

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 18: Arguing with Paul?

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rfst-152/lecture-18>

Overview

Early Christianity presents us with a wide diversity in attitudes towards the law. There were also many different Christologies circulating in different communities. The book of James presents one unique perspective. It seems to be written in the tradition of Jewish wisdom literature in its presentation of sayings and its concern for the poor. James also presents a view of works and faith that seems to oppose Pauline teaching. However, the terms “faith” and “works” function differently in Paul’s writings and in the book of James.

1. Diversity in Early Christianity: Attitudes towards the Jewish Law

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* We’ve reviewed several times already, at least some of the stuff for your paper this week, if you’re writing a paper on Judaism and the law in early Christianity; different varieties. If you’ll remember—and I’ve reviewed this several times so this is just really briefly, but one of the main themes of the whole course is the diversity of early Christianity. How many different kinds of early Christianities there were, and one of the important things is—or ways to look at that, is what were their different views of the law, so of course with Matthew, as we’ve seen, Matthew treats the law, the Jewish law, as something that apparently he considers his—the followers of his own church to continue to keep. There’s no hint in Matthew that the law would be abrogated. It’s interpreted, of course, so some of the aspects of Sabbath observance Jesus interprets differently in Matthew than do say, the Pharisees in Matthew or the Scribes in Matthew or other Jews. Matthew tends to give us the idea that the law is just there to be observed by everybody.

[2] When we got to Luke/Acts we saw that the Noachide laws, that is the laws given after the flood to Noah, which are only four of them, right? You don’t eat things that are strangled, you don’t eat blood, you don’t sacrifice idols and eat idol meat, and I can’t remember what

one of them was, but there are certain laws that the Jews considered were given to Noah after the flood and that all peoples, even Gentiles, were expected to follow those rules, but the Jews didn’t expect Gentiles to keep other peculiarly Jewish laws. Jews never expected Gentiles not to eat pork, to keep the Sabbath, to circumcise their children, and they never thought there was anything wrong with Gentiles doing those things. Of course that’s one of the things that separated them from the Jews. Luke/Acts seems to take that kind of view of the law, that the law is an ethnic—the ethnic customs of the Jews, similar to the ways that the Romans would have their own laws and customs, the Greeks would have their own laws and customs, the Egyptians would have their laws and customs, the Babylonians or the Persians would have their laws and customs. So that seems to be the way the Jewish law is treated in Luke and Acts.

[3] Paul, we’ve talked about Paul in Romans and Galatians. He has a much more radical teaching about the law, that the law is—Paul never says that Jewish followers of Jesus shouldn’t keep the law but he certainly discourages—in fact he forbids—Gentile converts to keep the law. In Galatians he says, you would be justified by the law, you’re cut off from grace. Paul has a much more radical position and we could look at others. We talked about Marcion, remember Marcion at the very beginning of the course, the guy in the second century in Rome, he taught a version of

Christianity in which he only recognized the Gospel of Luke and just the letters of Paul. He was the first one to come up with a canon list, we think, and then he edited those to where anything positive about the Jewish law or the God of the Jews was taken out because he believed that was a junior false bad god and not the Father of Jesus Christ. So Marcion threw out the whole Hebrew Bible, the scriptures of Jews entirely, and substituted for Jewish scripture his own edited version of Luke and the letters of Paul. All of these are different ways that early Christians talked about what to do about the law. We'll get to some of that again in James today because we can—you can read James, as Lutheran and some people read it, as being basically a disagreement with Pauline Christianity. We'll talk about whether that's a good reading of James or not, but quite often especially in Protestant Christianity, James has been read to be arguing against Paul's law-free Gospel or justification by grace through faith alone.

2. *Diversity in Early Christianity: Christology*

- [4] Before we get to James I want to highlight one other aspect that we have talked about a bit but I want to review it again as another illustration of the diversities of early Christianity, and this is our wonderful favorite topic, Christologies. We've talked about different Christologies all along. We've looked at different ones in John and that sort of thing. But let's just look at a few texts and read them together. First look at Luke, of course Christology, as you recall, is what do you believe about Christ? What kind of nature is Jesus Christ or was Jesus Christ? Luke 3:22:
- [5] The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son the beloved with you I am well pleased."
- [6] Now if you notice that's a quotation from the Psalms, you can see it down in your footnotes, if you have a study Bible, Psalm 2:7, also it cites Isaiah 42:1. If you also note there are some little words, little numbers that have footnotes, probably if you—it's certainly in the New Revised Standard Version, the letter footnote numbers. There's one that says, "Other ancient authorities read, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'" I've talked about this already in the class. Now the debate

among scholars would be was "today I have begotten you" originally in Luke's Gospel, and then some scribe took it out, because we do find it in some Greek manuscripts, or was it not there originally in Luke's Gospel and other scribes put it in? Nice question. Did the original Gospel of Luke have "today I have begotten you" said by the voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus," or not? Now why would this be an important issue? Because if the voice from heaven is saying, "today I have begotten you," which is a quote from the Psalm after all, then wouldn't that imply that Jesus was not the Son of God yesterday? That's exactly the way some Christians took it. They believed that Jesus became the Son of God. He wasn't born the Son of God, he was adopted as the Son of God. And some Christians said it was at his baptism and they would cite some Greek version of this text. Now scholars have debated about whether it was originally in the text. If it's not in the text how would it get there? Well a scribe would see this, "You are my beloved son," and the scribe might know the Psalms very well, and might know that the next line of the Psalm was, "today I have begotten you," and so just quoted it almost from memory from the Psalm and therefore it got into the text.

- [7] Or, as Bart Ehrman, the author of your textbook has said, Bart actually became very famous first as a text critic of the New Testament. That is, his profession was trying to figure out what was the most likely original reading of the Greek New Testament text by comparing all these different manuscripts. He's argued that he thinks that maybe the text originally said, "today I have begotten you," and orthodox scribes took it out in the second century. You can tell why orthodox scribes may have taken it out. If they thought that that gave weight to an adoptionist Christology, which they considered heretical, they would take it out of the text. It's an open question, some scholars say they think that, "today I have begotten you," was not there originally, and therefore they agree with the New Revised Standard Version in not putting it in the Bible, but putting it in a footnote instead. And others would agree with Bart Ehrman and say, no it probably was in the text and orthodox scribes took it out because it didn't sound orthodox for them. Anyway that's a clue that one of the Christologies that was around and was debated

in the second century was precisely, was Jesus born Son of God or did he become Son of God by adoption at his baptism? Psalm 2:7 is one that you can look that up for also.

[8] Now look at Luke 9:35: “Then from the cloud came a voice,” this is at the transfiguration of Jesus. Remember when he’s up on the mountain and his clothing changes, his face changes, he starts shining. Now here’s what the voice from the heavens says this time: “This is my Son, my chosen, listen to him.” “My chosen,” again that sounds like God the Father chose Jesus, maybe because of his special righteousness, to be his Son. Look at Acts 2:36. Now Acts, of course written by the same person who wrote Luke, so we’re not changing authors here we’re just changing books. Acts 2:36, this is in a speech, a sermon, one of the first sermons in Acts by Peter. From the day of Pentecost—you know the story, the spirit and flames come down and rest on the Christians and they all start speaking in tongues and languages of everybody around the world, and Peter gives a sermon. 2:36: “Therefore let the entire house of Israel...,” now this is the way he ends the sermon so this is an emphatic position in the text. This is the end of Peter’s sermon. “Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” “Has made him,” again that idea. Look at Acts 13:33, go back to verse 32:

[9] “And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us their children by raising Jesus. As also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’”

[10] Now it’s the today, but what is the day that this text seems to be referring too? The resurrection. Is this a hint that there were other Christians who believed that Jesus was human until he was raised from the dead and that’s when he became divine and the Son of God? Look at Romans now. We’re going to go to Paul, Romans 1:3-4:

[11] ...which he promised beforehand through his prophets and the holy scriptures, the Gospel concerning his Son who was descended from David, according to the flesh, and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead.

[12] Now I would dispute that translation. The Greek there that’s translated by your Bible as “declared,” or at least by the NRSV, I think is actually better translated as “appoint” or “designate.” Does anybody else have a different word for “declare” in that verse? Let me read it again; you look at verses 3 and 4 of Romans 1, “and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead.” Anybody else have a different word than declare? Yes?

[13] *Student:* Designated.

[14] *Professor Dale Martin:* “Designated,” see that’s exactly the word I would have used. Is there a difference? Well it could be, there could be a slight difference in the idea. Did God just announce that Jesus was divine at his resurrection, or did he make him, designate him, like when you designate someone to be the leader of the class, to be the President of the United States, you designate someone to an office and it’s at the designation of the office that the actual person becomes that official. I think that’s actually the better translation of the Greek. That again, though, would imply that Paul may be quoting a phrase that he maybe gets from elsewhere that believed that Jesus became the Son of God, divine, at his resurrection. Now of course I say Paul quoted something because there are other indications in Paul that he probably didn’t believe that. Paul seems to give the idea in other places that he had a Christology that Jesus was preexistence as divine. In Philippians you get the famous hymn where Christ descends into the body and he suffers as a slave and is raised back up. There you almost get the idea that Paul believed that Jesus was in a preexistent state as the Son of God, so this may not be Paul’s own considered theology or Christology, and therefore some scholars have said maybe he’s quoting a line that he gets from someplace else. It does show us that there may have been other Christians who believed that Jesus became divine only at his resurrection.

[15] In other words, we can map out all these differences, and of course, what was the Christology of the Gospel of John? When did Jesus become divine according to the Gospel of John? Anybody? He always was. He was with God from the very beginning. Everything was created through him. The beginning of the

Gospel of John ends up having the Christology that now has become orthodox Christianity. These other Christologies were all declared heretical at some point in Christian history. Notice how what we've got. Let's say we've got the historical Jesus, and we can say certainly he was a prophet. He was recognized as a prophet, he seems to accept himself as a prophet, and it may be that he claimed to be a king or a Messiah, but certainly by the time of his execution some people thought he was a king because that's the charge on which he was executed. This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, so the Romans executed Jesus because at least either he or other people were claiming that he was a king. He's a prophet and he's a king.

[16] Does that mean Jesus is divine? No of course not. The Jews had lots of kings that were not divine. The Jews had lots of prophets that were not divine. Modern people sometimes get the idea that the word "Christ" or "Messiah" in itself signifies divinity, but it doesn't. The "Messiah" in Paul's day, in Jesus' day was simply some Jewish figure who would rise up and take over the throne of David and reestablish the Kingdom of Israel. Calling someone the Messiah in the ancient world didn't mean that he was divine. It might, but it didn't necessarily at all. Jesus is a prophet; maybe he's even considered the Messiah. That doesn't make him divine. Some Christians therefore had to make a decision. Is he human and only human? Is he human and divine? This is the take that most followers of Jesus end up taking, although there were some followers of Jesus who existed all the way into the second century who believed he was purely human. They tended to be Jewish followers of Jesus, they accepted him as a great prophet, they even accepted him as a Messiah, but that didn't mean they thought he was God. They still wanted to be complete monotheists and have only one God. So they said, no Jesus can't be divine. So some followers of Jesus chose this route. Others, as we've seen in the New Testament, chose this route.

[17] Then, though you have to split this up. Was he always divine or did he become divine? Am I doing this right? Is this the next level? I had this chart in my notes by I gave it to [a teaching fellow] because I thought she might have to lecture today and I forgot it, so we're winging it folks. If he became divine, he always was

divine. If he became divine then when did he become divine? You had different choices again like we've said: at his birth, because then you have the songs that all the angels sing and you take some of those songs at the beginning of Luke and it sounds like they're talking about he's divine now; at his baptism, as we've seen some people tend to believe; or at his resurrection. So, Christians again seem to have divided up. Do you take him as becoming divine at his birth, his baptism, or his resurrection?

[18] We've seen other Christians say, no he always was divine, but even then they split up into different choices too because some of them said he was divine but also fully human, so he was both divine but also fleshly. Where have seen this? A letter in the New Testament insisting that you can't have Jesus as divine without also having him as come in the flesh, do you remember? 1 John, exactly. The letters of John get into this argument. Apparently some people in the Johannine community were claiming that Jesus was fully divine but not fleshly. Then you have—so this became that position, flesh and divine, and the other position I called it when I lectured on John, Docetism. That is, what came to be a heresy, remember, in the second century there was no organized church that could be able to declare what counted as orthodoxy and heresy, but this idea was Jesus was not fully flesh. He was so divine he was God so that when he walked along on the wet sand on the beach his feet didn't leave footprints. That's how divine he was. He didn't have any weight about him; he was not even fully flesh.

[19] Notice all of these are choices that followers of Jesus had to make in the decades following his death. Some of them took the human route, some of them took the human and divine route, some of them—believed that he became divine. This became declared as a heresy. We call it adoptionism of some sort. Then of those who took the always divine route, which became orthodoxy, some of them also took the docetic route: that he wasn't fully human and fleshly. And then others took this route, like the Gospel of John does and the letters of John, that he is both fleshly and divine. Notice how what this shows is that from simply the historical existence of Jesus and his existence as a prophet or a king, you had to make all these different choices to get down to this one

because which of these—all these different—we have one, two, three, four, five different possibilities down here, six right there. Out of six choices, only one of them is considered orthodox by the later church. I do this just to show these diversities are there. If you're a Christian you believe that, well, the Holy Spirit or God's providence led the way through this history so that what we end up with is the Nicene Creed, or the Creed of Chalcedon, which is what we ought to believe as Christians, but as a historian you can't make that judgment.

[20] As a historian you simply have to point out that there were lots of complexities in early Christianity that finally got whittled down into a more united consensus view on Christology. Any questions about any of that? I'm doing this partly just to show you how this happened historically and this actually gets you into a post-New Testament kind of subject. You could easily take a course after this, say the one taught by Bentley Layton or Steven Davis, that analyzes—it's called "From Jesus to Augustine," I think he's taken it past Augustine now. That covers a little bit of the New Testament text but really that's a course on the development of early Christianity in its first few centuries. You could even take courses that talk about the development of Christianity all the way up from the beginning to the Reformation, or even beyond. In any of these historical courses you're going to see this kind of diversity and the shaping of this that comes about. Part of what I'm doing is just illustrating the diversity of Christianity and how it came about, but I'm also trying to model a behavior for you of thinking historically about what are actually theological texts. Thinking about the growth of Christianity as if it didn't just plop out of the sky all in one orthodox piece, but it took a historical process of struggle to come about, and it was a complicated historical process.

3. *James as Jewish Wisdom Literature*

[21] Now where does that leave us with James? James provides us another example of differences in notions of faith and works when compared to Paul. First, I'm going to take some examples from Hebrew scripture, so if you've got your Bible, now I haven't taught you a song for the Old Testament books, the

books of Hebrew scripture, so you'll just have to follow along as best you can. Proverbs, in my Bible it's page 904 in the Hebrew Bible, but that's not the Bible you have, I would hasten to say. The Proverbs of Solomon, Son of David, King of Israel,

[22] For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for gaining instruction and wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity, to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young, let the wise also hear and gain in learning and the discerning acquire skill to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord [this is one of my mom's favorite verses when I was a kid, quoted all the time to us] is the beginning of wisdom, fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[23] Kind of a motherly type verse isn't it? What you've got in Proverbs is a whole series of teachings, wisdom sayings, and some of them are pretty—they're just like cover your mouth when you cough type things, there are some things that aren't particularly heavy or philosophical, or theological, but just sayings, wisdom sayings. Another one of my mother's favorite ones was, there was a women's club at the college she went to, the Christian college she went to, and the quotation of it was from this proverb where it's talking about a worthy woman and the quotation from the Bible was, "Her price is far above rubies," and that was the motto for this girls club. And my mother always said, "I wonder how much Ruby charges." That's sort of—it's little sayings—not "how much does Ruby charge," that's not part of the scripture but the other part, is part of the scripture. These are wisdom sayings, and this is wisdom literature, so in the Jewish scripture you have whole books that are basically wisdom literature, and scholars will use that term. They're sayings of wisdom kind of sayings. You get it also in Job, look at Job, it's before Psalms, Job 14:1. Job is also one version of wisdom literature.

[24] A mortal born of woman, few of days, and full of trouble, comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last.

[25] Ah, how sad. Notice wisdom literature isn't always very cheery. A lot of wisdom literature is about how difficult life is, that life is fleeting, that you just come up like a flower,

you're beautiful and young for two weeks and then you fade and get old and ugly, and then you die. A lot of wisdom literature is sort of like, life's a bitch so just enjoy it while you can, and that's where you get some of the sayings out of Job and the Proverbs. The Wisdom of Solomon, that may be in your—I don't have the Wisdom of Solomon. In your Apocrypha, if you have a Bible that has the Apocrypha in it, you would find the Wisdom of Solomon, which also has—if you look at the Wisdom of Solomon 6:17-20 has some wonderful wisdom sayings. Sirach 4 has sayings about the poor, about remembering the poor, it's an admonition to rich people to remember the poor, do not forsake the poor, and Sirach 6:5 has a warning about speech, control your speech, watch your tongue. Notice these sayings, things about how life is fleeting, you come up like flowers, like grass, it fades, take care of the poor, don't forget the poor. Wisdom literature often seems to be written within a context of people who are fairly well off themselves, rich people, and it's written to these rich people but in order to also get them not to forget the poor. Then the saying about watch your mouth, control the tongue that we see in Sirach 6:5 is also there.

[26] Now, with that in mind, all these other kinds of wisdom literature, turn to James and look at chapter 3 of James.

[27] Not many of you should become teachers my brothers [my translation says "sisters" but in the Greek it's just "brothers"] for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us we guide their whole bodies.

[28] Notice this is just folk wisdom, right? Look how you control a horse, you put a bit in its mouth, you pull the horse's mouth this way, the horse goes this way; you pull the horse's mouth that way, the horse goes that way. This is nothing really big revelation type stuff right? This is not kind of revealing secrets of God, or this is not even revealing secrets of the Gospel, this is just folk wisdom. That's what a lot of wisdom literature in the Bible also looks like folk wisdom. Or look at ships he says, another example:

[29] ... though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder, wherever the will of the pilot directs, so also the tongue is a small member yet it boasts of great exploits.

[30] Almost—it just really echoes that kind of stuff you can see in Sirach, in Proverbs, and those kinds of things. One of the things that James is, the letter of James is a representation of typical Jewish wisdom literature. Why do I say Jewish? Because this is actually a very Jewish document, there's almost no mention of Christ in it. If you took out a few sentences here and there, the letter of James could read as a non-Christian document, because most of this stuff about the tongue, how you control the tongue, about remembering the poor, all these sorts of things, this is stuff anybody—any Jewish person in the ancient world could have said. It's not particularly Christian. So James is an example of ancient typical Jewish wisdom literature.

4. Faith and Works in James in Comparison to Paul

[31] But, and here's where James becomes very interesting for Christian readings. Let's read Romans 4, Romans 4:1. Now you're familiar with this, you've already talked about Paul, you've written about Paul, you know about Paul:

[32] What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about but not before God. For what does the scripture say? " Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

[33] Now keep that scripture in mind, that's a quotation from Genesis. Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

[34] Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift, but as something due. But to one who without work trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

[35] Then Paul goes on and takes his argument further. Galatians 3 has a very similar thing, it quotes the same kind of scriptures from Galatians, and Paul in Galatians makes the

same point. Abraham was not justified by works, and he quotes some of this very scripture to prove, according to Paul, that Genesis shows that Abraham was not justified by works, he was justified by faith.

[36] Now look back at James 1, first chapter of James, verses 22-25:

[37] But be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror. For they look at themselves and on going away immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty and persevere, not being hearers who forgot but doers who act, they will be blessed in their doing.

[38] Look at James 2:14:

[39] What good is it my brothers if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? [Well I think Paul would say, as a matter of fact James, yes.] If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is that? Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

[40] Look at 21-26 of the same chapter, James 2:21-26:

[41] Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

[42] Notice this guy quotes the exact same verse Paul quotes, but to make the opposite point. Paul had quoted this very verse to argue that Abraham was justified by his faith not by works; this writer quotes the same verse from Genesis to say Abraham was justified by works.

[43] You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Likewise was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?

[44] This is when the Israelites were surrounding the city of Jericho before they marched around it and made all the walls fall down. Two of the spies came into Jericho and they were received by a prostitute, Rahab, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is also dead." Now these texts seem to be arguing against Paul, and it makes us wonder, does the author actually have texts of Paul in front of him? Is he actually reading Romans and Galatians and he sees that Paul quotes this passage from Genesis, and therefore, he quotes the same passage to make the opposite point? Or has he heard about Paul's Gospel about a works free Gospel in some places and he's responding to rumors? Or is he just responding to Paul-type Christians? He may not know Paul himself, he may not even have access to Paul's work, but he's heard some people who are followers of Paul and promote his kind of law-free, faith dominated Gospel, and he's writing against those kinds of people. It's very difficult to say. As I think Bart Ehrman in the textbook points out, and other people have said all along, there is a way to sort of get beyond this contradiction. To say that maybe the writer of James is not saying really the opposite of what Paul is saying after all. Have any of you picked up on that argument? Yes, what's the argument?

[45] *Student:* They're operating on different definitions of works and faith?

[46] *Professor Dale Martin:* Yes, they're operating on different definitions of works and faith, and that's a very good point. Notice for example, what was faith for Paul? Faith, and this is something that modern people, Christians as well as non-Christians, radical atheists, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens published these books saying, religious people in general are crazy people who believe lots of ridiculous things before breakfast, and just think that—the idea is that if you're a religious person you do believe that people go around walking on water all the time, that hell exists under the ground below our feet, that God is this man with a beard who sits up in the clouds somewhere, and so there are a lot of people who think, what is religious faith? Well, it's actually believing certain propositions. It's believing a proposition like there is a God, God is alive in the same way that you would believe the proposition is it's sun shining

outside. It's a proposition, you just look at nature, you figure it out.

[47] Now in the Terry lectures a year ago—I believe a year ago, Terry Eagleton who's a very famous Marxist literary critic, but he grew up Catholic. He gave the Terry lectures; they've just come out in publication by Yale University Press. I recommend them very highly. He gave four lectures in which he took on these sort of radical atheists, and Terry Eagleton wasn't arguing himself for Christian faith, I don't even know whether he believes Christian stuff or not, but what he was trying to argue is that what has counted as Christian faith over the centuries is more complicated than simply believing a proposition, that say the proposition God exists.

[48] For Paul, as a matter of fact, having faith is more a sense of putting your trust in God, so talking about trust, faith for Paul is trusting God to do what you need. Faith is not simply a belief in certain kinds of propositions, like a scientific proposition, it's actually an attitude of putting all of your trust in God through Jesus Christ. This notion therefore that faith is something that you believe about is not really matched by Paul's writings on faith, which are much more complex and they're much more like the idea that faith is a way of living; faith is a decision. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Great Leap of Faith*, the nineteenth century philosopher. Faith is this willingness to just throw it all in even though all the evidence might be to the contrary. It's a decision you make, it's a leap of faith, in Kierkegaard's understanding. That's what it's more like for Paul. But notice that's not exactly what James seems to think faith is, and this is why some people have said that Paul and James are not really disagreeing with each other because they're working with different notions of faith and works.

[49] What does James say? James 2:19, "You believe that God is one, you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder." That's a pretty big clue. Do you think Paul would have ever said that demons have faith in Christ? No. Paul actually doesn't talk about demons enough for us to really be sure. He only mentions demons once in all of his letters, and that's in 1 Corinthians 10, and he's just talking to the Corinthians saying, don't participate in idol sacrifices because that's participating in the

table of demons. Paul's not too concerned about demons. I would think it would be outlandish to think that Paul would have considered demons as having faith in Christ. Do demons believe that Christ exists? Paul would say, yeah, of course. Demons know God exists, demons know Christ exists, so that's not what Paul's definition of Christian faith is. But that is what James seems to be thinking faith is. It's simply the mental acknowledgement of the existence of God and that God is one, that is, the rejection of idolatry and polytheism and the idea that God is one. Now faith, therefore, for James is not the same kind of thing as faith is for Paul, and that's why you can have Paul saying, you're justified by faith and James disagreeing with him by saying, look even demons have faith, they believe and they're not saved by it, so you have to have works also.

[50] But also works is not really the same thing for Paul as for James. Remember I talked about how the traditional way of understanding Paul, this sort of Lutheran way, was that when Paul was talking about salvation by works versus salvation by faith, what he's talking about—and this is sort of the Protestant way of thinking that's become more popular in the modern world—"works" stand for anything humans can do. For Martin Luther works weren't just circumcision or keeping kashrut, or keeping the Sabbath—in other words, works of the Jewish law. For Martin Luther works were indulgences sold by the Roman Catholic Church. Works were even being baptized; works were confessing and doing penance. For Martin Luther, the works he was saying don't save you were any activity that human beings do in order to try earn their own salvation. That's not what works are for Paul. When Paul talks about works in Romans he's clearly talking about works of Jewish law. He's talking about circumcision. Now I'm not saying that that means that you can't read Paul as a Protestant. If you want to read Paul as a Protestant that's fine. You can read a certain kind of idea of salvation by grace through faith, apart from even human endeavor, in Paul's letter to the Romans, but that's not the main thing Paul was talking about. The main thing Paul was doing was trying to get Gentiles in Rome not to feel like they had to keep Jewish law, but also then not to despise Jewish followers of Jesus and not to despise Israel.

Romans is a complicated letter, but it wasn't as simple you might give the idea from traditional Protestant piety which is, works are human activity.

[51] That is obviously what James takes works to be, right? He's not talking about works of Jewish law; he's not talking about circumcision. There's nowhere in the letter of James that he tells his followers, you have to be circumcised. There's nowhere he says, you have to keep the Sabbath. What he does say, is you've got to take care of the poor, you have to do justice, you have to do right things. Notice how the social situation of James churches might tell us something about why he comes to his belief in faith that he does and why he comes to a belief about works that he does. Look at James 2:1-7, and remember now, when I was reading about—I mentioned Sirach and these other wisdom literature that mentioned the poor.

[52] My brothers do you with your acts of favoritism [that is favoring the rich in your church] really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? If a person with gold rings and fine clothes come into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, you take no notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that is invoked over you?

[53] James is written not to the rich, it's written to the poor. It's saying, don't kow-tow to the rich in your town, don't give them the best places in church. Look at James 5:1-6, he gets really heated toward the end of the sermon because it actually reads more like sermon than it does a letter. "Come now you rich people," now he's talking to the rich but I think he's kind of talking to the rich with the understanding that his real audience are the poor. He wants them to overhear him condemn the rich.

[54] ...weep and wail for the miseries that are coming on you. Your riches have rotted, your clothes are moth eaten, your gold and silver have rusted, their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept by back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure, you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter, you have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

[55] James is written to a Christian community that's apparently either very Jewish or he himself is writing from a very Jewish kind of point of view. He uses this wisdom tradition of Jewish literature that's already very well known by the time—we've got all kinds of books in this kind of wisdom tradition. He uses common sayings, but notice what kind of context he's writing in. He's writing in a context where most of the members of his church are poor, not wealthy. He's writing to condemn the rich for not taking that into account. When James says you can't be saved by faith apart from works, what are the works he's talking about? Justice. It's sort of like that bumper sticker that says you can't have peace without justice. Some people running around the world saying, oh let's have peace, let's have peace, let's have peace, well it's easy to say if you're rich, or you're middle class, but if you're poor and you're oppressed, then just hollering about peace all the time doesn't sound very just, does it? The bumper sticker, if you want peace work for justice, that's where James is. What works is for James doesn't—he's not talking so much about circumcision, the Sabbath, keeping Kosher like it seems to have been for Paul, what he's talking about is, you have to have justice.

[56] It's almost as if the writer of James is in a social situation where he didn't have the luxury of teaching salvation by faith alone. He needed to talk about what you needed to do to supplement your belief that God exists with pursuing justice toward the poor. And here's the debate among scholars, some people have given this answer of why James and Paul don't really disagree. Because, as some of you already picked up, they're working with what

seem to be different definitions of both faith and works. Clearly, James thinks he's disagreeing with some kind of version of Christianity that looks an awful lot like Paul's letters. James may think he's disagreeing with Paul even, it's hard to say, he doesn't ever mention him by name. But this writer may indeed think he's disagreeing with another form of Christianity that he may view as dangerous because if it teaches you that you're justified by faith alone apart from works, then that may let a lot of rich people off the hook. They don't have to do anything to prove their faith.

[57] James and Paul may indeed still be in something of a disagreement, although you can see how they wouldn't be disagreeing with each other quite directly. But James is operating in a situation where it's almost as if he looks at some Gospel that says, you're not

saved by works, you're saved by faith, and he says, well that's nice and convenient for those people who don't want to work for justice. He writes his letter even interpreting the same verses from Genesis that Paul had used but using them to emphasize justice as the work that has to supplement your faith rather than an idea that you're saved by faith alone. So does he disagree with Paul? Maybe yes, maybe no, maybe it's a little bit of both. Does he have a different view of law? Maybe yes, maybe no. That's for you to decide and to write your paper about this week or make scintillating comments in your discussion sections. Questions, comments, outbursts? We're more than halfway through the semester; you're not confused about anything? Good, I'm such a good teacher. See you next week.

[end of transcript]