

## Life Church Sermon Handout October 19, 2014: Introduction To James

### ▼ Game Plan

- We are working through the New Testament, alternating between the letters (epistles) and the gospels (beginning with Matthew).
- We are reading the letters in chronological rather than in canon order: Galatians, James, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Romans, Mark, Matthew, Luke, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, 1st Timothy, Acts, Hebrews, Titus, John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, 1 Peter, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation
- This will help us see how the church grew and dealt with various issues as they arose.

### ▼ James: The Setting

Taken from "The Untold Story of the New Testament Church" by Frank Viola

#### ▼ The Jerusalem Council - Acts 15

- A response to the conflict between Paul and the judaizers seeking to influence the Galatian churches.
- Local and remote church leaders came together to consider whether or not gentile Christians should be required to obey the Jewish law.
- The council considered a number of experiences, including Peter's evangelization of Cornelius' household (Acts 10 - 11).

#### ▼ Following James' recommendation the council decides that gentile believers should abstain from:

- food polluted by idols
- sexual immorality
- the meat of strangled animals
- blood

#### ▼ Jewish churches of Palestine

- Dispersed Jewish believers are suffering persecution from unconverted Jews and gentiles.
- Some, who don't have land of their own are forced to become laborers.
- Some are being deprived of their land and hauled into court by wealthy landowners.
- Some Christians are seeking the opportunity to become wealthy as traders.

- The wealthy are being shown undue favoritism.
- The scattered Jewish Christians have heard inaccurate accounts of the Jerusalem Council decision. They may have heard that good works have nothing to do with salvation.
- ▼ Perhaps, in response to local conditions, some of the worldly believers have begun to:
  - hurt each other with their speech.
  - discriminate against the poor.
  - give preferential treatment to the rich.
  - seek to become teachers.
- The church is experiencing sickness.

### **Discussion Questions & Topics**

- Has any of these world views matched your own at any point in your life? Discuss.
- How has Jesus influenced your world view?
- How does the setting and background of James relate to your life?
- What areas of your life do you hope to hear from God about through studying James?

### **Life Church Mission Statement**

Our mission is to teach people:

to enjoy knowing Jesus without fear, inadequacy, guilt, or shame,  
 to follow him together as his family,  
 to function together as his body,  
 and to work together to expand his kingdom and bring him glory.

### **Understanding The Bible**

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Here, for your convenience, are the Bible passages for today's sermon at Life Church. We use mostly the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible so that you can read it in modern English. You may have been accustomed to reading or hearing the King James Version of the Bible, which uses older English (with words like "thee" , "thou", "thine", "believeth", etc.). Don't be alarmed - the passages are really from the Bible!

The Bible was originally written in three ancient languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. None of the people in the Bible, and none of the people who God used to write it spoke English. In fact, English did not even exist as a language when the Bible was written. The King James Version, first published in 1611, was a translation of the Bible from its original languages into the every day English that people used back then - over 400 years ago! They didn't just speak that way in church - they spoke that way with everyone. The King James Version was "modernized" in 1769, but, even so, English has certainly changed a lot since then! **We believe that if you're reading an English**

## Life Church Sermon Handout October 19, 2014: World Views

### ▼ **World View: Key Questions**

- What's really real?
- Where are we and what is this place like?
- Who are we and where are we going?
- What's the problem; what's right and wrong?
- What's the solution?
- How do we know?
- What time is it?

### ▼ **Medieval Theism (400s - 1400s)**

- What's really real?  
God is the ultimate and final reality and all other things, seen and unseen find their reality in Him.
- Where are we and what is this place like?  
In a world created and sustained by a Creator who is active in its day-to-day operation.
- Who are we and where are we going?  
We are the Creator's creatures, destined to live and die according to His will which is dictated to us by those with special connections to Him.
- What's the problem; what's right and wrong?  
We rebel against God's will; right and wrong are defined by God.
- What's the solution?  
Obey God (by obeying those who represent Him).
- How do we know?  
Because it has always been so; the Bible and the Church confirm it, and they are certain authorities

### ▼ **Enlightenment Deism/Natural Religion (late 1600s - late 1700s)**

- What's really real?  
Nature and Natural laws are real. God is real, but is relevant only as a philosophical concept and an abstract object of worship.
- Who are we?  
We are God's creatures, made in His image, entrusted with the capacity to understand and manipulate the laws of nature for our own purposes, the pursuit of which glorifies God.
- Where are we?  
In a world created by God, and sustained by the automatic, mechanical functioning of the "Laws of Nature" which God designed.
- What's wrong?  
We don't yet fully understand the laws of nature and, therefore, cannot exercise full control over them.
- What's the solution?  
Learn the laws of nature in order to run the world.
- How do we know?  
Science, which confirms the truth about God and His universe

### ▼ **Post Enlightenment Modernism (late 1800s - early 1900s)**

"In this day and age . . ."

- What's really real?  
The observable universe.
- Who are we?  
Biological organisms, the products of a remarkable evolutionary process, who contribute to the process by spreading modernity, but whose end is personal extinction.
- Where are we?  
In a closed universe, on a chunk of spinning space mass, the product of a natural cosmic event, which is moving away from its point of origin, perhaps indefinitely.
- What's wrong?  
Some people haven't evolved as much as others. Ethics is based on personal satisfaction and technological improvements. Personal freedom and equality are the greatest goods.
- What's the solution?  
Science, technology and democratic government.
- How do we know?  
Science and reason.

### ▼ **Post-Modernism (late 1900s - present)**

Any time someone make a truth claim he/she exposes his/her agenda

- **What's really real?**  
We don't know.
- **Who are we?**  
We don't know. We can only tell different stories about our perceptions.
- **Where are we?**  
We don't know. We can only tell different stories about our perceptions. Science is not really based on "facts." Science is merely one sort of perception.
- **What's wrong?**  
We don't know. Some stories seem to be more useful than others, but nothing is "true" or "right" or "wrong." Ethics is whatever a society (or individual) makes it to be.
- **What's the solution?**  
What do you mean by solution?
- **How do we know?**  
We don't.

### ▼ **Jesus and his followers (pre-resurrection)**

N. T. Wright -

- **Who are we?**  
Jesus and his followers form the real return-from-exile people, the remnant, the seed, the little flock.
- **Where are we?**  
We are in the land, though still slaves, but our God will make us inherit the earth.
- **What's wrong?**  
What is wrong? Evil is rampant not merely within paganism but within Israel: from the oppressive regime of the chief priests to the populist revolutionary movements, the world's evil has radically infected Israel also.
- **What's the solution?**  
Everything we know about Jesus suggests that in his heart of hearts he gave the answer: "I am."
- **What time is it?**  
The hour of crisis, the great tribulation through which the kingdom will come, the long-awaited moment when the Exodus will be re-enacted, when exile will end, evil will be defeated, and YHWH will return to Zion.

### ▼ **Jesus' followers (post-resurrection)**

How can we answer the five key world-view questions? Taken from "The New Testament and the People of God" by N. T. Wright pp. 132-133.

- **Who are we?**  
We are humans, made in the image of the creator. We have responsibilities that come with this status. We are not fundamentally determined by race, gender, social class, geographical location; nor are we simply pawns in a determinist game.
- **Where are we?**  
We are in a good and beautiful, though transient, world, the creation of the god in whose mage we are made. We are not in an alien world, as the Gnostic imagines; nor in a cosmos to which we owe allegiance as to a god, as the pantheist would suggest.
- **What's wrong?**  
Humanity has rebelled against the creator. This rebellion reflects a cosmic dislocation between the creator and the creation, and the world is consequently out of tune with its created intention. A Christian worldview rejects dualisms which associate evil with createdness or physicality; equally, it rejects monisms that analyze evil simply in terms of some humans not being fully intone with their environment. Its analysis of evil is more subtle and far-reaching. It likewise rejects as the whole truth all partial analysis, such as those of Marx of Freud, which elevate half-truths to the status of the whole truth.
- **What's the solution?**  
The creator has acted, is acting, and will act within his creation to deal with the weight of evil set up by human rebellion, and to bring his world to the end for which it was made, namely that it should resonate fully with his own presence and glory. This action, of course, is focused upon Jesus and the spirit of the creator. We reject that is, solutions to the human plight which only address one part of the problem.
- **What time is it?**  
We live in the overlap of the ages: the age to come has already broken in in Jesus, but the present age still continues. A great crisis is looming shortly, involving fierce suffering and worldwide convulsion, from which the church will emerge stronger; and one day, though nobody knows when, Jesus will reappear, when God finally remakes the cosmos. The Roman world is tottering; only God's kingdom will last.