

JAMES 4:6-10 | KINGDOM HUMILITY

VERSE 6 –

In the previous verse, Proverbs 21:10 was alluded to (see note, v.5). But now James says that God gives **more grace** to overcome the problem. He then gives the remedy empowered by grace: *humility*. In verses 6-10 James gives instruction for humility, which is a key character trait in the age of the Kingdom offer. Consider Matthew 5:5, for example.

Giving support to the argument for Proverbs 21:10 as the reference in verse 5, James now quotes Proverbs 3:34. Once again, it is my contention that the book of Proverbs has a prophetic overtone and is more related to the last days than is commonly recognized. In those last days, *humility* rather than *pride* will be a key factor in enduring to the end.

This passage parallels with the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 23:12, **And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.** While there may be a general truth concerning humility in this passage, to take this as a promise in the age of grace would be problematic. To see it as true in the future tribulation aligns with Scripture. If the Proverbs are a collection of “wisdom for the tribulation,” then this is especially true.

VERSE 7 –

The natural response to verse 6 would be to **submit yourselves therefore to God.**

Will the devil **flee from you** if you **resist the devil**? In Ephesians 6:13 Paul instructs us to put on the **whole armour of God** in order to **withstand** the devil but says nothing about whether the devil will **flee from you**. In fact, the tone of the Ephesians 6 passage seems to be that *the devil will keep on coming*.

There comes a time in the last days in which the devil will be defeated, and this seems to be hinted at here. In fact, the Greek word translated **flee** is φεύγω [pheugo] carries the idea of *escape*. Why would the devil want to *run away* from those in the last days who **resist** him? Likely because after Revelation 12:9 he can no longer be **the accuser of our brethren** (Rev. 10:10) because **they overcame him by the blood of the lamb...**(Rev. 12:11). In fact, Revelation 12:9-11 fits so perfectly with James 4:7 that the burden of proof seems more on those who apply James to today rather than to the days of Revelation 12.

VERSE 8 –

The concept of drawing near to God so that He will **draw nigh to you** is consistently found in the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Chron. 15:2, for example). It is interesting that there is no equivalent Pauline statement for the Body of Christ. This is likely because we are in an *age of silence* in which our own actions are not the basis for God’s reaction. Because we are in the Age of Grace, it means we cannot do something that draws us near to God, for that would be works (Eph 2:8-9). In the Body of Christ, we want to do all we can to be near to God through His Word, but do we have a promise that He will be near to us when we do so? The best we can do is

take specific promises like Psalm 145:18, which is a millennial promise, and apply them generally. To do so makes us feel good but does not change the fact that we serve a Savior who is at the right hand of God, being sealed in the Spirit.

James then calls for a spiritual cleansing that is at least voiced in words of Levitical purification.

#### VERSE 9 –

These words sound like instructions to a group of people living in days of a forthcoming tribulation and judgement rather than an age of grace. One wonders what circumstances in the age of grace would this be advisable information.

The closest connection to the Body of Christ would be 2 Corinthians 7:10, but an examination of that context would require the conclusion that Paul was not talking about salvation by grace and through faith, and that he also had a Jewish audience needing Kingdom information.

In context here James is teaching Kingdom humility. In the light of being judged based on meekness, a haughty person should **Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep**.... But for any kind of evangelistic presentation, to introduce James 4:9 would simply instill a works-mindset into a grace-offer.

A typical evangelical answer can be found by Douglas Moo who says,

“The biblical writers therefore suggest that all persons will inevitably “mourn” for their spiritual state. They can wait to mourn until it is too late, when God has brought his judgment on the earth. Or they can mourn now, turning sorrowfully from their sin so that they will have no occasion to mourn when the Lord returns.”<sup>1</sup>

Such an interpretation does damage to the gospel of Grace.

#### VERSE 10 –

To conclude this segment, James instructs his audience to **humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord** and presents this as the requirement for being *lifted up* by Him. It is certainly a works requirement.

But what does it mean that the Lord will **lift you up**? It is clearly speaking in a spiritual sense (in fact, Greek has a different word for *lift* when referring to making a load higher, see Matt. 12:11). The word used here is most often translated *exalt*, as it is used in an almost identical sense in 1 Peter 5:6.

In this light, what James says aligns perfectly with the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:12. And such is, not surprisingly, a Kingdom promise, as seen in Luke 1:52.

In short, what James refers to in verses 6-10 is the need for Israel to humble herself for eschatological purposes. As consistently through his epistle, this aligns with *prophetic* passages like Psalm 37:10-11. The problem comes when Christians try to apply the *prophetic* to those who belong in *the mystery*.

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<sup>1</sup> Moo, Douglas J. *The Letter of James*. Copyright 2000 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.