An exegetical study of the Greek text, with attention to the unique theological themes, structure and content of James.

GENERAL GOALS

This course addresses the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Mission statement by:

1. encouraging students to become more knowledgeable of the structure and theology of the Letter of James in its historical milieu and more competent in using language, interpretative, and application skills learned in NT502 and Greek 1 & 2 (mission goal 1). Students will be encouraged to become creative, original, careful scholars who employ primary source materials and who allow their conclusions to flow from a careful reading of the text and to further an enjoyment and awe of God and of the New Testament.

2. introducing students to the Christian scholarship issues in James (mission goal 2).

3. helping students mature in their character, outlook, conduct, relationships, and involvement in society by the teacher’s model, class dialogue, mentoring opportunities and prayer (mission goal 4).

4. providing resources and strategies that will lead to effective local and global ministry, mission, evangelism, and discipleship as evident in James (mission goals 3, 5, 6).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. (10%) Read James in Greek (7%) using a word list and, as reference, grammar books. (Do not use analytical lexicons nor interlinear Bibles!) (Full credit given after four hours of translation per week.) Keep a journal of insights and questions encountered in reading James (1%), which you will share with the class. Keep a separate list of or underline all the imperatives and images in James-hand in last class meeting (1%). Complete class exercises (1%). Quiz on Greek (5%). Highest of two grades will be counted. If at least a passing grade is not received on the second quiz, the grade will be lowered one grade. Competence in Greek is necessary for a passing grade for the course.

2. Complete and hand in an original historical, “character”/thematic study and outline of James (30%). Historical context (3-6 pp. double-spaced) due week 2, Sept.20 (grace 9/22). Character (1 p.) and outline (1 p.) studies due week 3, Sept. 27 (grace 9/29). These papers can be rewritten if completed by week 7 (Oct 25). Include original draft and cover sheet and rewritten draft.

3. Complete an 8-12 page exegesis paper double-spaced (50% grade) by week 8 (Nov 1) (grace 11/7 – 9 a.m. at professor’s home). Exegesis paper must include a textual critical, literary, grammatical, semantic, stylistic, Jewish or Greco-Roman study, an original translation, 1-2 pp. application (may be additional to 12 pp.), and sentence flow in appendix. Th.M. students write a 13-17 pp. exegesis paper. Optional redone paper with first draft and original cover sheet due week 12, Nov. 29.

4. Complete and present to class a representation of an image(s) used by James which captures the message of the book (5%) by week 12 (Nov. 29).
5. Read all the required assignments. Reading, excellent attendance, and extra effort affect in-between grades. Self-evaluation form due last class day.

6. Th.M. elevated students – in addition read (minimum 200 pp.) and do a book review (1 p.) related to James. Book review will include a brief summary and evaluation of book’s strengths and weaknesses.

**Books Needed to Complete Assignments**


*Danby, Herbert. THE MISHNAH. Oxford: Oxford, 1933 (0-19-815402x) or Jacob Neusner. THE MISHNAH. (2 chs.) Ref. BM497.5.E5*


Kierkegaard, Soren. FOR SELF-EXAMINATION. Princeton: Princeton University, 1941. BR100K54f (1 long ch.).


*Choose 1-2 commentaries from suggested bibliography.
WEEKLY SESSIONS

Week 1 (Sept. 13):

A. Introduction to course, procedures, requirements.
B. How to do historical context, “character”/thematic study, outline, and exegesis papers.

Assignments for next class:
2) Historical context of James due next week.
3) Read Eusebius, History II.23 and III.25. (optional, read Josephus Ant. XX.IX.1[200])

Week 2 (Sept. 20):

A. What is a “catholic epistle?” What do we know about the authorship and date of James?
B. Overview of events. To whom is letter written? Which diaspora? Set readers in historical times
C. Quiz on James 1:1-11.

Assignments for next class:
1) Bring to class sentence flow of 1:5 (optional 1:2-8)
2) Complete character study and outline of James by next week. Keep a copy for class use.
3) Choose text for final paper.

Week 3 (Sept. 27):

B. (if time permits) – group study of purpose

Assignments for next class:
1) Translate James 1:12-27. Write out every variant for the last 4 words of 1:17, manuscript support for each, name, age, text-type, quality. Use UBS and Nestle.
2) Read “How to Derive Benediction from Beholding Oneself in the Mirror of the Word” (James 1:22-27) in For Self-Examination.

Week 4 (Oct. 4):

A. Translate James 1:12-27. Go over how to choose original text.

Assignments for next class:
2. Read the Gospel of Matthew to compare Jesus’ teachings with James’ teachings. Bring notes to class.
3. Begin work on final paper.

Week 5 (Oct 10-14): Reading Week, no classes

Week 6 (Oct. 18):

B. Trials vs. Suffering

Assignments for next class:
1) Translate James 2:14-16. For class do a textual study of 2:19.
2) Read Romans and Aboth in Mishnah.
3) Read ch. 5 Joy through the Night.

Week 7 (Oct 25):

B. James vs. his contemporaries (Paul and other rabbis)
   Go over how to do an exegesis paper.

Assignments for next class:
2) Read Yadaim (“Hands”) in Mishnah.

Week 8 (Nov. 1):

B. “Be done with misuse of the tongue.”
   Tongue vs. Hands. The Qualities of a Teacher.

Assignments for next class:
1) Translate James 4:1-17.
2) Read Malachi.
3) Complete exegesis paper by next class.
4) Bring to class outline of James.

Week 9 (Nov. 7-11): Reading Week, no classes

Week 10 (Nov. 15):

A. Translate James 4:1-17.
B. James vs. Malachi – Genre of James. Main theme of letter

Assignments for next class:
2) Prepare for quiz on 5:1-20.

Week 11 (Nov. 22):

A. “Be done with fighting as the world fights.” Asking – believing.
Position Reversal (1:9-10; 2:1-4; 4:6, 10)

Assignments for next class:
1) Optional rewritten final paper due next week.
2) Read ch. 6 Joy through the Night.
4) Develop 1 image in James which you think captures a central message of the letter (e.g. drawing, collage, slide, music, sculpture). Also bring to class list of imperatives and self-evaluation form.

Week 12 (Nov 29)

A. “Be done with wealth.” “Receive the implanted word by appropriately dealing with immediate problems”
Spiritual Healing – The Rev. Dr. William David Spencer
B. Images in James-class

Assignments for next class:
Complete all reading. Bring self-evaluation form to class.

Week 13 (Dec. 6)

B. Imperatives in James– Summary of letter.

Excellent Commentaries Recommended for Purchase


Extensive presentation of authorship, date, secondary literature, and theology. Using redaction criticism, he concludes that James is a two-stage work including sermons and sayings by James the Just later redacted by James or a member of the church. Does not have text in the book. Good attention to rhetoric. Responds to Dibelius.
Interacting extensively with the secondary literature, using transliterated Greek, he has good attention to general theme of letter “tests of a living faith.”

290-page introduction on author (James, the Lord’s brother), comparison to other writings (every OT and Apocryphal work!), place and date of writing, and grammar. Extensively refutes James as “cousin” of Jesus. Cites original texts of other writers. Phenomenal amount of detailed research. At times complicated organization.

James, the Lord’s brother, wrote a “diakopian letter.” Harmonizes Paul and James.


*Robertson, A. T. WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT VI GENERAL EPISTLES AND REVELATION OF JOHN. Nashville: Broadman, 1933. 0-8054-1306-5 also in Bible Works
Helpful for translation.

**Other Books Which Should Receive Attention**

Update on Ross. James is “quasi-prophetic letter of pastoral encouragement and rebuke” written by Jesus’ brother. Well written, good attention to metaphors. Uses internal textual evidence to contradict external evidence. Transliterated Greek.


Uses form criticism because the letter is a series of sayings without continuity in thought (paraenesis). Other examples of paraenesis are Barnabas, Didache, sayings of Jesus (especially Matthew), Shepherd of Hermas (Mandates), Aboth, Tobit, Ad Demonicum, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Testaments XII, and 1 Peter. “It is not possible to construct a single frame into which [the admonitions] will all fit” (p.11). James has “no theology” (p. 21). Pivotal book for contemporary scholars.
Letter written around 60 by James the Just. Good word studies.

James the Lord’s brother. Extensive introduction. Detailed discussion of Greek.

Johnstone’s rewritten sermons. Greek. James the Just wrote letter before 50. Good exposition of text.

Letter cannot be written after the death of James the Just. Extensive introduction on authorship yet quite difficult to ascertain final conclusions of author. Extensive commentaries dealing with other commentators of his time.

Well-documented, balanced introduction assuming the epistle is pseudonymous. Relates text more to Hellenistic rather than Jewish backgrounds. Transliterated Greek.


Good expository comments. No footnotes to check references. Transliterated Greek. James the Lord’s brother is author. He aims to show how the letter is consistent in teaching with the rest of the New Testament.

Letter written by James had added to it other elements. Extensive introduction with detailed notes on Greek text. Much comparative work with other early literature.


12 expository talks based on Greek text. Wonderful background on James. Assumes explicit claims of the texts. Interesting and full of common sense. Seems to rely on Mayor.


James was written by the Lord’s brother at least by the 50s as a hortatory sermon – a fine study with emphasis on rhetoric.

**Less Technical or Briefer Commentaries**


Good introduction without footnotes. Sermon by James edited by someone else; usual sermonic outlines.

Agreeing with W.L. Knox, a later Christian edits material by James (A.D. 70-130). Brief.

Calvin, John. CALVIN’S COMMENTARIES: EPHESIANS-JUDE. Wilmington: Associated [n.d.] BS 2625 [37]
James the son of Alpheus writes to the Jews scattered across the world. “They who at this day set anointing among the sacraments, are not the true followers, but the apes of the Apostles, except they restore the effect produced by it, which God has taken away from the world for more than fourteen hundred years.”


Three different helpful series for church studies. Pastor/teacher commentary especially has good ideas for how to start Bible studies.

After a verse, the author gives a brief historical setting, expository meaning, doctrinal value, practical aim, and outline of a sermon.


Introductory commentary with practical considerations. James is author. Greek words.


Letter may have been sermon notes. In a colloquial style, ably discusses letter with special attention to continuing themes.


BS 2785.Z.S28 Transliterated Greek. Brief but fine comments. Prayer for sick only assures sick of salvation (133).

“A tract showing traces of the diatribe form” which “could have been by James.” He assumes a redactor. Very brief comments.

“Busy parish priest” expounds Scriptures to congregation. Relies especially on Mayor. Includes introduction on historical matters.

32 Sermons written as verse-by-verse exposition [needs to be read with letter-opener].

Devotional studies by a minister interspersed with poetry. Transliterated Greek.

Letter is like a “collection of sermon-notes” by James the Lord’s brother. Transliterated Greek. Relies on Ropes, Hort, and Mayor. Brief commentary. Like Adamson tends to stress internal textual evidence.

**Articles & Other Books**

CRISWELL THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, January (Fall 1986) on Book of James: theology, prayer, suffering, preaching, commentaries, dispensationalism.

REVIEW AND EXPOSITOR, Summer (1986) on James.


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