

James - Chapter 2

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning we are going to continue in James chapter 2 and we are dealing with what is obviously one of the most controversial passages of Scripture in all of the Bible.

And it is the passage in particular that we're looking at that causes some to justify the claim, well there are contradictions in the Bible, you know?

It says one thing in one place and another thing in another place. So you can't take the Bible too seriously because even those who wrote in the Bible don't agree with each other, so you just kind of have to take it with a grain of salt.

Now the problem with that is, if you take that approach to the Scriptures, nothing is nailed down, nothing is for sure, and if you're going to assume that there are contradictions in the Bible because there are some things that you can't square with one another, then what makes you think that John 3.16 has any validity to it?

Maybe that too is just a matter of John's just writing his personal opinion. That's all it is. And that's the way some people see the Bible. But we are committed to the principle that if you approach the Bible with the understanding that it contains a progressive, unfolding revelation, that it is doctrine developing, doctrine on the move, doctrine unfolding, if you keep that in mind, it will enable you to see how things were true for some people at one time that are no longer true for people today.

[1 : 49] And the most crowning example that we can give of that is the animal sacrifice system. I've talked to people before and they say, Oh yeah, you're that dispensational guy.

And I say, Well, I guess maybe I am. Don't you believe it? I don't buy that dispensation stuff. I take the whole Bible. I don't buy the dispensation.

I say, Oh, you're sacrificing animals, are you? Oh, well, no, I don't do that. But, well, listen, if you're not sacrificing animals because of the time and place for it is past, you're a dispensationalist.

You may not know it, but you are. Because a dispensationalist, and by the way, I prefer the word administration as opposed to dispensation because our good friend Dr. C.I. Schofield, for whom I have great respect, gave us a Schofield Reference Bible.

And Dr. Schofield was a scholar who had intelligence to buy and sell my IQ and have change left over. But he did give, I think, some erroneous ideas about dispensations.

[3 : 03] And that is, he kind of put the idea in the minds of people that a dispensation is a block of time.

Well, there's no question that all dispensations occur within a time frame. But it does a great disservice to the concept to say that it is time-bound like that.

So I prefer the term administration. Now, dispensation is found in the King James. It's a very good word. It has to do with dispensing. And when you go to a dispensary, they dispense things.

Usually aspirin, drugs, whatever it may be, a Band-Aid. It's a dispensing. And a dispensation is that time where things are dispensed.

Different things are dispensed for different people at different times. The Jew had an entirely different set of marching orders than what we have in the body of Christ.

[4 : 05] It was the Jew to whom the law of Moses was given, etc. And they are not now, but they were then duty-bound to obligate that.

And by the way, for even the Jew, what we look upon as the law of Moses, and what the Jew looks upon as the law of Moses, the basis for Judaism is a defunct religion.

It no longer has status or legitimacy before God as a result of the death that Christ died on that cross. When that veil was torn in two from the top to the bottom, God was effectively saying he was done with that.

And Christ became, Hebrews tells us, that Christ himself became the new and living way. That is to say, the veil is his flesh. So Christ has done what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.

And that's the Romans 8 thing. So what we're talking about here in James is that James, as well as the other so-called Christian Hebrew epistles, beginning with Hebrews and ending with Revelation, belong to the kingdom motif.

[5 : 21] Now most people have no difficulty seeing Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and at least early part of the book of Acts as belonging to kingdom, kingdom oriented, because John's message, when he came on the scene and baptized Jesus, John's message was, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And the message was exclusively to the Jewish people. That's why Jesus told the twelve, don't go to the Gentiles, don't go to the Samaritans, confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

That's because God is going to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth, and he's going to use the nation of Israel as the spearhead implement for establishing that kingdom.

That's why Christ came. And the miracles that Jesus performed all comport with kingdom conditions, because in that kingdom, when it comes to earth, ideal conditions are going to exist. There will not be blind people. There will not be lame people. There will not be people who die at a young age. All of that is millennial stuff, and Christ came to affect that.

[6 : 49] So when he said the kingdom of heaven is among you, he was speaking of his very own person. Jesus was the personification of the kingdom of God come to earth.

So when you understand that and see that in the Gospels, and move into the book of Acts, it continues. And we see that in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of God came and the people were speaking in tongues, languages that they had not learned, and they're wondering, what is this?

What's this all about? Peter tells them. Peter says, this, this that you see and hear, this voice that you're, the voices that people are using, languages that they didn't know, the sound of the rushing mighty wind, all of that.

He said, this is what the prophet Joel was talking about. And as you read Joel 2, and we're not going there now, but I just want to give you some background.

As you read Joel 2, you will see that what took place on the day of Pentecost was the very early beginnings of the kingdom of heaven being applied in a practical way by these people.

[8 : 12] And that's why as you move on through the Acts a little bit, you see the people who owned lands, selling the lands, bringing the money, laying it at the feet of the apostles for the apostles to distribute to people whoever had need.

What is that all about? That's nothing more than the kingdom motif being put into practice. And the miracles and the signs that accompanied that continue right on.

So you've got the miracles of Peter, you've got the miracles of Philip, the Ethiopian eunuch, you've got the miracles of Stephen, who performed the signs and wonders and they could not resist them. That's all kingdom oriented stuff. And that's what has to be kept in mind when you come to James, because Hebrews, James, the Peter epistles, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, all of those are kingdom motif.

What do you have? What do you have sandwiched between kingdom content, but the letters of the apostle Paul?

[9 : 22] And they are not kingdom oriented. And those epistles that I just mentioned, Christian Hebrew epistles of which James is one, they are kingdom oriented and they are addressed of all things to the Jew.

Well, of course, who else? James, to the 12 tribes scattered abroad. Who are they? They're Jews. They are the 12 tribes that have been persecuted and scattered abroad.

And those are the ones to whom the writer of Hebrews wrote. They are the ones to whom Peter wrote. All of that is kingdom stuff. So when you come to James chapter 2, we see how this is going to figure in very dramatically.

Let's begin, if we may, with verse 14 of chapter 2. What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works?

Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and be filled, yet you do not give them what is

necessary for their body, what use is that?

[10:38] Now, what is that in verse 15 and 16? That's works. That's human effort. That is people doing something for people.

That's works. Remember in Matthew, well, I think it's in Luke also, the rich young ruler, when he said, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And by the way, that rich young ruler, asking about inheriting eternal life, wasn't thinking of, am I going to heaven when I die? That's not what he was thinking of at all. He was thinking, he was thinking of dying in the Old Testament motif.

Remember, remember, when Jesus was here on earth, three years, he ministered and labored under the Old Testament economy, not the new.

Got that? That's really important. That's why Jesus kept the Sabbath. That's why he observed everything Jewish. That's why he kept the law as he did. because he was operating under the law of Moses.

[11:44] That had not been suspended. And when the rich young ruler says, well, I've done all of these things from my youth up, Jesus said, all right, if you would be whole, then sell what you have and give it to the poor and come and follow me.

What? What? What is that? What is that? Is that the gospel we preach today when someone says they would have eternal life?

What are you going to tell them to do? Well, you have to divest yourself of all of your goods and bring the money to the church and the church will distribute it to those who have need.

Well, that's crazy. It isn't crazy. It's kingdom. Why do you think those people in early Acts who had possessions and houses and Barnabas, who was later going to team up with Paul, Barnabas was a Levite, probably shouldn't have had property anyway because the Jews, the priests weren't supposed to own property, and he sold the land and they brought the money.

What is that? That is human works. That's human effort. And when we look at the Sermon on the Mount, well, I'm reluctant to do that.

[13:01] Let's go there real quick. Okay. Let's go there to Matthew. Let's go to Matthew 6. We won't spend much time there because, but I just want to make a point and I think it's an important point to make.

Matthew 6, and it's the famous, commonly referred to, Lord's Prayer. And beginning in verse 8, he says how they are to pray, our Father who art in heaven, the kingdom come, and so on and so on, and do not lead us into temptation.

And then in verse 14, and this is, fellas, listen, we can't afford to just read over these and dismiss it. Words mean things. Words mean things.

And when he says, for if, that's a condition. If you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

This is kingdom stuff. But, if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Fellas, that's pretty plain.

[14:17] Their being forgiven was conditioned upon their forgiving others. But, what, how do you square that? How do you square that with what Paul said when he wrote to the Colossians and says, that we are forgiven all trespasses?

What's, what's going on? Do you see how people can say, well, now there is a clear contradiction. Well, it isn't a contradiction, but, it looks like a contradiction because, what is recorded in Matthew for the conditional forgiveness was right for that time and that message and those people.

But now, in the body of Christ, which is entirely different, which is a mystery, something sprung on the world that was never prophesied, never expected, never predicted, came on the scene, and forgiveness is a blanket.

Wow, what is that? That's different. Of course it is. And, when we find in the Old Testament and, in, in movie, well, yeah, actually it starts in the Old Testament.

The baptisms, the plural, they are the washings. There are ceremonial purifications that the Jews went through time and time again. And, the priest would, the priest who was functioning in an official capacity might have a multitude of baptisms within one week because a lot of times they were required to bathe themselves completely before they would do another procedure.

[16:02] And, they had multiple baptisms. And, this is what Hebrews is talking about in chapter 11, about the multitude, or chapter 6, the multitude of baptism. And, when you come to John's Gospel,

it is, repent, and it would be nice if you were baptized.

No. No. It is repent, and be baptized. And, if you leave out the baptism, the water baptism in the Gospels, you've got an incomplete situation.

John never said, you need to repent, but the baptism is optional. Because it wasn't. It was repent, and be baptized. And, when Jesus sent the twelve forth, what did He tell them?

Heal the sick, raise the dead, give sight to the blind, and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. What joke? And, why did John tell them to be baptized? That was part of their Gospel of salvation?

Because, they were going to be the priests to us, Gentiles, and a priest, believe it, had to be baptized. And, so that was a requirement, because all of the Hebrews, all of the Israelites, that's why they were being baptized.

[17:15] Yeah. In the Old Testament, in the Old Testament, it was the priest who was baptized when he was ordained into the priesthood. Thirty years of age.

And, by the way, John the Baptist was thirty years of age when he began his ministry. and John was from the tribe of anybody?

Levi. John was a priest. And, he was six months, he was six months older than his second cousin, who was Jesus.

And, Jesus came when he was thirty years of age to be baptized of John, but he was under the order of Melchizedek, not after the order of Aaron or Levi.

So, he had a baptism, and that water baptism was part of the message. And, when Paul comes on the scene, we find a striking contrast, and Paul himself, by the way, was baptized.

[18:21] Shortly after the Damascus Road experience, he was baptized. Why was he? Because, he was still operating under the kingdom motif. And, the body of Christ thing had not yet even begun.

And, wouldn't begin until God gives this revelation to the apostle Paul, and designates him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. And, fellas, what I'm telling you is, this is a whole new ballgame.

And, it does not, it does not square one with the other because it isn't supposed to. what we are saying is, those in the gospels and early acts were absolutely right on track for what they were supposed to be doing when they were supposed to be doing it.

But, the time would come when that would subside, and a new dynamic would come on the scene that really caught a lot of flack.

And, you know something? It still does. And, it's called justification by faith. This concept is that which Martin Luther had so much difficulty with because he came to the conclusion, actually it's found in Habakkuk before Paul refers to it, about the just living by faith.

[19:48] And, Martin Luther came to that conclusion and saw it as a major breakthrough and tried to sell it to Rome but they weren't buying.

And, I'll tell you why. Because the motif under Roman Catholicism is not mere justification by faith, it is faith plus works.

And, the works the works consist of the sacraments. the sacraments. The sacraments are the means by which grace is extended to people.

We believe, as Martin Luther believed, justification by faith is solely on the basis of believing it is by grace through faith plus nothing.

And, our Roman Catholic friends, and I'm sure they're very sincere about this, accepted in good faith. They believe you are saved by grace also but, grace is extended to you, made available to you through the sacraments.

[21:02] Where do you get the sacraments? The only place they are available is in the church administered by the priest. And, it begins with baptism and the baptism of incense and so on.

This is the great division that exists in Christianity and has for the last 2,000 years. And, Martin Luther was trying to reform the Catholic Church and the Catholic Church had already taken a position that all of their doctrines were sacrosanct.

All of their doctrines were God inspired. How are you going to change those? How's that going to look if you change? Well, they didn't even consider the possibility and of course they ended up kicking out Luther and Luther ended up walking away from the church anyway.

So, what we've got here, let's go back to James chapter 2. What we've got here is a work situation that many still have difficulty dealing with and I think the problem is simply resolved once you

understand the time frames that are involved.

So, let's go on. Verse 17 chapter 2, faith, even if it has no works, is dead being by itself. But someone may well say, you have faith and I have works.

[22 : 26] Show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one? You do well. The demons also believe and shudder.

Don't give yourself too much credit simply because you believe in God. So does the devil. He believes in God. Are you willing to recognize, foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified, that means declared righteous, by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

Well, was he or was he not? Was James right? was James wrong? Sure he was right. Of course he was right. He was right.

You see that faith was working with his works and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. Now, back to the formula, repent and be baptized.

[23 : 33] Well, repentance is an act of the will. It's a changing of the mind. You change your mind because you choose to. And the reason you choose to is because you have been given information that justifies your changing your mind.

And you realize, fellas, this is all that happens when we preach the gospel. When you preach the gospel, all you do is give people information that gives them a reason and a need to change their mind.

That's what the word repent means. What is it about their mind that they're changing? Well, what was it that they believed before they heard the gospel?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. What did they believe before they heard that gospel? Most people believed, well, I'm not that bad.

I'm a pretty good guy. I keep the law most of the time. I don't beat my wife and I don't kick the dog and I pay my taxes and I'm okay.

[24 : 42] I'm okay. Hey, no you're not. You've got to change your mind about that. You are wrong. The word repent always means the same thing.

Change your mind and it always means that you change your mind because you have heard information, you have seen something that causes you to change.

I give this illustration and I say, here's a guy, he's going to buy a new Ford and he's really sold on this new Ford and he's got it all picked out and the color and everything he's going to buy.

But you know what? Much as I like that Ford, I'm going to check out the Chevys before I buy it. I don't think they've got it. So he goes to the Chevy show room and he looks at the newest model out and says, wow, I didn't know how to do this.

I didn't know. Wow, wow, you know what? I think I'm going to change my mind. I'm going to buy a ship. Do you know what he did? He repented.

[25 : 41] Now nobody uses the word repent in that context because they associate it with religion. But it's not originally associated with religion at all. It means change your mind.

But it is sometimes used in a religious context. And it has nothing to do, nothing to do with penance. Penance means you somehow punish yourself or deprive yourself of something to help pay for your sins.

It is a self-punishment. That's the basis for Lent. Lent means doing without things you like. And it is a form of depriving yourself of something that you like.

It's a form of self-punishment. And it can get really extreme like it does with the flagellantes who every year around Easter time they take whips and they beat themselves and they flail their back until it's laid open with blood.

And they are told that they are helping to pay for their sins by punishing themselves. And fellas, if Jesus didn't pay it all, He didn't pay anything.

[26 : 55] The efficaciousness of the death of Christ was more than adequate, to completely pay for the sins of every human being because God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

And there isn't anything you can do to pay for your own sins. Any payment that you would make would be woefully inadequate anyway. Because it would be paid with a tarnished mentality and a tarnished deed.

What, Joe? Peter, when he taught, when he was preaching to the people, the Jews, after the death and resurrection, wasn't to repent and he was talking about change your mind about who Jesus

was.

You thought he was just an ordinary guy, but he was the Messiah, the king that was coming and you killed him and therefore you got to change your mind. I appreciate you mentioning that because and this is the concept that I had for years and years and years and when I first heard this I thought, well that's crazy.

Of course he did. Of course he did. And that is a common concept is that Peter on the day of Pentecost preached the gospel.

[28 : 08] Preached death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Of course he did. Everybody knows he did. Yeah? Well look at the text and find it. It isn't there.

What Peter did do, he delivered an indictment against the nation of Israel saying God delivered him up, but you, you, by wicked hands have crucified and slain the Lord of glory.

He charged them, he charged Israel, the Jews to whom he was speaking on that day of Pentecost, he charged them with the execution of their Messiah.

And then he said, God raised him from the dead. And the beautiful text there in Acts 2 says that when they heard Peter preach, they were pricked in their heart.

That is really something guys. What that means is, they got it. they got it. It laid them low. And it was a, it was a, oh no!

[29 : 21] Hey! That's right! That's exactly what happened! That's what we did! That's who he was! And he unfolded that mysterious passage in the Psalms about David, about saying you will not see your holy one to see corruption, corruption, and the typical Jewish response was that they were talking about David.

David was talking about him. And Peter says, no! No! He wasn't talking about David. It was in the Psalms and David wrote it, but he wasn't talking about himself. He said, listen, we know where David's buried.

We know where his tomb is. He did see corruption. His body is moldering in the grave. We know right where he was buried. That, the psalmist spoke of, was a Messiah who would not see corruption.

And these Jewish people, at least 3,000 of them, they started collecting the dots, connecting the dots. Things were fitting, coming together, and they said, man is right.

And in desperation, in desperation, they turned each other and said, men, brethren, what can we do? What shall we do?

[30 : 43] We would undo that if we could, but we cannot do it. What can we do? What can we do? Where do we go from here? And Peter said, you can change your mind and be baptized in the name of the one whose baptism you earlier refused.

Remember, the scribes and the Pharisees, they received not the judgment of God against themselves, they received the judgment of God against themselves, not being baptized by John. They rejected John. They rejected John's baptism. And now, Peter is calling upon them to reverse themselves. And then when you get into chapter 3 of Acts, we see a continuation where, of all things, this kingdom concept that we thought came to an end with the crucifixion of Christ, it continues on.

And the kingdom is still available. So the twelve are preaching in the book of Acts. They're preaching the kingdom. They have one additional element to it, and that is the resurrection. And boy, what that did was it beefed it up even more and made it even more dramatic. And that's what James is talking to the Jews. Now, that's his concept. That's his thinking. It is. He's talking to you. It is.

[32 : 10] The kingdom's right around the corner, folks. It is. You've got to do all these things good. God, when he lays this out, he is reminding these people of who Jesus Christ is and why he came.

And fellas, if you take the Pauline epistles, which are referred to as mystery, and Paul calls it that in Ephesians 3, and he says, this concept of Jew and Gentile together in one body was not made known before.

He means it was never prophesied. What is prophesied over and over and over and over again, all throughout the Old Testament, the kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom.

And what was the key to the kingdom? It was the king, the Messiah. And that's why Israel for 4,000 years, ate, slept, drank, the concept of the Messiah, the Messiah, the Messiah, when the Messiah comes.

And then when he came, the stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner. When he came, they rejected him.

[33 : 27] And as a result, they crucified him. God raised him from the dead. And that kingdom that was earlier offered continues to be offered and they are meeting kingdom conditions.

That's why, fellas, listen, this is a really important point. The whole kingdom concept, whether in these epistles or in the gospels or in the Old Testament, the whole kingdom concept is fraught through and through with the supernatural.

One miracle after another. Jesus performed all those miracles, 35 of them recorded, in order to authenticate his claim as Israel's Messiah and the Savior of the world.

And if he's going to come and present the kingdom and says that he's the king, he better have something to show for it. And he did. And he gave them one miracle after another.

And the text goes on to say they never had enough. And you know what their problem was? Hope you never forget this. Their problem was a lack of evidence.

[34 : 44] No. They had more than enough evidence. Their problem was a lack of will. They would not believe. how many times, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times would I have gathered you together like a hen gathers her brood under her wings?

And you would not. You would not. He didn't say you could not. He said you would not. And finally, Jesus had had enough.

And they never could get enough. They wanted to show. They wanted miracles. Give us some razzle-dazzle. And Jesus said, listen, if the mighty miracles done in you, Bethsaida, Chorazin, right on the shores of Galilee, all the fishermen, if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they're not even Jews.

They're Gentiles. Over on the coast, they're Gentiles. He said, if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, but not you.

So, there shall no more signs be given to this evil and adulterous generation except the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was in the fish's belly for three days and three nights, even so must the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth.

[36 : 16] That's the only other sign they're going to be given. And he cut off the miracles right there. Because their problem wasn't not enough miracles, not enough evidence, no. Their problem was they were just hell-bent for not believing no matter what he did.

So, we've got here in James, this situation with faith and works. Now, I've got to keep in mind here how important this is.

And come back, if you will, to Romans chapter 4. Romans chapter 4. And this is quite stunning. Let's begin with verse 6. Just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness, apart, apart from works, blessed are those whose lawless needs have been forgiven, whose sins have been covered, blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.

Is this blessing then upon the circumcised or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.

[37 : 32] Now, wait a minute. Didn't James say, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac on the altar? Yes, he was. Well, now look at what Paul is saying.

faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised?

Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. What does that mean? That means that Abraham came into a right relationship with God before before he was circumcised and he was called justified by faith.

Justified by faith simply means you believe solely on the basis of the information you're given and you exercise your will and you believe.

Now, we haven't dealt with this sufficiently because we've got to finish chapter two and there's more really important content ahead but the food is here and like I said, I can't compete with that.

[38 : 38] What, Joe? Also, Paul says in Ephesians 2, 8-10, that for it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not for yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works.

Paul said not by works and James says are we not justified by works also? So, do you see the difference here? There is a difference and there's supposed to be a difference because they're dealing with two different clienteles, two different kinds, if you don't make that distinction, by the

way, Paul called that rightly dividing the work.

If you don't rightly divide it, the only alternative is to wrongly mix it and you try to make these things fit and they just won't fit. They really don't conflict at all though because if there's truly faith there, works will be there automatically.

That's true. Works will be there if there's true faith. A faith that is genuine cannot help but produce works. That's right. And the reason it does is because it changes the person on the inside when his face is there and that is reflected outwardly.

So enjoy your breakfast and the time together. Thank you.