

“What Is Your Life?”

Introduction:

1. We are nearing the end of the year 2015, which for some of us is difficult to believe! For a child born exactly one year ago, a “year” represents one hundred percent of his life. For an adult born 50 years ago, a year represents but a small fraction of his life. Hence, perception-wise, as we age each “year” seems to get shorter and shorter in length.
2. Sober-minded people, upon nearing the end of the old year, and approaching the beginning of a new year, tend to become more introspective, and they are generally more prone to take an inward account of themselves. They think about what **has** been accomplished and they try to factor that in with what they **want** to accomplish, or with what **should** have been accomplished. In particular, they are prone to analyze their own life as it has been lived to this point.
3. It is with this in mind that we announce the title of this lesson, it being in the form of a question, “**what is your life,**” a question asked by James who identified himself in the New Testament book of James, as being “*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,*” James 1:1. Most Bible students believe this particular “James” was none other than “*James the Lord’s brother,*” Gal. 1:19; cf. Matt. 13:55.
4. Text: James 4:13-17.

Discussion:

I. Examine the overall Background of the Text.

- A. The Book of James was written to:
 1. “*The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,*” James 1:1. Language which would apply to Jewish Christians.
 2. Has been suggested that the recipients were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who, after Stephen’s death, were scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, Acts 8:1; 11:19.
 3. “*Brethren,*” Jas. 1:2; 2:1,5,14; 3:1; 5:19.
 4. Members of “*the church,*” Jas. 5:14.
- B. The book of James has been called “the gospel of common sense.” It deals with life in the everyday world.
 1. Dealing with temptation, Jas. 1:13-15.
 2. Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, Jas. 1:22.
 3. Avoiding respect of persons, James 2:1.
 4. Control of the tongue, James 3
 5. Avoid friendship with the world, Jas. 4:4.
 6. Exercise patience, Jas. 5:7.
 7. What ought to be our action toward those who depart from the truth, Jas. 5:19-20.

II. Examine the Text.

- A. “*Go to now ye that say,*” Jas. 4:13. (“*Come now,*” NKJV).
 1. An attempt to gain the attention of the readers.
- B. “*Ye that Say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city,*” Jas. 4:13.
 1. People making plans for the future.
 2. It is not wrong within itself to make plans for the future.
 - a. God made lengthy plans for the future in Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4.
 - b. Paul made personal plans regarding the future. Acts 15:36; 18:20-21.
 3. But it is wrong to make plans for the future without considering God’s will!
 - a. He is rebuking the practical atheism which would make plans without consulting God. Too many are like Pharaoh in Exodus 5:1-2. It has well been said that “man proposes, but God disposes!”
- C. “*And continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain,*” Jas. 4:13.
 1. The Jews were a nation of shopkeepers. Many of them carried products from one country to the commercial center of another. Some traders might go to Antioch, or Alexandria, etc.
 - a. Lydia, a seller of purple, was in Philippi when Paul met her, but she was from Thyatira, Acts 16:14.
- D. “*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow...*” Jas. 4:14.
 1. They were making plans for a year in advance, but did not know what would be on the morrow! Cf. Prov. 27:1
 2. James is addressing people making plans well in advance, but not considering God in their plans.
- E. “*For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,*” Jas. 4:14.

1. Life is likened to "*a vapor*," the morning mist that mantles the mountains.
2. Many are cut off from life just when they think they "have it made."
 - a. Note the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21.
 - b. King Herod, after giving "an oration," and hearing the people shout, "*it is the voice of a god, and not of a man*," died "*immediately*," and was "*eaten of worms*," Acts 12:21-23.
 - c. Alexander the Great amazed the world as he conquered the world and then allegedly wept because he had no more worlds to conquer. He had shown great resources of strength, and some had even begun to think of him as divine; he probably felt the same way. As he viewed it, he had the world at his feet. Yet at the very height of his power, he died shortly before he reached his 33rd birthday, in June, 323 B.C.
 - d. President John F. Kennedy, at the height of his popularity, who had so many plans for the future, died of an assassin's bullet on Nov. 22, 1963.
- F. You "*ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that*," Jas. 4:15.
 1. We must submit our will to the Lord's will!
 2. Note the language of Paul in Acts 18:21; I Cor. 16:7.
- G. "*But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil*," Jas. 4:16.
 1. Basically referring to those who think they can make a success of life without considering the will of God!
 2. Such boasting "*is evil*."
- H. "*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, it is sin*," Jas. 4:17.
 1. Referring to the sin of omission. Cf. Matt. 25.
 2. Contextually, this verse deals with those who know they ought to submit their will to God's will, but plunge ahead anyway without consulting the will of God.

III. Application: What is Your Life?

- A. With reference to Duration.
 1. It is likened to a vapor that appears for a "*little time*," Jas. 4:14.
 2. It doesn't take long to live a life! Job 14:1-2; 9:25-26; Ps. 90:9.
- B. With reference to Purpose?
 1. The real value of life is determined by quality, not quantity.
 2. Consider Methuselah versus Jesus. His biography is stated in three verses. Gen. 5:25-28. But note John 21:25 as it relates to the life of Jesus.
 3. The purpose of many is similar to that of the rich farmer, Luke 12:16-21.
 4. What ought to be our purpose is stated in Eccl. 12:13-14.
- C. What is your Life Retrospectively?
 1. From the standpoint of the past?
 2. Have you obeyed the gospel? The Bible describes the fate of those who neglect to obey, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 3. Most people live their lives doing their own thing, while ignoring their responsibilities both to God and to their fellow man
 4. Are there sins you have committed against others which you have not corrected?
 - a. Tomorrow may be too late to "make amends."
- D. What Is Your Life Currently?
 1. The saints at Corinth were admonished to "*examine*" themselves, 2 Cor. 13:5.
 2. As it now stands, are you as faithful to the Lord as you intend to become?
 3. As it now stands, are there sins in your life which you need to correct – against your family, your fellow man, your brother or sister in Christ?
- E. What is your Life Prospectively? As it affects destiny?
 1. Consider Matthew 7:13-14. The destiny of some is:
 - a. Destruction, Matt. 7:13-14.
 - b. Everlasting life, Matt. 7:13-14; 25:46.
 2. The purpose of life determines direction, and direction determines destiny.

Conclusion.

1. Every accountable person needs to be confronted with the question, "*what is your life*."
--Bobby Witherington, Dec. 20, 2015

