

James 1:9-11

⁹ *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:*

¹⁰ *But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*

¹¹ *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

In this lesson we go from the remnant asking for wisdom to the heart posture of the lowly and the rich, essentially, how a man esteems himself. This may on the surface seem disconnected, as if James is just jumping from one subject to another, but he is not.

Proverbs 11:2

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Remember in the last lesson we said that wisdom is the correct application of knowledge. The knowledge of God is what produces wisdom.

Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, and the fear of the Lord teaches a man *what he is*. How we esteem God and the truth He's revealed allows us to properly esteem ourselves, thus a man esteems himself *lowly* when he places himself *under* God. We see by comparing these two verses in Proverbs that to be lowly is to have a fear of the Lord.

This is actually going to mirror the doctrine found in Romans 12 for godly wisdom in the dispensation of grace. Wisdom requires a proper esteem of God, and therefore of one's self and of others.

James is going to encourage the brother of low degree to rejoice, because he *will* be exalted. Those who exalt themselves in this world, though given all of the same opportunities as the low man to humble himself, are going to be brought low.

For the remnant here, if they lack wisdom, they can ask of God, and God will give them wisdom, but it must be *in faith*, with nothing wavering—and as we saw previously, this means *according to God's will*. This means they are going to learn to humble themselves and forsake the things of this world, and instead have their eye single upon God's will. Thus, as Proverbs 11:2 says, *with the lowly is wisdom*.

Now we see in verses 9 and 10 a contrast being made directly between the *lowly* and the *rich*, making a distinction between the two. Why specifically address the rich here? If to be *lowly* is to have a fear of the Lord and to have wisdom, why contrast this with the rich? Why not contrast the lowly with the prideful? Do not even some rich men fear God and possess wisdom?

What we have to understand is that this epistle is, again, going to have doctrinal application in the time of Jacob's trouble, or what we may refer to as the seventieth week prophesied in Daniel 9. The context here for the audience of James is, to simplify the matter, what many refer to as "the end times." And in fact that is the context of all of the books of Hebrews through Revelation. When these books were written, the Hebrews were already at "the end of the world" according to the prophetic scriptures.

While there is a vast body of evidence to demonstrate this, let us consider just one passage:

Hebrews 9:26

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

When Jesus came the first time, it was, according to the prophetic scriptures dealing with Israel and the restoration of the earth, the end of the world. And we know and have discussed elsewhere that what is happening today is an intentional, unprophesied interruption of that plan, in order to fulfill a purpose distinctly related to the heavenly realm.

And so James is to have application once again when that prophetic program, relating to the nation of Israel and the earth, is resumed—where *the end of the world*, so to speak, can commence.

During that time, to be *rich* will be indicative of something. During that time, to be rich in the world indicates that you have rejected Jesus Christ and have instead pledged allegiance to the

beast and his world system, to a false christ and a false prophet. It is not simply about the *material gain*, it is about *how they have achieved that gain*.

This condemnation of the rich and warning against the rewards of unrighteousness is a common theme in the Hebrew epistles:

James 4:4

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

In that it says *world*, it is speaking to the *world system*, not the earth or the world of humanity in a general sense. The world it is speaking of is a world system that does not yet even exist, as it is predicated upon *the whole world* wondering after the beast and worshipping the dragon (Rev. 13:3-4). To be a friend of that world is to be an enemy of God.

James 5:1-3

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

² *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

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

2 Peter 2:14-15

¹⁴ *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:*

¹⁵ *Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness...*

Jude 11

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

There is no such condemnation of the rich in Paul's epistles for the dispensation of grace in which we currently live. We do however find an admonition:

1 Timothy 6:17-19

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

While God has provided all things for us to enjoy, our trust should be in God and not in uncertain riches, and we should be willing rather to use what riches we do have to serve God and our fellow man, just as Jesus said to Paul,

It is more blessed to give than to receive.
(Acts 20:35).

That is not to say that riches cannot be counterproductive for us today—they certainly can, and Paul addresses that in this very chapter, speaking of the danger of the love of money, and how many have been pierced through with many sorrows due to the love of money. But there is no explicit condemnation of the rich, rather, an exhortation for the rich to use what they have for God's purposes.

In the context of James, understanding that God is going to bring to justice *all things* is an essential part of wisdom. If wisdom entails fearing the Lord and esteeming Him and His truth, we must know that God is a judge that demands absolute justice in all cases.

In verses 9-11, the scripture speaks to God's righteous judgment and justice, a primary theme in the Old Testament prophets; how the prideful and mighty of the world are going to be brought down low, and how the lowly are going to be exalted.

A synonym for *lowly* is *humble*. We see this by comparing James 4:6 with Proverbs 3:34.

James 4:6

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Proverbs 3:34

Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

James 4:6 is a quotation of Proverbs 3:34, with variation by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But the meaning is the same.

Lowliness or humbleness can also be defined as *meekness*. Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language defines meekness as follows:

Meekness

Appropriately, humble, in an evangelical sense; submissive to the divine will; not proud, self-sufficient or refractory; not peevish and apt to complain of divine dispensations. Christ says, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.' Matthew 11:29

So we see *lowliness*, *humbleness*, and *meekness* all carry with them the same idea.

This *exaltation* of the lowly and meek is going to be their placement in the Kingdom of God on the earth. Jesus speaks to this in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:3-5

³ *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

⁵ *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

Well wait, is the inheritance the *kingdom of heaven*, or is it *on the earth*? Here we must define terms, because if the kingdom of heaven is us "going to heaven" forever, this passage is contradictory to itself, for Jesus says the meek shall inherit the earth, not heaven.

We have discussed previously the nature of the phrase *kingdom of heaven*, and how it is a specific phrase used in the book of Matthew to differentiate between the spiritual kingdom of God and the physical one brought to the earth, which is the subject of many Old Testament prophecies, and which was the heart of Jewish expectation from the Messiah, as it would be the eternal restoration of the kingdom of Israel, and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.

If the kingdom of heaven is for *the poor in spirit*, and *the meek shall inherit the earth*, then this inheritance *must* overlap. The kingdom of heaven must take place on the earth, else there are two different groups here with two separate inheritances. Either the kingdom of heaven has something to do with the earth, or *the poor in spirit* and *meek* are two different groups, with two different promises.

This is clearly not the case, as the promises to Israel's fathers were for a physical land and kingdom. Thus, the kingdom of heaven is heaven's (God's) theocratic reign over the earth, and those who inherit the earth naturally inherit that earthly kingdom over which God will reign through Christ. The poor in spirit here are one and the same as the meek, and the *kingdom of heaven* will be God's reign and kingdom in the actual, physical earth.

And so, the brother of *low degree* here in James could be said to be *meek*, in that *meekness* carries the idea of being humble and lowly.

The meek are spoken of at length in the Psalms :

Psalm 22:23-28

²³ *Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.*

²⁴ *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.*

²⁵ *My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*

²⁶ *The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.*

²⁷ *All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*

²⁸ *For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.*

Ye that *what*? *Fear the Lord*? And what is the fear of the Lord? It's the beginning of wisdom. And wisdom is with *who*? The lowly.

We see here God having respect unto the seed of Israel who were (will be) afflicted, and that the meek *will live forever*. Verse 27 and 28 shows us that the context here is God Himself ruling among the nations in His kingdom on the earth. Clearly this is not the case today, for, as Paul

writes, the god of this world is blinding the minds of those who reject the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4), and that we live presently in an evil world (Gal. 1:4). For the meek here, inheriting eternal life is to inherit the Lord's earthly kingdom. *This* is that exaltation of the lowly spoken of in James.

Psalm 25:8-22

⁸ *Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*

⁹ *The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*

¹⁰ *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

¹¹ *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*

¹² *What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*

¹³ *His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.*

¹⁴ *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*

¹⁵ *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.*

¹⁶ *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.*

¹⁷ *The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.*

¹⁸ *Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.*

¹⁹ *Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.*

²⁰ *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.*

²¹ *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.*

²² *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

We see here *the meek* are going to be instructed by the Lord (v9); that the Lord's mercies are to those who keep His covenant and testimonies (v10), which we can deduce will be the meek, because the meek are those who fear the Lord.

The audience here is asking God to have mercy on them and deliver them (v16-17). They are praying for God to forgive their sins, as they do not yet have eternal forgiveness (v18). These are they who are waiting on the Lord's return (v21), that is, Israel in the time of their prophesied time of trouble (v22).

Do we see how perfectly this lines up with the doctrine found in the book of James?

Psalm 37:7-11

⁷ *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*

⁸ *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

⁹ *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.*

¹⁰ *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

¹¹ *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

The meek, or the brethren of low degree, are equated with those who fear the Lord and are waiting upon Him, who are grounded in wisdom.

I am not trying to make this into some sort of word salad, I am just trying to demonstrate that this is all pointing to the same audience.

Psalm 37:16-22

¹⁶ *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*

¹⁷ *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous.*

¹⁸ *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*

¹⁹ *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

²⁰ *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.*

²¹ *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*

²² *For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.*

I just want to call attention here to the fact that this Psalm specifically addresses both the poor and the riches of the wicked in verse 16, and the “evil time” in verse 19. This evil time is, again, the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7), or the last days of prophecy before the Lord’s return to the earth. Again, those blessed of the Lord will inherit the earth.

Psalm 37:29-38

²⁹ The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

³⁰ The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

³¹ The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

³² The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

³³ The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

³⁴ Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

³⁵ I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

³⁶ Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

³⁷ Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

³⁸ But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

We come full circle here in verse 30, in that the righteous speak of *wisdom*, and what did we say part of that wisdom was at the beginning? Fearing God and esteeming Him and His truth above all else, which allows man to esteem himself as he is, thus he humbles himself under God's hand. This is exactly what Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:6.

Psalm 76:7-9

⁷ Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

⁸ Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still,

⁹ When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

Again, and again, and again, the context of these passages is the Lord's rising to judgment, and to save the meek and lowly.

We should be seeing a recurring theme by now in these Psalms. Where on earth would Jesus have gotten the idea that the *meek*, the *lowly*, would inherit the earth? Well, it's *all through* Israel's doctrine.

James 1:9-11

⁹ Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

¹⁰ But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

¹¹ For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

This idea that the high things will be brought low and the low exalted, and the fading pursuits of the high and rich being compared to grass that withers up and dies is a theme found in the prophetic scriptures. James here is directly alluding to these Old Testament passages.

Isaiah 2:11-21

¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

¹² For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up: and he shall be brought low:

¹³ And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

¹⁴ And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,

¹⁵ And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

¹⁶ And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

¹⁷ And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

¹⁸ And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

¹⁹ And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

²⁰ In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

²¹ To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Isaiah 40:1-10

¹ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

² *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

³ *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

⁴ *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:*

⁵ *And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

⁶ *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:*

⁷ *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.*

⁸ *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

⁹ *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

¹⁰ *Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.*

Psalm 37:1-3

¹ *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*

² *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

³ *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

Luke 1:52

⁴⁶ *And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,*

⁴⁷ *And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

⁴⁸ *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

⁴⁹ *For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*

⁵⁰ *And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*

⁵¹ *He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

⁵² *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.*

⁵³ *He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

⁵⁴ *He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;*

⁵⁵ *As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

Notice the common thread these all have, that it is the Day of Lord where He will be exalted, but man brought low, and they will be hiding from His glory (Isaiah 2); Jerusalem's warfare will be accomplished and her sins will be forgiven, and the glory of the Lord Himself will be revealed, that is, He will actually return and be visible (Is. 40); Psalm 37 we previously saw is in the context of the audience waiting on the Lord, who will deliver them in the time of trouble (v39), and that they will inherit the earth.

These passages about the low made high and the high low all take place in the context of the return of Jesus Christ, where God will be judge and avenger, where God will balance the scales of justice.

Even Mary alludes to this when she says,

He hath shewed strength with his arm. This is speaking to the return of Christ when He will judge:

Isaiah 40:10

Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.