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A0730 – July 29, 2007 – Jas 2:21-24 – Abraham Justified By Works

James 2:21-24 Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἀνεπέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον; ²²Βλέπετε ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη; ²³Καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἣ λέγουσα, Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη. ²⁴Ὁρᾶτε τοίνυν ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος, καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.

James 2:21-24 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he brought up Isaac his son on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working together with his works, and by the works faith was made perfect; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled saying, “And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You all see that a man is justified by works, and not only [justified] by faith. (**Author’s Translation**)

James 2:21-24 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- I. Three Aspects of Salvation
 - A. Phase 1: Saved from Penalty of Sin
 1. Which is Spiritual Death
 2. Justification
 - a. Basis: Grace
 - b. Means: Faith Alone
 - B. Phase 2: Saved from Power of Sin

1. Which is Temporal Death
 - a. Loss of Fellowship
 - b. Physical Death
2. Sanctification
- C. Phase 3: Saved from Presence of Sin
 1. Which is Eternal Death
 2. Glorification
- II. James 2:14 – Phase 2 Salvation
 - A. “faith” is objective (e.g. Creed of Methodists, Catholic, Lutheran) as in Jude 3 and Gal 1:23 “the faith” “the doctrine”
 - B. “works” is application of “the faith”, “the doctrine”
 - C. “save” in James means “deliverance in Phase 2
 - D. “Can doctrine without application deliver the Christian from temporal death?” No.
- III. James 2:15-17 – The Illustration
 - A. verse 17 “dead” – nekros
 1. If something is dead what do we assume?
 2. Parallel to *arge* “useless” in verse 20
 3. A dead faith (creed) is not non-existent but inactive, idle, useless
- IV. James 2:18-19 – The Hypothetical Opponent
 - A. Diatribe Formula
 1. Debate
 - a. Sarcastically Entertain Opponents Position
 - b. Call Him Foolish
 - c. Prove Your Case
 2. He’s an Opponent
 - B. Punctuation
 1. NIV – 2:18a “You have faith and I have works”
 2. NASB –2:18 “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”
 3. YLT – 2:18-19 “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith **by** your works, and I will show **by** my works my faith. You believe God is one, you do well; the demons believe and shudder.”
 - a. Textual Variants (*choris* or *ek*)
 - b. Manuscript evidence inconclusive

- c. Context favors *ek* (by, from, out of)
 - C. The Opponent's Argument is vv 18-19 where he claims there is no connection between faith and works; no connection between doctrine and application
- V. James 2:20-24 – James' Response
 - A. "Are you willing to recognize?" (*ginosko*) – "Are you willing to grasp the significance of" Abraham and Rahab?
 - B. "You foolish fellow" clearly refers to an opponent
 - C. "that faith without works is useless"
 - 1. *arge* – inactive, unproductive, idle (Matt 20:3)
 - 2. parallel to *nekros* in verse 17
 - 3. A dead faith is an unproductive faith
 - 4. An unproductive faith does not lead to spiritual maturity
 - 5. A productive faith does lead to spiritual maturity (2 Pet 1:8)
 - D. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works" introduces a kind of justification many Christians are not aware of
 - 1. Justification by Faith Alone
 - a. Unbeliever's problem is not sin (1 John 2:2; 2 Cor 5:19-21)
 - b. Unbeliever's problem is lack of +R and Eternal Life
 - c. Christ resolved problem by dying on the cross providing +R and Eternal Life
 - d. All who believe in Christ are declared +R (Rom 4:5) and receive Eternal Life (John 6:47)
 - i. Faith is credited as +R
 - ii. +R is a legal declaration
 - iii. *dikaioo*ⁱ – to justify, to declare righteous, to validate, to vindicate NOT make righteous (a forensic declaration)
 - e. Romans 4:1-6 Justification by Faith Alone is Before God
 - i. In 4:2 Paul opens the door for a second kind of justification; justification before men
 - ii. Justification Before God is Always by Faith Alone
 - iii. Justification Before Men is Always by Works

Works

- a. James 2:21 teaches Justification by
 - b. Rom 4:2 admits another kind of justification
2. Justification by Works
- a. 2:24 “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” is a poor translation
 - b. Makes it sound like there is one justification that is by faith and works
 - c. *monos* – “only, alone” is an adverb
 - i. Adverbs modify verbs. They do not modify nouns and faith is a noun. Adjectives modify nouns and if James wanted to modify faith he would have used *mones*, the adjectival form but he chose the adverb *monos*.
 - ii. Failure to realize this basic grammatical point has led to heretical statements about justification.

“Unproductive faith cannot save, because it is not genuine faith. Faith and works are like a two-coupon ticket to heaven. The coupon of works is not good for passage, and the coupon of faith is not valid if detached from works.”

(Ryrie Study Bible note on James 2:24)

“Faith only means a faith that does not produce works, and a faith that does not produce works is not saving faith to begin with. The reason is that works prove a saving faith.” (Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of James*, 258)

- ii. *monos* modifies the implied verb “justified” in the second clause
- iii. The correct translation is

James 2:24 “You see that a man is justified by works and not only [justified] by faith.”

- d. The corrected translation enables us to see that there are two justifications
 - i. Arena 1: Justification by Faith Alone Which is Before God

ii. Arena 2: Justification by Works Which is Before Men

3. Contrary to the opponents contention that faith is not connected to works James argues that works vindicate our doctrine.

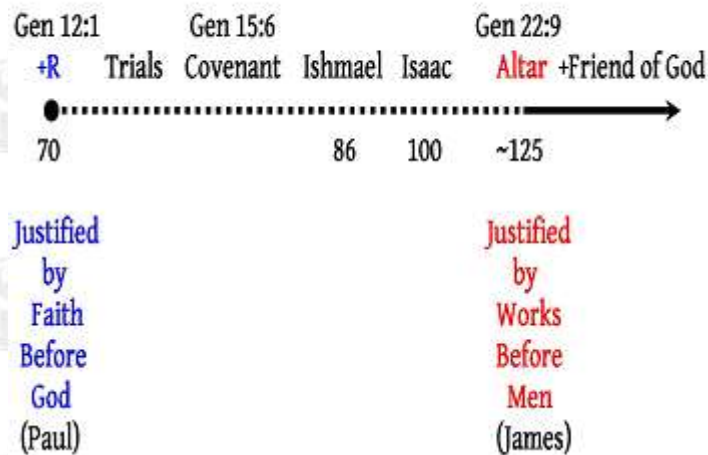
E. When was Abraham Justified by Faith Alone Before God? When did Abraham receive Arena 1 Justification?

1. Gen 15:6 sounds like he was justified here but this is a perfect tense meaning past completed action with ongoing results.
2. Abraham believed and was imputed +R many years before in Ur (~70yrs old)
 - a. Abraham faces trials in Marriage (Pharaoh and Sarai Gen 12:10-20)
 - b. Abraham faces trials in War (Gen 14:1-16)
3. In Gen 15:6 God entered into a covenant with Abraham who had already believed and been imputed +R (~84 years old)
4. Ishmael was born when Abram was 86yrs old; Isaac at 100yrs old

F. When was Abraham Justified by Works Before Men? When was Abraham Justified in Arena 2?

1. In Gen 22 when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar

Abraham's 2 Justifications



2. God Tested Abraham (Gen 22:1)
 - a. This is Abraham's Supreme Test of Maturity. Will he apply doctrine in the midst of a test?
 - a. What is the theme of James? Will you apply doctrine in the midst of a test?
 - b. What is the result of enduring trials? (Js 1:3-4)
 3. Heb 11:17-19
 4. What is Missing in Gen 22:3?
 5. Note "**we** will return to you" in 22:5
 6. Note interesting discussion Abraham and Isaac must have had in 22:11
 7. Note substitutionary atonement in 22:13
- G. Abraham was Justified Twice
1. Justified by Faith Alone Before God when ~70yrs old (Paul)
 2. Justified by Works Before Men when ~125yrs old (James)
 3. Gen 15:6 is quoted by James in 2:23 to the effect that the goal of God's justifying Abraham was fulfilled when Abraham offered Isaac
 4. Justification Before God is Distinct from and Divisible from Justification Before Men
 5. We may never see a person's good works although that is the intended aim or goal
- H. "as a result of works, faith was perfected"
1. *teleioo* – to bring to completion, mature, intended goal, perfected

2. The intended goal of doctrine is our maturity
3. When we apply doctrine during the tests of life we grow in maturity
4. God tests us to see if we will apply the doctrine in our soul and when we do this it meets the intended goal of doctrine which is for us to grow into maturity and to be called “a friend of God”

ⁱ “Verbs which end in *-ōō* generally indicate bringing out that which a person is or that which is desired...In the case of *dikaiōō*, it means to bring out the fact that a person is righteous.” (Spiros Zodhiates)

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