

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

"James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting."

– James 1:1.

It will be observed by the careful reader that this epistle, unlike any of the other apostolic epistles, is addressed, not to the Church, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, but to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered abroad. And from the incentive to patience held out in Chapter 5:8,9 – viz., that "the presence [Greek, *parousia*] of the Lord has approached," and "Behold, the Judge is standing before the door" – we see that its special application is to the present day, the day of the Lord's presence as judge. Since he did not come as judge at his first advent (John 12:47), the reference is manifestly to his second advent.

Notice too, that these are recognized by the [R1405 : page 152] apostle as brethren of the household of faith. (1:2,3.) So while this epistle is addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, it is thus restricted to those who are also of the household of faith, who still have faith in the prophecies and who are getting their eyes open to see in Jesus the promised Messiah and Deliverer. We recognize it therefore, as a special message to those of scattered Israel in this day of the Lord's presence, from whom blindness is being and will be turned away, and who are coming to recognize the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah.

This thought calls to mind the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her appointed time is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Chap. 40:1,2 – see margin.) We have seen that Israel's double of

chastisement was fully accomplished in the year 1878. (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. II., page 232.) And since that time we have also seen a marked beginning and a gradual progress of the turning away of blindness from fleshly Israel. How characteristic it is of the Lord, that he should have a word of recognition and comfort recorded for those chastened and returning ones at this time, whom he is now ready to recognize by the old familiar term, "My people!"

Observe now the character of the epistle. First of all it recognizes the fact of Israel's great trials* of faith and patience as now experienced in the special persecutions and hardships which, though they regard them as calamities and with fearful forebodings of greater trouble, are really working together for good to them in driving many of them back to the land of promise and preparing them for the blessings God is shortly to bring to them. And then it bids them rejoice even on these tribulations, and exhorts to patience, faith and stability of character and to dependence in God for wisdom – for further enlightenment concerning his plan, which he assures them they shall have if they ask in faith. – Chap. 1:1-8.

Verses 9-11 strike first thing at their prominent national greed for gain, exhorting them to learn to rejoice in those principles of righteousness which are destined to equalize the conditions of men, by humbling the rich and mighty and exalting the meek and humble; and showing how the rich man, as such, must pass away in the great leveling process of this day of the Lord.

Verses 12-15 trace the inevitable course of unrighteousness – how that lust, undue desire of any kind, brings forth sin, and sin when finished brings forth death. Therefore, "Blessed is the man that endureth trial [who does not follow the course of the depraved desires]; for when he is tried [*i.e.*, when his trial is

over], he will receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" – the everlasting life provided for all mankind who will accept it on God's conditions.

Verses 16-18 teach that though God is permitting persecution and trial to come upon his ancient people and will make them work together for good to them, yet they must not err in attributing these things to God. (Verses 16,13.) Only the good gifts come from God: such, for instance, as the truth whereby you are now begotten; for know ye not that Israel is to be *a kind* of first fruits unto God of his creatures? Mark the expression *a kind* of first fruits. The very first fruit of God's plan is the glorified Christ (Rev. 14:4), and Israel is not first in this sense, but is to be the first-fruits unto God of the nations.

Verses 19-25 are most appropriate words of counsel in view of these things: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren [of Israel, and of the household of faith], let every man [of you] be swift to hear [the truth of God], slow to speak, [his own opinions, and] slow to wrath [Let him not waste his time in wrathful denunciations, etc., against the persecuting powers; but in the midst of it all let him humbly and thankfully recognize the hand of Providence which is about to work out such a deliverance as Israel never knew before – Jer. 16:14,15]; for man's anger does not work out God's righteousness."

"Therefore, discarding all impurity and overflowing malice, embrace with meekness the implanted **[R1405 : page 153]** word which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves; for if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth

therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Verses 26 and 27 show the kind of character and disposition which pure religion or piety must necessarily manifest, viz., a character which refuses to be contaminated by worldly ideas and practices, and which takes delight in doing good. And if any man have not such a disposition, and the unbridled use of his tongue manifests the very reverse, a profession of piety on his part is vain and a mere self-deception.

CHAPTER II. Verses 1-9 counsel humility and condescension to men of low estate rather than preferment of the rich, which respect to persons is a violation of that commandment of the law, to love our neighbors as ourselves. Verse 5 points to the fact of God's choice of some of the poor of this world to be exalted as heirs of the Millennial Kingdom. **[R1406 : page 153]**

Verses 10-13 counsel charity and leniency in any judgment of fellow-men, in consideration of the weakness common to all, showing that if they are going to exact perfection of their fellows, that is, if they are going to judge them by the strict law of God, they also will be condemned under the same law.

Verses 14-26 show that works of righteousness must follow a true faith, that they are inseparably linked, and that a faith which does not so manifest itself is dead.

CHAPTER III. shows that as not many are qualified to be teachers, or expounders of divine truth, and in view of the responsibility of such to God, none should undertake it who are not so qualified of God. "Do not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that [by so doing] we shall receive a severer judgment [trial]." The position of a public teacher or expounder of divine truth, while it is one of privilege, is one that

must be held with meekness and sobriety, and when faithfully filled involves both labor and sacrifice. But if one assumes to become a teacher and permits his tongue to run at random according to his own imperfect will instead of the will of God, who can tell the extent of damage it may do in overthrowing the faith of many and in establishing error and beclouding the truth? But (verses 13-16) "Is any one wise and endued with knowledge among you, let him by honorable conduct show his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This [kind of] wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom from above is indeed first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easily persuaded, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who practice peace."

CHAPTER IV. is a continuation of the exhortation to humility and brotherly love, and points out pride and selfishness and greed of gain as the causes of all the wars and misery of the past.

CHAPTER V. Verses 1-6 show that great distress and trouble shall come upon the wealthy classes of the world who have long held a monopoly of earthly blessings. Verses 7-9 proclaim the great Judge at the door – "The presence of the Lord has approached and behold, the Judge standeth before the door" and his wrath is about to be revealed against all evil doers. But ye, brethren, who are on the Lord's side, stablish your hearts and be patient in the midst of the great trial which shall culminate in the full establishment of the kingdom of God, under which you, as a first fruit unto God of the nations, shall be first blessed. Then follow the special counsels of verses 10-20 encouraging to patient endurance and cheerfulness, sobriety of conduct, trust in

the Lord, and patience and helpfulness toward stumbling or erring brethren, etc.

Verse 14 also counsels their looking to the Lord for the healing of physical infirmities, and promises that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. This promise, we believe, has its **[R1406 : page 154]** special application in the time indicated by verse 9 – when the Judge has arrived and the Times of Restitution have begun.

In no other time, we believe, could this promise have had full application; for had the promise been intended to apply to the whole Gospel age, and had it been verified to all who in faith claimed it, many faithful souls of the past would still be living. It would signify nothing short of full restitution and everlasting life, which cannot, according to God's plan, be granted to any until the appointed "Times of Restitution" have come. For God to make such an engagement would be to frustrate his own plans. At the time, therefore, when this message is due to Israel, and when they shall begin to recognize it, we believe that this promise may be fully claimed, and that any who ask in faith may have life and health continually renewed and need never die – the restitution time having come and the restitution work being thus begun in them. In answer to the prayer of faith together with humble confession of sin, sickness will be continually rebuked throughout the Millennial age, and health and life will be granted to all the willing and obedient.

But in order to such faith, a knowledge of the facts upon which the promise is conditioned is necessary. While we see that death still reigns, so that not one of the generations past has escaped or eluded its grasp to witness the truth of this promise to the present generation, unless we can see some qualification which limits it to some particular time, either present or future, we cannot intelligently claim the promise. And many who have

claimed it before the appointed time have been greatly disappointed. We think now of two most remarkable instances of misplaced faith on this subject. One was a dear young brother in a neighboring city, fully consecrated to the Lord and leading an exemplary life, who was prostrated with consumption. He was visited by friends who encouraged him to claim this promise, which he did, refusing medical aid, and trusting to miraculous healing. But he died; and his last whisper was, "Mother, I will soon be well. God is bringing me down so low only to manifest his power in raising me up." A moment more, and all was over; and the faith of many went out with that young life.

Another instance was that of the wife of a brother from whom we heard the following circumstance related. The lady was an amiable and faithful Christian woman; she trusted in this promise, and several of her friends prayed with her and trusted for her recovery; a large circle of those who preach faith-healing were interested in the case, and her husband waited anxiously for the turning point toward health. But she died; and, said her husband to the writer, I for a time lost all faith in the Bible. But afterward, said he, mastering my feelings, I said to myself, Perhaps the old Book may be true after all, if we only knew how to read it. And since then God has been gradually leading him into the truth concerning his plan.

These instances, related to us with an inquiry for light on the subject, led to this re-examination of the epistle of James with the above conclusions. When we thus locate the promise in the appointed time, all is plain. And while the epistle, as a whole, is addressed specially to scattered and now returning Israel, which is to be a first fruit of the nations, and which in the near future will greatly need its timely counsel and encouragement, its wise and helpful counsels, warnings and promises have a general application to all whose hope, in common with the hope of

fleshly Israel, is in the restitution to human perfection and all its attendant blessings. And its lessons, though recorded specially for the restitution class, are profitable to the Church as well.

When Israel comes to an understanding of the plan of God, with the systematic order of its times and seasons, they will see that the restitution time has actually come and that they may claim its precious promises at once. And so may all others who intelligently and heartily accept the truth, except those who appreciate the still higher privilege of presenting their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, and who, in compliance with this covenant, cheerfully sacrifice the human nature even unto death, that in due time they may receive the divine nature and joint-heirship with Christ in his kingdom.

MRS. C. T. RUSSELL.
