

James

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[0 : 0 0] So we're in the book of James and let's see, where are we at anyway? I think we're in chapter 1, the 12th verse.

Just a quick little overview. One of the things we talked about is, and sometimes I'll say this, but the book of James, we could actually call the book of Jacob.

In fact, one of the commentaries I've been reading is from Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Anybody heard of him? Okay. And throughout the entire commentary, he never says just the name James.

He always, the entire commentary, always says James slash Jacob. It's a little overpowering. I think he's a Jewish, he's a Messianic Jew, so he's a Christian Jew.

And so I think he really wants to get that Jewish name in there, which is good. We talked a little bit about why it's James and the history behind that, but for whatever reason, in our Bibles, it says James.

[1 : 0 0] But it's the name Jacob, just like the name of the patriarch. And so keep that in mind. It's a very Jewish book, written to the 12 tribes of Israel.

And so as we read and study this book of James, keeping that in mind, that he's writing to the 12 tribes of Israel. And as we get into, especially verse 12 here, look more into kind of the context.

And a lot of times we think of the book of James kind of mix in, because James' audience is to Jews who were expecting to go through the tribulation.

And ultimately that didn't happen. We know from, Paul tells us in the book of Romans, that at some point God cut off Israel and said, I'm turning to the Gentiles.

And I'm sending Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. And so this initial plan, Jesus was going to return very, very soon.

[2 : 0 0] And the kingdom was, as he preached, at hand. It was at hand. But ultimately that whole program got put on hold, put on pause, because the Jews rejected their Messiah.

But that program, that's probably the best way to put it, will resume again.

Paul says in Romans 11 that when the time of the Gentiles is complete, he's going to graft the Jews back in. And so God's promises to the Jews for a land, for a Messiah to sit on the throne, all these things that were promised as far as their kingdom, will resume again and it will be offered again.

And that tribulation period will also resume. So, let's read here verse 12 through 18 or 17.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone.

[3 : 1 9] But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning.

And we'll stop there. That's what we'll focus on this morning. So, looking at verse 12, he says, blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, and that word approved just means to, like, pass a test or some kind of examination.

Whether it's, you might think of a job interview. So, we think of tests as something we take in school, but there are all kinds of tests or exams where people examine us, and you see how you did.

Did you pass the test? You'd go to a job interview. Do you seem like you're qualified for this job that you have applied for? And if so, then you are approved. And so, that's the way that this word is being used here in verse 12.

[4 : 29] But we see, blessed is the man who endures temptation, and that's the whole, that's a huge thrust of this letter that James writes to the 12 tribes who were scattered abroad among the other nations.

And in verse 2, we read, my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. That's the context. And it's easy because it seems like James jumps around to a lot of different topics, but I think they're all around this overarching topic of trials because these Jews were expecting the kingdom to come, and before the kingdom, what has to happen?

Before the kingdom entrance, there has to be a great trial. In fact, the prophets of old called it the Jacob's trial, Jacob's trial, which Jacob represents Israel.

That was Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. So the people of Israel are named after Jacob. Let's, to kind of focus a little bit and get some more context, James was Jesus' brother, and he was following in the footsteps of his brother Jesus and teaching the things that Jesus taught.

So let's, to provide a little bit of context, go back to one of the things that Jesus talked about to the Jews in Matthew 24. So if you turn to Matthew 24, Jesus warned about these same trials.

[6 : 06] and we're going to just read through this really quickly. Chapter 24, we'll start with verse, let's start with verse 3.

I think we can skip verse 1 and 2. Well, let's start with verse 1. Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and his disciples came to show him the buildings of the temple, and Jesus said to them, Do you not see all these things?

Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down. He's talking about the destruction of the temple. This temple will be destroyed. Now as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming?

And of the end of the age. The prophets of old had always spoken of this end of the age, and Jesus is giving them some clues and some hints that this is coming, and they know that Jesus is going to return at some point to bring in his kingdom, but bad things must happen first, and so they're asking, What are the details?

Jesus answered and said to them, Take heed that no one deceives you. One of the things that's coming is deception. For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ, and Christ means Messiah.

[7 : 36] He said, Some are going to come and they're going to say that they're me, and they will deceive many. I am the Christ and will deceive many, and you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows, not the end. It's just the beginning. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

And then many will be offended. They will betray one another and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will arise and deceive many.

Again, a reference to deception. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end, through all that sorrow, through all that tribulation, through all that turmoil, the one who endures through all of that, whether it's in life or to the point of death, that person will be saved.

[9 : 0 0] And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. That will be the entrance of the kingdom.

Then he goes on, and we won't read fully the rest of this, but he says, therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, and this is a reference to the destruction of the temple.

And he talks about, when this happens, flee, get out of Dodge. Don't go get your stuff, just get out, flee to the mountains. Because, he says, at this point, things are going to get really bad.

And all the stuff that he already talked about, that's pretty bad, isn't it? But he says, later on, down here, he said, there will be a time of tribulation that the world has never seen before.

It will be so intense, and we'll never see in the future. This will be the worst of the worst. So be ready for it. And so, this is what Jesus warned his own disciples about, his own apostles.

[1 0 : 1 6] This is what's coming. before the kingdom arrives, and I come and I sit on my throne, and he told the twelve apostles, you'll sit on thrones with me, ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel.

Before all that happens, there's a lot of turmoil that's going to happen. And it will be a test. It will be a test, and that's what James is talking about here.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, when he passes the test, and for some, passing that test means they will be killed because of their faithfulness.

And that happened to some already, even at the time this was written by James. And most people think that James was the first book of all the epistles that was written.

The book of James was fairly early on. But even this early on, James, the brother of John, had already been killed. And I'm sure others had as well.

[1 1 : 2 0] And so there was an intense persecution. And it was just the beginning. And so James is warning these Jews who lived out among the Gentiles, those who had been dispersed because of persecution, to endure through that temptation and be ready this is a test and you need to pass the test.

Don't give up. Endure through it. Even endure through it with joy. Count it all joy, he said back in verse 2. So it's important that they pass this test.

Then he says, if he passes the test, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life. And that's interesting terminology.

He's talking about life, life in the kingdom, life everlasting. And he uses this picture of a crown. And that's interesting because the kingdom will be a royal thing, right?

We're talking about a kingdom and a crown represents a kingdom. And he talks about people who will rule and reign with him in the kingdom, those who pass the test.

[12 : 34] He will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. We read in Matthew 24, in verse 13, it says, he who endures to the end will be saved.

That's exactly what James is talking about. There's going to be persecution. It's going to be intense. You're already experiencing now. It's only going to get worse. But endure through it.

Endure through it to the end. And then ultimately, you will find a reward at the end. There were things that Jesus warned about in his parable, and we read this a few weeks ago, about the parable of the sower.

The word is sown, right? And what are the things that cause the seed not to grow? One is people don't receive the word at all. Others receive it, and then the trials and tribulation cause that word to be choked out.

And so people just give up because of the trials because of the persecution. Don't give up. This is so important. Don't give up. Even to the point of death. And then the last one, what was the last warning about?

[13 : 45] What's going to prevent the crop to grow? It's riches and just the normal things of life, right? And so he said during this time, don't worry about getting rich, don't worry about building a career.

The kingdom is the most important thing at this time. We also see allusions to these similar things in Revelation. So if you turn to Revelation, we'll look at chapter 2 and chapter 3 in Revelation.

And in both of these cases, these are letters written by John the Revelator, we call him, by the apostle John, and he writes to the seven churches.

And people dispute, you know, were these real churches at that time or these future churches that he's writing to? We won't get into that. I don't know that it really matters for our study today, but he's writing to these seven churches and giving them instruction and also warning.

And in chapter 2, verse 10, he's writing to the church at Smyrna. And he says this, Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days, be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

[15 : 08] Fits right into what James is saying. This is what happened. There's going to be intense tribulation, persecution, but endure even to the point of death. Don't be afraid of death, and Jesus taught that, right?

He said, don't be afraid of death, because the world can offer you the whole world, right? But I can offer you eternal life. Chapter 3, we'll see what he says to the church at Laodicea.

And what was his concern with the church of Laodicea? That they were neither hot nor cold, right? That they were lukewarm. Chapter 3, verse 21, he says this, to him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat with my father on his throne.

He's saying, listen, there is such a reward coming if you will endure through these sufferings, these persecutions. You'll sit with me on my throne, rule and reign with me in my kingdom.

This is a promise that the Jews had, that they would be priests and that they would be kings with Christ in his kingdom.

[16 : 24] Now, the original plan, and we don't have time to look into this and I don't have the verses, but if you read the prophets, the intention was that the people of Israel would preach the gospel, would preach the Lord, would invite the Gentiles to become the people of God, that they would be an evangelistic nation, to take God's word to all the nations, to the heathen nations, to the Gentiles.

But we see what happened in Romans 9, 10, and 11, where he cut off Israel because they rejected him as their Messiah. And so he said, I'm going to do something special.

I'm going to make you Jews jealous. You were supposed to be my evangelists. I'm going to make you jealous by offering grace to the Gentiles.

I'm going to offer that the Gentiles will be my people. You were my people, but now I'm going to make the Gentiles my people. And it won't be a permanent thing.

I'll offer to make the Jews my people again, but for this time, until the time of the Gentiles is complete, it says in Romans 11, at that time, once that time is finished, then I will graft them back in again, and I'll make the Jews my people again.

[17 : 44] But there are conditions. It's not just being born a Jew, but you have to fulfill those things which are required of the Jew. But today, in this age in which we live, God has offered a gift of grace to us as Gentiles.

And so all these things that we're reading about in Revelation and Jesus talked about in Matthew 24, are not things that God intended for us to go through. He offered us grace.

And that isn't to say that we don't suffer, right? We suffer sometimes persecution, just like these Jews were facing as well.

We suffer for persecution for our Christian faith, just for trusting in Christ and holding Him up. A lot of times it's for the morality that we hold up. People don't like that we hold up the standard of God's Word.

Lord. But, and this is a verse that all of us know, so you can turn to it, but Romans 6.23, what does it say?

[18 : 47] Does anybody know what Romans 6.23 says? For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.

So for us, we don't have to endure through this whole tribulation period and hold fast to it and even be willing to die in order to gain eternal life in the kingdom.

We just trust in the blood of Christ. We trust in His blood for us and we get a free gift. There's no cost. There's no test to pass for us.

When we contrast what God has given to us with what was required for the Jews to go through during this tribulation period that they started to go through and that they will go through in the future, doesn't it make you grateful for the grace that God has outpoured to us?

And we were not a people. We weren't special. In fact, in some ways, we're just somewhat ancillary to God's plan because He's just using us, and I don't want to put it too lightly like that, to make the Jews jealous ultimately, you know, in the future.

[20 : 05] But He does love us, and He offered us this tremendous gift of grace, a free gift, that we don't have to go through testing, tribulation, turmoil, but we do.

We will. We suffer just like everybody in the world suffers, but our suffering is positioned in a different way. I'm going to look at a few verses from the Apostle Paul.

He was the Apostle to the Gentiles, and he also talks about suffering, but in a different way. He doesn't talk about suffering as a test of our faith. In 2 Corinthians 4, 17 and 18, it says this, 2 Corinthians 4, 17 and 18, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. So, we suffer in this life.

Some suffer more than others, but the sufferings, nobody likes going through any type of suffering, any type of pain, any type of trial, any type of persecution. But they do a work in us.

[21 : 29] For the Jews, especially during this tribulation period, the sufferings, the trials, will be a time of testing. For us, the sufferings that we have isn't a test, but it is something that forms us.

It works something in us. It causes us to grow. And we even today, even in the secular world, there's a saying that I think about, and it says people will encourage, if somebody's going through a difficult time, they'll say something like, well, if it doesn't kill you, what?

It'll just make you stronger, right? It does something in you. Difficulties work in us. And so we can even see in the temporal, not even going to the eternal, that suffering, pain, does something in us.

It causes us to grow in certain ways. In Romans 8.18, Paul says this, for I consider that the suffering of this present time, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

And so I imagine it's hard for us, right, especially when we're going through intense pain. And sometimes it's physical, but sometimes the worst kind of pain is more like emotional pain, psychological pain, when other people hurt us, when we're betrayed, when people sin against us and do things.

[22 : 55] And those things happen to all of us. But I imagine that in the future, a thousand years from now, for those of us who have trusted in Christ, even ten million years from now, look back and say, I appreciate that time of pain and suffering that I experienced back in that fleeting moment, what the Bible calls a vapor, that we experienced in that mortal life that we had.

God knew what he was doing when he was allowing us to experience that pain and suffering. Let's continue on in verse 13.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. I think there's a transition here, isn't there? Because he's talking about temptation again, and what we've been talking about, I forget what the King James says is the New King James, which I'm reading about, but there's the same word.

A temptation is a trial. It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with sin, it's just a time of tribulation, persecution. But the same word is used for temptation to sin.

[24 : 28] I think that's what we see here, as Paul is transitioning to talk about temptation to sin, because he's talking about our desires and our lusts, and giving birth to sin.

So he's transitioning here. So there are temptations when it comes to giving up through trial, but then there's temptation in other ways to sin. And so he says, let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone.

One of the reasons I think this can't be talking about trials is because is it true that God never intentionally put somebody through a trial?

not at all, right? We see that in the Bible, especially with the Jewish people. We see it with Job. God intentionally puts people through trials.

Sometimes it's directly. We see the plagues in Egypt. That was a trial. God brought on the people of Egypt. Sometimes indirectly. So we would see, especially with the nation of Israel, that nations would rise up and they would attack Israel.

[25 : 38] Israel. And God was a part of that. God was involved. And that was an intentional thing that God brought about. He used another people to do it. He manipulated them in some way to attack their neighbor, Israel.

But, so sometimes God in the past would use indirect means or direct means to bring about trials. God never, ever, ever will tempt someone to sin.

Ever. And unfortunately there are people out there that in the Christian church that teach that sin ultimately comes from God.

And there's, you know, when it comes to a, there's a more deterministic view, right, of how God operates. And everything is predetermined.

And that includes all the sin in our life. And so we should never, ever ultimately blame God for the sin in our lives.

[26 : 48] Right? And here he's making a point. He's saying, where does sin come from? He says, it's when you're drawn away by your own lusts. Right? I think we do need to be careful though, not careful, but understand we're continuing in the same context.

Persecution and temptation to sin. In Matthew 24, which we just read, he talked about there will be deceptions that will come.

There will be false prophets and people who are claiming to be the Messiah. In Revelation, what's the name of somebody? There's a specific person who claims to be the Messiah.

Who's that? The Antichrist. They claim to be the Messiah. In John, we read in the book of 1 John, he says, in fact, I think I wrote it down here.

I don't know if I have the reference. But he says, the Antichrist is coming, but he says, there are already Antichrists right now. So there are people who are Antichrists.

[27 : 56] And there have been people, in fact, I think it was in South America somewhere, that there was some guy, there's a documentary about him, who claimed to be Jesus returning.

And he got a lot of people to follow him. And I don't remember all the details. Or drinking the Kool-Aid. Yeah, who was that? Jim Jones? Jim Jones?

Did he claim to be Messiah? I don't remember. But people will claim, they'll be a false prophet, they'll claim to be somebody sent from the Lord in some way, whether they claim to be the Messiah or not, and they'll deceive people.

And so Jesus wanted to warn and make sure people were warned about that. So during the tribulation period, temptations to sin will not be from the Lord.

Don't think that God is the one who's tempting you. Some people think that God is the one who might induce them to sin, as if that's a test.

[28 : 57] So there are times where tribulation has been from the Lord, but never, ever a temptation to sin. So don't ever think that that's from the Lord.

It can be from the devil, but not from the Lord. And when the false prophets come, and this may be what James is getting at.

It's kind of hard to tell. But when these antichrist comes, and when these false prophets come, one of the ways you can tell that they're not from God is that they induce people to sin.

Because God will never do that. A righteous prophet will never do that. Entice you to sin, or turn away from the Lord, or good morals in some way. Another consideration here is in Matthew.

Everybody is familiar with the Lord's Prayer. And a lot of times when you get together in kind of an ecumenical group, you get together with a group of, let's say, Protestants, Catholics, and Methodists, and all kinds of people.

[30 : 04] People will try to do something that everybody agrees to, so we'll say the Lord's Prayer together. And I've done that in different groups over the years. But the Lord's Prayer, I think sometimes we mistake for just a template for any time, for any person, but it's not.

The Lord's Prayer was intended for something for his apostles to pray. It was something that he told his apostles, this is a prayer that you can pray. And I think it was a template, it wasn't necessarily word for word, right?

But regarding this tribulation period, and one of the things that they were taught to pray is, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. And that kind of sounds weird because you're asking the Lord not to tempt you.

But does the Lord ever tempt anyone? We read right here, never. So if you read most commentaries, they say this is a figure of speech. Lead us not into temptation is just saying, God, help me through temptation.

Deliver me from the temptations that I'm going to experience. And especially during this tribulation period. But we can always ask God to help us through temptation in any age, right?

[31 : 17] Just because this is something specific to the tribulation period doesn't mean that we can't ask the Lord to help us. And sometimes we, in our lives, go through intense periods of temptation.

And we can reach out to God and say, God, I need your help. The temptation is so strong and I don't want to fall to it. And he'll work in us.

And the Bible actually says, I don't have this verse, Paul, I know, says somewhere, he says, God will always provide a way out when there's a temptation. He'll always provide that way out.

Each one is tempted when he's drawn away by his own desires. This gets into a little bit, what is sin? And there's all kinds of ideas about what sin is. But one of the mistakes I think people make is they think that our desires are sinful.

Is that true? Not at all. Every desire that we have, every natural desire, the Bible actually talks about unnatural desires, that's a whole other thing.

[32 : 24] But we have natural desires. Desires for food, desires for comfort, I'll call them romantic desires, right, that a man and a woman have for one another.

These are all things that were designed by God. God gave us these desires. And so we should never think that when we experience these desires, that they are somehow, they make a