

James - First Century Review

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 December 2020

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Well, I'm going to be dealing with a little bit of review material since it's been a while, since we've gathered together. And I'm sure most of you were present when Tad Holbert led us through the first chapter of the Epistle of James. And I think he did a remarkable job.

We benefited from it a great deal. James is located with the other commonly referred to as Christian Hebrew Epistles.

It's near the back of the book. And they occupy these epistles. And I'm talking about Hebrews and James and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John and the Petrine Epistles and even the Revelation.

They all represent a very special place in the canon of Scripture. And I think they are placed right where they belong. And prior to that, of course, the Paulian Epistles, and then you've got the four Gospels and the book of Acts.

But I want you to note that it's the Paulian Epistles that are situated right in the middle of those, almost like a sandwich. And that is because those epistles represent a parenthesis.

[1 : 21] And we are now living in that parenthesis. So let me just introduce our referral to that with a couple of observations, and then we'll go into the text in chapter 2.

All of the New Testament is kingdom-oriented because they say they are beginning in Matthew chapter 3 with John's proclamation of the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And then all through the Gospels, we find reference to the kingdom of heaven at hand. And our Lord Jesus Christ was born, came into this world for the specific purpose of being the king of that kingdom.

And he is charged with the responsibility of restoring the earth to the pristine kind of condition that it enjoyed before the fall occurred in Genesis chapter 3.

You'll recall in chapter 3, as soon as the fall occurred, God was promising a Messiah to right the wrongs of the world and to literally undo the effects of sin.

[2 : 38] That was to be accomplished through this one who is the Messiah, Yeshua HaMashiach. And Israel waited for 4,000 years for that Messiah to come on the scene.

And when he did, that's when John announced him as being the promised one who is the seed of the woman. And he had come into the earth for the sole purpose of providing redemption for a fallen world.

And that's what Paul is talking about when he says God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. That's what he effected. The father sent the son to be the savior of the world.

And when he was presented to Israel as their Messiah, Israel rejected him. And as a result, he went to the cross. He there paid for the sins of the world, was resurrected the third day, spent six weeks with the disciples on the earth after his resurrection, and then went back to heaven after leaving the disciples with an earthly commission.

And essentially, that commission had to do with the same thing that John the Baptist was preaching. However, there was one important addition. And that is, the Messiah had come, had paid the penalty for the reversal of the curse, and had gone back to heaven.

[4 : 08] And the resurrection was the focal point after it had occurred. When he went back to heaven, he gave them that commission that they were to be endued with power.

Ten days, well, he didn't tell them how many days, but we know it turned out to be ten days on the day of Pentecost. And he said, you will be endued with a special power from the Spirit of God, and he will enable you to be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

He had no idea how long that was going to be, but they were gathered there for the Jewish Feast of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. And I think it is safe to say that this is one of the most important times

in the Jewish calendar.

It is actually, it is a great feast day. It is a time of great celebration, great enjoyment, great food, great everything. And they just pulled out all the stops.

People came from all over everywhere, sometimes even from out of the country, just to be there for one of the Jewish feasts. Because actually, Moses had pointed out in the Old Testament that every Jew was to attend one of three feasts during the year, if at all possible.

[5 : 33] And this was a time when people would come, as you read in Acts chapter 2, they were there from all over the Mediterranean basin, and they couldn't speak the language, because they'd come from different areas, and they had one thing in common, and that was their Jewishness.

So they're all gathered for this Jewish feast in the temple, and when the day of Pentecost had fully come, we are told that the Spirit of God descended on that group of people, and there were thousands there.

We know that 3,000 had a positive response to it, but there were thousands there. And all of these people who were unable to communicate with each other, even though they had a common religion, didn't have common language, God simply reversed the curse that had been imposed on the Tower of Babel when He confounded the languages, and everyone could hear the message that was spoken in their own language.

And Peter delivered this stunning message, and when people asked what was the meaning of all of this, and these people talking and everything, what is this?

And one wise guy at least said, well, they're drunk. And Peter stood up and said, these men are not drunk as you suppose. Seeing it's only 9 o'clock in the morning, they're not drunk.

[6 : 53] But this, this that you are seeing and hearing, is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. And fellas, I want to tell you, right there in Acts 2, is where one of the greatest faulty assumptions in all of Christendom has taken place.

Because down through the years, down through centuries, a meaning has been imposed upon that Acts 2 that is not accurate and has led a lot of people astray.

In fact, I'd go so far as to say much of Christendom, because it is assumed that that was the birthday of the church. And the King James Version doesn't help much because in verse 47 it says, the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

But the original text simply says the Lord added to their number. Was it a church? Yes. Yes, it was a church. There were 3,000 of them, but it was a Jewish church. It was a Jewish called out assembly for a special purpose.

There are lots of different churches in the Bible. In the Old Testament, there's a church and in the New. And you've got to determine what church it is that is in question when you look at the context.

[8 : 15] And the context will usually tell us. And the simplest interpretation, simplest interpretation that you could possibly get is the one that Peter gave us.

Peter, they said, what is this? What is this? And somebody said to him, no, no, these men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's the third hour of the morning. This, this that you are seeing and hearing is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.

Well, these people there were very familiar with the prophet Joel. Most of them were familiar with the Old Testament. And he goes on to explain this is what Joel was talking about.

That your men shall, old men shall see dreams and have visions, and there will be a manifestation from heaven, etc. And he goes on to describe what all is going to take place in connection with this. And that's the interpretation of Acts 2. You would think, you would think that what Peter said was, what is this? Well, it's obvious as to what this is.

[9 : 21] This is the birthday of the church. The Christian church. Fellas, there was nothing Christian about it. This was as Jewish as it could possibly be. The Christianity factor isn't even going to come into play until years later because all of these who had become believers were Jews and they submitted themselves to John's baptism and they were, they were completely caught up in the Jewishness in which they were born.

And it will not be until 10 years later that the first non-Jew is on the scene. And his name is Cornelius and he's a Roman army officer and you'll find all about him in Acts chapter 10.

So up until that time, this thing is Jewish, Jewish, Jewish, Jewish. And that's a bitter pill for a lot of Christians to swallow because we want to get in right on the beginning and we like to think that that was the beginning there.

And when you read later, and I think it's in Acts chapter 13, it says they were called Christians first in Antioch. There is another common, common faulty assumption and that is that Christianity began in Jerusalem.

Well, what was to become Christianity became, it started in Jerusalem, but actually it was Antioch. Antioch of Syria, which was actually a foreign country, is where what we would call Christianity really had its start.

[10 : 58] And that's when Gentiles became added to the picture in a dramatic way and the cheapest among them was Saul of Tarsus who became the apostle to the Gentiles.

Joe, if you'll hold your questions, we'll have to wait. I've got to get through this. So this is all background material. So what we've got here is a situation that has begun that is establishing a whole new order because this thing is going to move from strictly Jewish to Jewish with Jews embracing Jesus as the Messiah as a minority because most of the Jewish nation is going to remain in a negative mode regarding Jesus as the Messiah.

it will be a minority that will believe. And they are just having themselves a wonderful time in chapters 2 and 3 and in 4 the roof falls in because the persecution begins.

And the persecution is going to be Jew upon Jew. No Romans are persecuting anybody. This is Jew upon Jew.

And that which will determine persecution is whether you are one who believes Jesus was the Messiah of Israel or not. If you believe he was you are in a minority and you're in trouble because the majority is going to be led by a radical by the name of Saul of Tarsus and he is going to see you and your kind as an unhealthy cancer that is growing on Judaism and you've got to be stamped out.

[12 : 51] And that was the beginning of the career of Saul of Tarsus chief persecutor. I've often thought of Saul of Tarsus in connection of being the original Gestapo.

Think of that. World War II. Germany. The Jews. The Gestapo. Actually the Gestapo was predated by about 2,000 years from the Gestapo that Hitler originated.

Isn't that something? And it was Jew persecuting Jew. What this is going to result in guys is a time of enormous confusion and upheaval.

You've got to understand this. The first century of which the book of Acts covers 30 years is going to be abject chaos and confusion.

And the reason it is is because of Jesus of Nazareth and the way they are lined up for him or against him. The persecution is going to intensify and the brakes are going to be put on it temporarily when the chief persecutor himself comes to faith in Jesus as his Messiah.

[14 : 15] And that is Paul on the road to Damascus and everything is going to change. And when he has that conversion account on the Damascus road and God calls this man Ananias to go to Saul of Tarsus lay his hands on him that he may receive his sight most significant thing happens he tells Ananias he says no I understand you being concerned about going to Saul of Tarsus because of his reputation but he's the right guy you go and you find him he's on the straight straight and you find him for and then he tells Ananias he says and I will show him what great things he Saul must suffer for my name's sake for I will send him as the apostle to the Gentiles and he will speak before kings and the sons of Israel well who's left out nobody nobody this man singular as opposed to the twelve apostles this one man is raised up to be the apostle to the

Gentiles and his parish is the world Jews Gentiles everybody he's got this message to preach so this is the time of intense persecution that is going to begin and he is now going to be on the receiving end of it this is the guy that was dishing it out before and the question needs to be asked and still asked today is not this thing we call the gospel which means good news is it not the best good news this world has ever heard Christ died for your sins to reconcile you to God to render you savable so that you can come to God through this mediator Jesus Christ and have your sins forgiven and have eternal life imparted to you and a home in heaven and a right standing with God is there any better news anywhere than that no never has been and pray tell me why in the name of common sense should anyone have to suffer for preaching that what is going on what is this all about

I will show him what great things he must suffer and from whom was he going to suffer them from his own country on one occasion Saul of Tarsus was having such a tremendous effect in Damascus there where he had arrived he had arrived in Damascus for the purpose of rounding up these Jews that had fled there that had escaped him and bring them back to Jerusalem to stand trial and throw him in prison and Damascus is a good hundred miles from Jerusalem and when he had that

conversion experience and it completely changed him and put him on the other side now he's going to be receiving the persecution that he once had dished out and you've got to ask yourself what is going on that people oppose that kind of a message and the answer is we oppose it because it does not compute with our logic that we have arrived at from a fallen intellect we do not reason that way we do not see it that way this is why the gospel usually takes repeated hearings for someone to absorb it and understand it and apply it because at the outset it just sounds too good to be true to be preaching that stuff so what this is setting up now and this is what the book of Acts is largely about is a time of tremendous chaos listen the world has never seen such confusion as it saw in that first century and then in the midst of it all Rome is going to be entering the picture on a political over and he told them that the time is coming when the enemy is going to throw up a siege around you and they're going to level your city and level the temple he said that on Palm Sunday as he wept over the city and 40 years later in 70 AD Rome is going to come in under Titus the Roman general and in April April I think it is they set up a siege around the city and surround it nobody gets in nobody gets out and in August the Romans broke through of that same year and the carnage was unbelievable tens of thousands of Jews men women and children were slaughtered by the Romans and thousands were led away into captivity thousands were brought all the way back to Rome and induced into servitude for the Romans and this time of confusion is going on and let me tell you it is in this kind of backdrop of confusion that we're talking about that the epistle of James was written probably one of the first in the New Testament and why do you suppose James opens up with my brethren count it all joy when you fall into many testings and trials why did he start with that because that was the item that was front and center on everybody's agenda these people were undergoing tremendous persecution and James was addressing it with the knowledge that God was in it and that this was to be expected it is predictable because you are in a minority and guys by the way go right ahead don't bother me don't mind me at all and when when they are confronted with that reality it comforts them to know hey persecution is not abnormal and unexpected it goes with the territory and fellas [21 : 06] I'm here to tell you this morning that you better brace yourselves because we may be looking at some times of unprecedented opposition in the name or against the name of Christ and Christianity and there is every indication that it is coming so Joe you've got a comment or question well I was going to say back to the new message when the church started our church if you believe the church started back with Peter's time and acts you will not be saved you do not have eternal life because that's not the gospel you have to believe you have to believe Paul's gospel of death burial and resurrection unless you believe that you will not be going to heaven you better believe that the church started with Paul or you're not going to heaven people containers and 80% have could you pray put on chaos of chaos and confusion that James has written in.

In fact, if you read the others, read Peter, 1 and 2 Peter, you'll find the same theme. They're talking about the same thing, how difficult it is and was to live in that day and age. And then, of course, the rest is going to follow. So enjoy your breakfast in the day ahead. Thank you, Jenna, for your good service. We do appreciate it, dear. Thank you.