jewish Christians who, again, physically are separate from and removed from Jerusalem, from their homeland. They are dispersed or, in a sense, exiled from their homeland over a geographical, certain geographical area. And James then sends a letter that will generally address this group.

There's one other thing that we can know about this group for sure, I think, is that due to the number of references to poverty and wealth throughout James, most likely James is addressing a socioeconomic system where many of his readers find themselves in situations of poverty, even to the extent of being taken advantage of by rich landowners, for example. So perhaps in addition then to being ethnically Jews who are spread out and separate from their homeland, from Jerusalem, is many of them exist in situations of extreme poverty where they are subject to, often to mistreatment at the hands of wealthy owners and wealthy landowners and wealthy masters. And you'll see that in a number of references.

Well, for example, chapter one, but unfortunately these references usually get overshadowed, again, by the debate as to whether James agrees with Paul over justification. When Paul says you're justified by works and not by faith, when we focus on that, what we miss is that's in the context of treatment of the poor and those in a situation of poverty. So, for example, at the end of chapter one, in chapter one, James says, that if anyone thinks they are religious and they do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. So notice that emphasis on caring for those who are impoverished and those who are underrepresented. Later on in chapter two, again, before James gets into this discussion of faith and works and faith apart from works is dead and you're justified not by faith alone but by works before he ever says that, James introduces that by saying this, what good is it, my brothers and sisters if you say you have faith but you do not have works? Can that faith save you? If a brother or sister lacks clothes and lacks daily food and someone says to them, go in peace, be warm, and eat your fill, but you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is that? So again, James over and over brings up this theme of riches and poverty as if at least some of his readers exist in a situation of extreme poverty and even being taken advantage of by the poor.

And perhaps, again, some of his readers not paying close enough attention to those who are in situations of extreme poverty. One other thing about the second, James, is a letter from Jerusalem to the dispersion. When he's asked what kind of letter James might be besides just a first-century letter, which it is, it begins and ends just

like a letter, although it doesn't quite develop like some of Paul's letters in between that we're used to.

As someone suggested, James may resemble what is known as a letter to the dispersion. We do have some examples, although they're embedded in larger works, of a leader in Jerusalem sending out a letter to Jews who are dispersed, kind of a letter to those who are dispersed, an official or leader of the Jews in Jerusalem now writing a letter, an authoritative letter to address and to be read by those living outside of the city of Jerusalem. Some have suggested that James follows that pattern, that James is a letter to the dispersion, James being a leader, an authoritative leader in the Jerusalem church, now writing a letter to the dispersed Jews.

And that would certainly fit verse one, where James identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, now writing to the Jews, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed. And so someone suggested for that reason, James can be labeled a letter to the dispersion, following this idea of, again, of a Jewish leader in a position of authority now writing to those separate from and outside of Jerusalem, perhaps experiencing the pain and difficulty of being separated from the homeland, of being separated from the center of their religion, the center of God's dwelling place and his blessing upon his people. That's possible.

I don't know. It's hard to determine if that was really an official letter form or a form of a letter that the readers would have identified with and would have understood to exist or not. But that's certainly a possibility.

But at the very least, James is following a fairly typical convention of writing a first-century letter. One other thing we know about James, though, James, in many places throughout his letter, actually resembles Old Testament and Jewish proverbial literature or wisdom literature, such as one finds in Proverbs. Some of the verses in James or specific statements in James have a proverbial type of quality and form.

One person, although I think wrongly, one person even once described James as a string with a bunch of pearls just strung together. Some feel almost like you find in Proverbs, although I know in sections of Proverbs, this has been disputed, whether the author does this. But sometimes you read Proverbs, it seems he's jumping around to different topics.

And someone suggested James is doing that, just like jumping from one wisdom topic to another. But even more importantly many of the themes that James raises are themes that you find in Proverbs and other wisdom-type literature, such as James' instruction on speech, being careful of one's speech, his instructions on anger, his instructions on poverty and wealth, and many others. All of those are themes that emerge in a book like Proverbs or Jewish type of wisdom.

So that is a fairly common viewpoint. A fairly common view is that James closely resembles Old Testament wisdom or Jewish wisdom type of literature, although that's not the only thing perhaps it resembles, but certainly it has a lot of similarities in its teaching and some of the themes and the way it expresses them as you find in Jewish wisdom type literature. So, in light of all this, what is the purpose of James or why does James write? James writes then to encourage Christians to live out their faith wisely in the world.

And again, to add a little bit more detail, James addresses Jewish Christians who are scattered and separate from their homeland, separate from Jerusalem, James now writes to instruct them and encourage them to live out their faith wisely and bring in the wisdom idea wisely in the world. Now, as far as how James is put together, the plan of James, how James may be structured or arranged, and again, I'm not interested in giving you some elaborate outline or anything, but I want to highlight, that you'll notice I've listed three themes or ideas. The first one is the theme of testing or endurance, that is being tested and enduring through trials.

The other one is poverty and generosity. So, James addresses the issue of poverty and wealth, but in doing so, encourages generosity. And finally, the theme of wisdom and speech.

Again, all themes that you find cropping up in a book like Proverbs. So, wisdom and speech. Interestingly, what James does in the very first chapter, the very first eight, nine, ten verses or so, James will introduce all three of these themes, and then he'll do throughout the rest of the book keep revisiting those three themes.

These same three themes, and they're introduced in chapter one, but they keep reoccurring. James picks them up two or three more times throughout the book and expands on them at length. So, for example, listen to the first chapter and see if you can identify all three of these from your notes.

Again, testing and endurance in the midst of trials, poverty and generosity, the theme of poverty and riches, and then the last one being wisdom and speech. So, first of all, he begins, after his introduction, James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the twelve tribes and their dispersion, greetings. My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy because you know the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete and lacking in nothing.

So, do you see the theme of testing and endurance in the midst of trials? Now, if any of you are lacking wisdom, you should ask from God who gives all generously and unbegrudgingly, and it will be given to you. But ask in faith, not doubting. For the one who doubts is like the wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

For the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Did you catch the theme of wisdom and speech, especially speech in terms of prayer? Finally, the last verses, 9 and 10, let the believer, the Christian who is lowly, boast in being exalted, and let the rich boast in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field, its flower falls and its beauty perishes.

In the same way, the rich, in the midst of their busy life, will wither away. So, notice all those three themes, testing and endurance, and then wisdom and speech, and poverty and wealth, or poverty and wealth and generosity.

All these three themes will be revisited two or three more times throughout the book of James. Right now, I'm not going to ask you exactly what verses and what chapters, but just be aware as you read the rest of James, these three themes will cycle through the rest of the book as James expands on them and uses them to address specific situations in the life of his readers. Yeah, they actually, will generally occur in larger chunks.

So now he'll take the theme, for example, of testing and endurance and treat that in a fairly lengthy section, and then move on to the next, to wealth and poverty, or something like that, or wisdom and speech. Chapters three and four, there's a lengthy section on wisdom and speech. So, for example, I just ended with verse 10, in the same way with the rich, in the midst of their busy life, they will wither away.

Now he's going to start picking up the three themes and recycling them. So, here's the very next verse. Blessed is the one who endures testing, because such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

No one who is tested should say, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tested by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted when by their own desires they're led astray, et cetera, et cetera. So, then, by the end of the chapter, by the end of the chapter, the author then, remembers verses 26 and 27, a religion that is pure and undefiled before God is this: to care for orphans and widows.

And then in chapter two, he'll launch into this long section on how they treat those who are poor. So generally, he'll deal with these three themes in much larger sections now throughout the rest of the book. Again, it'd be interesting to look at those themes and ask why the author emphasized them.

Are those due to a situation in his readership? I already suggested that most likely socioeconomically, the emphasis on wisdom and wealth, or I'm sorry, poverty and

wealth and generosity probably reflects a situation where at least some of James's readers are in a situation of poverty and perhaps even subject to the abuse of wealthy, and others are in need of encouragement to show compassion and to help these persons out with their possessions. But it'd be interesting to see if any of the other situations also reflect, or any of the other teachings of these other themes reflect certain situations within the church that James is addressing, there are Jewish Christians that he's addressing. All right, any questions so far? Any other questions about James? There are a couple of other things we'll look at.

One of them, I've already said that James bears close resemblance to Jewish wisdom type literature, such as one finds in Proverbs and some of the other Jewish wisdom literature. Another feature of James that you soon become aware of is that James also, and if it's correct to identify James as the brother of Jesus, this might be all the more reason for him to do so, but that James' teaching in numerous places bears a striking resemblance to Jesus' own teaching, to the extent that the parallels between James and Jesus' teaching seem to suggest some kind of dependence for James on Jesus' teaching. We're probably not to think that James had access to any of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

Again, many of Jesus' teachings were very early on circulating orally, perhaps some of them in written form, and people would have had access to Jesus' teachings outside of the written Gospels themselves. So, we don't need to necessarily assume that James had read any of the four Gospels or had access to them, but certainly would have had access to Jesus' teaching. But again, the parallels are of the nature that most likely James knew the teaching of Jesus and was deliberately relying on Jesus' teaching.

The other thing that you'll notice, I'm going to give you just a few examples that seem to be more obvious. The other thing you'll notice is that almost all of them come out of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. There are a couple of others that go outside of that, but interestingly, most of them come out of the Sermon on the Mount, such as one finds in Matthew 5-7.

So, for example, James and Jesus. In chapter 1, verse 12, James says, And again, in this, what is known as a macarism or a blessing statement, blessed are those who, you find that kind of statement often in Jesus' teaching, but James says, blessed are those who persevere under trials because when they have endured, they will receive the crown of life. Now notice what Jesus says in one of the beatitudes that we talked about, the so-called beatitudes from Matthew 5-10, Blessed are you when people insult and persecute you because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So the main thing is the theme of the idea of blessing someone who endures persecution, motivated by a promise of a reward. In James' case, it's the crown of

life. In Jesus' case, the kingdom of heaven, which I think we're basically referring to the same thing.

What about this one? In chapter 2, James addresses one of the cycles of the themes of poverty and wealth, James says, Has not God chosen the poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom of God? Again, Matthew 5-3, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Luke doesn't have spirit, Luke just has blessed are the poor, but I'm using Matthew's version, Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In chapter 5, again, the theme of wealth and poverty and generosity cycles back again in chapter 5, and James says, he's addressing the rich, perhaps rich landowners who are oppressing the poor and even stealing from them.

He says, Your wealth has rotted, the moths have eaten your clothes, your gold and silver are corroded because you have hoarded wealth in the last days. Jesus in Matthew said, Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust can destroy. So a warning against hoarding up physical treasures, Jesus will go on later and say, Instead, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

You know that verse, but that's preceded by this warning against storing up physical treasures because moths and corrosion can destroy it. The very same thing James is warning against in chapter 5. One more. In chapter 10, James now switches, and shifts again to the theme of perseverance and endurance.

He says, Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in suffering, in the midst of suffering, take the prophets or look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. So, James points back to some of the Old Testament prophets who suffered physically because of their preaching, especially speaking out against Israel. Now, if you remember Matthew chapter 5, again in the Sermon on the Mount, Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who came before you.

Now, there are all kinds of other examples. I think that's the last one I gave. Yes, that's the last one I gave.

This could be multiplied. There are a number of others. Some of them are not quite as convincing.

If we only had one of these examples, you might be able to question whether James was really relying specifically or directly or unconsciously on Jesus' teaching. But the fact that there are so many examples that both thematically and structurally resemble sayings of Jesus, especially from the Sermon on the Mount, suggests that most likely James was relying on and borrowing from Jesus' own teaching as he now instructs his readers. So again, along with wisdom literature, Jewish wisdom literature provides the background for much of James' teaching, is Jesus' own

teaching, especially as found in the Sermon on the Mount, also plays a role in James' instruction.

Again, I want to enforce that I'm not suggesting James had a copy of Matthew. Most likely he didn't. But James is still very much aware of Jesus' teaching and has access to what Jesus taught, such as in the Sermon on the Mount, and now implements that into his own instructions for these Jewish Christians who have been dispersed and are separated from their homeland.

All right. I just want to introduce the next issue, and that is, we'll talk a little bit more about it on Wednesday, and that is the relationship between James' teaching and Paul's teaching. I don't want to approach it from the standpoint and say we're going to harmonize these, because usually what that ends up meaning is James is forced to sound just like Paul.

But at the same time, I am convinced that however different these two teachings and traditions may be, ultimately they do not contradict each other or they are not at odds with each other, but we need to understand what they are trying to accomplish and how they provide for complementary aspects of God's entire revelation to his people. But again, to remind, to reiterate what we've seen numerous times, for example, in Paul's letters, is if you remember back in, for example, the book of Galatians, texts like Galatians chapter 2, and I think verse 15 is the verse I want. Galatians chapter 2 and 15.

That's Ephesians. No wonder that didn't look right. Here we go.

Verse 16. Yet we know that a person is justified not by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So, did you hear that? We know that a person is justified not by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

And Paul says something similar in the book of Romans as well. Those are the books that Martin Luther seized upon and again have left a legacy to this day in how we often read Paul. But again, here are the words of James.

I'll read that one more time just so you understand formally the tension and verbally the tension. We know that a person is justified not by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Now here, James, you see, a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

So, you almost have a struggle there. Which one gives? Which one wins? Who's going to give up? Or is there another way that we should read this? On Wednesday, I want to explore this tension a little bit more and try to understand perhaps if we're not meant necessarily to solve it, can we account for why James and Paul expressed

themselves in the way they did in a book like Galatians and James. So, I will see you on Wednesday.

This was Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture number 29 on Hebrews and James.