

II: James

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1. Its Distinctiveness

A. Canonical Shape of James (Dodd)

1) Authorship: James, head of the Jerusalem church, associated with Jewish Christianity.

2) Addressees: Jewish Christians living abroad

Later understood metaphorically.

3) Genre

a. No formal characteristics of epistle.

b. No occasion

c. Thus, it is paranesis (similar to Wisdom).

B. Contents (Dodd)

1) Teaching of Jesus

Reflects a pre-literary stage of the traditions.

a. Numerous points of contact with the sayings of Jesus.

"There are in James numerous points of contact with the sayings of Jesus...These points of contact are a result of literary dependence, not on Matthew, but on the parenetic handing down of the sayings of Jesus which was especially widespread in the post-apostolic times." (Kuemmel)

b. Age of Transition

"It represents an age of transition, without knowledge of which our appreciation of early Christian history would be poorer and our grasp of ethical Christianity incomplete." (Guthrie, 736)

c. Primitive theology

Emphasis on παρουσία (5:7-9) and calling the gathering, the "synagogue" (2:2) are further evidence of primitive theology (Ladd).

d. No developed Christology, but

a) Faith in terms of faithful human behavior.

b) Partiality is incompatible with the glory of Christ (2:1).

2) Interpretation of the OT from a Christian perspective: Strong Jewish Flavor: Continuity

a. Law

a) Law is the law of liberty.

b) It does not defend the law, but assumes its validity.

c) The OT, when correctly understood, is the norm for living.

b. Focus on God

Rather than Christ as a focus of faith, he points the believers to God through the Scriptures (cf. Kuemmel).

a) Name

Christ is only mentioned in 1:1 and 2:1, and there could be omitted without difficulty.

b) Redemptive works

Paul focuses on the effect of Christ's death and resurrection but James does not mention life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

James, like Matthew, sees Jesus in His life as interpreter of the OT law. Jesus is not the only example but OT prophets such as Job and Elijah are too.

3) Faith and Works: the Big topic assessing James

a. Luther's difficulties

It arose from a somewhat imbalanced perspective induced by his polemical context (Carson).

b. Conflicts with Paul?

a) Paul speaks of living by faith, entirely dependent on God.

b) Context and Terms

James is a different context, with different terms.

1. Context

Wisdom: Parenetic, ironic, disputational

	Paul	James
Occasion	Jewish Self-righteousness	Dead orthodoxy
Argues against	Judaizers, who want to include human works	A situation where faith and works have become split apart

2. Terms: James views faith from the OT perspective.

Paul says faith apart from works of the law while James says faith not apart from works.

	Paul	James
Faith	Acceptance of the gospel; Personal, cordial trust (Ladd) Forensic	Assertion of monotheism; orthodox opinion (Ladd); Commitment to God and the submission of the whole will to Him (Dodd)
Works	Formal obedience intended for merit, a basis for boasting (Ladd)	Deeds of Christian love (Ladd); Characteristics of the obedient life, the only true response to God (Dodd)

c) James does not speak of salvation by a syncretism of human and divine cooperation.

1. God is the source of every benefit. Note that wisdom is a gift.

2. The believer is called to respond to the word implanted, which is able to save his soul.

c. Practical

a) Each will have its place in the ministry of the church.

b) Its value is as a corrective. Once a person has learned about Jesus and Paul, James sharpens the vision (Kuemmel).

2. Its Value in Canon:

A. Continuity and Discontinuity: Judaism and Christianity

1) In contrast to other formulae:

a. Old vs. New Covenant

b. Promise vs. Fulfillment

c. Shadow vs. Substance

2) He shows continuity between Israel and Obedient Christian life, i.e., distinction is not Judaism vs. Christianity, but obedience vs. disobedience, true vs false religion.

True Christianity is:

a. faith demonstrated by obedience

b. faith like Abraham's

c. faithfully following the law of liberty

d. waiting patiently for the coming reign of God

3) OT terminology

Since the audience is Jewish, the formulation is almost entirely in OT terminology, thus less explicit Christology.

4) Universal application

As the metaphorical diaspora, it has been and still can be applied to Gentile Christians.

B. Practical book: "The least dogmatic book of the NT" (ISBE)

"Designed to correct certain known tendencies in behavior" (Guthrie; cf. Wikenhauser)

1) True attitude to wealth

2) Control of the tongue

3) Approach to oaths

4) Christian prayer

Christian Ethics (Guthrie)

The whole epistle is ethical, not linked with doctrinal passages as in other epistles.