

**PAUL AND JAMES: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW THE LORD ACCORDING TO  
EPHESIANS 3:14-21 AND JAMES?**

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Ephesians 3:14-21 is an extraordinary passage, possibly expressing the conclusion of Paul's prayer begun in Ephesians 1:17-23, that each Christian might be given the power to deeply and wholeheartedly know the incredible love of God. In unpacking this, Paul deals with many important topics. This essay will add to an understanding of its message by comparing and contrasting the Pauline and Jacobean new covenant foci on Ezek 36 and Jer 31, respectively. What do I mean by this? James and Paul read very differently. Everyone sees that—even people who are committed to reconciling them. A reason we will propose for the essay for this difference is that James focuses on the Word implanted, much akin to Jer 31, while Paul's focus is on the implanting of the Spirit as described in Ezek 36. But, what's this have to do with Eph 3? One of the major themes in Ephesians is knowing the Lord. And this is one of the major themes of the new covenant as seen in Jer 31:31-34.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."<sup>1</sup>

This essay will dig into the questions, "What does it mean to know the Lord and what does it mean to know him even though it's beyond knowledge?" What would James have said in the context of Jer 31 if he was challenged to write Paul's prayer. By approaching this discussion in this way, it's a radical, tangential approach, but it's an exciting approach because if we believe in the continuity of Scripture then it ought to be possible to restate Eph 3:14-21 in Jacobean terms.

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture citations will be taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

What might this add to our understanding? It might add to our appreciation of Eph 3 by fleshing out a new covenant context of Paul's words. By looking at Eph 3:14-21 through the approach of this essay, we might see things in Ephesians that we might not have seen before. But also, this may go to redeeming James through the eyes of some. James is often seen as stark and stoic by many, even disinterested in the Spirit, but by thinking about how he may reframe Eph 3, we can gain a better appreciation of James. This essay will (1) briefly highlight key aspects of Ezekiel's prophesy of the inauguration of the new covenant; (2) examine Paul's understanding of knowing the Lord as it plays out in Paul's prayers (1:17-23; 3:14-21); (3) briefly highlight key aspects of Jeremiah's prophesy of the inauguration of the new covenant; (4) examine James' understanding of knowing the Lord; (5) present a prayer of James with a new covenant focus on Jer 31; and (6) present concluding thoughts and applications.

#### *EZEKIEL AND THE NEW COVENANT*

In Ezek 36:26-27, Ezekiel prophesies God's inauguration of the new covenant. It says, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." In the prophesy, Ezekiel proclaims that God will give his people a new heart, and he will give them a new spirit. However, he will actually put this spirit within his people. Not only that, he will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh. Again he states that God will put a spirit within them; however, on this occasion, he emphasizes that God will put his Spirit within them. This will cause them to walk in God's statutes. Therefore, he states that they should be careful to obey God's rules.

This picture describes a spiritually transformed people of God who are inwardly filled with the Spirit and who outwardly walk according to the ways of God. In v. 23, Ezekiel states one of the reasons why God is doing this. He says, “And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.” God is doing this so that “the nations will know that I am the LORD.” These points of emphasis just highlighted are all extremely important for understanding Paul’s new covenant foci within Ephesians, and therefore, Paul’s understanding of what it means to know the Lord.

#### *TO KNOW GOD IN EPHESIANS*

Bruce calls Ephesians the quintessence of Paulinism because it “sums up the leading themes of the Pauline letters.”<sup>2</sup> The epistle is divided into two distinct yet related halves: chapters 1–3 and 4–6.<sup>3</sup> The first half focuses on theology or doctrine while the second half focuses on the application of the theology and doctrine found in the first half.<sup>4</sup> However, the theology of Ephesians is presented through the mood of devotion and prayer (1:3-14, 15-21; 3:14-21) rather than through logical development or polemic, as seen in some of Paul’s other epistles.<sup>5</sup> Even the framework isn’t what one may logically expect; rather, Ephesians’ framework

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<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (1977; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 424.

<sup>3</sup> Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1999), 66; Edna Johnson, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of Ephesians*, ed. John Banker, Semantic and Structural Analysis Series (USA: SIL International, 2008), 29; Douglass Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, BTNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 270; Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 309.

<sup>4</sup> O’Brien, 66; Moo, *Theology*, 270.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, eds. J.A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 47.

is cosmic.<sup>6</sup> It “sets forth the cosmic implications of Paul’s ministry as apostle to the Gentiles.”<sup>7</sup> An essential implication of this cosmic framework that Ephesians unpacks is the relation between believers and God, and specifically, the concepts of knowledge and wisdom as it relates to man knowing God and his love. This is evident by Paul’s lexical focus in Ephesians. Οἶδα, γνωρίζω, ἐπίγνωσις and their cognates appear numerous times throughout the epistle. Σοφία occurs an additional three times. Over half of all these occurrences are found in Paul’s prayers (Eph 1:17-23; 3:14-21). This is worth investigating and examining in order to develop a more complete understanding of what it means to know God according to this epistle.

#### *Eph 1:17-23*

Paul opens his prayer (1:17) by asking “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” that He may give the Ephesians “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” What does Paul mean by “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation?” In v. 13, Paul notes that the readers “were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” after hearing “the word of truth” and believing in Christ. Thus, Paul asking God to grant them “the Spirit of wisdom” seems contradictory. Many commentators, therefore, take the human reference emphasizing that πνεῦμα is anarthrous and point to many parallel phrases to a spirit of wisdom (*e.g.* a wise spirit) throughout the Scriptures.<sup>8</sup> However, when we consider Paul’s focus for his readers on knowing the Lord, it sheds light on the passage. Paul desires their knowledge of God to increase and mature. Having already been sealed by the Holy Spirit, they, like all other believers, are not immediately made completely wise when converted and sealed; therefore, a gap exists where

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce, 424.

<sup>8</sup> Best, 163.

growth and enrichment is necessary that can only come from the Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Holy Spirit is essential to gain wisdom, especially concerning God. This aligns with contemporary Jewish usage of God giving the Spirit (*cf.* Wis 7:7).<sup>10</sup> In fact, human speculation cannot bring knowledge of God because wisdom is hidden in God (*cf.* Col 2:3) and only God can make it known (*cf.* 1 Cor 2:10-11).<sup>11</sup>

If we once again consider Paul's focus for his readers on knowing the Lord, we shall come to the answer concerning what Paul means by "the Spirit of revelation." Since we have successfully shown that the Spirit of wisdom imparts wisdom, we can logically presume that the Spirit of revelation imparts revelation. The wisdom and revelation is "in the knowledge of him." Paul's prayer in vv.17-19 is that "the Spirit, who had been given to the readers at their conversion (*cf.* v. 13), might impart wisdom and revelation to them so that they might understand more fully God's saving plan and live in the light of it."<sup>12</sup> Paul's prayer, then, is stressing the origin of true knowledge in God, and asking for God to give it to the Ephesians.<sup>13</sup> This results in the believers having the eyes of their hearts enlightened (v. 18). Paul uses καρδιά, according to O'Brien, "in its customary OT sense to describe the seat of the physical, spiritual, and mental life of a person, [and, therefore] denotes the centre and source of both physical life and the whole inner life with its feelings or emotions, volition, and, as here, its thinking."<sup>14</sup> Lexically, φωτισω could mean 'to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> O'Brien, 132.

<sup>13</sup> Best, 163; O'Brien, 133.

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien, 134.

enlighten,' 'to bring to light,' 'to reveal,' 'to shed light upon,' or 'to illumine'.<sup>15</sup> It's important to notice that all the meanings have a focus on revealing something or making something clearer. With that being said, "the eyes of your heart" is an OT metaphorical expression (cf. Pss. 13.3; 19:8). It also alludes to the implanting of the Spirit and the giving of a new heart in Ezek 36. Since Paul's audience are already believers they are already sealed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Paul knows that by God granting or revealing this wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him to them it will enlighten their whole person.

The purpose of this spiritual insight or enlightenment of the heart is that Paul's readers may know three things presented in three parallel clauses (vv. 18b-19): (1) the hope which is revealed through God's calling of the Ephesians;" (2) the knowledge God has given the Ephesians into the glorious wealth of his inheritance in the saints; and (3) God's immeasurable greatness of his power toward the Ephesians.<sup>16</sup> These three things that Paul wants them to know all occur according to God's exceedingly great power that he exerted<sup>17</sup> in Christ and worked on behalf of these believers in Ephesus. Paul ends the prayer in v. 20a focused on God's power demonstrated in Christ. God's power raised Christ from the dead and sat him at the right hand in heaven with all authority and power (vv. 20b-23). Therefore, true knowledge and true wisdom and revelation are made known to the Ephesians because of the working of God's infinite power working in the raising and exalting of Christ.

### *Knowing the Lord in Eph 1:17-23*

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1074.

<sup>16</sup> Best, 166; O'Brien, 134-136.

<sup>17</sup> O'Brien, 139, further explains the syntactic connection between ἐνέργειαν (v. 19) and ἐνήργησεν (v. 20) through the relative pronoun ἣν, which leads him to translate ἐνήργησεν as 'exerted'.

Before moving to the conclusion of the prayer in Eph 3:14-21, we must return to the question, “What does it mean to know the Lord?” Ezekiel 36 only mentions God and the Spirit. However, the NT, and especially Paul in Ephesians, brings to light the role that Jesus plays in the inauguration of the new covenant introduced by Ezekiel. Paul emphasizes the raising and exalting of Christ as the acts that allows for the sealing of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is understood as salvific knowing. Since the Holy Spirit is written on the new hearts of the Ephesians, Paul, up to this point, is led to pray that God would cause the indwelling Holy Spirit to give the Ephesian believers Godly wisdom and revelation in order that they may know God’s promises for them which are realities because of God’s redemptive plan accomplished by the power of God exerted in the raising and exalting of Christ. It’s worth noting that all three persons in the trinity play a part in Paul’s account. Also, the source of this Godly wisdom and knowledge is God himself. Therefore, to know the Lord, God must grant His knowledge and wisdom to believers. This even includes the Godly knowledge and wisdom that promotes the spiritual maturing and growing of believers essential to progressive sanctification.

*Eph 3:14-21*

The initial intercession in ch. 1 transitions to a reminder of the greatness of the salvation which God has won for the believers in Ephesus (2:1-3:13).<sup>18</sup> This leads into the remainder of Paul’s prayer found in Eph 3:14–21. O’Brien breaks the prayer down as follows:<sup>19</sup> (1) Paul’s prayer in vv. 14-19 picks up and repeats some of the the main themes in the prayer of ch. 1; (2)

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<sup>18</sup> O’Brien, 66.

<sup>19</sup> The remainder of the paragraph is from O’Brien, 253.



Verses 14-15 introduce the prayer and address God as “Father”; (3) Vv. 16-19 explain the details of his intercession. The prayer concludes with a doxology (vv. 20-21). Best explains that the details of Paul’s intercession (vv. 16-19) follows in three successive clauses (vv. 16-17; 18-19a; 19b), each beginning with ἵνα and to some extent dependent on the preceding clause.<sup>20</sup> This prayer serves as a way to justify his exhortations to them in chs. 4-6.<sup>21</sup> We shall walk through this prayer highlighting the themes, especially those that correspond with Eph 1:17-23, while also keeping in mind the questions, “What does it mean to know the Lord and what does it mean to know him even though it’s beyond knowledge?”

Paul returns to a focus on the Spirit and the mighty power of God. In the first clause, he prays that the Father would grant them to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being (3:16). Again, God has already sealed the Ephesians with the Holy Spirit (1:13; cf. Ezek 36:26-27). Paul, then, is asking that the Father would pour out his divine power on the people in order that they may be strengthened in their inner being through his Spirit. ‘Inner being’ refers to the center and source of both physical life and the whole inner life of a person. In this case, God has already redeemed the person’s inner being, but there is still spiritual growth and maturity that must take place that will only occur through the power granted by the Father through his Spirit. This prayer expands his previous intercession for the Ephesians to know God’s immeasurable greatness of his power toward them (1:18-19a).

In v. 17, Paul’s prayer becomes trinitarian with the introduction of Christ. With that being said, there is debate and difficulty surrounding the meaning of the rest of the first clause. The

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<sup>20</sup> Best, 335.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, 127.

problem lies in the fact that there is no particle linking v. 17 to the preceding. Several scholars and EVV believe that v. 17a explain the purpose or result of the preceding suggesting that Paul is praying for the Ephesians first to be empowered by the Father's Spirit in order that Christ can dwell in them.<sup>22</sup> However, this isn't what Paul had in mind. Johnson convincingly argues, "This clause [17a] is grammatically co-ordinate to the previous infinitive κραταιωθῆναι 'to be strengthened' and the clause it governs, but semantically it is a definition or amplification of that clause."<sup>23</sup> Best adds that "parallelism is seen in the two διὰ clauses" and in ἔσω ἄνθρωπον and καρδίας.<sup>24</sup> She supports her argument on the fact that when believers have the Spirit within themselves, Christ is also in them as Paul states in Rom 8:9-10.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Christ's indwelling of a believer runs parallel to the clause begun in v. 16 while also clarifying and bringing further definition to the strengthening mentioned prior. Best, in support of the clauses meaning the same thing, adds that v. 16 would have been more easily understood by a Hellenistic audience while v. 17a is more Semitic.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, both clauses together (vv. 16-17a) should read, "[...] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; [...]."

There are various ways to interpret vv. 17b-18.<sup>27</sup> The best option is to interpret "rooted and grounded in love" as the intended result of the two previous infinitives causing the passage

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<sup>22</sup> O'Brien, 258.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, 129. See also Best, 341, O'Brien, 258, and John R.W. Stott, *The Message of the Ephesians: God's New Society*, The Bible Speaks Today Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986), 134-135.

<sup>24</sup> Best, 341.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, 129.

<sup>26</sup> Best, 341.

<sup>27</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, vol. 10, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 212-213, lists five possible options.

to read, “with the result that you are rooted and established in love, you may have strength to comprehend [...] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.” Therefore, it’s God’s love that is the source of the blessings mentioned prior, especially the Spirit indwelling in the believer’s inner being and Christ dwelling in a person’s heart through faith.

Verse 19 emphasizes the unmeasurable nature of Christ’s love. Paul uses geometric terminology in v. 18 to emphasize an attempt at measuring Christ’s love; however, the strength that God gives us can’t measure the immeasurable because of our finiteness. In fact, Christ’s love surpasses all knowledge. Yet, Paul prays that the Ephesians would comprehend Christ’s love knowing that Christ’s love is so great that man can never know it fully.<sup>28</sup> It’s a paradox. At the same time, God has the power to pour out his wisdom and knowledge to such a degree that man’s mind can understand as much as is humanly possible concerning the love of Christ. But, this wisdom and knowledge that is needed is poured out by God through his Spirit. This is the fullness of God that must fill the believer in order to comprehend Christ’s love. Paul closes the prayer with a doxology. The main point to highlight is the truth that God is able to do even more than we ask or think, suggesting that God could even provide more than what Paul requested. That’s how powerful God is. This doxology is a fitting conclusion for the prayer and the first three chapters while also serving as a transition into the last three chapters.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Knowing the Lord in Eph 3:14-21*

Again, the Spirit plays a role in the prayer. This time he provides spiritual growth and maturity. God also grants believers to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in their inner

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<sup>28</sup> O’Brien, 264.

<sup>29</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 492.

being. Paul prays Christ may dwell in the believers' hearts through faith. These two references echo Ezek 36 and God putting the Spirit within his people. Paul just brings light to the reality of the new covenant fulfillment in Christ. This is why Paul then turns to focusing on the immeasurable love of Christ. Christ's love is essential to God giving man a new heart and putting his Spirit within him. Paul insists that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. Best states that knowledge is necessary "otherwise revelation could not be appropriated nor love understood. Yet Christ's love can never be fully grasped either intellectually or existentially."<sup>30</sup> The most man can understand love this side of heaven is through God's revelation through the Spirit and his Word and because of God's immeasurable love. Paul is suggesting that when love rules the life of a believer, they are able to fulfill the moral duties that follow in chs. 4-6.<sup>31</sup> This is knowing God and why Paul calls the Ephesians, in the latter half of the epistle, to walk in love (5:2) and as one who is wise (σοφός)<sup>32</sup> (5:15). Therefore, Paul's full prayer (1:17-23; 3:14-21) stresses the origin of true knowledge in God and shows how he asks for God to give this Godly knowledge and wisdom to the Ephesians through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

#### *JEREMIAH AND THE NEW COVENANT*

As stated earlier, Jeremiah's prophesy of the inauguration of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) focuses on the implanted Word. In v. 31, God specifically calls what he is making with the house of Israel and Judah a new covenant. In v. 32, he makes it clear that it is different than the Mosaic covenant made with their fathers when they came out of Egypt that they eventually

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<sup>30</sup> Best, 347.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> I don't have space to expound on this in such a short essay, but Paul's use of σοφός in the section of the epistle to describe the way man should walk in order to fulfill the moral duties God calls him to is language that one would expect James to use. Could James be explaining what it means to walk as one who is wise?

broke. In vv. 33-34, he explains the details of the covenant that he will make with them. First, he will put his law, the Torah, within them, and he will write it on their inmost being<sup>33</sup>—“the wellspring of all they think, say, and do.”<sup>34</sup> What God is communicating here is him overwriting the original sinful text of the human mind and heart with his Word.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, the writing of the law on man’s heart will enable relationship with God indicated by God’s statement, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” This is language associated with marriage and adoption correlating with God referring to himself as ‘their husband’ in v. 32.<sup>36</sup> Thirdly, God states that “they shall all know me.” This isn’t for a specific group of people; rather, it is for all people. Roehrs adds that in the Bible ‘know’ implies that “they will be made aware of a personal, intimate relationship with Him, exemplified in the bond that unites husband and wife.”<sup>37</sup> Finally, God ends this proclamation by stating that he will forgive their iniquity and will remember their sin no more. This suggests that “the sin problem will be finally and definitively dealt with” and “the obedience of God’s law that did not come about under the Mosaic covenant will be realized under the new covenant.”<sup>38</sup>

We should notice that though Jeremiah sets the old covenant in tension with the new, he doesn’t lay fault on the Mosaic covenant; instead it’s the people who are unable to keep the

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<sup>33</sup> F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, vol. 16, NAC, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1993), 284, argues that ‘hearts’ is too general; a better translation is ‘inmost being’ or ‘minds and hearts’.

<sup>34</sup> Walter R. Roehrs, “Divine Covenants: Their Structures and Function,” *Concordia Journal* (Jan 1988), 17.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew G. Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the words of Jeremiah*, vol. 29, NSBT, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 198.

<sup>36</sup> Shead, 198.

<sup>37</sup> Roehrs, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Michael D. Williams, *Far As the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 214.

covenant.<sup>39</sup> The problem is within them. Williams summarizes it well when he says, “His [God’s] people had proven faithless, even though God had always been faithful. The fault belongs to Israel, not the covenant.”<sup>40</sup> Secondly, Jeremiah affirms the place of the law in the life of the people of God. Notice that he doesn’t say a new law, but rather ‘my law.’<sup>41</sup> Thirdly, the language is steeped in imagery of relationship. The covenant goal, according to Jeremiah, is for the covenant people to intimately know God—having a personal relationship with him. Finally, there is no mention in Jeremiah of Israel’s covenant obligation; rather, it is all the sovereign work of God.

#### *DIFFERENCES IN NEW COVENANT PORTRAYALS*

Before moving into James, it’s worth briefly discussing the differences between Ezekiel and Jeremiah’s portrayals of the new covenant. First, the major distinction between the two portrayals has to do with Ezekiel’s emphasis on the role of the Spirit and Jeremiah’s emphasis on the law. Ezekiel shows that the indwelling Spirit that God promises to put inside them will cause the people to obey God. In Jeremiah, there’s an almost assumed changing of the mind and heart because of the law written on them which leads to obedience because the people know the LORD. Secondly, Ezekiel includes details concerning God removing the heart of stone and giving the people a new heart that Jeremiah omits. Jeremiah simply states that God will put his law within the people and write the law on their hearts. Thirdly, Ezekiel proclaims that God will cleanse the people and bless them (vv. 25, 29-30), but Jeremiah explicitly connects knowing God leading to God forgiving his people. Finally, as mentioned earlier, in Ezekiel’s account, one of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

the reasons God is doing this is to vindicate the holiness of his great name, which had been profaned among the nations, and which the Israelites, his people, had profaned among them. Thus, the outcome of God vindicating the holiness of his great name through the Israelites is that the nations will know that he is the LORD (Ezek 36:23). Jeremiah, on the other hand, never explicitly makes any claims concerning the nations coming to know God due to the inauguration of the new covenant. These are all interesting differences which shed light on what it means to know the Lord according to James.

### *TO KNOW GOD IN JAMES*

James often lies in the shadows of the other writings of the NT, especially those in the Pauline corpus. Much of this, especially in Protestant circles, began when Luther famously called James an “epistle of straw” in the introduction to the NT books in his German translation of the Bible. Throughout history, difficulty in harmonizing Jas 2:14-26 with Paul’s understanding of faith (Rom 5:1-2; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9) has led many to only read James in light of Paul or shy away from the text and disregard it all together. Many have also concluded that there is little-to-no structure, and it lacks continuity in thought which has added even more difficulty. Dibelius didn’t help this when, in what became the benchmark work on James in the early twentieth century, he argued that James should be understood as paraenesis.<sup>42</sup> Paraenesis is a type of text which typically urges or commands a specific audience to pursue moral change through strings of admonitions of general ethical content.<sup>43</sup> It’s primarily seen in Jewish wisdom literature. Jacobean studies made little advancements after Dibelius. However, now there is renewed

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<sup>42</sup> Martin Dibelius, *James*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Michael A. Williams, rev. Heinrich Greeven, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1975), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

interest in James. Therefore, we shall enter into this renewed interest in James in an effort to answer the questions, “What does it mean to know the Lord and what does it mean to know him even though it’s beyond knowledge?” James adds much to the discussion; therefore, we must look at the major themes of the text before answering the question.

The *Sitz im Leben* and purpose of James is critical to understanding the text. Church history tells us that James, the brother of Jesus, was a leading member of the Jerusalem Church before his martyrdom. He’s mentioned on multiple occasions in the NT. James is recorded as one of the earliest witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection (1 Cor 15:7). In Acts, Luke records that Jesus’ brothers were with the group praying in the upper room for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Paul mentions that he went to Jerusalem to meet Cephas and met James while he was there (Gal 1:18). Fourteen years later, Paul returned to Jerusalem initiating the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29; Gal 2:1-10). James plays a key role in the Council. He formulates the final consensus and offers Paul the right hand of fellowship. James relies on Scripture and focuses on the grace over the law. He longed for the gospel to go forth even to the Gentiles. Of the four instances that Paul mentions James, none of them are negative. In his epistles, Paul never shies away from listing the names of those who aren’t living a gospel-centered life (e.g. 1 Tim 1:18-20; 2 Tim 2:16-18, 4:9-10, 14). If Paul disagreed with James’ teachings, he would have made it clear. However, there is no sign of any rift between the two apostles.

Galatians 2:12 tells of certain men of the circumcision party who came from James and caused Peter to separate himself from eating with the Gentiles. This shouldn’t be understood as a criticism of James; instead, could we understand it as insight into the type of individuals who were in the Jerusalem Church and beyond that James felt a responsibility to lead? The Jerusalem



Church could have easily had Jewish Christians who still identified with some Jewish traditions and spiritual practices, like circumcision. In support of this is James' introduction which states the audience is the twelve tribes in the Dispersion (Jas 1:1). James' use of συναγωγήν (2:2) suggests that these Jews that James and other early Christian leaders ministered to still had ties to the synagogue. It doesn't seem farfetched to think that there may have been Jews in the early Church who hadn't converted to Christianity but, at the very least, were investigating the claims of Christ. This explains some of the pre-evangelistic language of James.

Since Paul only writes positive things about James as if they are brothers in Christ who have the same end goal in mind, I think we should understand Paul and James as co-laborers standing back-to-back battling the enemies of the Church—combatting false teachings. Paul's mission focused on taking the gospel to the Gentiles, while James' mission focused on Jews. I believe this focus on the Jew is the main reason why James reads so differently from Paul's works. This is evident from the sources that James uses.

Allison has successfully shown how James appears to use five primary sources: the LXX, extra-canonical Jewish tradition, popular Hellenistic philosophy, the Jesus tradition, and other early Christian traditions and texts.<sup>44</sup> We will briefly highlight the role each of these play. Carson notes that in almost all the quotations from the OT in James the text quoted is the LXX.<sup>45</sup> Allison presents twenty-five instances where James quotes, summarizes, borrows, or alludes to the LXX.<sup>46</sup> Such a dependence on the LXX, suggests that James' audience was highly familiar with

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<sup>44</sup> Dale C. Allison, Jr. *The Epistle of James*, eds. G. I. Davies and C. M. Tuckett, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2013), 51.

<sup>45</sup> D. A. Carson, "James," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 997-1013 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 997.

<sup>46</sup> Allison, 51.

it. He uses numerous words and phrases that echo the Jewish Scriptures yet don't allude to any particular text [e.g. 'the word of truth' (1:18), 'the righteousness of God' (1:20), "go in peace' (2:16), 'purify your hearts' (4:8), 'the Lord of hosts' (5:4), 'the day of slaughter' (5:5), 'establish your hearts' (5:8), 'the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord' (5:10), and 'the Lord is merciful (5:11)].<sup>47</sup> There's one more important point regarding James' use of the LXX. There is a special relationship between James and the Wisdom Literature of the OT.<sup>48</sup> This is seen in James' use of σοφία (1:5; 3:13-18). Also, his handling of themes resonate with this literature.<sup>49</sup> The work also shares much vocabulary with LXX wisdom literature.<sup>50</sup> Carson notes that "it [James] shares vocabulary and concepts with early Jewish literature of the Second Temple period" including Philo, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>51</sup> Philo's corpus and *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* fall into Allison's second category of extra-canonical Jewish tradition. James' dependence on the LXX, especially the Wisdom Literature and extra-canonical Jewish tradition, suggests that James' audience was Hellenistic Jews highly familiar with not just the LXX but especially the genre of wisdom.

Thirdly, James' use of popular Hellenistic philosophy is also important. The majority of popular Hellenistic philosophy found in James is also present in the Jewish and early Christian

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Carson, 997

<sup>50</sup> B. R. Halson, "The Epistle of James: Christian Wisdom?", in *Studio Evangelica 4*, ed. F. L. Cross, (Berlin: 1968), 308-309, shows that James has 67 *hapax legomena* and 52 of those are in the LXX. Of those, 34 occur in the wisdom literature which suggests that "James has a marked predilection for words from the Septuagint Wisdom literature".

<sup>51</sup> Carson, 997. It's worth noting that Sirach and Wisdom are included in the LXX.

texts mentioned above. Diatribe and stoicism are two of the most prominent.<sup>52</sup> However, Allison notes that James uses the idiom ἄγε νῦν (4:13; 5:1) that isn't attested in Jewish sources or in Christian texts; however, it appears several times in Homer and other Classical sources.<sup>53</sup> Not specifically Hellenistic philosophy but definitely akin to it are common worldviews of the Greco-Roman world that influenced James and his audience. Two are worth noting: (1) The Greco-Roman understanding of πίστις;<sup>54</sup> and (2) The common Mediterranean worldview of social reciprocity.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that James and possibly his audience were influenced not only by Jewish literature but also a Hellenistic worldview.

Fourthly, and possibly the most important, is James' use of the Jesus tradition. Allison finds ten instances where James depends on the Jesus tradition. Interestingly enough, all but one of the instances is from the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the Plain.<sup>56</sup> This suggests that, in fact, these two sermons of Jesus were extremely important to James. What's interesting is that James doesn't quote the Gospel accounts in Matthew or Luke; rather, he rewrites and borrows words from these accounts.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, he's still leaning heavily on two key

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<sup>52</sup> Allison, 56. See also John S. Kloppenborg, *James*, ed. Andrew T. Lincoln, New Testament Guides (London: T&T Clark, 2022), 97-106, for a more detailed analysis, and especially Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 29-86, on the connection of James and the Stoic understanding of the natural law.

<sup>53</sup> Allison, 56.

<sup>54</sup> Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 341-343, 468-471.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce A. Lowe, "Money Talks: The Intersection of Benefaction & *Hesedism* in Jas 2:18," (unpublished), 2, unpublished paper. See also Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?: Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2010), 1-190.

<sup>56</sup> Allison, 56-57.

<sup>57</sup> See John S. Kloppenborg, "The Emulation of the Jesus Tradition in the Letter of James," in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, eds. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg, Library of New Testament Studies 342 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 121-150, for a detailed analysis of James' use of Q; also John S. Kloppenborg, "The Reception of the Jesus Tradition," in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition*, eds. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert T. Wall (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 71-100; and Kloppenborg, *Guides*, 71-79.

teachings of Jesus. Betz states, “But what distinguishes the Sermon on the Mount above all from virtually every other New Testament text is the fact that it clearly regards it as its duty to formulate the hermeneutical principles which guided Jesus in his interpretation of the Torah.”<sup>58</sup> If Betz is correct, he gives reason for James’ heavy dependence on the Jesus tradition found in these two sermons. He’s trying to interpret the Torah for his audience, Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and beyond, (similarly to Jesus) in order to help them mature in and live out the gospel in their daily lives. Bauckham convincingly argues that the teaching of Jesus is wisdom instruction and has decisively shaped James, suggesting that James should be read as wisdom literature, as well.<sup>59</sup> This further supports the prior claim that James’ audience is familiar with wisdom literature and how to correctly interpret it.

Finally, James uses other early Christian traditions and texts. Allison believes that “James was—or perhaps some of his sources were—more likely than not familiar with Romans and perhaps also with 1 Corinthians and/or Galatians.”<sup>60</sup> He also argues that James borrowed from 1 Peter.<sup>61</sup> James could have been aware of other early Christian texts and traditions, but these are the ones that seem most likely. Since James alludes to these texts, we can only assume that his audience was somewhat familiar with them, as well. Sticking with the previous view that James and Paul are co-laborers working together, it would have been James’ responsibility to make sure that the Jerusalem Church and other Jews living outside of Jerusalem understood Paul and Peter

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<sup>58</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, “The Hermeneutical Principles of the Sermon on the Mount,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 42 (Mar 1983): 18.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage*, New Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 1999), 97-111.

<sup>60</sup> Allison, 57.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

correctly. As the leader of the church, he is responsible for ensuring the men and women under his care don't fall into antinomian habits, which is a possibility if one were to misread/misunderstand Paul. To successfully do this, he had to send a letter to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion. In fact, it was a paraenetic letter bringing structure to the paraenesis.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, there is a real possibility that James is responding to a misapplication of Paul. Now that we have explored James' sources and both the genre and audience are clear, it's time to present the main themes of the letter.

Allison, largely agreeing with Bauckham, asserts that Jas 1:2-27 is an introduction to the entire letter because it foretells all the major topics that James will cover in the letter. Therefore, we will turn to those that are directly related to James' understanding of knowing the Lord.

First, in Jas 1:2-4, James discusses patient endurance (cf 5:7-11) and perfection (cf. 2:22; 3:2). James calls the patient endurance of trials "the testing of your faith." This testing of faith by trials produces steadfastness which leads to perfection and lacking in nothing. There is similarity here with Rom 5:3-5; however, Paul emphasizes God's love that is poured out into the believer's heart through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. This language mirrors the language in Ephesians which we've argued is from Ezek 36. However, James never mentions the Holy Spirit in his letter. The early Christian Church valued the virtue of steadfastness.<sup>63</sup> McCartney argues that James applied the term to the Christian's faithfulness in the face of opposition, but he, unlike the Stoics, commends steadfastness in hope of eschatological exaltation (cf. 1:9).<sup>64</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>62</sup> Kloppenborg, *Guides*, 42-47; Allison, 74, calls it a "paraenetically [*sic*] oriented early-Jewish diaspora letter."

<sup>63</sup> Peter Davids, *A Theology of James, Peter, and Jude*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, BTNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 68-69.

<sup>64</sup> Dan G. McCartney, *James*, eds. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 87.

steadfastness is closely related to the biblical notion of faith.<sup>65</sup> As just mentioned, the full effect of steadfastness is that the believer becomes perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Moo argues that “in the OT and in Jewish literature, τέλειος is colored by its Hebrew background and comes to mean ‘complete’ or mature.”<sup>66</sup> This is how the OT and Hebraic tradition describes the righteous person such as Noah, who was “blameless” (רַמְיָם) (Gen 6:9; Sir 44:17; *Jub.* 23:10).<sup>67</sup> Martin states, “Obedience to God’s laws and the stress on a character free from defect are traits implicit in the concept of a person being blameless.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, James’ use of ὀλόκληροι, meaning growth in perfection and reaching full maturity, morally blameless, or complete, makes sense because it emphasizes that this is a process that leads to full maturity and moral completeness.<sup>69</sup> McCartney sums up the meaning stating that steadfastness “under pressure is a means of growth toward this completeness, a completeness that is, to be sure, eschatologically determined but already in development in the believer.”<sup>70</sup>

The second theme is wisdom. James 1:4 ends focusing on the end goal of steadfastness being a believer who is perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. However, Jas 1:5 begins by suggesting that some of his readers may lack wisdom. To James, receiving wisdom is the means to achieve this completeness. According to the way 4 Maccabees treats wisdom, it comprehends and encompasses the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, courage, and moderation, which are

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *James*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC, (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000), 56.

<sup>67</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *James*, vol. 48, WBC (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 16; Moo, *James*, 56

<sup>68</sup> Martin, 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> McCartney, 87-88

to be sought and developed especially in the context of testing.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, wisdom is an essential virtue and James wants to help his audience understand how they can receive it. In fact, it comes from God. James calls his audience to ask God for wisdom because God, being generous, will give it to them. This wisdom isn't general knowledge. James expounds upon what he means by wisdom in 3:13-17. The wise person shows his works in the meekness of wisdom by his good conduct (v. 13). This is different from worldly wisdom. It is a Godly wisdom from above that James describes as "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere" (v. 17). It's not selfish or jealous. It doesn't boast and isn't false to the truth (v. 14). That is the wisdom of the earth that is unspiritual and demonic (v. 15). The wisdom from above, Godly wisdom, is captured in the Jewish concept of *hesed* (חֶסֶד). The concept of *hesed* in the OT is ἔλεος (mercy) in the NT. James shows the importance of mercy/*hesed* when he discusses judgment and mercy in 2:13. He says, "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." James describes Godly wisdom as full of mercy—full of *hesed*. It's a loving-kindness that God pours out onto his people, and his people pour out on others. It's essential to notice that God's loving-kindness is the source of the believer's love. This love cares for the well-being of one's neighbor—even one's enemy. The person who embodies this shows no judgment and isn't judged, while the one who isn't an example of this doesn't receive the loving-kindness of God and instead receives his judgment.

When James tells his readers to ask for wisdom, he tells them to ask in faith, not doubting like a double-minded man. This is in contrast to God who James describes as ἀπλῶς (single-

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<sup>71</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, "James 1:2-15 and Hellenistic Psychagogy," *Novum Testamentum*, no. 52 (2010): 41.

minded/generous).<sup>72</sup> God gives generously. He actively lives out *hesed*. However, without wisdom, man is drawn toward being double-minded and isn't able to endure testing because his desires lead him to follow earthly wisdom. This is at the core of the scenario that James describes in Jas 2. The Jews were called to live out this ethic of *hesed*. The Greco-Roman world valued social reciprocity and the Jewish Christians began to replace their ethic. They showed favor to the wealthy and didn't care for the poor. This is the context of the faith and works debate in Jas 2:14-26. It's about living out *hesed*. James challenges his audience with a hypothetical situation. If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, James argues that you can't tell them to go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body. But this is what people were doing. Essentially, the scenario is an example of someone having πίστις but not having the works to back up what they were saying.<sup>73</sup> This is an example of the double-minded man lacking wisdom. The single-minded man, filled with Godly wisdom, lives within the *hesed* ethic which exemplifies πίστις and works. But, what does all of this have to do with knowing the Lord? Everything!

In 1:21, James tells his audience to “put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” The implanted word is an echo back to Jer 31. The letter describes the implanted word numerous ways: “the word of truth” (1:18), “the perfect law” (1:25), “law of liberty” (1:25), and “law of freedom” (2:12). All are equivalent expressions with various nuances.<sup>74</sup> The overall consensus is this is the

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<sup>72</sup> Kloppenborg, *Guides*, 99; Martin, 16.

<sup>73</sup> Πίστις here should be understood as “assurance” rather than the common understanding of “faith”, see Morgan, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Jackson-McCabe, 139-192.



law of God that he has written on man's heart. Not only does it save a person's soul, but it causes people to persevere through trials (1:25), it causes people to be doers who act (1:25), it causes people to show mercy (*hesed*) (2:12-13). A person who prays for wisdom has the implanted word on his heart. This is James' way of explaining to his audience what it means to know the Lord. God must implant his word on a person's heart. This implanting of the word leads people to practice the Biblical ethic of *hesed*. In the NT church it was difficult to live this out causing many to endure difficult trials. It's evident that some were failing and James was challenging to first make sure that they really had the law implanted within them and secondly ask God to give them Godly wisdom because it is what's needed to endure and show *hesed* to one's neighbor and enemy—it's what guides the believer to live out the perfect law written on the heart.

Now that we've looked at both Ephesians and James, how would James pray for his audience using Paul's prayer in Eph 3:14-21 as a guide. Paul prays,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

If James were to follow a similar structure to Paul's prayer then, James would begin by praying,

For this reason, I ask in faith as a righteous servant yet with a fallen nature, bowing my knees before God the Father, the Father of lights,

First, James 1:6 emphasizes asking God in faith, and 5:15 explains the power of "the prayer of faith;" therefore, he would begin by saying, "I ask in faith." James introduces himself as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" in James 1:1a. He would begin by referring to

himself as a servant. However, in James 5:16, he argues that “a prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” Therefore, James would want to emphasize that he is a righteous servant who is lifting up this petition. In 5:17, James uses Elijah’s fervent prayers to prove his case; however, James highlights that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.” Though Elijah was a righteous man, he still had “a nature like ours”—a fallen nature. Therefore, James would also include that he has a fallen nature. Following Paul, James would say, “I bow my knees,” however, he would change it to bowing my knees “before God the Father, the Father of lights.” Using the introduction to James in 1:1a again, James clearly uses the title God here to refer to the Father. He would add the Father of lights in reference to 1:17 because he is the one who gives “every good gift and perfect gift” from above which is an emphasis later in the prayer. Then James would continue by praying,

From whom each of the twelve tribes in the Dispersion are named in heaven and on earth. James would change his version of Eph 3:15 to emphasize that his audience, the twelve tribes in the Dispersion, (1:1b) are named in God the Father. James would include “in heaven and on earth” like Paul because both are dealing with cosmic realities—Paul concerning the Spirit being implanted within the believers and James concerning wisdom and the law coming down from above and being implanted on man’s heart. Following this, James would continue by praying,

That he who generously gives every good and perfect gift from above to all, may grant you the wisdom that comes down from above to any who lack it, so that you may show yourself first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere fulfilling the royal law and proving your love for the Lord Jesus Christ—

In Eph 3:16–17a, Paul prays that his readers would be “strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” This, as

shown above, is a clear allusion to Ezek 36. With that being said, James would allude to Jer 31 with an emphasis on God putting the law within them and writing it on their hearts. First, James believes that God “gives generously to all” who ask God (1:5b-c). The context of 1:5 is asking God for wisdom if you are lacking it. Thus, God must grant wisdom. Secondly, in 1:17, he states that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father.” In 3:14, James describes “earthly, unspiritual, demonic wisdom” (3:15) and contrasts it with “the wisdom from above” (3:17) which must refer to Godly or heavenly wisdom. Therefore, this Godly wisdom that comes from above is a good and perfect gift from God that he will give generously to all. Since James suggests that one can lack wisdom, this heavenly wisdom isn’t wisdom that saves; rather, this is wisdom that brings greater understanding of God. Thirdly, in James 3:13, he tells his readers to show their good conduct in the meekness of wisdom. James then describes this wisdom from above as “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (3:17). What James means is that the wisdom of believers manifests itself in good conduct characterized by the Godly qualities in 3:17. Fourthly, living in this way fulfills the royal law (James 2:8) and also proves an individual’s love for the Lord Jesus Christ. With this being said, James would continue by praying,

That you, whom God has chosen to be poor in the world and also to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, will meet trials of various kinds, and may count it all joy to remain steadfast in order that you may receive the crown of life and be made perfect and complete, lacking in nothing through the testing of your faith.

O’Brien commenting on vv. 17b-18 prefers to interpret v. 17b “as expressing the contemplated result of the two previous infinitives, which in turn provides condition for the next request.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, O’Brien believes Paul is stating that “through the strengthening of the

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<sup>75</sup> O’Brien, 260.

inner person by God’s Spirit and Christ’s indwelling in their hearts, the readers are to be established in love so that they will comprehend the greatness of love of Christ.”<sup>76</sup> Assuming that James would continue following a similar structure to Paul in vv. 17b-19, James would begin v. 17b by explaining two things. First, he would explain the purpose behind God granting wisdom from above to the readers. Secondly, he would explain the reason why his audience should show themselves faithful to fulfill the royal law and in so doing that proving their love for Christ. In fact, they are linked to one thing—counting it all joy to remain steadfast under various kinds of trials. Therefore, James would turn to praying for the various kinds of trials that the readers would meet, asking God that they may count it all joy to remain steadfast. James begins his letter by focusing on this very thing. Therefore, he emphasizes this not only because it is important to him, but it’s a critical part of the Christian life. James wants his audience to remain steadfast and to count the trials that they will encounter joy in order that they may receive the crown of life and be made perfect and complete. This wording combines concepts found in James 1:4 and 1:12. The former explains that the full effect of remaining steadfast in trials that test one’s faith makes the individual “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” The latter comes from a blessing concerning those who remain steadfast. James says, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” Prior to this beatitude, James connects trials to testing a person’s faith (1:3). This verse clearly connects remaining steadfast to receiving the crown of life as a reward. James continues by praying,

And by being doers of the implanted word, which is able to save your souls, because you asked God for wisdom.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Now James would emphasize the implanted word that is able to save souls (1:21). As discussed earlier, the believer needs to ask the Lord for Godly wisdom in order to persevere through trials. This is the portion of Paul's prayer where he focuses on knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge in order that the believer may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:19). Therefore, it's appropriate for James to focus on the implanted Word that is capable of saving a man's soul while also emphasizing Godly wisdom that helps guide the believer to live out *hesed* especially in difficult trials. After this James would turn to a brief doxology like James by praying,

Now to our God who is one, who is able to forgive our debts and remember our sins no more, just as we too forgive our neighbors who are indebted to us, he is able to give more generously than all that we faithfully ask, according to the power of the good and perfect law that came down from above and was put within us and written on our hearts.

James would, similarly to Paul, proclaim an important attribute of God. James would highlight the oneness of God as proclaimed in the Shema (Jas 2:8; cf. Deut 6:4-5). He may even borrow a portion of the Lord's prayer from the Jesus tradition emphasizing that God forgives debts and remembers sins no more. He'd pray that he and his audience would forgive their neighbors who are indebted to them (Q 11:2). James would then emphasize the generous nature of God concerning answering prayers similarly to how Paul focuses on God abundantly providing for all that believers ask or think. Next he would allude to Jer 31 by highlighting that this is done according to the power of the perfect law that came down. It emphasizes that it is within the believer and written on our hearts. Finally, James would conclude the prayer by saying,

To him be honor in the synagogue and in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, throughout all the generations of true Israel, forever and ever. Amen.

He'd begin this final verse giving honor to God borrowing language from Q 11:2 rather than focusing on God's glory like Paul. James would emphasize the synagogue rather than the church since he was speaking to Jews who still were connected to the life and culture of the synagogue. He would change the reference to Christ Jesus to "the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory" since that's how he refers to Christ in his letter (1:1; 2:1). Rather than focusing on all generations of people like Paul, James would say "all the generations of true Israel." They would end by saying "forever and ever" and "amen." Therefore, the prayer in it's entirety reads,

*For this reason, I ask in faith as a righteous servant yet with a fallen nature, bowing my knees before God the Father, the Father of lights, from whom each of the twelve tribes in the Dispersion are named in heaven and on earth, that he who generously gives every good and perfect gift from above to all, may grant you the wisdom that comes down from above to any who lack it, so that you may show yourself first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere fulfilling the royal law and proving your love for the Lord Jesus Christ—*

*That you, whom God has chosen to be poor in the world and also to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, will meet trials of various kinds, and may count it all joy to remain steadfast in order that you may receive the crown of life and be made perfect and complete, lacking in nothing through the testing of your faith and by being doers of the implanted word, which is able to save your souls, because you asked God for wisdom. Now to our God who is one, who is able to forgive our debts and remember our sins no more, just as we too forgive our neighbors who are indebted to us, he is able to give more generously than all that we faithfully ask, according to the power of the good and perfect law that came down from above and was put within us and written on our hearts, to him be honor in the synagogue and in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, throughout all the generations of true Israel, forever and ever. Amen.*

In summary, both Paul and James deal with what it means to know the Lord, but as we've seen, they come at the topic from different trajectories, each demonstrating a desire to consistently contextualize for their audience. Paul focuses on the implanting of the Spirit as described in Ezek 36, while James focuses on the Word implanted like Jer 31. Though they focus on two different aspects of the new covenant, we've shown how both are biblical. James'

hypothetical prayer proves this. This suggests that James is an ally of Paul rather than a critic and vis-versa. But why would they write such different messages when communicating the same truth? We've looked at this as well. Paul was writing to the Gentiles who knew the Lord. The mystery revealed to Paul was that the gospel is for the Jews and the Gentiles (Eph 3:1-6). It's not just the Jews who receive the indwelling Spirit. He will indwell the Gentiles, too. The Gentiles can not only know God, but when they are sealed by the Spirit, indicating they know the Lord, and living according to the ways of God, the nations (even more Gentiles) will see this and know God. This aligns with the message of Ezek 36. James on the other hand is writing to Jews who have a high-view of the Law which is exactly how Jeremiah reads. Since Jeremiah's account has no explicit mention of obeying God, James is explaining to his readers that truly knowing the Lord means to love and obey him. It means to live a life of *hesed*. This type of knowing the Lord is worthy of forgiveness. With this being said, let us no longer cast doubt on James' message or place Paul's writings above James. Not only do James and Paul not operate in sharp tension like many have posited, but rather they operate with harmonic contrast, enriching the vibrancy of the full tapestry of Scripture. Both are part of the canon and both are emphasizing knowing the Lord, and we should turn to both to help us have a better understanding of how we can receive Godly wisdom and knowledge to know the Lord and live out *hesed* in obedience to him.

#### *CONCLUSION & APPLICATION*

In conclusion I wish to provide four practical applications for using what has been said in this essay to help myself and others correct misconceptions of God and his desired relationship with us to better appreciate the power of being continuously filled with his Spirit to be able to abidingly focus with the eyes of our heart at an identity level on the astoundingly immeasurable

love of God for each of us. First, this paper convincingly shows that we should respect and allow the entirety of God's Word to speak and shape our theology, not placing some books or passages ahead of others. Doing this results in a fuller, more holistic understanding of God, especially his love for us and what it means to know him. Secondly, we should pray both like Paul and James. We should pray like Paul for God to grant us Godly knowledge and wisdom through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our inner being. This is a key step in every believer's progressive sanctification that takes place through the power of the Father through his Spirit. We should also pray like James. We should ask God in faith to grant his Godly wisdom in order that we would lack nothing through the testing of our faith. We should also ask in faith for God to make us single-minded men and women, filled with Godly wisdom who live lives characterized by *hesed*. Praying like Paul and James requires us to come humbly before the Lord and to depend on him to generously pour out his love upon us. Thirdly, we must wisely live out the biblical ethic of *hesed* proving our salvation. Humanity desperately needs this clear example of God's loving-kindness that leads believers to love and serve their neighbors. It promotes community, fellowship, and evangelism, yet it always points back to God as the source of the blessing. Finally, we should never question God's power and love to work in the life of a person, including areas of forgiveness and redemption. These passages show that God's power and love are immeasurable and, therefore, no trial is too great and no sin is too wicked for God to overcome and pour out his love and mercy. It should lead us to pray confidently for God to do miraculous things in our lives and in our neighbors' lives because he is a generous God who desires to be in relationship with us. By applying these four applications to your life, not only will an internal



maturity take place within you, but there will be an external change caused by an overflow of God's love on your life because of the implanted Word and Holy Spirit on your heart.

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