

“What Is Your Life?”

“Come now, you who say, *Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit;* (v. 14) *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.* (v. 15) *Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”* (James 4:13-15).

At this writing, we are nearing the end of the year 2018 — which for some of us is very difficult to believe! Sober-minded people, upon nearing the end of the old year, and approaching the beginning of a new year, tend to become introspective; they are more prone to take an inward account of themselves. They think about what **has** been accomplished and try to factor that in with what they **wanted** to accomplish, or with what **should** have been accomplished. In brief, they are prone to analyze their own lives as they have been lived up to this point.

With this in mind, we have entitled this article in the form of a question, the question being “**what is your life,**” a question posed by James in our opening text, and who identified himself in the New Testament book of James, as being “*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,*” Jas. 1:1.

Before actually considering the question, “**what is your life,**” we first want to examine the overall background of the text from whence it was taken. That being the case, we observe that the book of James was initially written to “*the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,*” Jas. 1:2 — language which would clearly apply to Jewish Christians. We would further observe that the original recipients of this book were repeatedly referred to as “*brethren*” (Jas. 1:2; 2:1,5,14; 3:1; 5:19), or to those who were members of “*the church*” (Jas. 5:14), which was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28).

With the aforementioned facts in mind, we shall briefly examine the text from which our question was taken.

“*Come now,*” Jas. 4:13. Obviously, James was seeking to gain the attention of his readers.

“*You who say, today or tomorrow we will go to such a city..,*” Jas. 4:13. He was addressing people who were making plans for the future. It is certainly not wrong within itself to make plans for the future. God obviously made lengthy plans for the future when He declared that the “*seed*” of the woman would “*bruise*” the head of the serpent, Gen. 3:15, a promise which looked forward some 4,000 years to the coming of Jesus (Gal. 4:4) and whose death would ultimately “*destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Heb. 2:14). So it is not wrong to make plans for the future, but it is wrong to make such plans without first considering God’s will!

“*Spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit,*” Jas. 4:13. The Jews were a nation of shopkeepers. Many of them carried products from one country to the

commercial center of another, doing so for the purpose of making “*a profit.*” You might thus recall Lydia who was a “*seller of purple of the city of Thyatira,*” but when we first read of her she was in Philippi, Acts 16:14.

“*Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow..,*” Jas. 4:14. James referred to people who were making plans for a year in advance, but did not know what would “*happen tomorrow.*” Of course, none of us knows what will happen one day in advance (Prov. 27:1), but James was addressing people who were making plans well in advance, but had not first paused to consider God’s will!

“*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away,*” Jas. 4:14. Yes, life is likened to a “*vapor,*” the morning mist that mantles the mountains. So many have been cut off from life just when they thought they had “*it made.*” For example, we think about the rich fool, who boasted of his possessions, saying to himself that he had “*many goods laid up for many years,*” but who died that very night (Luke 12:19-20)! Some of us remember Pres. John F. Kennedy who, at the height of his popularity and had so many plans for the future, died of an assassin’s bullet on Nov. 22, 1963.”*Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that,*” Jas. 4:15. Indeed, we must submit our will to the Lord’s will, saying as Jesus taught us to say, “*thy will be done,*” Matt. 6:10.

Having briefly examined the actual text from which our question was posed, we now ask the Question:

What Is Your Life?

1. With reference to Duration? It is likened to a “*vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away,*” Jas. 4:14. We are reminded of the words of Job who said “*Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue,*” Job 14:1-2. Job also said “*My days are swifter than a runner....; they pass by like swift ships, Like an eagle swooping on its prey,*” Job 9:25-26. Indeed, it does not take long to live a life! That being the case, it behooves us to “*number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom,*” Psa. 90:12.

2. With reference to Purpose? The real value of life is determined by quality, not length. For example, Methuselah lived 969 years and died; however, the biography of his life is told in a mere three verses (Gen. 5:25-28)!. In contrast, Jesus lived 33 years and was crucified; his life changed the world, and even today it continues to change the hearts and lives of countless people around the world. With this in mind, please note how the apostle John concluded his message: “*And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written,*” John 21:25.

2. What is your life Retrospectively? Or what is your life with reference to your past? Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ? The Bible clearly describe the sad fate of those who do not obey the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Even so, most people live their

lives, doing their “own thing,” while ignoring their responsibilities both to God and fellow human beings! Also, are there sins you have committed against others, which you need to correct? Remember this: tomorrow may be too late to make amends!

3. What is your life Currently? The saints at Corinth were admonished to “*examine*” their own selves, 2 Cor. 13:5. Self-examination for each of us is important! After all, it is possible for one to “*think of himself more highly than he ought to think,*” Rom. 12:3. And it is possible for one to think “*himself to be something, when he is nothing,*” and thereby deceive himself, Gal. 6:3. Before we examine the lives of others, we should first pause to “*examine*” ourselves! With regards to your life, as it currently is, we ask are you as faithful to the Lord as you ought to be? Are there sins in your life which you need to correct — sins against your fellow man, your family, your brother or sister in Christ, etc.?

4. What is your life Prospectively? In other words, what is your life as it pertains to your eternal destiny? Based upon Matt. 7:13-14, the destiny of some is “*destruction,*” whereas the destiny of others is “*everlasting life.*” It has been well observed that “the purpose of life determines direction, and direction determines destiny.”

Conclusion: The question, “*what is your life,*” is one which each accountable person should seriously ponder. Life ought to be lived with eternity in mind, for the quality of our lives on earth is what determines where we will “spend eternity!” Friend, “**what is your life?**”

*** —B. Witherington