

The Epistle of James
Verse by Verse Bible Study

George Shankool

The Epistle of James: Verse by Verse Bible Study Copyright © by
George Shankool

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher or author, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law

Printed in the USA.

Scripture quotations marked LSB are taken from the (LSB®) Legacy Standard Bible®, Copyright © by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Managed in partnership with Three Sixteen Publishing Inc., LSBible.org, and publishing.com.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION 1

OPENING PRAYER..... 3

CHAPTER 1 4

CHAPTER 2 37

CHAPTER 3 74

CHAPTER 4 93

CHAPTER 5 147

CLOSING PRAYER..... 247

THANK YOU..... 248

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 249

The Epistle of James

Introduction

This letter was written by James, the brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55) and brother of Jude (Jude 1:1), who was the elder who led the Jerusalem church (Acts 15).

The name James is a transliteration of the Greek word Ἰάκωβος (iakōbos), which is the Hebrew name, יַעֲקֹב (ya'āqōb), and in English we would say, Jacob.

Scholars believe that it was written between A.D. 40–45 and that it was written to predominantly Jewish Christian house churches outside of Jerusalem, based on its mention of the “twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (James 1:1).

The Book of James is directed to Jewish Christians scattered among all the nations. James was writing to Jews to encourage them to continue growing in this new Christian faith.

James emphasizes that good actions will naturally flow from those who are filled with the Spirit and asks if someone has saving faith if the Spirit's fruits are absent. We see Paul describe something similar in Galatians 5:22-23.

According to history, James was the head of the Church in Jerusalem, and he was martyred between 62 and 69 A.D. by being stoned to death by the Pharisees on the order of High Priest Ananus.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews (20.9.1): “Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned:

George Shankool

but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.”

We are going to examine the text by using scripture to interpret scripture. We will follow the connections that James is drawing from to give us a rich and thorough understanding of the message the Holy Spirit was intending to convey to the readers of this letter.

We will be able to extract so much applicational truth that will help us grow in our walk with Christ. We will learn about the importance of selfless love and how the fruit in our lives is the proof of our genuine faith in Christ. And we will be able to see the focus that James makes on the condition of the hearts of those who proclaim faith in Christ.

Opening Prayer

Let's open in prayer:

Father God, we thank you for your Word; we thank you for the opportunity to study Scripture in depth. Father, we ask you to open our minds, eyes, and hearts to your Word and allow us to see what you want us to see. If any errors are being taught in this study guide, Father, make it abundantly clear and correct it in our hearts and minds. Father, we thank you for the salvation you have offered us through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and Lord, help us to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all those we encounter. Lord, bring people into our lives that we can share with and give us the wisdom, knowledge, patience, and kindness to preach boldly in love. We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen and Amen!

For your reference, the translations that are used in this study guide are the Legacy Standard Bible (LSB) and the English Standard Version (ESV).

The Epistle of James

Chapter 1

Greeting

James 1:1 (LSB): “James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are in the Dispersion: Greetings.”

James identifies himself as a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This shows his humility; he is not trying to use his status as Jesus's half-brother (Mark 6:3, Matthew 13:55) from Mary and Joseph to gain position, recognition, or power.

It's likely he felt shame and dishonor that he didn't believe in Jesus before the resurrection (John 7:1-5). Which is similar to how Paul calls himself the least of the apostles because of his previous persecution of the Church.

1 Corinthians 15:9 (LSB): “For I am the least of the apostles, and not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

Paul also validates that this is truly the half-brother of Jesus in **Galatians 1:18-19 (LSB):** “Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. **[19]** But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.”

This is when Paul went to the Jerusalem council, as seen in Acts 15. There he met with Peter, James, and the elders to talk about the Gospel going out to the Gentiles. They were discussing if the Gentiles should be bound to the law of Moses, and they all agreed that they were not to be bound to be circumcised into the law of Moses.

History tells us that James became the head of the Church in Jerusalem and was also present at the Council of Jerusalem, as we have already seen in Acts 15.

Testing of Your Faith

James 1:2-4 (LSB): “Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, **[3]** knowing that the testing of your faith brings about perseverance. **[4]** And let perseverance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

James is telling us to be thankful for the trials. This is not because suffering is enjoyable, but rather because God allows testing and trials to refine us in our walk.

The areas where we are weak need to be strengthened so God will allow trials to show us the cracks in our walk so we can grow.

Through that growth, we will become more mature as Christians, and our Christlikeness will shine brighter, giving a greater witness to our testimony for God.

Paul echoes this in **Romans 5:1-5 (LSB)**:

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we boast in hope of the glory of God. [3] And not only this, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; [5] and hope does not put to shame, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

James 1:5-8 (LSB): “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. [6] But he must ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like

the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, [8] being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

This is speaking directly about the previous passage. James is saying when we are in the midst of a trial or temptation, we are to ask God for wisdom to overcome that trial or temptation.

God will always grant us the wisdom to overcome trials, because it's God's will that we do not fall into temptation. When we ask, we will receive, and when we do, we will give glory to God.

However, we must ask in faith, accept the answer, and wait for God's answer through prayer and studying the Bible.

We shouldn't ask God, search His Word, and when we don't like the answer, reach out for “wise counsel” elsewhere, because we are trying to find a more appealing answer. This behavior would not demonstrate asking in faith, and it would mean rejecting God's counsel in favor of human advice.

We also should not be holding onto things in our lives that God has already convicted us of.

For example, if God has convicted you of drinking, even if you are not getting drunk, but you feel the Holy Spirit telling you to

leave that behind. It would be a sin for you to continue in it and ignore that conviction. Even though the act of drinking alone in scripture is not considered a sin.

Let's explore this further. You acknowledge that God wants you to quit, but since you know the act is something you enjoy, you ask God to take it from you with your prayers, but your mind still wants it.

This is an example of being double-minded. We know something is wrong, and we know we should stop, but we do not want to stop because we enjoy it. But we want to stop to please God. Therefore, we struggle with choosing between sin and obedience. In that circumstance our convictions call us to ask for forgiveness, and we might even stop for a while, but we don't really want to quit. So, even in our prayers asking God for help in a situation, we are "double-minded," since our mind is trying to please both our flesh and God.

His reference to the wave of the sea and being tossed by the wind is similarly referenced by his brother in **Jude 1:13 (ESV)**: "wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame."

James was speaking in reference to apostate teachers and unbelievers. So they could have both been pulling from the same analogy in this reference.

A Jewish audience would know that biblically the sea is a reference to Gentile nations who are associated with paganism (Revelation 17:15), and wind in Hebrew is “ruach,” which is the same word used for breath and spirit. James seems to be employing this Jewish idiom to caution against seeking guidance from the pagan nations who follow deceptive spirits.

Let's look at the connection Paul makes to this in **Ephesians 4:11-24 (LSB)**: “And He Himself gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ, [14] **so that we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming,** [15] but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, being joined and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the properly measured working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. [17] **Therefore this I say, and testify in the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles**

also walk, in the futility of their mind, [18] being darkened in their mind, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. [19] And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. [20] But you did not learn Christ in this way— **[21]** if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, **[22]** to lay aside, in reference to your former conduct, the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, **[23]** and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **[24]** and to put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Paul is explaining to us what James is talking about. He is explaining the difference in the minds and actions of believers and unbelievers. He is showing us that we are not to seek answers in the world, which is the wisdom of the ruler of this world (Satan).

So we must remember, when we face trials and tribulations, we must ask God for wisdom to overcome that trial, and he will always give us the wisdom we seek. When we make it through the trials, we gain strength and grow in maturity and in our faith.

James 1:9-11 (LSB): “But the brother of humble circumstances is to boast in his high position; [10] and the rich man is to boast in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. [11] For the sun rises with a scorching heat and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.”

In verse 9 James says, “But the brother of humble circumstances is to boast in his high position” He is telling us that even when we are poor in the eyes of the world, we are rich in the salvation of Christ.

In verses 10 & 11, James is giving a warning about emphasizing physical beauty and financial status.

Uncoincidentally, James quotes from the book of **Job 14:1-6 (LSB):** “Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. [2] “Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not stand. [3] “You also open Your eyes on him And bring me into judgment with Yourself. [4] “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one! [5] “Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass. [6] “Turn Your gaze from him that he may cease from toil, Until he accepts his day like a hired man.”

Job was the perfect example of wealth and status, but the one thing he lacked was humility.

Job felt that his righteousness merited God's blessings. Because of that pride and entitlement, God allowed Satan to test Job to show the weakness in his life and to remind him that the only thing we deserve is God's justice and wrath. Job needed to be reminded that it is only by God's grace alone that we are saved and blessed.

Job eventually was humbled through his trials, and finally, during his discourse with God, he saw that he was far from the greatness of God.

This is also important for us to understand because of where James will take us in this letter when he talks about how good works are a result of saving faith.

Let's look at what Jesus said in **Matthew 6:20-24 (ESV)**: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **[20]** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **[21]** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **[22]** "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, **[23]** but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! **[24]**"No one can serve two masters, for

either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Let's also look at a couple of other examples that Jesus gave us:

One was the rich ruler **Matthew 19:16-30 (ESV)**: “And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” **[17]** And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” **[18]** He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, **[19]** Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **[20]** The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” **[21]** Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” **[22]** When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. **[23]** And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. **[24]** Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of

a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” [25] When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” [26] But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” [27] Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” [28] Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. [30] But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

This rich young ruler loved the world and his status more than he loved Jesus. His desire for earthly riches caused him to neglect the gift of eternal life and the riches that are offered in heaven. He exemplifies the religious leaders who chose their position over Jesus.

John 12:42 (LSB): “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for

fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;”

This connects us to the third seed in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:7, Matthew 13:22). This seed is choked by worldly worries and riches, so it doesn’t bear fruit. We know that only those who have faith in Jesus will bear fruit, and that fruit comes from the Holy Spirit. We cannot bear spiritual fruit unless we are reborn by the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-14, John 15:4), and the fruit of the spirit are seen in **Galatians 5:22-23 (LSB)**: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **[23]** gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

An example on the other side of this argument was the poor woman at the temple.

Mark 12:41-44 (ESV): “And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. **[42]** And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. **[43]** And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. **[44]**”

For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

This shows that she trusted God and knew her treasures were in Heaven, not on Earth, because worldly things were perishing.

Matthew 6:19-21 (LSB): “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **[20]** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; **[21]** for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We are to remember that we are sojourners on this earth, and our home is in heaven.

Ephesians 2:17-22 (LSB): “And He came and preached the good news of peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; **[18]** for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. **[19]** So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, **[20]** having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, **[21]** in

whom the whole building, being joined together, is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, [22] in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Hebrews 11:13-16 (LSB): “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. [14] For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. [15] And indeed if they had been remembering that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. [16] But now, they aspire to a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He prepared a city for them.”

Finally, we can look at the Beatitudes, which James seems to pull from throughout his letter.

We see Jesus rebuking those who have placed their trust in their worldly possessions, abilities, and status in **Luke 6:24-26 (ESV):** “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. [25] “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who laugh

now, for you shall mourn and weep. [26]
“Woe to you, when all people speak well of
you, for so their fathers did to the false
prophets.”

Now we can see, within context, that James, just like Jesus, was contrasting those who are poor physically, rich physically, humble in appearance physically, and beautiful in appearance physically.

If we were only focused on the physical, it would be easy to see that the rich and the beautiful are better off.

However, Jesus was always focused on the spiritual, which stems from within.

So what is being shown to us here is not that money is evil, but that the love of money is the root of evil.

In the same way, it is not beauty that is evil, but beauty can turn to pride, so through these examples we are seeing a warning against greed and pride.

We are to recognize that our treasures should be built in heaven, not on Earth, and that suffering loss in this world, whether it be money, beauty, or physical ability, should be looked at as secondary and minimal to the spiritual gain of salvation through Christ.

If your beauty leads to pride, it is better to focus less on it. Dress in a way that brings less attention to you, and focus on your inward appearance and obedience to Christ rather than adorning yourself with fancy clothes, jewelry, makeup, and so on. This is a warning to both men and women. Bring it to God, and ask for his wisdom in how to deal with these areas of struggle. Physical beauty is fine, but if it becomes an idol, it's a sin.

If your wealth makes you selfish and greedy, pray to God about it. Use your money to help others, to support ministries, and to glorify God rather than to glorify yourself and the god of this world (Satan). And if necessary, leave the job that is causing the greed and pride, sell your expensive possessions, and live a more simple and humble life. Remember money is not evil, but if it becomes an idol in our life, then it has become sin.

Therefore, we understand that every trial or test we encounter serves a specific purpose. The purpose is for us to recognize the weakness in our life, ask God for help, and listen to his guidance. And through that trial we will become stronger and learn to trust God more fully.

James 1:12 (LSB): “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

Again we can see James referencing Job. The story of Job is packed with trials and testing, and although Job suffered greatly, his faith remained, and through the trials, his pride was revealed, and he willingly humbled himself before God, recognizing his insignificance compared to the creator of all things.

Peter says we face trials as a test of the genuineness of our faith in **1 Peter 1:3-9 (ESV)**: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, [9] obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Peter continues to tell us that we shouldn't be surprised when trials come, but instead we should

rejoice because we bring glory to God when we persevere, **1 Peter 4:12-19 (ESV)**: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **[13]** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. **[14]** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. **[15]** But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. **[16]** Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. **[17]** For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **[18]** And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” **[19]** Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Peter then explains that God knows how to rescue the godly from various trials in **2 Peter 2:4-10 (ESV)**: “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; **[5]** if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; **[6]** if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes

he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; [7] and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked [8] (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); [9] then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, [10] and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.”

Next we see James bring up the crown of life. This crown is one of the five crowns that await believers in heaven. It is a gift from God that will be awarded to those who faithfully endured trials and tests on earth because of their love for Jesus.

In the original Greek, the word translated as “crown” is *stephanos*, which speaks about a prize or a reward for an action. This is different from a “diadem.” That is a crown worn by kings and rulers who have a birthright to it.

A *stephanos* is speaking of a garland or wreath. In ancient Rome and Greece these were placed on the head of an athlete to show their victory in a contest. That's why Paul says we should strive to win the race, and the crown of life is God's reward for those who persevere under trial.

This connects us to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5:10-12 (LSB)**: “¶Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **[11]** “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **[12]** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

As we face trials and tribulations, we can endure them for God's glory, which will ultimately bring us closer to God.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (LSB): “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. **[25]** Now everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. **[26]** Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; **[27]** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

The Bible teaches that Jesus loved us first, so we now can love in return. We know that loving our neighbors, and especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, is not a suggestion but a command. But

we shouldn't love out of compulsion but out of thanksgiving for the love that Christ has shown us.

Jesus explains this love in **John 15:12-15 (LSB)**:

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **[13]** Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. **[14]** You are My friends if you do what I command you. **[15]** No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

Since Jesus willingly laid down his life for us to call us friends, how could we not willingly lay down the things of this world for Christ and our brothers and sisters in him?

Jesus explains how we need to be willing to follow him in this way in **Matthew 16:24-26 (LSB)**:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. **[25]** For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. **[26]** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Paul elaborates on this in **Romans 12:1-2 (LSB)**:

“Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of

God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

James 1:13-15 (LSB): “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. [14] But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. [15] Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully matured, it brings forth death.”

This passage is very difficult and commonly raises the question of the deity of Christ. Because we know that Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness for 40 days. and here James says in verse 13 that God cannot be tempted... In Matthew 4, Jesus was led to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

The word translated “tempted” in Greek is *peirazo*; it is the same word used in verse 13 when James said, God himself tempts no one. This word can be translated in numerous ways, but in the context we see that *peirazo* is best translated as “testing someone maliciously” or “soliciting someone to sin” (tempt).

But the word used that says God cannot be tempted is a different variation of that word. That word is the Greek word *apeirastos*, which comes from the root word *peira*.

Which can also be translated to mean “learn.”

Now, by looking at the context, we can see that statement can also be translated like this: “Let no one say when he is enticed to sin, “I am being enticed to sin by God,” for God cannot learn to do evil, and he himself entices no one to sin.”

We see that thought reiterated in verses 14-15, “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.”

Showing that God will allow Satan to entice people to sin, and by his own desires, he chooses to sin.

Yes, God knows whether that person will choose to do evil or choose to do good, but his foreknowledge doesn’t affect the free will or the choice of the individual.

What we need to recognize is that James has shifted from testing and trials to temptation. I know that these sound similar, but they are entirely different.

The purpose of giving tests and trials is to strengthen and encourage the person who passes them. The purpose of temptation is to destroy the person who succumbs to it.

Temptation can be included within a trial by the enemy, but God's purpose is to strengthen and build up his body, not to tear it down; the enemy's purpose is destruction.

James 1:16-18 (LSB): “Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. [17] Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. [18] In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”

The Father of Lights is a reference to Genesis 1 and it references God as the creator. James is referencing God's unchangeable nature, seen in **Isaiah 40:28 (ESV):** “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

James continues to explain that through the salvation that Christ offers, him being fully God and fully man, he is the firstfruit into the

resurrection from within creation, but only the first of many “brothers” who will follow.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 (ESV): “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **[21]** For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. **[22]** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. **[23]** But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

Paul elaborates on this in **Romans 8:29 (ESV):** “For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

Hearing and Doing the Word

James 1:19-21 (LSB): “Know this, my beloved brothers. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; **[20]** for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. **[21]** Therefore, laying aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in gentleness receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

As Christians, we are to listen with open ears to teaching, receiving the teaching with all eagerness, but we are to examine the Scriptures daily to see if the teaching is aligned with scripture (Acts 17:11).

We were given two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we speak.

Proverbs 12:15 (ESV): “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.”

Proverbs 15:32 (ESV): “Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.”

Proverbs 19:20 (ESV): “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.”

We should always be slow to anger because anger blinds us from God’s will and causes us to follow our anger rather than the teaching of God's word. This is a perfect example of God’s grace and character regarding people in general, so in the same way we who are followers of Christ are to reflect God in all that we do.

Numbers 14:18 (ESV): “The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

And we know that Jesus is the Word of God, and it is by him that we are saved.

We can now understand what he meant when he said in verse 21, “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

James is telling us to be humble and receive Christ through faith because he is the one who is able to save our souls.

We see Solomon warn us about being quick to be angry in **Ecclesiastes 7:9 (ESV)**: “Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.”

All of these warnings point us to the hearts and intentions of men. There is a big difference between those who do what seem like good things and those who are expressing the love of Christ because they have experienced the love of Christ.

The hearts of men are always what reveal whether they are acting selfishly or selflessly. And we know that the hearts of men are wicked unless they are given a new heart. The only way to receive a new heart is by the grace of God through faith in Christ.

We see the wickedness of the heart in **Jeremiah 17:9 (LSB)**: “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can know it?”

We find out about the new heart in **Ezekiel 36:26 (LSB)**: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;

and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

This has shown us that the new heart is connected to the new spirit, which shows us being born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We see the difference between those who profess faith with their lips and even do good works in the name of Christ but whose hearts are far from God in **Matthew 7:21 (ESV)**: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **[22]** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ **[23]** And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ **[24]** “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **[25]** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **[26]** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **[27]** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the

winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell,
and great was the fall of it.”

James 1:22-25 (LSB): “But become doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. **[23]** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; **[24]** for once he looked at himself and has gone away, he immediately forgot what kind of person he was. **[25]** But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in what he does.”

What is the Law of Liberty?

I am glad you asked...

We have freedom from the Mosaic Law in Christ and exercise freedom in Christ. He has liberated us, and we are now in a New Covenant, which is governed by the Law of Christ or, as James calls it in James 2:8, the Royal (Messianic) Law.

Let’s look at some passages that link this Law of Christ together so we can see what exactly it is referring to.

1 Corinthians 9:21 (ESV): “To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but

under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.”

Galatians 6:2 (ESV): “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

James 2:8 (ESV): “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.”

We can now see clearly that James and Paul are both pointing us to **Matthew 22:36-40 (ESV):** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” **[37]** And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **[38]** This is the great and first commandment. **[39]** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **[40]** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

James warns us to act on Christ's commands, not just hear them, now that we know the Royal Law.

Be someone who loves God with all your mind, heart, soul, and strength, and loves your neighbors as yourself.

We cannot just talk the talk; we must also walk the walk, but with the new heart that God has given us in Christ, not as pretenders like the religious leaders of Jesus' day.

So what should we observe in our lives if we are a “doer of the word?”

We are to see love.

We have a deep love for both God and our fellow humans.

Our love for God is shown through our obedience in worship of him. Paul tells us in Romans 12:1 that our heavenly worship is our non-conformity to the world and our sacrificing our wants for obedience to God's will.

In John 13:35, Jesus says our love for each other proves to the world that we are his. Beyond that, our love for the unbelieving world by sharing the gospel with them is the perfect example of being a doer of the word.

We know that our love is a result of Christ's love, so our love is not earning our salvation, but instead it is a result of Christ's love and the gift of salvation through his finished work on the cross.

John explains this in **1 John 4:19-21 (ESV)**: “We love because he first loved us. **[20]** If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. **[21]** And this commandment we have from him:

whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

James 1:26 (LSB): “If anyone thinks himself to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.”

This is a warning to us all to watch the words we speak. We are ambassadors for Christ, and the words we speak have either a positive or negative reflection on Christ, who we are a representative of.

James is telling us that if we are tearing down with our tongue instead of building up, we are deceiving our hearts. Again we see the connection to the heart. These observations should remind us once again that the heart behind every word and action is the proof of our intentions.

James 1:27 (LSB): “Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

James is beginning to point out the hypocrisy of his audience.

They are known for their double standards toward the rich and the poor. James will remind them that it is the rich and the “honorable” who are persecuting the Church, and it is the poor, widows, and orphans who are accepting of the Gospel. We should not be swayed by others' status or wealth but remember that we are all equal in Christ.

Psalm 82:3 (ESV): “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.”

Psalm 41:1 (ESV): “Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;”

Psalm 72:4 (ESV): “May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!”

Psalm 113:7 (ESV): “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap,”

The Epistle of James

Chapter 2

The Sin of Partiality

James 2:1-7 (LSB): “My brothers, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. **[2]** For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in bright clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, **[3]** and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” **[4]** have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? **[5]** Listen, my beloved brothers: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **[6]** But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and they themselves drag you into court? **[7]** Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?”

This provides a clear example that we should not engage in the practice of venerating or exalting certain individuals above others. This principle

applies regardless of their wealth, celebrity status, or political office. This truth is especially clear for us within the church.

James reminds his audience that the rich and powerful are displacing the poor, who come to hear the teaching in humility, to favor the rich, who often seek to harm them.

James will show us that it is out of a sinful nature and a selfish heart that we would elevate people of status. We are doing it for selfish gain so we could reap some sort of earthly reward and benefit.

This is something that each and every one of us must guard our hearts from. Every person is made in the image of God, and God shows no partiality amongst men. Let's look at just a couple passages that show us how God feels about us showing partiality.

Deuteronomy 1:17 (LSB): “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.”

Deuteronomy 10:17 (LSB): “For Yahweh your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the fearsome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.”

Job 13:3-12 (LSB): “But I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to argue with God. [4] But you cover me with lies; You are all worthless physicians. [5] O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom! [6] Please hear my argument And give heed to the contentions of my lips. [7] Will you speak what is unrighteous for God, And speak what is deceitful for Him? [8] Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? [9] Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man? [10] He will surely reprove you If you secretly show partiality. [11] Will not His exaltedness terrify you, And the dread of Him fall on you? [12] Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes; Your defenses are defenses of clay.”

Galatians 2:6 (LSB): “But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.”

Romans 2:9-11 (LSB): “There will be affliction and turmoil for every soul of man who works out evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, [10] but glory and honor and peace to everyone who works good, to the

Jew first and also to the Greek. [11] For there is no partiality with God.”

James 2:8-11 (LSB): “If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. [9] But if you show partiality, you are committing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. [10] For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. [11] For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.”

James's statement, "But if you show partiality," should prompt us to examine our actions and faith.

James uses comparing and contrasting statements to make his point. He is saying that it is a sin to show partiality when it comes to dealing with people within the Church and, I would dare to say, in general.

He then compares that to their understanding of the Mosaic law. Since his audience consisted of Jewish believers in the early first century, they would understand that breaking one of God's laws means they have broken all of them, as the law condemns them regardless of how many sins they have committed. This is because the Law demands

perfection, and a single failure does not equal perfection.

Next, he explains to them that they are under the royal law, which is the law of Christ.

We explored this in Chapter 1 but ultimately recognize that the royal law, the law of Christ, and the law of liberty all refer to the same thing.

It is Christ's teaching that we are to love God with everything we have and love our neighbor as ourselves.

We know that we could never have loved God or others in the way the law demanded, but as believers, we are in Christ and he is in us, so it is by Christ's perfect love and obedience that we have been declared righteous, and because he loved and forgave us, his love and forgiveness will be seen in our lives towards others.

James shows that we don't love our neighbors as ourselves when we judge and elevate one person over another.

We have decided that if we elevate one person over another, we will gain value from that individual.

Let's see it from the perspective that James uses. We honor the rich and ignore the poor because we think the rich can help us, but the poor can't.

But James is reminding us that we are missing an important point: our reward and treasures are eternal, and the poor believers are rich in spirit, so helping those who cannot repay us physically is building rewards in heaven on the foundation of Christ.

But if you honor those who can repay you here physically at the expense of the poor, you have forfeited your eternal reward and are seeking and receiving your reward here on Earth.

Next James tells us that we are to act as though we are under the Law of Christ, which is his way of saying, if you are in Christ, act like it...

He then reminds us that we are to follow the teachings of Christ.

So what does that mean?

Christ's teachings are simple: the only way to the Father is through faith in the one the Father sent, and if you say you believe in Christ, you must show his love to others.

Jesus says this in **John 13:31-35 (ESV)**: “When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. **[32]** If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. **[33]** Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I

also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ **[34]** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **[35]** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We can now see that James is just reiterating Christ’s teachings, and now we can see he is echoing **Matthew 6:1-4 (ESV)**: “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. **[2]** “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **[3]** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **[4]** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Finally, we can see James making the connection to the Beatitudes in **Luke 6:20-49 (LSB)**: And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, “Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. **[21]** Blessed are those who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are those who cry now, for you shall laugh. **[22]** Blessed are you when men hate you, and exclude you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of

the Son of Man. **[23]** Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For their fathers were doing the same things to the prophets. **[24]** But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. **[25]** Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and cry. **[26]** Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers were doing the same things to the false prophets. **[27]** “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **[28]** bless those who curse you, pray for those who disparage you. **[29]** Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your garment, do not withhold your tunic from him either. **[30]** Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. **[31]** And treat others the same way you want them to treat you. **[32]** And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **[33]** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **[34]** And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. **[35]** But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to the ungrateful and evil. **[36]** Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. **[37]** “And do not

judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. **[38]** Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” **[39]** And He also spoke a parable to them: “Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? **[40]** A student is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. **[41]** And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **[42]** How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. **[43]** For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. **[44]** For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a bramble bush. **[45]** The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from the abundance of his heart. **[46]** “Now why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? **[47]** Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and does them, I will show you whom he is

like: **[48]** he is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep, and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the river burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. **[49]** But the one who heard and did not do accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the river burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

We can see now James is warning his audience (and us also) about having a false profession of faith. James quotes passages where Jesus elaborates on the same subject. If the love of Christ is in us, we should be showing love and forgiveness to others. The intent is not to gain our favor or secure our salvation, but rather to demonstrate the fruit of our salvation, which is selfless love from a new heart in Christ.

Love and forgiveness are a form of worship to God, and when we are withholding that from others, we are withholding our worship.

Faith Without Works Is Dead

James 2:14-26 (LSB): “What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? **[15]** If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, **[16]** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body,

what use is that? **[17]** Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead by itself. **[18]** But someone will say, “You have faith; and I have works. Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” **[19]** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **[20]** But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? **[21]** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? **[22]** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. **[23]** And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. **[24]** You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. **[25]** And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **[26]** For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

Okay...

The infamous “Faith without works is dead” passage.

Many have used this passage to twist the Gospel to say we are saved by faith and works.

But the passage is obviously not saying that.

James is saying that our good works serve as evidence of our faith in Christ. If the good works are not visible to ourselves, we need to examine our profession of faith and test ourselves to see if we are truly in the faith. We cannot test the faith of others; we can only test ourselves.

2 Corinthians 13:5-10 (LSB): “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? **[6]** But I hope that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. **[7]** Now we pray to God that you do no wrong, not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. **[8]** For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. **[9]** For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong. This we also pray for, that you be restored. **[10]** For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.”

2 Peter 1:3-15 (LSB): “seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us by His

own glory and excellence. **[4]** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **[5]** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **[6]** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **[7]** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **[8]** For if these things are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **[9]** For in whom these things are not present, that one is blind, being nearsighted, having forgotten the purification from his former sins. **[10]** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and choosing sure; for in doing these things, you will never stumble; **[11]** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. **[12]** Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been strengthened in the truth which is present with you. **[13]** I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly

dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder,
[14] knowing that the laying aside of my
earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our
Lord Jesus Christ has indicated to me. **[15]**
And I will also be diligent that at any time
after my departure you will be able to call
these things to mind.”

So now we know that we are to test our good works
to make sure our Faith is Genuine...

What are the good works that we need, and how
many of them equal salvation?

I am glad you asked!

The good works we need were already explained to
us by James through his reference to the Law of
Liberty, the Law of Christ, and the Royal Law; they
were reiterated in his quoting of the Beatitudes and
Jesus’ command not to judge and finally were
expounded by Paul in 2 Corinthians and Peter in 2
Peter.

The good works are love for God and love for one
another!

John expounds on that by sharing Jesus’ teaching
in **John 15:4-17 (LSB)**: “Abide in Me, and I in
you. As the branch cannot bear fruit from itself
unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you
unless you abide in Me. **[5]** I am the vine, you are

the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **[6]** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **[7]** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **[8]** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. **[9]** Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. **[10]** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. **[11]** These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. **[12]** "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **[13]** Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. **[14]** You are My friends if you do what I command you. **[15]** No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **[16]** You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would abide, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. **[17]** This I command you, that you love one another."

John expounds further on this in **1 John 2:1-17 (ESV)**: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **[2]** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **[3]** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **[4]** Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **[5]** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **[6]** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. The New Commandment **[7]** Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **[8]** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **[9]** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **[10]** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **[11]** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. **[12]** I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. **[13]** I am writing to you, fathers,

because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. **[14]** I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. **[15]** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **[16]** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **[17]** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Now we can understand that those who “abide” are those who have true saving faith.

James was warning us so we could test our faith to see if it was genuine, and the test is a selfless and sacrificial love for God and that same love for others.

John finishes this explanation in **1 John 2:15- 29 (LSB)**: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **[16]** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **[17]** And the world is

passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. **[18]** Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **[19]** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. **[20]** But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **[21]** I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. **[22]** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **[23]** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. **[24]** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **[25]** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. **[26]** I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **[27]** But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. **[28]** And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **[29]** If you know that he is righteous, you may be

sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”

And this shows us the result of those who truly were not in the faith, because they had no love and left the faith.

If their faith was genuine, they wouldn't have abandoned it. And he finally gives a word of encouragement, showing us that anyone who practices righteousness (selfless love for others) has been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit and has confidence in their salvation, that they will be saved at the coming of Christ and the resurrection.

Jesus clarifies for us what the works of God are, which helps us to see more clearly what James is trying to explain. Faith in Christ is the work God wants from us, and by faith in Christ we are forgiven, reconciled to God, and saved from our sin.

If we truly placed our faith in Christ, his righteousness and obedience to the Father are imputed onto us. Jesus became our sin and paid the cost of our disobedience so we could become the righteousness of God in Christ, as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Since we are in Christ, and he is in us, we are now made one with Christ, and since we are in his body, we have been made righteous. The righteousness of

Christ is given to us as a gift; it is not earned or deserved. Just like the typological picture given in **Zechariah 3:1-5 (LSB)**: Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. **[2]** And Yahweh said to Satan, “Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand delivered from the fire?” **[3]** Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. **[4]** And he answered and spoke to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have made your iniquity pass away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” **[5]** Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of Yahweh was standing by.”

Here we see Joshua standing before God in filthy garments, being accused by Satan, but instead of being condemned by God, he was given clean clothes. Does that sound familiar? He did nothing to earn them; they were a gift.

We see that same thing in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin and shame with fig leaves. We know our works are like filthy rags, which we just saw in Zechariah 3. But we see God himself replace the fig leaves with the skins of the animals that he offered to atone for their sin. Do

you see the connection again? They tried to work to cover their shame, but God showed them that it was only by his grace that it could be covered.

All believers are part of the body of Christ, so our love for them is love for ourselves and, most importantly, our love for Christ. Condemning, judging, and showing partiality against our brothers or sisters in Christ is like doing those things for Christ.

John 6:27-29 (ESV): “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” **[28]** Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” **[29]** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” **[35]** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. **[36]** But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. **[37]** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. **[38]** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. **[39]** And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up

on the last day. **[40]** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

We saw that James used Abraham and Rahab as examples to show that their faith was true. They demonstrated the truth of their faith through their actions.

However, we need to recognize that Abraham and Raham were not chosen arbitrarily. They exemplify what James has been trying to explain to us in this entire chapter.

Abraham showed his faith by his willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God. He did not fully grasp why the offering was being asked of him, but he trusted in the faithfulness of God. He reasoned to himself that God would resurrect Isaac from the dead if necessary, because he promised Abraham to make him a father of many nations through Isaac specifically. This shows Abraham loving God with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Which is the first of the two greatest commandments Jesus gave.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (LSB): “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only son, **[18]** to whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be

called.” **[19]** He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he also received him back.”

Matthew 22:37-38 (LSB): “And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ **[38]** This is the great and foremost commandment.”

James then gives us the example of Rahab, who put her life at risk to protect strangers. She was a Gentile willing to protect the 2 spies (2 witnesses) from the nation of Israel, and by doing so, she was putting herself and her family’s lives at risk. This case is a perfect example of loving your neighbor as yourself, which is the second of the two greatest commandments.

Hebrews 11:38-39 (LSB): “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **[31]** By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after welcoming the spies in peace.”

Matthew 22:39 (LSB): “And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

So, we can see that James specifically chose these two individuals to provide relatable examples of

the royal law of Christ and to demonstrate faith in action.

I highly recommend looking at the 11th chapter of Hebrews to see more wonderful examples of what faith in action looks like. Study their stories from the Old Testament, and be encouraged by them. Not one of those who are listed in the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11 was perfect. They all stumbled in many ways, but their eyes were fixed on God, and even when they stumbled, they were humble and sought forgiveness from the Lord and continued on, striving to love God and others.

Our good works are not a cause of our salvation but instead the result of it.

We can see that easily in **Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)**: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **[9]** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **[10]** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

And Paul tells us in Romans 3:20 that no man is justified by the works of the law. And he also tells us in Galatians 5:22-23 that the fruit of the spirit will be evident in our lives.

We can notice that the first one listed is love, and in the same way, Paul dedicated an entire chapter,

1 Corinthians 13, explaining that love was the greatest of all the gifts of the spirit.

Lastly, we can relate this to Jesus' talk on separating sheep from goats. **Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV):** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **[32]** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **[33]** And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. **[34]** Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **[35]** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **[36]** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' **[37]** Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? **[38]** And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? **[39]** And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' **[40]** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' **[41]** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **[42]** For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty

and you gave me no drink, **[43]** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ **[44]** Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ **[45]** Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ **[46]** And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

This definitively connects showing love to brothers and sisters in Christ as proof, as James says, of good works that are a result of having true saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Because when we sin against a fellow believer, we are sinning against Christ himself, and when we bless a fellow believer, regardless of whether they can do anything for you in return in this life, we are showing love and blessing Jesus himself.

Because his brethren (Romans 8:29) are all part of his body, and just as he rebuked Paul for his persecution of the church, he did not say, Why are you persecuting my followers?"

He said, Why do you persecute me?! (Acts 9:4-8)

So if we ever see ourselves having a struggle or a lack of love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to bring that to the Lord in prayer

and ask for his strength, guidance and help to show the love for one another because that he has commanded us to do. We must continue to remember that it is by the grace of God through faith in Christ that we have been saved, not by our own works, so if God, being above all things, was willing to bear our sin on the cross and pay the debt we cannot and forgive us all that we have done against him, how are we to not offer the same respect to people who are equal to us?

Matthew 5:43-48 (ESV): “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **[44]** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **[45]** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. **[46]** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **[47]** And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? **[48]** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

What's interesting about the word perfect is the Greek word that is used is *teleios*, which is the root of the word *tetelestai* that Jesus used on the cross

when he said, It is finished. The word teleios means “complete,” and tetelestai means “finished.”

We are told in the epistles that we are righteous because Christ imputed His righteousness upon us, showing that the only way to be complete or perfect is by having faith in Christ.

We can see proof of that by what Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:18-21 (ESV)**: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **[19]** that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **[20]** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **[21]** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

I'm going to have Jesus wrap this up with the parable he gave in **Matthew 18:21-35 (ESV)**: “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” **[22]** Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. **[23]** “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. **[24]** When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed

him ten thousand talents. **[25]** And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. **[26]** So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' **[27]** And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. **[28]** But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' **[29]** So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' **[30]** He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. **[31]** When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. **[32]** Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **[33]** And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' **[34]** And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. **[35]** So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

The wicked servant did not extend forgiveness to his brothers, showing his lack of love, which is proof that he didn't truly have saving faith.

The wicked servant demonstrated his belief in the existence of the master and his authority over him, as he possessed an intellectual understanding of the master's identity. However, he did not truly understand the loving relationship and the forgiveness the master offered him. If he had, he would have shown his fellow servants the same love and mercy.

This is echoing what James said: “Even the demons believe and shudder,” showing that an intellectual knowledge of the existence of God is not saving faith, but instead a humble recognition that we could never be righteous on our own and accepting the gift of forgiveness by the grace of God through faith in Christ. Naturally, this will lead us to extend the same love and forgiveness to others.

I am aware that individuals will interpret James 2:22-24 to suggest that our salvation is dependent on our actions. They'll teach that James and Paul contradict each other and that we must earn and keep salvation. So, let's take a moment to look at what James is saying.

James 2:22-24 (LSB): “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. [23] And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness,” and he was called

the friend of God. **[24]** You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

We can see that James shows Abraham's faith preceding his works in verse 23. Just as Paul did in **Romans 4:1-24 (LSB)**: "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? **[2]** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God! **[3]** For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." **[4]** Now to the one who works, his wage is not counted according to grace, but according to what is due. **[5]** But to the one who does not work, but believes upon Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, **[6]** just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: **[7]** "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. **[8]** Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." **[9]** Therefore, is this blessing on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness." **[10]** How then was it counted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; **[11]** and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that

righteousness might be counted to them, **[12]** and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. **[13]** For the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. **[14]** For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith has been made empty and the promise has been abolished; **[15]** for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no trespass. **[16]** For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be according to grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the seed, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all— **[17]** as it is written, “A father of many nations have I made you”—in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. **[18]** In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, “So shall your seed be.” **[19]** And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; **[20]** yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, **[21]** and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to do. **[22]** Therefore it was also counted to him as

righteousness. **[23]** Now not for his sake only was it written that it was counted to him, **[24]** but for our sake also, to whom it will be counted, as those who believe upon Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, **[25]** He who was delivered over on account of our transgressions, and was raised on account of our justification.”

So, we can see that Paul is telling us that Abraham was considered righteous apart from the act of circumcision, showing us that it was not by the Law that he was made righteous.

James is saying that Abraham was declared righteous by his faith, and the faith was justified by his works. The Greek word for “justified” is “dikaioo,” which can also mean to show or exhibit or give evidence. We can clearly see in the context of James that James is showing that Abraham’s faith was exhibited, or evidenced, by his works. Therefore, showing us that there is no contradiction. If we go to the account of Abraham offering Isaac, we can see proof of this interpretation.

Genesis 22:9-12 (LSB): “Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac and put him on the altar, on top of the wood. **[10]** And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. **[11]** But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven and

said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” **[12]** And He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the boy, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me.”

In verse 12, we have a key to understanding this. The Angel of the Yahweh, says, “for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me.”

We know that “The Angel of Yahweh” is the preincarnate Jesus. So, now we have to ask ourselves a question.

Did God test the faith of Abraham and his fear and love for God because he didn’t know if Abraham loved God enough to follow through?

Well, if you are a nonbeliever, that question seems logical to you. However, we know that God knows the hearts of men, and he knows the end from the beginning. So, the testing of Abraham’s faith was not for God, but instead for Abraham and also for us. We can now see that the faith of Abraham when he first believed God, when he was declared righteous, was true saving faith because his works were evidence of his saving faith. Basically, by Abraham’s fruit, we can see he was a true believer. His faith preceded his works, but since his faith was genuine, it naturally produced the works, and those works are the proof of the genuineness of his

faith. This is James' entire point. It's almost like he was expounding on Jesus' teachings.

Matthew 7:15-23 (LSB): “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **[16]** You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? **[17]** Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **[18]** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. **[19]** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **[20]** So then, you will know them by their fruits. **[21]** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. **[22]** Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many miracles?’ **[23]** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Jesus is clearly showing that not everyone who has a profession of faith is a believer, but instead, you will know them by their works (fruit).

He compares a good tree producing good fruit to a bad tree producing bad fruit. What we need to realize is that we are not the tree.

There is a tree that brings life, and a tree that brings death. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the law that brought death into the world. That was brought through the enticement of Satan, showing him as a representation of the bad tree.

Jesus is the tree that brings life. He died on the tree to fix the death that was brought from the tree. If we place our faith in Christ, he will abide in us, and we will abide in him. And through the good tree we can bear good fruit. But the good tree cannot bear bad fruit. Showing us that Jesus, being the good tree, is incapable of bearing bad fruit, and if we are truly abiding in Christ, the good fruit coming from Christ will be evident. And that good fruit we have already concluded is selfless love.

So, in contrast to that, we see Satan as the bad tree, and his fruit can only bring death. Showing that the sons of Satan, those who abide in him and refuse to be reconciled to God by his grace through faith in Christ, can never bear good fruit, which is selfless love. Their fruit can mimic good fruit outwardly,

but inwardly, they are filled with selfishness. All that they do that appears to be good is done with selfish ambition and hopes for gain.

We can see clearly that James is using this teaching that Jesus gave, and is expounding on it to point out the hypocrisy, the selfishness, and the partiality that is being shown by the church. This is a strong warning to those who are within the body to evaluate themselves to ensure that when they meet Jesus, he will not say I never knew you.

The Epistle of James

Chapter 3

Taming the Tongue

James 3:1-12 (LSB): “Do not, many *of you*, become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment. [2] For we all stumble in many *ways*. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the entire body as well. [3] Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. [4] Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot wills. [5] So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! [6] And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* existence, and is set on fire by hell. [7] For every kind of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. [8] But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. [9] With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. [10] From the same

mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. **[11]** Does a fountain pour forth from the same opening fresh and bitter *water*? **[12]** Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* saltwater produce fresh.”

James includes himself in the statement as a teacher who would be judged with more strictness, warning those who desire to teach that there is a great responsibility and heaviness that goes along with it.

Teachers should not only be cautious in how they explain and teach the word of God but also in how they speak and act in general.

Verse 2 explains that everyone stumbles in many ways, showing that even teachers stumble due to our human nature.

He continues by explaining that if you don't stumble in your words, you can control your body, and if you do that, you're perfect.

Well, we know that Jesus is the only perfect person who has ever lived.

James is indicating that nobody can tame their tongue, and he uses this as a warning for those seeking leadership to avoid being self-righteous and conceited.

He explains that teachers and leaders will be judged in a stricter form, both by what God expects from us and also by the world that is observing us.

James then spends the next several verses expounding on that idea.

He then gives different examples of how a piece of wood placed into the mouth of a horse could direct the horse in a whole direction, in the same way a small rudder could move a giant ship. he continues by explaining how mankind has been able to tame every type of wild beast, but then says that no man is able to tame the tongue...

He was showing how something small can direct a powerful animal and a powerful vehicle. So how much more can the tongue of a man direct the whole body.

Jesus teaches the importance of our speech in **Matthew 15:10-11 (LSB)**: “After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. **[11]** It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

And he explains what this means in **Matthew 15:15-20 (LSB)**: Now Peter answered and said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” **[16]** And Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? **[17]** Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and

goes into the sewer? **[18]** But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. **[19]** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false witness, slanders. **[20]** These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

This should remind us of what Solomon taught in **Proverbs 10:1-32**.

In **verse 6** he says, “Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked covers up violence.”

In **verse 8** he says, “The wise of heart will receive commandments, but an ignorant fool of loose lips will be ruined.”

In **verses 10-14** he says, “He who winks the eye causes pain, And an ignorant fool of loose lips will be ruined. **[11]** The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, But the mouth of the wicked covers up violence. **[12]** Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions. **[13]** On the lips of the one who has understanding, wisdom is found, But a rod is for the back of him who lacks a heart of wisdom. **[14]** Wise men store up knowledge, But the mouth of the ignorant fool draws ruin near.”

In **verses 18-21** he says, “He who covers up hatred has lying lips, And he who spreads a bad report is a fool. **[19]** When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who holds back his lips has insight. **[20]** The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, The heart of the wicked is worth little. **[21]** The lips of the righteous feed many, But ignorant fools die for lack of a heart of wisdom.”

In **verses 31-32** he finishes by saying, “The mouth of the righteous bears wisdom, But the tongue of perversions will be cut out. **[32]** The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, But the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.”

So, let's compare the characteristics of the tongue of the righteous and the wicked.

The Epistle of James

Mouth of the righteous	Mouth of the wicked
Blessings are on the head of the righteous.	But the mouth of the wicked covers up violence.
The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.	But an ignorant fool of loose lips will be ruined.
On the lips of the one who has understanding, wisdom is found.	Hatred stirs up strife.
He who holds back his lips has insight. The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver.	The mouth of the ignorant fool draws ruin near.
The lips of the righteous feed many.	He who covers up hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads a bad report is a fool.
The mouth of the righteous bears wisdom.	When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable.
The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable.	But ignorant fools die for lack of a heart of wisdom.
But love covers all transgressions.	But the tongue of perversions will be cut out.
	The mouth of the wicked, which is perverse.

That is a good reminder for all of us to watch what we say to others.

Is our speech lifting up or tearing down?

The only true way to lift others up with speech is to speak the truth about Jesus in love. Those words could become a fountain of life and a well of living water for an unbeliever.

Jesus tells us that we will give an account for every idle word (**Matthew 12:36-37**), and scripture also tells us that we are not to partake in crude humor, slander, spreading rumors, or gossiping about others (**Ephesians 5:4**).

James goes so far as to say that the same tongue blesses God and curses those made in his image.

We as believers are commanded to share the Gospel of Christ and are called to be the light of Jesus in the darkness of this world. So we should be speaking truth in love just as Jesus did. We should refrain from tearing down others with the tongues of venomous snakes. To clarify, love does not affirm sin, nor does it encourage sin. Love will speak the harsh reality, irrespective of the opinions of others. Love will tell others about the destruction of sin and salvation in Christ, even if it will cause us to lose a job, a relationship, or even our own life.

In chapter 1, James told us that we should be slow to speak and quick to listen; this appears to directly connect to the passage here. He says we should listen to God, learn righteousness, and mature before teaching.

Paul reiterates this to us in his letters to Timothy and Titus. We see this when he is speaking of the requirements of an overseer, deacon, or elder. To be chosen as an overseer, deacon, or elder, one must be slow to anger, not double-tongued, not quarrelsome, and gentle and mature in the faith. (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9)

Paul goes on to warn us in Titus 1 against those who speak recklessly, showing another connection to this passage.

Titus 1:10-11 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. **[11]** They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

The contrasting and comparing continues in this chapter when he asks if bitter water could come out of a freshwater spring.

Freshwater springs are an idiom for Jesus, because he is the source of the living water (John 4:10, John 7:37-39), which pictures the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon believers. We also know that

Jesus tells us that good trees only produce good fruit, and bad trees only produce bad fruit.

Therefore, we can see a connection between the bitter waters in Exodus 15 at Mara and in Revelation with wormwood. We have seen that the good spring that produces fresh water is Jesus (Jeremiah 17:13 and John 4:10-14), so we can connect the bad water to the spirit of Antichrist, which is Satan (1 John 4:3).

James is making another direct connection to what we have already looked at in previous chapters. He is comparing and contrasting the appropriate behavior of people who claim to be followers of Christ against those who are unbelievers.

We saw how Solomon in Proverbs 10 contrasted the speech of righteousness to the speech of the wicked.

The righteous mouth is a spring of life, his tongue is like fine silver, they have understanding and speak wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), and they feed many.

Each one of these things can be connected to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the well of living water (John 4:14).

Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).

The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is
understanding (Proverbs 9:10).

Jesus shed his precious blood for us, which in
Scripture is represented by silver (Matthew 27:3-
7).

Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35) and the word
of God (John 1:1), and we can't live off of bread
alone but from every word that comes from the
mouth of God (Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3).

And finally, love conquers all transgressions, and
we know that God so loved the world that He gave
His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in
Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John
3:16).

Jesus reiterates this in **John 15:12-17**
(LSB): "This is My commandment, that you
love one another, just as I have loved you.
[13] Greater love has no one than this, that
one lay down his life for his friends. **[14]**
You are My friends if you do what I
command you. **[15]** No longer do I call you
slaves, for the slave does not know what his
master is doing; but I have called you
friends, for all things that I have heard from
My Father I have made known to you. **[16]**
You did not choose Me but I chose you, and
appointed you that you would go and bear
fruit, and that your fruit would abide, so

that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. **[17]** This I command you, that you love one another.”

And John finishes all of these connections for us in **1 John 4:15-21 (LSB)**: Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. **[16]** And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **[17]** By this, love has been perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in this world. **[18]** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. **[19]** We love, because He first loved us. **[20]** If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. **[21]** And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

If we take a second to look at the negatives spoken about the wicked tongue in Proverbs, we will be able to learn some interesting things from that.

Solomon says the mouth of the wicked covers up violence. Solomon demonstrates that an individual who conceals their own or others' violent actions is deemed wicked.

He continues and says an ignorant fool of loose lips will be ruined.

A fool in the Bible is someone who in their heart says there is no God. In that context, that would be the denial of Yahweh. So we can see that someone who is denying the truth of the one true God, whether that be an atheist, agnostic, or someone from any other false religion who spreads those falsehoods and never repents, will face destruction.

Solomon also says that hatred stirs up strife. Hatred is the opposite of love, and 1 John 4:8 says, “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” So those who do not know God cause division, conflict, and bitter arguments.

We see that he who covers up hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads a bad report is a fool.

Covering up hatred and spreading a “bad report” is bearing a false witness. This is lying for the purpose of harming another.

There is a difference between lying to harm another, lying to protect another who is harming others, and lying to protect someone from being harmed.

The Bible shows how Egyptian midwives lied to Pharaoh to save newborn boys. They lied to Pharaoh and said the Hebrew women gave birth too quickly, so they couldn’t kill the male children.

They were risking their lives to protect the innocent, and God blesses them for what they did.

This is similar to how Christians in Nazi Germany hid Jews in their homes and informed soldiers that they had not seen any Jews. They risked their lives to protect those who could not protect themselves.

Also, when Christians helped slaves escape through the Underground Railroad, they too were risking their lives to protect another.

So we see that bearing false witness is not a blanket statement; it shows that those who lie for personal gain, to harm, or to protect those who have harmed are sinning. But I would argue that those who have lied to protect the innocent from harm at the risk of their lives are without guilt.

Exodus 1:15-21 (LSB): “Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; [16] and he said, “When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” [17] But the midwives [m]feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but let the boys live. [18] So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?” [19] Then the midwives

said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can come to them.” **[20]** So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very mighty. **[21]** Now it happened that because the midwives feared God, He made households for them.

We then see Solomon give a warning when he says, “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable.” This echoes James's advice to be quick to listen and slow to speak. Those of us who are quick to speak often lack discernment in our speech. We often speak impulsively, expressing words that can be as destructive as fire or venom, because we allow either our sinful nature or the enemy to influence what we say. But we know that we are supposed to be walking in the Spirit, not the flesh. So if we slow down and listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than our flesh, we will save many people from being hurt, including ourselves.

Next, we see that ignorant fools die for lack of a heart of wisdom. We have already observed that those who reject the one true God are considered fools, and they will ultimately face the second death due to their lack of wisdom. We see this explained in **Proverbs 1:7 (LSB)**: “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; Ignorant fools despise wisdom and discipline.” and

continued in **Proverbs 9:10 (LSB)**: “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

And finally we see the tongue of perversions will be cut out because the mouth of the wicked is perverse.

This indicates that those who are evil possess a tongue filled with wickedness, which leads to anger, divisions, gossip, concealment of evil, pride, and much more. The love and truth of Christ is not in them, and they will be cut off from the living in the final judgment.

Wisdom from Above

James 3:13-18 (LSB): “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good conduct his works in the gentleness of wisdom. **[14]** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. **[15]** This wisdom is not coming down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. **[16]** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil practice. **[17]** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruits, without doubting, without hypocrisy. **[18]** And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

The Epistle of James

We can see the connection James is making to Proverbs 10 again.

James is also pulling from Proverbs 9:10, The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

So, who among you is wise and understanding? The believer in Jesus will have fear of Yahweh, which shows that they are wise and have understanding. And a believer will react and respond in love, because Jesus loves us first.

The commandment we were given by Christ all stems from love. We can only love God because Christ loved us first, and we can only love others if we have truly understood the love of Christ.

Paul helps us to understand true Christian love in 1 Corinthians 13. He tells us:

- Love is patient,
- Love is kind
- Love is not jealous
- Love does not brag
- Love is not puffed up
- Love does not act unbecomingly
- Love does not seek its own
- Love is not provoked
- Love does not take into account a wrong *suffered*

- Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness
- Love rejoices with the truth
- Love bears all things
- Love believes all things
- Love hopes all things
- Love endures all things
- Love never fails

Paul lists 16 attributes of Godly love, which is the number 8 doubled.

Let's look at the meaning of the number 8 in Scripture.

After a believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit, we are called a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we are said to be born again. Next, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead occurred on the first day of the week. Which meant that it was after the Sabbath (the 7th day), so in respect to this typological sense, he was resurrected on the 8th day. Thus fulfilling the type as the perfect example of new creation, born again from death to life.

In biblical numerology, the number 8 is symbolic of a new beginning (Genesis 17:2; Mark 16:9-11; Genesis 7:13). Christ appeared eight times after His resurrection, God saved eight people from the Flood, and newborns were circumcised on the eighth day.

So we can now see that the 8th day represents rebirth, or new creation

When the Bible doubles something, it is confirming it with certainty. That's why when Jesus says truly, truly, he is showing that what he is about to say is absolute truth.

We also see an explanation of doubling brought up in **Genesis 41:32 (LSB)**: “Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is confirmed by God, and God will quickly bring it about.”

So eight being doubled is showing the surety of love enduring the resurrection and the new heaven and the new earth.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (LSB): “But now abide faith, hope, love—these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

You can see James continuing to finish chapter 3 with a comparison and contrasting of the actions and behaviors of someone who is a true believer or someone who has a false profession of faith.

These are warnings for each of us to take to heart and for each of us to judge within our lives accordingly. We are the only ones who can see if our ambitions are selfish or if we are filled with hatred, malice, slander, anger, or wrath.

In the same way, we can see within our lives if we are rooted in the love of Christ and we are allowing the love of Christ to shine through our lives in the

George Shankool

way that we act, walk, and talk while we are in public and in private.

These warnings are given for our benefit, for us to measure ourselves and test ourselves to ensure that our faith is genuine, because an ungentuine faith does not save, but true saving faith produces the good fruit and good works of love, which is the royal law of Christ.

The Epistle of James

Chapter 4

Warning Against Worldliness

James 4:1 (LSB) “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?”

We can connect this passage to what Paul says in **Romans 7:21-25** “So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. [22] For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, [23] but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. [24] Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? [25] Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

Paul gives us more details about this battle in **Ephesians 6:10-20 (LSB)**: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. [11] Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to

stand firm against the schemes of the devil. **[12]**
For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but
against the rulers, against the authorities, against
the world forces of this darkness, against the
spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly
places.”

Paul is very specifically telling us to guard
against the attacks of Satan and his demons.

He is telling us that people are not our
enemies and our ultimate battles take place
in the form of spiritual warfare. We need to
understand that attacks from Satan can
occur in subtle temptations, calls to old
habits of the flesh, hateful speech, self-hate,
and many other spiritual attacks.

The spiritual realm and spiritual warfare are
found throughout the entirety of Scripture,
from the serpent in the Garden in Genesis to
the dragon in Revelation.

Unfortunately, we have seen the modern
churches shy away from speaking openly
about this topic, which has done a giant
disservice to the Church.

How can we defeat the enemy if we don't
even know he exists?

We have three battles in our life as a
Christian: our flesh, the world, and the

Devil. Every day we are fighting one or a combination of all three of these things.

We need to identify the weaknesses in our lives through prayer and awareness, and we must then ask God for strength to overcome these weaknesses by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The devil is crafty, and he and his demons have been observing people since the beginning. They watch families for generations, they study us and our weaknesses, and they use whispers in our minds to entice us with our desires.

If they know you are weak with lust, that is where they will strike. If you struggle with drugs or alcohol, then they strike there. If gossip, pride, or anger, then this is the target. Unfortunately, we make it easy for the enemy. We have become lazy in studying God's word, in prayer, and in spiritual discipline as a whole. So often, our own fleshly desires and the enticements of the world lead us astray with little to no effort on their part.

If we give in to temptation, we must confess our sin quickly to keep the Devil from taking a stronghold in that area of our lives. Remember the Holy Spirit indwells the

believers, and he is far greater than the Devil. However, if we willingly fall into sin and are unrepentant, we have voluntarily given ground to the enemy.

We are in a spiritual war, and just like in earthly wars, the enemy can capture areas of your life because of a lost battle. But the difference is that he can only hold onto it if you allow him. He deceives us into thinking that he has won, but he has no true power over the believer. He only has the power that we allow him to have over our lives.

So instead of continuing to sin out of shame or fear or self-loathing because you stumbled, quickly confess your sin to God. Ask for forgiveness, and ask him to rebuke the enemy from that area of your life. Ask God to give you strength, and apologize for giving that area of your life to the enemy. Trust God to save you from your weaknesses, knowing you belong to him, not the devil. Do not be double-minded and believe that God wants you to succeed. When he helps you overcome an area of weakness, praise God. And if you fail a test, learn from it, and praise God for the opportunity to learn. Never give up, and continuously pray and give your anxieties and troubles to God.

Ephesians 6:10-20 (continued) (LSB): [13]

“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. [14] Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,”

Paul tells us the first thing we need to do is “gird our loins with truth.”

Truth is a reference to the Scripture. Knowledge of God's word is our first defense against the spiritual attacks of the enemy. Girding your loins was the first thing a man would do before battle. He would do this to prepare himself for swift movements and prevent the length of his garments from tripping him. This illustrates the importance of understanding scripture, which will help us navigate quickly through the trials and tests we will face. And when the fiery darts of the enemy are being launched at us, we can navigate with ease because of our deep-rooted knowledge of the Truth.

Wearing the breastplate of righteousness instructs us to protect our hearts from the lusts and temptations of this world. It demonstrates that by understanding the truth through our study of God's word, we can effectively safeguard our hearts against the deceptive lies of the adversary.

Ephesians 6:10-20 (continued) (LSB): [15]

“and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

Christ calls us to be His hands and feet, proclaiming the Gospel and being prepared to resist temptation and the attacks from the enemy.

Our proclaiming the Gospel is a way of recruiting more soldiers into the army of Christ. Everyone is in the spiritual war; you are either fighting on the side of God or the enemy. Jesus makes that known in **Matthew 12:30 (LSB)**: “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”

Ephesians 6:10-20 (continued) (LSB): [16]

“In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,”

Our faith in Christ, his faithfulness, and his promises serve as a shield against Satan's attacks and as our shelter during the storm.

Without faith in Christ, there is no way to be protected from the enemy. But in Christ, though attacked, we have refuge and protection from the devil.

Ephesians 6:10-20 (continued) (LSB): [17]
“also receive the helmet of salvation,”

We are called to fix our minds on eternity and guard our minds by focusing on things above, not earthly things.

Colossians 3:2 (LSB): “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 (LSB): “But a natural man does not accept the depths of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually examined. [15] But he who is spiritual examines all things, yet he himself is examined by no one. [16] For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will direct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Romans 12:1-2 (LSB): “Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of

God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

The renewal of our mind is the first step in our Christian walk. We are told to “repent and believe.” The word repent comes from two Greek words, “meta,” meaning “transform.” Meta is where we get the word “metamorphosis.” And the next word is “noeo,” which means the understanding of your mind. Therefore, the term “repent” signifies that we must undergo a transformation or renewal in our understanding of our minds.

Great... What does that mean?

This means we must recognize that achieving righteousness on our own is impossible. We are fallen and broken, and we need salvation from ourselves and our sinful lives. Once we are willing to turn from the pride of thinking we can work our way to heaven, we will realize that our works outside of faith are filthy rags compared to the righteousness of God.

That is when the second step comes in.

Romans 10:9-13 (LSB): “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him

from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, leading to righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, leading to salvation. [11] For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes upon Him will not be put to shame.” [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him, [13] for “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Ephesians 6:10-20 (continued) (LSB): [17]
“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”

The Word of God was shown as the first thing we used to prepare ourselves for battle, and now we see it as the weapon we use to strike back against the enemy. Just as Jesus struck Satan with the word of God in the wilderness, when he eventually fled from him.

This is the only aspect of the armor metaphor that Paul duplicates, highlighting both the importance of Scripture and the necessity of understanding it.

Paul states the importance of scripture while writing to Timothy while in jail in 2 Timothy 4:13, “When you come bring the cloak which

I left at Troas with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the parchments.”

We also see the word being shown as a word in **Hebrews 4:12 (LSB)**: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

And Jesus in Revelation will conquer with his word, which is pictured as a sword.

Revelation 19:15 (LSB): “And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will [c]rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the wrath of the rage of God, the Almighty.”

Ephesians 6:10-20 (continued) (LSB): [18] “praying at all times with all prayer and petition in the Spirit, and to this end, being on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, **[19]** as well as on my behalf, that words may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel— **[20]** for which I am an ambassador in chains—so that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Finally, we see prayer, both for ourselves and for others. Prayer is vital to Christians, but it is often one of the two most lacking areas in life. The second area where we lack discipline is the study of God's word. So we can see that the two most important things that Christians need to be doing on a daily basis are the areas where we lack the most discipline. That is because the enemy has learned how to distract us from prayer and study because he knows how effective they are against him.

Let's look at just a couple of passages that talk about prayer to reiterate the importance of prayer in the life of a believer.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (LSB): “pray without ceasing;”

Romans 8:26-27 (LSB): “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; [27] and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

Luke 18:1 (LSB): “Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,”

Romans 12:11-13 (LSB): “not lagging behind in diligence, being fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, [12] rejoicing in hope, persevering in affliction, being devoted to prayer, [13] contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality.”

Philippians 4:6 (LSB): “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

James 4:2-3 (LSB): “You lust and do not have, so you murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

James says, “You lust and do not have, so you murder.”

Which points us so clearly to David, Bathsheba, and Uriah.

King David lusted over the wife of Uriah, and since he didn't have what he wanted, he took her for himself. Her pregnancy revealed his sin. Uriah

refused to sleep with his wife while his brothers were dying in battle. So Uriah's love for his brothers made him act selflessly, which shined more light on the darkness of David's sin, exposing his selfishness. So David had Uriah killed to cover up his sin.

2 Samuel 11:11 (LSB): And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing."

Then James says, "You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask."

This should remind us of Cain and Abel.

Cain desired the approval of God and became jealous of Abel. Cain offered a freewill offering to God without first making an offering of sin. This showed Cain's pride in thinking that God would accept the works of his hands without making a sin and guilt offering first. His brother Abel first offered for his sin and guilt, and then he also offered a freewill offering, which God approved of.

Cain became angry and jealous, which led him to murder his brother.

God tells Abel, “sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

Peter gives us the same warning in **1 Peter 5:6-11 (LSB)**: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, [7] casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. [8] Be of sober spirit, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] But resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished among your brethren who are in the world. [10] And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, and ground you. [11] To Him be might forever and ever. Amen.”

Next we see James say, You do not have because you do not ask. This again directs our attention to Cain. He wanted the approval of God and was covetous of the relationship that God had with his brother Abel. But Cain was unwilling to ask for forgiveness, so he never received it.

Finally, James says, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

We can see James drawing more connections to the teachings of Christ in **John 14:12-14 (ESV)**: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater (*in quantity, not in quality*) works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. **[13]** Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **[14]** If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

Jesus tells his Church that they will do more (in quantity) works in Christ's name for the world to bring God glory than he did while he was on earth (that is obvious since he knew there would be billions of Christians working for the kingdom over 2000 years).

He then tells us to ask him anything in his name and he will do it... That doesn't mean, “I want a Lamborghini, in Jesus name”...

It means ask for anything regarding the work Jesus did in his ministry in his name, and he will give it to us.

Great!

What works did Jesus do?

- Healed the blind - Matthew 9:27-31
- Raised the dead - Luke 7:11-17
- Healed the lame - Matthew 9:1-18, Mark 2:1-2, Luke 5:17-26

- Healed the deaf - Mark 7:31-37
- Healed the lepers - Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-14
- Cast out demons - Mark 1:21-27, Luke 4:31-36
- Healed the mute - Matthew 9:32-34
- Fed the hungry - Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15, Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 8:1-13

So if we ask for any of those things in Jesus' name, he will do it to glorify the Father through the Son. The Church is the body and bride of Christ, so we glorify the Father in the Son's name.

I'm glad we cleared that up! Go raise the dead!

Ok, I know what you are thinking...

Are you serious?

Yes... Yes, I am.

Now let me explain. What we need to realize is that every miracle that Christ did had two parts to it. There was the physical aspect, but then the more profound meaning behind the physical aspect. Let's elaborate.

He healed the blind, demonstrating that those who are spiritually blind can now see because of their faith in Christ.

The Epistle of James

He raised the dead, showing the spiritually dead who were standing condemned now can be raised from the spiritual death they are in by putting their faith in Christ.

He healed the lame, showing the spiritually lame are healed by putting their faith in Christ, and because of him, they can now walk for God in faith.

He healed the deaf, showing the spiritually deaf are healed by putting their faith in Christ, and because of him, they can now truly hear the truth of God's word.

He healed the lepers, showing that the spiritually corrupted by sin are healed by putting their faith in Christ, and because of him, they are a new creation, their sin is forgiven, and they are reconciled to God.

He cast out demons, showing that the spiritually oppressed are healed by faith in Christ, who makes their bodies the Holy Spirit's temple, where the enemy cannot dwell.

He healed the mute, showing the spiritually mute are healed by putting their faith in Christ, and because of him, they can now preach the Gospel of Christ to the unbelieving world.

And fed the hungry, showing that by putting our faith in Christ, we can now feed the unbelieving

world who are hungry for truth, the bread of life (the Gospel of Christ).

I am not saying that God cannot choose to manifest physical healings or other physical miracles. I cannot biblically justify that, and I do not believe the physical manifestation gifts of the spirit have ceased.

But what I can biblically justify is the fact that God cares more about the spiritual than the physical. And the importance behind the spiritual aspect of the miracles far exceeds the physical manifestation of the miracle.

Therefore, we can conclude that physically healing someone is not as significant as the spiritual healing that occurs when they accept the gospel.

In the same way, any other physical manifestation of miracles in no way, shape, or form even compares to the spiritual implications behind the picture that those physical miracles typified.

So we as believers can perform all of those spiritual miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. If we ask for help in that ministry, Jesus will give us what we ask in his name.

We can plant the seeds and be used by the Holy Spirit for those ministries, but not everyone we preach to or pray for will be saved. However, we know that Scripture says that only God can give

growth to those seeds. It is just our job to plant them and water them.

Let's take a look at the Lord's Prayer to see if we get any more insight.

Matthew 6:9-13 (LSB): "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. **Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** [11] Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. [13] And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.']"

So we can see that if we ask wrongly for things in prayer, we will not receive because we are not saying, "Your will be done"; we are saying, "My will be done."

John explains this in **1 John 5:13-15 (LSB):** "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. [14] And this is the confidence which we have [k]before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15] And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

James 4:4 (LSB): "You adulteresses, do you not know

that friendship with the world is enmity toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world sets himself as an enemy of God.”

Just as in the rest of the letter, we can see James comparing and contrasting their behaviors to the actions of unbelievers; he now calls them adulterous!

In the Bible, sexual immorality and adultery are used to describe idolatry.

We can rephrase this sentence: You idolaters, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world sets himself as an enemy of God.

Let's look at some passages that shine some light on what James is saying.

We can begin with **1 John 2:15 (LSB)**: “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

This indicates that we should never allow the things of this world to compete with God in our lives. This applies to everything in our lives, including our careers, entertainers, athletes, spouses, kids, money, possessions,

and anything else of this world. Once we begin to value things more than we value God, those things become idols in our lives.

John 3:19 (LSB): “And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”

This is showing us that the people who love the world love what it has to offer more than what God has offered us eternally through Jesus. To keep these things, they are willing to stay in the darkness so their wicked desires are not exposed by the light of Christ.

Before blaming others, we should examine the aspects of our lives that we haven't fully surrendered to God. Once we find them, we need to focus our prayers and offer the areas freely and willingly to God. And we need to make sure that we are not being double-minded when we are praying.

John 15:19 (LSB): “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”

Jesus is telling us as believers that we are not of this world because our home is not

here. So our love and treasures should be focused in heaven rather than on Earth.

1 John 3:17 (LSB): “But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

Here we see greed and selfishness being pointed out. John is showing us that, as believers, we are to be willing to help others regardless of the cost, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

2 Timothy 4:10 (LSB): “for Demas, having loved this present age, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.”

Paul here is explaining that Demas’ love for the things of this world enticed him, and he deserted him because of earthly pleasures.

This finally connects us to the parable of the sower. Let’s look at **Matthew 13:3-8 (ESV):** “And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. **[4]** And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. **[5]** Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, **[6]** but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they

withered away. **[7] Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. [8]** Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Jesus explains this for us in **Matthew 13:18-23 (ESV)**: “Hear then the parable of the sower: **[19]** When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. **[20]** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **[21]** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. **[22] As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. [23]** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

The third seed grew into a healthy-looking tree, but it did not produce any fruit. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

This represents those who profess faith in Jesus, but there is no fruit in their life. In John 15, we see that only a believer who has true faith in Christ abides in him, and it is only those who truly abide in Christ who bear fruit. It is impossible to bear fruit without Christ. This point is reiterated by John in 1 John 2:19, where he explains that if anyone walks away from their faith, it indicates they never had true saving faith to begin with.

We can see that loving the world and loving Jesus are not compatible. You have to choose. Matthew 6:24 (ESV) says, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." You cannot serve God and money."

That principle applies to everything in this world. We can't love worldly things more than Christ, or we become idolaters, or, as James said, adulterers.

That is why Jesus says this in **Luke 14:26 (ESV)**: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

Jesus is showing us that our obedience, love, and dedication are always to him first. He uses this extreme example of immediate family members to illustrate that our commitment is to him first.

James 4:5-8 (LSB): “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? **[6]** But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” **[7]** Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James is reminding his Jewish audience of God’s jealousy for them. It is also a warning to them to guard themselves against idolatry. The nation of Israel was very familiar with being called the wife of Yahweh. They understood the term adultery to be connected to idolatry, and they would recognize the term jealousy to represent God’s jealousy for his wife Israel when they would fall into idolatry.

This is seen in **Psalms 78:58 (LSB):** “For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.”

God spoke of Israel leading him to jealousy in **Ezekiel 8:3 (LSB):** “He sent forth the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner *court*, where the seat of the figure of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was *located*.”

God speaks of his jealousy returning again for Israel, and his redemption of them in **Zechariah 8:1-3 (LSB)**: “Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came, saying, **[2]** “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘I am jealous with great jealousy for Zion, and with great wrath I am jealous for her.’ **[3]** Thus says Yahweh, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts *will be called* the Holy Mountain.”

Let’s look at James’ statement, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Be subject, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

Let's break that into sections to address it properly.

The phrase “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” connects us to 1 Peter. Let’s look at 1 Peter 4 and 5 to see the connection in thought to James’ letter.

1 Peter 4:12-19 (LSB): “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you. **[13]** But to the degree you are sharing the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. **[14]** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are

blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. **[15]** Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; **16** but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be put to shame, but is to glorify God in this name. **[17]** For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **[18]** AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? **[19]** Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God must entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing good.”

Peter's explanation of the expected trials of our faith should immediately remind us of James' teachings. He explains that we are to be suffering for righteousness' sake, not because we are acting wicked. James is issuing a similar caution. Peter then explains that God judges his house first.

Now the judgment that Peter is referring to is not the eternal judgment, but the judgment of our lives and the chastisement, trials, or refining fires that God brings to correct our walk as a loving Father.

This clearly connects us to Hebrews 12:4-17 (LSB): “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. **[5]** And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as

sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; **[6]** For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He flogs every son whom He receives.” **[7]** It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **[8]** But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. **[9]** Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? **[10]** For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our benefit, so that we may share His holiness. **[11]** And all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. **[12]** Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, **[13]** and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. **[14]** Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord, **[15]** seeing to it that no one falls short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and

by it many be defiled; **[16]** that also there be no sexually immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. **[17]** For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.”

Then Peter says if God chastises his children in an earthly sense, then how much more will he do so to those who have rejected Christ? The typological images of Sodom and Gomorrah and the prophecies of Revelation show that God is storing up wrath for the nonbelievers. They will be punished physically in an earthly sense and also eternally for the rejection of Christ. But praise God, believers are not destined for wrath. God disciplines those he loves and pours wrath on those who reject Christ.

Peter then says, “AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?”

He is quoting from Proverbs 11, which is comparing and contrasting the wicked and the righteous. We have seen James in previous chapters quote from Proverbs 9 and 10. So, the connection to Peter and Proverbs 11 should be clear. Just as the judgment Peter was referring to was the judgment of character and discipline or

wrath. Saved in this context is speaking of earthly, fiery trials, not condemnation.

So, he is saying if God's children are not saved from being chastised as his kids, then how much more punishment will come to the wicked unbelievers?

And he ends with this statement: "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God must entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing good."

Peter continues in **1 Peter 5:5 (LSB)**: "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **[2]** shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; and not for dishonest gain, but with eagerness; **[3]** nor yet as lording it over those allotted to you, but being examples to the flock. **[4]** And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **[5]** You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Peter just summarized James' whole point. We as believers, especially those who are elders (teachers) and leaders within the body, are to follow the example of Christ. We serve the body as

an example, not out of obligation, but out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us. If we are doing it for selfish gain, it is of no eternal benefit toward our heavenly rewards. And if they are a false professor in Christ and are using the Church as a way to gain riches, then the only thing that they can look forward to is an eternity in hell.

James 4:8-10 (LSB): “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **[9]** Be miserable and mourn and cry. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. **[10]** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

Again, James is warning his audience and us to ensure that we are focused on Christ and not trying to serve Christ and ourselves or the world. Then James connects this all to what Jesus taught in the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5:1-12 (ESV): “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. **[2]** And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: **[3]** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The poor in spirit is a reference to those who are spiritually humble.

These people do not lift themselves up, and they do not consider themselves worthy or special.

They acknowledge their need spiritually, which puts them on a path to true repentance and opens their heart to the Gospel.

This is in direct opposition to those who are self-righteous and pious like the Pharisees. They saw themselves as the standard of holy, and they puffed themselves up spiritually. And although their outward actions looked good weighed against the actions of other men, when compared to the righteousness of God, their best works were nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), because they were not done in faith.

So although they thought they were rich spiritually and in need of nothing, they were dead spiritually in the eyes of God. This arrogance was what hardened their hearts to the truth, and their pride blinded them from being humble enough to accept Jesus' offer of salvation. Because Jesus did not fit the idea of what they expected him to be.

The poor in spirit are humbled because of their brokenness and they are more willing to accept that they need salvation, which is why they are blessed.

Humility makes us look outside ourselves for God's grace. Pride causes us to look inwardly, thinking that we have the power to save ourselves.

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [4]
“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

This piggybacks off of the previous statement.

Those who are humble enough to mourn over their fallen nature, sin and brokenness are comforted by the offer of salvation that Christ is offering.

They are humble enough to accept that they need salvation. They will be grateful that even though they were so far from righteousness in the eyes of men, that Christ paid for their sin the same as those who appear righteous.

They will feel great comfort and appreciation because of their humility.

This again is in contrast to the religious leaders who felt entitled and were filled with pride, judgmental attitudes and arrogance. So much so, that they couldn't see Jesus for who he was even though the scripture that

they were so familiar with screamed his arrival to them.

He fulfilled prophecy after prophecy, and even his triumphal entry into Jerusalem was prophesied to the day in Daniel 9:24-27. Jesus wept over the fact that they couldn't see him as their messiah and were unwilling to accept him exactly on the year he was prophesied to be presented as their king, as seen in Luke 19:28-44.

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [5]

“Blessed are the meek (*enduring injury with patience and without resentment*), for they shall inherit the earth”

This connects us to **Psalms 37:8-13 (ESV):**

“Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!

Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. **[9]**

For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

[10] In just a little while, the wicked will be

no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. **[11]** But the

meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. **[12]** The

wicked plots against the righteous and

gnashes his teeth at him, **[13]** but the Lord

laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.”

That gives us a connection to **Revelation 5:9-10 (ESV)**: “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, [10] and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

So we can see how Jesus was prophesying about how the saints will reign with Christ.

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [6]
“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. [7]
“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

We know that James has been making connections to the condition of our hearts as believers. We've seen connections to how we face trials, the fruit of our salvation, how we speak, placing God first, not having idols in our lives, and now showing mercy and forgiveness. Showing the renewal of mind by God giving us a new heart.

Let's continue this thought with what Jesus said about forgiveness in **Matthew 6:14-15 (LSB)**: “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not

forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

Jesus is showing us that a result of truly accepting the forgiveness of God will result in us showing forgiveness. But if we do not forgive it proves that we have never truly understood the forgiveness God is offering us through the sacrifice of Christ.

Matthew 9:12-13 (LSB): But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. **[13]** But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jesus explained that he didn't come for those who think they are righteous. Because only pride causes self-righteousness, but he came to save sinners. Showing that those who recognize they need salvation and receive the grace of God through faith in Christ are those who will receive healing in Christ.

This connects us to **Luke 18:9-14 (LSB):** “And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: **[10]** “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other

a tax collector. **[11]** The Pharisee stood and was praying these things to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **[12]** I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' **[13]** But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' **[14]** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

This shows the humility of the broken sinner and the pride of the tax collector. Jesus showed us that the humility of the sinner was what led him to be saved, because he looked outward and sought God's salvation.

We are told to show love and mercy to others because Jesus loved us first.

We are also told that we are to forgive our equals unconditionally because God, being far greater than us, was willing to have mercy and forgive us when we were still his enemy.

We know that we owe God a debt that we could never have repaid, but because of our cries for mercy, he willingly paid our debt.

All of this is explained to us perfectly in the parable of the unforgiving servant seen in **Matthew 18:21-35 (LSB)**: “Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” **[22]** Jesus *said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. **[23]** “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. **[24]** When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. **[25]** But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. **[26]** Therefore, the slave fell to the ground and was prostrating himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ **[27]** And feeling compassion, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. **[28]** But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ **[29]** So, his fellow slave fell to the

ground and was pleading with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' **[30]** But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. **[31]** So, when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. **[32]** Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **[33]** Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' **[34]** And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. **[35]** My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts."

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [8]

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

This should remind us of when Samuel was called to anoint David as king. He was told not to look at the outward appearance because God looks at the heart. **1 Samuel 16:7 (LSB):** "But Yahweh said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man

looks at the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks at the heart.”

This is showing us that God judges the hearts of men, not their outward appearance or even their good works.

He knows the intention of the heart, and if the heart is pure in intention, they will be blessed.

So when we humbly confess our sin before God and profess our faith in Christ with a truly pure heart, we will become co-heirs with Christ and see God.

But if our profession is impure, we will not see God, just as Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15-23 (LSB)**: “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **[16]** You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? **[17]** Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **[18]** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. **[19]** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **[20]** So then, you will know them by their fruits. **[21]** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in

heaven will enter. **[22]** Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many miracles?’ **[23]** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [9]

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

We are called to live at peace with everyone as far as it depends on us.

Paul explains that to us in **Romans 12:17-21 (LSB)**: “Never paying back evil for evil to anyone, respecting what is good in the sight of all men, **[18]** if possible, so far as it depends on you, being at peace with all men, **[19]** never taking your own revenge, beloved—instead leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. **[20]** “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” **[21]** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [10]

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for

righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

This connects us back to **James 1:12**

(LSB): “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

That is why Jesus told us this in **Luke**

9:23-27 (LSB): “And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. **[24]** For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. **[25]** For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? **[26]** For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. **[27]** But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 5:1-12 (continued) (ESV): [11]

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **[12]** Rejoice and be glad, for

your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Jesus expounds on this in **John 15:18-27 (LSB)**: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. **[19]** If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. **[20]** Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. **[21]** But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. **[22]** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. **[23]** He who hates Me hates My Father also. **[24]** If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. **[25]** But this happened to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me without cause.’ **[26]** “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me, **[27]** and you will bear

witness also, because you have been with
Me from the beginning.”

Let’s look at what Jesus said in **Luke 6:20-26**

(ESV): And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples,
and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours
is the kingdom of God.”

Now that we've reviewed Matthew's context,
we see Jesus is referring to the poor in
spirit. We can refer back to our explanation
of Matthew's account, which indicates that
being poor in spirit involves a brokenness
and humility necessary to accept salvation
by the grace of God through faith in Christ.
Showing that poor in spirit meant that they
were not prideful or pious.

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [21]

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall
be satisfied.”

Again, we can see here that these are
spiritual truths being laid out. So hungry
would be for righteousness, truth, and being
fed with God's word.

This relates to humility, not being too
prideful to accept the revelation from God.
So many people are puffed up and filled
with worldly knowledge. They believe that
they are in need of no spiritual knowledge
because of their earthly understanding.

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [21]

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”

This statement is once again related to spiritual matters.

Weeping now refers to feeling sad or distraught over sin, whether it is our sin or the sin of the world. Those who are humble and seek God's truth thirst for righteousness, and when it is lacking, whether it be in our lives or in the world, it causes us to weep.

This is in contrast to those who are prideful and celebrate the sins of the world and their own. Jesus is explaining that those who weep over injustice and unrighteousness will laugh in the kingdom with joy because of the righteousness and justice of God. Their weeping will cease and will be replaced with peace and joy.

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [22]

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! [23]

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

This last statement is a statement that should be ingrained into the hearts and minds of followers of Jesus Christ.

We are blessed when we are hated and excluded because of our faith. Because it shows that we are not of the world, but instead we are co-heirs with Christ. The Bible says that they hated him first, so they are bound to hate us.

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [24] “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.”

Now that we have the context from Matthew 5, we see these woes are to contrast what was being spoken of. Therefore, the statement regarding woe to the rich refers specifically to those who are rich in spirit.

The intent is to contrast the poor in spirit. This statement is not about those who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Remember, Jesus’ audience was the disciples.

Who in that time would have been considered “rich” in spirit?

It would have obviously been the religious leaders of the Jews.

The "rich" in context referred to being self-righteous, as well as being puffed up with pride and piety. In context, Jesus was saying, "Woe to you who are self-righteous because you are not humble enough to accept that you need salvation because you believe you have earned it yourself by your supposed adherence to the law." But instead, you have neither earned true salvation, and the only reward you have is your status amongst men... "You have received your consolation."

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [25] "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry."

Again, going back to the context, we can see that Jesus is speaking about spiritual things.

So he is saying woe to those who are "spiritually full," not full on food. He is speaking to the self-righteous religious leaders or those filled with earthly knowledge.

These people feel they have no need for true spiritual food, and we know that spiritual food is Christ and his teachings; he is the bread of life (John 6:35).

So, although they are filled now with "knowledge," they have no understanding of spiritual truth. Instead, they are puffed up

with pride and arrogance. But when judgment comes, they will be hungry because they lacked the true substance that can only be found through Jesus Christ, who is the word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). And because of their pride, piety, and self-righteousness, they will miss out on salvation because they lacked the humility to acknowledge that they needed a savior.

They will be separated eternally from the presence of God and into eternal judgment, as seen in 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 and Matthew 25:46. Showing that they will be eternally hungry, in pain, torment, and anguish.

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [25] “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.”

If we're keeping to the same theme, laughing in a spiritual sense would relate to the arrogance and piety of the religious leaders of that day. But we can also relate it to anyone who mocks Jesus and his message as the truth. They laugh and see it as foolishness because of their pride (1 Corinthians 1:18).

We can see other scriptures pointing to such behaviors; in the end times scoffers and mockers will come (**Jude 1:18, 2 Peter**

3:3). They will weep in the end because they will realize that their worldly "wisdom" and arrogance have caused them to forfeit their opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ. Over and over again, we can see that pride is the root of unbelief. And humility is the key to repentance.

Luke 6:20-26 (continued) (ESV): [26] "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

Jesus, in this statement, is making it clear that those who are loved by the world are not believers. The Bible clearly states that the world will have enmity with believers (Romans 8:7–8, Mark 13:13, Luke 21:17), because the world lives in darkness (John 3:16–20). Satan is called the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) and the prince/ruler of this world (John 16:11, John 12:31).

All those who are of this world are against Jesus, his message, and anyone who follows him (John 15:19). So if we are in lockstep with the world and the world does not have friction with us or our belief systems, there are two options:

One is that we are hiding our light under a basket and not professing our faith in a way

to be ambassadors for Christ (Matthew 5:15-16).

The second option is that we are only nominal believers. This implies that while we identify as Christians, our faith and love remain grounded in this world.

We are called to be a new creation, transformed and a light in the darkness. Paul says in Romans 12:2 that we are not to be conformed to this world. So this is a good opportunity for us to evaluate our lives.

Are we living in harmony with the sinful world (James 4:4)? Or does the sinful world despise our message because we stand firm for Christ and the truth?

James 4:11-12 (LSB): “Do not slander one another, brothers. He who slanders a brother or judges his brother, slanders the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. **[12]** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you who judge your neighbor?”

James is quoting from **Psalms 15:1-5 (LSB):** “O Yahweh, who may sojourn in Your tent? Who may

dwell on Your holy mountain? **[2]** He who walks blamelessly, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. **[3]** He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; **[4]** In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear Yahweh; He swears to his own hurt and does not change; **[5]** He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.”

Solomon warns us about this in **Proverbs 30:10 (LSB)**: “Do not slander a slave to his master, Lest he curse you and you be found guilty.”

We know that all men are slaves to God because all men owe God a debt of sin. You are freed and made a son and co-heir with Christ only when you accept the payment he offers. So cursing someone else's slave in this context would be condemning another person. Which is making yourself to be God. We are not those who condemn; it is the law that condemns people.

We are those who have the privilege to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. If they accept Jesus, they are forgiven. And if they reject him, they are condemned by the law.

We are to be especially careful on how we speak to our brothers and sisters in Christ as we see in **1 John 3:15-17 (ESV)**: “Everyone who hates his

brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. **[16]** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **[17]** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"

Boasting About Tomorrow

James 4:13-17 (LSB): "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

[14] Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. **[15]** Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

[16] But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. **[17]** Therefore, to one who knows to do the right thing and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Finally, James is warning us all about focusing on building treasures on Earth.

He is not saying we should not worry about providing for ourselves or our family. On the contrary, scripture tells us that we are not to be idle or lazy as seen in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. We are told that we are to work hard to provide for ourselves and our family, as seen in 1 Timothy 5:8.

What he is doing is trying to correct the hearts of those who are greedy and focused only on profit and gain.

Jesus is very clear on this topic in **Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)**: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust[a] destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

This is showing us that we never know when our lives will be required by God. So we should not waste our lives building treasures in a place that we are just sojourners in.

Jesus gives us a parable about this topic in **Luke 12:16-21 (LSB)**: “And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. [17] And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ [18] Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. [19] And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” [20] But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you prepared?’ [21] So is the one

George Shankool

who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich
toward God.”

The Epistle of James

Chapter 5

Warning to the Rich

James 5:1-6 (LSB): “Come now, you rich, cry, howling over your miseries which are coming upon you. **[2]** Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. **[3]** Your gold and your silver have rusted, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. You have stored up such treasure in the last days! **[4]** Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields—that which has been withheld by you—cries out against you; and the outcries of those who did the harvesting have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. **[5]** You have lived luxuriously on the earth and lived in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. **[6]** You have condemned and murdered the righteous man; he does not resist you.”

James is expounding on what he just went over in chapter 4 and is again connecting us to what Jesus said in **Matthew 6:19-21** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **[20]**

but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **[21]** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Showing us clearly that the things on this Earth will be destroyed, so we should never place our focus on earthly treasures.

Instead, our focus must remain on the eternal things, showing love to others by preaching the gospel and building up and edifying those who are within the body.

James is echoing ideas behind the seven woes that Jesus pronounced over the leadership of Israel. And Jesus was directing a prophetic judgment from the book of Zechariah against the leadership of Israel.

Zechariah 11:4-11 (ESV): “Thus says the Lord my God, “Pasture the flock *doomed* to slaughter. **[5]** Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and *each of* those who sell them says, ‘Blessed be the Lord, for I have become rich!’ And their own shepherds have no pity on them. **[6]** For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land,” declares the Lord; “but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another’s power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their power.”

The religious rulers were oppressing the people and gaining riches through their wickedness. They were placing heavy legalistic burdens on the people; they were taking advantage of their position; and they were oppressing the people in a spiritual sense and enriching themselves through it.

This prophecy was also declaring that the Romans would come and the power of the rulers of Israel would be taken away. Also that Israel will be dispersed from the land, and God will not spare them. On that day, God will not spare them but will let the Roman army judge these oppressors of the people.

We can see that all of this came to fruition when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD.

The prophecy is further elaborated in **Zechariah 11:4-11 (continued) (ESV): [7]** “So I pastured the flock *doomed* to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock. **[8]** Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me.”

This prophecy is about the incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ.

It is talking about how God himself would pastor the nation of Israel, which was being led astray by idle shepherds.

It is also a representation of how Jesus dealt with the religious leaders, the “three Shepherds,” which were the Pharisees, the scribes, and also the lawyers (Matthew 23, Luke 11:52).

This prophecy shows how Jesus was very irritated and impatient with these bad shepherds of Israel, and it also shows their animosity toward him.

Zechariah 11:4-11 (continued) (ESV): [9]

“Then I said, “I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.” **[10]** I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. **[11]** So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the Lord.”

The Lord says that he broke his staff of favor, which is hugely significant.

This is the moment that the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Jesus calls this event the unpardonable sin, and from that point on, the nation of Israel no longer

had an opportunity to obtain the Messianic kingdom at that point.

Jesus said that they had rejected him who came in the name of his father, but one will come in his own name, and they will accept him. That person will be the Antichrist (John 5:43).

We also know that after Jesus rebuked the nation of Israel for their rejection of him and declared that he was performing miracles by the power of Satan, he said that they would not see him again until, as a nation, they all declared, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord in Matthew 23:39.

This is a reference to the Leviticus 26:40-45 prayer. In verse 11, it says that the afflicted flock realizes that it was the word of the Lord.

The evidence shows that there is always a remnant of believing Jews in Israel who accept the testimony of Christ. According to Romans 11, the final remnant of Israel will come to faith after the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. That shows us that there will be a time when Israel's partial hardening will be removed and they will see that they killed their Messiah, Jesus. They will repent and pray the prayer found in

Leviticus 26:40-45, receive the Holy Spirit as stated in Zechariah 12:10, and then Christ will return for His second coming, establishing His messianic kingdom physically on earth for 1000 years, as described in Zechariah 13-14 and Revelation 19-20.

This is also connected to the seven woes that Jesus pronounces on the Jewish leadership and the nation of Israel for their rejection of him.

We can see that connection when James said, “You have condemned and murdered the Righteous Man. He does not resist you.”

This is showing how Jesus was condemned and murdered by them, and he willingly allowed them to have him crucified because that was always the plan.

Now that we have looked at the background, let's look at the seven woes

Matthew 23:1-13 (ESV): ”Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, **[2]** “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, **[3]** so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. **[4]** They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. **[5]**

They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, **[6]** and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues **[7]** and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. **[8]** But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. **[9]** And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. **[10]** Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. **[11]** The greatest among you shall be your servant. **[12]** Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. **[13]** “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. **[15]** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. **[16]** “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ **[17]** You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? **[18]** And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ **[19]** You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? **[20]** So whoever swears by

the altar swears by it and by everything on it. **[21]** And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. **[22]** And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. **[23]** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. **[24]** You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! **[25]** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **[26]** You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. **[27]** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. **[28]** So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. **[29]** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, **[30]** saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ **[31]** Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **[32]** Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. **[33]** You

serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? **[34]** Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, **[35]** so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. **[36]** Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. **[37]** “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! **[38]** See, your house is left to you desolate. **[39]** For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

So we can clearly see the warnings James is connecting and the danger of placing love for money over God and his people. Let each of us ask God to cleanse our hearts from greed, covetousness, and a love for the things of this world. And let us remember to build and store treasures in heaven, which are the souls of those who God will save by our preaching of the gospel and being the hands and feet of Jesus in this dark world.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 (LSB): “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. [7] So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. [8] Now he who plants and he who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. [9] For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

Patience in Suffering

James 5:7-11 (LSB): “Therefore be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the soil, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains. [8] You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Do not groan, brothers, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. [10] As an example, brothers, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] Behold, we count those blessed who persevere. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”

First, James is warning the Church not to grumble against each other. This is what the Israelites did in the wilderness. They grumbled against God and

against Moses, and it is they who were condemned in the wilderness. Their grumbling exposed their hearts, and their hearts were in unbelief.

Hebrews 3:16-19 (LSB): “For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? **[17]** And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? **[18]** And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? **[19]** So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”

Next, James is taking the opportunity to encourage us to be faithful and patient; he reminds us that Jesus is near and he is standing at the door. In ancient cultures, judges sat in the door of the city. So the audience would have recognized this meaning in its historical context. We know that Lot sat at the city gate, which indicates that he held a position as an elder or judge in Sodom (Genesis 19:1). We also know that Boaz took his offer to redeem Ruth before the judges/elders of Bethlehem who were sitting at the door or gate of the city (Ruth 4:1-2).

We see Abraham being met at the door of his tent by Yahweh in **Genesis 18:1 (LSB):** “Yahweh Appears to Abraham Then Yahweh appeared to

him by the oaks of Mamre, **while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.**”

Israel is told to keep watch at the doors in **Proverbs 8:32-36 (LSB)**: “So now, O sons, listen to me, For blessed are they who keep my ways. **[33]** Hear discipline and be wise, And do not neglect it. **[34]** How blessed is the man who hears me, **To watch daily at my doors, To keep watch at my doorposts. [35]** For he who finds me finds life And obtains favor from Yahweh. **[36]** But he who sins against me does violence to his own soul; All those who hate me love death.”

We see a prophetic type of Jesus returning for his bride outside of the window and lattice in **Song of Songs 2:8-9 (LSB)**: “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he is coming, Leaping on the mountains, Jumping on the hills! **[9]** My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. **Behold, he is standing behind our wall; He gazes through the windows; He is peering through the lattice.**”

Now that we have established a connection to the return of Christ for his Church.

He then uses Job as an example of one who has persevered through trials. Anyone who has studied the book of Job knows that he was no stranger to trials. Satan requested to sift Job, and God allowed it. The only stipulation God put on Satan was that he could not take his life. Job had some pride and self-righteousness in his heart that God wanted

him to see and address, and unfortunately, it took much suffering for him to realize God's blessings in his life were not because he deserved them but instead were purely out of his grace. Once we get to chapter 38, when God himself speaks with Job, we see his pride leave and his humility grow quickly. This should serve as a lesson for all of us.

Let's go back to what James said in verses 8-9: "Therefore be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the soil, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not groan, brothers, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."

The coming of the Lord is often confused with the Day of the LORD. They are two distinct events. This topic is too broad for me to gloss over briefly, so I will spend some time taking you through the evidence. Since James brought it up, let's just go full force and cover the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for his Church.

Before we begin the study, I want to stress that I'm not trying to convert anybody to my views. I aim to present the evidence I have discovered, which has influenced my conclusions. I urge you to approach the evidence with a receptive mind,

but always ensure to verify the truth of my teachings by comparing them to the scripture. Be like the Bereans from Acts 17:11 (LSB): “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

A common argument against the pre-tribulation rapture comes from those who claim that John Darby invented that view in the 19th century. Their confident delivery of the argument often leads many to accept it without question.

Unfortunately, their claims are empty.

Now, if someone wants to say that Darby popularized the belief in common times, then yes, I would agree.

However, the teaching dates back to early church fathers and their writings; there are examples of teachings of the imminent return of Christ for His church.

I will give several examples to refute the claims of those who speak boldly about Darby inventing this view. However, I will not argue from these writings for the truth of the rapture of the church but rather from the Bible itself.

There are types, shadows, and passages that clearly point us to this view. Some of the earliest church

fathers believed in the imminent return of Christ and the rapture of the church, but unfortunately they changed their views as time went on and when the church was furiously persecuted. They began to believe that they were in the midst of the tribulation and therefore left the early belief of the pre-tribulation rapture. They didn't realize that they were being refined and strengthened to build the church. They had no idea that Christ's return for his church would extend almost 2000 years.

Let's look at the following examples from early writings that, at the very least, refute the argument that Darby invented the view.

Irenaeus of Lyon (120 AD-202 AD),
Against Heresies, Book 5, chapter 5.
He referred to Enoch's translation and Elijah's being "caught up" as previews of the Rapture. "For Enoch, when he pleased God, was translated in the same body in which he did please Him, thus pointing out by anticipation the translation of the just. Elijah, too, was caught up [when he was yet] in the substance of the [natural] form; thus exhibiting in prophecy the assumption of those who are spiritual, and that nothing stood in the way of their body being translated and caught up. For by means of the very same hands through which they were moulded at the beginning, did they receive this translation and assumption.

Eusebius (260/265 – 339), Fragments in Daniel, fragment ε, Migne 24.528—

“Hence, I think the apostle Paul was moved to write in this manner on the second coming of Christ, «For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a command, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God,» and so forth. But the same apostle also set forth in order, following this prophecy, the end-times coming of the antichrist and his depravity, and after this the glorious appearing of our Saviour.”

This shows that Eusebius made a distinction between Paul’s writings in the letter to the Thessalonians, showing that the coming of Christ for his Church comes first, then the rise of the Antichrist, then the Glorious appearing (2nd coming of Christ), which is seen in Revelation 19.

Eusebius (260/265–339), Commentary on Isaiah, Bk. 2, Sect. 58—

“In the season of the end, God shall bring them to the city of God, even the heavenly Jerusalem, and prosper them with this supreme boon, when he shall take them up

like he did with Elijah, carrying them upon angelic chariots, bathing them in heavenly light ... in regard to the sense, the lofted journey through the air signifies the carrying [of the church] into the heavens, which being interpreted more wisely the divine apostle said, ‘we shall be siezed in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.’ So they shall enter into the heavenly city.”

So all the Gentiles who have been saved shall come into the heavenly Jerusalem. This again shows us that Eusebius speaks of the snatching of the Church.

Eusebius (260/265–339), Fragments in Luke, Luke 17:26, Migne 24.584-585—

“Indeed, as all perished then except those gathered with Noah in the ark, so also at his coming, the ungodly in the season of apostasy ... shall perish ... At the time of the deluge, it (judgment) did not come and destroy all the inhabitants of the earth before (until) Noah entered into the ark. Therefore, in the same way, at the consummation of the age, it (this pattern) says (demands) that the cataclysm of the destruction of the ungodly shall not happen before those men who are found of God at that time are gathered into the ark and

saved according to the pattern of Noah ... all the righteous and godly are to be separated from the ungodly and gathered into the heavenly ark of God. For in this way [comes the time] when not even one righteous man will be found any more among mankind. And when all the ungodly have been made atheists by the antichrist, and the whole world is overcome by apostasy, the wrath of God shall come upon the ungodly.”

Eusebius here is using Noah and the Ark as a type or a picture of the rapture of the church. You will see in this study that I have a different view of the typology of the Ark. However, the reason I use this text is to show the view of the pre-tribulation rapture existed long before Darby.

Victorinus of Petrovium (died 304) was a bishop in modern Slovenia, martyred during Diocletian’s reign. He says this in his **Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John, 6.14, “14.** "And the heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up."] For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away.” Then we see Victorinus connect this in his commentary on chapter 15: "And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in

them is completed the indignation of God."]
For the wrath of God always strikes the
obstinate people with seven plagues, that is,
perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these
shall be in the last time, when the Church
shall have gone out of the midst."

This shows that he believed in the
rapture of the church; this seemed to
fit more of a pre-wrath view, but
again, I am using examples to show
the view existed. I will address these
arguments throughout this study.

I think I have made my point. We can now see that
there were others with the pre-tribulation and pre-
wrath rapture view far before Darby in the 19th
century. Therefore, rather than accepting the
Darby argument as truth and rejecting the
possibility of the pre-tribulation rapture, we should
approach it as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11: "...they
received the word with all eagerness, examining
the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."

Let's begin with **Revelation 3:8-11 (LSB)**: 'I
know your deeds. Behold, **I have given before
you an open door which no one can shut**,
because you have a little power, and have kept My
word, and have not denied My name. **[9]** Behold, I
am giving *up those* of the synagogue of Satan,
those who say that they are Jews and are not, but

lie. Behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you. **[10] Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. [11] I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.**

Hour of Testing: **Revelation 17:12 (LSB):** “And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.”

Showing that the 10 kings and the beast will be given authority for ONE hour, which I believe is the same hour of testing that the church is taken out of.

Next we see a connection to another open door in **Revelation 4:1-2 (LSB):** “After these things I looked, and behold, **a door standing open** in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” **[2]** Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.”

Jesus said that he was preparing a place for the church. He said he would come from heaven and

receive us to himself and take us back to heaven with him in **John 14:2–3 (LSB)**: “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. **[3]** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

Paul connects us to John’s being taken in the spirit immediately to heaven when he hear the voice that sounded like a trumpet in **1 Corinthians 15:51–53 (LSB)**: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **[52]** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. **[53]** For this corruptible must put on the incorruptible, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Next we will look at a connection to what Jesus said in John 14 about coming to receive us to himself. And a connection to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15. And also the event we read about in Revelation 4 with John being taken into heaven. These are all connected to **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (LSB)**: “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. **[14]** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **[15]** For this we

say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise (given their heavenly bodies) first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up (Harpazo—Taken by force) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Let’s look at another appearance of the word Harpazo—Taken by force which we will find in **Revelation 12:1-6 (LSB)**: “And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. [2] And she was with child, and she *cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. [3] Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads *were* seven diadems. [4] And his tail *swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. [5] And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. [6] Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she *had a place

prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for 1,260 days.”

The word used in Revelation 12, which said the male child was taken to heaven, is *harpazo* (taken by force) and is not the same word used when Jesus ascended.

Let's look at the ascension passages.

Acts 1:9-11 (LSB): “And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. **[10]** And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. **[11]** They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

The word for lifted up is "*epairo*," which means to lift up, raise on high, or exalt oneself.

The word for received him is "*hypolambano*," which means to take up in order to raise, to bear on high, to take up and carry away, to welcome, and to take up.

And the word for taken is "*analambano*," which means to take up or raise.

So we can see clearly that Jesus' ascension was on his terms. But the word used in Revelation 12 is to be taken by force. We know that the same term, *harpazo*, is used for the church in 1 Thessalonians 4. So I believe this is a prophetic picture of the Rapture of the Church (the Body of Christ).

Satan has been trying to kill the Body of Christ from its birth at Pentecost until this day. A day is coming when the Body of Christ will be snatched up to heaven. If we connect that to the rest of this chapter, we will find out that it is the event that causes the war in heaven to break out. Which ends with Satan being thrown down to the earth and enacting the first woe—the fifth trumpet.

Revelation 12:4 gives a future overview, and then verse 7 provides the details of that event.

It is evident that the world will be ruled by “the male child.”

And we know that believers are said to reign and rule with Christ. Which gives more evidence that the male child being snatched away in this passage is the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:1-20, 2 Timothy 2:12, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 3:21, Revelation 20:4-6)

We know that Jesus identifies completely with His Church as being part of Himself, and we have scriptural examples of this. The most notable is

when Jesus approached Saul on the road to Damascus and rebuked Saul for persecuting Him (Acts 22:7). Even though we know that it was the church that Paul was persecuting, showing that Jesus sees no difference between His church and Himself.

So how does that connect us to this chapter?

Well, we know, according to 2 Thessalonians 2, that the Antichrist cannot rise to power until the one who restrains is taken out of the way. I believe the one who restrains is the body of Christ; therefore, this event takes place prior to the 70th week of Daniel. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 (LSB):** “Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him (*this is the event from John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and pictured in Revelation 4*), **[2]** that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come (see Amos 5:18-20). **[3]** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it (the day of the Lord) has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, **[4]** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God. **[5]** Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

[6] And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. **[7]** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. **[8]** And then that lawless one will be revealed—whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming—”

In Revelation 19 Jesus returns to wage war alongside his saints. There is no reference to a trumpet, a shout, or the gathering of believers to heaven to be with him at that time. Because Jesus is coming to earth to destroy the Antichrist, the false prophet, and their army. This is also when he will set up his messianic kingdom on Earth.

In Luke 13 there is another connection to entering through a door. We also find out that the door will be shut after the group who was prepared enters. Once it is shut, those who are standing on the outside will be left into a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This should remind us of what Jesus promised the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3. There we see that Jesus will open a door that no one can shut and shut a door that no one can open, and he would keep (take them out of) the hour of testing coming on the entire world.

Let's look at **Luke 13:22-30 (LSB)**: “And He was passing through from one city and village to

another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. **[23]** And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” And He said to them, **[24]** “Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. **[25]** Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ **[26]** Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ **[27]** And He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you workers of unrighteousness.’ **[28]** In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out. **[29]** And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. **[30]** And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.”

We get more details that help us in interpreting what will happen to those left out of the door in **Matthew 8:10-11 (LSB)**: “Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. **[11]** And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; [12] but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

So we can see that the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness when the door is shut. Who are the sons of the kingdom, and what is the outer darkness?

If we define sons of the Kingdom, we will be able to define outer darkness.

The Parable of Tares

Matthew 13:24-30 (LSB): “He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. [25] But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. [26] But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. [27] The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ [28] And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves *said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ [29] But he *said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. [30] Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First

gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The Parable of Tares Explained

Matthew 13:36-43 (LSB): “Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” **[37]** And He answered and said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, **[38]** and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; **[39]** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age (Messianic Age/Kingdom); and the reapers are angels. **[40]** So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. **[41]** The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, **[42]** and will throw them into the fiery furnace (Lake of Fire); in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **[43]** Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

So now we have a definition of who the Sons of the Kingdom are...

These same Sons of the Kingdom who were thrown into the outer darkness are said to be the good seed

that will be planted in the Son of Man's (Jesus') world (Kingdom), and they would be the ones who would grow a good harvest that will be brought into Jesus' barn (New Heaven and New Earth), while the Tares (sons of the Devil) will be thrown into the fiery furnace (the Lake of Fire).

So now we can see that the Sons of the Kingdom are believers brought into the Messianic kingdom (both the Nation of Israel and Gentiles in the kingdom) out of the Great Tribulation (70th week of Daniel).

Jesus is the light of the world, and the Church is the body of Christ. The Church is told to shine our light into the world. So if the Church were taken out of the world through the door, and the door was shut, the world would be left in the outer darkness. We also know that the entire book of Revelation shows us how the world will be weeping and gnashing their teeth at God during this time.

Next we are going to examine the banquet feast/wedding feast that is often used to describe a celebration for believers. We will need to look at several accounts from parables and typology to understand what is being said.

Let's start with **Matthew 25:1-13 (LSB)**: "Then the kingdom of heaven may be compared to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Jesus). **[2]** Now five of them were

foolish (unbelievers), and five were prudent (believers). **[3]** For when the foolish took their lamps (to shine light), they took no oil (they didn't have the Holy Spirit) with them, **[4]** but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. **[5]** Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. **[6]** But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' **[7]** Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. **[8]** And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' **[9]** But the prudent answered, saying, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' **[10]** And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. **[11]** And later the other virgins also *came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' **[12]** But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' **[13]** Therefore, stay awake (1 Thessalonians 5:6), for you do not know the day nor the hour."

Did you notice the "shout" and the gathering of those who had oil (the Holy Spirit) through the door into the wedding feast?

Did you notice the shutting of the door, leaving those who did not have oil (the Holy Spirit)?

Are you starting to see the compounding of ideas and evidence yet?

We have seen that the wedding feast, or wedding banquet, or feast has been referenced in conjunction with a door being closed. What is interesting about this is that it connects to something that most would never think about.

Next we will examine the parable of the Prodigal Son—**Luke 15:11-32 (LSB)**: “And He said, “A man had two sons. **[12]** And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. **[13]** And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate living recklessly. **[14]** Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. **[15]** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. **[16]** And he was desiring to be fed with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. **[17]** But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! **[18]** I will rise up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you. **[19]** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as

one of your hired men.” **[20]** So he rose up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. **[21]** And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ **[22]** But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, **[23]** and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let us eat and celebrate, **[24]** for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate. **[25]** “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. **[26]** And summoning one of the servants, he began inquiring what these things could be. **[27]** And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ **[28]** But he became angry and was not wanting to go in, and his father came out and began pleading with him. **[29]** But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and never have I neglected a command of yours. And yet never have you given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends. **[30]** But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ **[31]** And he said to him, ‘Child, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. **[32]** But we had to celebrate

George Shankool

and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive, and was lost and has been found.”

I see a deeper prophetic meaning to this parable as well, which I believe is its true intention.

I believe this parable is parallel to what Paul explains in Romans 9-11. Which is the offer of salvation to the Gentiles while Israel for a time is hardened, until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

Let's first look at the three people spoken of and give them some definitions.

The Father is obviously God.

The Younger Son is a picture of the rebellious Gentile peoples of the world and their reconciliation to God by placing their faith in Christ. (Romans 11:30)

The Firstborn Son is a clear picture of the Nation of Israel (Exodus 4:22)

Ok, let's dig into the younger son.

The Gentiles were those who went astray from God; after the Flood, they had been seeking prostitutes, which in Scripture would be idolatry (Hosea 9:1) and reckless living.

The scripture demonstrates that the nations have been serving and seeking a pantheon of false gods, committing various forms of sexual immorality and debauchery. Leviticus 18 outlines that for us, and verses 24-27 specifically connect it to the Gentile nations who are vomited out of the land.

They rejected the love of God and went after their own pleasures. When they were reminded by the gospel of the love of God, they came back home to Him through repentance and faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:12-13). This was similar to how the younger son recalled his father.

Then it says that the son was still a long way off, and the father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son and threw his arms around him and kissed him. This is where you will hear most say, "This is such a wonderful picture of the grace of God the Father and his willingness to have Christ come to us, to show us perfect love by his willingness to take our place and pay for our sin on the cross." Of course I agree, but there is so much more here...

But prophetically, it is a picture of Christ gathering his Gentile Church to himself.

Why would I say that?

Well, first of all, we can see the Parallel in typology between this and Isaac as a type of Christ, seeing

his bride (The Church) from far away, traveling with his father's servant (Eleazar which means comforter, an obvious type of the Holy Spirit) **Genesis 24:62-67 (LSB)**: “Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi, for he was living in the land of the Negev. **[63]** And Isaac went out to muse in the field (the world) toward evening (Jesus always talks of returning for his church at midnight); and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. **[64]** And Rebekah lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac and dismounted from the camel. **[65]** Then she said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself. **[66]** And the servant recounted to Isaac all the things that he had done. **[67]** Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. Thus, Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

Isaac bringing Rebekah into Sarah’s tent is a type of Jesus bringing his bride, the church, into heaven.

Ok, I know you think I am stretching this, but let’s look at who Paul said Sarah, Isaac’s mother, is a type of, in **Galatians 4:21-31 (LSB)**: “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the Law? **[22]** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the servant-woman and one by

the free woman. **[23]** But the son by the servant-woman had been born according to the flesh, while the son by the free woman through the promise. **[24]** This is spoken with allegory, for these women are two covenants: one from Mount Sinai bearing children into slavery; she is Hagar. **[25]** Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **[26]** But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. **[27]** For it is written, “Rejoice, barren woman who does not give birth; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate one Than of the one who has a husband.” **[28]** And you brothers, in accordance with Isaac, are children of promise. **[29]** But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh was persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. **[30]** But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the servant-woman and her son, For the son of the servant-woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.” **[31]** So then, brothers, we are not children of a servant-woman, but of the free woman.”

So if Sarah is a type of the heavenly Jerusalem, where would her tent be located?

Heaven!

So yes, this is showing Jesus taking his bride to heaven.

The firstborn son refused to come to the banquet because of his self-righteousness and pride. He thought he deserved blessings from the father because of his works. He treated him transactionally, just like Israel did with God. So Israel, because of their rejection of Christ, refuses to enter into the wedding feast. Therefore, the fires of tribulation will refine them in the outer darkness.

We see a type of this in Daniel 3 with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

We also see a prophecy about this in Zechariah 13:8-9.

What about the “first resurrection” from **Revelation 20:4-6 (LSB)**: “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their witness of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who also had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. **[5]** The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **[6]** Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of

Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”

Resurrections are likened to harvests in scripture.

In Israel, there is a yearly cycle of harvests, which, as a corporate whole, are that year's harvest. However, that year's harvests are separated into 3 time periods: spring—barley (Passover), late spring right before summer—wheat (Pentecost), and fall—fruit (Feast of Tabernacles).

Jesus is called the firstfruits of the resurrection, and we know Jesus is part of the first resurrection, so the resurrection being limited to a one-time event falls flat in the face of biblical evidence.

1st Resurrection—is representative of those who have come to faith in Christ, and they will be resurrected into glorified bodies. Revelation 20 is speaking specifically of those who have been martyred during the Great Tribulation. Showing that those who come to faith during the 70th week of Daniel and die for their faith will be blessed with the opportunity to be glorified with those who had been raptured and had died in Christ in the past.

Which is explained in **Revelation 14:13 (LSB)**: “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who

die in the Lord from now on!” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”

We also see the connection to a second rapture of the 144,000, which I believe is typed by the taking away of Elijah in the Old Testament.

2nd Resurrection—is the resurrection of the wicked dead unto condemnation.

The pre-trib rapture is also pictured in Genesis 41. This is when Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream. He explains seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. I believe this is picturing the seven church generations and the seven years of 70th week of Daniel.

The 70th week of Daniel is also likened to a famine from **Amos 8:11 (LSB)**: “Behold, days are coming,” declares Lord Yahweh, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of Yahweh.” How would a famine of the word of God come on the earth if the true believing church is still present? But if only two witnesses and 144,000 are preaching over the whole earth in the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel because the church has been raptured, that would fit a famine of God’s word.

Back to the story of Joseph and him gathering the grain. So, just as the grain was gathered into the cities for storage at the end of the seven years of plenty, the true Church, both dead and alive, will be gathered into heaven prior to the 70th week of Daniel.

Finally, we can look at the Old Testament type of a wedding feast that gives us the clearest evidence of a pre-tribulation rapture. It also gives us some details that solve an objection to the pre-trib rapture, which is the Bride of the Lamb making herself ready in Revelation 19.

Let's look at Genesis 29. Here we see Jacob as a type of Christ. Jacob worked the land of Laban for seven years to take Rachel as his bride. Jacob loved Rachel and desired to have her as his wife. Laban promised Rachel to Jacob, but when the week-long wedding feast began, Jacob went and consummated the marriage and found out that Laban had switched Rachel with Leah, Rachel's older sister.

Jacob confronts Laban, and Laban tells Jacob if he serves another 7 years, he'll give Jacob Rachel. But Laban says that Jacob must first finish his week with Leah, and then his week of the wedding feast with Rachel will begin.

Rachel is a type of Israel, Christ's first love. When Jesus started his ministry, he came to propose to Israel.

Matthew 15:24 (LSB): “But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

He offered her the kingdom, but they rejected Jesus. So he instead offered the kingdom to the Church. Once the Church is raptured, the week (7-year) wedding feast begins in heaven. When the week with the Church is finished, he will then receive his bride, Israel, and begin his week-long wedding feast with Israel on earth, consummating his millennial kingdom.

Showing why the sons of the kingdom are left out of the wedding feast in Matthew and in the parable of the prodigal son. However, they will have their banquet after the great tribulation, because all of the remnant who survive the great tribulation will have come to faith and will celebrate their union to Christ.

- Rachel gives birth to Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph is a type of Christ, and Benjamin is a type of the remnant of Israel. That is why Paul, as a descendant of Benjamin and a representative of the nation of Israel as a Pharisee, is a type of the remnant of Israel. He was a persecutor of Christ, then was blinded for three days to show his spiritual blindness. He is then healed.

The Epistle of James

- Leah has seven children; the last is Dinah, whose name means judgment. Which happens to connect us to the apostate Church of Laodicea, whose name means judgment of the people.

George Shankool

Seven Children of Leah	Seven Churches of Revelation
1. Rueben - Behold a son, see a son - Root word: ra'a (raw-aw) - to see, look at, inspect, consider. 2nd root word ben (bane) - son, male child	1. Ephesus - They left their first love, Jesus, the only begotten son of the Father. They are told to look (raw-aw) to Jesus (bane: the only begotten son of the Father) and remember where they have fallen.
2. Simeon - heard - Root word: sama (shaw-mah) to hear, listen to, or obey.	2. Smyrna - They are given encouragement to listen to (shaw-mah) and are told to obey (shaw-mah) Christ even unto death.
3. Levi - joined to - Root word: Lava (law-vaw)- to join, be joined, attend, be joined onto, abide, cleave	3. Pergamum - They are warned that they have allowed themselves to be joined to (law-vaw) sexual immorality and idolatry.
4. Judah - praised - Root word: yada (yaw-daw) to throw, shoot, cast, confess or praise	4. Thyatira - They are rebuked for tolerating Jezebel and told that they would be thrown (yaw-daw) into tribulation if they do not repent.
5. Issachar - there is recompense (payment) - 1st root word: nasa (naw-saw) lift, bear up, carry, sustain, endure, lift oneself up. 2nd root word - sakar (saw-kawr): reward, pay, hire or wages	5. Sardis - They are warned that their faith is dead; they need to remember what they received (Greek word lambano)- receive what is given . As the body of Christ, we receive the Gospel, which tells us that Jesus paid (saw-kawr) our debt so we can endure (naw-saw) to the end.
6. Zebulun - exalted - root word: zabal (zaw-bal), to exalt, honor, or dwell exaltedly.	6. Philadelphia - They are told that they will be kept from the hour of testing that is coming on the entire world and that they will be placed at a high level and held in high regard (zaw-bal: exalted) in a place where those who are of the synagogue of Satan will bow before their feet. And they will be made pillars in the sanctuary of God, which is in heaven. Therefore they will also dwell exaltedly (zaw-bal) in heaven.
7. Dinah - (Only Daughter of Jacob)- Judgement - <i>She was defiled by the prince of Shekem</i>	7. Leadocia - (Only church named after a woman) Laos — meaning people group — and Dike — meaning judicial decision (sentence of condemnation), vengeance, judgment, or punish. They will face judgment if they don't repent. <i>This apostate church will be defiled by the Antichrist.</i>

Next, let's look at an event in Revelation where there are countless people in heaven who were taken out of the Great Tribulation. This is seen in **Revelation 7:10-15 (LSB) (continued)**: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." **[11]** And all the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, **[12]** saying, "Amen, the blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." **[13]** Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These, clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?" **[14]** And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out (Greek word: ek; connect this to the notes on Revelation 3:10) of the Great Tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **[15]** For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary; and He who sits on the throne will dwell over them.

We see these saints in heaven, praising God the Father and Jesus; they are not described as martyrs, but they are in heaven. We also know that the structure of the book of Revelation first gives a large overview, then a zoomed-in view of events that describe in detail the events that happened in the overview.

We have already seen the sealing of the 144,000 earlier in Revelation 7, which happened at the beginning of or before the 7-year covenant with the Antichrist (the 70th week of Daniel), and we are now witnessing saints in heaven.

Let's see if we can get some details from the text that help us see who they are more clearly.

In verse 15, we read, "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary; and He who sits on the throne will dwell over them." This should remind us of the promise given to the church of Philadelphia in **Revelation 3:12 (LSB)**: "He who overcomes, **I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God**, and he will never go out from it anymore. And I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name."

We know that overcomers are those who have placed their faith in Christ according to John in **1 John 5:4-5 (LSB)**: "For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the overcoming that has overcome the world—our faith. **[5]** Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Back to Revelation 7:15. In Greek, the word "dwell" means to be in the inner part of the temple or to be

covered with his tabernacle. Which should remind us of two major connections.

The first connection is when Abraham's servant brings Rebekah to Isaac to dwell in his mother's tabernacle. This is an obvious type of God the Father sending the Holy Spirit to gather a bride for Christ and bring her to the Heavenly Jerusalem since Sarah, Isaac's mother, is a type of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:21-31).

Let's examine the gathering of Rebekah by Eliezer in **Genesis 24:56-67 (ESV)**: "But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master." [57] They said, "Let us call the young woman and ask her." [58] And they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." [59] So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men."

We see here that Eliezer Abraham's eldest servant (Genesis 24:2) was unwilling to delay. The brothers left the option to Rebekah (the bride), and she chose to go to her husband. This also shows that the bride should long for the day they could finally be brought to the bridegroom (2 Timothy 4:8).

Genesis 24:56-67 (ESV) (continued): [60]
"And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you become thousands of ten

thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!”

This was a prophetic blessing given by her brothers, showing that she would be the mother of many people, not only through her bloodline but also how the Bride of Christ (the Church) will become vast.

Genesis 24:56-67 (continued): [61] “Then Rebekah and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man. Thus the servant took Rebekah and went his way. **[62]** Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb

Beer-lahai-roi was first mentioned in the Scripture when The Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar when she was fleeing from Sarah. She named the well Beer-lahai-roi, which means “Well of the living one who sees me,” “well of the living water that is seen,” or “well of the living God who is seen.” (Genesis 16:7-15) All three meanings point specifically to Jesus Christ.

Genesis 24:56-67 (ESV) (continued): [63]
And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming.

No one but the Father knows the day or the hour, not even the Son (Matthew 24:36).

Jesus often says he will come at midnight for his bride, and this is a great picture of that: Isaac was out in the field (the world) in the evening, not knowing he would be seeing his bride right then.

Genesis 24:56-67 (ESV) (continued): [64]

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel [65] and said to the servant, “Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself.

Both Isaac and Rebekah lift their eyes to see each other. This shows that both are living in anticipation of their union. She asked Eliezer who the man coming to meet them was... This is the picture of our bridegroom Christ coming to meet us in the clouds and us being taken to him by the Holy Spirit. Rebekah putting her veil on is a picture of the church (Bride of Christ) ensuring that they are ready to meet their bridegroom, as seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.

Genesis 24:56-67 (ESV) (continued): [66]

And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. [67] Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”

We know that Jesus was heartbroken by the nation of Israel's rejection of him. His sadness was not that he was surprised, because he knew that they would reject him. Nonetheless, his heart hurt to the point where he wept over Jerusalem about it, as we see in Luke 19:41–44. The Holy Spirit bringing his virgin bride, the Church, to him brings him comfort. Isaac bringing Rebekah into the tent of his mother gives us a picture of Jesus bringing the church (His bride) into the dwelling place that he prepared in heaven that was offered to Israel. But when they rejected him as their Messiah, it was offered to the Gentiles (His mostly Gentile Bride). So through Israel's spiritual death, the tent was left available, and Christ welcomed his bride to bring him comfort. Paul gives us so much insight into corporate Israel rejecting Christ. He then talks of the grafting in of the Gentiles and finally the eventual apostasy of the corporate Gentiles. That is when he speaks of the eventual redemption of Israel in Romans 9-11. Now we can see that these saints in heaven are a representation of the church and represent the “fullness of the Gentiles” that Paul spoke about. Thus leaving the world in darkness and unbelief corporately. The world then would be ripe for the Antichrist, and the remnant of Israel would be ripe to place their faith in Jesus.

Let's continue.

We know Sarah is a type of the heavenly Jerusalem because Paul explains that to us in **Galatians**

4:21-31 (LSB): “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the Law? **[22]** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the servant-woman and one by the free woman. **[23]** But the son by the servant-woman had been born according to the flesh, while the son by the free woman through the promise. **[24]** This is spoken with allegory, for these women are two covenants: one from Mount Sinai bearing children into slavery; she is Hagar. **[25]** Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **[26]** But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. **[27]** For it is written, “Rejoice, barren woman who does not give birth; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate one Than of the one who has a husband.” **[28]** And you brothers, in accordance with Isaac, are children of promise. **[29]** But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh was persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. **[30]** But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the servant-woman and her son, For the son of the servant-woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.” **[31]** So then, brothers, we are not children of a servant-woman, but of the free woman.”

Next, we have Jesus telling his apostles about this very event, and John, the writer of Revelation, just so happens to be the one who writes this in his

Gospel account in **John 14:1-3 (LSB)**: “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. **[2]** In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. **[3]** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

Doesn’t this passage sound just like the event we are learning about from Revelation 7?

So, now we can see that these saints are in the Father’s house in the dwelling places that Jesus prepared for them. Let’s keep reading to see what else we can see.

Let’s see if we can see another connection to the raptured church in **Revelation 7:16-17 (LSB)**: “THEY WILL HUNGER NO LONGER, NOR THIRST ANYMORE; NOR WILL THE SUN BEAT DOWN ON THEM, NOR ANY HEAT; **[17]** for the Lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them and will guide them to springs of the water of life. And God WILL WIPE EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES.”

The multitudes from every nation are from before the first half of the 70th week of Daniel, which connects to **Revelation 3:10 (LSB)**: “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

Let's break down that statement.

“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance (which is the Gospel), I also will keep (the Greek word translated into “keep” is Tereo, which means take care of or guard) you from (the Greek word translated into “from” is ek, which means out of) the hour (a definite point in time) of testing (trial, proving, a trial of integrity, or temptation), which is about to come upon the whole (the Greek word translated into “whole” is Olos, which means whole, all, or completely, which contradicts those who teach that the isolated events that happened in 70 AD were the fulfillment of the Great Tribulation) world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

The hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth, is the time when the Antichrist will tempt the whole world. Which includes all 7 years of the Great Tribulation. Those who dwell on the earth is a very specific phrase, which refers to unbelievers. Again showing the removal of the faithful church and the apostasy of the world.

This group of people in heaven connects to the raptured believers who were spoken of prophetically in the Letter to the Church of Philadelphia. These are the believers who are alive just before the 70th week of Daniel. They have held

to the true gospel of Jesus, and by doing so, they overcame the world and were washed by the blood of the Lamb and clothed in white. If we connect this to what we read earlier in chapter 7, the sealing of the 144,000, we can see the connection to these people from every tribe and nation to what Paul said in **Romans 11:25-27 (LSB)**: “For I do not want you, brothers, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; **[26]** and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” **[27]** “And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

This shows that the offer of salvation to the corporate Gentiles has been fulfilled. Now the partial hardening of Israel is being lifted by the sealing of the 144,000. This gives us a connection to **Romans 11:17-24 (LSB)**: “But if some of the branches were broken off (Corporate Israel), and you, being a wild olive (Corporate Gentiles), were grafted in among them and became a partaker with them of the rich root (Jesus) of the olive tree, **[18]** do not boast against the branches (Corporate Israel). But if you do boast against them, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. **[19]** You will say then, “Branches (Corporate Israel) were broken off so that I (Corporate Gentiles) might be grafted in.”

[20] Quite right! They (Corporate Israel) were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be haughty, but fear, **[21]** for if God did not spare the natural branches (Corporate Israel), He will not spare you (Corporate Gentiles), either. **[22]** Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you (Corporate Gentiles) also will be cut off. **[23]** And they (Corporate Israel) also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them (Corporate Israel) in again. **[24]** For if you (Corporate Gentiles) were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches (Corporate Israel) be grafted into their own olive tree (Jesus is the Good Tree and is of Israel according to the flesh)?”

We are now seeing the fullness of the Gentiles being gathered as the wheat was gathered into the barn of Joseph before the 7-year famine in Genesis 41:46-57.

The 7 years of plenty represent the 7 churches (all of Church History); the storing of the grain over time represents people coming to faith; and the storing of the grain right before the 7-year famine shows the harvest (rapture) of the church. The church was born on Pentecost, which is the festival of the wheat harvest in Israel, and that gives the

connection to this pretribulational gathering of the "wheat." Not to be confused with the parable of the wheat and tares. Because we have already noted that the parable was speaking about the Messianic Kingdom. Which takes place after the 70th week of Daniel.

The Book of Revelation is often misunderstood because people do not pay attention to the keywords and phrases that point us to the true understanding of the passage. They also fail to realize that there are several harvests in Israel.

The First Resurrection is threefold because, in Scripture, God prescribed three yearly harvests.

1st, the Barley Harvest—Jesus, the first fruits of the resurrection

2nd, the Grain/Wheat Harvest—The Birth of the Church and the Rapture of the Body of Christ prior to the Grape Harvest.

3rd, the Grape Harvest—The Rapture of the 144,000 (Revelation 14:1-5 & Revelation 14:14-16)

Let's look at where the harvests were first explained in **Exodus 23:14-15 (LSB)**: "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. [15] You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the

month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.”

The Feast of Unleavened Bread takes place during the Passover, and the first fruits of the barley are presented as an offering to God.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. **[21]** For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. **[22]** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. **[23]** But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits,”

NOTE There are two “first fruits” recorded in the Bible in English: barley and wheat. When you read it in Hebrew, the language is distinctive to barley and wheat, so do not get confused when you see the term “first fruits” in English interchanged between the festivals.

Exodus 23:16 (LSB): “Also you shall keep the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field;”

This is the wheat harvest, which is known to us as the festival of Pentecost. This is where two leavened loaves are offered as a wave offering before God. The two loaves represent both Jews and Gentiles who were once sinful (puffed with the old leaven), but now they are presented as the righteousness of God. All of the old leaven was removed from the house of Israel during Passover, but during the Passover, some of the first fruits of the barley harvest were set aside to die and become leaven for the grain offering. Christ is the fulfillment of the first fruit, as described in 2 Corinthians 5:21. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Showing that Jesus became leaven for us, the two loaves, and now we could be waved as an offering before God because of Jesus' sacrifice.

We can also see Paul speaking of the Resurrection of Christ and the Rapture of the Church in **1 Corinthians 15:20–23 (LSB)**: “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. **[21]** For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. **[22]** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ, all will be made alive. **[23]** But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.”

We need to distinguish between Jesus' coming to gather us to him and his second coming. Paul speaks of both events in 2 Thessalonians 2, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, and the Day of the Lord is spoken of, and they are two separate events.

Christ is the first fruit of the barley harvest; the church is the wheat harvest, which is the next harvest after the barley harvest. The third harvest is not spoken of by Paul in this passage because Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. This message is directed towards the predominantly Gentile Church, rather than the corporate nation of Israel. The final harvest of fruit, grapes, figs, and olives, all prophetic types of the nation of Israel, serves as their representation.

Paul continues to talk about the New Heaven and New Earth but then backtracks to explain that Jesus must reign as king over the Earth in the Messianic Kingdom until he conquers death. We know that happens after his 1000-year reign and the second resurrection. Which is the resurrection of the dead to be raised in the Great White Throne Judgment.

The resurrection starts with Christ, then the Church, then the 144,000 (the grape harvest's first

fruits), and finally those who die during the Tribulation.

Those who are alive to the end of the tribulation will enter the kingdom, still in their human bodies, and they will still be subject to death. These will be the “good seed,” the “sons of the kingdom,” that Jesus mentions in the parable of the wheat and the tares. The parable depicts a new planting and the final harvest following Christ's 1000-year reign.

We know that the parable speaks of the 1000-year reign because the tares are thrown into the fire to be burned, which is a picture of the Lake of Fire. And the wheat is gathered into Christ's barn, which would be the heavenly Jerusalem in the New Heaven and New Earth (Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:36-43, & Revelation 20-22).

We see this expounded on in **1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (LSB)**: “Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. **[25]** For He must reign UNTIL HE HAS PUT ALL HIS ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET. **[26]** The last enemy to be abolished is death. **[27]** For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. **[28]** And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be

subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”

Paul continues to speak about the resurrection of the believers, explaining that our earthly bodies are sown in their death but raised in a new form. He compares us to a grain of wheat or a seed of a tree, which must be planted into the earth and will grow into something greater. We too must shed our earthly bodies to be raised into our heavenly bodies.

Paul explains the shedding of our body of flesh and blood and us being given a new body in **1**

Corinthians 15:35-58 (LSB): “But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?” **[36]** You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; **[37]** and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. **[38]** But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. **[39]** All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. **[40]** There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. **[41]** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. **[42]** So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a corruptible

body, it is raised an incorruptible body; [43] it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; [44] it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. [45] So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. [46] However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. [47] The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. [48] As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. [49] And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Paul continues to describe the resurrection and tells a mystery of the Rapture.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (LSB): “Now I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the corruptible inherit the incorruptible. [51] Behold, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. [53] For this corruptible must put on the incorruptible, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] But when this corruptible puts on the incorruptible, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the word that is

written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. [55] O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” [56] Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57] but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! [58] Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Again, this should remind us of the connection to **Revelation 4:1-2 (LSB)**: “After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” [2] Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.”

Now we are seeing the connections more clearly.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 explained that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. He said we have to shed our earthly bodies through death. But then he says some of us will not die like the others, but instead, we will be alive when we are changed into our spiritual bodies. That seems to imply we will leave our earthly bodies behind. If we shed our shells (our physical bodies), we will be immediately in the Spirit (body), just as we see John described in Revelation 4. He was caught up

(Harpazo—rapture) in the spirit, not the perishable flesh, into the clouds by the voice of the Lord that sounded like a trumpet, and he was with God in the throne room. Paul was caught up to heaven too! After seeing a vision, he expressed uncertainty about whether he was in the body or the spirit.

2 Corinthians 12:1-6 (LSB): “It is necessary to boast, though it is not profitable, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **[2]** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. **[3]** And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— **[4]** was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. **[5]** On behalf of such a man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in weaknesses. **[6]** For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will consider me beyond what he sees in me or hears from me.”

We can see the similarities between what happened to Paul and what happened to John in Revelation 4. John said that the voice that called him sounded like a trumpet. We know that was the voice of the one who first spoke to him. In Revelation 1:8, we see that it was Jesus speaking: “I am the Alpha and

the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

That voice is explained to us in **Revelation 1:17-20 (LSB)**: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not fear; I am the first and the last, **[18]** and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. **[19]** Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. **[20]** As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

We see another connection to those who will be caught up while hearing a voice like a trumpet in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (LSB)**: “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. **[14]** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **[15]** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **[16]** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the

dead in Christ will rise first. **[17]** Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. **[18]** Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

These believers are not the ones referred to later in Revelation 14 who are "harvested.”

To get some biblical clarity on why they are not the same people, let's look at **Exodus 23:16 (LSB)**: “Also the Feast of the Ingathering **at the end of the year** when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field.” (This is a representation of the harvesting of the Grapes in Revelation 14. Because the end of the year harvest is the fall harvest of the fruits (Grapes, figs, olives, etc.) all types of Israel.)

We can now look at the event in **Revelation 14:14-16 (LSB)**: “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. **[15]** And another angel came out of the sanctuary, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sits on the cloud, “Put in Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” **[16]** Then He who sits on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.”

We can see the similarities between this event and the rapture of the church. Which makes it obvious why so many people confuse this event with the previous harvest of the earth.

But Revelation 14 is the final harvest, which takes place 5 days after the Day of Atonement, which is an obvious picture of the redemption of Israel.

What's interesting about that is that there is a typological picture of the redemption of Israel in **Genesis 45:6 (ESV)**: “For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.”

The 7-year famine in the story of Joseph clearly represents the 70th week of Daniel, which corresponds to the 7 years of the Great Tribulation. Two years into the 7-year famine, Joseph saves the Nation of Israel, symbolizing the first of Israel's remnant coming to faith at the two-year mark of the 7-year tribulation, not the 144,000. That being said, there are still five years left. If that is the case, we could use the “day for a year” prophetic calculation and see that 5 years later is the feast of Tabernacles. We know that it takes place during the grape harvest and shows the Nation of Israel being gathered to Christ.

At the beginning of Revelation 14, we will see the 144,000 standing on Heavenly Zion with the Lord;

they had been sealed with his name on their heads, and they are called the first fruits of the earth (Revelation 14:14-16).

This typologically fits the harvest that we are seeing in Revelation 14.

Often Jewish writing will give an overview and then zoom in to show details. We saw that throughout the Old Testament, but especially in Genesis. Just look to Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3, which gave an overview of the creation, and then chapter 2 continued through chapter 3 to give a zoomed-in view of specifics within the creation.

In the same way, Revelation 14 starts with the endpoint, giving an overview of the point of that chapter, but then the rest of chapter 14 zooms in to give details explaining how that overview was reached.

We know that more people survive the tribulation and enter the kingdom. Most notably, the entire remnant of the nation of Israel survived to the end because of placing their faith in Christ (Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 13:9, Leviticus 26:40-45).

But these are not the 144,000, the first fruits of the grape harvest, because they are raptured (harvested) before the second coming of Christ.

We can see that this event is different from the Rapture of the Church because the details of this event do not fit.

These believers in chapter 14 were not called in the same manner, and the dead did not rise first to meet them in the air with the Lord.

So although there are similarities, there are many stark differences.

Another thing that needs to be remembered is that the first fruits of a harvest are done before the entire harvest is reaped, and since there are three different harvests, we know there are multiple reapings typologically per harvest.

There was no mistake that 144,000 are called the first fruits, showing us that they were the first of the grape harvest. And we know the grapevine is an obvious picture of the nation of Israel.

Chapter 14 also depicts the harvesting of the "bad grapes" subsequent to the "first fruits of the grapes." The 144,000 are harvested. Remember, these events can have gaps of time even though they are written in sequence.

Revelation 14:17-20 (LSB): "And another angel came out of the sanctuary which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. [18] Then another angel, the one who has authority over fire, came

out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” **[19]** So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. **[20]** And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of 1,600 stadia.”

We are seeing the final portion of this harvest, which is connected to the wrath of God. That harvest is showing us a preview of the event that will happen when Christ destroys the Antichrist and his army.

Prophetically, we have a picture of these events in **Isaiah 63:1-6 (LSB)**: “Who is this who comes from Edom, With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, This One who is majestic in His clothing, Marching in the greatness of His power? “It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” **[2]** Why is Your clothing red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? **[3]** “I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My clothes. **[4]** For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of

redemption has come. **[5]** I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished, and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. **[6]** I trod down the peoples in My anger And made them drunk in My wrath, And I brought down their lifeblood to the earth.”

Can we see the connection from Isaiah 63?

Let’s check out **Revelation 19:17-21 (LSB)**:

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, **[18]** so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of strong men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” **[19]** Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army. The Beast and False Prophet Are Seized **[20]** And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who did the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. **[21]** And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

Finally, let's look at the typology of the three harvests in Exodus 23:17 "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh."

This clearly shows the THREE required gatherings of God's people.

- 1) Christ, the barley harvest, resurrection of Christ.
- 2) The Church, the wheat harvest, the resurrection of the Church.
- 3) The 144,000, the grape harvest, the resurrection of the first fruits of Israel.

This shows that these saints in chapter 7 are in heaven before the 70th week of Daniel, picturing the raptured church.

We have seen the Greek word "ek" used to explain those who would be taken out of the hour of testing that is coming upon the entire world in Revelation 3, and we see those that were taken out of the Great Tribulation in heaven during the time of the sealing of the 144,000. Which connected us to the rapture, showing the fullness of the Gentiles coming in, and now the beginning of the refining and saving of the remnant of Israel. However, we have one more connection.

The word church is a conjunction of two Greek words, “Ek” and “Keleo.” We have learned that the Greek word “Ek” means “out of” and the Greek word “Kaleo” means “to call,” “to call aloud,” or “utter in a loud voice.”

We can see that calling the Church “called-out ones” is fitting.

We are called out of death, sin, the world, shame, and so much more. We are called to be holy, which means separated or set apart.

What is intriguing to me is how in Jewish thought the names of people or groups have deep meaning, both immediate and prophetic.

Take, for example, Israel. Jacob was named Israel after he wrestled with God (pre-incarnate Jesus, the Angel of the Lord). The word Israel means God prevails. Because God always wins, meaning that the people of God will prevail in the end if they are resting in him.

This wrestling match serves as a typological representation of Jacob (Israel) continuously struggling with God, demonstrating that he would not simply submit and obey due to his stubbornness. What is even more intriguing is that Jacob struggled with God in the evening, which I believe adds a second layer to that prophetic statement.

The prophecy depicts Israel in the final days, struggling in the outer darkness with God until he touches them, just as he did with Jacob, and inflicts wounds on their pride right before the second coming of Christ.

The fullness of the remnant of Israel will be blessed by God because they will recognize that they need his blessing. And this happens right before the Sun of Righteousness comes into the world again (Malachi 4:2).

Just as Jacob refused to let The Angel of the Lord go until he blessed him. The end times are “coincidentally” called the day of Jacob’s trouble, pointing us back to Jacob, in his great day of distress thinking Esau would kill him, and how he spent the evening wrestling with God.

So in the same way, I believe the Church being called the “called-out ones” has a prophetic meaning, showing that the Church will be called out of the world to be with Christ prior to the hour of testing that is coming on the entire world.

Let’s bring home the evidence that backs up the pre-tribulation rapture of the true church, as well as the rapture of the 144,000 seen in Revelation 14.

Zechariah 14:1-8 (LSB): “Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh when the spoil taken from you

will be divided among you. **[2]** Indeed, I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city will go forth in exile, but those left of the people will not be cut off from the city. **[3]** Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as the day when He fights on a day of battle. **[4]** And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. **[5]** And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel (wilderness); indeed, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! **[6]** And it will be in that day, that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle (showing the end of the tribulation and the second coming of Christ). **[7]** And it will be a unique day which is known to Yahweh, neither day nor night, but it will be that at evening time there will be light. **[8]** And it will be in that day, that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.”

This also connects to **Jude 1:14-16 (LSB)**: “But Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, also

prophesied about these men, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, **[15]** to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” **[16]** These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of their own benefit.”

We can see that these 144,000 sing a song before the throne of God, showing that they are in the heavenly throne room. It does not say that they were martyred, but it does say that they were purchased as first fruits. So it seems as though they were raptured at a point in tribulation. Because of their faithfulness and witness for Christ, they can come with the Lord when he returns.

These events would take place at the end of the Tribulation, and we can see from the passages from Zechariah and Jude that the Battle of Armageddon would be the time frame to fit this event. The scene itself is Jesus arriving on the Mount of Olives with the 144,000 and His Church in preparation to destroy the army of the antichrist at Har Megiddo.

We can see that these 144,000 have been sealed with His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. Showing the connection to **Revelation 3:12-13 (LSB)**: “He who overcomes,

I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God, and he will never go out from it anymore. And I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. **[13]** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

We know that he who overcomes is speaking of a person who has placed their faith in Jesus, as seen in **1 John 5:4-5 (LSB)**: “For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the overcoming that has overcome the world—our faith. **[5]** Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

So we can see a connection to the 144,000 and the True Church. The importance of this is that both of these groups are raptured in Scripture. But we need to recognize that they are two groups of people and two different events in time.

To my knowledge, mainstream scholars have not discussed this idea, making it difficult to accept. However, a detailed examination of the biblical text seems to clearly point this out to us.

Now, we need to ask ourselves, do we have two pictures of a rapture?

Well, we do, actually. We have the peculiar story of Enoch, which is the first type of the rapture that took place prior to the Flood, which was a

type/shadow of the Great Tribulation. We have the connection of Enoch to this event because of the prophecy that Jude quotes speaking of Jesus' return with his holy ones...

Let's look at some passages that show us the first type of the rapture in the Bible:

First we will look at the story of Enoch in **Genesis 5:21-24 (LSB)**: "And Enoch lived 65 years and became the father of Methuselah. [22] Then Enoch walked with God 300 years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he became the father of other sons and daughters. [23] So all the days of Enoch were 365 years. [24] Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

We see Enoch referenced again in **Hebrews 11:5 (LSB)**: "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for prior to being taken up, he was approved as being pleasing to God."

Which should remind us of **1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (LSB)**: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed."

And also **1 Thessalonians 4:17 (LSB)**: "Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up

together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

Enoch was a type of the church. He was not a Jew since Israel did not exist, and he walked with God and was taken. He did not face the judgment of the flood, and he was not spared through the flood. Instead, he was taken to be with God prior to the flood. Just as the faithful believers will be taken prior to the 70th week of Daniel.

We have another connection in Jude that I saw just recently that almost didn’t make it into the book, but I figured it would be fruitful.

Jude 1:14-16 (LSB): “But Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, also prophesied about these men, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, **[15]** to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” **[16]** These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of their own benefit.”

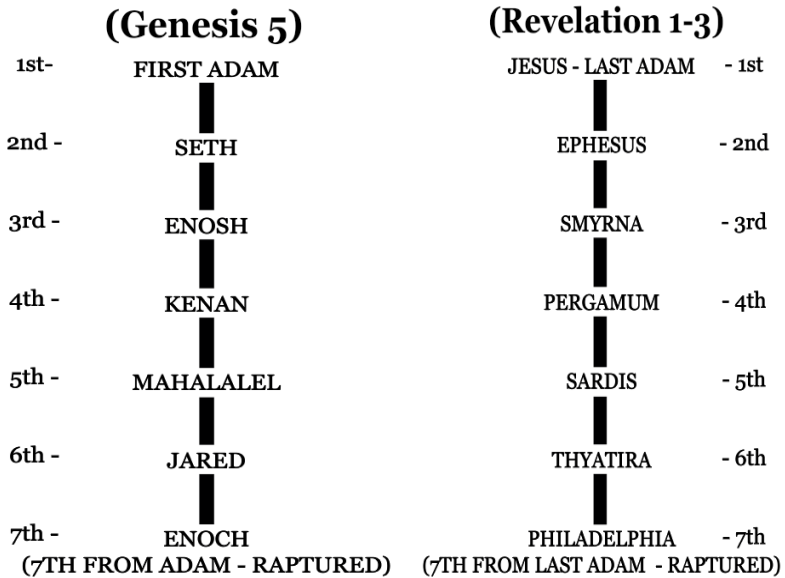
Jude reminds us that Enoch is the 7th generation from Adam. From our study of Revelation, we recognized the typology of the 7 churches and the 7

generations of church history. So by following the model of Enoch being the 7th from Adam, I thought to myself... Who would the seventh from the last Adam, Jesus, be? Well, we know that Jesus didn't have children, but look at what the author of Hebrews says.

Hebrews 2:9-10 (LSB): “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels—Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. **[10]** For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”

Now we can see that Jesus would bring many sons to glory, and since the churches are used as a type for generations, they could be counted as generations from Christ. So let's see if there is a connection. Take a look at the graphic to get a better idea of where we are going with this.

The Epistle of James



Enoch, the 7th generation from the first Adam, was taken prior to the Great Flood because he walked with God and was approved as being pleasing to God.

The church of Philadelphia, the 7th generation from the last Adam, is promised to be kept from (taken from) the hour of testing that is coming on the whole world. This promise was given because they walked with God and were approved as pleasing to Him.

Coincidence... Well, that is for you to decide, but I don't think so.

Let's look at some passages that show us the second type of the rapture in the Bible:

Let's look at Elijah in **2 Kings 2:9-12 (LSB)**:

"Now it happened when they crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." **[10]** And he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." **[11]** As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and it separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. **[12]** And Elisha was seeing this and he was crying out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw Elijah no more."

We have now seen two types and groups represented in a rapture event. Enoch is a type of the church, and Elijah is a type of the faithful prophet of Israel, the 144,000. This shows two raptures and two groups of people at two different times.

We can possibly tie these events to the harvests of Israel. We know that the wheat harvest is the birth of the church. Therefore, it could be logical that the resurrection (rapture) occurs during the wheat harvest (Pentecost). Because we know that Jesus was resurrected during the Feast of Firstfruits of

the Barley Harvest, which takes place in the time of Passover.

However, additional evidence suggests that the rapture may occur during the Feast of Trumpets. But we will look at that when we get to Revelation 16.

If the harvests are connected to the raptures, that would mean that the first fruits of Israel, the 144,000, would be raptured at some time during Tishri, since that is when the last three festivals of Israel that have not been fulfilled take place...

The 1st of Tishri, the feast of trumpets; the 10th of Tishri, the Day of Atonement; and the 15th of Tishri, the feast of Tabernacles.

We have now seen the biblical evidence and probability that there are two separate raptures and two separate groups from the hints given in Revelation 3 and Revelation 7.

Revelation 3:10-13 (LSB): “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. **[11]** I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. **[12]** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God, and he will never go out from it anymore. And I

will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. [13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 7:9-17 (LSB): “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues;

This passage clearly says they are from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands (not only the 144,000 as we see in Revelation 14). This connects us to **Leviticus 23:39-40 (LSB):** “On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of Yahweh for seven days (the time of a week-long wedding), with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. On the first day, you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches, and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall be glad before Yahweh your God for seven days,”

The connection to the palm branches shows us that Revelation 7 takes place on the first “day”

(prophetic year) of the Great Tribulation. This refers to the union of Christ and his bride, the Church.

Just as Jacob married Leah first.

Christ and the Church will spend 7 days (prophetic years) in heaven partaking in the Great Wedding Feast.

After that feast, Jesus will marry his bride, Israel, just as Jacob married Rachel 7 days after Leah.

We are not exactly sure what day or year the rapture will take place. We can observe that the believers in Revelation 7 were already in heaven. We just know that we can connect that specific event with them having the palm branches to the first day of the 7 prophetic years.

Ultimately, we have discovered that the Bible contains numerous allusions to the rapture, and if we maintain intellectual integrity, we can discern that the overwhelming evidence points to a pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

We can also conclude that the wedding feast of Christ and the Church will mirror that of Jacob and Leah, and then the first fruits of Israel will be raptured before Christ's second coming. That is when Jesus finishes his "weeklong" wedding feast, which takes up the 70th week of Daniel. He returns with his saints to marry his bride, Israel, which

mirrors Jacob marrying Rachel after he finished the week with Leah (the church). Israel and the Church then spend 7 years celebrating on earth while establishing the messianic kingdom, during which Jesus will reign and rule for 1000 years.

I pray that this study and the information that I provided have shined some light on difficult ideas and concepts.

Again, if you decide to disagree, that is ok.

However, I feel that I have provided ample evidence to show that there is biblical merit for my view. And at the very least, my argument has caused you to dig deeper into the Bible to strengthen your understanding. As long as you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you are my brother or sister in Christ, and I pray that God may give you a hunger for his word.

Not so you may be puffed up with knowledge, but so you can stand firm in your understanding and preach the Gospel to the lost with a sense of urgency. Because whether we are raptured today or die today, we are not promised tomorrow, so we must remember those who are lost.

May God bless you and bring people into your life that you can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with.

James 5:12 (LSB): “But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your yes be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.”

James is again Drawing connections to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.

Let's take a look at **Matthew 5:33-37 (ESV):**
“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ [34] But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, [35] or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. [37] Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

Any common practice was to swear by something greater than yourself to prove that you were telling the truth. Jesus warned us against this, and James reiterates the warning that while swearing against anything in creation is bad, swearing against God is even worse.

Jesus said that his followers and disciples had no need to swear, but instead tell the truth, let their yes be yes and their no be no.

This is a contrast to what the Pharisees were doing, **Matthew 23:16-22 (ESV)**: “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ [17] You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? [18] And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ [19] You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? [20] So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. [21] And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. [22] And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.”

The religious leaders of Israel taught that you needed to keep a vow or an oath if it was a public vow using God’s name. However, if the vow was made casually, using only "heaven," "earth," or "Jerusalem," it wasn't binding. They taught that swearing by the temple was binding, but swearing by the gold in the temple was not.

This practice allowed individuals to appear holy while providing them a loophole to break their oath if necessary. They could lie and exaggerate by saying, “I swear by Jerusalem that its true!” Because they did not specifically swear by God's

name and the vow was private, they believed they could avoid accountability.

We know that is ridiculous, so Jesus rebukes them for that practice.

Jesus finally tells us that all we need to say is "yes" or "no." Our word should be good enough.

Does that mean I cannot make a promise or sign a contract?

No, Jesus was not condemning promises, contracts, or agreements. He was speaking of the kind of frivolous vows that people make on a daily basis. Like when kids say, "I cross my heart and hope to die."

As Christians, we should be true to what we say and not be flippant with our promises and vows. Because at the end of the day, our actions represent Christ. Which means that our poor behaviors cause others to blaspheme the name of Christ.

The Prayer of Faith

James 5:13-15 (LSB): "Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. [14] Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15]"

And the prayer offered in faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

James is connecting us to **Matthew 9:2-8 (ESV)**:

“And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; **your sins are forgiven.**” [3] And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” [4] But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? [5] For which is easier, to say, ‘**Your sins are forgiven,**’ or to say, ‘**Rise and walk**’? [6] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“**Rise**, pick up your bed and go home.” [7] And he **rose** and went home. [8] When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.”

James uses this to show what Jesus did for the paralytic man. He forgave his sins and raised him physically, but he is pointing out the spiritual raising from our inability to walk for God that happens at the point of salvation and the physical resurrection to come.

In scripture, anointing with oil symbolizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

So it seems the point of this passage is to tell the elders to go to those who are weary (sick) and pray over them and anoint them with oil, and if they pray the prayer in faith, they will be saved.

Romans 10:9 (ESV): “believe in your heart and confess with your mouth and you shall be saved.”

That's why James finished with, “the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven”.

The reason I changed the word that was translated from sick to weary is because the Greek word *kamnō* is only used one other time in the New Testament in Hebrews 12:3, and it's translated weary, and since James is quoting from the story of Jesus healing the paralytic, weary would fit better than sick.

What we need to remember is that physical healing is not our priority. Our priority is always the spiritual healing that comes only by the grace of God, through faith in Christ.

Can God still heal physically? Of course!

Does God still heal physically? Again, of course!

I am not saying God will not heal a physical ailment; what I am saying is that our focus should always be on leading the lost to Christ, not seeking

physical healings. If God uses us to heal a blind person, but we never open their eyes to the Gospel of Christ, then they remain blind and will die in their sins. If God raises someone from the dead through our prayer, but they don't have faith in Christ, the extra years are useless.

James 5:16 (LSB): “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

James seems to be telling those who have not yet come to faith to confess their sins and accept Christ and to pray for one another to come to faith so they may be healed.

This would connect to what Peter said in **Acts 2:37-41 (ESV)**: “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” **[38]** And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **[39]** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” **[40]** And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” **[41]** So those who received his word

were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

We also have a connection to 1 John

James 5:17-20 (LSB): “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. [18] Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit. [19] My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, [20] let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

James ends his letter reiterating the power of intercessory prayer, and he reminds us that we should never give up on the lost.

James shows us the power of Elijah's prayers and reminds us that he was a human just like us.

I think this is a wonderful reminder to us all.

We often venerate the Old Testament prophets but forget that we have the full revelation of God, and they only had a taste.

Because we were born again, we have the gift of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit; they never had that privilege.

Let's look at what Jesus told us in **Matthew 11:7-11 (ESV)**: "As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? **[8]** What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. **[9]** What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **[10]** This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' **[11]** Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

So, who are the ones in the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus is talking about?

Jesus explains this in **John 3:1-6 (ESV)**: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **[2]** This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." **[3]** Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." **[4]** Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" **[5]** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit,

he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

So we can now see that those who have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit are of the Kingdom of Heaven. We have become members of the body of Christ. Now they are in Christ, and Christ is in them. Being the least member of the body is even greater than being John the Baptist

But that is not because of us but because of Christ.

Therefore, we must remember to have boldness and confidence in our prayers, as James states, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

This passage also reiterates that the healings spoken of earlier were focused on the spiritual, not physical.

James said, “My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Does this mean someone who is a believer can leave their faith and lose their salvation, but we can pray for them to get it back?

No, once someone has truly placed their faith in Christ, they will not stray from the truth. And we know Jesus is the truth.

John actually clarifies this for us in **1 John 2:18-29 (LSB)**: “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **[19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. [20]** But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **[21] I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22]** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **[23]** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. **[24]** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **[25]** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. **[26]** I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **[27]** But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide

in him. Children of God **[28]** And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **[29]** If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”

So, we can clearly see that James is talking about turning back unbelievers who have heard the truth of Christ and either rejected it or had a false profession of faith and walked away. Which clearly gives us a connection to the prayers he was requesting in verse 16, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

This also connects us to another passage in **1 John 1:5-7 (LSB)**: “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **[6]** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **[7]** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

This passage contains a significant amount of information. John is warning about a false profession of faith. He is refuting gnostic teachings that have infiltrated the

church and have exposed the darkness in the hearts of many.

If we say we have fellowship with God but don't believe in Christ, we're liars, and Christ isn't in us, which leaves us in darkness.

But if we have true saving faith, we are no longer sons of the darkness; we are cleansed from sin by Christ's blood and are now sons of the light.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-5 (LSB):

“For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **[3]** While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **[4]** But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. **[5]** For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.”

He then says this in **1 John 1:8-10 (LSB)**: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **[9]** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **[10]** If we say

we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

John is showing that we all have sin and are in need of forgiveness. So anyone who is trying to boast in their fulfillment of the law outside of the grace of God through faith in Christ is a liar.

We have an example of how the faith and prayers of others can lead someone to believe.

Matthew 9:1-7 (LSB): “And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. [2] And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” [3] And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” [4] But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? [5] For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? [6] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” [7] And he rose and went home. [8] When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.”

We get a little more info from Luke's Gospel, **Luke 5:17-20 (LSB):** "On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. **[18]** And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, **[19]** but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. **[20] And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."**

This shows that the faith of the people who brought the man to Jesus gave him the opportunity to be healed, and the faith of the man was what brought on the forgiveness of his sins.

This is showing us that we as Christians are to be preaching the gospel to those we know, because how will they know about Jesus if nobody tells them.

Closing Prayer

Father God,

We are in awe of you! Lord, you are so great! Your mercy, your kindness, and your love surpass anything that we can understand. We are grateful for all of those who have called to become our brothers and sisters in Christ. And we pray that you may continue to soften the hearts of others. Lord, we ask you for strength, wisdom, understanding, discernment, and guidance. Heal our brokenness, forgive us for our stumbling and disobedience, and help us to forgive ourselves as well as others. Lord, we feel the world becoming darker, and time is feeling short. But regardless of how much time we as individuals or the world have, I pray that you may use us for you, for your glory, and to be the light within this dark world. Lord, may you use our testimonies as an encouragement to others to show that no one is too far gone for you to redeem. Let us not be puffed up with knowledge and pride, but give us wisdom and humility, and let us use what we learn in the Bible to shine your light on this dark world. We love you, and we give you all praise. We come before you humbly covered in the blood of the Lamb, and it is in the great name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen and Amen!

George Shankool

Thank You

Most of all, I would like to thank God. Thank you for blessing me with the opportunity to help others with the knowledge you have revealed to me. You have blessed me and kept me alive for a purpose, and I am grateful that you chose to call me to serve you with the gifts you have given me. I am so humbled and blessed to have the opportunity to guide people to you and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would also like to thank my wife. You are my love and my inspiration. Thank you for being an excellent mother to our children and the best wife I could have hoped for!

A special thank you to my parents for putting up with me through tough times and being the parents that God called you to be; you helped mold me into the man I am today. Thank you for guiding me in the right direction, and even when I was lost, your prayers and advice were not in vain.

I want to thank my children for inspiring me to be a better dad; your innocence and joy bring so much to my life; you have helped me become more selfless, and I thank God for every moment we share.

Also, I would like to thank my brothers and sisters in Christ who are following the call of God and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the world. Thank you for your continued service to the LORD, and thank you for the love and encouragement that you give to me and those you minister to.

About The Author

I am just a fellow brother in Christ, forgiven of my many transgressions by the grace of God Almighty, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! I am grateful that God is using me for His kingdom and His glory. And I recognize that all the good that has come into and through my life is only because of Him! We must always remember to reserve our praise for God. Pastors, elders, Bible teachers, Christian influencers, musicians, etc., are all many members of the same body, with the head of the body being Christ.

We are all tools, gifted by the power of the Holy Spirit according to His will. It would be inconceivable to praise a hammer, screwdriver, or drill for serving its purpose. Ultimately, if they are not in the hands of a builder, they would be useless.

So, remember, we must not elevate the tools whom God chooses to use, but we should always praise our Master and creator, Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father by the Power of His Holy Spirit. Amen.