

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 29, Hebrews, James Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 29, Hebrews, James, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture explores the New Testament books of Hebrews and James. It begins by examining the concept of the new covenant, highlighting its roots in the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, explaining how it provides forgiveness, direct access to God, and the ability to obey God's law. **The lecture then pivots to the book of James, focusing on its unique characteristics and historical interpretations, particularly Martin Luther's views.** The discussion considers James' authorship, readership (Jewish Christians in diaspora), and the letter's emphasis on themes like testing, poverty, and wisdom. **Finally, the lecture begins to address the relationship between the teachings of James and Paul, setting up a comparison of justification by faith versus justification by works.**

**2. 47 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 29 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson_NTLit_S
ession29.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 29, Hebrews, James

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Dave Mathewson's New Testament Literature Lecture 29 on Hebrews and James.

Briefing Document: New Testament Literature - Hebrews and James

Main Themes and Ideas:

1. The New Covenant:

- **Old Testament Roots:** The concept of a covenant relationship between God and humanity begins in Genesis 1-2 with Adam and Eve. The Old Testament then revolves around a series of covenants aimed at restoring this broken relationship due to sin.
- **Prophetic Anticipation:** Old Testament prophets (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36 & 37) anticipated a "new covenant relationship" that would restore God's original intention for creation and his relationship with his people.
- **Key Elements of the New Covenant (as seen in Ezekiel):** God taking Israel from the nations and gathering them to their own land.
- Cleansing from uncleanness and idols. "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 and spirit. "A new heart I will give you, a new spirit I will put within you."
- God's Spirit enabling obedience. "I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes."
- God dwelling with his people. "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."
- **Newness of the New Covenant:** Direct experience of God, not mediated knowledge (Jeremiah 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."

- Complete forgiveness of sins.
- God enabling obedience through the Holy Spirit.
- **Salvation and the New Covenant:** All blessings of salvation (justification, redemption, receiving the Spirit, obedience) are inextricably linked to the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ. "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."
- **"Already, Not Yet":** Like the Kingdom of God, the new covenant participates in an "already, but not yet" structure. It has been inaugurated in Christ (Hebrews 8), but will be fully consummated in the future (Revelation 21:3). "The new covenant has already been inaugurated, yet it has yet to be inaugurated in all its fullness in the future."
- **Revelation 21:3:** "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." This is the covenant language consummated.
- **Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is a "down payment" on our final redemption.

1. **Significance of 70 AD:**

- The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Rome is a crucial historical, religious, and literary turning point.
- This date is often used when dating New Testament documents.
- Some believe Hebrews was written before 70 AD because there is no mention of the temple destruction. "Some suggest that because there's no mention of the temple in Hebrews...that perhaps Hebrews could have been written during or before it was destroyed."
- Mathewson suggests the lack of reference to the temple is because Hebrews uses the wilderness generation as its model.

1. The Book of James:

- **Neglect and Martin Luther:** The book of James is often overlooked. Martin Luther questioned its value because it seemed to contradict Paul's teaching on justification by faith alone. Luther believed justification came only by God's grace through faith, and that humans cannot earn God's favor through works.
- **James 2:24:** "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." This verse is at the heart of Luther's concern.
- **Luther's Legacy:** Luther's influence has led to a tendency to filter the New Testament through the lens of Paul's teachings.
- **Placement in the Canon:** The arrangement of the New Testament (Gospels -> Acts -> Paul's Letters -> Hebrews/James) sets the stage for reading James in light of Paul. Early manuscripts sometimes placed James *before* Paul's letters.
- **Authorship:** Church tradition attributes the letter to James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church. This would lend authority to the letter and make it a prime candidate for inclusion in the New Testament canon.
- **Audience:** Addressed to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion" (James 1:1). This likely refers to Jewish Christians scattered outside of Jerusalem, possibly living in poverty. "James then is addressing Jewish Christians who...are separate from and removed from Jerusalem, from their homeland."
- **Socioeconomic Context:** The letter reflects a context of poverty and wealth disparity, with some readers experiencing mistreatment from wealthy landowners. "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."
- **Letter to the Dispersion:** The letter follows the convention of a leader in Jerusalem sending a letter to Jews in the dispersion.
- **Wisdom Literature:** James resembles Old Testament and Jewish wisdom literature (like Proverbs) in its themes and proverbial style. "James closely resembles Old Testament wisdom or Jewish wisdom type of literature."
- **Purpose:** To encourage Christians to live out their faith wisely in the world.
- **Key Themes:** Testing/Endurance: Being tested and enduring through trials.
- **Poverty/Generosity:** Addressing poverty and wealth, encouraging generosity.

- Wisdom/Speech: Emphasis on wisdom in speech and conduct.
- **James 1 as an Introduction:** The first chapter introduces all three of these themes, which are then revisited throughout the book.
- **Connection to Jesus' Teaching:** James' teachings bear a striking resemblance to Jesus' teachings, particularly from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). This suggests that James was familiar with and relied on Jesus' teachings.

1. James and Jesus' Teaching:

- **James 1:12 and Matthew 5:10:** Both thematically discuss the blessing of someone who endures persecution with the promise of reward.
- **James 2 and Matthew 5:3:** James writes on the chosen of God being the poor, and Matthew writes "Blessed are the poor in spirit".
- **James 5 and Matthew 6:19:** James warns against hoarding wealth because it rots, and Jesus in Matthew warns against storing up treasures on earth.
- **James 5 and Matthew 5:** James points back to the Old Testament prophets, who suffered physically because of their preaching, and so does Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Relationship Between James and Paul:

- There is apparent tension between James' emphasis on works (James 2:24: "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone") and Paul's emphasis on justification by faith (Galatians 2:16: "a person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ").
- The lecture will explore this tension and seek to understand how these seemingly different teachings can complement each other.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of the key concepts presented in the lecture excerpts, emphasizing the historical and theological context of Hebrews and James.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 29, Hebrews, James

New Testament Studies: Hebrews & James

I. Key Concepts & Themes

A. Hebrews

- **The New Covenant:** Its inauguration in Jesus Christ, its fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36-37), and its superiority to the old covenant. Focus on direct experience with God, complete forgiveness of sins, and God-given ability to obey.
- **Already, But Not Yet:** Understanding the New Covenant as partially realized in the present (through Christ) but awaiting full consummation in the future (eschaton).
- **70 AD/CE:** The destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans. Its significance as a historical and literary turning point. Consider how the author of Hebrews references the tabernacle instead of the temple and why.

B. James

- **Authorship:** The traditional view that James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, is the author.
- **Audience:** Jewish Christians dispersed outside of Jerusalem, likely facing socioeconomic challenges, including poverty and exploitation. Understanding the reference to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion."
- **Relationship to Wisdom Literature:** The influence of Old Testament and Jewish wisdom traditions, particularly Proverbs, on James' themes and style.
- **Relationship to Jesus' Teachings:** The parallels between James' teachings, particularly those found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and Jesus' own words.
- **Themes:** Testing/endurance, poverty/generosity, and wisdom/speech, and how James introduces and revisits these themes throughout the letter.
- **Faith and Works:** Understanding James' assertion that "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24) in its context of caring for the poor.

- **Purpose of James:** To encourage Christians to live out their faith wisely in the world, reflecting the practical application of Christian belief.
- **Letter to the Dispersion:** Considering the possibility that James's writing may be classified as a "letter to the dispersion."

C. Comparing James and Paul

- Understanding the tension and potentially complementary teachings between James and Paul on faith and works. Paul claims that individuals are justified by faith, while James suggests it is by works.

II. Short Answer Quiz

1. What are the three key components of the new covenant as emphasized in the lecture?
2. Explain the "already, but not yet" aspect of the new covenant, providing an example from the lecture.
3. Why is the date 70 AD/CE significant for New Testament studies?
4. According to tradition, who is considered the author of the Book of James?
5. Describe the likely audience of the Book of James, noting their socioeconomic context.
6. How does the Book of James resemble Jewish wisdom literature?
7. Identify two themes that James revisits throughout his letter, using examples from the first chapter.
8. Provide an example of a parallel between the teachings of James and Jesus (from the Sermon on the Mount).
9. Explain James' assertion that "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."
10. What are the similarities of James's letter as a letter to the dispersion?

III. Short Answer Quiz - Answer Key

1. The three key components of the new covenant are a new direct relationship with God, complete forgiveness of sins, and the ability to obey God's law through the Holy Spirit. God himself provides the motivation for his people to keep his commands.

2. The "already, but not yet" aspect refers to the New Covenant's partial realization in the present, inaugurated by Jesus Christ, with the full consummation awaiting the future eschaton. The Holy Spirit is a down payment to our final redemption.
3. 70 AD/CE marks the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. It serves as a historical and literary turning point, and is used when dating certain biblical writings.
4. Traditionally, James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, is considered the author of the Book of James. The Jerusalem church leadership would make the letter a prime candidate for New Testament scripture.
5. The audience of James is likely Jewish Christians dispersed outside of Jerusalem. Many faced socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty and exploitation by rich landowners.
6. James resembles Jewish wisdom literature through its themes (speech, poverty, wealth, anger), its proverbial style, and its practical focus on wise living in the world. The themes and style is similar to Proverbs.
7. Two themes revisited throughout James' letter are poverty/generosity and wisdom/speech. In chapter one, we can see poverty and generosity in the believer boasting in being exalted, and wisdom and speech is emphasized to pray for the Lord to avoid being double-minded.
8. An example is James' statement that "Blessed are those who persevere under trials" compared to Jesus' beatitude, "Blessed are you when people insult and persecute you because of righteousness." Both emphasize blessing for enduring persecution.
9. James's assertion in 2:24 that "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" is used in the context of caring for the poor. Someone can claim faith, but if that person has no works to prove it, that "faith" is dead.
10. James was a leader in the Jerusalem church that now sends letters to the dispersed Jewish population. In verse one, James identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, who now writes to the twelve tribes that are dispersed.

IV. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the New Covenant as presented in Hebrews, comparing and contrasting it with the Old Covenant. How does the author of Hebrews use Old Testament texts to support the idea of a New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ?
2. Analyze the socioeconomic context of the audience of the Book of James. How do the themes of poverty and generosity reflect the realities faced by James' readers?
3. Explore the relationship between James' teachings and Jesus' teachings. Provide specific examples of parallels between the two, focusing on the Sermon on the Mount. How does James' use of Jesus' teachings shape his message to his audience?
4. Examine the apparent tension between James' emphasis on works and Paul's emphasis on faith in relation to justification. How can these two perspectives be understood as complementary rather than contradictory?
5. What does the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD/CE tell us about the dating of the book of Hebrews? How might the author of Hebrews reference the Tabernacle instead of the temple and why?

V. Glossary of Key Terms

- **New Covenant:** God's promised relationship with his people, inaugurated by Jesus Christ, characterized by direct experience of God, complete forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit's empowerment for obedience.
- **Eschaton:** The final event in the divine plan; the end of the world.
- **Already, But Not Yet:** A theological concept describing the present overlap of the inaugurated kingdom of God and its future, complete fulfillment.
- **70 AD/CE:** The year of the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Roman army, marking a significant turning point in Jewish history.
- **Dispersion (Diaspora):** The scattering of the Jewish people outside their homeland of Israel.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of literature, exemplified by Proverbs, that focuses on practical advice for living a virtuous and successful life.
- **Sermon on the Mount:** A collection of Jesus' teachings found in Matthew 5-7, containing key ethical and moral instructions for his followers.
- **Justification:** Being declared righteous in God's sight. In Protestant theology, it is primarily by faith.
- **Works:** Actions or deeds, especially those done in obedience to God's commands.
- **Letter to the Dispersion:** An official or leader of the Jews in Jerusalem writing a letter to address and to be read by those living outside of the city of Jerusalem.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 29, Hebrews, James, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Hebrews and James

- **What is the significance of the New Covenant, as discussed in relation to Hebrews?**
- The New Covenant, prophesied in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36/37), is inaugurated by Jesus Christ and establishes a new relationship between God and his people. This covenant offers direct experience of God, complete forgiveness of sins, and the empowerment by the Holy Spirit to obey God's law. All blessings of salvation are tied to the New Covenant. The New Covenant also participates in the "already, not yet" structure, being inaugurated yet awaiting full consummation.
- **What is the significance of 70 AD/CE in New Testament studies?**
- 70 AD marks the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans. This event is a crucial turning point in Jewish history and influences how scholars date certain New Testament books. Some suggest that if a book doesn't mention the temple's destruction, it might have been written before 70 AD. However, Dr. Mathewson suggests that for the book of Hebrews the lack of reference to the temple can be explained by the author using the Tabernacle as a model for their argument instead.
- **Why has the book of James been traditionally less emphasized in the church?**
- The book of James has been less emphasized due to its seemingly contradictory statements to Paul's teaching on justification by faith alone. Martin Luther questioned its value as New Testament scripture because James states that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. This has led to a tendency to focus on certain passages, like those on patience in trials, while overlooking others.

- **Who is the likely author of the book of James, and who are the intended readers?**
- Church tradition strongly suggests that James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, is the author. The letter is addressed to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion," which likely refers to Jewish Christians scattered outside of Jerusalem.
- **What is the socioeconomic context of the book of James, and how does this influence its content?**
- The book of James reflects a socioeconomic context where many of the Jewish Christian readers were in situations of poverty and were being taken advantage of by wealthy landowners. This is reflected in the letter's emphasis on caring for orphans and widows, the poor, and warnings against mistreating those in poverty.
- **What are the three main themes that run throughout the book of James?**
- The book of James revolves around three key themes: testing and endurance in the midst of trials, poverty and generosity (addressing wealth and poverty), and wisdom and speech (emphasizing careful speech and discernment).
- **How does the teaching in the book of James relate to the teaching of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount?**
- Many parallels exist between the teachings in James and the teachings of Jesus, especially those found in the Sermon on the Mount. Examples include the blessings for those who persevere under trials, the call to care for the poor, warnings against hoarding wealth, and the example of the prophets' suffering. This suggests that James was familiar with and relied upon Jesus' teachings.
- **How can we understand the relationship between the teachings of James and Paul regarding justification?**
- The apparent tension between James and Paul arises from their differing emphases. Paul emphasizes justification by faith apart from works of the law (Galatians 2:16), while James states that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone (James 2:24). These differing viewpoints should be understood as complementary aspects of God's revelation.