

# James Chapter 1

## Introduction

The reasons for believing James to be the Lord's brother are well summarized elsewhere (1); his introduction is therefore an essay in humility and not playing on human relationships as a means to assert authority, seeing he does not mention this fleshly relationship: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ". James the Lord's brother being the clear leader of the early church, it would be fitting that at least one of his letters (and Hebrews too?) be preserved. His high position of respect is indicated by Mk.15:40 describing a "James the less"- i.e. than the great James the Lord's brother. It was not until after James' death that the Gospel mushroomed among the Gentiles, which again points to a basically Jewish readership being catered for. The Lord's brothers having been sceptical of him during his ministry (Jn.7:3-5), James' depth of appreciation must have developed at lightning speed for him to write this epistle at a relatively early date. Two outstanding characteristics of James are the constant allusions to previous Scripture, especially the Gospels and Proverbs, and the intensely practical understanding of the moment by moment spiritual battle which we all face. It is worth noting that the most senior brother of the early church scored highly on these points. His humility in calling himself a servant of the Lord Jesus is remarkable- Paul could legitimately lay weight to his reasoning by saying he had seen Christ in the flesh (1 Cor.9:1; 2 Cor.5:16); how much more so could James have gently pointed out his "(knowing) Christ after the flesh"?

## Greeting

"Greeting" (v.1) means literally 'I wish you joy'. James then goes on to define what that joy is: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations". And so we are introduced to the basic theme of James- the machinery of human nature and our evil desires, and how to overcome them. Contrary to how it is often read, the temptations here are spiritual temptations- so the context of the chapter and letter require. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (NIV "evil desire"), and enticed" (1:14). The real temptations in life are to give way to our evil desires; the trials of life like illness or disaster may not necessarily tempt us so strongly in this way. It is easy to think that 'temptation' refers to these 'physical' trials, and to see those problems as things in themselves to be bravely endured. But whether we lose a leg or miss a bus, the same spiritual temptation of frustration- or whatever- may be presented to each sufferer. The flesh tends to make a big difference between physical and spiritual temptations; but to God- and James- the spiritual temptations are of paramount importance; whatever physical temptations we have are not for their own sake but to create the situation which our evil desires will use to tempt us spiritually. For other examples of 'temptation' and trial referring primarily to the spiritual temptations that lie behind the physical trials, see Digression 1.

## Spiritual temptation

James exhorts us to count falling into spiritual temptation as a joy; instead of the 'here we go again...', 'sin after sin' kind of attitude descending on us as we sense such temptations approaching. We must instead rejoice that here is another opportunity to please God on the highest level possible; to have an evil desire in your heart and to overcome it. The idea of falling ("When ye fall..") may create the idea of giving way to the temptations. But there may be some degree to which we fall (2) a little way before we are tempted: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away (from his normal safe spiritual self, abiding in Christ) of his

own lust" (1:14). There is surely no real temptation if the evil desire appears so unattractive as to not even lead us part way towards realizing it. Thus the devil in the sense of Christ's natural desires (Heb.4:15 cp. James 1:14,15) led Jesus away from His own supreme spirituality to tempt him (3).

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (v.3). Our joy at the onset of temptation should be because we know that we have an opportunity to develop permanent spiritual fruit, if only we can respond correctly in those split seconds when the process of being drawn away and enticed is going on. The trying of our faith due to spiritual temptation is in the sense of our faith that God "is able to keep (us) from falling" (Jude 24). In the moment of temptation, whether it be from an unkind word from someone or irritation at someone's natural characteristics, our joy will be helped by our faith that God will keep us from falling, and will not lead us any further into temptation unless we go on ourselves. However, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom.10:17).

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart (source of our evil desires), that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps.119:11). Thus the spiritual temptations lead to a testing of the faith developed by the word- perhaps implying that each individual piece of spiritual faith developed by the word is then tested by a spiritual temptation.

### **Working patience**

At this point it is worth drawing attention to the remarkable parallels between James 1 and 1 Peter 1 (4). The infallible principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture will therefore allow more light to be shed on much of James 1. Peter's parallel to "the trying of your faith worketh patience" is "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith...tried with fire" (1 Pet.1:6,7). A heavy spirit is more likely the result of prolonged spiritual temptation than physical trials, although these were no doubt the cause of the spiritual tests. The fire therefore represents the fire of the flesh, a figure which James also uses regarding the tongue as the epitome of our evil desires (3:5,6). Thus Prov.16:27: "An unGodly man diggeth up evil (out of the evil treasure of his heart- or is this the basis of the wasted talent parable?): and (therefore) in his lips there is as a burning fire"; cp. too 1 Cor.7:9. It is the constant reaction to spiritual trial that forges an acceptable character, not just the receipt of physical trial, as would be the case if the fire only represented persecution in itself. This trial of faith "worketh patience"- which must therefore be defined in this context as the ability to grit one's teeth in the moment of temptation, and cling on to one's faith in God's spiritual protection in the power of the word.

### **Perfect work**

Such patience results in a "perfect work..perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (1:4; note the triple emphasis of the same idea) in terms of spiritual development. The word of God has the power to make perfect (2 Tim.3:16; 1 Cor.13:10), and we have seen its place in developing the faith and patience which James says lead us to perfection. The trial of faith leads to the development of these fruits of the Spirit; yet the word also leads to the same fruits (Jn.15:7 cp. v.4,5). For more examples of the word generating spiritual trial and trials having the same effect as the action of the word on us, see Digression 2. The goals of spiritual development James sets are high- contrast Paul, who frequently laments the realities of the flesh (why the different approach?). Maybe James was alluding to Christ's ultimatum "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect", Mt.5:48. The idea of perfection occurs again in 3:2, where it applies to the man who does not offend in word, and therefore has his whole life in tight control- again, the result of a mind fully controlled by the word. In the context of sin and forgiveness, Paul's words in Rom.5 take on new meaning: "We glory in (spiritual) tribulations (cp."Count it all joy...") also: knowing that (spiritual) tribulation

worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom.5:3-5). "Tribulation" is therefore to be equated with "the (spiritual) trial of your faith" in James 1.

The interpretation of "faith" as faith in God's keeping us from falling (Jude 24) is confirmed by a closer look at Rom.5; "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations *also*"- as if he is saying that the "tribulations" had the same effect as "being justified by faith (in forgiveness), we have peace (through forgiveness) with God...we have access by faith (in forgiveness) into this grace..." (Rom.5:1,2). So we see the equation: "Tribulations" (Rom.5:3)= same effect as having total faith in forgiveness (Rom.5:1,2)= "the trial of your faith" that God will help you overcome your sin (James 1:3), i.e. keep you from spiritually falling (Jude 24). In the language of Rom.5, the "experience" of patiently resisting sin gives birth to hope- confidence and a positive approach, hoping for grace in the last day. The more we overcome the hour by hour niggings of the flesh, the more humbly confident we will be of our eternal future.

"That ye may be perfect" may seem an unreasonably high target. In Eph.4:13 Paul says that through the ministry of the Spirit (now in the word) we are on the way to the "perfect man" state; he implies that he too is on that journey ("till we all come"). Yet in Phil.3:12-17 Paul speaks as if whilst he has not yet reached that state, striving for literal perfection is the same thing as being perfect. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after...reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize...let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded...be followers together of me" in this example of all out striving for a perfect character. Does this indicate that a state of perfection is theoretically possible for us in this life<sup>(5)</sup>, through developing a full faith in God's total justification of us on account of our being in Christ? Thus both the word and the blood of Christ sanctify us, seeing that the word reveals and develops faith in Christ's sacrifice (Jn.17:17; Heb.10:10-14). Both blood and water (the word- Eph.5:26) came from Christ's side on the cross.

## **Word of wisdom**

"If any of you lack wisdom" (1:5)- "wisdom" is associated with the faith and perfection which James well anticipates his readers would complain they lacked. We have seen that the word is the source of such faith, perfection and endurance; it seems fair to equate wisdom with the word. We will see by and by that James makes frequent reference to Proverbs- and in that book wisdom is almost a synonym for the word, in the local instance the Law of Moses, upon which Proverbs is often a commentary.

"Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (1:5). Again, James anticipates the natural human fear that a totally spiritual God will upbraid us for our lack of spiritual strength; but God's giving of such strength is "liberal", to whoever asks. James evidently interpreted "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Mt.7:7) as primarily referring to asking for spiritual strength and knowledge. Similarly "...how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things ("the Holy Spirit", Lk.11:13) to them that ask Him?" (Mt.7:11). These passages appear to be alluded to by James here- thus wisdom, the word, the Holy Spirit, good things, "every good gift and perfect gift" (1:17), God's spiritual help to overcome sin, are all equated. These things are further defined in 3:17 as resulting in peace and harmony.

"Upbraideth not" can imply to taunt, to cast in the teeth. James implies *God* doesn't do that, implying some others did. No doubt he was referring to the spiritually elitist Judaizers, who would have rejoiced to mock the spiritually immature who humbly sought for spiritual strength to overcome their temptations. "Upbraideth *not*!" God expects us to crawl to Him seeking for such strength to do better. But half the time our love of true spirituality just isn't

strong enough to motivate us, and we let our fear of God's holiness and righteousness make us fear His 'upbraiding'.

### **Fighting faith**

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering". A half hearted 'Dear God please keep me from this sin I think I may well commit soon' is no good. It is easy to conceive of faith as a sense of hope and trust in God in time of physical trial. But far more is it a totality of belief that God will hold us back from sinning as the temptation starts to develop- surely the supreme way of showing faith.

"He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind". There must be a connection with the later description of a controlled tongue being the force that overcomes fierce winds (3:2-4). Words being a reflection of the mind (Mt.12:34), controlled words show a controlled mind, which is through the influence of the word. Such a man is a "perfect man" (3:2)- i.e. matured by the word (2 Tim.3:16,17; 1 Cor.13:10). Thus the only way to ask for spiritual strength is if the mind is firmly controlled by the word, which thus generates an upwards spiritual spiral- "unto every one that hath (of spiritual strength) shall (more) be given...but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Mt.25:29). This parable of the talents must refer to spiritual knowledge and strength, and the need we have to develop (trade) the spiritual gifts we have been given. Notice how we are given the talents/ gifts of spirituality, totally at the discretion of the Master. In a similar way, the gift of wisdom in James 1:5 equates with the "good..and..perfect gift...from the Father...the word of truth" of 1:17,18 and the wisdom that descends from above that is pureness, peace, gentleness, mercy etc. in 3:17.

### **Wave on the water**

"Wavereth" comes from a root meaning 'division', giving the idea of inner debate. We will see that time and again James is warning us against having a semi-spirituality, whereby only part of our mind is totally influenced by the word, whilst other parts still retain the thinking of the flesh. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed".

James being so shot through with allusions to the Gospels, it is tempting to think that James is as it were taking a snapshot of Peter, wavering both in his physical movement and in faith as he stood on the water. Jesus did not upbraid Peter (cp.1:5) for his request for strength and support, but was eager to satisfy it.

There is also a possible connection with Eph.4:13,14, which says that the miraculous Spirit gifts were to be possessed *until* the church reached the "perfect man" state, i.e. when the canon was completed (1 Cor.13:8-10 cp. 2 Tim.3:16,17), and that through being in that state they would "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive". The primary reference is doubtless to the doctrine of the Judaizers. This would liken the brother in James 1 whose faith in the Lord's protection from temptation is weak, to the brother in Ephesians 4 who will not make full use of the word to remain in the "perfect man" state, and is therefore liable to be influenced by false teaching. Both brethren are weak for the same reason- not making full use of the Spirit's gift in the word. Eph.4:13,14 implies that firmly grasping the basic doctrines of the one faith results in us not being blown about by winds. This connection with James teaches that true doctrine will have a very practical effect upon our lives; in this case, by developing a firm faith.

James constantly sets before us the need to strive for a "perfect" (complete, mature) man state, through having a mind wholly committed to the word. His black and white, "hot or cold" approach is now powerfully shown: "Let not that man (the waverer) think that he shall

receive anything of the Lord" (1:7). This squashes the natural human reasoning that a bit of faith in prayer will lead to a bit of response from God. Faith is an absolute state. We either pray in faith- or with what are effectively empty words. But of course by contrast, if we do not waver, we certainly shall receive of the Lord. Again, there is another warning against semi-spirituality: having faith within certain limits, being content with expecting a small answer to our requests in accordance with our shaky faith. The way James understands human nature shines through, and it is fitting that someone of his experience and insight into the moment by moment ways of the flesh should have been the great leader of the early church. He too must have analysed his sins and temptations like we also can do. The correlation between his being such a senior brother and his evident appreciation of the wiles of the flesh must be significant; something to think about at the next ecclesial election?

### **Double-think**

The theme of semi-spirituality continues: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (v.8)- i.e. all his spiritual ways. "Ways" is often used in a spiritual context in Proverbs, to which James alludes so much. The more evident allusion here is to Mt.6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for..he will hate the one, and love the other..Ye cannot serve God and mammon". James inspired interpretation of Matthew would make this apply to our minds. One can quite easily serve two masters physically, externally; as every self-examining Christian should be all too aware. It is only in our heart that we can only serve one master. "Mammon" in the James context is thus not just material goods, but more importantly the lack of a totally spiritual mind which is behind these things. Note again the 'all or nothing' approach. While surely every reader of these words finds this somewhat worrying, tempting to conclude that this exposition is so idealistic as to be out of touch with reality, it does us no harm to reflect that ultimately in God's sight things are in black and white. As we read these words we are either in black or white with God. The ideal standard is set by Christ speaking of taking up the cross daily and following him. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" Paul could say. If our conscience is tuned according to the word, we should be able to sense whether we are "double minded...wavering" or with that totality of commitment to the word in our heart, even if sometimes we falter. Considering these things should make us all recognize that spiritually we are but candles in the wind, desperately needing to make every effort to resist the winds of the flesh, and seek the shelter of Christ and His word of grace which keeps us from falling.

"Double minded" means literally 'two souled', showing that the soul can refer also to the spiritual side of man, as well as the carnal. Notice how in the context James is talking about the mind being split into carnal and semi-spiritual divisions. The 'souls' referred to in the phrase 'double minded' would therefore be referring to attitudes of mind. For more on 'The Problem of Soul and Spirit', see Digression 3.

### **Rising up higher**

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted" (v.9). The riches which exalt the poor brother are the spiritual riches contained in the word (Ps.119:14; Prov.3:16 etc.). A poor brother being exalted recalls the parable about taking the lowest seat in the ecclesia so we may rise up higher at the judgement. Yet James uses the present tense- "he *is* exalted". This is one of many examples of believers being spoken of as if in prospect they are already in the Kingdom (see Digression 4), in the same way as Israel were constituted the Kingdom of God at Sinai after their Red Sea baptism, but were not fully manifested as such politically until their entry into Canaan. Thus "The rich...*is* (present tense) made low (i.e. told to take the lower seat, as he will at judgement)...he *shall* (future) pass away" (v.10). However, this may have had a primary reference to the rich Jews of the first century being stripped of their

wealth in some parts of the empire. Note that Heb.10:34 was also written to the scattered, persecuted Christian Jews whom James was addressing: "Ye...took joyfully the spoiling of your goods". If James is alluding to the parable of the wedding feast, then the reference to the poor brethren being given an honoured seating place in God's sight in this life, would have telling reference to the practice of the rich Christian Jews having their own honoured seats in the ecclesias to whom James was writing (2:3). This command to "rejoice" is in the context of v.2 speaking about rejoicing in spiritual trial. For the low brother who was to be exalted, the very thought of such greatness in the Kingdom could be a temptation to pride- and he should rejoice in the chance to fight this. 'Let him rejoice' shows that the kind of joy James is thinking of would not come naturally, as it would if the brother was just thinking of his exaltation in this life.

### **Fading flowers**

"Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away". 1 Pet.1:24,25 has a similar passage: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever". The fading grass is contrasted by Peter to the enduring Word of God, and this is repeated by James. The humble brother taking the lowest seat in the ecclesia (cp. the more spiritual members being told in 2:3 "sit here under my footstool...stand thou there" because all the chairs were taken by the rich) is connected with the one who asks the wisdom from God (v.5), who is not wavering or double minded, and who through the word is attaining to the perfect man state (v.4). Thus the poor in this world are rich in the faith that comes by hearing the word of God.

The figure of fading grass suggests reference back to Is.40:5-8: "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together...The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth...surely the people is grass...but the word of our God shall stand for ever".

The "glory of the Lord" being revealed primarily refers to Christ's manifestation to Israel at his first coming. The preceding verses 3 and 4 describe John's preparatory work: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness...". "All; flesh" were to see the revelation of God's glory in Christ. This "all flesh" can refer to the Jews, "all" of whom went out into the wilderness to hear John's testimony regarding the coming Christ. This is confirmed by v.7 "The (Jewish) people is grass". The "goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field" would then be a reference to the Jewish law, which was "holy, just and good" but offered a fading glory, which Paul in 2 Cor.3:7-18 said epitomized the Law. The word of the Lord (v.5) and "the spirit of the Lord" (v.7) were to make the grass wither and pass away, although the word would remain. This pointed forward to the ending of the Jewish system and Law through the work of Christ, "the word made flesh", "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor.3:18 R.V.), and the ministry of the word remaining.

James seems to have this background in mind when he makes the allusion in 1:9-11 to Is.40. The rich Christian Jews of the first century who were not that humble to the power of the word may well also have been swayed by Judaist arguments. They are being likened to the "grass" of Is.40, which represented the Jewish system which was to be replaced by a permanent, unfading system based on the word. The Messianic Ps.102:4,11 describes our Lord as being "withered like grass", showing how in his life and death on the cross he took upon himself the punishment of apostate Israel. James is neatly exhorting them to commit themselves wholly to the word, lest the demise of the Jewish system should result in their fading away too. Yet there is also the very primary application to the materialism of this group, being obsessed by their earthly riches. "So also shall the rich man fade away in his

ways". "Ways" is elsewhere translated "journeyings", and would connect with the reference to the itinerant Jewish traders in 4:13: "Ye (amongst the believers) that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain".

"For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat ("a hot wind", Gk.), but it withereth the grass...blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (v.11,12) is an obvious allusion to the person who received the word and quickly "sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth", referring to the person who falls away due to temptation (Mt.13:5,20,21). The rich members of the ecclesia had therefore only let the word enter them skin-deep; it had not penetrated far through the "earth" of the flesh. The rising of the sun can refer both to Christ's coming (Mal.4:2) and also to trials. In a sense both these meanings were fulfilled in AD70, when the rich Jews converted just prior to AD70 fell away, having endured only "for a while". The call to let God's word fully penetrate our flesh goes out to us with great urgency, living as we do on the brink of the final period of trial, and the full coming of Christ. More thoughts concerning all this will be found in Digression 13 about the parable of the sower.

### **Moment by moment**

"Blessed is the man that endureth (spiritual) temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (1:12). Now James is giving us supreme encouragement in those moments when the decision between flesh and spirit looms large. When we endure spiritual temptation, hanging on to the spiritual side of our minds, we will at that moment receive a crown for overcoming in Heaven. Because of this, we will be given the crown of victory at the judgement (2 Tim.4:8), which has been developed as a result of our moment by moment spiritual victories in this life. Therefore each temptation we face is like a mini-judgment seat. This idea of there being some recognition in heaven the moment we achieve a spiritual victory is perhaps based on Mt.5:11,12. So much of James is rooted especially in the Sermon on the mount. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you...rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* (present tense) your reward in Heaven". Our eternal life "is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col.3:3,4) Similarly Rev.3:11 implies we do now have the crown in a sense: "Hold fast that thou hast (your reward you have in prospect?) that no man take thy crown". Through our trials, God "scourgeth every son whom he receiveth", and therefore we can be spoken of in the continuous tense as "receiving a Kingdom" through our continued correct response to trials (Heb.12:6,28).

In those moments of spiritual temptation it is easy to recognize that the situation creating the temptation has clearly been arranged by God, and therefore to get bitter against Him. But "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God" (v.13). Now the earlier definition of 'temptation' as the spiritual temptation to sin which arises within us becomes vital. God may put the physical temptation in our way- e.g. the serpent in Eden, God tempting Abraham in Gen.22:1- but our evil desires or "lusts" in our minds (v.14) are alone responsible for our sinning, due to wrongly responding to these physical temptations. Thus God could therefore examine the inner thought process of David's mind to reveal whether he was giving way to the spiritual temptations that would be developed by the physical trials: "Examine me, O Lord, and prove (same word as "tempt" in Gen.22:1) me; try my reins and my heart" (Ps.26:2). Thus "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away" (v.14).

### **Madam death**

"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin". The lusts inside our mind are being likened to an attractive woman enticing us. Thus the instinct to illicit sexual attraction within us is seen as a type of all wrong attraction to sins of any kind. It is a repeated New Testament

theme that the punishment for sin is some kind of burning by fire. To the Old Testament mind, this image of being burnt at judgment day would have connected with the command to burn a whore (Lev.21:9); thus all types of sin are to be seen as prostitution against God. The same process in sexual attraction of a wrong thought taking root, constantly preying on the spiritual mind, resulting in our allowing it to grow under the excuse that we are still in control, eventually bringing forth gross sin, is repeated time and again as we are faced with the spiritual temptations of life every hour. The same figure occurs in Num.15:39 speaking of 'going a whoring' "after your own heart and your own eyes", as if our natural mind is a whore.

Our inherent sin and carnal mind being likened to a whore or glamorous woman is a strong theme of Proverbs. The important thing to note is that Proverbs emphasizes that it is obedience to the word which will keep us from the lusts which the woman represents. "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil...hear me now therefore (says the wisdom/word), O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her" (by listening to wisdom's words); Prov.5:3,7,8. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light...to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman" (Prov.6:23,24).

### **The strange woman**

Prov.7:1-5 is an even stronger emphasis: "Keep my words, and lay up my commandments..keep my commandments...My Law...that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words". The woman was "subtle of heart" (v.10), recalling the serpent, and had a guise of spirituality: "I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows" (v.14). She reasons that "the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed" (v.19,20). This is almost certainly the basis of Christ's parable of the talents, revealing that the reasoning of the one talent man was that Christ was not physically around, therefore he need not develop. Thus that man does not represent just the lethargic Christian; but the man who consciously indulges in sin because he cannot feel the Lord's presence. "The goodman" is further equated with Christ in Mt.20:11. Notice the emphasis in the three Proverbs passages mentioned on the words of the woman being her means of attraction. Prov.7:21 is explicit: "With her much fair speech (cp. the serpent again, and 2 Cor.11:3; Rom.16:18, which connect the fair speaking, the whore, the serpent and the Judaizers) she caused him to yield". Words are a reflection of the mind (Mt.12:34), again indicating that the woman represented an epitomy of fleshly thinking. The parable of the prodigal son is clearly meant to show the path which we all take whenever we sin. The women upon whom he wasted his (spiritual) substance represent our giving way to sin in its various forms (Lk.15:13).

### **The good gift**

Again, James warns us not to err in thinking that God is leading us into sin by stressing that "every good gift and every perfect gift (gift of perfection) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (v.17). The gift that leads to perfection must be that of the written word, replacing as it did the temporary ministry of the miraculous gifts (1 Cor.13:8-10). This coming down of the "good gift" (cp. "the good word of God", Heb.6:5) is parallel with the gift of wisdom in v.5, which gift is further expanded in 3:15-17: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure (cp. "the words of the Lord are pure"; "Thy word is very pure", Ps.12:6; 119:140), then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits". Thus the effect of asking for wisdom (1:5) is to be liberally given the gift of responding to the word so that it cultivates a fullness of spiritual fruits in us (1:17; 3:17). The gift of wisdom



produces a fullness ("full of...") of characteristics which recall the moral characteristics of God's Name as declared to Moses: "Merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant (cp. "full of good fruits") in goodness and truth, keeping mercy..." (Ex.34:6,7). The R.V. describes Yahweh as a God "full of" these things. Thus the word through developing those characteristics in us leads to God's Name being upon us and God being manifested to us.

The gift of the word "cometh down from the Father". 'Coming down' is the language of God manifestation- e.g. God "came down" upon Mount Sinai in a mighty theophany; Jesus "came down from Heaven"; God "came down" to destroy Sodom and Babel. It is through the word 'coming down' into our hearts that we are able to manifest God. Thus Jn.3:5 speaks of being born again (lit. 'from above')- which 1 Pet.1:23 interprets as being born of the word. There are many references to the word resulting in men carrying the Name of God and thus manifesting Him: consider Jer.15:16 AVmg.; Dt.18:18,19; Jn.17:6; 10:34-36, and how much the prophets manifested God because they spoke the word of God, so that their words were the word of God. More on this in Digression 5.

### **Father of lights**

"The Father of lights" (v.17) is another indication that the good and perfect gift which comes from Him is connected with the word, which is "a light unto my path" (Ps.119:105,130; Prov.6:23). Another connection in this context starts in 1 Jn.1:5: "This then is the message (word) which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all". The prologue of John's Gospel is closely linked to that of his epistles. The parallel to 1 Jn.1:5 is Jn.1:4 "In him (the word) was life, and the life was the light of men". Thus the Father of lights is the source of the logos-word, which is the gift that can be given to us.

"With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". James again puts his finger on the feelings we have in those moments of weakness- there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" in the amount of spiritual strength He gives us from the word. It is tempting to think that the power of the word does vary, to despair that Bible reading can ever affect the likelihood of us overcoming sin. If there is no variableness in the power of the word, then it follows that any weakness to temptation is solely our fault. Again, the ideal standard is hinted at in a wonderfully gentle way- if the power of the word is constant and able to overcome every spiritual temptation, then there is the possibility- theoretically, sadly?- that we should have the power now to overcome every temptation. Failure or success is in our own hands.

### **Immutable counsel**

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (change of mind, Rom.11:29). The gift of God is now in the word, and the calling of God is also done largely through it. Several of the Old Testament references concerning the unchanging nature of God are in the context of speaking of the unchanging word of God:

- In Num.23:19 Balaam assures Balak that God will not suddenly give him a different prophetic word after the one he had just given, and that the prophecy he had just given would be surely fulfilled: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the Son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

- Later Saul thought that the word of God was variable, in that he doubted whether the command to totally destroy the Amalekites still stood. Samuel rebuked him for not "obeying the voice of the Lord...the Strength of Israel will *not* lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent" (1 Sam.15:22,29).

- Mal.3:6 "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"- because of the eternal covenant (cp. the word) which God made with Israel.

- Titus 1:2,3: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised...in...His word through preaching". It may well be that in His defining of the gift as the word, James is preparing the way for his readers to accept the changeover in the manifestation of the gifts from the miraculous to the ministry of the word.

## **Born again**

In contrast to the process of conceiving sin explained in v.14,15, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of Truth" (v.18). The child of God is born "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn.1:13)- i.e. of the will of God. The act of intercourse which leads to human conception is the ultimate and strongest expression of the fleshly will of man. The same immense drive and will is possessed by God, who channels it through His word to result in the conception of spiritual people. What *tremendous* power there is therefore in that word! Note the comparison: "Of his own lust...of His own will...the word" (v.14,18).

"Being born again, not of corruptible (human) seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Pet.1:23). Jn.3:3 says that the new birth comes from above- James 1:17 describes the good and perfect gift of the word as being "from above". Notice that the word of God is connected with the will of God. Perhaps our faith in our prayers is militated against by our resigned 'If it be Thy will' being so liberally sprinkled in them. Generally the Biblical examples of prayer- which presumably guide our approach- are conspicuous by their omitting of 'If it be Thy will...'. They seem to request things in total faith- and normally receive them. Even Paul in recounting his experience of having three prayers go unanswered (2 Cor.12:8) does not make any specific comment about the will of God. If we have the word of God in our minds and guiding our prayers, then we will be praying according to the will of God, "in the Holy Spirit". John 15:7 is explicit: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you". Jesus doesn't say that our prayers will be answered according to *God's* will, but according to our own will. This is because the word guiding our thoughts results in our will becoming identical with that of God, in so far as it is guided by the word. Again, an ideal is being suggested to us- a wholly spiritual mind filled with the word will result in a far more powerful prayer life. It is by birth of the word, therefore, that we become a son of God, part of the Divine family; and Jesus said "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt.12:50)- thus equating the will of God and the word. Similarly Jn.7:17 "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (in the word). Even more fundamentally, the covenant name of God is 'I will be who I will be' (Ex.3:14 R.V.mg)- and God executes the will that is intrinsic in His very Name through His word. Thus as we saw earlier in considering v.17, a proper response to the word leads us to bear the name of God.

## **"A kind of firstfruits"**

"That we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (v.18)- as a result of the word's action on our mind, in the context of James 1, these firstfruits must be a state of mind. "His creatures" would therefore be the spirit-bodies that are the ultimate end of God's creation. However, we can have the firstfruits of that state now in our minds, which if they are spiritual are the only part of our bodies which are experiencing the Kingdom life now, albeit in a limited form. An alternative approach to this verse is to view the "creatures" as the whole multitude of the redeemed, of which the present believers are only "the firstfruits". In this case, all the faithful who have been influenced acceptably by "the word of truth" are only a small foretaste of the many who will be so converted in the Millennium. This raises

fascinating questions about the population and nature of the Millennium, and indicates the relatively small number of the faithful in the world's previous history.

Because of the glorious power of the word as outlined in the previous verses, "Wherefore (therefore), my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear" that powerful word. The idea of running swiftly in eager response to the word is quite a common Biblical idiom (2 Thess.3:1; Ps.119:32,60; Hab.2:2; Amos 8:11,12; Dan.12:4). Inevitably some practical examination of our eagerness of response to the word has to be made. How frequently do we rise up from our readings with an eager resolve to do something practical, to make some subtle change in our character? How often do our minds burn and race within us as we chase connections and themes through Scripture (cp. Lk.24:32) and God's word falls open to us? Or are we content to dash through "The readings" on the way to work, or leave them to the dog end of the day? God and the Angels no doubt look eagerly to those parts of the day when we read the word as their opportunity to guide and teach us, to strengthen us against the flesh. What a despoil to them if our minds are somewhere else as we read- if we bother doing the readings at all that day.

### **The wrath of man**

The practical effects of swiftly hearing this powerful word are to make us "slow to speak, slow to wrath" (v.19). Along with many other examples in James, this definitely alludes to the Proverbs- in this case 10:19 and 17:27 for "slow to speak", and 14:29 for "slow to wrath". The context in these passages is that "instruction...reproof(10:17)... knowledge... understanding (17:27) ...understanding" (14:29) lead to the control of speech and wrath. All these things are true concerning the word- the ultimate source of reproof (2 Tim.3:16,17) and understanding. This is exactly the context of James 1- by being "swift to hear" the spiritual strength which is in the word, we find the strength in practical terms to be "slow to speak, slow to wrath". It may be that James is alluding to Moses being "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"- i.e. rather quiet, unsure of his words. Hence God reassured him: "I will teach thee what thou shalt say" (Ex.4:10-12). This would be specially relevant to James' persecuted Jewish readership; telling them to 'be like Moses' in his quiet speaking.

"The wrath of man (i.e. wrath as the expression of his feelings uncontrolled by the word) worketh not the righteousness of God" (v.20). The implication is that the word making us "slow to wrath" *does* work the righteousness of God- i.e. the word works or develops the righteous attributes of God within us, e.g. being "slow to wrath". This is a specific characteristic of God's Name (Ps.103:8;145:8); thus the word gives us God's Name (see Digression 5). In a similar way, the spiritual trial of our faith "*worketh* patience" (1:3)- another aspect of "the righteousness of God". In this case, we see that the word has the same effect upon us as trials. For more examples of this, see Digression 2. Our present tribulation "*worketh* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor.4:17). 1 Jn.2:29 is also relevant- "every one that doeth righteousness is born of God", which James says is by the word. Thus the word of God acting on a man "*worketh*..the righteousness of God". There are so many allusions in James to the Sermon on the mount that the mention of the righteousness of God probably links with the only time Jesus mentioned this, in Mt.6:31-33: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat..but seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness". Thus seeking God's righteousness is contrasted with over-concern about food. In the wilderness Jesus made the contrast between not living by bread alone, but by every word of God. Thus living by the word of God is associated with seeking the righteousness of God. It is also stressed that we only receive ('work') the righteousness of God by faith (Rom.3:22; 10:3-6; Phil.3:9)- which comes from the word (Rom.10:17- which is in the

context of a whole chapter showing that righteousness comes by faith). For more examples of the action of the word leading to God's righteousness being imputed to us, see Digression 5.

### **Receiving the word**

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word"(v.21). Receiving the word so that it makes us "slow to speak, slow to wrath" is helped by laying apart "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness". The Greek phrase translated "lay apart" is elsewhere used always concerning forsaking the practical, specific characteristics of the flesh (Heb.12:1; 1 Pet.2:1; Eph.4:25; Rom.13:12). We have seen so far that James is emphasizing that it is through the new birth from the word that this can be achieved. 1 Pet.2:1 also tells us to lay aside fleshly characteristics by being "newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (v.2). Similarly Eph.4:23-25: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind...put on the new man (created by the word)...putting away lying" (etc).

Rom.13:12,13 gives us the greatest motivation to make this effort to so apply the word: "The night is far spent, the day (of the Kingdom) is at hand; let us therefore cast off (same word "lay apart") the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as (if we are) in the day" of the Kingdom. Thus we can therefore live now to some degree as we will in the Kingdom- by using the word to cast off the flesh and put on spiritual attributes, resulting in us walking (living in our day to day lives) as if we are in "the day" of the Kingdom.

The word acting on our minds should help us lay apart all "superfluity of naughtiness". "Superfluity" is from the same word translated "abundance" in Mt.12:34 "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". It must have occurred to us all at some time that the command to bring "into captivity *every* thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor.10:5) seems impossible to achieve. There are so many thoughts which are necessary in our secular lives, they cannot all be brought around to Christ. However, the word "abundance" means 'that which is over and above the necessary'. The point of bringing our thoughts to Christ is so that our words will be Christlike, and as our thoughts lead to our words, we must control them. The context of 2 Cor.10:5 is Paul justifying the apparently hard words he was having to use to the Corinthians- he assured them that in practice he was bringing all his thoughts captive to Christ, therefore his words were not the outpouring of unspiritual bitterness. Thus only those thoughts which are "of the *abundance*" of the heart (the mind) control our words; those thoughts which are over and above our necessary ones. James is saying that this "abundance" or "superfluity" of wrong thinking ("naughtiness") can be displaced by the word.

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word" to enable this, James advises. "Engrafted" means 'implanted', or more literally 'something placed inside you which springs up'. This must have some reference to the sower parable- "The seed is the word", and if we are to receive the word meekly, James must be likening us to the ground of the parable- in this case, 'meek' ground. Are we meek to the word- 'quiet, mild', as 'meek' implies? It is so true that a settled, quiet mind is vital if we are to let the word really act on us.

There may also be a reference back to Romans 11, where Paul reasons that the Gentiles had been grafted into the Israelitish olive tree. Having a Jewish readership, James is maybe gently hinting that *all* men, including Jews, need the word grafted into them.

### **Which word?**

So far in this study we have spoken in general terms about "the word" being the power of righteousness, which comes down from above and germinates spiritual life within us. This verse 21 gives us some hints as to a more precise definition. We have noted the clear allusion

to the parable of the sower- the "engrafted"/ implanted word-seed. "The word of truth" of v.18 "begat" us, which the almost parallel passage in 1 Pet.1:23 says is the seed-word of God. The word in the parable of the sower is defined as "the word of the Kingdom" (Mt.13:19)- i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom. The sower parable shows the response of various people to the Gospel which they *initially hear*. James 1:21 continues by saying that this word is "able to save your souls". This recalls a number of passages which say that it is the message of the basic Gospel which saves our souls:

"To you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts 13:26).

"The Gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom.1:16)

"I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received (cp. "receive with meekness the engrafted word")...by which also ye are saved; if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you" (1 Cor.15:1,2); this Gospel which would save them was centred around the basic truths of the resurrection and second coming of Christ which Paul goes on to reiterate in 1 Cor.15. One of the conclusions arising from this is that an ecclesia should regularly hold meetings of some sort which re-iterate the basics of the Gospel. There really *is* power in them, to save our souls.

The subsequent warning "Be ye doers of the word" in the sense of bridling the tongue and visiting the sick (v.22,26,27) implies that "the word" of the Gospel included practical matters- something hinted at in many other passages. The believers to whom James was writing had already received the implanted word-seed of the Gospel at their conversion- but James implies that they needed to keep on receiving it. 1 Pet.1:22,23 connects loving "one another with a pure heart fervently" with "being born again...by the word of God". Thus again the new birth is not just a question of accepting doctrine in the sense of 'first principles', but also the doctrine of practical Christian living. Thus it needs continued intercourse with the word to create a stream of new life. On a practical note, let us remember that we should get this power of new life entering us from re-hearing the basic Gospel as much as from the deeper parts of our Bible study. Thus Sunday evenings at 6:30 should not be a session of sleepily having our ears tickled with the fact we have the truth about man's mortality, the nature of Christ, the Kingdom etc.- but one more chance to eagerly receive that word of power and dynamic new life. Notice that the word can "save your souls", showing that the soul does not always just refer to the life or body/creature, but can also refer to our spiritual selves, which the word is able to save or preserve (see Digression 3).

### **Theory and practice**

Having talked in theory so much about the power of the word, James now warns: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (v.22). One of the easiest forms of self deceit is to hear the correct exposition of the word and feel that therefore we are on the right track towards the Kingdom. Yet a comparison with v.27 indicates that it is quite possible to be "spotted by the world" as well as being a hearer of the word. This must be something we are especially liable to, hearing as many of us do up to three times a week the correct exposition of the word at church meetings. There must be a reference back to Rom.2:13: "for not the hearers of the Law are just (ified) before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified". Thus again James is thinking of the Jewish nature of his readership, and leading them to redirect their zeal for keeping the Law to zeal for receiving and doing "the engrafted word" of Christ's Gospel. "Deceiving" implies 'reasoning'- and again, James has his finger on the pulse of human nature. If we ask ourselves, 'Do I reason with myself that I am doing the word when actually I'm only hearing it' the instinctive answer is, 'No, I'm not aware I do anyway'. The reasoning or "deceiving" goes on in our deep subconscious. "Doer" is also translated "poet", in the sense of a performer of a written script. Thus Paul speaks of

"how to perform that which is good (i.e. the law/word of God, v.16) I find not" (Rom.7:18). This theme of self-deception is continued in v.26- if a man "seem to be religious, and bridled his tongue (he) deceiveth his own heart". Words are a product of the mind (Lk.6:45), and thus to bridle the tongue is to bridle the mind, which can only be done through the application of the word. If this is not done, then we deceive ourselves- which v.21 says we do by hearing and not doing the word. Thus to be a doer of the word in this case is to apply the word to our minds, to consciously make the mental effort to let the word control our thinking and words when in a provocative situation. Therefore being a doer of the word does not necessarily involve any physical work.

### **The real works**

There are other examples of 'works' not being physical actions but mental effort to apply the word to our minds:

- "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (Jn.6:29- cp. Rom.10:17 "Faith cometh by hearing...the word of God"). Prov.12:22 (Septuagint) speaks of the man that "worketh faith".
- "The work of the Law written in their hearts" (Rom.2:15)
- Sin "did work in our members" (Rom.7:5)
- God "hath begun a good work in you" (Phil.1:6)- i.e. in your spiritual development
- "Fruitful in every good work...patience...longsuffering... joyfulness" (Col.1:10,11)
- A man carefully examining himself by the word, "the perfect law of liberty", is "a doer of the work" (James 1:25).
- We will be judged according to our works (Rev.22:12)- and our spiritual development rather than physical achievements will be of paramount interest to our Judge.
- Those who believe false doctrine about Christ's nature should be shunned because "He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds", i.e. his beliefs (2 Jn.11,7). A like example is in Rev.2:6,15: "The *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate...the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate".
- Similarly Jesus worked "the works of Him that sent me" (Jn.9:4; 17:4) not just in miracles and good deeds, but in developing that perfect character until He "finished the work (of saving man) which Thou gavest me to do" .
- "The works of Abraham" (Jn.8:39) in the context were to believe in Christ.

All this is part of the great Bible theme that our thoughts really are reckoned as works by God. In the light of this housebound housewives and hard working bread winners can take courage that their lack of 'works' physically achieved is totally appreciated by the Father. With this definition of works it is no longer necessary to feel we can only work for God at weekends or in the evenings- or after the children are asleep. Our whole life can be one of active, working service. But to inspire those works, constant contact with the word must be made. The odd glances at the pocket Bible during the day, or the Commandments of Christ on the wall, will be worth their weight in golden faith in the great day.

### **Mirror image**

The man who hears the word but does not do it "Is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (mirror): for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (v.23,24).

Hearing the word but not doing it is a sermon on the mount allusion- those who *heard* those sayings but did not *do* them were likened to the man building his house on the sand (Mt.7:26). In the same way as he *thought* that he was building and was doubtless quite pleased at his progress, so the man who glanced in the mirror thought all was well with his spiritual development. The acquiring of knowledge ('hearing') can give the impression that we are progressing; but practice ('doing') is the real foundation. It is sad that the ever deepening level of our community's Bible scholarship is not always matched by such 'doing'.

Hearing the word is likened to glancing in a mirror and then going on with life, immediately forgetting that vision. Like the quick glance at the mirror, straighten the tie, brush the hair, off to the office. Maybe this equates with the sleepy, half awake doing of the readings in the morning and then off into the day with not a further thought about our real spiritual figure.

"Beholding" means 'observing fully'- the man's mistake was in his immediate forgetting of the image he saw. Thus he was a very careful hearer- because it is not always that we apply ourselves so much to the word that it is as if we are staring into our own face, observing fully our real spiritual self. In the previous analogy, here is someone who got up, washed, dressed and did his readings at the table with a concordance, and was really helped in those minutes to examine himself. But Bible study was only part of his life- he "Straightway forgot". Surely none of us can feel complacent at this challenge of James?

Notice how the word is likened to a mirror- our study of it should always lead to some form of self-examination and assessment as we compare ourselves against the deep things of the Spirit. Thus our studies should revolve around the application of the word to our moment by moment spiritual lives, rather than the mental gymnastics with Scripture at one extreme and empty platitudes at the other, which seem to characterize so much of our communal Bible study. The idea of the word being represented by a mirror occurs again in 1 Cor.13:8-12. Verse 8 describes the withdrawal of the miraculous spirit gifts, and their replacement by the completed word- "that which is perfect", v.10 (cp. 2 Tim.3:16,17). Paul then contrasts the dispensation of the Spirit gifts and the word: "Now we see through (look into) a glass, darkly; but then face to face". Thus the dispensation of the word would enable him to see a clear reflection of himself- "Then shall I know (myself) even as also I am known" (1 Cor.13:12). The implication of these few words are tremendous- through using the completed word to examine ourselves, it is possible for us to see ourselves as God sees us- to know ourselves even as God knows us. Paul expresses his lack of full knowledge in 1 Cor.4:4: "I know nothing by myself (therefore) am I not hereby justified". The context is Paul's countering of the Corinthians who claimed to have examined and judged him. Paul is saying that he is not qualified to fully examine and judge himself, so therefore cannot comment. But now, with the completed revelation compared with the partial understanding of only some facets of God's revelation to man given by the ministry of the miraculous gifts (1 Cor.13:9), we are able to achieve a fuller self-examination. James' description of the word as the "perfect law" (1:25) strengthens the impression that he is consciously alluding to 1 Cor.13 (cp. "that which is perfect" concerning the completed word); as if he is preparing his readers for how they should use the completed word which he, like Paul, knew in advance would soon be available.

### **Baby face**

The word enables us to 'behold' ('Observe fully') our "natural face". "Natural" is from the Greek 'gennas'- to regenerate, conceive, gender, beget. This must connect with the concept of v.17,18 and the parallel 1 Peter 1:23- we are conceived by the word entering us. The man James is speaking of looked at his "natural face". This could imply at least two things- he examines the state of spiritual regeneration he has reached from the word; or he looks back to

his initial spiritual birth, how he was at his first 'genesis' by the word of the Kingdom when it developed within him for the first time. The same idea is picked up in 3:6; the tongue "defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell". Our thoughts lead to the words of the tongue. Thus ultimately an undisciplined mind "setteth on fire the course of nature"- unless our thoughts are restrained by the word, our 'genesis' ("nature") so far developed by the word, and our initial spiritual strength developed by the word of the Gospel, will be destroyed, "set on fire" (6). Strong interprets "course" as meaning 'A circuit of effects'- the circuit of effects due to our 'genesis'("nature") will be destroyed or broken unless we make a conscious effort to control the mind. We have seen that the 'genesis' is a result of the action of the word on a man's heart. This creates a 'circuit of effects'- hence 3:6 AVmg. speaks of the "wheel of nature" (the 'genesis') in the sense of something continuous. Surely the implication is that once the word starts to take effect, it initiates a circular, upwards spiral of spirituality- spiritual strength leading to spiritual strength, a certain level of appreciation of the word steadily leading to a higher level. For more examples of this, see Digression 7. However, this "course of nature" can be broken by not making a conscious effort to control the mind and the words which follow from it (in the context of James 3:6), and of not making the effort to *continue* beholding our "natural face" in the mirror of the word, and letting the word act on the results of our self-examination (7).

### **The bane of knowledge**

That the word should lead to an ever-increasing level of self-examination and recognition of the urgency of our need to spiritually improve is also hinted at in 1 Jn.1:10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"- implying that the more the word is in us, the more we recognize the degree to which we have sinned. But notice it is not just a reading of the word that results in this- seeing that the Jews to whom Paul partly wrote Romans (8), for all their Bible knowledge and ability to assimilate the detailed Old Testament allusions Paul makes in Romans, were of the opinion they could "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom.6:1)- i.e. they reasoned that whatever they did was automatically blotted out by reason of being in Christ (and Jewish?). "We make Him (God) a liar" must refer back to the serpent in Eden, who also lacked the word of God in him, thus effectively leading him to the conclusion that Adam and Eve could not sin, even if they consciously disobeyed the commandments. Saying we have not sinned is equivalent to saying that we do not need Christ- both statements make God a liar (1 Jn.1:10 cp. 5:10); which again was the implication of the serpent reasoning. Paul picks this point up in 2 Cor.11:3, where he connects the reasoning of the serpent with that of the Judaizers, who also argued that Christ was not vital for salvation. Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge made Adam and Eve aware of their sin- as does eating of the word of knowledge in our day. Jn.15:22; Lk.12:47,48 and many other passages clearly teach that the more knowledge of the word a man has, the more aware he is of his sins, and therefore the more answerable to judgement.

### **Keeping hold**

However, the very nature of life in this present world appears to make it impossible to permanently "continue therein" ("continue"= 'to stand beside'). But things were even more difficult for the first century believers: "Whoso...continueth (*looking*) therein (into the word)...being not a forgetful *hearer*" (v.25). Thus looking at the word and hearing the word are paralleled. The only access to the word by the average believers was probably by hearing it read publicly. The ability to read would not have been widespread, and copies of the scrolls not widely available (hence the ministry of the miraculous spirit gifts to provide the word of prophecy and its interpretation). Other passages refer to this hearing of the word through public reading of it in the ecclesia: Acts 13:27; 15:21 (cp. James 2:2 AVmg.); 2 Cor.3:15;



Col.4:16; 1 Thess.5:27; Rev.1:3; 2:7,11. The believers should hear the word spoken or read and look into it continually- i.e. keep it in mind, meditate upon it. Thus 1:19 encourages them to be "swift to hear" the word of God- not to mentally doze through those all-important meetings of the ecclesia when the word was read. Thus James never intended these words to be read as meaning 'You must walk around with your head in a Bible all day'- he was too practical to advocate that. But he was offering an even greater challenge- to live each day continually looking into the things of the word in one's mind, with "the eyes of your understanding being (open)", Eph.1:18. We who can read and have convenient access to the written word have so much more opportunity- but we seem to lack the degree of mental spiritual alertness to the word that James is speaking of. Surely every Christian who can afford one should have a pocket Bible close at hand during the day and frequently refer to it- even for a few brief seconds in the hour. But above all, we must strive to achieve that continual mental looking into the things of the word. There is ample evidence to suggest that many of us have trotted through the 'readings' every day for years without catching the fire of personal Bible study- content to rely on the reflections of those who have gone before. A whole host of other conscience pricklers could be listed:

- As we sit at a baptism service are we "swift to hear" Romans 6 yet once again? Do we all bother to open our Bibles and follow?
- It has been proved beyond argument that to pay attention to information one should preferably read for oneself rather than just listen- and also take notes. As an ecclesia goes on through time, there should *not be* an ever-diminishing amount of page rustling at our meetings. Are there pens and notebooks in the hands of the average Christian congregation?
- Is there a dearth of questions and extra comments after Bible classes? What exactly do those stony silences indicate?

But he who continues looking into "the perfect law", "this man shall be blessed in his deed"- and that in itself means that James is not setting an impossible standard. It is realistic for a man to achieve it. Note how the continual looking into and application of the word is "his deed". We have earlier commented how 'deeds' and 'works' can refer to the mental effort made in daily life, rather than specific physical actions.

### **Word of freedom**

Notice the reference to "the law of liberty"- another gentle dig at his Jewish readers, reminding them of "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free...be not entangled again with the yoke of (Mosaic) bondage" (Gal.5:1). Other references to "liberty" are clearly in the context of liberty from the Mosaic Law, and they also have indirect hints at our liberty being because of a word ("law") of liberty:

- "We are not children of the bondwoman (the Law) but of the free" (Gal.4:31). We are children by being born of the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet.1:23). Thus "the free" is the free word of liberty.
- "Ye have been called unto liberty...(to) walk in the spirit" (Gal.5:13,16)- i.e. in a way of life guided by the Spirit word (Jn.6:63 etc.)
- "As free...(doing) the will of God" (1 Pet.2:16,15)- which is in the word (James 1:18; Jn.1:13)
- "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor.3:17)- the Lord's Spirit is in the hearts of His people who are influenced by the Spirit-word.
- "The truth (the word- Jn.17:17) shall make you free...the servant abideth not in the house for ever (alluding to Hagar being cast out, representing the casting out of the law, Gal.4:30). If

the Son therefore (i.e. because the law was being cast out) shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn.8:32,35,36). That freedom comes from the Truth (Jn.8:32), which is in the word.

Now it may be argued that if "the law of liberty" (to return to James 1:25) is the words of Jesus and the New Testament, then that part of Scripture is far more spiritually powerful than the Old Testament, particularly the Law. Why not drastically re-jig the Bible Companion to concentrate on the New Testament? Two answers present themselves:

- "The spirit of Christ was in (the prophets)" (1 Pet.1:11). The Spirit of Christ was in them, but it was only there for our benefit who came after Christ (1 Pet.1:12). Thus the prophets "searched diligently" for the meaning of their prophecies (1 Pet.1:10)- the implication being that they were unsuccessful because the purpose of the prophecies was for our benefit not for theirs- "not unto themselves...they did minister the things, which are *now* reported (explained) unto *you*" (1 Pet.1:12). We have shown that the Spirit-word is the law of liberty, which is contrasted to the Mosaic law or word of bondage. The contrast is not specifically made between the word and the Mosaic law, but between the Spirit word and the Mosaic Law. Thus it may be that the Spirit in the sense of a power of righteousness that can change a man's mind was only released fully from the Old Testament word when it was read by believers after Christ. Notice how the parallel with us looking into the law of liberty in 1 Peter is in 1:12 concerning the Angels desiring to look into the word. This is a parallel with 1:10, describing how the prophets desired to look into the word. Thus seeing that prophets and Angels have unsuccessfully tried to look into the word, we should grasp the opportunity we have. This parallel show that the "law of liberty" was also the prophetic word of the Old Testament which the prophets tried to "look into".

- There is considerable evidence that the power of the Old Testament word was opened by the death and resurrection of Christ, when He became "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor.3:17,18 RV), thus enabling us to be changed from the Mosaic glory to the Christian glory- "From glory to glory...by the Spirit of the (risen) Lord" (cp. Jn. 1:16,17). In passing, it is worth considering whether Paul's other reference to contrasting types of glory also has reference to the Mosaic/Christian system comparison- "the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another...so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption" (1 Cor.15:40,42). Thus Paul would be likening the present mortal state of our bodies to the earthy (terrestrial) Jewish system, compared to the glory of the spiritual heavenlies in Christ.

### **Of milk and meat**

The man who keeps mental hold of the Spirit of the word in his daily life "Shall be blessed in his deed". This must be alluding to Lk.11:28 "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it". Again, the hearing of the word was a literal hearing, as Jesus had been speaking orally to the people. Thus James' interpretation of keeping the word was to continually look into it in one's mind and let it have the effect of self-examination upon us. The preceding verse records the comment "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked" (Lk.11:27). Jesus is saying that the more important spiritual equivalent of this is to "hear the word of God". Thus being breast fed is likened by Jesus to hearing and keeping the word. In Peter's language: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (1 Pet.2:2). It is only the spiritually young who should feed on the milk of the word (1 Cor.3:2; Heb.5:12,13). Those to whom Jesus spoke about the sucking of breasts being like hearing and keeping the word were also spiritually young, having only just heard the word. James 1:24,25 is saying that the man who continually looks at his natural face in the mirror of hearing and keeping the word will be blessed for his effort. Lk.11:27,28 is saying that the spiritually

young who as newborn babes keep hearing and keeping the word will be blessed. Remember that it was suggested that the "natural" (Genesis-ed) face of the man could refer to his recently spiritually born self. This would fit the connections with Lk.11:27 nicely. Thus James implies that there is an especial temptation for those newly converted or spiritually conceived by the word to soon give up their zeal for the word and to stop carefully examining their own position in the light of the word. The parable of the sower puts this in black and white. Our 'instruction' of candidates for baptism through correspondence courses and personal discussion sessions can often end at baptism- our provision of the milk of the word ends as soon as the baby is born!

### **Keeping and doing**

"If (we) know these things, happy (blessed) are (we) if (we) do them" (Jn.13:17). Also worth mentioning Lk.8:21 too: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it". By being born again by hearing, doing, keeping and continually looking at the word, we take on the family likeness- Jesus can feel to us as to a mother or brother. These things help us appreciate the real spirit of the frequent commands to "Keep my commandments, and do them" (Lev.22:31). This implies that keeping and doing the word are different. God is not so much looking for individual cases of us 'doing' the word in the sense of occasionally obeying a highly specific command- but for us to "keep" the word in the sense of continually keeping it in mind in our lives, so that as a consequence we 'do' the specific commands when necessary. The copious parallels between James 1 and 1 Peter 1 further illuminate the looking into the word of this v.25; the parallel is Peter's description of the Cherubim Angels earnestly looking down into the mercy seat in 1 Pet.1:12, as if paralleling that supreme place of God manifestation with the Word.

The gentle reminders of the need to leave Judaism are continued in v.26 "If any man among you seem to be religious". The Greek word translated "religious" is elsewhere always used in the context of the Mosaic law; James is implying that they were not properly keeping the spirit of the Mosaic law if they "bridled not (their) tongue". This idea of bridling the tongue is picked up again in 3:2-4, where James says that we put bits in the horses' mouths to control them, "but the tongue can no man tame", i.e. bridle (3:8). "No man" here must mean 'no ordinary man of the flesh', since James 1:26 says that the believer must bridle his tongue. In the preceding verses in James 1, James has been talking about 'doing' the word in practice rather than just theoretically receiving it. The prime example of this, he continues, is whether you can bridle your tongue. This is because our thoughts lead to our words, and therefore to bridle the tongue is to control the mind- and this can only be done through the conscious application of the word. This is the main 'doing' of the word. Again there is the warning against semi-spirituality; seeming to be religious.

### **Psalm 32**

Ps.32:8,9 provides the basis for James 1:26: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide (mg. 'Counsel') thee...be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee". Thus having the instruction, teaching and understanding of God should replace having a bridle or bit. God does not want to force our tongues and bodies to obey Him- but for us to effect this by our application of His word to our minds. Thus the word is the means of bridling our tongues and therefore our minds- our whole lives. Note too that a bridle is a two-way thing. It stops the horse approaching the rider in an ungainly and painful way. The action of the word on our minds should lead to us similarly being helped in our approach to God. The man who thinks he has his mind bridled but whose words belie this "Deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (v.26- cp. Jer.17:9). To be "Double

minded" (1:8; 4:8) is thus to have what we think is our 'spiritual' heart or mind deceiving our real heart- that of the flesh, "his own heart".

"Pure ('clean') religion" may refer to the system of religion that comes as a result of "the washing of water by the word" (Eph.5:26). This religion is also "undefiled"- possibly implying that to not let the word totally affect our lives is to allow ourselves to be defiled by our fleshly mind and desires. The sexual connotations of the word for "Undefiled" would suggest that passive laziness to apply the word is equivalent to active unfaithfulness against Christ. This pure and undefiled religion "Before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (v.27). The reference to God as the Father is in the context of v.17- "the Father of (the) light" of the word which came down to us.

We may well ask 'Why is God so especially concerned for "the fatherless and widows"?' Maybe because He had witnessed the emotional agony of His humanly fatherless Son, Jesus, and the broken heart of Mary on the Lord's death? There is a possible connection between this verse and John 14:18 where Jesus promises that he "Will not leave you orphans (fatherless- A.V. 'comfortless'): I will come to you" through the Holy Spirit Comforter, which was manifested firstly in the miraculous Spirit gifts and then in the written word. The ideas of God 'coming down' and 'visiting' people are common Old Testament idioms for God manifestation. Thus it may be that James is implying that in the same way as Jesus has visited us through the Spirit-word, so we should share the spiritual Comfort of the word with the fatherless and widows. We have noted the association between 'coming down' and the gift of the Spirit-word already in v.17, which provides the background for this v.27.

This pure religion is also to keep ourselves "Unspotted from the world". The words "pure", "undefiled..unspotted" are all the language of marriage. Because the notion of us being the bride of Christ, engaged to Him, seems so far above our feeble spirituality, it is tempting to think that the relationship between a man and his bride is just being used as a vague likeness of our relationship with Christ. But the glorious fact is that we are in absolute reality the typical bride of Christ! Intercourse with the world and fleshly mind is as bad as being unfaithful to our bridegroom- and almost on the night of our marriage, too. The comment is sometimes made that Christians are too dreary and weighed down by our sins. But bearing in mind the nature of our relationship to Jesus and His faithfulness unto death for us, it is not surprising that we are seriously worried about the continual failures which we have to admit to; these are equivalent to being unfaithful to Him. To balance this, there is the joy of receiving "every good and perfect gift" from our loving, truly merciful Father, the knowledge that He "upbraideth not" and is delighted by our strivings to truly develop spiritually; and the happiness ("blessedness") of the man who does try to keep the word in his heart. Whilst we need to be careful that we are not giving way to spiritual pride, there can be a sense of deep joy and peace at the little victories we slowly win against the flesh.

## Footnotes

(1) See Neville Smart '*The Epistle of James*' (C.M.P.A 1955); A.D.Norris '*Acts and Epistles*' (Aletheia Books, 1989); John Martin '*James*' (C.S.S.S., n.d.).

(2) The Greek word for "fall" in 1:2 only occurs in Lk.10:30 regarding the man falling among thieves- representing the inherent sins of human nature to which all men fall prey, and from which our Lord as the good Samaritan offers possibility of redemption.

(3) For more about the language of physical movement used in regard to sin- e.g. the ideas of 'falling' and 'leading'- see '*In Search Of Satan*', p.27 (The Dawn, 1990).

(4)

|                |          |
|----------------|----------|
| James          | 1 Peter  |
| 1:3            | 1:7      |
| 1:1            | 1:1      |
| 1:10           | 1:24     |
| 1:12           | 1:7;3:14 |
| 1:25           | 1:12     |
| 1:18           | 1:23,3   |
| 1:17           | 1:3      |
| 1:2            | 1:8      |
| 1:12           | 1:9      |
| 1:17           | 1:12     |
| 1:21           | 2:1      |
| Whole of James | 1:13     |
| 1:14           | 1:14     |
| 1:17           | 1:23,25  |

Like James, Peter in both his letters is emphasizing the need to develop spiritual attributes in the light of the imminence of the Lord's coming; and he warns that false teachers would sidetrack them from the pursuit of real spirituality, which is a major theme of James.

(5) Is it theoretically possible through the power of the word to be perfect in God's sight to the same degree as our Lord was- at least momentarily? If we answer 'Yes', then the unique relationship between God and Jesus, and the fact that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" is surely not appreciated. But if we answer 'No', in what sense was Christ our perfect example? Would God set before us a standard of perfection (e.g. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect"), if He knows that we have no possibility of attaining it?

(6) Setting on fire is symbolic of destruction; see Jer.17:27; Jude 7 etc.

(7) See Arthur Gibson, '*The Wheel of Nature*', The Testimony, Vol.44 (1974), p.295 for an excellent linguistic study of this.

(8) Note the Jewish context of Rom.1 and 2 and the constant allusions to the Old Testament to prove that Jews are in the same spiritual state as Gentiles.

## James Chapter 2

James continues to move into the specific nitty gritty of the life developed by the word:

"Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons" (2:1).

"The Lord" is not in the original- "Our Lord Jesus Christ of glory". This idea of Jesus being the glory is picked up in 1 Peter 4:14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory (parallel with "the name of Christ") and of God resteth upon you"-

as the cloud of glory did over the tabernacle. Also on the same track is 2 Cor.3:8,9: "How shall not the ministration of the Spirit (in Christ) be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation (the Mosaic law) be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory". Thus James describing Jesus as the Lord of glory may be yet another hint against keeping to the Mosaic glory. Notice the gentle yet firm way in which James makes the point- appealing to his Jewish readers through Biblical allusions which he knew they would appreciate.

## Respect of persons

"With respect of persons" is another link back to the Proverbs- here to 24:23: "These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgement". Thus through having wisdom- which is from the word- respect of persons is avoided. This is the point made in 2:8,9: "If ye fulfil..the Scripture...ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin"- through fulfilling the Scriptures, we avoid respecting persons. There is also a link with the fact that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) in a Jew/ Gentile context. It seems from this allusion that the Jewish brethren were prejudiced against poor Gentile believers.

"If there come unto your assembly (mg. 'synagogue') a man with a gold ring (Gk. 'Gold fingered'- not just one of them!), in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing..." (v.2,3). The use of the word 'synagogue' here shows that some of the early Jewish ecclesias were the result of whole synagogues being converted to Christ. The ecclesias are also called synagogues in Acts 6:9; thus Heb.10:25 reads literally "Not forsaking the synagoguing of yourselves together". The fact James uses the word 'synagogue' rather than 'ecclesia' indicates the degree to which early Jewish Christians still kept a fair amount of the Jewish approach to religion.

Thus the letter of Acts 15 concerning this implies that it was felt quite in order for Jewish believers to continue being circumcised, whilst the Gentile believers still had to abstain from blood (Acts 15:29). Elsewhere Paul vigorously argues that obedience to both these Mosaic commands was quite irrelevant to salvation or spiritual growth. Similarly Paul seems to have placed great importance on keeping a Jewish feast (Acts 18:21), whilst telling the Colossians (2:14-17) that this was not necessary due to Christ's death. The rich stranger who unexpectedly turned up at their ecclesia perhaps refers to the same class of Jewish itinerant preachers as are mentioned in 2 Jn.7-11.

## Readership?

James is writing to Jewish believers. The "poor man" walking into the ecclesia was a brother- "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom" (v.5). If this poor brother was also a Jew, why does James talk about "Your assembly..ye have respect to (the rich)..and say to the poor...."? We have two possibilities at least:

- 1) The letter was written just to a group of rich Jews; or
- 2) The letter was written generally to all Jewish believer and the "poor man" represented the poor Gentile brethren whom the Jewish believers despised.

There is fair support for both:

- 1) Poor believers are equally in need of exhortation as are the rich. They are even more prone to the temptations of materialism; but there is nothing aimed at this group in James. Chapter 2 rebukes rich brethren for belittling these poor brethren. Chapter 3 is about brethren seeking to be "many masters" (3:1) and proudly talking to that end. These are the temptations especially faced by rich, capable brethren. Chapter 4 describes the itinerant Jewish traders always

hungry to make more money (4:13). Chapter 5 is specifically about "ye rich men...your riches are corrupted" (5:1,2).

2) "The poor of this world" could be Gentiles- "He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor" (2 Cor.8:9) is quoted by Paul to show that the poor Gentiles had received spiritual riches, and should therefore contribute their earthly riches to the poor Jewish believers at Jerusalem (Rom.15:26). "Rich in faith" would then refer to the Gentiles being given the spiritual riches of Christ (2 Cor.9:9). "Heirs of the kingdom" recalls Eph.3:6 "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs" through also having the promises of inheriting the Kingdom made to them (Gal.3:27-29).

There are no doubt elements of truth in both views. Thus the letter does seem to be aimed at the rich Jewish Christians who had fled Israel from the persecution of Saul; but there may also be a secondary implication that the poor brethren they were despising were Gentiles. This would be in keeping with the fact that every reference in James to the Jew/Gentile, Moses/ Christ question within the ecclesia is indirect and subtle.

### **Jews for Jesus?**

One of the reasons for James writing was to encourage the Jews to spiritually improve so that the second coming would be hastened and the Kingdom established for real, rather than the 'coming' being just a 'coming down' manifestation of the Lord, as it actually was. It was the affluent sector of Jewry who had a partial faith in Christ whom James singles out as being the important ones whose repentance would hasten the second coming. Applying these things to the last days, it cannot be without significance that the 'Jews for Jesus' movement is gaining phenomenal ground- amongst whom? The affluent, loud mouthed (cp. James 3), money-loving, trade-crazy Jews of North America (cp. James 4:13; 5:2). Bearing in mind the orthodox false doctrines these people are full of, they fit well their prototypes in James- Jews who were not truly humble to the power of the word, committed to a 'hail fellow well met' Christianity (cp. 2:2,3). Notice that generally it has not been the poor Jews of London's East End or downtown Tel Aviv who are professing Christ. We know that the Jews are still to face their greatest holocaust. How relevant then is James 5:1-3: "ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you...ye have heaped treasures together for the last days". Every persecution of the Jews has been partly inspired by Gentile jealousy at their wealth- not least in these last days. Turning the spotlight to spiritual Israel- maybe the implication of James is that if only we can summon the courage to repent of our gross materialism into which the ecclesia of the last days has slumped, then there will be a hastening of the second coming. It is Biblically argued elsewhere that a specific rejection of materialism by the ecclesia of the last days may save us from part of the tribulation to come, and thus hasten the coming of Christ for us. If we do not curb it, we may need to go through the tribulation to achieve the same spiritual effect upon us as would a specific repentance from it here and now.

"A gold ring, in goodly apparel" probably connects with 1 Peter 3:1,3: "ye wives...whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of...wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel". The links between James and Peter are so numerous that it seems fair to assume that there is a conscious connection here. In this case it is worth noting that the passage in 1 Peter 3:3 about adorning has subtle reference to Judaism- e.g. "adorning" is the Greek 'kosmos'-ing, often used about the Jewish age. 'Cosmetic' is derived from this word too.

### **Judging after the eyes**

"A poor man in vile raiment". That this passage may also be talking about spiritual pride and partiality is further suggested by the word "vile" carrying the idea of morally filthy- it is

translated "filthiness" a few verses earlier in 1:21 in a moral sense; and "the filthiness of the flesh" in 1 Peter 3:21 (n.b. Rev.22:11 too). The idea of raiment or clothing representing a spiritual state is common in the New Testament (1). Thus James may be warning them against judging a brother who, due to his poverty, appears outwardly to have an appearance of evil when this is not the case.

"Ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or Sit here under my footstool" (2:3).

The Greek for "gay" implies dazzling bright- it is used of the "white (same word) linen" in which the saints will be clothed (Rev.15:6; 19:8), the "bright clothing" of the Angel in Acts 10:30 and "the bright and morning star" (Rev.22:16). This further supports the suggestion that James 2 is referring to spiritual pride- apart from wearing gaudy clothes, these brethren were imagining themselves to be supremely righteous, and therefore lording it over those they considered to be spiritually poor. This is almost confirmed beyond question by the rest of the verse being an allusion to the parable of the guests at the marriage supper- some come into the ecclesia (2) wanting to immediately have the places of honour, whilst others -the truly spiritual- gratefully accept whatever place they are given. There is also possible reference to Matt.23:5,6 which also speaks of outward dressing by the Jews to give a spiritual impression, and a loving of chief seats in the synagogue: "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at (Jewish) feasts (cp. the communion service), and the chief seats in the synagogues". The fact that within the Jewish ecclesias there were seating arrangements in order of seniority further shows how they were based around the Jewish synagogue system, even suggesting that the ecclesia had the actual building as their ecclesial hall. Similarly there is ample evidence that the communion service was originally run on the lines of the Jewish passover, with the eating of a meal in fellowship as a vital part of the 'love-feast'. Notice that James does not criticize the existence of such seating arrangements in themselves, but the wrong brethren being put in the wrong place. "A good place" does not just imply a nice seat- "good" is normally used in the sense of being morally good, and is also translated "honest"; it comes from a root meaning 'virtuous, morally worthy'. "Sit here under my footstool" also has a mainly spiritual implication- unless some brethren were so pompous that they had virtual thrones to sit on in the ecclesia. Jesus being seated at God's footstool shows his subjection to Him spiritually, and does not necessarily refer to the physical place where Jesus sits. Marshall's Interlinear renders "sit here" as "sit here well", implying that James' readers were thinking well of brethren in spiritual terms due to their outwardly impressive appearance.

### **Semi-spiritual**

This spiritual judging of others was because they were "partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts" (v.4). Being partial within their minds, resulting in them respecting ('judging') the thoughts generated by their evil minds continues the theme of being only semi-spiritual due to being "double minded", a result of not letting the word totally dominate the mind. Verses 8 and 9 also go on to show that only through lack of application to the word was this partial thinking coming about. In similar vein Jeremiah accused the Jews of 'dissembling in their hearts' (42:20), using a Hebrew word which can mean both 'to go astray' and also 'to vacillate'; as if partiality and spiritual vacillation between good and evil are the same as rank disobedience.

James really pleads with us to see the importance of all this, as if he is physically with us: "Hearken, my beloved brethren" (v.5)- also suggesting that he was well known to his audience. This would again imply that the initial readership which James was focussing on was quite a small group of brethren. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in



faith...?". This should not be read merely as meaning 'God has called the poor people to the Gospel'- seeing that the rich to whom James was writing had also been called (cp. Is.66:2). Rather the emphasis is on "*God* (has) chosen the *poor* of this world" for positions of authority within the ecclesia- implying, in the context of v.3, that *they* had made a wrong choice, saying to the man in gay clothing "sit thou here in a good place" in the ecclesia. Thus James implies that God's choice should be our choice. The fact has to be faced that looking around the ecclesias of today, it is not "the poor of this world" who are in places of authority. Yet James here implies that they should be- as does Paul (1 Cor.6:4). Now it can reasonably be argued that this category of brethren do not want such positions, and are happy to see those humanly more competent doing the job. Because of this, it is not the done thing to even nominate such brethren for office. Perhaps the fault lies with both sections of our community- surely those brethren should both be nominated and be prepared to accept responsibility, in the light of what James and Paul are saying? Remember that Peter, James and John were simple working men- but through the power of the Spirit James could talk to his brethren as "my beloved brethren" and rebuke them. That same Spirit can be in us through the word. 1 Cor.6:4 shows beyond cavil that in a case of disagreement or difficulty in judgement- and such cases are now increasingly common- the opinion of the most humble and least esteemed brother should be sought and accepted. Such a brother will, by his very qualification for the task, naturally demur- as doubtless the brother chosen in the Corinth ecclesia did initially (if they obeyed Paul's advice). But surely this is what is required by these passages?

### **Inheriting the Kingdom**

"Heirs of the Kingdom which he hath promised to them that love Him" (v.5). This mirrors 1:12 "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which he hath promised to them that love Him". The implication is that it is "the poor of this world" who successfully endured spiritual temptation by the power of the word, and who therefore will have the reward "which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him". The repetition of this phrase in 1:12 and 2:5 encourages us to make this interpretation. Yet in the first century, "the poor of this world" would have been those with the least free time, probably unable to read and anyway unlikely to be able to afford their own Scriptures, and probably more heavily burdened with domestic cares than the "rich men" of the ecclesia. Thus the point is again made that our spirituality is not related to the amount of spare time which we have free to devote to Bible reading. It is from the constant daily meditation on whatever spiritual food we have had time to feed on that we can overcome temptation and thus have the heart-warming knowledge of being thought of by God as "them that love Him". "If ye love me, keep (in memory) my commandments" Jesus had also said. Note that "the Kingdom" and "the crown of life" are equated by comparing 1:12 and 2:5; as in 2 Tim.4:1,8. Thus "the Kingdom" does not only refer to the 'political' situation on the earth when Christ's rule has been established, but is also a synonym for eternal life, "the crown of life". Thus at the judgement seat the sheep are told "Inherit the Kingdom" (Matt.25:34)- when the Kingdom in the sense of Christ's political rulership of the earth has not yet been established. Similarly, Christ's preaching "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God" to Israel (Matt.4:23) was not just composed of details about the state of the world after His second coming- but also about the opportunity of receiving "the crown of life" at His return. A study of the Greek word 'basileia' translated 'Kingdom' indicates that it can refer to all aspects of the King's rulership, not just the political Kingdom. John Thomas' definition of this word is well worth studying [\(3\)](#).

### **Working men**

"But ye have despised the poor" (v.6). "The poor" here are brethren- and therefore the poor labourers who were oppressed by the "rich men" of the ecclesia in 5:4 must also refer to brethren in the ecclesia. "Despise" here in 2:6 in the Greek can also carry the idea of active abuse- it is also translated "dishonour" in Jn.8:49, "suffer shame" in Acts 5:41 and "entreated shamefully" in Lk.20:11. These are all concerning the Jews persecuting Christ and the early church. The only other occurrence of the word (Rom.1:24) is also concerning the apostate Jews. Thus it may be that James is implying that this despising of the poor Jewish believers and Gentiles in the ecclesia was the same as the Judaizers and Jewish authorities behind them were doing. It would be surprising if the letter of James, being addressed to Jewish Christians, did not make some reference to the Judaist infiltration of the ecclesias, which Paul's letters show was a major threat to the early church (e.g. Gal.2:4). The use of this word "despise" may thus imply that this group of rich Jews had been infiltrated by the Judaizers. Their lack of total commitment to the word would mean that their resistance to the Judaist infiltration was low indeed. It is therefore to be expected that they succumbed.

"Do not rich men (i.e. richer than you) oppress you, and draw you before the judgement seats?". This recalls the descriptions of Jewish persecution of the saints: "Saul..entering into every house (church?), and haling ("Dragging"- same word in Jn.21:8) men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3); "they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city" (Acts 17:6). The believers to whom James was writing had therefore suffered violent physical persecution, and yet still they lacked any deep spirituality. The rebuke later in this chapter of their attitude that works alone could substitute for their weak faith may well have reference to this (cp. 1 Cor.13:3; Rev.2:13,14). No doubt it is extremely tempting when being physically persecuted to feel that this excuses us from making the effort to control our minds by the application of the word. In the holocaust to come which we may well have to endure we will do well to remember this. The implication behind James' use of these words is that as the Jews were doing to them, so they were doing to their brethren, thus equating them with the Jews- maybe implying that the Judaist infiltration was so subtle that they were being influenced doctrinally by these people, and yet also submitting to persecution from their 'provisional' wing. Israel's relationship with Egypt, Assyria and Babylon had been similar.

## **Brazen blasphemy**

"Do not they blaspheme that holy name by the which ye are called?", or 'that is called upon you'- in baptism. 1 Tim.6:1,2 associates the blaspheming of God's Name with servants despising their masters who were believers. The context in James is of believers despising their poor brethren (v.6), perhaps through despising the brethren who were in their employ (5:4). Thus the suggestion is that the same spiritual blasphemy which occurred when believers were persecuted was repeated when a rich brother abused or despised a fellow brother. Notice that it is the name of God which is blasphemed in 1 Tim.6:1, whilst at baptism the believers called upon themselves the name of Christ- they were baptized into Christ and thus became Christ's. This interchangeability of the name of Christ and God occurs frequently in the New Testament- because God's Name was given to Christ on his ascension (Phil.2:9; Rev.3:12). The reason for the rich brethren despising the poor was through not appreciating that God's Name was called upon those brethren- in the same way as the Jews' blasphemy of the Name was through their lack of appreciation that the believers carried the Name. Thus the key to successfully, humbly relating to our brethren is to remind ourselves of the mighty Name which they bear, and that to despise them is to despise God.

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the Law as transgressors" (v.8,9).

"Royal" means the Kingly law- James' comment on the emphasis which Jesus gave to the command to "love thy neighbour" in Matt.22:39, and especially to the giving of the "new commandment...that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn.13:34). Matt.22:37,38 clearly states that the command to "love thy neighbour" was secondary to that to love God. Yet the "new commandment" of Jn.13:34 to love thy neighbour ("one another"), and James' calling of this "the royal law" implies that now the law had been ended on the cross, including the ten commandments written in stone (Col.2:14-17), these two commands were one- because to love God is equivalent to loving your spiritual neighbour, because by calling on the name of Christ the neighbour therefore carried the Name of God, and thus to love the neighbour is the same as loving God. This is the teaching of the preceding v.7, as we have seen.

Alternatively, "the royal law" may refer to the entire Mosaic law- seeing that the law was fulfilled in the keeping of that one commandment, to "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Rom.13:9). Gal.5:14 says the same, and as in James 2 the context is of not biting and devouring one another within the ecclesia, as a result of Judaist infiltration to stir up strife (Gal.5:11,12,15). If the command to "love thy neighbour" was fulfilled with no subsequent despising of poor brethren, "ye do well". The Greek for "well" is the same word translated "good" in v.3- the rich were invited to sit in a "good place" in the ecclesia, i.e. in a place of spiritual honour and respect. Thus James is saying that the ultimate qualification for sitting in the "good place" in the ecclesia was to love the members of the ecclesia as oneself, especially those whom it was tempting to despise. If the "royal law" refers to the whole law of Moses, it should be noted that *we* must fulfil it in spirit. It is easy to think that the Law was fulfilled solely by Christ's death on the cross.

## Law-breakers

"If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors" (of the Law). This conviction by the Law may refer to the command to Israel's judges: "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small (poor) as well as the great" (Dt.1:17). These judges were therefore matched by Spirit-gifted ecclesial elders in the New Israel. These judges were 'given' as heads over Israel (Dt.1:15 A.V.mg), as the ecclesia were 'given' Spirit-gifted elders (Eph.4:11). Because of their power, "all the people shall hear and fear" (Dt.17:13), exactly as they did after Peter's Spirit-guided judgment of Ananias (Acts 5:11). The judges were "wise men" (Dt.1:13)- hence James' rebuke of the elders because they were *unwise*: "Who *is* a wise man...among you?" (3:13 cp. 1 Cor.6:5). The book of Malachi is a rebuke of Israel's priests and judges- James' many allusions to it tabulated in our comments on 4:8 are understandable once the connection between Israel's judges and ecclesial elders is appreciated. Psalm 82 condemns the judges for doing many things which James accuses the elders of doing: possessing the Spirit, but respecting persons, overlooking the poor, fatherless and needy; neglecting the true knowledge of God, although they had been called to be God's children.

Col.2:14-17 clearly shows that the law in the form of the ten commandments, including that to "love thy neighbour", had been replaced by Christ. Yet James reasons with his readers as if they still respected the old law of commandments- again indicating the slow transition to an acceptance that the Law had been ended in Christ (5). The command to love one's neighbour as oneself is an absolute statement; it cannot be fulfilled if one neighbour is loved more than another. The love a man has for himself is complete- in fundamental terms the degree of this love does not change with time or with the characteristics he exhibits. This nature of love should be shown to the brethren. To respect persons was to break this ideal. Thus Jesus could ask us to love each other "As I have loved you" (Jn.13:34). He loved us as the church as a

whole ("you" is plural), and therefore each of us receives the same all consuming love of Christ, shown in summation by his death on the cross. Our love to each other should be equally constant and without the favouritism which seems almost inevitable with our natural mind.

## **John: special case?**

If it is now argued 'But John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved", showing Jesus loved some more than others', then there is a serious contradiction within Scripture which we cannot countenance. The explanation must be that John in writing his gospel- under inspiration- added as a personal note of appreciation that he was the disciple Jesus loved; not implying he was loved more than the others (which would be a very self centred thing to put in his gospel), but just simply putting it on record that Jesus loved him. Therefore whilst our human chemistry may attract us to some brethren rather than others, our agape love should be constant to all. This surely presents a real challenge to our concept of loving our brother. As with so much in James, this seems almost too idealistic. But James drives the importance of it home: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (v.10). This is identical reasoning to Gal.3:10-13, where Paul is arguing that the Galatians should resist the inroads of the Judaizers and not return to the Law- therefore suggesting that there was an identical situation amongst James' readers, as there probably was in nearly every first century ecclesia, especially the Jewish-dominated ones.

## **Fratricide**

"For that law which said (AVmg.), Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law" (v.11).

The statement that "that law" included two separate commandments (concerning murder and adultery) shows that "the royal law" of v.8 may well refer to the whole law of Moses, which was fulfilled by loving the neighbour (Rom.13:9). These two commands concerning adultery and murder occur together elsewhere; it may be that James chose them because in spirit they are easily broken due to an uncontrolled mind; and the control of the mind is the great theme of James. Spiritual adultery is further defined in 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?", thus interpreting adultery as having worldly friends. Those to whom James was writing were aware, so v.11 implies, that literal and spiritual adultery were wrong, but were not so conscious of the command not to kill each other by hating them in their heart (Matt.5:21,22). The fighting and killing which James describes as happening amongst his readers (4:1,2) must refer also to this spiritual murder due to lack of love (to what else can it apply?). It is noteworthy that James is one of the few New Testament letters that does not contain explicit warning against sexual misbehaviour. We can thus start to build up a fuller picture of James' audience- keeping dutifully away from worldly friendships, holding themselves back from sexual sin, yet trading zealously with the world to make much profit (4:13), and unaware of the supreme importance of the command to love each other, resulting in them transgressing the law in spirit. Perhaps they are not without their counterparts today.

This lack of love was especially shown in their words: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (v.12). Notice the equation of words and actions ("speak...do"), continuing the theme of thoughts and words being the same as physical actions. "The law of liberty" is normally used elsewhere in contrast to the Law of Moses- another subtle swipe at the Judaist tendencies in the early Jewish ecclesias. We must speak our words in accordance with the fact that we will be judged by the word; if we have the word/law of liberty (cp.1:25) in our hearts and therefore influencing our words, we need not

fear our judgement by that word (4). Thus we judge ourselves now by our response to the word in practice, by how far we let it influence our words and doings, especially in the area of showing love to our brother.

### James and Job

"For he shall have judgement without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgement" (v.13). This appears to be alluding to Job 22:6-11, where Eliphaz says just the same about Job, saying that the harsh judgements coming upon Job were a result of him being harsh in his dealings with his fellow men previously- e.g. "Thou hast sent widows away empty...therefore snares are round about thee", as they were around a widow. Several of the things Eliphaz mentions in his accusations of Job are also themes in James:

| Job 22:6-11                                                                                        | James                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "Thou hast...stripped the naked of their clothing                                                  | "If a brother or sister be naked" (and you don't clothe them), (2:15)             |
| Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry... | "Destitute of daily food"                                                         |
| But as for the mighty man, he had the earth (i.e. you gave much to <i>him</i> )                    | "Ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing" and neglect the poor (2:3) |
| ...thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the (1:27) fatherless have been broken".      | "Visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction"                          |

If these connections are valid- and there are several other places where James is writing with Job in mind- then it appears that James did not see Job as beyond reproof; but that like those to whom James wrote he was a rich businessman, trusting in his own strength. This fits in to the many other indications that Job represented those Jews who trusted in the Law (see Digression 6). If the allegations of Eliphaz in Job 22 are therefore partly true, Job's clearing of himself from these things in Job 31 is to be read as sophistry- and therefore this clearing of himself is vigorously rebuked by Elihu, speaking on God's behalf, in Job 32. It is not unreasonable to think that it is not just the recording of the friends' words that was inspired but that to some degree their rebuke of Job was also directly inspired by God, although not all they said can be treated like this. We are quick enough to accept their reasoning regarding the mortality of man as inspired statements of Divine truth- why not some of their other statements about Job?

"He shall have judgment without mercy" suggests the picture of two people at the judgment seat being judged for the same sin; one is forgiven because he had showed mercy, while the other is rejected for not doing so. The rejoicing of the merciful brother is then set against the misery of the unmerciful brother. Mercy will then rejoice *against* judgment in the same way as the men of Nineveh will rise up *against* the unworthy at judgment day.

### Mercy

Note the implication that the believer should *shew* mercy. The Greek word translated "shewed" in v.13 is not the normal word translated thus. The word used here means literally 'to do a work', again continuing James' theme that spiritual actions are still 'works'. This lack of love and harsh judgement amongst James' audience was also connected with an academic emphasis on faith to the neglect of works- seeing that v.14 continues "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?". It seems true in practice that those who are busy actively expressing their faith in works tend to have less time for unnecessarily harsh judgement of others in the ecclesia. It did not "profit"- literally 'heap up'. Those to whom James wrote were hard working traders (4:13); thus such language was especially relevant to them. Again, James is working out a very telling play on words: 'Your heaping up of material profit while being academically familiar with your faith is not heaping up spiritual profit'. These brethren *said* they had faith. Later in chapter 3 James points out that because the word was not really controlling their thoughts, their words were uncontrolled. An example of this would be this public talking about their faith, heaping up a reward in the eyes of men.

A notable example of faith without works is then given in v.15,16. It ends with the challenge "What doth it profit"- cp. v.14 "What doth it profit...though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?".

### **Words, words**

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (v.15,16).

It is probable that this was not a hypothetical situation; 5:4,5 describe some rich brethren as oppressing their brethren who were their agricultural employees. "Destitute" means literally 'coming short', perhaps connecting with the fact that the employers kept back these brethren's wages (5:4). 1 Cor.13:2 makes the point that it is quite possible to have great faith without having any true love for one's brother. Similarly, these people were saying in absolute faith, really believing it would be done by God, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled".

"Depart" either implies they were told this by their employers to whom they came with their request, or perhaps that they were told to depart from the ecclesial meeting where such requests were considered. It would seem that their rich employers were these brethren who refused their requests. The mention of lack of food and clothing ("naked") recalls Matt.6:25, where the Lord assures His people that these needs will always be provided for. Yet the believers James writes of had to be concerned about these things. It may be that God provides for our needs by giving the means to the rich in the Ecclesia, but it still depends on their freewill decision to share what they have.

Therefore "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (v.17). This is in the context of the previous eight verses which have been reprimanding the readers for the lack of a loving mind. These are the "works" which were lacking, as well as the physical "works" of giving material support. There must be a connection here with Christ's words: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Jn.12:24). If this connection is valid, then James is

equating faith with the seed of wheat. The seed represents the word (Lk.8:11; 1 Pet.1:23), supremely manifested in the Lord Jesus. The equation is because "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". Thus James is saying that the word seed in us should bring forth fruit in our caring for others, in the same way as Jesus died in order to bring forth much spiritual fruit in us. The rich brethren needed to make the same kind of short term sacrifice due to the effect of the word in their lives, in order to care for their brethren's welfare, as

Jesus did for them. It is significant that in v.26 faith is likened to a dead body, which is the same figure being used here in v.17.

## Faith-works

Verses 18-20 are in conversation language: "Yea, a man may say (to me, James), Thou hast faith, and I have works". James says that he would respond "(can you) shew me thy faith without thy works? and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (v.18).

The man is implying that if James has faith and he has works, then between them they should be accepted. Thus the man was effectively advocating salvation by works, whilst agreeing that faith was also important- although not essential for him personally to develop. This sounds like the reasoning of the wavering Jewish believers. James replies that faith and works are indivisible, that true spiritual works cannot exist without faith. Thus it is irrelevant for a believer to think that he must concentrate on developing 'faith' or 'works' as independent things- what God looks for is 'faith-works', i.e. a faith whose very nature leads to works; a faith that *works* by love (Gal.5:6). Thus the works follow as an inevitable corollary from the faith, and therefore are not consciously performed. Therefore James reasons that a wise man will "shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (3:13). "Thou believest that there is one God"- the fundamental truth of Judaism which the Christian Jews prided themselves on- "the devils (demoniacs) also believe, and tremble" (v.19), alluding to the sick often trembling before their cure. This may refer to the many incidents of curing of demoniacs in the Gospels, all of whom were parabolic of the hopeless state of the Jewish system (6). More significantly, James is referring to the fact that many people during Christ's ministry had had the faith to be cured, but only a handful had responded with the works which a word based faith should have produced- as opposed to the intense hope and belief in personal betterment which the people had. The other person in the conversation is described as a "vain man" (v.20); "vain" meaning empty headed or minded, referring to the demoniac state of v.19. We saw in 1:26 how the man who did not have the word in his heart to control his tongue was also "vain". The man referred to here in 2:20 was without faith, and thus without the word, seeing this is the basis of faith. Faith without works is barren (v.20, Gk.). This is in the context of v.21 speaking of once barren Abraham (Rom.4:19 implies he was impotent when Isaac was conceived) being "*our* father", as well as that of Isaac. Faith *with* works is therefore spiritually fruitful. Faith *without* works being barren or dead may hint at the deadness of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb (Rom.4:19). Despite having produced Isaac, their faith and works were only completed by the offering up of Isaac. Until that point, they were still effectively 'dead' in God's sight, not being totally proven.

## Father Abraham

James goes on to show how Abraham's faith brought works as a natural by-product: "Was not Abraham our father (another hint at a Jewish readership) justified by works?". The phrase "Abraham our father" looks back to Matt.3:8,9 and Jn.8:33,39, where the Jews who said this were told to "bring forth fruits (works) meet for repentance" and to "do the works of Abraham" respectively. Thus James was telling his readers to do the works of Abraham. The fact they were doing works already shows that the real 'work' of Abraham they needed to develop was his faith. "This is the work of God, that ye believe" (Jn.6:29), Jesus had said. The Biblically minded would have spotted the apparently flat contradiction between "Abraham our father (was) justified by works" and Rom.4:2, which stresses that Abraham was not justified by his works but by his faith (7). Thus again the "works" which James says Abraham was justified by were his faith *and* the practical outworking of it in being prepared to offer Isaac. Abraham's "works" were that "he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar"

(v.21). Notice the past tense of "he had offered" and that it does not say 'he bound Isaac....'. Because of Abraham's faith that God would resurrect Isaac on behalf of the perfect lamb sacrifice that he believed was to come (Gen.22:5,8,14), it was reckoned to Abraham as if he had performed the 'work' of offering Isaac even though he had not physically performed it. Thus the Biblically minded would be able to see from these allusions to other Scriptures that the spiritual attribute of faith and the concept of works are almost indivisible. This is confirmed by noting that the one act of offering up Isaac is described as "works" in the plural- because it involved many separate decisions of faith. And in our lives too, God may count something to us as a completed work when we have only summoned enough true faith to do it, and have not actually performed it in reality.

### **Upward spiral**

It is that faith, therefore, which does the works. Verse 22 puts this in so many words: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?". Note too the upward spiral initiated by having a basic faith- faith led to works, and those works perfected the faith. For more examples of this upward spiral, see Digression 7. The Greek word for "wrought" is the same translated 'worker together' in 2 Cor.6:1: "We then, as workers together with (God)". Faith 'works' alongside the physical works. The preceding verse (2 Cor.5:21) speaks of how God is working through His gift of Christ for our salvation through our not relying on our own works. Paul says he is working together with God to get the believers not to "receive the grace of God in vain" by relying on their physical works for salvation. By having this attitude to works and faith, Abraham's faith was "made perfect" or finished, implying that it is possible for a man to develop a fulness of faith in something, a totality of belief which needs no further improvement. If Abraham could reach this dizzy height, it must certainly be within reach of all his seed.

### **"The Scripture was fulfilled..."**

"And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (v.23). This is quoting Gen.15:5,6, where in the moment that Abraham looked up at the stars and believed (so Rom.4:23 implies) "So shall thy seed be", God "counted it to him for righteousness". God knew that Abraham's faith in those words would really be shown when he was asked to offer Isaac, the only human means of their fulfilment. Thus the Scripture recorded that Abraham was righteous when this was as yet unproved by his works. However, that Scripture was fulfilled when Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac. The point is being made that just that kind of intense faith is as if the works have already been done- which is exactly in line with James' preceding reasoning. The use of the phrase "The Scripture" implies that either there was a literal written account made of the words of Gen.15:6 which was then validated by Abraham's offering of Isaac (n.b. "*was* fulfilled", past tense), or "The Scripture" refers to some kind of (Angelic?) record in Heaven of events in our probations, similar to the concept of the deeds of believers being written in a book of life. The evidence for either seems about equal, and there is no reason why both cannot be correct. "The scripture of truth" in Dan.10:21 appears to have been some written record available to the Angels which they revealed to man. "The Scripture" elsewhere in James seems to refer to the general spirit of God's principles in dealing with man: "The Scripture saith..The spirit that dwelleth in us.." (4:5) does not seem to refer to any specific written scripture, and "the royal law" (i.e. what was specifically placed on record) seems to be separate from "the scripture" in 2:8. Similarly "the scripture" foresaw that God would justify the heathen (Gal.3:8), and "concluded all under sin "(Gal.3:22), hinting that "the scripture" is more than just the written words (8).



Writing was certainly developed by Abraham's time, and a literal written statement of Abraham's acceptance with God being verified by his offering of Isaac is an attractive idea. That "the scripture" which was fulfilled at the time of the offering of Isaac (James 2:20) was something written is suggested in Rom.4:22,23, where the fact "it was imputed to him" in Gen.15:6 "was not written for his sake alone". The fact Abraham was justified for his faith was written for Abraham to see at some time in his life. The point has been made (9) that the descriptions of Sodom in Gen.10:19 (cp. Gen.14:3) imply that Genesis 10 was written before Sodom's destruction as recorded in Gen.19. Thus it is reasonable to suggest that Gen.15 may also have been in written existence.

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (v.24). Romans 4 stresses that works do *not* justify a man, but rather a true faith that is expressed in actions. "Faith only" must therefore refer to a holding of true doctrine and a hope that God provides physical help, as characterized by the healed demoniacs (2:19) and exemplified by those who asked in prayer for things to "consume upon your lusts" (4:2,3). There is a definite connection between "faith" as a spiritual quality and "the faith" as the set of doctrines which the believer accepts. It is these which produce the attribute of faith. The "works" James is referring to are 'faith works'- i.e. works that come as a natural corollary to faith and which include spiritual attributes like belief in God's word.

### **Rahab likewise**

"Likewise also (notice the favourable juxtaposition of Rahab and Abraham) was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (v.25). The use of the word "messengers" instead of "spies" implies that the spies came with a message which Rahab believed. The Joshua record stresses how she knew the covenant Name, knew and quoted the words of Moses (Josh.2:9), and had her roof covered with flax- i.e. linen, perhaps hinting at the righteousness already imputed to her for her faith. The message which the spies brought was probably a call to repentance, or perhaps a statement of the coming destruction of Jericho. Rahab's acceptance of this message based on her knowledge of God's basic principles corresponds to the holding of 'the faith' by the Jewish Christians. Her sending out of the spies another way was the 'works' that came as a natural response to her true faith. Her hiding of the spies, courageous lying to the Jericho Gestapo or putting the cord out of the window as a public testimony to her separation were her physical 'works'- but these are not chosen as an example of her 'faith-works'. Her scheming to enable the spies to safely return to Joshua by them going out "another way" and thereby enabling the campaign against Jericho to begin, showed her real "works". She believed their message about the destruction of Jericho, therefore in faith she enabled the spies to return to bring this about. Rahab was "justified...*when*...", again showing that justification or faith being made perfect (v.22) is something that can occur at a specific moment after reaching a certain degree of faith which has been expressed in actions (cp. Abraham looking up at the stars and believing). The implication here in v.25 is that the moment the spies were sneaking through the outskirts of Jericho following her directions, Rahab was justified.

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (v.26). 'Faith' is being likened to a person, i.e. the believer in the conversation of v.18-20 who thinks that his own faith alone will save him. "The Spirit" is often a reference to a spiritual mind, notably in Romans. Thus the body is equated with faith as the Spirit or spiritual attributes are with "works".

### **Footnotes**

- (1) E.g. Rom.13:14; Gal.3:27; Eph.4:24; Col.3:10; 1 Pet.5:5.
- (2) The ecclesia should therefore have the spirit of selfless love and joy on behalf of others which is at a wedding banquet.
- (3) John Thomas' interpretation of the Kingdom of God as based on the Greek word 'baseleia' is to be found quoted in F.T.Pearce, '*Understanding the Kingdom of God*'.
- (4) Cp. Jn.15:22, which also says that the word will judge us according to how we have obeyed that word.
- (5) Further discussion of this slow changeover from the Law will be found in *Jesus of Nazareth* p.87,88 (Pioneer Publications, 1991)
- (6) See John Allfree '*Demon Possession*' (Mansfield: Bible Study Publications, 1986).
- (7) Romans being one of the early epistles was probably in circulation among James' readers.
- (8) The apparent personality behind this phrase "the scripture" may be a reference to the Angel who was associated with the work of inspiration.
- (9) Edward Whittaker, *For The Study And Defence Of The Holy Scripture* (Norwich: The Testimony, 1987) pp. 78,79.

## James Chapter 3

James continues to be increasingly specific as to how the word should act upon us to produce a spiritual character. The whole of Chapter 3 is devoted to showing how *our* words are the clearest indicator of how *the* word is affecting our heart, and the emphasis we should therefore give to the control of the tongue and the thoughts behind it.

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (v.1,2).

This being addressed to those leading the ecclesia further suggests that this letter was written primarily to the rich Jewish believers who were the Spirit gifted eldership in the mainly Jewish ecclesias of the first century.

These two verses must have Matt.23:8 in mind: "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren". Hence James addresses them as "my brethren", gently reminding them that they were not masters but brethren. The context of Matt.23 is denouncing the Pharisees for loving the prominent seats in synagogues and to be publicly recognized for their righteousness, which again indicates that these brethren were influenced by Judaistic attitudes. We have seen how in 2:2,3 they were placing great importance on having good seats in the synagogue/ecclesia. "Masters" means 'teachers'; and maybe this is echoing Paul's condemnation of the Jews in Rom.2:17-24: "Thou art called a Jew...and makest thy boast (cp. James 4:16) of God...and art confident that thou thyself art...an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes". There are several other links:

| <b>Rom.2:17-24</b>                   | <b>James</b>                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "Makest thy boast of God"            | The tongue of the teachers in the ecclesia boasted (3:5; 4:16)                                       |
| "Knowest His will"- so they thought. | They should have said "If the Lord will" (4:15)- implying they thought they already knew God's will. |

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes"                                | "Many masters" (teachers); 3:1                                                                                   |
| "Dost thou commit adultery?"                                                      | "Ye adulterers" (4:4; 2:11)                                                                                      |
| "Through breaking the Law"                                                        | "Ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors" (2:9)                                             |
| "The name of God is blasphemed among the which ye Gentiles because of you (Jews). | "Rich men..the judgement seats(Gentiles) ...blaspheme that worthy name by (Jewish believers) are called" (2:6,7) |

## Teaching the word

Their desire to be teachers therefore indicated that they were bringing the attitude of their former religion and the surrounding world into the ecclesia. The rest of Chapter 3 is about the tongue; James' argument therefore seems to run 'As a teacher you will have to speak many words, and the chances are (v.2) your words will offend someone in the ecclesia. Remember that as a teacher of the ecclesia you are responsible for the flock, and therefore "we shall receive the greater condemnation"(v.1). Only a "perfect man" who has his words totally in control will not offend anyone, and only he is "able also to bridle the whole body" (v.2)- the ecclesia, the body of Christ'. It is worth noting that our judgement in the last day will take into account the quality of our converts and the effort we have made to build up others- see Digression 8. Our receiving condemnation as a result of being masters may be alluding to Matt.12:37: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned". In this case, the words Christ is speaking about are specifically our words to our brethren and sisters. The context in v.34 is Christ telling the teachers of the law that it was impossible for them to "speak (i.e. teach) good things" because their heart was evil. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (v.35), which connects with the description of the Scribes (teacher of the Law) instructed in the Truth bringing forth "out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt.13:52).

### Perfect A.B.?

The ideal ecclesial 'master' will not offend any in the ecclesia because his words are controlled on account of his being a "perfect man". 2 Tim.3:16,17 says that the word of God has the power to create a perfect man (cp. 1 Cor.13:8-10; Eph.4:8-13). James 1:4,5 has shown that by the wisdom of the word, a man can be made "perfect and entire". Only such a brother will be able to "bridle the whole body" (ecclesia). Earlier, in 1:26, the bridling of the tongue is spoken of as a result of the word acting on the heart. Thus only someone able to bridle his own tongue can bridle the ecclesia. That this interpretation is on the right lines is also suggested by v.6 talking about the "members..the whole body" being influenced by the tongue. This is the language of 1 Cor.12 concerning the ecclesial body.

"We put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body" (v.3).

This can probably be read on two levels- the need to control our lives by concentrating on the control of the mouths (the tongue), and also the implication that the whole body of the ecclesia can be turned about by their leader controlling the ecclesial tongue- i.e. encouraging the members to control their thoughts and words. And this is exactly what James, the real leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia and the Jewish believers of the Diaspora (1:1), was trying to do. The way he asserts his own leadership like this is so subtle that only the thoughtful and spiritually aware would appreciate it. The Greek 'peltho' translated 'obey' carries the idea of yielding and friendly confidence- as one would deal with a horse; and this is precisely how James was trying to influence this ecclesial "body". This was to the end that the body would be turned about, a phrase implying a total about turn, thus showing the degree to which the ecclesia needed to change.

The reference to bits in the horses' mouths is an allusion to Ps.32:8,9. This teaches that the understanding of God, having experienced His mercy, should lead us to control our tongues, rather than our having to be forced to do so by a bridle. This fits in with the teaching of v.8, that the tongue cannot be tamed by man's human efforts (cp. bit and bridle), seeing that the natural mind which produces our words is 'beyond cure' (Jer.17:9 Heb.)

### **Against the wind**

The figure of the ecclesia's leaders as the rider and the church as the horse is now transferred to that of a captain steering the ship. "Behold also the ships, which though they be...driven of fierce winds (cp. the Jewish ecclesias scattered abroad by fierce persecution), yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the Governor listeth" (v.4). Again, emphasis is given to how relatively easy it is to control the direction of our spiritual lives and the whole ecclesia- by a dedicated concentration on the control of the tongue and the thinking behind it. The ships seem "so great" (translated "mighty" in Rev.16:18); the flesh seems so vast and strong, the task of turning round a wayward ecclesia appears so impossible. They "are driven of fierce winds" representing the winds of false Judaist doctrine (Eph.4:14), and the winds of the flesh and trials of life which beat upon the spiritual house of our lives and the ecclesia, as described in the parable of the house on the rock (Matt.7:25-27). Both these references to winds stress how the temporal ministry of the miraculous Spirit gifts would be replaced by the 'perfect man' state brought about by the possession of the completed word (cp. 1 Cor.13:8-10; 2 Tim.3:16,17), and that then the winds of false doctrine would not blow the church around. Note how the immature ecclesia is again being likened to a ship blown about by the wind. The winds of the parable of Matt.7 were overcome by hacking away at the rock of our hard human heart in order to hear the sayings of Christ and put them into practice. It is significant that the winds of James 1:6 could be overcome by faith, which comes from the word. The wavering believer is likened there to a ship in trouble on a windy sea.

The ship can be turned about "Whithersoever the governor listeth". The word for "listeth" means 'intense desire or will', showing the great concentration of mental effort required by the captain of the spiritual ship. Again, the way to have a powerful will is to have our own personal will merged with that of God. The will of God is in the word (1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18 cp. John 1:13), and a saturation of the mind with the word will result in our mind becoming like that of God. Thus John 15:7 states the tremendous encouragement: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done". Jesus does not say we must ask according to God's will- but according to our *own* will, because if the word abides in us then our will becomes that of God- and any prayer according to His will is heard (1 Jn.5:14).

### **A micro member**

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things" (v.5). The believer is identified with his tongue. "A little (Greek: micro) member" stresses the small physical size of the tongue in proportion to the vast spiritual effect it has. If the body and its members also have reference to the ecclesia as a whole, it may be that James is implying that one very subtle member- i.e. an individual in the ecclesia- was using his words to mislead the ecclesia (1). The ship can be easily influenced- by either a good or bad governor. The individual referred to was probably an agent of the Judaizers, whom the New Testament often describes as doing their evil work through "Great swelling words of vanity" (Jude 16; see too 3 Jn.10; 2 Pet.2:3; 2 Tim.2:14; 1 Tim.6:4; Col.2:4; Eph.5:6; 1 Cor.1:17; Rom.16:18). The tongue boasting "great things" is looking back to Ps.12:2,3: "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a *double heart* do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh great things" (AVmg.) The context of bad words coming as a result of a double mind is exactly the same as in James (1:8; 4:8). the vain man of Ps.12:2 is mentioned again in James 2:20. Ps.12:4,5 also have connections with James (2). Psalm 12 concludes with praise of God's words: "The words of the Lord are pure words" (v.6), as if to suggest that the word of God is the antidote to proud speaking. This all fits the context of James nicely. Thus "the tongue" here in James 3:5 is being used to represent a group of proud, vain talkers within the ecclesial body, who were probably all influenced by the Judaizers, possibly with one specific ringleader. Being "a little member" of the ecclesia, this group may not have been numerically large.

## Forest fire

"Behold, how great a matter ('wood') a little fire kindleth!" (v.5). The Greek word for "little" here is different from that in the phrase "a little member". This implies rather a short period of time- i.e. 'consider what havoc can be caused by fire so quickly'. The implication is that James' readers needed to act quickly both to bring their own tongue under control and also to restrain "the tongue" element that were leading the ecclesia astray, and soon would burn down the ecclesia- represented by the 'wood', composed of "the planting of the Lord". The New Testament epistles often give reason to think that the ecclesia will be in a state of great spiritual weakness just prior to the second coming. Those who find this hard to believe should bear in mind how *quickly* a small group of brethren can influence the ecclesia for bad.

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body" (v.6). The root of all sin is in our hearts (Jer.17:9), and as the tongue so accurately reflects the heart, it is "a world of iniquity". God "hath set the world in (man's) heart" (Ecc.3:11), which means that "there is no good in" man (Ecc.3:12), i.e. in

man's heart. The tongue will defile the whole body- the ecclesia, and also our individual lives. Remember how in 2:26 a man's spiritual life is also likened to a body. The tongue defiles the body. This is alluding to the Lord's words in Matt.15:11,18 that "those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man". Jesus says our evil desires defile us; James describes our tongue as doing the same, again showing the effective identification of our thoughts and words. We have suggested that "the body" refers to both the ecclesia and the spiritual life of the believers. There are many references to "the body" which cannot be applied to our physical body (3); most obviously James 3:2 speaks of the body being bridled by control of the tongue. Similarly, every part of the body we have in the Kingdom will be spiritually aware and significant (4). It is for this reason that abuse of the body we now have is such a serious offence. The word for 'defile' is the same translated 'spot' regarding the need for a believer to keep himself and his spiritual garments unspotted by the world (1:27)- thus equating "the body" and the garments, and "the world" with our evil thinking which leads to our bad works. It is worth making the point that we can

be spotted by the world in this sense even without watching a television, smoking a cigarette and those other stereotypes of "the world". Remember that God has set the world in our heart, so that there is no good in man (Ecc.3:11,12).

The tongue and the evil heart behind it "setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (v.6). We have commented earlier on this. The tongue will be set on fire of Gehenna- i.e. the destruction of the physical body of the rejected at the judgement will be the destruction of his "tongue", seeing that there is a certain association between our spiritual character and our physical body. The language here implies physical fire may be used to destroy the unworthy saints- an idea supported elsewhere (see Digression 9, 'Gehenna').

### **Taming the tongue**

"For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind" (v.7).

"Mankind" in Greek is from two words- 'Man' and 'kind'. The latter is the same as occurs earlier in the verse, and as well as meaning a genus it fundamentally means 'nature' (see A.V.mg). In the same way as a horse and ship can be "tamed" because we can relatively easily analyse their

nature and make them respond in an expected way to a certain stimulus, it seems that some in the ecclesia were thinking that the use of human wisdom could tame our animal human nature. Marshall's Interlinear offers the rendering "every nature of beasts...has been tamed by human nature". The fact animals have increasingly been tamed by man ("is tamed and hath been tamed") perhaps encouraged these believers to think that there could be a gradual progression in the taming of human nature also by human strength. The connection between the animals and our bestial sinful instincts would have been appreciated by these brethren; "every kind" of animals had been increasingly tamed, and thus they thought human strength could also tame human nature. "But the tongue can no man tame" (v.8)- our pets are more obedient to us than our tongues. The Greek for "mankind" well describes the reasoning ability of our human nature that can apparently tame animal instincts. "Man" alone can imply human, semi-spiritual reasoning- e.g. "I speak (reason) after the manner of men", or "I am speaking in human terms" (N.I.V.) in Rom.6:19. "Kind" carries the idea of growth by germination.

### **Downward spiral**

But rather than being progressively tamed, human nature is in a progressive downward spiral to death if it goes unchecked (1:14,15). The deception of our natural thinking is that to a limited extent it can be spiritually sound: "The Gentiles...do by nature the things contained in the law" (Rom.2:14), "nature itself" teaches the spiritual principles governing hair length (1 Cor.11:14). Like James' ecclesia, it is possible to live in the Truth adhering to correct doctrine- "the faith"- and make a half hearted attempt to develop a spiritual mind to control our actions in our own strength. James argues for a totality of success in our spiritual lives; he is saying that any striving for spiritual development based on our natural reasoning will fail, ultimately, to develop the high standard of being totally spiritual that James is setting. He holds up Abraham and Rahab as examples of those who did reach a certain point of fulness of faith and subsequent justification with God, showing that such a state is not impossible for us. Jude 10,12 describes the Judaizers speaking "great swelling words...which they know naturally" at the communion service ("feast of charity"). This again suggests that James' warning about using natural wisdom- i.e. from within our own nature- to control the ecclesial body and our own lives is aimed at a group of false teachers within the ecclesia who were controlling the ecclesia and encouraging its members to control themselves by relying on the

mental abilities of human nature, rather than on the wisdom from the word filling the mind (5). "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (v.8).

The likening of "the tongue" to a deadly snake invites comparison with the serpent in Eden, and therefore with the Judaizers, who "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" were enticing Christians away "from the simplicity which is in Christ" by preaching "another Gospel" based on "another Spirit"- i.e. of the human spirit or mind, as opposed to the Holy Spirit which was in the word of the true Gospel (2 Cor.11:3,4). The serpent in Eden is elsewhere a symbol of the Jewish system (6). The serpent was to be *destroyed*, not just tamed, by the seed of the woman. The serpent/ devil being in our natural mind, our tongue must be regarded by us as a rampant snake, seeing that it reflects our thoughts. The following verse 9 contains another allusion to early Genesis. By the tongue, the man made in God's similitude is cursed, due to the serpent's tongue. Through the unbridled tongue and also the influence of the Judaist serpent, the new creation of believers could be cursed, as they can be today too.

The tongue cannot be tamed by man; the emphasis being on the word "man". Yet in 1:26 we saw that the mark of a true believer influenced by the word is that he *can* bridle his tongue. Thus here James is saying that "no man" in the sense of the natural man, a reliance on human strength, can control the tongue. There must be a connection with the demoniac Legion whom no man could tame (Mk.5:4)- perhaps in that he also represented the Jewish system (7). There is also an echo here of Paul's description of how human nature is so impossible for the natural man to control: "The carnal mind...is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be...in my flesh dwelleth no good thing...how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom.8:7; 7:18). Thus it is not a question of changing the carnal mind by the strength of the carnal mind; Paul says that is impossible; but of creating a "new man" by a spirit or power of reasoning outside the natural man. If the spirit of man is no use, the only other source of power is God's Holy Spirit, available to us from the word. The parallels between the untamable nature of the tongue and that of our evil thinking as described in Romans shows how exactly our words are to be equated with the thinking of our heart. The tongue is "an unruly evil"; Strong defines "unruly" as 'unrestrainable', which fits in with the exposition offered above.

### **Blessings and cursings**

"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God" (v.9).

The fact that they did use their tongues to praise God tempted James' readers to think that this meant that they had their tongues and therefore their thinking too in control. Again, the warning against semi-spirituality and a 'feel good religion' comes over. We have seen that the rich, proud speaking members of the ecclesia are the target of much of what James is saying. Our previous notes on 2:6,16 have shown that this group were quite aggressive to the lower ranks of believers. The men "made after the similitude of God" may well refer to the creative power of the word making them in God's image. As with Daniel, Nehemiah and other faithful spiritual leaders of the Jews, James totally associates himself with his brethren- *we* curse men, he says. It is noteworthy that as a faithful shepherd James does not disassociate himself from this wayward flock. However, elsewhere in the letter he repeatedly addresses them as "ye"- e.g. v.14 is in the same passage concerning control of the tongue: "*Ye* have bitter envying and strife in your hearts". The only other places where James associates himself with the readers are in 3:1,2 and 6, again in this same passage about the tongue- it is "among *our* members". There seem two possibilities to explain this. It may be that James personally felt guilty of misusing his tongue- "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man"

(3:2). No doubt James had spoken wrongly at some time and was conscious of this, and therefore felt he could not phrase this criticism of them as he does all the others- he could not write 'You both bless God and curse men with your tongue' when he too was guilty. However, James' 'cursing' and thereby offending ("we offend all", 3:2), was no doubt a temporary slip-up, compared to his readers whose generally unbridled tongue was because "Ye (not James) have bitter envying and strife in your hearts" (v.14). This envying and strife within the ecclesia caused the "fightings among you" (4:1), and this again suggests that the cursing of men which they were guilty of related to their words to their brethren.

The other possible explanation of why James personally associates himself with the 'cursing' done by the tongue is that "the tongue" may indirectly refer to a certain group within the ecclesial body. They were part of the body of Christ, as was James, therefore the tongue was "among our members" (3:6), and its cursing of men therefore implicated the rest of the ecclesia.

## **Bitter words**

We have seen that James often bases his reasoning on the sermon on the mount. The ideas of blessing, cursing and men in God's similitude are found in Mt.5:44-48: "Bless them that curse you...that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven (i.e. showing His spiritual characteristics)...be ye therefore perfect" (cp. James 3:2 "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man"). This again suggests that the men in the similitude of God who were being cursed were those of the ecclesia who blessed these rich brethren who cursed them, and thus became the children of God due to their being born of the word, which makes a man "perfect" (8). "Similitude" is from a word meaning 'to assimilate', implying a likeness that has been taken on. The "men" like this are those who have developed the likeness of God, "men having become according to likeness of God" (Marshall's Interlinear). The frequent references to Peter's letters also makes an interesting point. The parallel there is in 1 Pet.3:8-11: "Be ye all of one mind...not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing...refrain (your) tongue from evil...the Lord is against them that do evil". The "evil" spoken of here is therefore that of bitter speaking within the ecclesia which must not be responded to. This type of evil is far harder to resist than being taken to law unfairly, which is how we tend to read this passage. However, the context in Peter is also of physical persecution by the Romans, influenced by Jewish criticism of the Christians. There seems a hint that this group of evil speakers within the ecclesia were associated with the Roman and Jewish authorities (9).

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (v.10).

There is possibly a passing allusion here to Moses, the only other person in Scripture to be recorded as having blessing and cursing coming from him. He could justifiably do so, because he had the word of God in him. But these who did not have the word in them were not justified in doing so- i.e. the association of themselves with Moses which was being made by these Judaist-influenced brethren was not valid. For another example of this, see notes on v.15 and also 4:12. Verse 11 implies that this sending out of blessing and cursing was simultaneous- the figure is of a spring gushing out both salt and fresh water from the same place (Greek 'hole'- cp. the mouth) at the same time. If the cursing of the other brethren was being done in the name of God, then this figure is apt- i.e. along with praise of God there was apparently righteous condemnation of these other brethren, in the same way as Moses simultaneously blessed and cursed the people on God's behalf.



No doubt the withholding of wages from these brethren (5:4) and refusing to materially alleviate their poverty (2:16) was justified by accusing the poor brethren of spiritual weakness that warranted this cursing by God. The close association of material wealth and spiritual pride throughout Israel's history and also here in James must be taken to heart by us in these last days. Just before the Lord returns there will be some who "eat and drink with the drunken" due to their wealth, and this leads them to beat their fellowservants (Mt.24:45-50). This group will be those who are called to be the rulers of the ecclesia ("his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them their- spiritual- meat in due season"). Those James speaks of were the "masters", "governors" and horse-riders in the ecclesia (3:1-5). The fact that some of our ecclesial leaders are in a position to be rich in this world must mean that all this is a serious warning to them- some will, according to the parable, allow the authority and power they have in their secular life to corrupt them, so that they act like that in the ecclesia. Let us all humbly resolve that our Lord's parable will not be fulfilled in us. Note how that parable formed a footnote to the Olivet prophecy- as if to say that this temptation to have a lack of true love for one's brethren in these last days will really be something to be reckoned with.

The blessing and cursing "proceedeth" from the mouth. This is the same word used in Mt.15:18,19: "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart...out of the heart proceed evil thoughts". Again, the mouth is effectively identical with the heart, showing the great emphasis by James on a man's words as being the main form of manifestation of his evil heart, and the need to control them if all other sin is to be avoided.

"My brethren, these things ought not so to be". The Greek for "ought" occurs nowhere else and is extremely strong (cp. "my brethren" with the gentle opening gambit of the Lord in His letters to the ecclesias). It is worth noting at this point how well and personally James seems to have known his readership, although they were all "scattered abroad" (1:1) throughout the Roman world. Surely he would not have been so dogmatic in his denunciation of the type of words they spoke unless he knew exactly their situation. The nature of inspiration is such that James could have just sat and wrote as a result of a specific revelation to him of the weaknesses of these people, seeing in vision how they selected comfortable chairs in the meeting room for the rich (2:3), refused welfare to the poor, and spoke such wrong words as described in chapter 3. However, it seems more likely that inspiration worked through a band of dedicated (young?) servants of the ecclesias moving around the scattered pockets of Jewish Christians as they went from city to city (4:13) and reporting back to James. Or maybe James himself moved around visiting them, as a good shepherd; or perhaps he knew them all personally due to them all being in the Jerusalem ecclesia together in happier days.

## **Sparkling springs?**

"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place (Greek: 'hole') sweet water and bitter?" (v.11). We have already made some comment on this in our notes on v.10. The spring gushing out (the idea of "send forth") sweet and bitter water corresponds to the mouth having blessing and cursing proceeding from it. The idea of their words gushing from them corresponds to the rebuke that their tongue was unbridled in v.3. Note that both blessing of God and cursing of brethren gushed from them. For our words in regard to God to be unbridled is a sin, as much as to curse a brother without restraint. It is so tempting to feel that our relationship with God is fine, and therefore to assume that our attitude to our brethren is therefore beyond rebuke. These who blessed God and cursed their brethren fell into this trap. Our praise of God needs to be bridled or restrained by the word. Any ecstatic release of praise to God can therefore only be acceptable if it is within the bridle, or control, of the word- i.e. if its root motivation is in the word rather than human emotion. The word for "bitter" is from a root meaning 'to

pierce'; the words of this group in the ecclesia who are being reprimanded must have really pierced the heart of the poor, humble brethren. A spring can either emit sweet or bitter water, depending on the surrounding soil type- cp. the parable of the sower/types of ground. So our words really are an indication of our spiritual status; they will not really alternate between sweet and bitter, although they may appear to in our human self examination. In God's eyes they are either sweet or bitter. There is a significant link with Jer.6:6-8: "Cast a mount against Jerusalem (ecclesia?): this is the city to be visited (AD70 language); she is wholly oppression in the midst of her (cp. James 2:6;5:4 concerning the Jewish believers oppressing their brethren). As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her (i.e. the waters cast out are paralleled with her words of violence-that is how violence is *heard*)...be thou instructed (the same idea as "endued with knowledge" in the Greek of James 3:13), O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited"- as happened after AD70. The Jewish believers are thus being likened to apostate Jerusalem-fitting, seeing they were all once members of the Jerusalem ecclesia that had since been "scattered abroad" (James 1:1 cp. Acts 8:1,4; 11:19).

## **Marah**

The sending out of sweet and bitter waters must also look back to Marah, where the bitter waters were changed to sweet by the tree cast into the waters (Ex.15:25), pointing forward to the cross. James' way of changing the bitter water of human nature into sweet waters was by true obedience to the word in our heart. Ex.15 suggests that this change is due to the cross being applied to the waters. By doing so, "there He proved them" (Ex.15:25) whether they would believe in the efficacy of the tree or not. Therefore our belief in the cross of Christ and the power he has subsequently made available for the development of 'sweet water' is only shown by our zeal to obey the word. The need to obey the word in order to drink the sweet waters is also stressed in Ex.15. The people feared they would catch disease from drinking the bitter water, and so immediately after the tree had been thrown into the waters "there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them, and said, If thou wilt hearken to the voice of the Lord...I will put none of these diseases upon thee...and they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of (sweet) water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (v.25-27). Obedience to the word would lead to the bitter waters being changed to wells of good water, as witnessed by their coming to the prosperous oasis of Elim. Compare the wells of Elim with James' fountain (spring) of sweet waters. "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh" (v.12).

We have seen that the fountain yielding water represents our heart or tongue yielding our words. The trees bearing fruit therefore must be interpreted as being our hearts bearing the spiritual fruit of our words. Both fig and olive trees are well hacked Old Testament symbols of Israel- as if to imply to these Jews that only by having the real spirit of Israel in their hearts rather than just in their flesh could they bear spiritual fruit. The bearing of fruit by the fig tree is a consistent symbol of the repentance of Israel in the "last days" of AD70 and (hopefully and prayerfully) in the twentieth century. In his usual neat style James is implying that the national repentance of Israel would be imputed to them if the "remnant" of Jewish Christians bore fruit; but with their present attitude of mind this was impossible. This is the same idea as in 5:7: "The husbandman (God? Christ?) waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth (the land-of Israel? i.e. from the Jewish believers especially?), and hath long patience for it"- a connection with 2 Pet.3:15, where Peter says that the delay in the second coming to await the development of "all holy conversation and Godliness" (v.11) among Peter's Jewish readers shows "the longsuffering of our Lord" (Christ). It is possible to argue that the exact timing of the second coming is related to the repentance of Israel, and was deferred from AD70 due to

lack of Jewish repentance. Thus we can appreciate why James, knowing this as he wrote before AD70, so earnestly begs the Jewish believers to develop true spiritual fruit that would result in the second coming, as opposed to petty bickering and infighting. Peter's plea is just as intense. The same plea, with even greater urgency, has to be made to natural and spiritual Israel in these days. In practice, let us again notice how all spiritual fruit is epitomized by the type of words we speak; the fruit of the olive is parallel with the water from the fountain.

## **Beware...**

There is a clear link with Mt.7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing (looking like a lamb, appearing to have the gentle, spiritual characteristics of Christ)...ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?...a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit (cp. "so can no fountain...yield")...every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (cp. James 3:6- the tongue will be destroyed in Gehenna fire). Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them". This almost conclusively shows that this group of Jewish believers within the ecclesia whom James is writing about were the Jewish "false prophets"- or those influenced by them- whom the Lord had warned would try to infiltrate the ecclesia. For those who were attune to these connections with other Scripture, it would have been obvious that these brethren were false prophets because their words so clearly gave them away. Note how James has slightly changed Christ's analogy-from grapes and figs growing on thorns and thistles to grapes growing on figs, and figs growing on olives. Thorns and thistles is used to describe the fruit of the (same?) Jewish false prophets in the ecclesia in Heb.6:5-8, and they would also recall the curse in Eden to any Jewish mind. This would associate these Jewish false teachers with the serpent who brought thorns and thistles into Eden- a simile repeated in 2 Cor.11:3 and elsewhere. James is saying that the thorns and thistles had become figs and olives, i.e. they appeared far more acceptable than the false prophets of Christ's parable, but the fact their fruit was not consistent with what they appeared to be was still the litmus test which proved they were false. Again, there is a warning against thinking that semi-spirituality means acceptability with God. As the ecclesia seemed duped into thinking that because they used their tongue to bless God, all their words must be acceptable, so they thought that because these men didn't appear to be thorns and thistles but rather figs and olives, they must be acceptable even if there was some mismatch between the tree and the fruit.

There is a slight change of figure also with v.11: sweet and bitter water becomes "salt water and fresh". The many links with the sermon on the mount suggest a connection with the group of passages that show that the salt in a believer (Mt.5:13) represents his gracious, "seasoned with salt" way of speaking (Col.4:6) which leads to peace within the ecclesia (Mk.9:50). Both salt water and fresh represent positive spiritual ways of speaking; as their parallel figs and olive berries both equally represent spiritual fruit. The point is thus being made that a spring or tree cannot yield two types of products, and therefore encourages the connection with Mt.7:15-20.

Figs, olives and bitter water recalls Jer.8:13,14: "There shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree...for the Lord our God hath...given us water of gall ('poison'- Dt.29:18) to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord". The lack of spiritual fruit on Israel is here associated with bitter or poisonous water. If James is referring to this passage, the tongue "full of deadly poison" (3:8) and the corrupt mind it reflected was the cause of the Jews' lack of fruit, and there is even the implication that God had given them the 'bitter water' of their tongues as a curse, as He did to Israel at Marah, in the sense that God confirms the spiritual or unspiritual attributes of a man- e.g. He hardened Pharaoh's already hard heart.

## Wise men- where?

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (v.13)

A "wise man" is a synonym for a prophet: "I send unto you prophets, and wise men" (Mt.23:34), the implication being that these brethren thought that they were prophets (i.e. having the Spirit gift of prophecy) and endued with Heavenly knowledge. This follows on nicely from the albeit indirect accusation in the previous verse (through the Matt.7 allusion) that they were false prophets. Verse 14 lends support to this: "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth". "Thy word is Truth" (Jn.17:17), and therefore if they had bitterness in their hearts they were blaspheming against the word which they were inspired to speak. The elders of the early ecclesias (the "presbytery" of 1 Tim.4:14) probably had the Spirit gifts, especially that of prophecy- i.e. 'forth-telling' inspired words of God to the ecclesia. Our Lord said that many who had the gifts of the Spirit would be condemned at judgment day (Mt.7:22)- a prophecy hard to apply to anyone other than the Jewish believers and elders of the first century.

### Showing off...

Thus it is possible that James is telling these brethren to validate their spiritual position by humbly showing the word at work in their hearts by their way of life ("a good conversation"), rather than thinking that just because they had the gifts this was proof that they were righteous before God. In this case the "blessing" of God (v.9) which they thought justified all their other words would have been blessing or praying to God using the spirit gifts as described in 1 Cor.14:16 and Jude 20. The fact their mouths uttered the "sweet" water of the inspired word along with their own brash speaking was therefore especially serious. Because they possessed the gift of prophecy they thought it unnecessary to make the personal effort of applying the word in their hearts to control their thoughts and subsequent words. Examples abound in Hebrews, Corinthians and the Lord's letters in Revelation of those possessing the gifts being unacceptable to God, hence His withdrawal of them. There are similarities between this and our possession of the word of Truth. A true response to the word must always produce humility- any Bible study that does not result in this in some way is pointless. For other examples of this, see Digression 10 'The word and humility'.

A comparison of verses 13 and 14 shows that "a good conversation" is the same as not having "bitter envying and strife in your hearts". "Conversation" therefore does not simply mean 'way of life' but rather the thinking that is behind that life. "The former conversation" is "the old man...the deceitful lusts" and is replaced by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph.4:22,23), showing that "conversation" applies to the state of mind. It is because of this that Timothy's "Conversation" was to be comprised of mental attributes like "charity...faith...purity" (of mind), 1 Tim.4:12. As was argued in Chapter 2, "works" are 'shown out' of the state of the mind, and cannot be separated from it. The context being of the tongue, the "works" referred to are probably words, which epitomize all a man's spiritual "works". Words should therefore be humble ("with meekness of wisdom"), and based on a heart saturated by the word, and this will indicate whether a man is a true prophet. By contrast, proudly speaking inspired words to publicly show off the gift of prophecy, and also gushing out the words of an unregenerated heart, were equally unacceptable. Such a person was not a true prophet in God's sight.

### Showing out

The idea of "showing out" goes back to 2:18, where James asks this class of believers to show him how it was possible to have faith without works. There he is arguing that they are

indivisible, and here in 3:13 he is effectively saying the same- that the works or words are an inevitable reflection of the heart, "the faith", or "conversation".

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth" (v.14).

The bitter envying in the heart connects with the bitter water of v.11, representing the bitter words of the brethren- again showing that words and heart are effectively identical.

"Envy" is the Greek 'zelos' and is the word used to describe zeal for God; it is not the normal word translated "envy". This envying, as we can imagine from what we know already of these brethren, was justified by them with spiritual reasons; similarly Acts 13:45; 17:5 and 1 Cor.3:3 describe Jews and believers envying each other for supposedly spiritual reasons. Envy and strife within the ecclesia were a (conscious?) product of the work of the Judaizers and other false teachers amongst the brethren. It may well be that they were envious of others in the ecclesia spiritually, being jealous of the true spirituality possessed by the poorer brethren. However, the "wars and fightings" of James 4 seem to be associated with desiring material possessions (4:2), resulting in evil speaking between brethren (4:11). In this case the envying of chapter 3 could just be envying the possessions of other brethren. Yet the spiritual associations of "envying" ('zealousing') suggest that either this envying of possessions was couched in spiritual terms- e.g. 'You shouldn't have that car (which I envy) because you should show more generosity to the Truth'- or that the envying was of the more spiritual members. The envying and strife was clearly within the ecclesia, from what chapter 4 and other mentions of envying and strife imply (1 Cor.3:3; Phil.1:15 etc.). But the root cause of this was because this bitterness and envying was "in your hearts".

### **Glorying in the flesh**

Amazingly, these brethren were glorying (boasting, rejoicing) in this: "glory not". Similarly they rejoiced in their boastings about how they made plans to make business trips without taking account of the working of God's will (4:13-16)- presumably because they thought that as prophets they knew God's will. They were clearly rejoicing in what was wrong and evil, doubtless as a result of taking on board the Judaist-pedalled philosophy that "let us continue in sin, that grace may abound" (Rom.6:1). Romans was written largely to Jews- the first two chapters especially describe how the Jewish ecclesia of the first century were repeating the same errors as that in the wilderness. Digression 11, 'Israel and Romans 1', gives more detail here. The Jewish believers were reasoning that because they were Jews they were justified, and Christ being a Jew confirmed the impossibility of sin being held against them. Thus they smugly rejoiced in being able to commit sin and, as they thought, remain justified, thereby spurring their spiritual condemnation of their poorer Gentile brethren.

### **Wisdom from above**

But "this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is (as there is in your heart-v.14), there is confusion and every evil work" (v.15,16).

This is reminding them that such philosophy was not by God's inspiration- that because one is a vehicle for God's inspired word, it does not follow that all ones' thoughts and reasoning are correct. "Sensual" means 'natural', and looks back to v.7 implying that human nature cannot be tamed by the 'natural' reasoning of human nature, or the human mind- it is "devilish", or 'demoniacal'. James 2:19 has associated these Jewish believers and their semi-faith with the healed demoniacs; James is saying that such semi-faith which has enough hope to be healed but does not respond with works subsequently, is not a positive spiritual attribute at all- it is rooted in the natural, earthly mind.

James is pointing a contrast between wisdom- or the word (cp. notes on 1:5)- which comes from above, and that which is of the earth. There is a link here with Heb.2:2,3, a letter which we have suggested was sent to the same readership as James and may have been known by them already. "If the word spoken by Angels (the Law) was steadfast...how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...spoken by the Lord". "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth (Moses? The Angel who spake the Law?), much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven" (Heb.12:25). The wisdom that came from the earth is therefore associated with the Jewish system, and it is this which was resulting in all the human reasoning of these brethren; not the Law itself, but the influence of the Judaizers who advocated it. The wisdom from above mentioned in v.17 is therefore that which comes from the new covenant in Christ as opposed to that of the Law. "Descendeth" carries the idea of literal downwards movement, perhaps referring to the Angel physically descending in the cloud to give Moses the words of God by which he was constituted a prophet. If this is the reference, then as we saw in the notes on v.10, this is another rebuke of these brethren who were seeking to parallel themselves with Moses.

## Heart disease

If there is envying and strife in the heart, "there is confusion and every evil work" in the same place. Yet again, the works are said to take place in the heart. The Corinthians are twice rebuked by Paul for having confusion in the ecclesia (1 Cor.14:33; 2 Cor.12:20 translated 'tumults'), due to their misuse of the Spirit gifts. This would seem to be relevant to the situation in James' ecclesia; but again, the confusion began in the heart due to the lack of impact the word had made upon it. Another repeated theme is that "every evil work" is paralleled with the uncontrolled tongue, showing that the tongue is the summation of every potential sin that lies within our heart. The Greek for "evil work" only occurs four times; one of them is in Titus 2:8, which speaks of the Jewish and Roman adversaries of the ecclesia seeking to speak evil of the believers. Whilst on its own this would not be significant, in view of the constant parallels between the Jewish system and his readers which James is making, it appears that he is linking the evil thoughts in their hearts concerning their poor brethren, with the evil speaking about the ecclesia being done by the Jewish 'satan' outside the ecclesia.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (v.17).

The wisdom coming from above is the gift of the word coming down from God, making us "firstfruits of His (spiritual) creatures" (1:17,18). We have suggested that the wisdom from above is the word of Christ as opposed to that of Moses; in Jesus the word became flesh (Jn.1:14), the whole of God's revelation became associated with the person of Christ, not just the words of the New Testament inspired after His time. Thus this verse describes both the work of the word, and also the character of Christ, the wisdom/word of God from above. If the word was truly in them, they would have the characteristics of purity as opposed to their double mindedness; they did not have peace in their hearts (cp. v.16), their rejecting of their poor brethren's welfare requests (2:16) and harsh treatment of them (2:6; 5:4) contrasted with the gentleness and ease with which brethren should feel they can intreat us with. The word with its associated spirit of Christ will develop these attributes within us. Purity of mind (cp. Phil.4:8) is of "first" importance; if this is achieved, "then" the characteristics which the ecclesia were so sadly lacking in would then naturally follow. The Greek 'proton' occurs again in Mt.6:33: "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness". This is achieved, according to James, by striving to let the word develop now those righteous attributes which will be revealed so fully and widely in the Kingdom (cp. Rom.14:17).

## Heavenly things

"The wisdom that is from above" must also refer to Jn.3:3-5, which speaks of being born from above, i.e from Heaven. Nicodemus thought that he had already been born from above, seeing that he had a knowledge of the Law. But Christ told him "heavenly things" (Jn.3:12), which Nicodemus found hard to accept. The word which makes us born again (Jn.3:5 cp. 1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18) does so because it reveals Heavenly principles to us.

This wisdom/word in James was "full of mercy and good fruits". The word develops these fruits (Jn.15:5-8), as does Christ (Phil.1:11)- again showing His equation with the word. The language of fruiting goes back to v.12, where the tree that bears fruit is the heart of the believer. Now what bears fruit is the word- because that must be equated with the heart if good fruit is to be produced. Thus we can make the equation: Christ=Word=In heart=fruit. These factors may be arranged in any order, showing how Christ dwells in our heart by faith (Eph.3:17 cp. Col.3:16; Rom.10:17).

The fullness of spiritual attributes mentioned here may refer back to Ex.34:5-7 (R.V.), which describes the name of God as being *full* of His attributes of mercy, patience, justice etc. The word of true wisdom produces these characteristics in us, thereby giving us the Name of God. For more examples of the word giving us the Name of God through developing His attributes and fullness in us, see Digression 5. Again, James is setting an ultimate standard- aiming for the fullness of God to be developed in us through the almighty power of the word. It must be theoretically possible for a man to be perfect in God's sight; even though in the past he has failed and thus come short of Christ's standard, he can still be justified by the faith which is developed by the word acting upon him. Our Lord was of our nature, and yet still attained perfection. We are invited to follow him to perfection, being perfect even as God is. The means by which we achieve this may be slightly different to how he did; yet through the word "now are we the sons of God" (1 Jn.3:1,2; Jn.1:13; 1 Pet.1:23), Spirit-begotten as He was.

## **Actors with Oscars**

This degree of commitment to the word leads to a brother being "without partiality"; something which the ecclesia were guilty of due to their lack of having the word in their hearts (see notes on 2:4). Having their own minds full of strife, division and confusion (v.14-16) would inevitably lead them to be partial or divided in their dealings with other brethren. The word 'affectionately believed' will lead us to be "without hypocrisy"- again inviting a comparison between these brethren without the word truly in them and the Pharisees, who are those invariably described as "hypocrites" in the New Testament. However, the phrase also occurs in the sermon on the mount, and the many allusions to this discourse in James suggest that he may have had Mt.7:5 in mind: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye". We have seen that the context of James 3 is of a group of brethren criticizing another group, with the inference that their criticism was masked with pseudo-spiritual reasoning. This is exactly the theme of Mt.7:5. To avoid being a hypocrite, James implies, we need to let the word sink into ourselves- which has the same effect as casting the plank out of our own eye. It is the word which has the power of self-examination; 1 Jn.1:10 implies that if the word is in us, then we appreciate what sinners we have been. The telling thing about the description of the Spirit gifted eldership as "hypocrites" ('play-actors') is that their make-up and costume was the Truth itself. The fact we are wearing this can lead us to think that we really are the part we are playing- but putting on the clothes and changing our heart to truly identify with what we profess are two different things.

## **Blessed peacemakers**

"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (v.18).

There are a number of connections here with the Septuagint of Is.32:16-20: "Righteousness remain in the fruitful field...the work of righteousness shall be peace...quietness and assurance...blessed are ye that sow". This is clearly a Kingdom passage, yet it is quoted about our present ecclesial experience. This is one of many examples of where spirituality in this life can give us a foretaste of the Kingdom. Other instances of this will be found in Digression 4.

The wisdom coming from above in v.17 we have shown to have reference to our birth by the word, to become new creatures. Verse 18 has links with two passages which also contain this theme of spiritual re-birth by the word.

The mention of being "full of good fruits" in v.17 may be looking back to the list of spiritual fruits in the beatitudes in Mt.5- the poor in spirit, the weeping, the meek, the pure in heart, those hungering after righteousness, the peacemakers etc. comprise all the main spiritual fruits; and are also a fair description of the oppressed, spiritually minded underclass in the ecclesias to whom James is writing. Now v.18 makes a definite connection with Mt.5:9; "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". This would indicate that James read the people mentioned in the beatitudes as being within the ecclesia, and "the peacemakers" being the quiet brother who humbly tries to calm the bitter vying for power between the rich, self opinionated leaders.

In this case, James is reminding these leaders of the virtues of those they despised; they sowed the fruit of righteousness because the word developed those fruits in them. By doing so, Mt.5:9 says, they became the children of God. Thus the word led them to develop the spiritual fruits which made them peacemakers, which made them the children of God. Thus possession of the word does not automatically make us sons of God, but the effect it achieves upon us in giving us the family characteristics of our Father.

The other clear connection of v.18 is with Heb.12:11. Having spoken of the persecution of the Jewish believers being a proof of their sonship to God, "the Father of spirits", Paul encourages them that this chastening "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". The poor believers in James' ecclesias had also become the spiritual children of God by the word acting on them, making them react to the chastening they were receiving at the hands of the rich brethren by developing peace. Their peaceful sowing of the word, which was the seed sown (Lk.8:11), was going to lead them to "raise a harvest of righteousness" (N.I.V.) in their own characters.

If this line of interpretation is correct, it would appear that the poor, mistreated brethren were humbly responding to the criticisms of them (the cursing of v.9) by quietly quoting the word, in order to try and make peace both between them and the rich brethren, and between the rival factions in the eldership. See notes on 5:7 for more on this. This problem of there being "wars and fightings" amongst this group is continued in 4:1, thus making the chapter division unfortunate.

## Footnotes

(1) The "man of sin" must have a primary reference to a Judas-like character within the early ecclesia who was trying to lead them back to Judaism.

(2) Ps.12:4= James 4:13; the sighing of the oppressed against the proud speakers in v.5 parallels James 5:4 concerning the oppressed labouring brethren sighing to God because of the abuses of their rich employers in the ecclesia.

(3) E.g. Matt.5:29; Lk.11:34,36; Jn.2:21; Rom.8:23; 1 Cor.6:19,20; 11:24; Eph.5:23; 1 Thess.5:23.



(4) See *'The Redemption of the Body'*, The Bible Student, Vol.20 no.6.

(5) Presumably this talking false doctrine at the love feast was in the form of the 'exhortation'. In the same way as in the synagogue any suitably qualified visitor was asked to speak for the edification of the congregation if they wished (Acts 13:15), so in the early Jewish ecclesias it may have been the custom for any brother who so wished to speak a word of exhortation.

(6) See Jn.8:44.

(7) See John Allfree *'Demon Possession'* (Mansfield: Bible Study Publications, 1986).

(8) See James 1:4; 3:2; 1 Cor.13:10; 2 Tim.3:16,17.

(9) This would explain why the "man of sin" passage in 2 Thess.2 has so many allusions to Judas; as if the persecuting system it describes has associations with renegade believers.

## James Chapter 4

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your own lusts that war in your members?" (v.1).

The way this is phrased implies that the unspiritual brethren were blaming the evident infighting within the ecclesia on others- perhaps the group of poor brethren who they spiritually cursed in 3:9,10. Note how the fightings came out of their lusts- "come they not hence...?" is the language of physical movement, cp. "out of the same mouth *proceedeth* blessing and cursing" (3:10), "drawn away of his own lust" (1:14) **(1)**. Lusts warring in the members suggests an allusion to Rom.7:23 "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members". The allusions to Romans may be because this letter too was in circulation amongst the dispersed Jewish believers. The "members" of James 4:1 are therefore the parts of the evil human heart. The double mindedness in the hearts of the individual brethren was inevitably reflected in the members of the ecclesial body (cp. 1 Cor.12:12; Eph.4:25). Another link with 1 Peter clarifies that the warfare within the body was also within their own minds: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet.2:11). The Greek for "lusts" here in James 4 is not the normal word so translated. The only other times it occurs are in 2 Pet.2:13 translated "pleasure", where it is associated with the Judaist false teachers; Tit.3:3, where Paul says these lusts were part of his former Judaist life; and in Lk.8:14 regarding that which chokes the growth of the word.

Their lusts or pleasures may have warred against each other in the sense that they desired different things which conflicted within their heart, but the idea of war and fighting seems more usually used with reference to the spiritual warfare within the human heart (cp. 1 Pet.2:11), whereby the spiritual reservoir is under violent attack from the united desires for the various pleasures to be possessed. The Greek for "fightings" occurs in Titus 3:9 and 2 Tim.2:23,24 concerning arguments within the ecclesia over the interpretation of the Law. It would therefore seem that the justification for gratifying their materialistic desires was based on misapplication of the word. Again we are seeing the classic characteristic of apostasy- a mixture of truth with error until a position of self-justification has been reached.

These reasonings over certain passages began as a debate within their own heart ("members"), and then spread to the whole ecclesia.

We have pointed out that the break between chapters 3 and 4 is unfortunate. The mention of "wars" in 4:1 and "confusion" in 3:16 only 3 verses earlier suggests a connection with the "wars and commotions" heralding the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk.21:9), seeing that "confusion" and "commotions" are the same Greek word. Is James implying that the crazy political situation in the world that heralded Jerusalem's downfall was going to be reflected in

ecclesial life in the last days, resulting in a similar downfall of the scattered Jerusalem ecclesia? The situation within the body in these last days may provide an unfortunate parallel.

## **Verdict: manslaughter**

"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (v.2).

The Greek for "lust" here is the normal word, and a powerful parallel is made between this and asking (praying) in the wrong way. Such prayer is an expression of lust; the very same word is used concerning lusting after a woman in Mt.5:28. Prayer to God for personal pleasures that gushes out without the restraint of the word is truly a serious offence.

The idea of killing in 2:11 was interpreted as meaning showing lack of love to your brother, after the pattern of Mt.5:21,22. The word for "kill" here in James is not the usual Greek word. This one is normally translated "kill" in the phrase "Thou shalt not kill" when quoting the ten commandments. Thus James is making an especial appeal to their Jewish minds by implying that their lack of love really is effective manslaughter. Thus in order to satisfy their carnal desires they were killing or hating their brethren. An obvious fulfilment of this would have been in their withholding of the meagre wages of the poor brethren- effectively killing them by their lack of love- in order to indulge their latest pleasures. What parallels with saving for the holiday home at the expense of struggling ecclesias in the third world?

"Desire to have" is a very emotion-loaded word in Greek, implying to be moved to jealousy by something or someone. Such a motivation for prayer is unacceptable. The parallel is with "and cannot obtain", which means literally 'to chance upon'. Their semi-spiritual attitude to life is epitomized by their psychology of prayer- thinking they might chance to get the answer to a prayer, they expressed their emotional, natural desires for the pleasures of this life in prayer, justifying this by misapplying Scripture. They never realized that the love of these pleasures was actually swamping the growth of the real word seed, which was occasionally planted in them by the poor brethren reminding them of the word; so the two references to the sower parable in 3:18 and 4:1 would imply.

### **Asking amiss**

Despite all the commotion within their hearts and the ecclesia, and perhaps also in their strivings in their misdirected prayers, "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (v.3). Although they asked in prayer, in God's sight such words are not prayer: "Ye ask not...ye ask", because desiring is not praying. Alternatively, this may be looking back to 1:4,5 about asking for wisdom, as if to say 'You don't receive answers to your prayers for material things because you don't pray firstly for the wisdom from the word to be in your heart, which would have made your subsequent prayers powerful'.

There is a link here with Mt.7:7,8: "Ask, and it shall be given you...for every one that asketh receiveth". But "Ye ask and receive *not*". The reason for such powerful prayer is given in the surrounding context in Mt.7- if they were not hypocrites in criticizing their brethren, which 3:17 implies they were guilty of, and if they did to men as they would like God to do to them (Mt.7:2,12). Not surprisingly therefore, the prayers of these brethren were not answered as Mt.7 promised. There is probably also a reference to Jn.15:7: "If...my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you". "Done unto you" possibly implies physical blessing. Because the word was not in them, which is the whole theme of James, this promise was not fulfilled in them.

"Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (v.3).

"Amis" is from a word meaning to be sick or diseased, or generally 'evil'. Although it is not the same word translated "sick" in 5:14-16, there may be a connection with the idea there of them being struck with physical sickness because of their sin and being advised to pray for forgiveness and therefore a cure. Here in 4:3 James is saying that their prayers were for human things and therefore they and their prayers were sick. "Consume" means 'to spend' in a financial sense, thus suggesting that they were asking God to specifically provide money, which they would then spend on their various pleasures ("lusts"). This would explain their 'killing' of their brethren by holding back wages from them (5:4), because they specifically wanted the cash in hand; see notes on 5:3 too.

## Friends of the earth

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (v.4).

As the reference to killing in v.2 looks back to 2:11 in the sense of killing your brother by not loving him, so the command in the Old Covenant not to commit adultery mentioned in 2:11 is here interpreted as meaning not having friendship with the world. James' reasoning seems to be based (yet again) in the sermon on the mount- this time in the passage about not being able to serve two masters, which results in loving the one and hating the other (Mt.6:24). James is putting things in black and white terms again. By their prayers being based on the human desires of their heart they were loving the world and thereby hating God. "The world" is therefore primarily our evil desires- the world is in our heart (Ecc.3:11,12), and "The lust of the eyes" etc. is "All that is in the world". The language of adultery invites us to interpret being a "friend" of the world in a sexual context, or to see that mere friendship with the world is of the same intensity as intercourse with it, in God's sight. Serving mammon (the world) in the two masters parable is due to taking thought for human possessions (Mt.6:25)- i.e. the service of mammon is a mental condition in the heart rather than just physically spending time pursuing these things. This is exactly the context here in James. "Friendship" (Greek 'philia') is a gentle word, even implying 'fondness'. Being a friend of the world means that, in the light of the two masters parable, they were not being a friend of God. This maybe connects with 2:23, which calls Abraham a friend of God because of his faith and works based on the word of promise taking hold of his heart. Their friendship or sympathy to the world and its desires which were in their heart meant that they had no real faith because the word was not truly influencing their thinking.

This friendship with the world is "enmity with God". This takes us immediately to Rom.8:7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God", thus again connecting the love of the world with the unregenerated mind. James is pounding away about the importance of the mind, and therefore of our attitude to the word which influences it. This enmity is further defined in Eph.2:15,16: "Having abolished in His (Christ's) flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments...for to make in himself one new man...that He might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby". The phrase "*the* enmity" implies that this is the same enmity as referred to elsewhere, namely in Rom.8:7. The carnal mind allowed itself to be stimulated by the Law- not that the Law encouraged sin, but man's response to it encouraged carnal thinking, e.g. in the form of self righteousness (2). This again hints that their "friendship of the world" was justified by their misquoting of the Law. "The world" which they were so sympathetic towards (so "friendship" implies) may even refer to the Jewish world, both in its doctrine and its materialistic, pleasure-seeking attitude to life.

## Scripture in vain?

"Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (v.5).

This does not appear to be a verbatim quote from any manuscript- for a comment on the word "scripture" see notes on 2:23. James is effectively rebuking them for their lack of sensitivity to the word- by not recognizing the fundamentally lustful nature of our natural mind, they were effectively saying that the Scriptures' warnings about our evil human nature were "vain". They thought that by reason of possessing the Spirit gifts the evils of the human heart were by-passed an error also made by evangelical theology today. There appears to be a reference back to the descriptions of man at Noah's time in Gen.6:5 and 8:21 as having a fundamentally wicked heart. 2 Pet.3, Jude and the Lord in His Olivet prophecy all interpret Noah's world as being a type of the Jewish system heading towards destruction in AD70. So again James is saying that the lustful attitude of mind within these Jewish believers equated them with the rest of the Jewish world, which was about to be destroyed as Noah's world was. The Greek for "vain" is often used about vain Jewish philosophy that affected the ecclesias (Eph.5:6; Col.2:8; 1 Tim.6:20; 2 Tim.2:16; and Acts 4:25); it also looks back to the description of the brethren James is writing to as "vain" in 2:20. This would imply that because of the influence of vain Jewish (Judaist?) reasoning, they had become vain in their minds, and therefore Scripture had also become vain to them. The Greek for "dwelleth" means 'to dwell as an integral part'; the same Greek word for 'dwell' occurs in Rom.7:17,18,20, describing "sin that dwelleth" within our members; we have seen 4:1 is alluding to this same passage in Rom.7 concerning the spiritual conflict in our members. The same word is also used in 1 Cor.3:16 about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the early believers through their possession of the gifts- maybe suggesting that James is reminding the Jewish ecclesial elders that the Spirit gifts dwelling in them did not mean that the evil human spirit of our own nature did not dwell in them. The very word "spirit" can refer both to this human spirit and also to the spirit of Christ in our minds. Thus they had to have the Spirit truly in their heart by their response to the word as well as tabernacling in them by reason of their possession of the gifts. The effort to apply the word to the human heart is therefore not just something which began after the miraculous gifts were withdrawn, but which also had to be practiced by their early possessors. If even those with the gift of prophecy (i.e. chosen by God to speak forth His word under direct inspiration) had to make this effort; how much more must we? God *yearns* that we might have a spirit like His, that we might be spiritually minded: "He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us" (James 4:5). And be sure that He will be ever working in our lives to try to get us to have this focus.

## **Envy**

The particular aspect of our inherent natural spirit that James draws attention to is its capacity to envy. We have suggested previously that their desire for wealth led these brethren to show a lack of love to the others in the ecclesia, although they justified this by misinterpreting parts of the Law. James is saying that they should not justify these envious feelings so quickly, but remember that Scripture generally warns that these feelings are part of our fallen nature, and they should not misapply odd passages to justify them as acceptable. The Greek for "envy" here is always used elsewhere concerning either the envying of the Jews against the believers, or about the envyings generated within the ecclesia by Judaist-stimulated controversies.

"But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (v.6).

This apparent personality of "the Scripture" was commented on under 2:23. Having quoted Scripture which states the pathetic spiritual condition of man, James quickly reminds us of another Scripture that gives more hope. The context of v.6 is in the earlier verses of the

chapter concerning why their prayers were unanswered. "Grace" means 'gift', and can refer to the answer of prayer by God's Spirit (See Digression 12). Thus James is saying 'God does actually answer prayer- Prov.3:34 says he gives grace to the humble, i.e. He answers their prayers, although He resists the requests of the proud'. Note that James is quoting the Septuagint version of Prov.3:34 here rather than the Hebrew Old Testament; for comments on which see Digression 13.

## **Giving grace**

Giving grace in the sense of a gift also recalls 1:17,18 and 3:17 concerning the gift of the word- as if to show that God would hear prayers for the wisdom of the word to be revealed to them (cp.1:5), but not answer a 'wants list' of worldly pleasures. The context of the quote from Proverbs is that the humble man is the one who has wisdom- i.e. who has taken note of the word in his heart. For more connections between the word and humility, see Digression 10. Being humble is paralleled with being submissive to God and resisting our evil nature (v.7) and drawing nigh to God acceptably (v.8); thus humility born of the word is revealed by both our attitude to God's holiness and to our own innate sinfulness. The brash prayers and self justification of these brethren was in sharp contrast to all this. The same verse from Proverbs is also quoted in 1 Pet.5:5 in the context of the elders showing loving care to the flock, because God "giveth grace to the humble". This context of commands to elders is the same as in James, whose intended readership appears to have been the same group of elders in the Jewish ecclesias. Peter's argument, if it follows that of James, would therefore be that their prayers would be hindered, i.e. grace would not be shown- if the elders proudly oppressed the flock. Note that these same elders are warned not to exact money from the flock as a reward for their shepherding in 1 Pet.5:2, which we have seen was a problem mentioned by James in the form of them holding back wages from their brethren-employees. This would mean that this was being done under the spiritual pretext of keeping the money back as the wages of the elders, no doubt backed up with some misinterpretations from the Mosaic Law.

## **Resistance movement**

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (v.7).

"Submit" means literally to put oneself under- i.e. to keep under these evil human desires, which is the same as resisting the Biblical devil. Bearing in mind the Jewish background of this letter and the other connections with Romans, this idea of submission to God may be referring back to Rom.10:3: "They (the Jews) being ignorant of *God's* righteousness, (through a lack of open-hearted Bible study), and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God". Thus one of the root causes of their pride and lack of recognition of their own sinfulness was that they were influenced by the Jewish concept of self-righteousness. Note the importance of doctrine in having very practical effects on a man's way of thinking and thereby his standing with God. There is a clear parallel between these verses in James 4 and 1 Pet.5:2-9. After making the quotation from Prov.3:34, Peter warns them to "be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". This primarily refers to the Jewish and Roman authorities seeking occasion to criticize and therefore persecute the Christians. However, the parallel in James 4:7 is "resist the devil", which corresponds with 1 Peter 5:9 "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world". The devil of Peter refers to the Jewish/Roman systems as well as to the flesh. The Greek "pathema" translated "afflictions" means both physical persecution and 'an emotion or influence' (Strong), thus showing that both types of 'devil' are referred to here, although the emphasis in Peter's case is on the devil as a civil

power. 'Pathema' is used concerning physical persecution by the civil 'devil' in 2 Tim.3:11; Heb.10:32; 2 Cor.1:6; 1 Pet.5:1; and concerning our evil desires in Rom.7:5 (the "motions" of sin within us), and the "affections" of the flesh in Col.3:5; Rom.1:26; Gal.5:24. Thus the parallel passage in James 4:7 concerning resisting the devil is about both the Roman/ Jewish system and the evil desires of the flesh, although the latter is the context in James, whilst the former provides the backdrop to Peter's use of the word.

Again, we see that the Jewish thinking influencing the ecclesia was encouraging the 'devil' of their evil hearts, whilst a conscious resisting of the Judaizers' inroads and of the fleshly heart would lead to those things fleeing. More comment upon 1 Pet.5:8 and the relationship between physical and spiritual trial will be found in Digression 1.

## Draw nigh...draw nigh

"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (v.8).

The Greek phrase for "draw nigh" is used in the Septuagint- the N.I.V. for first century Christians- to describe the priests drawing near to God in the offering of sacrifices and prayers. The elders were being reminded that they were equivalent of priests in the new Israel (3) and therefore had a responsibility to acceptably and reverently draw near to God on behalf of the congregation, as well as to accurately expound the word publicly (Mal.2:7; Hos.4:6; see too comments on 2:9). This drawing near to God in prayer was only possible through a pure heart and therefore pure hands or actions. God would only hear their prayers if these things were in order; which is why the feeling we should have that our prayers are heard should give us confidence that spiritually we are going the right way (1 Jn.5:14).

"Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you" (Zech.1:3) and "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Mal.3:7) must be the basis for these words of James. Both these passages are in the context of Israel's restoration at the time of the second temple; there are a number of other connections between James and the restoration prophets:

| James | Restoration prophets |
|-------|----------------------|
| 1:13  | Mal.3:15             |
| 1:17  | Mal.3:6              |
| 1:27  | Mal.3:5; Zech.7:10   |
| 2:1   | Mal.1:9              |
| 2:4   | Mal.2:9              |
| 4:3   | Mal.2:13             |
| 4:4   | Mal.2:11             |
| 5:3   | Mal.4:1              |

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 5:4  | Mal.3:5     |
| 5:17 | Hag.1:10,11 |
| 5:20 | Mal.2:6     |

As it was the duty of the priests to convert the people of Israel by the word (Mal.2:6), so it was too for the ecclesial elders of the New Israel (James 5:20). But as the temple was neglected due to bickering, materialism and fleshly living among the priests, so was the ecclesia of the first century. The problems of Malachi's time and also those of James were solved by a coming of the Lord (Mal.3:1,2). Living on the brink of Christ's return, there must be similarities with the present ecclesial position. All these types highlight the key position of elders in influencing the ecclesia, and therefore the standards required of them. A fair degree of our current ecclesial problems may be traceable in some measure to our inattention to the importance of elders' qualifications.

The idea of drawing near may have feint connections with the day of the Lord in AD70 drawing near; the same Greek phrase is used in Mt.24:32; Lk.21:20,28; and see notes on 5:8. The Greek root is 'to squeeze close', which we can do to God by prayer, and which He will therefore do to us. The parallel in 1 Pet.5:6 says that in response to humbly drawing near to God, He will "exalt you in due time"- i.e. answer your prayers eventually, and especially with a place in the Kingdom (cp. "friend come up higher" at the judgment seat). God's immediate drawing near to us as a result of our drawing near to Him is therefore not necessarily in the immediate answering of prayer, but in the sense of peace with God which we have after acceptably placing our requests before Him- "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds" (Phil.4:6,7), even before we receive the answers.

The language of physical movement in verses 7 and 8 paints a fascinating picture of a man walking towards God ("drawing near" is often used in the sense of literal walking), thereby resisting the devil, and therefore the devil turning tail and fleeing in the opposite direction. As we walk towards God, he walks towards us- perhaps alluding to the parable of the prodigal son, where the man's walking towards the Father is matched by His running towards him (Lk.15:20), so eager is our God to respond to any real spiritual effort on our part. The context here in James 4 is of prayer- the drawing near to God is in prayer.

## **Cleansing hands**

The idea of cleansing the hands suggests a link with Is.1, which has other connections with James: "When ye spread forth your hands (in prayer), I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear (as was happening to these brethren): your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean (cp. "cleanse your hands"); put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes...seek judgment, relieve the oppressed (what the brethren had not done- James 2:14-16; 5:4), judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (cp. James 1:27- what they didn't do)...if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land (i.e. inherit the Kingdom): but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (AD70; Is.1:15-20). These scattered members of the Jerusalem ecclesia were therefore being equated with the "sinners in Zion" at the time of Sennacherib's Assyrian invasion; it was in their capacity to enable the Kingdom to be established in AD70, but if they continued in sin both they and Jerusalem along with natural Israel would be destroyed. Sadly they chose the latter,

and their counterparts in Hezekiah's time made such a shallow reformation that they only succeeded in deferring judgment. The Greek word 'katharizo' is often used for the 'cleansing' of leprosy; the Lord likened the Pharisees to cups that needed cleansing, i.e. the cups were defiled by leprosy and needed purification; His description of Jerusalem's destruction stone by stone recalled the method of destroying a leprous house. The Jewish system was leprous because *inwardly* it was defiled; externally it looked fine (Mt.23:26). It was their fleshly way of thinking that was the real leprosy, and this is also the context here in James 4:6; the cleansing of actions is parallel to purifying a double-minded heart, because in James the thoughts of the heart and actions, especially words, are treated as identical.

## Washing the heart

Cleansing or purifying ('washing') the heart suggests Jer.4:14, which is also in the context of the impending destruction of Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem (ecclesia!), wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain (cp. 2:20 "vain man") thoughts lodge within thee?". The parallels between these believers and apostate Israel are unmistakable. "Purify" is often used about Mosaic purification (Jn.11:55; Acts 21:24 etc.)- cp. the idea of cleansing being associated with the Law's commandments about leprosy. This purification by washing comes from "the wisdom that is from above (that) is...pure" (3:17)- i.e. the word, "the washing of water by the word" (Eph.5:26), which is the new covenant's equivalent to the purification process performed in the laver. For this reason John Thomas translates Titus 3:5 as "the laver of regeneration", cp. "the washing of regeneration...of the Holy Spirit", in the word.

"Purify your hearts, ye double minded" implies that having a mind which was only semi-spiritual was as bad as being totally defiled and needing cleansing. It looks back to the description of those who had only semi-faith in prayer as "double-minded" in 1:8. Here in chapter 4 the context is the same (see notes on 4:1-3). Thus James is saying in 1:6-8 'Ask for wisdom, the spiritual strength from the word, in full faith, not the double-minded prayers you have been making for your pleasures ("lusts", 4:3)'. See notes on 1:8 for more on "double minded".

## Real repentance

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (v.9).

This exhortation to weeping and the general theme of making a repentance from the heart recalls Jesus' desperate, 11th hour call to repentance to avoid judgment on Jerusalem. "Turn ye even to me (cp. "draw nigh to God") with all your heart (cp. "ye double minded"), and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments (cp. their hypocrisy- James 3:17)...who knoweth if He will turn and repent (of the planned judgments on Israel, natural and spiritual)?...let the priests (cp. the ecclesial elders of James)...weep" (Joel 2:12-17). Joel 2 goes on to describe the judgments of AD70 in verses 30-32- according to Peter's quotation of them in Acts 2.

The double emphasis on mourning in this verse suggests reference to Mt.5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted". This would mean that James interpreted this group of people as those mourning in repentance for their sins, receiving the comfort (Greek 'parakleo'- drawing near) of closeness to God. The idea of God drawing near has been seen in the preceding verse- "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you". Again, the encouragement James' readers got from his words was proportionate to their ability to pick up these definite connections with other passages. To him that has spiritual talents of understanding the word, more will be given. James could have said 'Jesus basically said,



"mourn and I will draw near to you", so mourn in repentance and this is how God through Christ will draw near to you, as I have just spoken about in v.8'. But instead we have to be sensitive to the two mentions of mourning here in v.9, recognize this is one of the many references back to the sermon on the mount, and appreciate the similarity of meaning between 'comforted' in Mt.5:4 and "draw nigh" in v.8. That the connection with Mt.5:4 is valid is confirmed by the Greek word for "joy" in James 4:9 only occurring elsewhere in Lk.6:25, which is effectively repeating Mt.5:4: "Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep". "Mourn and weep" is repeated in James 4:9.

### **Emblems- of what?**

There seems fair reason to believe that the riotous merry making mentioned here occurred at the Breaking of Bread. 1 Cor.11 rebukes some at the Corinth ecclesia (which included Jews, and was probably in receipt of James' letter, therefore) for getting drunk at the communion service. Similarly Peter and Jude warn of those brethren who 'feasted' at the love feast (Breaking of Bread). The Greek in Jude 12 means to revel or be sumptuous, and describes those guilty as "feeding themselves without fear". This word for "feeding" specifically means to shepherd- as if it were the ecclesial elders or shepherds who were particularly guilty of these abuses. Thus James is saying that they ought to be mourning and weeping in repentance at the Breaking of Bread rather than revelling.

If this is what James is meaning, some important practical issues emerge. Firstly, sorrow and an apparently long face are to be expected from many of us who inevitably feel the need for repentance burning keenly as we face the supreme dedication and holiness of Christ on the cross. There seems far too much criticism of those who do "weep and mourn" in their souls with a spirit of heaviness (cp. Is.61:3; James 4:9) at the memorial service. How can any of us tell another to be more happy or look more cheerful without knowing the nature of their relationship with God in the past few days? For such an intensity of self-knowledge and repentance to occur, there must be a fair period of time for reflection and self-examination- not just the odd minute as we wait for the emblems to reach us. The "feast of charity" referred to in Jude 12 would have been a replica of the last supper- a whole meal of fellowship followed by the specific taking of the bread and wine.

"Afflicted" means 'to realize ones own misery' (Strong) and only occurs elsewhere in Rom.7:24 and Rev.3:17. Romans 7 and 8 have been alluded to previously in the letter, and Rom.7:24 is describing the wretchedness Paul felt due to appreciating how sinful his innate evil desires really were. This marvellously fits the context of James 4, where he is advising them to analyze their own evil hearts more and appreciate their inherent sinfulness. By doing so they would feel "wretched" or "afflicted". The Laodiceans were perhaps another ecclesia with a Jewish element to whom James was also writing; they certainly had the same problems of materialism and a lukewarm, semi-spirituality. The Lord criticized them for not knowing that they were wretched, i.e. not examining the wretchedness of their own evil desires enough. The idea of wretchedness is similar, although not linguistically connected, to the descriptions of the rejected at the day of judgment, writhing in the pain of self-hate, realizing for the first time the degree of their inherent sinfulness. If we judge ourselves now, i.e. examine ourselves and realize we are worthy of condemnation (judgment- Mt.7:1), then we will not be judged (1 Cor.11:31).

They were to "turn" their revelling into sorrow; a word which means basically 'to pervert'- e.g. the Judaizers perverted (same word) the Gospel of Christ (Gal.1:7). This would imply that as they had perverted the Gospel, they were to 'pervert' it back again; they had spiritually justified their laughter and revelling by this perversion.

## **Uplifting**

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (v.10).

The parallel in 1 Pet.5:6 indicates that this lifting up is at the judgment seat: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you (same Greek as "lift you up" in James) in due time", i.e. in the future, at the judgment (cp. "come up higher" in the wedding feast parable). Thus if we examine ourselves to the degree of wretchedly feeling that we in our own strength will be only worthy of condemnation, then as we will be lifted up from our grovelling before Christ at the judgment, so He will lift us up now. Luke 21:36 seems to refer to this lifting up at the judgment: "Pray always...to be stood before the Son of man"- by the Angel gently lifting us up from the ground at Christ's feet, as He did to Daniel in his acting out of our experience at the judgment (Dan.10:8-19).

The humbling of self spoken of in verses 6 and 7 was in the context of being humble in prayer. The lifting up which comes as a result of this we have shown to be our exaltation in the Kingdom. Thus by reason of having our prayers heard, especially those for the gift of the understanding of the word (4:6 cp. 1:17,18; 3:17), it is as if we are exalted in prospect into places in the Kingdom. Thus 1 Jn.5:14 says that the confidence we have of acceptance at the judgment is based on our prayers being answered now.

James 1:9 spoke of the humble brother rejoicing in that he is exalted ("lifted up" in 4:10). The context there was of having prayers for wisdom heard (1:5,6). The rich man's wavering prayers (1:6 cp. 4:14) were unheeded compared to those of the poor. Thus the poor brother being "lifted up" was through his prayers being answered. Now in 4:10 James is again telling the rich elders to humble themselves like the poor brethren so that they too could be lifted up. The emphasis in 1:9 and 4:10 is on God lifting us up (same word as "exalting"). This must look back to the repeated warnings in the Gospels about exalting oneself (Lk.14:11; 18:14; Mt.23:12), often referring to the Jews who did this. The man of sin, which must have reference to both Jewish and Roman systems of apostasy, also "exalteth himself" (2 Thess.2:4). The Jewish characteristic of spiritual self-exaltation was therefore seen in these Jewish brethren.

There is a parallel between verses 6 and 10; God "giveth grace unto the humble" (v.6) and lifts them up (v.10). The giving of grace we have interpreted as giving the answer to prayer, and especially in the gift of wisdom from the word; this equates with being lifted up with a place in the Kingdom. Thus to an extent we are in the Kingdom now in prospect (See Digression 4), through experiencing the gifts of the word and answered prayer.

## **Evil speaking**

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (v.11).

James now speaks specifically of one particular manifestation of their evil desires and the things which militated against their prayers being answered, namely evil speaking and condemning the poor brethren. This is the same thing as noted in 3:9,10, where we saw that they cursed these brethren with the excuse that they were doing it under the inspiration of God.

Their evil speaking was due to not letting the word curb their evil desires; they were thus effectively judging the word, saying that their own natural spirit was superior to that holy Spirit provided by a humble response to the word. Similarly they effectively thought that the Scriptures' warning against the natural lust of our heart was "vain" (4:5). Note that speaking

evil of the brother and speaking evil of the law are equated, implying that the brethren they were slandering had the word in them. The parallel passage in 1 Pet.2:1,2 says that the antidote to "evil speakings" was to "desire the sincere milk of the word" as newborn spiritual babes- strong medicine for ecclesial 'elders', who probably had the gift of prophecy. Possession of the miraculous gifts did not force them to desire the true spirit of the word (4). Speaking evil is equivalent to condemning or spiritually killing a brother, according to James- no doubt basing his reasoning on that of the Lord, that to hate your brother was to kill him (Mt.5:21,22).

James saw the Mosaic command not to kill your brother as meaning 'do not condemn' under the New Covenant. Therefore to do so was to speak evil of "the law" both of Moses and Christ. The Lord also said that to call your brother a "Fool" was as bad as condemning or killing him. The Greek for "fool" implies someone who has been shut out of a certain knowledge; the word is invariably used in the New Testament regarding someone lacking in the true knowledge of God. There does seem to be a definite reference to Mt.5:21,22, and therefore James would be implying that the Jewish elders were accusing the others of not having their true knowledge of God (due to their gift of prophecy, they may have argued?) and therefore being condemned by God. By doing so they were speaking evil of the word which the other brethren had received, which was enough to make them spiritually wise ("the wisdom that is from above", 1:17,18 cp. 3:17) and not fools, as the elders accused them of being. The elders were not denying that the others had received part of the word, but were saying that without having the knowledge which they claimed to have, these brethren were fools, i.e. 'judged' or condemned. This spiritual superiority due to supposed additional revelation is a common characteristic of the descriptions of the Judaizers and their followers: Rev. 2:24, "the (pseudo) depths of (the Jewish) satan"; Jude 10; 1 Cor.1:17-21; 2:1-7; 3:18,19; 2 Cor.11:19; Rom.1:22; 12:16. Jude 19 describes these brethren as separating themselves, falsely claiming to have the Spirit, although they still attended the communion service to spread their false ideas (v.12); thus their separating of themselves was not in a physical sense, but an elitism due to their claim to have superior Spirit-given knowledge. Even today it is possible for there to be spiritual elitism from thinking that we have a deep understanding of the Spirit word which others are not yet able to appreciate.

This verse 11 seems to consciously refer back to 2:5-16. Speaking evil of "the law" by evil speaking about the brethren is probably based on 2:8,9: "Respect to persons (breaks)...*the* royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". The chapter 2 passage mentions the oppression of the poor brethren before the "judgment seats" of the eldership (2:6), and the subsequent turning down of their welfare requests (2:16), as examples of breaking the royal law. That same law was being broken by the elders falsely accusing and condemning their brother, according to 4:11. Thus these elders were trying to act like Christ in His role as judge, and were bringing false accusation against the brethren and subsequently condemning them, as an excuse not to provide them with their basic needs, and to withhold their legitimate wages (5:4).

### **Law makers and breakers**

The judges of Israel under the Mosaic Law were those "to whom the word of God came", and yet they were condemned for judging unjustly, accepting the persons of the wicked (cp. saying to the well dressed man 'sit here', 2:3), not defending the poor and fatherless (the Jewish ecclesial elders also neglected these; 1:27) and not delivering the poor and needy (cp. 2:15,16; 4:5). Despite being inspired with the word of God "they know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness" (Jn.10:34-36; Ps.82:1-5). James is making a very apt comparison between these judges and the Jewish eldership, who had become so obsessed

with being the equivalent of these judges in the new Israel that they had come to think that their personal doing of the law was not important. Similarly those today who publicly expound the word can become 'judges' rather than doers. That they judged the law may even imply that they set up their personal ideas as being greater and more inspired than the word of God itself, and maybe even 'judged' or condemned part of the word which conflicted with their personal 'wisdom'. Being a doer of the law must be another allusion to Romans: "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom.2:13). This is again in the context of Paul's rebuke of the Jewish thinking that by being Jews and having heard the Law they were justified; and this also connects with the argument in James 2:20 that holding "the faith" must be accompanied by works, and being "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (1:22,23).

"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (v.12).

The stress on *one* lawgiver suggests, in harmony with our previous comments, that the elders were making new laws under the claim of inspiration, and were using these to condemn their brethren. Note how the evil speaking which began as a result of the word not controlling their thoughts led them to condemn others, contrary to the clear law of Christ (Mt.7:1), and having effectively disregarded the word their next step was to literally add to it. They had already done this in effect by trying to Biblically justify their wrong actions (5). The phrase "there is one lawgiver" would have rung bells in every Jewish mind concerning Moses the lawgiver. Again their likening of themselves to Moses is being condemned (see notes on 3:10). However, the ultimate lawgiver is God, who is "able to...destroy" soul and body (alluding to Mt.10:28). The fact that God's ability to save and destroy in Gehenna at the judgment (n.b. the Mt.10:28 allusion) is chosen out of all His powers, shows that the elders were specifically claiming that they had the power to make the decision of salvation or destruction, and that the judgment panel which they formed to judge the poor brethren was rated by them as an exact equivalent to Christ's judgment seat at the second coming. The extent of their blasphemy of the word of God which they claimed justified them in all this is hard to comprehend.

### **Wrong judgment**

This verse has clear reference to Rom.14:4: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand". We have seen in 4:10 the idea of being lifted up at the day of judgment. Thus Paul in Romans is also using 'judging' in the sense of spiritually condemning, and is saying that the brethren doing such judgment were usurping Christ's position as the judge, saying *they* were the master of the servants. Therefore Paul says that such condemned brethren will be justified by being lifted up to acceptance at the true judgment seat. The similarity of the situation suggests strongly that Romans and James were written to the same readership, and that their writers expected the readers to make connections between the letters- due to the same spirit inspiring both writers. The context in Rom.14:3 is judging (i.e. condemning) your brother due to his attitude to the Mosaic food laws and the Sabbath. Those who were doing the judging were "him that eateth not"- i.e. the Judaizers who wanted a move back to the Jewish laws. The connections between Romans and James are such that we can safely say that the group who were doing the judging in James are identical to the group of Judaizers in Romans. Thus the group of Jewish elders James writes to were almost definitely either Judaizers or Judaist influenced. The connections with James would explain why Rom.14:10-13 stresses so much that the judge at the judgment seat is God through Christ, rather than men. The importance of this can be appreciated far more once it is recognized that the Jewish

eldership were claiming to have an inspired command from God to set up judgment seats and judge to condemnation on Christ's behalf.

The situation is made the more fascinating when we appreciate that the power of the Spirit was available to the apostles and possibly some elders to inflict physical sickness as a punishment- e.g. Peter could strike Ananias and Sapphira dead, Christ would threaten to strike down false teachers (Rev.2:23; 22:18); Peter could threaten many (unrecorded) physical curses that he could bring upon Simon for his blasphemy (Acts 8:24); Paul could make Elymas blind (Acts 13:9-11) (6). It is probable that the gift of healing was largely used to cure such people after their repentance, and this is the basis of James 5:15 (see note there). It would appear that the Jewish elders were claiming some kind of similar authority.

## "Go to..."

"Go to now (N.I.V. "Now listen"- i.e. to the *true* word of God), ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain" (v.13).

The two references to "Go to" in James (here and 5:1) suggest immediately the one other place where this idiom is used- it occurs three times in five verses in Gen.11:3-7 concerning the building of Babel. There is good reason to believe that Babel represented the apostate Jewish system of worship. "A city and a tower" of Gen.11:4 points forward to Jerusalem and the Jewish system having a tower in the midst of its vineyard (Is.5:2; Mt.21:33). All Jewish temples were built with the help of Gentile labour, as Babel was built by all nations collected together in one purpose. Babel and Shinar are the basis of Babylon in Scripture, and the descriptions of Babylon in Revelation have many echoes of the Jewish system. The scattering abroad of Babel all over the earth corresponds to God's Angelic 'coming down' on Jerusalem in AD70 and the subsequent scattering of the Jews world-wide. We have seen previously that James very much has the events of AD70 in mind, and the use of the phrase "go to" would be another reminder that unless the Jewish believers repented of their materialism and other unspirituality, then both natural and spiritual Jerusalem would be severely punished- as indeed happened to both of them.

We have shown earlier that this verse primarily refers to the itinerant Jewish traders within the ecclesia. 2 John 7-11 (also written to a Jewish audience?) also speaks of itinerant preachers who were likely to have serious doctrinal errors. The Jews with whom they mixed in such travelling would not have been wholesome spiritual company. Indeed, it was "Vagabond" (Greek 'strolling') Jews who stirred up trouble for the believers (Acts 19:13). These brethren blatantly, proudly talked of their business plans, glorying in not saying 'God willing' (so v.15,16 implies). This was probably because they believed that they no longer personally had to keep the law (v.11), and that they were justified by reason of knowing the truth and being Jews by birth (2:20 and cp. Romans 6:1).

## Sections of the letter?

The sudden switch of subject away from judging brethren to that of crazy materialism calls for an explanation. It seems that the letter of James criticizes the believers for increasingly serious things, with a corresponding increase in punishment from God. The sections can be categorized as follows:

1:1-12 Semi-faith in prayer from lack of attention to the word due to materialism

1:13-27 Falsely blaming God for temptation, hard speaking to brethren, and neglect of the fatherless and widows in the ecclesia due to brief, meaningless self-examination and not being sensitive to the word.

2:1-13 Preference to the rich in the ecclesia, condemning the poor brethren, saying some parts of the word were unimportant.

2:14-26 Saying external works and technical holding of the Truth justified a man, and that lack of real spiritual effort can be Biblically justified.

3:1-4:12 Total unrestraint of the evil heart and its words, saying this was unnecessary for them. Claiming to be inspired with new revelation from God which replaced parts of the Bible and justified them totally.

4:13-5:6 Sinking into total materialism, throwing off all sense of subjection to God, effectively crucifying Christ afresh (5:6).

5:7-20 Subsequently being struck with physical sickness to try to lead them to repentance; final destruction at the Lord's 'coming' in AD70 and the holocaust for natural and spiritual Israel which followed.

If this analysis is correct, then these separate parts of the letter would have been sent at different times- hence 4:13 "Go to *now*". How many of us are in the first category discussed in 1:1-12? If our attention to the word continues to slip, it is only a matter of time before the ecclesia of the last days drops into the categories lower down the list. It has been suggested (7) that the letter of James is a series of exhortations given to or at the Jerusalem ecclesia and then circulated. This would fit in with the pattern deduced here.

## One day at a time

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (v.14).

In view of the Jewish and Christian persecution which the parallel letter of Peter speaks of, they especially could not plan on predicting the future without God's help. Their travelling from city to city trading was probably enforced by the persecution. The Greek for "buy and sell" in v.13 means specifically to trade whilst travelling around, as a pedlar. Thus in their spiritual arrogance they were saying that their travelling around was done by their own spiritually correct decision, which obviated the need to say 'God willing'. They probably showed off their plans to the poor labouring brethren, as if they knew by direct inspiration what would be on the morrow. There must also be reference back to Christ's commands about not worrying about tomorrow because God would provide- "take therefore no (anxious) thought for the morrow" (Mt.6:34). If James had this in mind, then he was saying that he knew that in their evil heart they were worrying in a God-forsaking way about tomorrow, which they justified by saying that they had inspired knowledge of the future and the profit they would make, and therefore showed this off with a false air of confidence to the poorer brethren. Again, these brethren are reminded of the need to remember their true nature: "For what is your life?" (cp. 4:14).

The description of life as a vapour appears to be an allusion to Job 7:7: "O remember that my life is wind". Thus James is asking them to learn the lesson of Job, as he does in 5:11; to come to a true understanding of the weakness of human nature through responding in humility to the trials of life, and to the knowledge of God directly provided by Him. Again, as in 2:3 (see notes there) these brethren are being compared to Job, as they are again in chapter 5; as with him, physical trial was brought upon them in order for them to learn humility and the lessons concerning human nature and its relation to a holy God, which previously they had been unwilling to learn. Digression 6 further explores the links between Job and Jewish believers.

## 'God willing'

"For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that "(v.15).

"To say" implies that there should have been a verbal statement, publicly heard, of their recognition of the Lord's will in their lives. Their need to say that they would live if it was the Lord's will shows the extremely temporary nature of their lives at that time of persecution. Despite such tribulation, their hearts were so hardened against the true influence of the word that they were not made more sensitive to God's hand in their lives, but rather were hardened into thinking that in their own strength and wisdom, which they imagined was God-given, they would weather the present crisis.

The Lord's "will" here is the Lord's desires and wishes, not necessarily the pre-determinate "will" of God (8). The parallel letter of Peter emphasizes that the will of God was what controlled their present persecution (1 Pet.2:15; 3:17; 4:19), and that they should seek to do God's will by overcoming the natural will of the flesh (1 Pet.4:2,3) by the word of God, which contains the will of God (1 Pet.1:23; 2 Pet.1:21 cp. Jn.1:13). Putting together these ideas, the message seems to be that it was the same will of God that they needed to get inside their hearts, to overcome the will of the flesh, which was also bringing their tribulations, implying that God was developing their response to the word through their persecutions. James is therefore saying that they should recognize the will, the desires, the purpose of God behind their persecution from city to city, which was to develop in them a more truly spiritual mind. But by effectively saying that God's will or desires were irrelevant to them, they were denying themselves the opportunity to be spiritually developed by their sufferings. Lack of attention to what God is willing or desiring in our own trials can similarly lead to them being in vain for us too.

That they should say "we shall live" if the Lord will suggests that they thought that their lives were protected from harm, or that they had some inherently indestructible element to them; hence the reminder in the previous verse that their life was only a brief vapour, as opposed to the more permanent 'immortal soul' they perhaps almost believed in as a result of the Roman/Judaist philosophical influence upon them.

The amazing thing is that despite these brethren's progressively worse problems in their doctrine and way of life, James continues to patiently reason with them, leading on towards his final appeal for repentance in Chapter 5.

## Evil joy

"But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (v.16).

We have previously commented on how their blatant rejoicing in their sin was due to their reasoning that it was impossible that they could sin- hence "all such...*is* evil". Similarly the Judaist element at Corinth rejoiced in the fact that there was a division in the ecclesia between the Paul and Apollos factions (1 Cor.4:6,7), and that they retained in fellowship a brother who had brazenly committed incest for all to see (1 Cor. 5:6); this all shows the same mentality, of openly rejoicing in the freedom that they believed they had from all moral and spiritual constraints. "Rejoice" really means to glory or boast, which means that it had to be done to someone else. To boast that they did not need to say "If the Lord will" about their plans would not have made many eyes turn in the world generally; therefore it is more likely that they were boasting to the poor brethren whom they had spiritually condemned, saying that the superior revelation which they had received enabled them to have freedom from that kind of spiritual requirement which the poor brethren needed to obey.

"Boastings" occurs only three times elsewhere, and each time it is in the context of false Judaist reasoning. Rom.1:30 describes how Israel in the wilderness (see Digression 11, 'Israel and Romans 1'), and also the last day Jewish ecclesias, were "boasters". If this means spiritually boastful, then it implies that the rejected generation in the wilderness thought up ways to spiritually justify themselves; hence Rom.1:30 goes on to describe "inventors of evil things", i.e. the alternative tabernacle system of worship that they created and carried with them, based around their idols (Acts 7:43,44). 2 Tim.3:2 describes the boastful infiltrators of the ecclesias in the last days (2 Tim.3:6), who had once known the Truth (2 Tim.3:5 cp. Rom. 2:20; 2 Tim.1:13) but through their claims to superior knowledge and revelation ( 2 Tim.3:7) and giving way to their corrupted natural mind ( 2 Tim.3:8) were "reprobate concerning the faith". This very well describes the Judaist brethren to whom James was writing.

"Boasting" also occurs in 1 Jn.2:16 translated "pride": "All that is in the world (the Jewish world- so the phrase normally means in John's writings), the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride (boasting) of life, is not of the Father (as the Judaists were claiming?), but is of the world. And the world passeth away" (in AD70). We have suggested that this boasting of life was a spiritual boasting by the Jews that they were blessed with superior wisdom and justification with God. 1 Jn.2:16 is looking back to Eve's sin in Eden (Gen.3:6)- she saw that the fruit of the tree of knowledge was good for food (the lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes) and to be desired to make one wise (pride of life). The Jews' desire for worldly wisdom was like Eve in Eden (9). Her motivation for taking the fruit would therefore have been that of spiritual pride, the desire to boast to her husband that she was now under no restrictions at all and had a wisdom equal to that of God. Exactly the same was true of the first (and twentieth?) century Judaizers.

## Knowing the good

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (v.17).

This indicates that these elders knew what they should be doing but consciously chose not to. In the light of their false claims to inspiration and the despicable doctrine and practice which they followed, it seems incredible that they could still have a knowledge of the real truth within them; and yet such is the deceit of the human heart that such doublemindedness can easily occur.

There may be a reference here back to Lk.12:47: he that "knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes". James 4:15 has spoken about their conscious disregard of their Lord's will. Thus v.17 is saying 'You know God's will and you know that you should show your recognition of it publicly- but you don't'. Lk.12:48 goes on to say that knowing the Lord's will is the same as being given much- which the Jewish elders had been by having the miraculous Spirit gifts.

The phrasing of "to him that knoweth..to him it is sin" implies that not all James' readership did have that knowledge- because they had become so hardened in their belief that their attitudes were correct, that they no longer had the knowledge of the truth? "To him it is sin" implies that there were some without knowledge to whom their lack of doing good would not be reckoned as sin- i.e. although all unrighteousness is sin, no matter who commits it, "sin" is reckoned to the person who has the knowledge of what he ought to be doing. This is another of the many indications that an ongoing record is kept of our actions or lack of them, so that our failure to do an action that we know we should is counted as sin to us at a certain moment in time.

## Footnotes



- (1) The language of physical movement is often used concerning temptation and our natural desires.
- (2) There are several examples of the Mosaic Law being associated with the 'devil' in the sense of our evil desires; it is even spoken of as "the law of sin and death"; by the very fact that it was perfect, it condemned man as a sinner worthy of death.
- (3) See also notes on 2:1 and 5:2,4.
- (4) Compare this with Saul's possession of the gifts, and also the judges of Israel: Jn.10:34-36 cp. Ps.82:1-5.
- (5) That disobeying the law of God is effectively adding to it was clearly brought home to Israel: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Dt.12:32). The command to Joshua to "observe to do according to all the law...turn not from it to the right hand or to the left" (Josh.1:7) is probably reiterating the command not to add ("to the right") or subtract ("to the left") from the law. Cp. also Rev.22:18,19, which is based on these passages.
- (6) Similarly in the Old Testament Zechariah had power to kill three false shepherds (priests) of Judah in one month (Zech.11:3,8). Note too the equation of repentance and deliverance from physical illness in Is.33:24: "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: (because) the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven".
- (7) H.A. Whittaker, *'Seven Short Epistles'*, Biblia, 1990.
- (8) There are different original words used for these two types of "will"s.
- (9) Cp. also how Eve's covering of glossy fig leaves that would soon fade points forward to the inadequate sin covering of the law, replaced by the slaying of the lamb. See also 2 Cor.11:3.

## James Chapter 5

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you" (v.1)

The reference to rich men weeping again suggests a link with the beatitudes: "Woe unto you that are rich...that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep...when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Lk.6:24-26). The mourning and weeping was what they were advised to do as a mark of their repentance in 4:9- perhaps this was therefore to be as a result of their no longer being rich, i.e. sharing their wealth with their desperately poor brethren. The beatitudes were saying that the rich would mourn and weep at the judgment; James is advising them to do so now, i.e. to judge or condemn themselves by their self-examination in this life, so that they would not experience the weeping and gnashing of teeth then (cp. 1 Cor.11:31). The weeping and howling were to be when "your miseries...shall come upon you"- i.e. in AD70. Thus the 'coming' of Christ then was also like the judgment seat at the second coming; the misery of the AD70 judgments and subsequent Jewish persecution was similar to that to be seen at the second coming. There should also be a parallel with the true contrition which we ought to have after repentant self-examination.

### Howling

There is an allusion here to Zeph.1:11,12: "Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh (i.e. the market area near the temple- see N.I.V.)...I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. Therefore your goods shall become a booty". The Jews Zephaniah addressed were facing the coming day of the Lord at the hand of Babylon; the materialism and subsequent money-making from the temple worshippers that they were guilty of, was being repeated in a more subtle form by their counterparts in the Jewish ecclesia in the days before AD70. Zephaniah warned "The great day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly" (Zeph.1:14), hoping to motivate them to repent. Similarly James : "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (5:8). Ripping off the temple worshippers was paralleled by the financial abuses of the flock by the elders, to be mentioned in v.4. The idea of howling in Israel as a result of the impending day of the Lord due to their sins is common in the Old Testament prophets: Is.13:6; Jer.25:34; 47:2; Ez.21:12; Joel 1:5,8,11,13;

Mic.1:8; Zech.11:3. Many of these refer to the priests or the prophet howling. Thus James is saying that as well as howling in repentance, these ecclesial elders as counterparts of the priests and prophets under the Mosaic system should be howling out warning to the flock concerning the coming day of judgment.

"Miseries" can also imply spiritual lowness; the rareness of the Greek word and the other allusions to Rom.7 in James suggest that we are intended to see a connection with Rom.7:24: "O wretched (same word as "miseries") man that I am!" - an exclamation concerning the intense evil of his natural mind that was called forth by Paul's self examination, maybe implying that if they judged (condemned) themselves now in their self examination, they would avoid the misery and self-realization they were to have in the coming holocaust.

"Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten" (v.2).

The similarities between them and the priests is continued by their garments being described as moth eaten; which exactly fits the context of Heb.8:13, which describes the old covenant as a decaying garment about to vanish away in AD70. Thus the Jewish ecclesial elders were so closely associated with the Law due to their desire to justify their materialism (which the riches and garments must also refer to) that they were to be destroyed along with it. That these rich men were in the ecclesia is confirmed by the reference back to the rich brother in goodly apparel being given a prominent place in the ecclesial meeting place (2:2).

Note the present tenses: "are corrupted...are moth eaten". The unlikelihood that they walked around in literally moth eaten clothes or that their gold was literally corrupted indicates that James meant that they were like this in the sight of God. This provides an interesting key to Mt.6:19-21, to which there is a clear allusion: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt..but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven...for their will your heart be also". Thus James read the moth and rust corrupting as being in God's sight- if a man's heart is set on earthly things, God looks ahead to the distant day when those possessions have decayed, perhaps after the person's death, and as they are then, so God considers them to be in this present life. The emphasis in Mt.6 is on where the heart is- which precisely agrees with the context of James. Our mind *is* able to see our material possessions in a similar light to how God does.

"Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (v.3).

Their riches were specifically "gold and silver"- which we have identified as the main thing which these brethren were desiring (see notes on 4:3). The idea of corruption of financial wealth is repeated in 2 Cor.8:15, where Paul likens the Corinthians' giving of their financial blessings in order to make an equality among the brotherhood, to the manna not being left to corrupt by the morning, but instead being gathered and shared out (Ex.16:18,19). Those who refused to obey this command found their manna was corrupted by morning- teaching that unless we share our manna or money (as 2 Cor.8:15 interprets it) before the morning of the Lord's coming, we will incur His wrath. This fits beautifully with the situation in James; in our notes on v.1 we saw that there was probably the suggestion that they share their riches with the poorer brethren, so that the curses on the rich and happy in the beatitudes did not come upon them.

## **Fire eating**

The eating of the flesh with fire connects the literal and symbolic use of fire to destroy the Jewish heavens and earth (2 Pet.3:7). Note the equation of the believers with their riches- as rust ate gold and silver, so fire would eat their flesh. Their life ("flesh") *did* consist in the abundance of the things which they possessed (Lk.12:15). The fire also represents the

Gehenna fire of the rejected at judgment; its connection with the rust of their riches perhaps indicates that the punishment of the rejected at judgment is at the hands of those things which caused their rejection. Alternatively, this language may be similar in idea to "delivering to satan for the destruction of the flesh" in 1 Cor.5:5; the satan, or evil desires, in this case being their love of riches.

The Greek for "rust" occurs also in 3:8 translated "poison", concerning the nature of the tongue and the evil heart it is associated with. Thus they are being reminded that their gross materialism was rooted in their evil desires, and it is this fact that "shall be a witness (judicially) against you". Again

this is the language of judgment, as if they were to be soon at the Lord's judgment seat. The idea of eating flesh at judgment occurs again in Rev.17:16 and 19:18- prophecies which must have an initial application to the AD70 destruction of Israel. They describe the military forces responsible for the AD70 punishments and subsequent persecutions as eating the flesh; here in James the evil desires behind their riches do the eating, implying that it was because of these that the judgment came, again stressing the ultimate importance of the heart's spiritual condition. Remember that the judgments on Jerusalem in AD70 had repercussions for natural and spiritual Israel throughout the Roman world.

## **Heaping up treasure**

The heaping of treasure together is another allusion to the early chapters of Romans: "Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (cp. 2 Pet.3:15 concerning the delay in judgment upon Jerusalem in order to allow natural and spiritual Israel time to repent), but after thy hardness and impenitent heart (notice the emphasis on this) treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath" in AD70 (Rom.2:4,5). The treasures they had heaped up were therefore directly proportionate to the amount of wrath they would receive- perhaps because their wealth was proportionate to the amount of defrauding and subsequent lack of love shown to their brethren (5:4). The Heavens and earth (natural and spiritual Israel?) were "kept in store" (2 Pet.3:7)- the same Greek phrase for "treasuring up" and heaping treasure together- for judgment by fire in AD70. The fact this fire was to come on individuals (2 Thess.1:8) invites us to interpret the heavens and earth as referring to the individual people that comprised the Jewish system; and we can conclude that this included both apostate, largely Judaist-influenced Christians, as well as the natural Jews.

This Greek phrase for laying up treasure also occurs in Lk.12:21 concerning the 'greater barns' man laying up treasure for himself. Note that Lk.12:15, also in this context, has already been alluded to in James 5:3 (see above). The rich man was a farmer- as were some of the rich brethren amongst James' readership (5:4); he thought he knew the future, as the same class in James' letter thought they did (4:13), and the suddenness of his destruction corresponds with the rich in the ecclesia thinking that spiritually they were in peace and safety, and then the sudden destruction of AD70 coming (1 Thess.5:2,3) at "the day of the Lord"- note the many links between 1 Thess.4:15 - 5:9 and the Olivet prophecy concerning the same destruction. Again, James opens up a parable with an interpretation many of us otherwise would not have reached. The emphasis on their time being "the last days" is doubtless because they thought they knew the future- as indicated in 4:13-15 by their lack of saying 'If the Lord will', presumably because they thought the Lord's coming was far distant. Therefore along with their prototype in the rich farmer parable, they thought that they could go on building up their own Kingdom on earth.

## **Working men**

"Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (v.4).

We have frequently made reference to this verse previously, showing how this was being done by the rich farm owners in the ecclesia, under the pretext that the poor brethren who were their employees were spiritually unworthy; and it is to this that 2:6 concerning despising the poor refers. This situation could well have occurred within a small household ecclesia, thus putting much more pressure on the labourer brethren (See Digression 14, 'The Size Of The Early Church').

There is a reference here to Mal.3:5, which is in the context of describing the day of the Lord's sudden coming to the temple in fire in AD70 (v.1-3), and primarily refers to the judgements on the corrupt priesthood: "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against..false swearers, and against those that oppress (mg. 'defraud', cp. James 5:4) the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless (James 1:27), and that turn aside the stranger from his right (James 2:2cp. 2:6 implies unexpected visiting brethren were refused material help), and fear not Me..return unto Me...But ye said, Wherein shall we return?..It is vain to serve God...we call the proud happy (cp. glorying in their proud boastings)"- Mal.3:5,7,14,15. Again, the eldership of the Jewish ecclesias is being likened to the priesthood under the Old Covenant (see notes on 4:8), and the priests' stealing of the offerings matched the elders financially abusing the poor of the flock within the ecclesias. The materialism and subsequent laxness of Israel's shepherds has uncanny similarities with criticisms which could be levelled at their latter day equivalent.

We have seen in our notes on "consume" in 4:3 and 5:3 that the weakness of these brethren was for hard cash- hence it was "the hire" that was kept back. Passages warning about the dangers of loving money (e.g. 1 Tim.6:10) can now be interpreted with reference to this class of believers. The cry of these brethren coming up to God connects with Elihu's inspired accusation of Job causing the cry of the poor to rise to God (Job 34:28), thus making Job a type of the rich Jews of the first century ecclesia who had to learn the true ways of God through their sufferings (see [Digression 12](#) for more on this).

## **Cain and Abel**

A cry entering God's ears recalls the effect of the slaughter of Abel by Cain (Gen.4:10), who as the first human liar and murderer was a prototype of the Jewish devil (Jn.8:44). His persecution and slaughter of Abel represented the oppression of the poor Christians by these Judaist-influenced brethren. Cain's killing of Abel pointed forward to that of Christ by the Jews, and thus James is saying that by enduring the abuses of these so-called elders in the ecclesia, the poor brethren were fellowshipping the sufferings of Christ on the cross at the hands of the Jewish elders of His 'ecclesia'. Each of our sufferings too can be examined to show echoes of the cross. It appears that Cain's hate of Abel was based on spiritual pride- Gen.4:3 speaks of their review by God "at the end of the day" (AVmg.), and Gen.4:7 suggests that then a choice was made between them by God as to who should be priest: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not have the excellency?...and unto thee shall be his desire" AVmg.). This type of hurt pride is easily discernible in the actions of the Jewish elders towards the more spiritual believers, and in the persecution of Jesus by the Jews. Thus the description of the brethren as condemning and killing the just in v.6 applies both to Christ on the cross and to the spiritual condemnation and lack of love ("killing", in terms of the sermon on the mount) which was being shown towards the poor brethren by their reprobate elders. Note how Rom.12:14 speaks of brethren persecuting each other within the ecclesia.

## **Israel in Egypt**

God's hearing of a sincere cry of affliction also looks back to Israel in bondage to Egypt, whose cry was then answered by Angelic intervention. Similarly the use of the title "Lord of Sabaoth" is the equivalent of the "Lord of hosts" with all its Angelic implications. This emphasis is doubtless due to the fact that Angels brought the punishment of natural and spiritual Israel in the AD70 period (Mt.22:7 cp. Rev.19:14; Dan.4:35). The echo of Israel's experience in Egypt is surely intended: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage" (Ex.2:23). This would associate the rich Jewish believers with the Egyptians in their persecution of God's people. And as natural Israel were delivered at Passover, so these suffering poor believers would be at the second coming, which the Passover deliverance typified.

"Reaped down" is a totally different Greek word to that used in "them which have reaped". The latter means to harvest in the agricultural sense, whilst the former means more 'to gather together', thus linking with the idea of heaping treasure together in the previous verse. The hard work of the labouring brethren had brought riches to the rich elders, yet still they defrauded them of their wages, showing the degree of their wide-eyed lust for money.

"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth (the land- of Israel?), and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (v.5).

Note the certainty of James' accusations- "Ye have" occurs four times in as many verses. This shows the certainty of inspiration, either through James having seen how they had lived in Israel before their scattering, the inspired reports of the 'messengers of the churches', or a direct satellite-vision of their present situation given to James. Their living in pleasure on the earth may refer back to the affluent man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, who represented the Jewish priesthood (Lk.16:19). Compare this with the same class being represented by the rich farmer in the greater barns parable. The mocking of the requests of poor Lazarus would refer to the rich Jewish eldership despising the welfare requests of the poor believers.

### **Glorious feasting**

The use of the phrase "on the earth" may be reminding them that they were amassing pleasure on earth as opposed to Heaven, as v.3 had also made clear. Alternatively, the past tenses here may refer to James' knowledge of how they had lived "on the earth" or land of Israel. The words for "pleasure" and "wanton" imply glorious feasting; "ye have nourished your hearts" therefore equates their minds with their bodies. This is a theme of James- that our way of thinking and our physical actions and sensations are indivisible. Their glorious feasting was really feeding the evil desires of their hearts which had led them to hold the feasts. Yet in practice they were fattening themselves in readiness for the slaughter to provide meat for another feast- that of God's wrath (cp. the description of the day of the Lord's judgment as a feast with slaughtered beasts in Is.34:6). The Greek for "nourished" can also mean 'to stiffen', digging at their refusal to let their hearts be changed by the word. "A day of slaughter" suggests reference to Ez.34:2-4, which condemns the pastors of Israel for killing the spiritually fat of the flock but not spiritually feeding the others; and also to the "day of slaughter" of those in Jer.12:1-3 whose hearts were far from God because of their prosperity, although they had a show of Godliness. There is probably another link to Jer.25:34, where the shepherds of the flock were to be killed in the AD70 slaughter (Jer.25:38=AD70; 25:32=Mt.24=AD70).

"Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you" (v.6).

We have shown in our comments on v.4 that "the just" can refer to both Christ and the oppressed underclass of believers. Their sumptuous feasts of v.5 were at the expense of killing fatted animals- who represented the spiritually fat, ideal sacrifices of Christ and the poor brethren. The idea of killing being equated with lack of love is popular in James- e.g. 4:2; 2:11, based on Matt.5:22.

There seems to be a contrast here with 4:6, where God is said to resist (same word) the prayer of the brethren. Maybe the maximum show of God's displeasure with them was only in not answering their prayers for material things and money. Thus an apparent lack of major signs of displeasure from God should not lull any of us into thinking that this means we are totally acceptable in God's sight.

## **Corrupt eldership**

"The just one" is a title of the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) whom they crucified afresh, and "He doth not resist you" indicates that one particular "just one" is being referred to. However, "the just" can also refer to those justified by their faith, which is how it is used in early Romans (1:17; 2:13), a part of Scripture which James' readers seem to have been familiar with in view of the number of references made to it. By being justified by their faith these believers were not relying on the Mosaic law- for which they seem to have been condemned by their elders. Yet they did not resist the abuses made of them, but followed Christ's example on the cross. Thus we have the impression of this group of brethren being condemned by pompous, materialistic elders claiming to have some new revelation from God, who used this as an excuse to withhold their wages and publicly humiliate them at the communion service (2:2); and in the face of all this, they did not actively resist but took the sad state of the ecclesia to God in prayer- cp. the faithful servants sorrowfully telling their Lord about the abuses of one of their number by the much-forgiven ecclesial elder (Mt.18:31). The cry of those servants and their fellow brethren whom James is referring to "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth"- and He heard.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (v.7).

This final section of the letter appears to be addressed to the whole ecclesia, with a bias towards those who were being persecuted by the rich brethren. Its theme is an appeal for positive co-operation in order to help each other repent and thus be ready for the imminent coming of the Lord. It is therefore intensely relevant to the Lord's people of today. Note that James appears to have expected the second coming in his time: "Unto the coming of the Lord".

## **Precious fruit**

"Patient" means literally to be 'long-spirited', again showing the fundamental importance of the control of the mind. It can also imply to suffer patiently, as if encouraging the abused brethren to continue to use their spiritual minds to spiritually endure the trials the others were giving them. Their patience is equated with that of God, as a husbandman waiting for spiritual fruit to develop. This shows James' urging of them to continue their non-resistance to these brethren so that they would bear spiritual fruit, and maybe also the suggestion that they were to be patient with the misguided elders until they too bore spiritual fruit. James 5 goes on to speak of the patience of the prophets in continuing to speak the word- as if to encourage these brethren to keep using the word to help the others to bear spiritual fruit- cp. notes on 3:18.

"The coming of the Lord" is paralleled with receiving the early and latter rain, which must be referring back to Joel 2:23 and Dt.11:13,14 concerning the blessings of the Kingdom which would be experienced once Israel repented. Note that there is a dearth of direct Biblical evidence to support the idea that the early and latter rains refer to the outpourings of the Spirit in the first century and the Kingdom- although humanly speaking the idea fits nicely. Biblically they seem to refer to the physical blessings of the land as a result of Israel's obedience. Thus again there is the inference that James looked for the literal second coming and establishment of the Kingdom being in AD70, conditional on Israel's repentance. The precious spiritual fruit of the ecclesia would only be fully harvested by the Lord then- maybe indicating that the attitude of mind we develop now will be fully manifested in terms of spiritual fruit by our reaction to that great moment of absolute truth at the judgment. "Precious fruit" carries the specific idea of great financial value in Greek- as if to encourage them that the spiritual fruit being developed by their poverty was the true riches, thus again connecting with the allusion in v.3 to the Lord's words about treasure in Heaven rather than on earth.

The long patience of God for spiritual development until the coming of the Lord is clearly parallel with 2 Pet.3:7-15, which says that the apparent delay in the Lord's coming was in order to give them the opportunity of developing spiritual fruit. "As workers together with God" for their spiritual growth and subsequent acceptance at judgement, they were to be patient under the trials God was bringing- as God too was patient in watching their gradual development of fruit. The husbandman receiving the rains connects with Dt.11:13,14 describing a repentant, obedient to the word Israel being given the rains- again showing the Jewish audience of the letter, and stressing the need for the whole ecclesia to repent.

## **Stable minds**

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (v.8).

Again, James throws down an ultimate challenge- to show the same supreme patience to our stumbling spiritual development and blatant faults which God shows to us, to both the trials which help us develop and also to our weak brethren.

"Stablish" means both to set fast/ confirm, and also to turn resolutely- which neatly makes it relevant to both groups in the readership, the one who needed to continue to develop their already spiritual mind, and the other who needed to resolutely turn their hearts around in repentance. The word occurs relatively frequently in Thessalonians, also in the context of preparing for the Lord's coming- showing that the main way of preparing for the second coming is by a conscious development of our way of thinking, which can only be achieved through true commitment to the word. Very often the Greek word for "stablish" is used about God stablishing our heart- showing that God will work on our hearts in accord with our personal effort. 1 Thess.3:12,13 even suggests that this stablishing or confirming of the mind which we have personally developed will be done for us at the judgment seat, where self-doubt as to whether we have had a truly spiritual mind will loom large: "Abound in love one toward another...to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God...at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". Notice this stablishing is dependent on loving each other now- very relevant in the James context.

## **Patient prayer**

The coming of the Lord was drawing nearer on behalf of their patience. The exhortation to patience was not just because they needed to patiently endure in their spirituality, but also because James was probably aware that the second coming of the Lord which he expected in the first century was quite likely to be delayed, due to the lack of Israel's repentance. Both

James and the parallel Peter (2 Pet.3:11,15) are saying: 'Be patient for the second coming and continue your spiritual patience so that it will come quicker and you won't have to be patient for so long'.

Thus Peter's parallel to this v.8 is "The end of all things is at hands: be ye therefore sober (self-controlled- by having a stablished mind), and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves" (1 Pet.4:7,8). They were to continue their effective love to those brethren who so abused them, praying earnestly for the second coming. This would only be achieved by their continued attention to stablishing their thinking, so that it was consistently controlled by the word rather than just being partially controlled- which was the root cause of the semi-faith and lukewarm commitment to true spirituality that had been the downfall of the other brethren.

"Draweth nigh" literally means 'is made near'- the more spiritually aware, especially those who had heard of Peter's reasoning in 2 Pet.3, would have seen in this the implication that a stablishing of the mind would draw near the Lord's coming. The same Greek phrase occurs in 4:8 "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you"- and we have seen that this refers to praying to God acceptably from a heart influenced by the word. Such prayer would hasten the second coming- a basic principle taught in the Lord's prayer, seeing there is no point in praying "Thy Kingdom come" unless we believe those prayers will result in the days being shortened to that day.

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (v.9).

In view of the gross abuses going on, it must have been a sore temptation for the poor brethren to grudge against their elders- not least when they turned them away empty handed at pay day (v.4). James is pleading with them to keep up their excellent attitude of not resisting (v.6)- because at any moment the true judge would come. And note too that if they did resist by grudging, they also would be condemned at the Lord's coming- for taking the judgment of these renegade servants of the Lord into their own hands. How much less have we any right to judge our fellow servants of today! James' reasoning implied that the verdict of condemnation pronounced on them by the other brethren (v.6) was not valid- but they would only be condemned if they grudged against such treatment.

### **Groaning grudge**

The Greek for "grudge" is normally used concerning the groaning of sincere prayer, often in silence, brought about by suffering- e.g. Mk.7:34; Acts 7:34; Rom.8:23,26; 2 Cor.5:2,4- although it also carries the idea of complaining. Thus instead of making their complaints to each other, they were to quietly make them to God- and the Lord Jesus, with "groanings (same word as "grudge") which cannot be uttered" (Rom.8:26) would make powerful intercession for them.

Peter's equivalent for them being condemned is in his warning that Sodom and Gomorrah were "condemned with an overthrow", making them an ensample unto those that after should live unGodly" (2 Pet.2:6). If this is a valid connection, James is saying that vicious bitterness against brethren who are wrongly abusing you, leading you to condemn them, is the same magnitude of sin as living the reprobate life of the Sodomites. Similarly "the judge standeth before the door" is clearly matched by 1 Pet.4:4,5, which says that some - the same group of Judaizers within the ecclesia?- "think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (this is the sort of accusation often made by the Judaist infiltrators- cp. their smear campaign on Paul): who shall give account to him that is ready



(cp. "before the door") to judge the quick and the dead". Thus a life of "excess of riot" is the same as giving way to bitterness in the heart that leads to condemnation of the brethren.

This connection between 5:9 and 1 Pet.4:5 parallels the coming of the Lord in judgment with the resurrection- the judging of living and dead. Thus James and Peter did not think of the Lord's coming in any sense other than how we think of the second coming- to raise and judge the dead, and establish the Kingdom on earth (see notes on 5:7). Thus Paul, probably writing to the same group of Jewish believers: "Wherefore we receiving (i.e. being so near to receiving it we are practically receiving it now) a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear" (Heb.12:28)- i.e. in the development of truly spiritual characteristics in our heart. Such acute awareness of the imminence of the Lord's coming should surely be matched by us, as we live on the very edge of time and human experience as we know it, when "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet.4:7).

This likening of the second coming to Christ standing at the door must surely connect with Rev.3:20: "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him". Having a formal meal ("sup") with the believer must connect with the Lord's parable of the marriage supper representing the Kingdom. These letters having been written before AD70, Christ is maybe saying that if only there was a true response to His word on an individual basis ("If any man..."), then he would fully come in the glory of His Kingdom in AD70. The principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture- in this case Rev.3:20 by James 5:9- surely has violence done to it if the Lord's standing, knocking at the door is not understood with some reference to the second coming.

## Prophetic example

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, which have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience" (v.10).

We have suggested in our notes on v.7 that the example of the prophets patiently speaking forth the word of God amidst opposition from others in their ecclesia, was an example of the patience the wrongly denigrated brethren needed in continuing to gently rebuke the erring brethren with the word; and to continue patiently letting the word dwell in their minds so that they did not let bitterness develop. This appears to be another allusion to the beatitudes- this time to Mt.5:11,12: "Blessed are ye, when men (even in the ecclesia, in their case) shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely...rejoice, and be exceeding glad (cp. James 1:2)..for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you". This enduring physical suffering not only associated them with Christ, but also with a whole band of men who had faithfully spoken forth the word in the past. The fact the prophets had suffered for speaking forth the word to an apostate Israel indicates that the persecution of the brethren was due to their Biblically hitting the rest of the ecclesia below the belt. The Greek for "suffering affliction" really means 'hardship', referring to the obvious domestic hardship brought about by the holding back of the wages by the criticized brethren.

We have suggested that the eldership in the Jewish ecclesias probably had the gift of prophecy, and even if they did not, these to whom James was writing certainly thought they did. Thus James is pointing out from much Biblical precedent that being a prophet was associated with experiencing hardship as a result of persecution and unfair treatment by those who claimed to be brethren (so the Matt.5:12 allusion intimates); and also with being patient with many opposers. Such reasoning would have been very telling on these elders. It is hard to see why the reminder should be given that the prophets spoke in the name of the Lord. Maybe it was because the poor brethren's Scriptural protests were being ridiculed as not

being spoken in the name of the Lord. In this case James would be encouraging them that by reason of their being persecuted for their message, they were proving their association with those who were truly inspired to speak in the Lord's name. Speaking forth the word is often associated with carrying the name of God; not only in the sense that prophets spoke God's word in the Lord's name, but that the word develops the attributes of the Name (Ex.34:4-7) in a man's character, thus leading him to carry God's Name if he shows forth the truth, mercy and patience of the Lord. By their correct response to the word these believers were similar to the prophets in that they spoke in the name of the Lord. See Digression 5, 'The Name, The Word and The Glory' for more about the word giving men the name of God.

## **A pitiful Lord**

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (v.11).

The concluding theme of this letter is that despite their faults, all the ecclesia should pray for God's forgiveness for the others, especially bearing in mind the physical affliction that had been brought on some of them because of the grossness of their sins (see notes on 4:12). Job was a prophet (Job 29:4), one of those referred to in the preceding verse, and his example seems to be behind much of what James says in this chapter. "Happy" being the same word translated "Blessed" in the beatitudes encourages us to see an allusion here back to Matt.5:10-12, which v.10 has already referred to: blessed are those who endure tribulation for speaking the word. The Jews ("we") counted the prophets as blessed people because of their sufferings (Mt.23:29; Acts 13:15,27). Indeed, the Greek for "count" means 'to beautify', and is from the word for "happy/ blessed". The suffering which Job endured was not just physical but more especially from the mental trauma created in him by the criticisms of him by his friends with their (false?) claims to be inspired prophets, saying that his sufferings were due to gross spiritual weakness. This was probably the elders' reason for not supporting the poor brethren- they would have reasoned that their hardships were a sign of God's displeasure because of their lack of spirituality.

We have discussed the problem of Job being credited with "patience" despite his mistakes in Digression 6; his patience seem to have been in continuing to speak forth the true word of God, and in having the humility at the end to accept his failures. That Job did have failures is indicated by James saying that in "the end of the Lord" He showed great mercy and pity, which would imply forgiveness. The same word is used in Heb.10:28 concerning the man dying without mercy, i.e. forgiveness, under the Law as a punishment for sin.

"Very pitiful" is very intense in Greek- elsewhere it is translated "bowels", "inward affection". Thus the position of Job touched the Lord's heart in a way few other human experiences are said to in the word. We have shown (in Digression 6) Job to have been a man who allowed himself to be too far influenced by the Judaist-type philosophy of the friends, the 'elders' of his ecclesia, and yet to have kept doggedly reflecting on and believing God's basic principles so that he eventually came to an appreciation of human nature and God's greatness which few others have done. The poor brethren in the Jewish ecclesias were in a similar position- being worn down by the spiritually cocksure reasoning of their elders, feeling increasingly spiritually desperate because of their words, as Job did, and therefore needing every encouragement to patiently continue rather than give way in bitterness, so that they might come to the same end as Job. The tremendous pity which God showed for Job would also be shown to them if they fully fellowshipped his example by their patient endurance.

## **Above all things...**

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (v.12).

This may well be referring to Job again, in his over-dogmatism brought about by the intensity of his sufferings; e.g. his cursing of the day he was born, and his swearing that he will never confess to being a sinner or admit that his sufferings were justified because of his sinfulness (see Job 27:5 and context). This was the type of statement which he repented of at the end. Similarly, James wants the brethren not to let the emotionally charged nature of their situation lead them to make any other response apart from a humble response governed by the word. Hence v.13 and 14 go on to say that the response to affliction, sickness or falling away should always be expressed in the form of prayer, rather than in self-generated oaths. The stress of "above all things" is hard to understand until the passage in the sermon on the mount which this verse is based on is properly appreciated. Mt.5:33 quotes Lev.19:12 concerning swearing, which warns that oaths by the Lord's name should not be made lightly but had to be fulfilled, otherwise the name of the Lord would be blasphemed. Therefore the Lord quotes this as saying "Thou shalt not forswear thyself (i.e. swear falsely), but shalt perform (His emphasis being on that word) unto the Lord thine oaths" (i.e. oaths made in His name).

But because Christ so appreciated the extreme proneness to failure which we have by nature, He correctly declared that whatever men claimed they would do 'by the Lord's name' was likely to be "of the evil one", i.e. the devil of their own heart (Mt.5:37), and therefore plans to do the Lord's work should be expressed in straightforward, unassuming language. Even with the best intention in the world, the Lord knew that oaths could so easily go unperformed. Christ concluded His advice with His reason for it: "For whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one" (AVmg.). The phrasing of James 5:12 is similar, and matches this with "Lest ye fall into condemnation"- which connects with the theme of the whole letter, that "above all things" the believer must not give way to his innate evil desires because doing so will lead to rejection at the judgment. And again, he singles out the expression of those desires through the tongue ("swear not") as being the most likely form of failure. The Greek word used for 'falling' here does not carry the idea of falling headlong, as in "Fall from your own steadfastness" in 2 Pet.3:17, but rather of a more gradual stepping down from their high spiritual position- as if to say that whether they dramatically fell by renouncing their faith or apparently just stepped down a little by responding to the trials given by these false brethren, the result was the same- condemnation at the judgment which James believed was so imminent. "Condemnation" is also translated "hypocrisy"- i.e. they could step down into a semi-spirituality, which was tantamount to being condemned.

"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (v.13).

The previous verse has been emphasizing the importance of not letting our words run away with us- and therefore James now tells us to channel all our words through prayer, rather than indulge in the circular talking of Job and the friends which was the exact opposite of "Yea,yea...nay,nay". "Afflicted" is the same word translated "affliction" in v.10 concerning Job's hardships.

## **Making melody**

"Merry" really means 'To be cheered up' after hardship, and is only used elsewhere in the record of Paul's shipwreck concerning the company being of "good cheer" after Paul's stirring exhortation on the deck- surely one of the most dynamic and powerful appeals for faith ever heard (Acts 27:22,36). It may be that some of them had found legitimate release from their

sufferings, perhaps by contributions from other ecclesias. Alternatively, James may be talking hypothetically: 'Even if any of you find relief, then express your joy in the words of the psalms rather than giving reign to your own natural inclinations to make a rash oath to God in gratitude'. Those who had been 'cheered up' may refer to the rich brethren- instead of expressing their joy in rowdy parties dressed up with spiritual excuses (Jude 12; 1 Cor.11:21; James 2:2), they should express it in the words of psalms. "Sing" here is also translated "making melody" in Eph.5:19, where Paul speaks of doing so in the heart by singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs".

It is perhaps significant that Paul advises them to do this as an antidote to being drunk (Eph.5:18)- and if James is speaking about the need to sing psalms instead of indulging in drunken revelry at the communion service, then he would be saying the same thing as Paul. Drunkenness at the breaking of bread must have been a regular occurrence at Corinth at least, from how Paul writes (e.g. "Another is drunken...when(ever) ye come together...this is not to eat the Lord's supper, therefore- 1 Cor.11:20,21). Singing psalms would have been done at the breaking of bread service to imitate the singing of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) at the last supper (Mt.26:30); and the reference to Psalm singing in 1 Cor.14:26 also seems to be in the communion service context. Thus it may be that v.13-16 are describing what should have been happening at the memorial feast- there should have been prayer rather than complaining by the suffering, psalm singing rather than drunkenness by the joyful, the time given over to conversation- which would have been considerable, if the service was based on that of the Jewish Sabbath or Passover- should have been spent confessing faults rather than bragging, condemning and spreading false doctrine (Jude 10-12 cp. 2 Pet.2:18,19), and this should have given way to loving prayer for those who had been struck sick because of committing such sins.

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they ("it", Gk.) shall be forgiven him" (v.14,15).

There are two different words translated "sick" here. The first implies more 'weariness of mind', as if spiritual weakness is being referred to. The references to "save a soul from death and...hide a multitude of sins" in v.20 is in the same context of spiritual sickness. In any case, it is unlikely that James would be saying that any physical sickness could be cured, bearing in mind Paul's thorn in the flesh. "The sick" in v.15 however does refer to physical sickness, although "raise him up" is also used concerning a spiritual revival (Rom.13:11 cp. Eph.5:14). This confusion between physical and spiritual sickness is understandable once it is appreciated that physical sickness was brought upon weak members of the first century ecclesia in order to lead them to repentance (see notes on 4:12). Therefore v.16 tells them to confess their faults to each other so that they could pray for forgiveness and subsequent healing for their brethren.

"The elders of the church" may be those of the Jerusalem ecclesia, as that is whom "the elders" often refers to in the New Testament. However, it is just as likely that they refer to the Spirit-gifted eldership of the individual ecclesias to whom this letter was sent- their anointing with oil shows their control of the use of the Spirit. This pouring out of oil not only recalls the use of the Spirit to heal the physically sick by the disciples (Mk.6:13), but also the outpouring of the Spirit in the gift of forgiveness in Acts 2:37,38 (see Digression 12). In this case James would be emphasizing the need to respect the eldership because of their possession of the Spirit, which made them God's representatives regardless of their personal spirituality. Compare this with David's respect for apostate, Spirit-gifted Saul, and the respect Israel had to give their reprobate judges (Ps.82:1-5). Notice that it was possible for "the prayer of faith"

by these elders to "save the sick" despite their unspirituality. Similarly Paul warned an identical group at Corinth that although they had faith to move mountains through the Spirit- e.g. curing the sick- their lack of love would deprive them of salvation personally (1 Cor.13:2). Spiritual success in any form- be it in preaching or the triumph of faith in a particular problem- can so easily tempt us to feel that therefore in all other areas our life must be acceptable with God. But not necessarily so.

## **Availing much**

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (v.16).

Note the parallel effect of the prayer of a friendly brother and that of the eldership in v.14,15- again indicating that in ultimate terms an elder had no spiritual power that was not possessed by any brother who had a humble faith.

The Job allusions continue, this time to his prayer for the forgiveness of his friends (Job 42:8). Job himself was ill at the time he prayed for the friends- his "captivity" was ended "when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). That James too was counselling the sick to pray for the sick is implied by "pray one for another, that ye may be healed". The sickness being brought on as a result of their sins in holding false, Judaist doctrine confirms that James read Job, under inspiration, as a type of those influenced by Judaist thinking (see Digression 6). Based on Job's example, James is probably advising them to concentrate on forgiving and loving one another, as this would lead to their personal repentance and thus their cure too. This would imply that the fundamental sin that was causing their sickness was their gross lack of love and spiritual concern for each other.

As these sick brethren were to call for the elders of the ecclesia to pray for them, it may be that the rich, spiritually proud brethren whom James has been reprimanding in his letter may not have been the true eldership, although they fancied themselves as such. However, it appears that the problem of spiritual and subsequent physical sickness was widespread in all groups of the ecclesia, including the eldership. There seems, at first glance, two types of prayer spoken of in v.15 and 16; a calling of the elders to pray for the sick person, and the afflicted ones confessing their sins to each other in order to effect a cure. Yet in view of what we know of the corruption of the eldership, it would seem better to treat these two descriptions as parallel- the elder who had been struck seriously sick was to call the others to him, and at the pathetic bedside of the once arrogant rich farmer they, too, were to confess their sins, so that not only would he be cured, but their less serious sicknesses would also be lifted.

## **The Lord's prayer**

To be successful this kind of prayer had to be "effectual". The Greek 'energeo' gives the idea of dynamic expenditure of energy. Such effort in prayer for the spiritual welfare of others can only come from a truly selfless spirit. The prayer of our Lord for us and the disciples in Gethsemane springs to mind. The connection is strengthened by "fervent" being the same word translated "earnestly" in Lk.22:44 concerning the Lord's praying more earnestly with huge tears. This would suggest that James understood Christ's prayer in Gethsemane not just to have been for personal strength but also for our forgiveness and salvation. Thus in Lk.22:46 He could encourage the sleepy disciples to rise and pray *also*- i.e. as well as him praying for them- that they did not fall into temptation. Note how "watch" in Mt.26:38 is elsewhere used about spiritual watching rather than being on the look out for people approaching. Heb.5:6,7 lends support by saying that Christ's agonizing prayer in the garden that God would save Him from death was fulfilling the type of Melchizedek, who prayed to

God for other people, not just himself. The only way of reconciling all this is to see Christ's prayer for salvation from death as being motivated by His desire for our salvation from death. No wonder James refers to this as the supreme example of showing spiritual love for our brethren in our prayer life.

"Avaieth" means literally to 'in-work'- as if prayer for others will help us personally by our offering it. This idea seems to be picked up in the next verse.

### **Of like passions**

"Elias was a man subject to (Strong: 'similarly affected by') like passions as *we* are (James found it hard too), and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (v.17).

Elijah's prayer exemplifies how intensely we should pray for the spiritual benefit of others, and how that in itself helped him spiritually. In view of the exalted status of Elijah in Jewish theology, James stresses how he was of "like passions" to us (cp. Acts 14:15)- i.e. he too, because of his inherent human nature, did not find intense prayer easy. Elijah's fervent prayer was that it might not rain, and in the context of James his prayer was for the spiritual good of Ahab and apostate Israel. In the same way as apostles like Paul and Peter could pray for physical sickness to come upon men to lead them to repentance, so Elijah prayed for the famine to come upon Israel to make them realize their sin. James is saying that if the sick brethren and indeed the whole ecclesia prayed for forgiveness with the same intensity that the apostles and Elijah had prayed for such physical problems to come upon the spiritually weak, then those problems could be lifted. But it was only those who were sensitive to the true spirit of the word, in this case in the Elijah record, who would have grasped this.

The intensity of Elijah's prayer needs some thought to appreciate, as superficially it appears that it is hardly recorded that he prayed for the drought. However, it must have been as a result of his prayer that he could say "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word". This is because of a principle outlined by Eliphaz in Job 22:27,28; he said that one of the blessings of living in good conscience with God was that one's prayers were powerful, and therefore "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto (God), and He shall hear thee...thou shalt also decree a thing (i.e. in prayer), and it shall be established unto thee". Thus the power of prayer is such that effectively requests became decrees, so sure can we be of their being answered. So many of the great prayers of Scripture are not littered with "If it be Thy will"- instead, because those who prayed were saturated with knowledge of God's will through their familiarity with the word which contains God's will (Jn.1:13 cp. 1 Pet.1:23), they could pray whatever *they* willed, and could be confident of being heard because the word was in them. And our Lord had said that nothing less was possible for His people now- Jn.15:7. Therefore if a man of our passions like Elijah could pray so powerfully for the weak in his ecclesia, the same was possible for that of the first century.

### **Triumph on Carmel**

"And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (v.18).

Again we are left to imagine when, where and how Elijah made this prayer, seeing that it is unrecorded. After his glorious triumph of faith on Carmel in the sight of all Israel, there appeared at last to be a significant repentance: "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Yahweh, He is the God", and promptly proceeded to massacre the priests of Baal. No doubt finding the four barrels of water to put on the sacrifice as the ritual required had involved considerable effort- making them reflect on the God whom they knew in their hearts provided rain. Elijah then went up to the solitude of the crags of Carmel, "cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees (in fervent prayer), and said

to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea" for rain. This command was repeated seven times. Being a man of like passions as us, it took seven repeated prayers, a widow continually coming and not taking no for an answer, for there to be even an indication of a response. Thus Elijah's 'praying again' was for a lifting of the physical curse on the land because of their repentance. Note his running before Ahab's chariot as the rain started to come down, symbolic of his belief that by his repentance Ahab was the righteous king that he had come to herald (1 Kings 18:39,33,42-46). This same calibre of head-between-the-knees, up-in-the-mountain prayer, consistently repeated, would lead to the lifting of the sickness placed on the first century ecclesia.

## **Rain again**

The heaven giving rain is associated with the earth bringing forth her fruit- miraculously, seeing that it is unlikely that anything had been planted in the previous 3« years of total drought. Similarly God would act over and above their personal ability to develop spiritual fruit in them, given this basic prerequisite of total faith in prayer, based on the word truly dwelling in them as it did in Elijah. Similar victories of faith and repentance are just as possible for us, especially during the three and a half year period of tribulation which may well come upon us in the last days. James' specific, inspired mention of the three and a half year period of drought must be significant, as the duration of the drought is not mentioned in the Old Testament record. It is possible to historically demonstrate that there was a three and a half year period of especial difficulty in the land and among the Jews empire-wide before the final cataclysm of AD70; during this period the Jewish ecclesias would have had special opportunity to repent. The situation of AD70 is more than likely to be replicated in our last days. The way to ensure that we will stand up to that test is by each showing unlimited love and concern for the true spiritual welfare of our brother. The final two verses sum this up, and thereby the whole theme of the epistle.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (v.19,20).

Erring from the truth in the terms of James' letter is not only limited to doctrinal deviance in the sense of 'first principles', but in showing a lack of love of each other and of the word, having a selfish materialism rather than a truly spiritual mind, and having a heart uninfluenced by the word, resulting in uncontrolled words and a lack of true compassion towards the Lord's brethren. In the context of the previous verses, James is giving extra incentive to pray for each other's repentance and forgiveness- such prayer as well as personal discussion and example really can "convert him". This shows that to some degree our prayers can influence the spiritual state of another brother over and above his personal level of spirituality- given certain prerequisites. If this is not so, and we each totally determine our own spiritual destiny regardless of the effort of others, then these closing exhortations of James 5 are without purpose.

## **Converting the sinner**

"Convert" here means literally 'to revert'. It is used in the New Testament particularly of the conversion of the Jews- i.e. a reverting of their hearts to the true spirit of their father Abraham (cp. Lk.1:17). Interestingly, Is.6:10 and Acts 28:27 talk of the Jews refusing to be sensitive to the word preached in the first century, and therefore not being healed- both physically and spiritually. This background of the word 'convert' nicely fits the context of James in its associating the ecclesia with the apostate Jewish world by which they were influenced, and warning that unless they were more sensitive to the word they would not be

healed. By the same token those who did speak forth the word to try to convert their brethren were being classified along with Christ and the apostles, who also spoke the word to try to convert the Jews.

"If...one convert him, let him know..." sounds as if the brethren were not consciously trying to win converts- yet James encourages them that their conscious 'preaching' of the word to their wayward brethren and praying for them were all to the same effect as preaching, seeing that these brethren were spiritually dead anyway. By re-awakening them to a truly spiritual life they were saving their soul from death. The 'soul' here may mean the body or life, in the sense that ultimately acceptance at the judgment seat would mean that their "soul" or life would not die; however, it is more likely that the soul here refers to the spiritual record of the believer (see Digression 3). The language of preaching- i.e. conversion and saving souls- is being used here about the upbuilding of brethren. The same style is found in Dan.12:3: "They that be wise (Heb. 'teachers', i.e. prudent guides) shall shine as the (stars)...and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars". 1 Thess.1:8 similarly speaks of the word of the Lord sounding out from the Thessalonian ecclesia- in the sense that all the ecclesias near and far were inspired by their evident faith. Thus it was their spiritual example to others that was their sounding out of the word. Another example is Phil.2:15 speaking of the ecclesia witnessing as lights in the world to "a crooked and perverse nation". A closer examination of this passage shows that this was through their holding forth the true word of life to the Judaizers amongst them. The specific nation referred to cannot be the Roman world in general, but rather the Jews. This suggestion is clinched by the fact that Paul is here quoting Dt.32:5, which is describing the apostate among the ecclesia in the wilderness as "a perverse and crooked generation". Thus Paul like James is using the language of preaching, to describe how they should work through the word and prayer to build up the apostate amongst the new Israel during their wilderness walk to the Kingdom. Likewise Acts 20:7 speaks of Paul "preaching unto" the Troas ecclesia in his breaking of bread exhortation. The language of preaching being used in upbuilding existing believers may help explain why Paul sometimes speaks to believers as if he is imparting basic doctrine to them; thus "Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor.15:51) was written to believers. Writing to the same ecclesia a while later there is more of the same: "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:20).

## **The end of all things**

The exact parallel of these verses in James is found in 1Pet.4:7,8: "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (for each other, we may imply from the James parallel). And above all things have fervent charity (cp. fervent prayer, James 5:16- through which true love can be expressed) among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins". This parallel shows that fervent prayer for each other spiritually is the way fervent love is shown. Converting the erring brother will "hide a multitude of sins", alluding to Prov.10:12: "Love covereth all sins". True love is therefore shown by loving rebuke, rather than turning a blind eye. Truly "the end of all things is at hand" for us, as never before. There is a special need in our last days to show these qualities of true love to each other.

We have to seriously ask ourselves personally whether we have that degree of selfless concern for the spiritual welfare of each other that we would climb mountains to find the solace conducive to prayer; to have our face between our knees in the intensity of our pleading with God, for the sake of our brother's spiritual growth. Elijah and the brethren of the first century did this for men who were far gone in their declension; how much more motivated should we be for our far less errant brethren? Many of us do not have the fear of sin, both in ourselves and in our brethren, which leads us to such intensity of effort either for



others or for ourselves in our own weaknesses. Surely each of us needs to assimilate more the idea of striving for God's glory in the conquest of the flesh. But this is the high challenge of the letter of James- to drive ourselves onwards to an altogether higher and fuller spirituality, which by its very nature concerns itself with the triumph of others in the day of judgment to the same extent as we care for our own.

## EPILOGUE

There is a strong hint throughout the New Testament that the quicker the believers develop spiritually, the sooner the Lord's coming will happen (notably 2 Pet.3:11,12,15). It also seems likely that Christ's coming is to some degree dependent on the repentance or spiritual condition of Israel. At least, this is how it seems God wishes us to perceive things.

It therefore follows that the New Testament letters should emphasize and encourage spiritual development so that the second coming would occur. The letters of Hebrews, James and Peter being addressed specifically to the Jews (James 1:1 "The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad"- a strange phrase to use to Gentiles), it is fitting that they should emphasize the need for each Jewish Christian to develop a spiritual character, so that the day of Christ would be hastened, and that the judgements would not fall on the believers, and less heavily on the natural Jews. The relevance of such exhortation to the present generation, apparently living on the brink of the second coming, is therefore acute: "Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (5:8,9). "Denying...worldly lusts (of James 1:14 etc.) we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world (the whole theme of James); looking for...the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit.2:12,13).

## Digression 1: The Essence Of Temptation

It is easy to conceive of trials as just physical sets of circumstances in our lives which impose discomfort. However, James 1:13-15 defines temptation and testing as fundamentally being in terms of our evil desires being stimulated by these physical circumstances. Thus missing a bus may provoke the same degree of spiritual temptation- e.g. to impatience, lack of faith- as breaking a leg, although they appear physically to be trials of quite different magnitudes. The temptation is not in the missing of the bus, but in the thoughts generated by it.

Bearing in mind James' definition of temptation as a process that occurs within the human heart rather than as a set of physical circumstances, a number of passages can be seen in a different light:

- Rev.3:10: "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the (ecclesial/ Jewish?) world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (land of Israel?). It seems unlikely that Sardis was totally preserved from the physical tribulation that came upon the Jewish world- but because of their high spiritual standards, the Lord promised to spiritually keep them from temptation; i.e. to help them to control their evil desires, confirming the freewill effort they were making to do this. Jude 24 speaks in similar vein of God as "Him that is able to keep you from (spiritually) falling".

- 1 Cor.10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (e.g. as experienced by the Israelites, in the context)...God...will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it". Escape is not always provided from physical trials- especially in the case of those who were soon to be the Christian martyrs amongst Paul's readership. But when faced with situations which make us feel that we will be spiritually

swamped by the power of our innate evil tendencies, then we can take courage that although the physical conditions causing the trial may not be taken away, there will certainly be an opportunity made for us to resist the spiritual temptation. Notice how a way of *escape* is provided- implying that initially the temptation is truly too heavy for us, and an escape is therefore made for us by God so that He is not in the position of forcing us to sin. Surely all readers of these words know this feeling only too well- sensing that we are in a position where our evil desires are growing stronger and stronger, not wanting to sin, but feeling that humanly, given a few more moments, and it will be inevitable. It is in these moments that we have to desperately cling to this promise- that God *will* make a way of escape, that he will keep us from falling (Jude 24) by His power of righteousness.

Back in 1 Cor.10, verse 14 continues "*wherefore...flee from idolatry*"- i.e. from the spiritual temptations.

- Mt.6:13: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (RV, NIV)- i.e. the Biblical devil, the source of our temptation. This again indicates that God wishes us to invoke His special help to control our evil heart.

- Heb.11:36: "Others had trial (also translated "temptation") of cruel mockings and scourgings". The real trial was in the temptations provoked by these things in their hearts. They "received a good report through faith"- not because they physically endured it (cp. 1 Cor.13:3), but due to their faith in spiritually being able to endure these tribulations with God's grace to help.

- 1 Pet.4:12,13 equates "the fiery trial which is to try you" with "Christ's sufferings" . His mental agony of spiritual temptation, to the extent of secreting bulbous drops of sweat, was infinitely greater than His physical suffering. The real trial which was to test the believers in AD70 was a spiritual one. Likewise 1 Pet.5:8,9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren". The fact they could resist and overcome these afflictions makes it difficult to apply them to the physical persecution from the Roman 'devil'; once they are interpreted as spiritual trials brought about by those sufferings, the passage reads more clearly.

- 2 Pet.2:9 comments on God's deliverance of Lot from Sodom as "The Lord (knowing) how to deliver the Godly out of temptations"- to keep Lot from the great spiritual temptation provoked within him by that city, God destroyed it. Similarly God's abhorrence of this present world which Sodom typifies is largely due to the spiritual temptation it so evidently brings upon His people.

- Lk.8:13 describes how those who do not properly have the seed of the word in their heart will fall away "in time of temptation". The word in the heart enables us to overcome the sinful desires of our nature which are lodged there (Ps.119:11). If the word is not there, then there will be an inevitable falling away in time of spiritual temptation.

- The believers' praying for Peter was perhaps for his spiritual strengthening rather than his physical deliverance, hence their disbelief at his physical reappearance- or was that an example of the fickleness of our so-called faith, that even whilst praying for something we cannot accept that the answer will immediately come?

Out of the 50 odd times that the Greek word normally translated "temptation" occurs, there is only one instance where it appears to mean a purely physical trial rather than including some aspect of spiritual temptation within our heart: "Through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an Angel of God" (Gal.4:13,14). Given the overwhelmingly

consistent use of "temptation" in a spiritual context, this passage should perhaps also be read in that way. In this case, it would appear that Paul is recognizing that his physically feeble appearance when he first preached to them had been a spiritual temptation to them to disbelieve his message because of the appearance of the preacher. Paul is arguing that they had overcome such temptations initially, but now due to the smear campaign against him by the Judaizers (2 Cor.10:10) they were being swayed against him because of such considerations, and thus were now failing this spiritual trial.

## Digression 2: The Word And Trial

There are a number of passages which indicate that the effect of both physical and spiritual trials can be similar to that of the word, and that the word is opened to us by our correct reaction to such trials. The prime mover in this relationship between the word and trial must be the word; its influence upon us makes us respond acceptably to trial, which in turn heightens our sensitivity to the word- resulting, theoretically at least, in our daily experience of life generating an upward spiral of spiritual development (see Digression 7)- as long as we continue to apply ourselves to the word.

The following are examples of this parallel between the action of the word upon a man and the effect of trials:

- "Chastening...yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby" (Heb.12:11). "The word of righteousness...strong meat" leads to Bible students "by reason of use (having) their senses *exercised* to discern both good and evil" (Heb.5:13,14); and the word abiding in us also yields the fruits of righteousness (Jn.15:4,7).

- Ez.24:12 describes God's efforts to purge Jerusalem from their sins in terms of boiling her with a fierce fire: "She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth from out of her: her scum shall be in the fire". The wearying with lies suggests that it was due to their listening to false prophets rather than the true word of God that the fire did not cleanse them. Thus fire is a symbol both of physical trial and also the word (cp. Jer.20:9), exemplified in Ezekiel's context by Jerusalem being literally burned by the Babylonians as an opportunity to purge Israel's sin; the words of the prophets calling for repentance at this time were also a fire.

- There are clear connections between the rod and the word of God. Ez.21:9,10 equates the sword with the rod of Christ: "A sword is sharpened...it is the rod of My Son" (AVmg.). The sword is a clear symbol of the word (Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12; Rev.19:21). Is.11:4 confirms this link between Christ's word and His rod: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked". Ps.2:9 shows the power of this word/rod: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". Similarly "feed Thy people with thy rod" (Mic.7:14) must refer to Christ's instruction of Israel- when He will "feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer.3:15). Ps.110:2 describes the rod of Christ's strength being sent out of Zion to enable Him to rule the world; Is.2:3 describes the word of the Lord going out from Zion. However, in all these cases the rod does not just mean spoken words and mental understanding, but also refers to the physical punishments to be seen in the last days. Thus Micah pleads with Israel to see that God's Hand was behind their present distresses, which were effectively God's word spoken to them: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city...*hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it*" (Mic.6:9). Christ warned Pergamos that unless they repented- i.e. obeyed His word- He would "come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev.2:16). This fighting was not just verbal reasoning but by physical distress (cp. Rev.2:22,23).

- "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor.1:5). "Consolation" is the same word translated "Comforter" in Jn.14-16; and the Spirit power of the Comforter is largely available to us through the word. Thus the more we suffer, the more the word's comfort should be revealed to us. Yet this relationship between trials and the word depends upon a basic love of the word initially- "unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction" (Ps.119:92). Elihu, speaking on God's behalf, said the same: "He delivereth (spiritually?) the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression" (Job 36:15)- exactly as happened to Job ("now mine eye seeth thee", Job 42:5). It is understandable, therefore, that the Hebrew for "instructed" in Ps.2:10 concerning the instruction by the word/rod of Christ's mouth is also translated "chastened".

- Heb.12:10 shows that our chastening by God is so "that we might be partakers of His holiness". The ideas of sanctification and holiness are parallel (e.g. "sanctify yourselves...for I am holy", Lev.11:44). It is the word that sanctifies (Jn.17:17), thus enabling us to be partakers of God's holiness. Again the effects of the word and God's chastening are parallel.

- It is through the power of the word that we become sons of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet.1:23); yet Heb.12:8 says that the scourging of our Heavenly Father is a sure sign that we are His children, showing that the word and our trials work in tandem to make us sons of God.

- A comparison of Dt.8:2 and 16 shows that the purpose of Israel's difficult wilderness journey was the same as why they were given manna: "Thou shalt remember all the (difficult) way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no...who fed thee in the wilderness with manna...that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee". The Lord reasoned in Jn.6 that the manna represented the word- their reliance on the manna provided by the word of command from God (Dt.8:3) taught them the same lessons and revealed their real spiritual state, every bit as much as their response to the various trials of the journey.

- Joseph's physical trials in prison and the trials brought about by God's word are equated in Ps.105:18,19: "Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron...the word of the Lord tried him".

- Our whole reasoning is summed up in Ps.94:12: "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him (thereby) out of Thy law".

## **Digression 3: The Problem Of Soul And Spirit**

The standard explanation about death runs something like this: 'The soul means the body or a creature, and sometimes refers to our natural 'life'; the spirit is the power or breath that keeps us alive, the life force, and refers at times to the mind and spiritual side of man'. It is easy to construct a 21st century parable along these lines: The soul can be likened to a light bulb which lights up when the current or spirit is passed to it, and then dies when God as it were turns off the switch and the spirit/ current goes back to the 'circuit'. Frequently, this all rings true; but there are a significant number of passages which pose problems, although they do not invalidate the truth of the above approach in dealing with many of the passages which mention the soul and spirit. The following points are presented really as a caveat against sweeping statements that can lead us into difficulty with orthodox opponents.

- "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Mt.10:28). The soul and body seem separate here.
- "That thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 Jn.2). Physical health here seems to be different from the health of the soul.
- "My soul fainted within me" (Jonah 2:7)- and yet Jonah stayed alive physically (how else could he have prayed from the belly of the whale?). The soul is not the life here.
- "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pet.4:19). Yet many of Peter's readership would have lost their physical life in the fiery trial that came upon them; the committing of the soul to God surely has a more spiritual reference?

However, there is a difference between soul and spirit- they can be divided assunder (Heb.4:12), and it is true that generally the soul does refer to the natural, fleshly side of man, and the spirit to the more spiritual aspect. Yet because the spirit or mind is such a fundamental part of our life, the soul can at times be almost synonymous with the spirit. Thus we should not fear the death of the body (soul), but of the soul in the sense of the mind disposed towards God which we have developed. It is noteworthy that in many languages other than English there is no equivalent of the separate concepts of soul and spirit which we have. Sadly the Bible translations in those languages use the same word to translate 'soul' and 'spirit'- several African languages and also Hungarian and Polish are examples of this. There are numerous examples of the soul referring to the mind or spirit, in the sense that 'soul' fundamentally means 'you'- in every way, every aspect of us (Ps.103:1), including our mind or spirit:

- "That thy soul may bless me...that my soul may bless thee" (Gen.27:19,25). The use of the word "soul" in this and other passages is pointless if all it means is 'thou mayest bless me...that I may bless thee'. The soul here must therefore refer to something else apart from the person- in this case 'You- with the earnest, sincere desire of your mind'.
- The broken bread represents our Lord's broken body (1 Cor.11:24), or 'soul'. But not a bone of His body was broken; Ps.34:18-20 contrasts his broken heart with his unbroken bones. Thus the broken bread speaks of his broken mind, the breaking of his body ('soul') in a mental rather than physical sense.
- "The soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity" (Lev.7:18) shows how the phrase "the soul" is used rather than 'he that eateth', in order to indicate that the person did it with the conscious will of his mind or spirit. But "their soul abhorred (such) statutes" (Lev.26:43), and so God's soul or mind abhorred them (Lev.26:30,43).
- "Keep thy soul diligently" (Dt.4:9) is picked up in the Proverbs (which are largely a commentary on the Mosaic Law), in the dictum "Keep thy heart (mind) with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov.4:23). Thus the soul is paralleled with the heart or mind/spirit, hence the plea: "Lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul" (Dt.11:18). This seems to parallel the heart and soul- how can the word of God be mentally retained ("lay up") in the soul in the sense of the physical life or body? The believers being "of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32) is another example of this.
- "Poured out my soul before the Lord" (1 Sam.1:15)- the inner mind poured out in prayer.
- "Let this child's soul come into him" (1 Kings 17:21) must be one of the clearest associations between the soul (life) and spirit (life force). It may even be consciously alluding back to Gen.2:7, where God put the spirit into Adam's prostrate body so that he became alive.

- "He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul" (Prov.19:16), i.e. his spiritual man, in trim.
- God's soul delighted in the Lord Jesus (Is.42:1,6)- i.e. God rejoiced mentally within Himself. This is proof for God being corporeal.
- Jesus "poured out His soul unto death" (Is.53:12), the Septuagint version of which is quoted in Phil.2:7: "(He) made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form (mental demeanour) of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men". Phil.2 is describing the mind that was in Christ Jesus (v.5), and how especially on the cross He showed such extreme "lowliness of mind" (the context in v.3). Thus the Lord's pouring out of His soul refers to His mental pouring out in humility.
- "Lusts, which war against the (spiritual) soul" (1 Pet.2:11).
- A selection of other examples: Is.10:18; 53:10,11; 1 Cor.15:45 cp. v.44; 1 Kings 18:21,22; Gen.19:20; 1 Pet.2:25; Ps.34:2; Prov.2:10.

## **Digression 4: The Doctrine Of Salvation**

There can be no doubt that the physical, political Kingdom of God does not now exist, seeing it will be established after the Lord's return (Dan.2:44; James 2:5; 2 Tim.4:1,8; 1 Cor.15:50 etc.). "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God". However, in prospect we are now saved, sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph.1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor.1:22), in the heavenlies now (Eph.1:20; 2:6), having risen with Christ acceptably in baptism so that in prospect sin has no more power over us (Rom.6:11), "receiving (now) the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet.1:9). This idea of being saved in prospect, whilst still having to strive for the Kingdom and having the possibility of falling from grace, is foreshadowed in the experience of natural Israel. After their baptism at the Red Sea, Israel were declared the Kingdom of God by reason of God being their King through their promised obedience to His word (Ex.19:5,6). They were "saved" (Jude 5) from the power of Egypt (cp.sin). Yet they had to walk through the wilderness (cp. our probations), behaving according to the responsibilities of being God's Kingdom, and yet still capable of backsliding before they became established as the physical Kingdom in the land. Those very same Abrahamic promises of inheriting the land of Canaan as the centre of the coming Kingdom are made to us through our Red Sea baptism. Abraham lived in the land of promise in his mortal life, but did not of course experience what it would be like in the Kingdom (Heb.11:9). That he had to look forward to in faith, as do we, his seed. No wonder Bro. Roberts described the ecclesia of today as "the Kingdom in miniature".

Peter leaves us with no doubt as to the validity of this parallel: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (cp. "a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation", Ex.19:6), an holy nation, a peculiar (i.e. purchased) people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness (Egypt) into His marvellous light (cp. the glory at Sinai?). Which in time past were not a people (Kingdom), but are now the people of God" (1 Pet.2:9,10). Alluding to this same idea, our guardian Angels, speaking on our behalf, welcomed the risen Lord into Heaven with the song "Thou...hast made us unto our God (now) a Kingdom of priests; and we shall (in the full manifestation of that Kingdom) reign on earth" (Rev.5:10). Paul in Hebrews 12 describes our being in Christ in language referring back to God's declaration of Israel as His Kingdom at Sinai (Heb.12:18,29= Ex.24:17). A significant detail in Acts 7:36 now falls into place: "He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs...in the wilderness forty years"; yet Ex.12:41; 33:1 say that the bringing out of Israel was at the Red Sea. These two 'bringings out' of Egypt (the flesh) are experienced by us, firstly at baptism, and secondly in actually entering the Kingdom at the second coming. Our bringing

out from the Kingdom of darkness into the sphere of God's rulership only occurs in prospect at baptism and must be confirmed at the end of our wilderness wandering.

In common with the majority of prophecy, the predictions of the future Messianic Kingdom had their primary fulfilment in the first century. The following Biblical proof indicates that the Kingdom prophecies are capable of a relatively small preliminary fulfilment in forms other than the final political Kingdom to be established on the Lord's return:

- The result of healing lame people in Acts 3:8; 14:10 was that they *leaped* (this is emphasized) and walked, praising God. This seems to be couched in the language of Is.35:5,6 concerning lame people leaping and praising God; a prophecy we normally apply to the future Kingdom.

- Simeon waited for "the consolation (comfort) of Israel" (Lk.2:25), referring to the Kingdom prophecy of Is.40:1,2- and saw it have a fulfilment in the first coming of the Lord.

- The disciples' request to know exactly when the Kingdom would be restored ('When will Ez.21:25-27 be fulfilled?') was met with a promise that while they would never know the exact date, that was immaterial as they would possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit soon (Acts 1:7,8)- implying that what they would do with them would be a primary fulfilment of the Kingdom prophecies which they were enquiring about. Sadly orthodox (and not so orthodox) Christendom has perverted such passages to teach that through the indwelling of the Spirit we are now fully in the Kingdom. In no way is this true, nor can it be.

- It was quite possible that the full Messianic Kingdom could have been established in the first century, depending upon how the Jews responded to Christ's Gospel. All things were ready for the feast, representing the Kingdom, and the Jewish guests invited- but their rejection of the offer resulted in a 2,000 year delay while the invitations were pressed home on equally laid back Gentiles (Mt.22:4). Similarly Peter understood that the Lord must remain in Heaven "until the times of restitution of all things (cp. Mt.22:4), which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began"; but he felt, under inspiration, that "all the prophets...as many as have spoken (note the emphasis; cp. "all His holy prophets"), have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts 3:21,24), i.e. the days of the first century.

- Isaiah's prophecies of Christ being a light to the Gentiles in the Kingdom were fulfilled in Paul (Is.49:6= Acts 13:47; and is Is.49:4 also a prophecy of Paul's thoughts? "I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought...yet surely my judgment is with the Lord").

- Psalm 2 is clearly about the future Kingdom: "The uttermost parts of the earth" for Christ's possession, v.8; v.9= Rev.2:27 and Dan.2:35 concerning the Kingdom. Yet it is given a first century fulfilment in Acts 4:24-28.

- "The sunrising (AVmg.) from on high hath visited us" (Lk.1:78) through Christ's mission, fulfilling the prophecy of Mal.4:2 about Christ as the sun of righteousness in the first century, although it clearly has reference also to the greater dawning yet to come.

- "In that day (of the future Kingdom- v.14) will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9:11)- a clear future Kingdom prophecy, but quoted about the building up of the first century church in Acts 15:14-16.

- Acts 2:30-33 says that our Lord's exaltation in Heaven fulfils, albeit primarily, the promise to David of Christ reigning on his throne. This is confirmed by 2 Sam.7:12 saying that God would "set up" David's seed to have an eternal Kingdom; and "set up" in the Septuagint is the

same word as "resurrect", as if in some way the promise would be realized after Christ's resurrection.

- The image of Dan.2 has its' main fulfilment in the events of the second coming; but Is.41:25 describes the Lord's first advent as coming "upon princes as mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay"- Daniel 2 language (and cp. Mt.3:2 with Dan.2:44).

- Isaiah's promise of new Heavens and new earth (Is.65:17) was fulfilled primarily when the Jewish system was finally ended in AD70 (2 Pet.3:13); but it clearly has an application to the Kingdom.

- The pouring out of the Spirit gifts described in Joel 2 was primarily fulfilled in Acts 2, whilst looking forward to "the great and the terrible day of the Lord". Thus Joel 2:32 "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" was fulfilled primarily in the first century too; it is quoted in Rom.10:13 in this connection.

- The loyal band of Bible students in the temple expected redemption to appear in Jerusalem (Lk.2:38), presumably because of the Old Testament prophecies like Joel 2 concerning Christ being manifested in Jerusalem at His second coming and Kingdom. But their first century application of these was not wrong.

- The Lord's showing judgment to the Gentiles and not publicly striving or crying in his preaching (Mt.12:18-21) primarily fulfilled the Kingdom prophecy of Is.42:1-3. Note how His gentle, low pressure attitude to preaching will be the same in the Kingdom as it was in the first century. In the same way Is.54:13 concerning the preaching of the Gospel in the Kingdom is quoted about Christ in Jn.6:45.

- Our Lord's final Bible class showed how the Old Testament prophets described the preaching of the Gospel world-wide from Jerusalem (Lk.24:47) in the first century. He must surely have been referring to 'Kingdom' passages like Is.2:2-4.

In line with all this evidence for the establishment of the Kingdom in prospect in the first century- and no more than in prospect, let it be emphasized- it is to be expected that there are a number of hints that in some limited sense we are now in the Kingdom. The watchful student will not have been slow to pick them up:

- "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness (cp. Egypt, 1 Pet.2:9,10), and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear son; in whom we have (now) redemption through His blood...for by Him were all things created (the new, spiritual creation of believers is finished in prospect)...you...now hath he reconciled...*if* ye continue in the faith... whereunto I also labour, striving..." (Col.1:13,14,16,21,23,29). This shows how our comprising the Kingdom in prospect is dependent upon our continued personal effort. The contention is sometimes made in discussion with those who wrongly believe that the Kingdom in its full sense is the church of today that "into" in Col.1:13 can mean 'for'. However, the Greek preposition 'eis' means 'in the interior, into, indicating the point reached or entered' (Strong). Thus Phillip and the Eunuch "went down both into (Gk: 'eis') the water" (Acts 8:38)- from which we correctly argue that baptism is by full immersion into water. However, it is true that at times 'eis' is translated with the idea of 'towards', although this is not its primary meaning. The rest of the quotation from Col.1 made above would suggest that we should understand 'eis' here in its normal meaning.

- The New Covenant which is to be made with Israel on Christ's return has now been made with us in this life (Heb.8:10 cp. v.13).

- Our comprising the Kingdom to some degree is understandable seeing that God speaks of "those things which be not as though they were" (Rom.4:17). Thus Abraham and those



believers who have died are described as 'living unto God' in prospect, because He can foresee their resurrection (Lk.20:38). It is to this that Rom.6:11 refers: "Reckon yourselves (i.e. in prospect)..alive unto God through (having been resurrected with) Jesus" in baptism. In the same way as in prospect we should reckon ourselves resurrected to eternal life, unable to give service to sin any longer, so in the same way we are now in the Kingdom. Careful attention to the tenses in 1 Cor.15:20 indicates the same logic; by His resurrection Christ has "become the firstfruits of them that slept"- not those 'who are sleeping', but "that slept", seeing that because of their Lord's resurrection they also are alive in prospect. Similarly if Christ had not risen "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor.15:18), implying that now they are not perished. The practical meaning of all this is that we should live now in the same joy and righteousness as if we were in the Kingdom. "The day (of the Kingdom) is at hand: let us therefore...walk honestly, as in the day" (Rom.13:12,13), i.e. as if we are now living in the Kingdom which is soon to come.

- Jesus reasoned that only 'babes' had spiritual understanding (Lk.10:21,22), and babes enter the Kingdom (Mt.18:4), implying that our grasp of the real spirit of the Truth in child like simplicity and tenacity makes us effectively connected with the Kingdom now.

- We have been called to "glory" in possessing Divine nature in the Kingdom (2 Pet.1:3,4). Obviously we do not have that now. Yet we are firmly connected with that hope; Peter earlier described himself as "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" in us (1 Pet.5:1). Likewise we have been credited with righteousness now through Christ (Rom.9:30), yet our reward in the Kingdom will be a "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim.4:8).

- "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor.5:17) is very much the language of Rev.21:5 concerning the creation of new things on the ruins of the old, at Christ's return. Yet this dramatic change must occur within the believer as a result of being in Christ in this life, before he can share in the wonders of that future age.

- The reasoning of Hebrews 3 and 4 concerning "the rest" of the Kingdom is probably the clearest example. "We which have believed do enter into rest...for he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His" on the Sabbath (4:3,10). Thus those who no longer relied on the works of the Law but on faith were living in the spirit of the Sabbath- they had in some sense entered the rest. But despite their reliance on faith, works were still necessary: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God...let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall.." (4:9,11). This is a perfect cameo of the whole argument; in prospect we are in the Kingdom, but have a very real possibility of falling from grace, and still need to labour for the final entry into that Kingdom.

- In the same way as the resurrection and establishment of the Kingdom have happened in prospect, so too has the judgment. "If we would judge ourselves (i.e. examine ourselves to the point of realizing we deserve condemnation at the judgment), we should not be judged" (1 Cor.11:31), i.e. condemned, at the judgment seat of Christ. Thus Jude 23 speaks of pulling a man out of the fire, i.e. saving him from condemnation in Gehenna, as if to some extent the unworthy are now experiencing their punishment, as the righteous are their reward. The fire of condemnation at the judgment has already been kindled by men's attitudes now (Lk.12:49), and hence by doing good to such men when they abuse us we (now) "heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom.12:20); note that "thine enemy" here must therefore refer to someone who is responsible, i.e. in the ecclesia (cp. 2 Thess.3:15, which implies 'an enemy' was first century vocabulary for a shunned and rejected false teacher).

- The possession of the Holy Spirit in the first century was possessing "the powers of the world to come" (Heb.6:5), showing that at that time there was a foretaste of the coming

Kingdom. Thus in answer to the question about whether He would then fully restore the Kingdom of God, our Lord basically said: 'When, exactly, you can't know. But you will receive Holy Spirit power coming upon you (Acts 1:8 AVmg.) and will spread the Gospel world-wide from Jerusalem; which is tantamount to saying that in a limited sense the Kingdom is coming right now, although when it will finally be fully established is not for you to know'. Further support for this is found in our earlier suggestion that Kingdom prophecies like Is.2 were fulfilled to some degree in the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem in the first century.

- Jn.3:3-5 emphasizes the need to be born of Spirit to enter the Kingdom. This occurs to us in a limited sense now through the word (1 Pet.1:23; 2 Thess.2:13), so that we are born again into that Kingdom. Yet the full birth of the Spirit is after acceptance at the judgment.
- The Pharisees will be thrust out of the Kingdom at judgment (Lk.13:28), implying that in a sense they were part of it before its establishment.
- "He that *is* least in the Kingdom of Heaven *is* greater than" John the baptist (Mt.11:11). The following verse speaks of preaching the Gospel of that Kingdom (Mt.11:12 cp. Lk.16:16), perhaps implying that by responding to Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom we are associated with the Kingdom, and are thereby "greater" than the message which John preached.
- Mt.1:17 mentions that there were 42 generations before Christ. This must have some connection with the 42 stopping places before Israel reached Canaan, as described in Num.33:2. Thus the birth of Christ would be like God's people entering the promised land of the Kingdom in some way.
- Phil.2:15 describing the believers now as lights shining in the world is alluding to the Septuagint of Dan.12:3, concerning the saints in the Kingdom shining as the stars. Once it is appreciated that we are now in the spiritual heavenlies (Eph.2:6) then this makes sense.
- Ex.38:18 describes the curtain over the door of the tabernacle in similar language to how the veil hiding the Most Holy is described. Christ is the door of the tabernacle through which we enter at our conversion (Jn.10:9). By doing so we also enter, in prospect, through the veil into the Most Holy of eternity and Divine nature.
- The parable of the camel (i.e. the rich would-be believer) being unloaded of its wealth before it enters the city (Mt.19:23,24) represents a rich man entering the Kingdom (the city = the Kingdom, as in Rev.22:14; 21:2; Heb.13:14; 11:16; a city can also represent believers). If he sheds his riches now, it follows he is then able in some sense to enter the Kingdom now. This mini parable is in the context of Mt.19:21: "Sell that thou hast...and thou shalt have (now) treasures in (the Kingdom of) Heaven". This is the same idea as in Mt.18:4: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child (which necessitates parting with riches etc.), the same is (now) greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven". In these few words is our highest challenge.

We have shown how God's declaration of Israel as being His "kingdom of priests" in Ex.19:6 is quoted by Peter concerning the present ecclesia. Yet that promise was conditional: "If ye will obey my voice indeed...ye shall be unto me a Kingdom...and an holy nation". Despite their continual disobedience, God later speaks of Israel as His holy nation and Kingdom (Lev.20:26; Dt.7:6), showing that they could have this status of being His 'Kingdom' without obedience. Similarly, God "saved the people out of the land of Egypt (but) afterward destroyed them that believed not" (Jude 5). Their being saved from Egypt, as we have been from sin, did not guarantee ultimate salvation. By being called to the Kingdom, we enjoy this status in prospect, although this is not in itself a guarantee of salvation.

Christ "hath *made* us kings and priests" (Rev.1:6) in prospect, although we will only exercise this power in the Kingdom. Frequently we read of the saints being 'made' things which we must still strive to attain (Rom.5:19; 6:18,22; 8:2; 1 Cor.12:13; Eph.1:6; 2:13). God *made* Christ a sin offering, that we might be *made* the righteousness of God (2 Cor.5:21), although our Lord still had to exercise freewill effort to be that offering, as we must too. "God...saved us (in prospect)...that...we should be *made* heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit.3:5-7).

Finally, a brief word of reassurance for those to whom these ideas may be new. In no way am I suggesting that we are now in the Kingdom in its fullness; the passages examined above indicate that we are only a shadow image of that coming glory, "the Kingdom in miniature" (R.R.). But by grasping this fact we receive great motivation to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet.1:10), "*Knowing*, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thess.1:4). It was this fact that we are saved in prospect which Paul used to stir Timothy out of his spiritual inertia: "God...*hath* saved us" (2 Tim.1:9). When properly grasped, it will do the same for us.

## Digression 5: The Name, The Word And The Glory

The theme of the glory of God is surely one of the most inspiring in the whole of Scripture. In Ex.33:18 Moses asked to see the glory of God. God replied by saying that He would proclaim His Name before Moses, but it was not possible for Moses to see His face. Because of this, Moses was hidden in a rock while the glory, or the bodily presence of God, passed by. So the glory of God is deeply associated with the face of God, with His personal bodily presence. We are hidden in Christ, the smitten rock, and from this position we can comprehend the glory, the moral attributes of God, and we ought to be awed at how close we are to the blinding light of God's full glory, His face. The "glory" of God can be shown to be His characteristics or attributes. In Ex.33:8 Moses asks to see God's glory, and in reply he is told God will proclaim His Name before him, which is done in Ex.34:5-7 by the declaration of God's righteous attributes. Solomon building a temple "For the name of the Lord, and an house for His Kingdom" (2 Chron.2:1) suggests that God's Kingdom is another manifestation of His Name, because it will be filled with His attributes. This helps us understand Rom.14:17: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink...but righteousness..joy", i.e. the characteristics of God's Name.

The same theme is found in Philippians 1:11, which speaks of us being filled with the fruits of righteousness- i.e. the righteous characteristics of God of Ex.34- unto the *glory* of God. The R.V. of Ex.34:5-7 says that God is *full* of these attributes- hence Phil.1:11 talks of us being filled with these things too if we bear the Name, even in this life. The idea of fullness and being filled often occurs in the New Testament in the context of the glory. Eph.1:23 describes the church as "His body, the fullness of Him (God?) that filleth all in all". Thus we are "*the*" fullness of God and Christ. "We beheld His glory..full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34).. and of His fullness have all we received" (John 1:14,16). The word "filleth" in Eph.1:23 is the same as 'complete' in Col.2:9,10: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are *complete* in Him". Christ is filled with God's fullness of the righteous attributes of glory, and in Christ we are also filled. Seeing that we are the body of Christ it follows that the ecclesia in toto manifest the fulness of Christ's and therefore God's glory, through each of us manifesting a slightly different aspect of God's glorious character to perfection. Thus Peter reasons that the quicker the ecclesia spiritually develops, manifesting those attributes, the earlier Christ can return (2 Pet.3:11-15).

Despite the wonder of these things, let us remember that physically seeing the back of the Yahweh Angel who passed by (it could not have been God Himself because "no man hath seen God at any time") was the same as hearing the Name proclaimed. These things are only the back parts of God, although they comprehend all the spiritual things we can now understand. How much more wonderful in the Kingdom to see God Himself "face to face"- literally, "eye to eye", with the associated spiritual understanding which that will necessitate!

What we hope to show is that in some ways in this life we can see at least an image of that face, that true Glory, through the Word of God and above all in His Son, and this will ultimately prepare us to see God literally face to face. The book of Job talks much about seeing the face of God, and when we think of Job's pock-marked, boil filled face we perhaps see a figure of our total lack of glory, and our similar challenge to think upon the glories of God's face. Job 33 is especially interesting. Here Elihu, speaking on God's behalf, talks of the misery experienced by those who will not fully repent- perhaps a feeling we are familiar with in our spiritual lows; but if there is an intercessor, v.23, one among a thousand, who can shew unto man His (i.e. God's) righteousness- and it is Jesus who does this- then God is gracious to us, because, v.24, He has found a ransom; v.25,26. On repentance we experience a new, free relationship with God where prayer comes easy and we can in a way see God's face because righteousness is imputed to us. Job earlier complained that He couldn't see God's face- "He holdeth back the face of His throne" (26:9); but because God is prepared to impute His righteousness to us, in our case through Christ, it is possible figuratively for us to see God's face now. There are so many references to the shining of God's face representing forgiveness and acceptance, and to David exhorting us to seek God's face- e.g. in the context of Israel's sins "Turn us again and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved"(Ps.80:3). It would seem that there was a thick dark cloud over the mercy seat, in which Yahweh dwelt in the form of the angel of the presence. When the people especially pleased God or He wanted to especially demonstrate His forgiveness of their sins, the angel shone forth out of the darkness. David wanted to see this more and more, so he prayed "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth" (Ps.80:1). Paul clearly tells us that we have not come to darkness and the voice of words, like Israel at Sinai. We really can abide in the true light of glory. We who dwelt in darkness have seen a glorious light, we can *abide* in that light that David longed to see occasionally.

## **The face and the way**

The face of God and the Way of God are also associated. David prays "Thy face, Lord, will I seek...teach me Thy way" (Ps.27:8,11). The Cherubim of glory protect the Way, we are told; when Cain sinned, he was driven away from the presence or (s.w.) face of God because he was driven away from the cherubim. Therefore he complained that he was hid from God's face. John the baptist was sent before the face of the Lord as manifested in the face of Jesus to prepare his ways. This he did by encouraging the people to repent. As David tells us it is only through repenting that we can see God's face.

So how then in practice can we see the face and glory of God in the face of Jesus? 1 Peter 1:8 seems to be alluding to the events of Exodus 34: "Whom having not seen (cp."Thou canst not see My face"), ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory " (cp.Ex.34:6 R.V. "The Lord, *full* of mercy..." and the other "glory" attributes). We cannot see God but we can be full of the attributes of glory, until we see Christ face to face, which is the context of the preceding v.7. Acts 2:28 quotes Psalm 16 concerning Christ's resurrection and ascension: "Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance". So Christ's fulness of joy was to see God's face, and He has left us His joy (John 15). This was "the joy set before Him", and it is ours too. This is our fullness of joy, to

see God's face, spiritually in this life, and physically in the future. After asking us to let His Words abide in us, Jesus said He had told us that so that our joy might be full (John 15:7,11). So the effect of the Word and of true repentance and turning to God is the same as seeing God's face- it should bring that same fulness of joy. Other passages make the same connection between the Word and God's face shining upon us- e.g. Ps.119:135 "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant, and teach me Thy statutes".

### **Seeing God's face**

We are able to see God's face through having no sin, which is what the word of God stops (1 Jn.3:6,9 cp. 1 Pet.1:23); 3 Jn.11 implies that being born of God (by the word- 1 Pet.1:23), allows us to see God, i.e. His face.

Our Lord rebuked Phillip for asking to physically see God by saying that the knowledge they should have gained from his words and their spiritual 'seeing' or understanding of Christ should have had the same effect (Jn.14:9,7,10,17).

In Dt.5 Moses recalls that God spoke with the *people* "face to face in the mount" *because* "I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the Word of the Lord". Notice how Israel as well as Moses had this opportunity to know God face to face through the Word given to them. In Dt.4 we read that Israel saw no similitude, but heard a voice. We too cannot physically see God, but the Voice, the Word, is all sufficient. To them it was just the sound of Words-certain sounds coming through the air; but to Moses and to the Spiritual Israelite it was the face and glory of God. To us too, the word can be mere lines of ink on paper. Israel asked that this Word should not be spoken to them. Are we similarly so foolish, not to recognize the power of that Word? So again, we see the theme of the Word enabling us to see God face to face. In Dt.34:10 we read "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face". This implies that because Moses was the greatest prophet- i.e. he had most dealing with the Word of God- therefore he was able to know God face to face. Similarly, because Jesus was the Word Himself, in bodily person, He was also in a sense, the face of God. Thus the Angel speaking face to face with Moses (Ex.33:11) is described in Num.12:8 as speaking mouth to mouth- because his words reveal his face. And Zechariah's access to the word was having 'the seeing of God' (2 Chron.26:5 AVmg.). There are also many examples, as we would expect, of the Word giving us the Name of God and also the glory of God, as well as letting us see God's face.

### **The word and the Name**

Jer.15:16: "Thy Words were found, and I did eat them (a primary reference to the finding of the book of the Law?); and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: Thy Name is called upon me, O Lord God of Hosts"(A.V.mg.) provides a strong connection between the word of God and the Name being given us. 1 Chron.13:6 describes the fact that the Name was "called upon" the ark. The word leads to that same Name being called on us, thus making us the ark of God's manifestation, with the associated cherubim of glory overshadowing us. Deut.18:18,19 is another example. There are many instances of the prophets personally taking the Name of Yahweh because the word caused them to manifest Him- e.g. Ezek.33:30 speaks of the Jews coming to Ezekiel's house to hear the Word of God from his lips, saying "Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord..they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words". Moses could say that by speaking forth the doctrine he had been inspired with he was publishing the name of the Lord (Dt.32:2,3); and Is.52:6 implies that Israel in the last days will come to know God's name through the Word. Isaiah 48:16 reads as if it is God speaking until we come to the last phrase, when we realize that it is because the prophet is speaking on God's behalf he is a full

manifestation of Him: "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord God and His Spirit, hath sent me". The pouring out of water and spirit (both associated with the word) thus results in carrying God's name (Is.44:3,5).

Jesus prayed in Jn.17:6,8,22 "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me...I have given unto them the words Thou gavest Me...the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them". So here we have a clear link between the word, the Name and the glory, the word dwelling in us making us part of the glory and Name of God. In Jn.10:35 Jesus quotes a passage in which men are called God and states "If He called them gods unto whom the Word of God came". So the Word of God coming to us gives us the Name of God. We are called gods (elohim), meaning 'those who derive their strength from God'. So if we let the Word of God come to us, we are deriving our strength from God. The Name of God is stated in Ex.3:14 to be "I will be who I will be". Those who bear God's Name must therefore exhibit God's will. Again, it is only the word which can help us do this- "of His own will begat He us by the word" (James 1:18); "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh..but of God" (John 1:13). By developing the characteristics of the Name in us, the Word implants God's will in us, thus making us have the Name of God. From the language of the above two verses it seems reasonable to infer that a parallel is being drawn between the strong human desires for intercourse and procreation, and the even stronger desire of God for spiritual children, the power of which will or desire is focused in the word. Hence Dt.28:58: "The words of this Law are written...that thou mayest fear (appreciate) this glorious and fearful name, Yahweh Elohim", and the characteristics it contains; and Ps.122:4 equates "the testimony" (word) and the Name.

## **The word and the glory**

The Hebrew word for "glory" implies weight or heaviness; and frequently the word of God is described as weighty- e.g. Mt.23:23; Zech.7:11.

2 Cor.3 is an example of the Word turning us into the glory of God; we behold "as in a glass the glory of the Lord, (and) are changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord". We know the Spirit is present in the Word, and James talks of us looking into the "perfect law of liberty" as a mirror. So we look into that mirror, the Word, and we see ourselves in our true light. If the Word is acting on us, we should not see a reflection of ourselves, but rather a picture of God's glory. The longer we look- and James says we should constantly be looking into that mirror if the Word is abiding in us- the more the reflection we see will not be of ourselves, but of God's glory as we ourselves are actually changed into the glory of God. Finally at judgement day it will not be us we see at all but Christ, because we will have totally turned into Jesus, the image and the body will be one and the same. So then the Word acting upon us enables us to see God's face, to bear His Name, and therefore to reflect His glory and have hope of fully turning into the face and glory and Name of God. It is also instructive to see the clear association between the glory of God and the manna appearing at the same time in Exodus 16:7, bearing in mind Christ's association of the manna with the Word of God in John 6. The ideas of glory, word and name were in our Lord's mind in Jn.17. He gave us the glory God gave him by giving us the words God gave him, which was the same as manifesting the Name to us (Jn.17:22,8,6). Ps.19 is also relevant here; v.1-6 describe the glory of God, and the parallel v.7-14 the wonders of the word.

Ex.29:43 states that Israel were "sanctified by My glory", which was seen by the physical presence of the shekinah in their time. For the new Israel, the word is the sanctifier (John 17:17), thus linking the word and the glory. The discourse in the upper Room links together these strands of thought beautifully- the attributes of God (the fruits of the spirit), the glory,

and the word: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified...if My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done". Thus being "in My name" (which is now God's Name) and having His words in us are associated: "...go and bring forth fruit..that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you..herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit". The word abiding in us makes us in the Name and brings forth the fruit (of the spirit), which is to the glory of God ( John 14:13; 15:7,8,16). In passing, note that if God's word is in us our prayers will be powerful. So often we agonize over whether something is God's will which we are praying for, and therefore this militates against our having full faith in that prayer. There seem few examples of prayers in the Bible which explicitly emphasise praying according to God's will; the answer may be that if the word of God is in us, it will implant the will of God in us (James 1:18), and therefore our prayers will be according to God's will and will be answered therefore.

2 Tim.2:20,21 is on the same theme: "In a great house (alluding to Is.22:20-24 about the temple) there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth...if a man therefore purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." That last phrase must link with 2 Tim.3:16,17, which says that the word of God enables the man of God to be "perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works". Thus the sanctifying and purging power is the word (as John 17:17; Eph.5:26). The word makes us acceptable vessels. These are elsewhere called "the vessels of glory" (Rom.9:23), filled with light, glory and treasure (2 Cor.4:6,7), which are all symbols of the word of God (Ps.119:105,130,162), filled with oil (Mat.25:4), the spirit word. The Word and the glory are again associated in Num.9:17,18 : "When the cloud (of the glory) was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed:and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched." Thus the commandment of God and the cloud of glory are portrayed as being synonymous. The record also stresses this in Num.10:11-13. Similarly in Lk.9:36 the word or voice of God is associated with the cloud of glory.

### **The spirit and the glory**

In Paul's letters especially, the ideas of the Spirit and the glory run together strongly. We know that the Spirit gifts have now been replaced by the Word, and therefore it is this which can in the same way fill us with God's glory:

- Eph.4:8 states that Jesus ascended in order to give the Spirit gifts to men, as He stressed in His discourse in the Upper Room. Then v.10 says that He ascended "that He might fill (s.w. Him that filleth all in all with the fullness, Eph.1:23) all things" (the saints). Note in passing how the phrase "all things" and "all in all" are used about the saints. The latter phrase is used solely in this context of the saints (Col.3:11 is a good example), and this is how we should read 1 Cor.15:28 "God may be all in all"- i.e. that God may be manifested completely in all His *saints* (not just 'in all creation generally'), who lived both before and during the Millennium. So the Spirit, in its' manifestation in the gifts or the word, was in order for us to be filled, to come, v.13, to the "stature of the fullness of Christ"- which we have shown is God's fullness.

- Eph.3:16,19: "According to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit..to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God". This beautifully brings together the ideas of glory, fullness and the Spirit (word).

## **Head knowledge**

Often we find that the glory and the fullness are associated with what some would call 'head knowledge'; whilst not an end in itself, it is vital if we are to start to appreciate, with a sense of awe that helps us overcome all the petty problems of the present, these high things on which we are thinking:

- i) Comparing Col.2:2,3 and 9 shows that "the fullness of the Godhead" which we seek to receive is equated with "all the treasures of wisdom and *knowledge*".
- ii) Rev.4:6 and other visions of the beasts associated with the cherubim of glory stress they were "full of eyes"- a symbol of mental alertness to these things.
- iii) James 3:17 "the *wisdom* that is from above.. full of mercy and good fruits" (of the spirit-righteous attributes- referring consciously to Exodus 34?)
- iv) Romans 15:14 "ye also are full of goodness (Ex.34 R.V. again), filled with all *knowledge*".
- v) We can only reach the "fullness of Christ" (Eph.4:13) through the *knowledge* of the Son of God and being a "perfect (complete) man", which only comes from a study of "all Scripture" (2 Tim.3:16,17).
- vi) In Eph.1:17,18 Paul prays to "the Father of glory" to give the Ephesians "the spirit of wisdom...in the *knowledge* of Him: the eyes of your *understanding* being enlightened; that ye may know..the riches of the glory". To pray to a father of something is in order to receive what they are the father of. Paul asks the "Father of glory" to give them wisdom, knowledge, understanding of the glory etc. So the glory and these things are parallel. Today that prayer is answered in our prayerful study of the Word.

It was the wonder of us having this glorious future that inspired Christ when on the cross- He looked ahead to us being in such glory due to His life and death in order to encourage Him in His sufferings. Psalm 17:15 shows us the mind of Christ: "I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness". So there is a parallel between seeing the Face of God and having His likeness, indicating that our strivings to be God-like really will result in us seeing God's face. Interestingly, the Septuagint uses the word 'glory' instead of 'likeness'. If we apply all this to Jesus, we have a connection with Isaiah 53:10,11: "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." This seems to imply that in some sense He had a vision of all His followers in a state of spiritual perfection and maturity- *when* He made the offering, He saw His seed, saw us the travail of His soul, justified many, and bore their iniquities. Isaiah says Jesus was "satisfied" by the thought of us in a spiritually mature and perfect state. Psalm 17 says He was satisfied by God's likeness, or glory. This must therefore refer to the likeness, the glory, the face of God reflected in us which Jesus saw in prospect on the cross or at the resurrection, or perhaps as He prayed the words in John 17 for all His followers of all ages to be one as He was with the Father. The idea of the word enabling us to see God seems to be expressed also in John 15:22-24, where Jesus says that because He had come and spoken unto them, "now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father". Also in John 14:9,10 Jesus seems to expand his answer to Phillip's question 'Show us the Father...he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' by saying that "the words that I speak...the Father that dwelleth in Me doeth", associating the word with seeing God.

If we seek God's glory (John 7:18)-i.e. the development of His attributes in us- He will seek ours (John 8:50), and our glory is His glory. The word for 'seek' used here can mean 'worship'- we must worship this concept of giving glory to God in our lives. God's glory is



His essential self (Jn.17:5), yet He is willing to give us His glory. He will not give His glory to anyone apart from His people (Is.48:11). What higher honours can be revealed to us?

## **Preaching the glory**

One practical way in which we can manifest the glory is by preaching, and to demonstrate this we will digress a little to consider 2 Cor.3 and 4. These seem to be the Spirit's commentary on the events of Exodus 33 and 34, particularly the glory that Moses witnessed and received in the mount. 2 Cor.3 begins with Paul showing how human were the "letters of commendation" that some were insisting he have. As will be shown, it seems that the Judaists were active in Corinth undermining Paul's authority as a preacher; see Paul's justification of himself in 2 Cor.11:21-24 (such language can only apply to the work of Judaists). To counter their claims, Paul develops this theme of "letters" being needed, showing that the "letters" written on the stone tables of the old covenant were now replaced by the ministration of the spirit which he and his supporters ("we") had been given. This ministration was more glorious than that written on stones, and he uses this irony to show how there was no need to insist on letters of recommendation now we have the ministry of the spirit Word in the gospel. The old covenant was written in tables of stone; the new was written by the spirit on "fleshy tables of the heart" (3:3). "Fleshy" is the same word as "carnal", and normally implies 'the sinful flesh' of our nature. Thus the spirit word which Paul preached had the power to put God's law into our stony sinful hearts, which the Law could not do. "The ministration of death...(came to pass by glory), so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance"(v.7); so the word of God in whatever manifestation is associated with the glory. However, the glory associated with the Law on Moses' face faded, although because of the veil over his face, neither Moses nor the people realized it. The same veil "remaineth..unlifted" (v.14) on the Jews. "But we all, reflecting as in a glass the glory of the open faced (unveiled) Lord, are changed into the same image" (Vine's translation). As explained earlier, by looking into the Word of God, we see the unveiled glory, and therefore in our preaching we reflect that glory in the word we preach to a greater extent than Moses did, and because of the ultimate realities of these things "we use great plainness of speech" in our preaching (3:12).

"If our Gospel be hid (lit: veiled), it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world (age- i.e. Moses) hath blinded the minds of them that believe not (as the Israelites were unable to look at the glory of Moses through fear of blindness), lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (the glory behind Moses' veil which was not fully revealed)...should shine unto them" (v.3,4); thus we are preaching the true gospel of glory, which is made veiled by the attitude of our hearers. Like John in the wilderness ("Who art thou?' 'I am a voice' "), the preaching of the Gospel makes us lose our sense of personality as it involves us in this idea of furthering God's glory. Therefore Paul writes (4:5) "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus..for (because) God..hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus"- another clear allusion back to Exodus. And still with this theme of the glory in mind, he goes on to speak of our trials working for us "a far more exceeding weight of glory" (4:17; the Hebrew word for glory means an 'exceeding weight'- the lofty wonders of God's revelation to Moses can be repeated in our lives through our correct response to the trials the word of the gospel may bring). He then concludes(4:18) "We look not at the things which are seen (Moses and his fading glory), but at the things which are not seen ("the end"- the glory behind Moses): for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

## **The glory of forgiveness**

And yet we so often fall short of all this. But encouragingly, the glory of God is often associated with forgiveness. When Israel refused to believe Joshua's good report, Moses recounted the attributes of glory to God, and pleaded for Him to have mercy because of them. He said "Let the power of My Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy" (Num.14:17,18) etc. So these attributes of God are His strength- and His strength is in His great love. Several Psalms draw a parallel between God's great strength as expressed in the natural creation, and His forgiveness. David and Nehemiah also went through these attributes of glory when asking for forgiveness. In Rom.9:22,23 we read that God's longsuffering of sinful men demonstrates, to quote a modern version, "the boundless resources of His glory " towards us, the vessels of mercy. 1 Kings 8 gives further insight into this. Solomon prays that because God has said of the temple "My Name shall be there", "Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall make in this place "(v.29). We have seen that the glory and Name of God are connected. Jesus is the true temple, full of the glory, the righteous attributes of God, and therefore if we pray in Christ, the temple, our prayers will be heard. Our Lord reasons that a Spirit/word filled mind is the true temple (Jn.4:23,24 cp. v.21)- a description pre-eminently fulfilled in himself as well as in us to a lesser extent. If the people sinned they were to enter the temple or turn towards it and "confess Thy Name". We in the Christ temple go through the same process of confessing the Name- perhaps by running through the attributes of Exodus 34- and thereby confessing God's righteousness and our sinfulness.

This is all brought together in Num.6:24-27, where the High Priestly blessing (i.e. forgiveness-Acts 3:26) was associated with God making "His face shine upon thee, and be gracious (Ex.34, the Lord, full of graciousness) unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance (face) upon thee, and give thee peace (i.e. forgiveness). And they (priests) shall put My Name (by doing this) upon the children of Israel". Thus when we are forgiven, God's face shines upon us and His Name is called upon us, as it was first of all when by calling upon ourselves the Name in baptism our sins were forgiven.

The Lord Jesus showed the full reflection of the glory. John 1, in introducing Jesus as the full manifestation of God, has many links with Exodus 34- we are reminded there that we cannot see God, and yet the Son, like the glory in Ex.34, has declared Him; Jesus is described as "full of grace and truth", alluding to Ex.34 :6 "the Lord, a God full of goodness and truth" (R.V.). So let us really strive to develop those attributes so that they really are part of our innermost beings. When Moses came down from the mount, he was not conscious that his face shone with the glory. We too should not have to self consciously exhibit the attributes of glory- they should be an almost natural part of us. We need to be born again by the Word so that we have a child-like lack of self consciousness, not self-regardingly displaying our spiritual attributes, but shewing "out of a good conversation our (spiritual) works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

## **Digression 6: Gehenna: The Valley Of Hinnom**

It is a ground rule of Bible study that its words must be taken at face value unless there is reason not to from other parts of Scripture. One example of this is in the use of the word 'Gehenna', which we understand to have been a place of literal fire outside Jerusalem where material rejected by the city was burnt. We normally interpret this as representing the total destruction of the rejected at judgement; but why cannot the Lord's descriptions of the wicked being thrown into a Gehenna of age-lasting (A.V. "everlasting") fire refer to their destruction by literal fire in the literal locality of Gehenna, the Valley of the Son of Hinnom? This would

chime in well with the copious hints that the judgement will be at Jerusalem; the rejected refuse from the spiritual Jerusalem will be taken out of the literal city to be destroyed by fire.

Christ is coming with "flaming fire" to punish two groups of people:

- Those who "know not God"

- Those "that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ", i.e. the responsible who have consciously rejected the Gospel's demands (2 Thess. 1:8). Those responsible for Christ's crucifixion will be at the day of judgement, and will be punished with fire and burning in the vicinity of where they crucified Christ (2 Sam. 23:7), i.e. just outside Jerusalem.

In the same way as the world of Noah's time was destroyed by water, so the Godless set up ("Heavens and earth") of modern man will be ended by fire (2 Pet. 3:6,7). The water was literal- why not the fire too? Is. 66:15,16 is in similar vein: "The Lord, will come with fire...to render...his rebuke with flames of fire", before new Heavens and earth are established (Is. 66:22). The punishment on Jerusalem in AD70 involved literal fire- as it did in the Babylonian destruction. The parable of the tares has reference to both the judgement of AD70 and that to come. The unworthy then were burned up in the blazing ruins of Jerusalem; and literal fire is probably intended too when "the tares are gathered and burned in the fire...in the end of the world" (Matt. 13:40). Mal. 4:1 and Ps. 21:9 describe the punishment of the wicked as being in an oven, which had a literal relevance to the fiery furnace of Jerusalem in AD70. Jesus likens "the days of the (coming of the) Son of man" to when Sodom (representing Jerusalem, Is. 1:10) was destroyed by literal fire. Jude 7 interprets Sodom's destruction by fire as a type of the fate of the unworthy. It would seem likely in view of these precedents that the holocaust to come upon Israel will be with literal fire. Thus Malachi's description of the Jews being refined by fire in the last days to bring about their repentance (Mal. 3:2,3) may have a literal aspect to it (cp. the description of Jerusalem as a furnace in Is. 31:9). Two thirds of the Jews in the land will be "cut off" in this tribulation, but God will "bring the third part through the fire" (Zech. 13:8,9). The language of coming through the fire must connect with the experience of Daniel and his friends in the fiery furnace- which was literal fire.

However, there are also references to the nations being punished with fire (e.g. Is. 66:15; 2 Thess. 1:8). The most notable is that in Ezek. 39 of Gog and those who surround Jerusalem being consumed with fire for seven years, perhaps in the same way as her prototype Assyria was destroyed by an Angel as "a flame of fire" in Hezekiah's time, outside Jerusalem. There being a seven year period of Gog's burning would exemplify the idea of 'age-lasting' fire. Rev. 14:10,11 describes the beast's followers being tormented in fire and brimstone so that they had no rest during the 'aion of the aions', and their (literal?) smoke rose up as a witness. A lot of expositional problems are solved (e.g. the consistently literal application of "fire and brimstone" in Scripture) if this is taken to describe the literal punishment by fire of these people throughout the Millennium. Rev. 14:18-20 describes how the rejected are trodden in the winepress "without the city" implying a specific location. Thus we have seen that there will be a use of literal fire in the Jerusalem area in the day of judgement to achieve the destruction of three groups:

- The armies of Gog and her rebellious followers

- Wicked Jews in the land

- Unworthy saints

This fire will last for a period, varying in length for each individual involved. This would solve the problem of there being varying degrees of punishment at the judgement (Lk. 12:47,48)- which is hard (though not impossible) to fit into a concept of the judgement as being an instant punishment of all the rejected with death. A period of punishment is implied.

This understanding of 'Gehenna' throws light on other passages- e.g. feeding your enemy is heaping coals of fire on his head (Rom.12:20)- i.e. 'your love to him will result in a more severe punishment at judgement'. Note that it will be the responsible who will be punished in the fire of Gehenna; the "enemy" is thus within the ecclesia. What does Rom.12:20 mean if it does not have a reference to literal fire? James 3:6 describes the tongue as a fire which is to be set on fire of Gehenna- i.e. those who don't restrain their tongue will be set on fire in Gehenna, as figuratively their tongue has set their spiritual lives aflame. In 1 Cor.3 Paul describes how his converts are the foundation stones of the spiritual temple of God, the ecclesia. He advises the elders to build up these converts, warning them that they will only receive a reward for this work if their work- i.e. the converts they have made- is not burnt up. If it is- i.e. if their work is shoddy so that these converts are rejected and burnt in Gehenna- then they personally will just about be saved (v.10-15).

Thus we have seen that it is a vital principle that "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb.12:29). Any day now "The Lord whom (we Christians) seek, shall suddenly come to His (spiritual) temple...But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire" (Mal.3:1,2).

## **Digression 7: The Word And Humility**

If we are truly sensitive to the word of God then we will find it requiring us to do things in response to it which naturally we recoil at. Thus true obedience to the word must be associated with a true humility, a willingness to submit self to the will of God in ways which really hurt. The following make this clear:

- We are born again by the word (Jn.3:5 cp. 1 Pet.1:23). This power of new life in the word continues to act upon us whenever we have contact with it; our response to it should give us the humility of a child if it's power of rebirth operates upon us. Thus Naaman's final submission to the word of command concerning baptism resulted in his flesh becoming "like unto the flesh of a little child" with its associated implications of humility (2 Kings 5:14).
- Josiah is a good example of humility to the word: "When the king had heard the words of the book of the Law, that he rent his clothes". Huldah, speaking on God's behalf, noted that "thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake" (2 Kings 22:11,19). How is our response when a new understanding of the word's teaching in practical, everyday issues stares us in the face from the pages of Scripture?
- Israel "obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction" (Jer.17:23), implying that to be truly sensitive to receiving instruction is like bowing the head in humility, rather than stiffening it upright in pride.
- "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to...walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic.6:8) alludes to Dt.10:12,13: "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to...keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes", thus equating obedience to the word and humility.
- Dt.17:19,20 is explicit: "He shall read therein (in the book of the Law) all the days of his life...that he may...keep all the words of this law (aided by his familiarity with it)...that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren".
- Israel were fed with manna to humble them (Dt.8:16); and the Lord reasoned in John 6 that the manna represented the word of God.
- Because our response to the word should humble us, God may choose to humiliate those who do not respond in humility to the word. Israel's humiliation at the hands of their enemies

is a prime example of this. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways, but have been partial (A.V.mg.: "Lifted up the face against") in the law" (Mal.2:9). Thus having a semi-spiritual, "partial" attitude to the word is the same as being proud against it.

## **Digression 8: Israel And Romans 1**

The commands concerning Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land form a large chunk of the Mosaic Law, and thus these were only relevant to the younger generation and the Levites who were to enter the land of promise (note how only those who were numbered and over 20 at the time of leaving Egypt were barred from the land; the Levites were not numbered). This younger generation were in sharp contrast to those aged over 20 at the Exodus. The extent of spiritual despair and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of the children born to them then (Josh.5:5,6), thus showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant. There is good reason to believe that Romans 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness; notice the past tenses there.

Rom.1:23 charges them with changing "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like...to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps.106:20 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "Changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom.1 is matched by Ps.106:21 "They forgat God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps.106 is similar to that in Rom.1. "Full of envy" (Rom.1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps.106:16), "whisperers" (Rom.1:29) to "murmurers" (Ps.106:25), and "inventors of evil things" (Rom.1:30) to God being angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps.106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other even to the extent of murder (Rom.1:27,29). A rabble of about 2 million people living in moral anarchy with little law and order, driven on in their lust by the knowledge that God had rejected them is surely a frightening thing to imagine. The emphasis on sexual sin in Rom.1 is paralleled by 1 Cor.10 stressing the frequent failure of Israel in the wilderness in this regard.

Against such an evil and God forsaking background that young generation rebelled, to become one of the most faithful groups of Israelites in their history. As such they set a glorious example to the youth of today in rebelling against a world that mocks any form of true spirituality.

## **Digression 9: The Holy Spirit And Answered Prayer**

### **The Holy Spirit And The Answering Of Prayer**

It is evident that the gift of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost involved the possession of the miraculous gifts of tongues among those who heard Peter speak. However, there is good reason to think that in some way this promise of a spiritual gift after baptism can also apply to us in a non-miraculous way.

Rom.5:16 and 6:23 describe salvation as "*the* gift"- inviting comparison with "*the* gift" of the Spirit in Acts 2:38. Indeed Acts 2:39 seems to be quoting Joel 2:32 concerning salvation as if this is what the gift of the Spirit was. Peter's reference to the promised gift being to those "afar off" alludes to Is.57:19: "Peace (with God through forgiveness) to him that is far off". Eph.2:8 also describes the gift as being salvation, saying that "by one Spirit (this gift) we all

have access to the Father" (2:18). This is further validated by the fact that Eph.2:13-17 is also alluding to Is.57:19: "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace...(who) came and preached peace to you which were far off". Ps.51:12,13 draws a parallel between possessing God's holy Spirit, and benefiting from His salvation.

Isaiah 30:1 condemns the Jews for seeking forgiveness their own way rather than by the gift of God's Spirit: they "cover with a covering (atonement), but not of my Spirit, that they may add (rather than subtract) sin to sin". Is.44:3 describes the latter day forgiveness of Israel in similar terms: "I will pour...floods upon the dry ground (spiritually barren-Is.53:2): I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring". The blessing of Abraham's seed is in their forgiveness through Christ (Acts 3:25,26)- which is here paralleled with the pouring out of the Spirit upon the Jews. This is clearly the language of Joel 2 and Acts 2. Gal.3:14 puts all this in so many words: "That the blessing of Abraham (forgiveness) might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit". Thus 1 Cor.6:11 speaks of being washed from our sins "by the spirit of our God". There is a parallelism in Romans between us receiving "grace...the atonement..the Spirit" (1:5; 5:11; 8:15), showing the connection between the gift ("grace") of the Spirit and the forgiveness which leads to the atonement. It is hard to overstate how much the New Testament builds on the language and concepts of the Old Testament, especially in view of the large primarily Jewish readership the epistles would have had. Time and again in the Pentateuch and Joshua God promises to give the land to His people- "the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it" is a common phrase. The counterpart of the land under the new covenant is salvation; that is therefore the gift of God now in prospect, with its associated forgiveness of sins.

Peter asked the Jews to repent before they could receive the gift; this would have involved personal prayer. There seems reason to believe that the gift of the Spirit is a way of describing answered prayer. The giving of "good things to them that ask" in prayer is the same as the giving (gift) of the Holy Spirit (Matt.7:11 cp. Lk.11:13). Phil.1:19 parallels "Your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ". Similarly, 1 Jn.3:24 says that we are given the Spirit as a result of our obedience to the commands; verse 22 says that obedience to those commands leads to our prayers being answered. Thus our confidence is due to having our prayers heard (1 Jn.5:14) and also due to having the Spirit act in our lives (1 Jn.3:21,24; 4:13), seeing that prayer is answered by the Spirit's work.

A word study of the Greek word 'charis', often translated "grace", will show that it is often used in connection with the gift of the Spirit.

"Through the grace (gift) of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" (Acts 15:11). Yet the idea of "grace" is often connected with answered prayer (e.g. Ex.33:12; 34:9; Num.32:5; Ps.84:11; 2 Cor.12:9; Heb.4:16; James 4:6 cp. v.3). Zech.12:10 speaks of the last day outpouring of "the spirit of grace and supplications" upon the Jews. This summarizes what we are suggesting- that prayer ("supplications") brings about the gift of the Spirit in the sense of forgiveness, and that this giving of the Spirit to answer prayer is exemplified in the Jewish repentance of the first century and last days. In the same context Paul speaks of "The gifts and calling of God" to repentance and forgiveness (Rom.11:29). It is worth reflecting whether answered prayer is a gift of the Spirit because a Spirit-Angel is being given over to the task of answering the prayer.

## **The Holy Spirit Today**

We each stand in need of God's powerful help to develop "the new man" within us, to overcome sin, and at last to be transformed into the Divine nature. Left to ourselves, with our

desperately sinful nature, these things are not possible. Flesh itself cannot redeem flesh; there must be the action of God through His Spirit, by which He achieves all things in order for "the redemption of the (fleshly) body". Attention must be drawn to two fundamentally wrong ideas about the work of the Spirit:

- 1) The claim that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are available today. An impartial analysis of the feeble claims of so called tongue speakers and miracle workers, let alone the clear Biblical refutation of them, should make this a non-starter.
- 2) The idea that men are predestined to salvation regardless of their freewill decisions, and that in order to effect this God uses His Spirit to work directly on the hearts of sinners, forcing them to be righteous so that they might be saved. This concept of 'prevenient grace' is rightly amongst the doctrines to be rejected in our Statement of Faith. It nullifies the power of God's word, and makes all our freewill efforts to obey it of no consequence. If this theory were true, "Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound". But God forbid. There are ample examples of men possessing the Holy Spirit without it stopping them sinning- e.g. Saul, Caiaphas, Samson, Simon (consider carefully Acts 8:13-18).

### **"One Spirit"**

That there is only "one spirit" is a basic Divine principle (Eph.4:4-6); yet it is clear that the "one spirit" has a variety of different ways of manifestation. "There are diversities of operations (of the one Spirit), but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor.12:4-13). This explains the rather nebulous use of the word 'Spirit' in the New Testament- sometimes concerning the miraculous gifts, or elsewhere concerning the new spiritual character we should develop, and the help God gives us to do so. There may appear superficially to be a contradiction between those passages which imply that Spirit gifts were widespread in the first century, and those which suggest a much more limited possession of them, mainly by the apostles. This problem is solved once it is recognized that the language of the Spirit and its gifts refer to God's power in both miraculous and non-miraculous manifestations. Likewise the 'Comforter passages in John 14-16 can refer to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the first century, whilst nearly all the features of the Comforter are also found in the word of God, showing that those passages also have application to the non-miraculous work of the Spirit in our times. It is for this same reason that the promised gift of the Spirit in Acts 2 can be interpreted as both miraculous and non-miraculous.

Because it is the same Spirit working through various specific manifestations, to some degree the Spirit and Holy Spirit (the one Spirit used for a special purpose) are interchangeable. It should be noted that any distinction between Spirit and Holy Spirit is largely a New Testament one; if the difference was that fundamental, one would expect to see it in the Old Testament too. The following examples prove the similarity:

- "This spake he of the Spirit, which they...*should* receive: for the Holy Spirit was not *yet* given" (Jn.7:39) parallels the Spirit and the Holy Spirit- once the emphasis upon the word "yet" is appreciated.
- "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor.3:16) is matched later in the same epistle by "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you" (1 Cor.6:19).
- "The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove" upon Christ (Lk.3:22) is paralleled by "the Spirit of God descending like a dove" (Mt.3:16; see too Jn.1:32).
- "Disciples...said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem...the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" in Jerusalem (Acts 21:4; 20:23).

- "They...were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word...the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:6,7).

- A selection from the other copious examples are: 1 Cor.6:9-11 cp. Tit.3:5-7; 1 Cor.12:3; 7:40.

Because there is only "one Spirit", even the terms "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" can be paralleled because they are manifestations of that same one Spirit: "Ye are...in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you...the Spirit is life...if the Spirit of (God) that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you...the Spirit (Christ, 1 Tim.2:5; 2 Cor.3:18 R.V.) maketh intercession for us" (Rom.8:9-11,26).

### **The Spirit In The Word**

It is a fundamental Bible truth that God's creative power is His Spirit. The Spirit was the agency by which God caused the natural creation to come into being. In a split second, "things which are (now) seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb.11:3)- i.e. matter was created. The same cataclysmic power that operated then is now available to bring about a new creation of righteous, spiritual minds able to eternally inhabit the Kingdom. To enter the Kingdom, we must be born again, of water (baptism) and Spirit (Jn.3:3-5). This birth of the Spirit must be connected with the idea of the word being the source of spiritual life: "The seed is the word" in the parable of the sower (Lk.8:11). "Of his own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); "obeying the truth through the Spirit (i.e.)...being born again...by the word of God" (1 Pet.1:22,23). Similarly "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit.3:5) connects with Christ washing the church with the water of the word (Eph.5:26).

However, it is obvious that the written word is not the only form of manifestation of God's Spirit. His Spirit is in us and the whole natural creation, sustaining life (Ps.104:29,30 cp. Ecc.3:18-20), being manifested here in a form other than the written word. Thus although there are frequent parallels between the Spirit and the word, it is not true to say that there is absolute equality between the Spirit and the word. Otherwise there would be no need for there to be the two separate words "word" and "Spirit" used by inspiration. We obey the truth (i.e. the word, Jn.17:17), *through* the Spirit (1 Pet.1:22,23). However, there is such strong teaching that the written word of God is the supreme manifestation of God's Spirit to us that we should be motivated by this to apply ourselves to it, so that the huge Spirit power used at the natural creation might be unleashed upon us. A number of such passages are discussed in '*Bible Basics*', Section 2.2. Others include the following:

- Gal.3:5 states a principle of receiving the Spirit "by the hearing of faith", i.e. responding properly to the word (Rom.10:17).

- "The Spirit is truth" (1 Jn.5:6), and "Thy word is truth" (Jn.17:17).

- "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of (i.e. some of) his Spirit" (1 Jn.4:13) is referring back to Jn.15:4-7, which says that if the word dwells in us, then God is in us. Note that being given "of" God's Spirit is parallel with our response to the word. Thus the gift of the Spirit can refer to word-developed spirituality.

- 1 Pet.2:2,3 describes desiring "the sincere milk of the word" as *tasting* the grace of the Lord, through knowing "the word of his grace" Acts 20:32). Peter may well be alluding to Heb.6:4,5 concerning *tasting* "the Heavenly gift", *tasting* "the good word of God", which parallels being "made partakers of the Holy Spirit". Thus the word is connected to the gift of the Spirit, a connection made all the stronger once we realize that the Greek word for "grace" sometimes refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit.



- The symbols of Revelation need to be interpreted with the help of other parts of the word. The city "which *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt" (Rev.11:8) is therefore inviting us to look to those parts of the Spirit word which will identify this city.

## The Comforter

Many of the things said about the Comforter in Jn.14-16 are said about God's word:

| The Comforter                                                                           | The Word Of God                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jn.16:13                                                                                | Fulfilled in the written word, notably Revelation.                        |
| Jn.14:17 R.V.                                                                           | Jn.15:7                                                                   |
| Jn.16:14,15                                                                             | Jn.15:15                                                                  |
| Jn.14:26 "Shall bring all things to your remembrance , whatsoever I have said unto you" | Fulfilled by our having the written record of Christ's words.             |
| Jn.16:8 Reproving/ convicting the world of sin                                          | Jn.12:40; 2 Tim.3:16; 4:2; Tit.1:9; Jn.3:20; 8:24 cp. Ps.119:105; Mic.2:6 |
| Jn.15:26; 16:13                                                                         | Jn.17:17                                                                  |

The idea of the Comforter is associated with God and Christ coming to us and abiding in us- yet this is if we "Keep (Christ's) words" (Jn.14:21-24). All this exemplifies how the Spirit was first manifested in a miraculous form- which the Comforter primarily was- and then in a non-miraculous way through the word. In the context of the Comforter, our Lord equates the effect of His words and the miracles of the Holy Spirit: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works" (Jn.14:10); and later: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin...if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin" (Jn.15:22,24). Another example is in Jn.10:25 cp. v.26,27. Thus the Comforter would "abide with you for ever", even after the miraculous gifts ceased.

### "Abundantly above"

It must be a ground rule in considering this subject that flesh and human effort alone cannot bring about the salvation of flesh. God through His Spirit must somehow be active. It must also be recognized that the presence of the Spirit in our lives is not solely proportional to our ability to do mental gymnastics with Scripture, nor to the amount of time we spend in eye contact with the word. Thousands, if not millions, the world over, are doing these things, yet are devoid of fellowship with God. Our personal effort in applying ourselves to the word, rising early and forcing ourselves late into the night to do so, is essential. However, there must be some other element at work in bringing about our salvation. Otherwise, we come to the equation 'Bible study = salvation'. This section of our study aims to exemplify how God

works to confirm our freewill decisions to be spiritual and truly follow His word; and then to show how our obedience to God through His word can initiate an upward spiral of spiritual growth. The spiritual effect of God upon men over and above their own strength is indicated by the following of many possible examples:

- God "left" a remnant of faithful believers in apostate Israel (Rom.9:29). Whilst their faithfulness was obviously a result of their own spiritual effort, God 'leaving' them from apostacy suggests that He was also active in preserving them from it too. The record does not speak of them saving themselves from it.

- "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord" (Prov.16:1). God is active in controlling the thoughts of men.

- "They hearkened not unto the (inspired?) voice of their father (Eli), because the Lord would slay them" (1 Sam.2:25). Likewise, Samson's desire for a Philistine wife "was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines" (Jud.14:4). In the same way, God's way of destroying the Canaanite nations was "to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel to battle, that He might destroy them utterly" (Josh.11:20).

- Rehoboam is an interesting case. For the first three years of his reign he was righteous, obeying the Law- so much so that the faithful "priests and the Levites that were in all Israel (the 10 tribes) resorted unto him". Only after three years did he turn away (carefully consider 2 Chron.11:4,13,17,23; 12:1). We may therefore wonder why he then so harshly and stubbornly refused to listen to the peoples' request for more reasonable government. This apparently uncharacteristic attitude is explained: "The king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform His word...Thus saith the Lord, ye shall not...fight against your brethren...for this thing is of me" (2 Chron.10:15; 11:4).

One of the clearest examples of God working in our lives over and above our own ability is in our calling. To some unspecified extent there is predestination- otherwise the concept would not be raised in Scripture. The context in which Paul discusses it in Romans is of Israel thinking that they had been called to be God's people, due to some inherent righteousness in them personally. The counter to this was that their calling was to some degree dependent on predestination. It was certainly not due to their personal righteousness, but due to God's pre-arranged purpose with Abraham that they should be God's people. Our own calling was likewise not just a result of our hearing the word of the Gospel, although this was the vehicle through which the call came to us. Before we actually heard the word, there had to be a process whereby it came to our attention. Birth into a family of true believers, catching sight of an advertisement etc., such things were not of our own doing.; nor were they the result of searching the Scriptures for ourselves. They were due to the unmerited grace of God in calling us. Truly "God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died" for us.

Our salvation was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by...renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit.3:5). Thus in Paul's case "it pleased (lit. 'willed') God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal.1:15) - not Paul's works. Thus our obedience to the truth was "through (on account of) the Spirit" (1 Pet.1:22). Against this must be balanced Rom.10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing...the word of God". God's Spirit was involved in bringing about our calling, and is also present in the word by which we are called.

God was the instigator of our calling, and through His Spirit by which he does all things, He has prepared the way for us to know the Truth as revealed in the Spirit-word. Once presented with the opportunity, not knowing why we, as opposed to the man next to us, has received it,

we have to exercise our freewill to obey the call. Those finally with Christ are "called, chosen and faithful", having come through those three stages.

## God's Confirmation Of Our Attitude

The following passages describe God's way of confirming our freewill decisions to both obey and disobey His word; the power by which he does this is, as ever, His Spirit.

- Some "stumble at the word, being disobedient: *whereunto also they were appointed*" (1 Pet.2:8). This passage does not just say that the wicked are disobedient; they are *appointed* to this. God therefore had a hand in their disobedience- through confirming them in their conscious rejection of Him. On the other hand, "Whom (God) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom.8:29). The predestination was not just to know the Gospel, but to be righteous- to be able to conform our characters to the perfect example of Jesus. Thus "I have chosen you...to bring forth fruit" (Jn.15:16), i.e. spiritual attributes.

- "Whosoever hath (of spiritual knowledge and blessing) to him shall be *given*" (Mt.13:12) shows that the faithful do not get the blessing solely by their own effort, but through the gift of God.

- Surely there is no point in praying to understand God's word if our own human intellect is all that is required (Ps.119:18). Such prayers are surely for God's help to confirm us in efforts to understand. Earliest prayer for understanding before studying the word is a vital habit to develop. We have great assurance that such prayer is according to God's will. But the point must be made a hundred times; in no way will God's Spirit *force* us to achieve any spiritual development; it works to *confirm* us in the efforts which we make of our own freewill. This principle must be born in mind when reflecting upon how the Lord opened Lydia's heart *so that* she attended to Paul's preaching. The Lord opened her heart, not she herself; although the fact that God helped her like this shows that she was not lacking in freewill effort herself.

- "Because ye are sons (already born again through response to the Gospel), God hath *sent forth* the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal.4:6). We become sons of God by birth of the Spirit/ word (1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18), and therefore God sends this Spirit of Sonship into our hearts. Notice that the prerogative in this is with God, not us. In similar vein: "God hath *given* us the spirit...of power...love...a sound mind" (2 Tim.1:7). Likewise Paul prayed that God "may *give* unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph.1:17,18).

Our obedience leads to greater obedience, in an upward spiral. The dynamic in this spiral is God's spirit. It is through the Spirit that God draws near to us if we draw near to Him (James 4:7,8). This is neatly summarized in 2 Tim.2:7: "Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things". Thus our freewill 'considering' of Scripture will result in the Lord adding to our understanding even more that we could ever achieve unaided.

This power can also work negatively, to confirm men in their sin. Thus Pharaoh's already hard heart was hardened, as was that of the weak ecclesia in Hezekiah's time: "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" (Is.63:17). This may well be the difference between the "evil spirit from the Lord" that confirmed Saul in his spiritual declension, and the *Holy* Spirit, which does the opposite. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" is therefore a prayer for God to exercise His spirit/power in our lives to lead us away from the temptations we hate, rather than to use His Spirit to confirm us in the temptations which we ourselves enter into. It is a powerful exhortation to consider that at every spiritual crossroads we come to, God is waiting to confirm us along the road we chose to travel. What motivation, therefore, to chose the path of the cross. There can

be no half way position of God just passively tolerating our spirituality (cp. Ps.50:21)- He confirms us in our attitude, for better or for worse.

We have shown at the beginning of this study that the gift of God's Spirit can refer to God's spiritual blessing such as forgiveness and the answering of prayer. Even in the first century, the work of the Spirit was not just confined to the miraculous gifts; thus "He that ministereth to you the Spirit *and* worketh miracles among you" (Gal.3:5) suggests that there was a non-miraculous work of the Spirit then. It seems clear that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not possessed by all first century believers; and yet the epistles often imply that all believers had received the Spirit (e.g. 2 Cor.1:22). The resolution of this is in the fact that all believers then and now receive the non-miraculous effect of the Spirit. Indeed, Jude 19 suggests that 'having the spirit' could just refer to someone who is not "sensual", i.e. of the flesh. John was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb...(going) in the Spirit and power of Elias...waxed strong in spirit" (Lk.1:15,17,80); but "John did no miracle" (Jn.10:41). David associated having God's holy Spirit with having free fellowship with Him due to sins being forgiven, paralleling the holy Spirit with "a right spirit within me...a clean heart" (Ps.51:10,12); and Paul spoke of God's willingness to forgive us as "the spirit of grace" (Heb.10:29), i.e. His spiritual gift. Paul's reasoning in Gal.3:5,6 is similar- the Spirit is ministered to us by faith, in the same way as Abraham's faith resulted in righteousness being imputed ('ministered') to him. Thus imputed righteousness is made parallel to the gift of the Spirit.

Paul frequently remembered that his own spiritual strength was not just of himself, but a result of God's mercy in magnifying his own efforts; he had "obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (1 Cor.7:25); "as (i.e. because) we have received mercy, we (spiritually) faint not" (2 Cor.4:1). Even in his decision to stay single, doubtless after enormous heartsearching, emotional tension and conscious bruising of his very soul, Paul recognized that to some degree the strength to do this was a spiritual gift from God: "I would that all men were even as I myself (single). But every man hath his proper *gift* of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor.7:7). Lk.6:32 speaks of receiving "thank" for making the conscious effort to love the unlovable. The Greek for "thank" is 'charis', normally translated "grace", and often connected with the help of the Spirit which is given to us in response to our own efforts.

## **Holy Spirit At Baptism?**

We have shown earlier that whatever else it referred to in its local context, the gift of the Spirit promised after baptism in Acts 2 was related to forgiveness and the subsequent hope of salvation. At baptism we rise in prospect as Christ rose, to total victory over sin. In prospect, all our sins were forgiven. As forgiveness is a spiritual gift, or gift of the Spirit, it follows that in some way we receive this at baptism. The continuation of this gift is conditional upon our using faith to keep it active on our behalf. We are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (alluding to our baptism), to an inheritance (a place in the future Kingdom)...reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power (spirit) of God *through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet.1:3-5). That faith comes from our response to the word (Rom.10:17); thus again we see the same process, of our freewill obedience to the word resulting in God's spiritual help being made available to us to keep us from "falling from grace", from falling away from those great gifts of forgiveness and salvation which we receive, in prospect, at baptism. Yet in no way does God irresistibly regenerate us from baptism.

In our moments of repentance, both at baptism and on the many subsequent occasions, it is hard to believe that in prospect God's enormous Spirit power has really prepared a way for us

to be totally spiritual. Israel on Carmel with Elijah were in a similar position; thus Elijah prayed "Hear me, O Lord...that this people may know...that Thou hast turned their heart back again" (1 Kings 18:37). He meant: 'They don't realize that you are so willing for them to repent, that in prospect you have touched their hearts and made them do it; answering my prayer dramatically may motivate them to make the necessary freewill response in repenting, so that the spiritual help you have made available in prospect, can be theirs in reality'. Even the frankest comparison of ourselves with that motley crew of hardened apostates should inspire afresh the belief within us that God is willing that all His people should continually come to repentance. The reference in Acts 11:18 to God *granting* repentance shows that He is active in developing our desire to repent; "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom.2:4).

That God is working in our lives through His Spirit, and that He has granted us the gifts of forgiveness and prospective salvation by its working, should not engender any spirit of relaxation. If we truly believe this, it will motivate us to greater personal effort: "God...hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident...wherefore we labour that...we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgement seat...knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:5-11)- i.e. 'Despite having had God's gift of salvation in prospect, the utmost personal effort is still required in responding to it. Think of the day of judgement, the fear that you will have then because of God's holiness and your sinfulness. Although this is not our only motivation, indeed it is somewhat human ("we persuade men"), it is still powerfully true'.

In conclusion, some interesting words from Br Neville Smart, from his book *The Epistles of John* pp. 34,35,69, 70- published by the CMPA, 1980.

"Christ... is also Himself our Advocate, working by His Spirit (if we will let Him) that transformation in our surrendered lives which shall enable us to stand one day in His presence... through the Holy Spirit, "the other comforter", he would come to them [the disciples] and make his dwelling-place in their hearts, and bring them to God...Behind and in the gospel of God's grace is the activity and influence of His Spirit. And in the personal lives and perceptions of all true disciples in all ages the Holy Spirit also plays an essential and gracious part. For no man is led to the only true God and to His Son Jesus Christ merely by the unaided process of human thought: "No man can come to me", Jesus declares, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him". And it is not for man to define or to seek to limit the manifold ways in which that process of drawing may operate. In all manner of ways which we cannot know, the grace of God is active through His Spirit in the hearts and minds and lives of His children; and nowhere, surely, more critically than in seeking to draw them to Himself in the first place- to lead them to the gospel of His grace and to open their eyes to its saving spiritual significance. But God will not force [men]...in any way by thought or conduct to respond to the promptings of God's grace... the anointing... seems clearly to refer more generally to the grace of enlightenment concerning the gospel through which the disciples had come to "know all things".

## **Digression 10: The Size Of The Early Church**

The Acts and epistles (and Revelation?) focus on the period AD33-AD70; it is easy to imagine that the early church was markedly different from our present set up in terms of size,

organization and details like the instruction of candidates for baptism. However, closer examination reveals that this was not so. Prior to this study I had the impression that the Christian community in those days was vast compared to our own, with the Roman empire littered with large ecclesias so that Christians were a household name due to their numbers alone, as Anglicans, for example, are today. Once the small size (relatively) of the early community is appreciated, it becomes easier to relate to their situation and to see that there is indeed a close bond between those days and our own due to these similarities. Not only so, but if a community of 20,000 people (at a reasoned guess) could "turn the world upside down" by their preaching, what of us with our infinite advantages?

There is a strong emphasis on the existence of house churches throughout the New Testament: Acts 2:46; 5:42; 16:34,40; 18:8; 20:20; 21:8; Rom.16:6; 1 Cor.1:11; 16:19; Col.4:15; 2 Tim.3:6; Philemon 2; Titus 1:11; 2 Jn.10. This list is impressive. It would seem likely that most New Testament ecclesias could fit into a domestic 'house' with the exception of Jerusalem. The remarkable lack of archaeological discoveries of big Christian meeting places pre AD70- and that not for want of trying- would confirm this. Thus the whole Corinth ecclesia could fit inside one house (Paul wrote Rom.16:23 from Corinth). It is worth noting the evidence for household baptisms being quite frequent: 2 Tim.4:19; 1 Cor.1:16; Rom.16:10,11; Acts 16:15 (these probably refer more to the domestic servants and employees rather than the children). It is conceivable that the salvation of Noah and his adult household by baptism (1 Pet.3:20 cp. Heb.11:7) was the prototype for these household baptisms. There is good reason to think that most baptisms in this period were mainly done by the apostles- if the ecclesias continued growing at the rate they did when Paul was among them then there would be hints of a far bigger community. For example, Acts 16:5 speaks of the congregations growing in number daily- implying baptisms were being done daily, immediately a candidate was ready (not left to the weekend for convenience!). Thus these household groups would develop into the house churches which seem to have been the typical first century ecclesia. It is worth sidestepping to Matt.10:35,36: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" in the holocaust of AD70 and that to come; i.e. brother betrayed brother (spiritually and naturally) within the household ecclesias.

There seems no reason to suspect that there were many other ecclesias apart from those mentioned in the New Testament, apart from Crete having ecclesias in "every city" (i.e. not many), and a number of ecclesias in Galilee and Judea, presumably pockets of the disciples' relatives and some who remembered the Lord's miracles. We know that generally the Jews rejected the Gospel; if a few thousand were converted around the time of the first Pentecost (out of a Jewish population of about 2.5 million in the land, deducible from Josephus), it is unlikely that there was a continuation of that pattern of mass conversion. It may be that Paul's equation of the Jewish believers of the first century with the seven thousand who refused to worship Baal has a literal application (Rom.11:4) in that there were about 7,000 Jewish believers. By the time of Acts 4:4 "the number of the men (that believed) had come to be (Greek- not as AV) about five thousand". The only verse that seems to contradict this impression is Acts 21:20: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe". However, the Greek word translated "many" is nowhere else translated like this. The sense really is 'You know what thousands believe'- i.e. 'you know the number of Jewish believers, it's in the thousands'. The same word is translated "what" in 2 Cor.7:11 in the sense of 'how much'. It is significant that Acts 9:31 describes the churches Paul persecuted as being in the provinces of Judaea, Galilee and Samaria; every house church between Jerusalem and Tarsus had personally been entered by Paul (Acts 8:3). This in itself suggests reasonably small numbers, and in passing reminds us of how familiar Paul would have become with the areas in which our Lord lived, probably entering the very houses of believers in towns like

Bethany and Capernaum. Doubtless his conscience for Christ grew at great speed in that period. The other provinces such as Idumea, Decapolis, Iturea, Trachonitis etc. do not appear to have had any ecclesias in. In a short space of time after his conversion, Paul was able to introduce himself to all the ecclesias in Judea in person (Gal.1:22 cp. v.24). The 5,000 Jewish converts made at Jerusalem would have largely returned to their original homes in the Roman world (Acts 2:9,10) or been driven to similar places by the persecution. This significant Jewish presence in probably all the ecclesias of the Roman world would account for the epistles nearly all warning against the Judaizers, and their frequent references back to Old Testament incidents and passages which would have been largely unknown to the new, ex-pagan Gentile converts.

Outside Israel numbers also seem to have been small- there were only seven ecclesias ("*the seven churches*") in the province of Asia (Rev.1:11), the elders of whom all turned away from Paul (2 Tim.1:15; there is evidence that Timothy and some other faithful brethren were still in the area). Indeed by the time Peter wrote to this area just prior to AD70 he seems to address himself only to scattered individuals holding the Truth throughout the whole of Asia Minor (1 Pet.1:1). John's letters give a similar impression. Philippi seems to have been a house church based on Lydia's household at the time Paul wrote to them. He says he had enjoyed fellowship with the whole ecclesia "From the first day until now" (Phil.1:5)- i.e. from the time of the first visit there which resulted in Lydia's baptism. Thus the whole ecclesia knew Paul personally- "Those things, which ye have...seen in me, do" (Phil.3:17; 4:9). This indicates that there had been no new baptisms since his visit. Again, note the similarity with present missionary policy of dissuading new converts from doing their own baptisms until there is another visit by mature brethren. Paul's evident affection for this ecclesia is understandable if they were a small, united family unit whom he had initially taught and baptized.

Similarly Paul could constantly remind the Thessalonians of his personal example which they had witnessed, again implying that there had been no new baptisms since his visits. The emphasis cannot be missed: "Ye know what manner of men we were...our Gospel came unto you...in power, and in the Holy Spirit (i.e. they all heard it at the same time)...ye became followers of us...what manner of entering in we had unto you...ye turned to God from idols (Paul's entering in by the Gospel had been to the whole ecclesia at the same time)...yourselves...know our entrance in unto you...after we...were shamefully entreated as ye (all) know at Philippi, we were bold to speak unto you the Gospel (i.e. the whole ecclesia heard it all at that one time)...ye remember, brethren, our labour...ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every (each) one of you (personally)...as a father doth his children"- i.e. Paul had personally fathered each of them by preaching to them. Seeing he was only in Thessalonica "three Sabbath days" the numbers involved could not have been great (1 Thess.1:5,6,9; 2:1,2,9,10,11- there are many others). Paul's great knowledge of the ecclesia and theirs of him also suggests small numbers (2 Thess.1:4; 3:7). Every ecclesia knowing about the Thessalonians (1 Thess.1:8) even quite soon after their conversion (when the letter was probably written) suggests a small number of ecclesias world-wide, notwithstanding a highly efficient grape vine based on the 'messengers of the ecclesias' (cp. Rom.1:8; Col.4:7,8; 2 Pet.3:15) resulting in epistles and news spreading fast. Similarly the faith of the Rome ecclesia was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom.1:8).

1 Cor.4:17 implies Paul had visited most of the ecclesias: "...as I teach every where, in every church". Thus would account for Paul being able to say what the customs of all churches were concerning head coverings (1 Cor.11:16), and his personal knowledge of so many of the individuals and ecclesias to which he wrote. He could tell the Romans that "the churches of Christ salute you" (Rom.16:16)- i.e. he had personally seen that their faith was spoken of in

all the ecclesial world (Rom.1:8). His personal knowledge of the Rome (house?) ecclesia is beautifully shown by him asking them to give each other a holy kiss from him (Rom.16:16), surely implying close personal knowledge of all of them. Paul's great personal involvement with all the ecclesias and often all their members individually resulted in the pressure of caring for *all* the churches that was upon him (2 Cor.11:28). His courage under imprisonment led to "the majority of the brotherhood" (Phil.1:14 Moffat) being encouraged to preach more boldly, suggesting most of them knew him well. His pain because of the Corinth ecclesia's mistakes becomes more real when we appreciate that they all knew him personally, having all had the ordinances delivered to them by Paul at the same time (1 Cor.11:2), all having been begotten by Paul's preaching (1 Cor.4:15,16).

Thus we have good reason to think that the average ecclesia of the first century was probably the same size as the average U.K. ecclesia today, although often based around a family unit and with a group of Jewish believers either fleeing persecution or who had broken away from the local synagogue, perhaps under the influence of one of those who was converted at Pentecost. Thus they would have been close-knit units, making it easier for us to appreciate how in such a household ecclesia the brother who was the head of the house could easily abuse the brethren who worked for him as labourers (James 5:4), and sheds more light on the commands concerning how believing employers should treat their brother-employees. A spirit of loving co-operation in the daily round would have been vital if ecclesial life was to prosper.

The large numbers converted around Pentecost can lead us to think that first century preaching was totally unrelated to our experience; however, it seems that this was a special, one-off occurrence. The statement that "many" believed as a result of the various preaching campaigns can also mislead us; the Greek for "many" used on those occasions probably means a figure under 50 in Acts 8:25; 16:23; 24:10; Lk.1:1; 12:19; Mk.5:9,26. Remember how the first 'overseas' preaching mission in Cyprus failed to produce a single convert until their tour reached the end of the island. Hopefully this study will help us relate better to those early days, seeing a very similar community to our own in the U.K. in terms of size, in which the active brethren could manage to have a knowledge of all the ecclesias and many of their members, based around a hub of activity in Jerusalem (or was Antioch the real seed-bed of the work?), as our own community grew around Birmingham. We too have the same kind of grapevine, the same kind of news travelling on it, the same problems, the same glorious Hope that could motivate men to leave all for the sake of Christ and His Gospel.

## **Digression 11: New Testament Quotations From The Septuagint (As opposed to the Hebrew Old Testament)**

The following evidence indicates that the Septuagint was in places accepted as a valid reflection of God's word by the inspired writers of the New Testament. Yet as we know, there are many places where the LXX differs from the Masoretic text, and there are many instances where the NT writers appear to make a point of exposition based upon a fine point of textual reading. This raises many questions as to the nature of NT quotation from the Old Testament. Take Ps. 41:9,10. This is quoted from the LXX in Mk. 14:18,21. Yet Jn. 13:18 quotes the same passage from the Hebrew text, with a slight difference. Which was inspired? Surely, both sources of the original were accepted as worthy of quotation. So from this evidence alone we should be wary of concluding that the differences between LXX and the Hebrew text are mutually incompatible.



A note is perhaps necessary about *how* the NT writers quoted from the LXX. Because often it appears they don't quote exactly from the LXX. The classic example would be the way Amos 9:11,2 is quoted in Acts 15:16-18. The argument of James actually hinges on the LXX reading as opposed to the Hebrew [Masoretic] text reading. 'All the nations' were to have God's Name called upon them, whereas Is. 63:19 describes the Gentiles as people upon whom God's Name had not [then] been called. Yet this 'quotation' is actually a merger of the Amos passage with several others (Is. 45:21; Jer. 12:15; Hos. 3:5). That's why James introduces the quotation with the comment that he is quoting "the prophets" (plural). The quotation is more like an interpretation of the text- which was how the Jews were used to interpreting the OT texts. Their principle of exposition, called *gezera shawa*, linked together Bible texts which used the same language. One of the texts which James incorporates into his 'quotation' is Jer. 12:16 LXX, which speaks of how converted Gentiles will be "in the midst of my people". Yet this very phrase occurs several times in Lev. 17 and 18, where we have the commands for how the Gentiles who lived amongst Israel should behave (Lev. 17:8,10,12,13; 18:26). They were told that there were four areas where their lifestyle had to conform to Jewish practice. And these are the very four areas, in the same order, which James asks the Gentile Christians to obey! Clearly, then, the decree of Acts 15, commanding the Gentile Christians to e.g. not eat blood, had as its context how Gentile Christians should live 'in the midst of' a Jewish Christian ecclesia. This is the limitation of the context. From this little exercise in exposition we learn how carefully and intricately the early brethren expounded the OT. Yes, they used the LXX, but they used it in such a way as to bring out practical points, searching always for Bible precedents for the situations they found themselves in. They set us quite some example, especially considering that James, the Lord's brother, would have been a manual worker and artisan as the Lord was; perhaps he was scarcely literate. And yet he reached such heights of exposition and wisdom purely from a simple love of God's word and attention to its detail.

|          |          |
|----------|----------|
| Mt.1:23  | Is.7:14  |
| 3:3      | " 40:3   |
| 12:21    | " 42:4   |
| 13:14,15 | " 6:9,10 |
| 15:8,9   | " 29:13  |
| 21:16    | Ps.8:2   |
| Mk.1:3   | Is.40:3  |
| 4:12     | " 6:9,10 |
| 7:6,7    | " 29:13  |
| Lk.3:4-6 | " 40:3-5 |
| 4:18     | " 61:1   |

|           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| 8:10      | " 6:9        |
| Jn.1:23   | " 40:3       |
| 12:38     | " 53:1       |
| 12:40     | " 6:10       |
| Acts 2:19 | Joel 2:30,31 |
| 2:25-28   | Ps.16:8-11   |
| 3:22      | Dt.18:15     |
| 4:25      | Ps.2:1,2     |
| 7:14      | Gen.46:27    |
| 7:42,43   | Am.5:25-27   |
| 8:33      | Is.53:8      |
| 13:34     | " 55:3       |
| 13:41     | Hab.1:5      |
| 15:16-18  | Am.9:11,12   |
| 28:26,27  | Is.6:9,10    |
| Rom.2:24  | " 52:5       |
| 3:4       | Ps.51:4      |
| 3:12      | " 14:3; 53:3 |
| 3:13      | " 5:9        |
| 3:14      | " 10:7       |
| 9:17      | Ex.9:16      |
| 9:27,28   | Is.10:22,23  |
| 9:29      | " 1:9        |

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| 9:33       | " 28:16       |
| 10:11      | " "           |
| 10:16      | " 53:1        |
| 10:18      | Ps.19:4       |
| 10:20      | Is.65:1       |
| 11:9,10    | Ps.69:22,23   |
| 11:26,27   | Is.59:20,21   |
| 11:34      | " 40:13       |
| 12:20      | Prov.25:21,22 |
| 14:11      | Is.45:23      |
| 15:12      | " 11:10       |
| 15:21      | " 52:15       |
| 1 Cor.1:19 | " 29:14       |
| 2:16       | " 40:13       |
| 5:13       | Dt.17:7       |
| 10:20      | " 32:17       |
| 15:55      | Hos.13:14     |
| 2 Cor.4:13 | Ps.116:10     |
| 8:21       | Prov.3:4      |
| Gal.3:10   | Dt.27:26      |
| Eph.4:26   | Ps.4:4        |
| Phil.1:19  | Job 13:16     |
| 2:11       | Is.45:23      |

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| Heb.1:6    | Dt.32:43         |
| 1:7        | Ps.104:4         |
| 1:10-12    | " 102:25-27      |
| 10:27      | Is.26:11         |
| 10:38      | Hab.2:4          |
| 11:5       | Gen.5:24         |
| 11:21      | " 47:31          |
| 12:5,6     | Prov.3:11,12     |
| 12:13      | " 4:26           |
| 12:15      | Dt.29:18         |
| 12:26      | Hag.2:6          |
| 13:6       | Ps.118:6         |
| Jam. 1:10  | Is.40:6,7        |
| 4:6        | Prov.3:34        |
| 1 Pet 1:24 | Is.40:6,7        |
| 2:6        | " 28:16          |
| 2:9        | " 43:20,21       |
| 3:10       | Ps.34:12         |
| 4:18       | Prov.11:31       |
| 5:5        | " 3:34           |
| Rev.2:7    | Ez.28:13; 31:8,9 |
| 2:27       | Ps.2:9           |

## Digression 12: An Exposition Of Job

Job must be one of the most enigmatic books for Bible students; what we seem to lack is a framework around which to develop our interpretation of it. Such a framework should be provided by following up the connections between Job and other Scriptures. It is the purpose of this study to trace some of these connections: by doing so we will come to see that Job and his friends represent the Jewish system and the mentality behind it, although in the same way as the Lord Jesus was associated with Israel (for example in the suffering servant prophecies of Isaiah, which apply to both Christ and Israel), so Job is also a type of Christ. We are going to suggest that Job represents both apostate Jewry and our Lord Jesus, which is typical of the way all God's people exhibit the reasoning and weakness of the flesh whilst simultaneously striving for the imitation of Christ (cp. Rom.7:13-24). Compare too how Saul, Jonah and Adam represent Christ although they also sinned.

Although Job did not speak wrongly about God (42:7;2:10) and kept patiently speaking the word of God despite the mockery it brought from the friends (James 5:10,11), this does not mean that Job or all that he said was blameless. The friends are not reprimanded for speaking wrongly about Job, but about God. Thus there was probably a fair degree of truth in their accusations concerning Job. Elihu also severely rebukes him, and unlike the three friends he is not rebuked for anything in the final analysis by God in Job 42 (1); not to mention the accusation of 'darkening counsel without knowledge' (38:2) by the Lord Himself, backed up by four chapters of heavy reprimand of Job's reliance on human strength and wisdom. This led to Job retracting much of what he had said: "I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth...I will not answer...I will proceed no further...I uttered that I understood not...wherefore I abhor myself and repent" (40:4,5; 42:3-6). This clearly establishes that much of Job's reasoning was faulty, although what he spoke before God was correct (2). Job was a prophet (Job 29:4 cp. 15:8;23:12; Prov.3:32; Amos 3:7; the secret of God being with him made Job a prophet) and it is in his role as such that he is commended in James 5:10,11- i.e. for the words concerning God which he spoke. The words for which God and Elihu rebuked him were therefore about other things. Elihu accused him of speaking "without knowledge" (34:35), which Job admitted he had (42:3).

### Job and the Judaizers

It can be shown that James read Job in a bad light insofar as he saw him as a type of the rich, Judaist-influenced Jews in the first century ecclesia who proudly despised their brethren. Eliphaz says that Job's sudden problems amid his prosperity were what would happen to all the wicked (15:21). This seems to be alluded to in 1 Thess.5:3 concerning the sudden destruction of rich, spiritually self confident believers. Job's words of 30:1 certainly smack of arrogance: "Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock". This would mean that his merciful acts to the poor were done in a 'charitable' spirit, thinking that such public acts declared him outwardly righteous: "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (29:13,14).

This has clear reference to the clothing of the Mosaic High Priest with his outward show of righteousness. Job was probably the family priest, seeing that the head of the household appears to have been the priest in patriarchal times; thus Job could offer a sacrifice for the sins of his children (1:5). Job's likening of himself to a moth-eaten garment due to God's changing of his circumstances (13:26-28) must connect with the disciples of the Law as an old, decaying garment in Heb.8:13. The priestly clothing "for glory and for beauty" (Ex.28:2) is certainly alluded to by God when He challenges Job "Deck thyself *now* (i.e. like you used

to) with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty...then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee" (40:10,14)- as if God is saying that Job's previous life represented the Mosaic priestly system with its external pomp and implication that one's own righteousness can bring salvation ("that thine own right hand can save thee"). Job's humiliation meant that, by implication, he no longer felt able to clothe himself with the priestly garments of glory and beauty; he had learnt the spirit of the Christian dispensation, to trust on the grace of God rather than a system of salvation depending on personal righteousness. The descriptions of Job rending his "mantle" (priestly robes) recalls that of Caiaphas; his falling on his face perhaps indicates his recognition that reliance on the outward show of the Law needed to be replaced by humble faith. Job thus described his experiences as God leading "priests away stripped" of their robes (Job 12:19 N.I.V.).

## **Job the priest**

The priest's duty was to expound the word of God (Mal.2:7; Hos.4:6): Job being a prophet also meant that he had a prominent role to play in the instruction of the people. It appears that as a prophet he was faithful- he spoke what God said. The friends were also prophets, seeing that in 15:8,9 they say that they have been given the same "secret" (i.e. inspiration) and knowledge of God as Job had. However, they did not accurately speak forth what they were inspired with as Job did (42:7). But as the priests of Israel misled the people by faulty reasoning ostensibly based on the word, so Job too was in error as a priest. Eliphaz told Job "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee" (15:6). This is picked up by Christ in his words to the one-talent man in the parable: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee". The man was condemned for keeping his talent (his spiritual knowledge of the word) to himself rather than sharing it with others. Eliphaz proceeds to make the same rebuke of Job- although he had "heard the secret of God", which we have seen implies the gift of prophesying the word, he "restrained wisdom unto thyself" (v.8). This confirms that Christ's one-talent man of the parable is based on Job, thus making him represent the rejected at judgement. No doubt the primary application of the one-talent man was to the Jewish believers of Christ's day who did not capitalize on the talent they already had. The taking away of the talent and its being given to others recalls the Kingdom (i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom) being taken from the Jews and being given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it (cp. trading the talent).

In Job 9:21 and by implication in other places, Job effectively says that there is no point in serving God or striving for obedience to God. This is what the priests of Israel later said: "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" (Mal.3:14). Elihu claimed that Job "hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God" (34:9)- i.e. keep the commands of God, seeing that the Hebrew for "delight" often occurs in the context of obedience to the word. The Malachi passage is more specifically alluding to Job 21:7,15: "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?". These are the words of Job, complaining about the prosperity of the wicked who had such an attitude, and the carefree happiness of their lives: "Their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ" (21:11,12). It is in this that the Malachi context is so significant, for Mal.3:15 continues: "We (the Israelites) call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up". This was also Job's view. Notice that Job is probably implying that his prosperous three friends were among the wicked whom he is describing, thus associating them with the corrupt Jewish priesthood.

## **Job and Israel**

There are a number of passages which associate Job with Israel in general terms. We will first consider these and then proceed to analyse how the reasoning of Job showed the same characteristics as the Jewish system in the first century.

It has been suggested by J.W.Thirtle in "*Old Testament Problems*" (worth a read by every serious student) that the book of Job was re-written and compiled by Hezekiah's men who at the same time produced the Psalter (all under inspiration, of course). The copious connections between the suffering servant prophecies of Isaiah and the book of Job (take a glance down the A.V. margins of Job) are therefore more easily understandable- the account of Job's sufferings and vindication amidst opposition was framed in language that pointed forward to the similar suffering (through the same disease?) and vindication of Hezekiah. The suffering servant of Isaiah refers to both Israel and the Lord Jesus, exactly as the parable of Job also does. The connections between Isaiah 40 and the book of Job are especially marked. The more obvious are tabulated here:

| <b>Isaiah 40</b> | <b>Job</b> |
|------------------|------------|
| :14              | 21:22      |
| :17              | 6:18       |
| :22              | 9:8        |
| :23              | 12:21      |
| :24              | 14:8       |
| :26              | 25:3       |
| :27              | 3:23       |
| :31              | 29:20      |

The link between Is.40:27 and Job 3:23 is most significant: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed over from my God?". These are the words of Job in 3:23: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?". Thus Job represents Israel; and because "Israel" in Isaiah also refers to our Lord, we can make the equation Job=Israel=Jesus. The distancing between himself and God which Christ felt on the cross (Mt.27:46) is thus foreshadowed by Job feeling the same- and like Christ, it was a trial from God, not a specific punishment for sin.

Another telling point of contact with Isaiah is found in 4:3-5. Job had "strengthened the weak hands..and..the feeble knees. But now it (the weakness and feeble knees) is come upon thee, and thou faintest". This is picked up in Is.35:3,4: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful (Heb.'hasty'- both are relevant to Job) heart, Be strong...behold, your God will come". Thus Job is a type of the weak-hearted Jews, and his final deliverance thus points forward to the coming of the Lord. The return of the prodigal son foreshadowed the final repentance of the Jews (note how that parable is based on Gen.43:16;45:14,15). But Job's decision to say "I have sinned...and it profited me not" (33:27) also connects with the prodigal son (Lk.15:21), thus again associating him with the Jews in their suffering and repentance.

Isaiah's earlier description of Israel as "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness...but wounds, and bruises and putrifying sores" (1:6) is couched in the picture of Job "with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). Note too that the description of Miriam in Num.12:12 LXX is quoting from Job 3:16 LXX; as if both Job and Miriam represented apostate Israel.

There are also links between Job and Deuteronomy 28, again connecting Job with a faithless Israel:

| <b>Deut. 28</b>                                                                                                                   | <b>Job</b>                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| :29 "Thou shalt grope at noonday, gropeth in darkness"                                                                            | "They (the wicked; although the friends as the blind are getting at Job when they speak of them) meet with darkness in the daytime and grope in the noonday as in the night" (5:14).               |
| :29 "The blind"                                                                                                                   | Job had fits of blindness (22:10,11)                                                                                                                                                               |
| :35 "The Lord shall smite thee in the knees and in the legs with a sore botch from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head" | "Boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (2:7) were inflicted by satan. "The Lord" in Dt.28 was the wilderness Angel; which is one of several indications that Job's satan was an Angel... |
| :37 "An astonishment...                                                                                                           | "Mark me (Job) and be astonished" (21:5;17:8).                                                                                                                                                     |
| and a byword, among all nations"                                                                                                  | "A byword of the people" (17:6;30:9). "Now am I their song" (30:9).                                                                                                                                |
| :67 "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning"                | "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning" (7:4).                                                                 |
| All the Jews' blessings from God were to be taken away and their children cursed:"Thou shalt                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



