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FOREWORD BY DOUGLAS J. MOO



EXEGETICAL
GUIDE TO THE
GREEK
NEW
TESTAMENT

JAMES

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General Introduction to the EGGNT Series

Studying the New Testament in the original Greek has become easier in recent years. Beginning students will work their way through an introductory grammar or other text, but then what? Grappling with difficult verb forms, rare vocabulary, and grammatical irregularities remains a formidable task for those who would advance beyond the initial stages of learning Greek to master the interpretive process. Intermediate grammars and grammatical analyses can help, but such tools, for all their value, still often operate at a distance from the Greek text itself, and analyses are often too brief to be genuinely helpful.

The Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (EGGNT) aims to close the gap between the Greek text and the available tools. Each EGGNT volume aims to provide all the necessary information for understanding of the Greek text and, in addition, includes homiletical helps and suggestions for further study. The EGGNT is not a full-scale commentary. But these guides will make interpreting a given New Testament book easier, in particular for those who are hard-pressed for time and yet want to preach or teach with accuracy and authority.

In terms of layout, each volume begins with a brief introduction to the particular book (including such matters as authorship, date, etc.), a basic outline, and a list of recommended commentaries. At the end of each volume, you will find a comprehensive exegetical outline of the book. The body of each volume is devoted to paragraph-by-paragraph exegesis of the text. The treatment of each paragraph includes:

1. The Greek text of the passage, phrase-by-phrase, from the fourth edition of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (UBS⁴). In the present volume on James, five textual changes (1:20; 2:3, 4, 15; 4:10) from the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, twenty-eighth revised edition, © 2012 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart (NA²⁸) are noted that will also be adopted in the fifth revised edition of the UBS text (forthcoming, 2013).
2. A structural analysis of the passage.
3. A discussion of each phrase of the passage with discussion of relevant vocabulary, significant textual variants, and detailed grammatical analysis, including

parsing. When more than one solution is given for a particular exegetical issue, the author's own preference, reflected in the translation and expanded paraphrase, is indicated by an asterisk (*). When no preference is expressed, the options are judged to be evenly balanced, or it is assumed that the text is intentionally ambiguous. When a particular verb form may be parsed in more than one way, only the parsing appropriate in the specific context is supplied; but where there is difference of opinion among grammarians or commentators, both possibilities are given and the matter is discussed.

4. Various translations of significant words or phrases.
5. A list of suggested topics for further study with bibliography for each topic. An asterisk (*) in one of the "For Further Study" bibliographies draws attention to a discussion of the particular topic that is recommended as a useful introduction to the issues involved.
6. Homiletical suggestions designed to help the preacher or teacher move from the Greek text to a sermon outline that reflects careful exegesis. The first suggestion for a particular paragraph of the text is always more exegetical than homiletical and consists of an outline of the entire paragraph. These detailed outlines of each paragraph build on the general outline proposed for the whole book and, if placed side by side, form a comprehensive exegetical outline of the book. All outlines are intended to serve as a basis for sermon preparation and should be adapted to the needs of a particular audience.¹

The EGGNT volumes will serve a variety of readers. Those reading the Greek text for the first time may be content with the assistance with vocabulary, parsing, and translation. Readers with some experience in Greek may want to skip or skim these sections and focus attention on the discussions of grammar. More advanced students may choose to pursue the topics and references to technical works under "For Further Study," while pastors may be more interested in the movement from grammatical analysis to sermon outline. Teachers may appreciate having a resource that frees them to focus on exegetical details and theological matters.

The editors are pleased to present you with the individual installments of the EGGNT. We are grateful for each of the contributors who has labored long and hard over each phrase in the Greek New Testament. Together we share the conviction that "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16, HCSB) and echo Paul's words to Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15, HCSB).

1. As a Bible publisher, B&H Publishing follows the "Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture." As an academic book publisher, B&H Academic asks that authors conform their manuscripts (including EGGNT exegetical outlines in English) to the B&H Academic style guide, which affirms the use of singular "he/his/him" as generic examples encompassing both genders. However, in their discussion of the Greek text, EGGNT authors have the freedom to analyze the text and reach their own conclusions regarding whether specific Greek words are gender-specific or gender-inclusive.

Introduction

AUTHORSHIP

The author identifies himself simply as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1), the lack of elaboration suggesting that he was well-known to the community to which he writes. If we examine the NT for his identity, we find five people named James:

1. James the son of Zebedee brother of John, one of the twelve apostles (Mark 1:19; 5:37)
2. James the son of Alphaeus, also one of the twelve (Mark 3:18; Acts 1:13)
3. James “the Younger” (Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10 = son of Alphaeus?)
4. James the father of Judas, not Iscariot (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13)
5. James the Lord’s brother and leader of the early church (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Jude 1:1)

There is no evidence in Acts that the first James mentioned above had the authoritative influence to issue an encyclical of this tone, and he was, in any case, martyred in AD 44 (cf. Acts 12:2), likely too early to have authored the letter, especially if it is responding to Paul’s doctrine of justification or a garbled form of it, since Paul before this date had not yet begun his missionary journeys. Of the remaining, the most likely candidate is the last, since only this James would have been well enough known to have required no identification beyond his mere name in the letter’s greeting (or in Acts and Jude for that matter). He was a leader, if not *the* leader, of the Jerusalem church. Thus when Peter was released from prison, he asks that word be sent “to James and the brethren” (Acts 12:17). Later at the Jerusalem Council, James is the one who brings the discussion to a close and renders the final decision (Acts 15:12–21). When Paul arrives in Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, he reports to James (Acts 21:18). His lead position also appears in the order in which Paul lists the “pillars” of the church in Jerusalem: “James, Cephas, and John” (Gal 2:9, 12), an order that would later appear in the canonical arrangement of the general epistles. Additional evidence that points to this James includes:

1. The relationship that evidently existed between the author and the community to which he writes and the authority that he assumes in addressing them
2. The Jewish “dialect” in the letter (see, e.g., 1:1, 8, 11, 22, 23, 2:1, 7, 9, 13, 16; 3:13; 4:7, 11; 5:3, 17)
3. The similarities between the language in the letter and the speech of James and the counciliar letter in Acts 15:13–29 (see below on 1:1, 16, 27; 2:5, 7; 5:10, 19)
4. Social, economic, agricultural, and climatic references that are consistent with a Palestinian provenance (cf., e.g., 2:5–7; 3:12; 4:13–17; 5:1–7)
5. Early church tradition that generally, though not unanimously, supports this identification (see Eusebius *HE* 3.25.3; 2.23.25)
6. Indications of an early composition of the letter (see below on Date)

Some scholars, however, contend that the author *poses* as James the Lord’s brother but cannot, in fact, *be* that James (see, e.g., Dibelius-Greeven 11–21; Ropes 43–52). They argue that

1. The Greek is too refined and the rhetorical style too Hellenistic for an Aramaic-speaking Jew from Galilee (see below, e.g., on 1:17)
2. A dialogue with Paul’s doctrine of justification suggests a date later than AD 62, the year in which James was executed
3. The dietary and cultic concerns that appear in Acts 15 are absent from the letter
4. The “Judaistic” James of Gal 2:12 and tradition could not be the James of the letter who reveals no concern for ritualistic purity
5. There are only two direct references to Jesus
6. The author never, in fact, identifies himself as Jesus’ brother

These concerns are not definitive, however, for they begin with the assumption that a pseudonymous letter would have been accepted as authoritative in the ancient world. Studies are challenging this premise (see, e.g., Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie* 22 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986]; Terry L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004]).

In regard to the language and rhetorical style of the letter, Greek was widely spoken in Galilee, and Hellenistic influences were ever present there. There is no compelling reason to assume the Greek of the letter is “too schooled” (Turner, *Style*, 114) to have been composed by James the Lord’s brother, especially if he was assisted by an amanuensis (see J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* [Leiden: Brill, 1968], esp. 3–21, 119–23, in S. E. Porter, ed., *The Language of the New Testament: Classical Essays*, JSNTSup 60 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991], 126–52, 174–90, 191–226).

As for the relation between James and Paul, it is possible that James is not responding directly to Paul but to an early and perverted form of his doctrine (cf. Rom 3:5–8; 6:1–2; see D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 625–26). Or James could be responding to issues entirely independent of Paul (see Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James*,

Disciple of Jesus the Sage [London: Routledge, 1999], 127–31). Indeed, James may not even be using *δικαιῶ* (“justify”) in the Pauline sense (see section on 2:21).

Concerning Acts 15, it is certainly reasonable to expect that James would have addressed the Gentile controversy, especially when some of his readers likely resided in or near Antioch (see below on Occasion and Purpose). However, it is possible, if not likely, that the letter predates the controversy (see section on Date).

Regarding the “Judaistic” James, ritual law may not have been an issue in the community to which James writes, not to mention that Gal 2:12 does not state that James aligned himself with the legalists (in fact, he did not; cf. Acts 15:24), nor can we be certain that the accounts of James’s cultic piety are history rather than legend (see R. B. Ward below in For Further Study § 2).

As for there being only two direct references to Jesus (1:1; 2:1), the letter abounds in allusions to the Sermon on the Mount (see, e.g., 1:2, 4, 5, 8; 2:5, 10; 3:1, 12, 18; 4:2–3; 5:10, 12), and the letter contains numerous similarities to Q, a hypothetical source of Jesus’ sayings likely used by Matthew and Luke (see McKnight 26). James may not cite or quote Jesus, but he makes Jesus’ teaching his own throughout (see Martin lxxv–lxxvi; Mayor iii–iv).

Finally, while the letter does not mention James’s relation to Jesus, neither does Acts, the spirit being thicker than blood (cf. Mark 3:33–35; see Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990], 125–30). And the fact that the letter does not mention a relationship virtually undermines the assumption of pseudonymity, since a later author who was posing as James the Lord’s brother would likely have identified himself as such.

DATE

Those who deem the letter pseudonymous usually date it toward the end of the first or beginning of the second century (see, e.g., Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, tr. Howard Clark Kee, rev. ed. [London: SCM, 1975], 414). If James the brother of Jesus composed the letter, the *terminus ad quem* date would be AD 62, the year of his martyrdom (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1 [197–203]). Some date it near this date (see, e.g., Hort xxv), primarily, they argue, because

1. The discussion of justification in the letter suggests a knowledge of Paul’s developed doctrine
2. The worldly behavior described in the letter suggests a second generation of Christians (cf. 1:19–27; 4:1–10)

Neither reason is convincing, however, since the former need not be assumed (see section on Authorship) and the latter naïvely assumes that first-generation believers could not be as readily prone to sin as later generations (see Moo 25). Other scholars who consider James to be the author date it in the mid-to-late 40s, which would make it, perhaps, the earliest New Testament book (see, e.g., Mayor cxxi–cliii; Johnson 111–21). The following points argue for an early date:

1. The absence of any reference to the Gentile situation, which precipitated the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (c. AD 48)
2. The distinctively Jewish nature of the letter (cf., e.g. 1:1; 2:2, 8–13, 19, 21, 25; 4:4; 5:4, 17)
3. The simplicity of church organization—“teachers” (3:1) and “elders” (5:14)
4. The relative simplicity of doctrine, including the lack of explicit Christology
5. An affinity to the teachings of Jesus closer than that of any other letter
6. The apparent use of pre-synoptic Jesus traditions (see below For Further Study § 65)

OCCASION AND PURPOSE

If the letter is pseudonymous, any number of occasions for its writing could be postulated. If we assume James the Lord’s brother composed the letter, it was probably written from Jerusalem during his tenure there as the leader of the church. Based on the explicit reference to faith in Christ in 2:1, James was addressing Christians, and the manner of address, “to the twelve tribes in the dispersion” (1:1), as well as the Jewishness of the letter almost certainly indicate that these Christians were Jews. Furthermore, if the letter is an early composition and the term “dispersion” (διασπορά) is taken literally, the recipients were probably among the rank-and-file believers in Acts 8:1 that were driven out of Jerusalem by their persecutors and eventually scattered (διασπείρω) as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19–21). The oppressed and poverty stricken condition of James’s readers fits such a diaspora existence well (cf., e.g., 1:2–4, 12; 2:6–7; 5:4–11; see E. Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead* [New York: Crossroad, 1990], 23–24). This in turn would likely explain the circumstances that precipitated the letter and the purpose for which it was written: James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem writes, as it were, an “encyclical” or “diaspora letter” (Jer 29:1–23) to his oppressed and displaced flock in order to encourage, instruct, and admonish them (see Donald J. Versepunt, “Genre and Story: The Community Setting of the Epistle of James,” *CBQ* 62 [2000]: 96–110).

OUTLINE

- I. Address and Greeting (1:1)
- II. The Testing of Faith (1:2–18)
 - A. Trials in Perspective (1:2–4)
 - B. Praying for Perspective (1:5–8)
 - C. Ups and Downs in Perspective (1:9–11)
 - D. Perseverance and the Crown (1:12)
 - E. Hooked by One’s Own Bait (1:13–18)
- III. The Evidence of Genuine Faith: Deeds of Love (1:19–2:26)
 - A. Open Ears and Measured Speech (1:19–20)
 - B. Hearers and Doers of the Word (1:21–27)
 - C. Discrimination Against the Poor (2:1–7)

- D. Partiality and the Golden Rule (2:8–13)
- E. The Inadequacy of a Faith Without Works (2:14–17)
- F. Justified by Works (2:18–26)
- IV. Warnings Against Pride and Arrogance (3:1–4:12)
 - A. The Taming of the Tongue (3:1–12)
 - B. Wisdom’s Peaceful Disposition (3:13–18)
 - C. Ungratified Desires and Church Conflict (4:1–3)
 - D. Spiritual Adultery (4:4–6)
 - E. Submission to God (4:7–10)
 - F. Defamation and Judgmentalism (4:11–12)
- V. Living in Light of Eternity (4:13–5:11)
 - A. Making Plans and the Will of God (4:13–17)
 - B. The Woes of Wealth (5:1–6)
 - C. Persecution and the Parousia (5:7–11)
- VI. Concluding Exhortations (5:12–20)
 - A. Oaths and Truth-Telling (5:12)
 - B. Prayer for All Seasons (5:13–18)
 - C. An Alarm to Action (5:19–20)

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

Throughout this volume of the EGGNT, references for the most part are made to five specialized commentaries on James, written in or translated into English and based directly on the Greek text. They are:

- Dauids, Peter H. *The Epistle of James*. New International Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Dibelius, Martin. *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*. Hermenia. Revised by Heinrich Greeven. Translated by Michael A. Williams. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.
- Martin, Ralph P. *James*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Nelson, 1988.
- Mayor, Joseph B. *The Epistle of St. James: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, Comments, and Further Studies in the Epistle of James*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1913; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990.
- Ropes, J. H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916.

Dauids provides, perhaps, the best balance of scholarship and accessibility. Proposing that the letter is a collection of homilies and axioms written in a Jewish milieu in the AD 50–60s, the book is a mixture of insights, quotables, and applications that can be brought directly into the sermon. Martin provides a broader and more sustained analysis of the text and a much wider survey of current scholarship on James. The reader might repeatedly stumble, however, on his interpretations and theory that James was addressing zealots and attempting to quell an uprising from among the Christian ranks. Dibelius-Greeven is something of a masterpiece with its exhaustive analyses and excurses. The reader who is unconvinced of the commentary’s ongoing

emphasis that the letter is a later editor's patchwork of ill-fitting units might be tempted to set it aside. It nevertheless provides a valuable comparison of James to other ancient hortatory literature and leaves almost no grammatical questions unaddressed. Mayor is the oldest but is magisterial in its breadth and remains unsurpassed in its analysis of the Greek, survey of the grammar, and listings of classical and Hellenistic parallels. The commentary is a virtual treasure chest to students of the Greek text of James. Ropes might at first be dismissed as nothing more than a concise clone of Mayor. It is not, and for its size it provides the expositor with a significant number of perceptive and quotable gems.

Sometimes when weighing differences of interpretation, references are also made to the following more current commentaries drawing from the Greek text, though written for readers of the English text:

- Blomberg, Craig L., and Mariam J. Kamell. *James*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *James*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
- McCartney, Dan G. *James*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- McKnight, Scot. *James*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Letter of James*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

For a comprehensive list of commentaries and bibliography of general literature relating to the background and exegesis of James, see Dibelius-Greeven 263–71; McKnight xix–xxx.