Crystallization-Study

OF THE EPISTLE OF

JAMES

Witness Lee

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Anaheim, California, on April 26 through June 7, 1995.

CHAPTER ONE

ITS STRESS—

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION (1)

Scripture Reading: James 1:1

OUTLINE

I. The virtues of Christian perfection stressed by James:

A. Counting it all joy whenever falling into trial and enduring it by faith with the hope of receiving the promised crown of life—James 1:2-4, 12.

B. Asking of God in faith for wisdom to know how to be perfect—vv. 5-8.

C. Rejoicing of the lowly brother in his exaltation and of the rich brother in his being brought low—vv. 9-12.

D. Resisting temptation (which draws the believers away and entices the believers by their own lusts) by all good giving and every perfect gift from the Father of lights and by the virtue of being begotten by God with the word of truth to be the firstfruits of His creatures—vv. 13-18.

E. Receiving in meekness the implanted word to avoid wrath, bridle the tongue, take care of the orphans and widows, and keep oneself unspotted from the world, according to the (perfect) law (of freedom)—vv. 19-27.

F. Having no respect of persons by not dishonoring the poor, who are the heirs of the kingdom promised by God to His lovers, and by not regarding the rich, who oppress the believers and drag them to the courts and blaspheme the honorable name by which the believers are called; and loving one's neighbors as oneself to fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture that he may not be judged by the law of freedom without mercy—2:1-13.

G. Being justified by works, not by dead faith, in supplying the daily necessities of the needy ones, as both Abraham and Rahab were justified by their works after being justified by faith—vv. 14-26.

H. Not stumbling in word by bridling the tongue—3:1-12.

I. Not cursing man, whom God made according to His likeness, by the mouth with which one blesses the Lord—v. 9.

J. Behaving in wisdom, showing the good manner of life in meekness, mercy, purity, peace, forbearance, compliance, impartiality, without jealousy, selfish ambition, boasting, lying, and hypocrisy—vv. 13-18.
K. Dealing with pleasures, the world, and the devil by loving God, by the indwelling Spirit given by God, and by the grace given to the humble—4:1-10.
L. Not speaking against the brothers by keeping the law—vv. 11-12.
M. Confiding not in self-will but in the Lord—vv. 13-17.
N. Awaiting the Lord's coming with long-suffering—5:7-9.
O. Taking the prophets and Job as examples in suffering evil with endurance—vv. 10-11.
P. Speaking honestly without swearing—v. 12.
Q. Praying according to the example of Elijah—vv. 13-18.
R. Turning back the brother led astray from the truth—vv. 19-20.

II. The items listed above imply:
A. The factors of which the Christian perfection stressed by James is produced:
1. All good giving and every perfect gift—1:17a, 5.
2. The begetting by God, the Father of lights, to be the firstfruits of His creatures—vv. 17b-18.
3. The word of truth—v. 18.
4. The implanted word—v. 21.
5. The Scripture—2:8.
6. The indwelling Spirit of God—4:5.
7. Grace given by God—v. 6.

B. The means by which the Christian perfection stressed by James is carried out:
1. Faith—1:3, 6.
2. Wisdom given by God to know how to be perfect—v. 5; 3:13, 15, 17.
3. The crown of life—1:12.
4. The (perfect) law (of freedom)—v. 25; 2:8-12; 4:11.
5. The promised kingdom of God—2:5.
6. The judgments of God—vv. 12-13; 3:1; 4:11-12; 5:9.
7. The examples of the Old Testament: Abraham, Rahab, the prophets, Job, and Elijah—2:23-25; 5:10-11, 17-18.
8. The likeness of God according to which man was made—3:9.
9. Confiding in the Lord—4:15.
10. The Lord's coming back—5:8.

11. Prayer—vv. 14-15.
12. Probably the cultivation of man's natural "bright virtue" created by God, thus becoming the cultivation of man's self.

C. The functions of the Christian perfection stressed by James:
1. Making oneself perfect in living a pious life but not in fulfilling God's eternal economy—1:4; 3:2.
2. Benefiting others.
3. Glorifying God.

By the leading of the Lord, we decided to have the crystallization-study of the Epistle of James. This Epistle has been a topic of debate throughout the centuries. Martin Luther called James a book of straw. This word is too extreme. There is some straw in James, but not all the points of this book are straw. To decide what is straw and what is not straw needs a top discernment.

We need to point out that under God's sovereignty, there are the Old Testament and the New Testament with the old dispensation and the new dispensation. God has two peoples: the old people, Israel, and the new people, the church. Also, there are the old man and the new man. When we speak concerning the Epistle of James, we must realize these four pairs of items: the Old Testament and the New Testament, the old dispensation and the new dispensation, God's old people and God's new people, and the old man and the new man. I consider the apostle James as the top mixer. He mixed the New Testament with the Old Testament, the new dispensation with the old, the new people of God with the old, and the new man with the old man. The debate on the book of James cannot be resolved unless one sees these factors.

James is on Christian perfection, but is this perfection by the old man or by the new man, by the natural man or by the regenerated man? In the book of James there is a mixture. Many points in James indicate that he does not refer to the regenerated man but to the natural man. There are other points in James, however, that point to the new man, not the old man. The New Testament tells us we have to put off the old man and put on the new man (Eph. 4:22-24). It also tells us that we have to deny the self, which is the corrupted soul, the old man (Matt. 16:24). Then we need God's strengthening to strengthen our entire being into the inner man, which is the new man (Eph.

3:16). Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the sharp word of God operates to divide our soul from our spirit. This is a base for our study on James in this first chapter.

The stress of the Epistle of James is Christian perfection. According to history and according to James's writing, there are different perfections on different levels in different ages. Job 1:1 says that Job was a perfect man. The problem in the book of Job is how to discern Job's perfection. In Philippians 3:6 Paul says that as to the righteousness which is in the law, he had become blameless, perfect. This was before Paul was saved. While he was Saul of Tarsus, he was a blameless person; he was perfect. Job's perfection was before the law, and Saul's perfection was under the law. Now we have James's perfection, but in what age? His perfection was not only in the age of the law but also in the age of grace. James was a person with one foot in the age of law and the other in the age of grace. Thus, he was one person standing in two ages. This is the perfection of James, but this is not the genuine Christian perfection revealed in the entire New Testament. Job's perfection was before the law, without law; Saul's perfection was under the law; and James's perfection was under both the law and grace. The genuine Christian perfection is purely under the absolute grace of God. We need to remember these four kinds of perfections according to history and the Bible. The Christian perfection stressed by James is under both the law and grace, by both the old, natural man and the new, regenerated man. This is a mixture. Now we want to see the virtues of the perfection stressed by James.

THE VIRTUES OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION STRESSED BY JAMES

Counting It All Joy Whenever Falling into Trial and Enduring It by Faith with the Hope of Receiving the Promised Crown of Life

The crown of life is an incentive, inciting the believers to count all the trials as a kind of joy, so that they can endure them by faith (James 1:2-4, 12).

Asking of God in Faith for Wisdom to Know How to Be Perfect

To endure trials James says that we need faith. Then he says that we need to ask of God in faith for wisdom to know how to be perfect (vv. 5-8). This wisdom is different from the wisdom covered in 1 Corinthians 1. Christ is our wisdom, but not for us to know how to be perfect. He is our wisdom as our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (vv. 24, 30).

Rejoicing of the Lowly Brother in His Exaltation and of the Rich Brother in His Being Brought Low

Whether you are exalted as a poor one or brought low as a rich one, you need to rejoice (James 1:9-12). This kind of rejoicing is a virtue.

Resisting Temptation (Which Draws the Believers Away and Entices the Believers by Their Own Lusts)

James 1:13-18 points out that we need to resist temptation (which draws the believers away and entices the believers by their own lusts) by all good giving and every perfect gift from the Father of lights and by the virtue of being begotten by God with the word of truth to be the firstfruits of His creatures. These three points are very good: the begetting of God, the word of truth, and the firstfruits of His creatures. We resist temptation by God's good giving and gifts and by the virtue of God's regeneration, which is with the word of truth to produce the firstfruits of His creatures. We can resist temptations only as a regenerated man, not as a natural man.

Receiving in Meekness the Implanted Word

First, we have to receive in meekness God's word implanted in us. Then we can avoid wrath, bridle the tongue, take care of the orphans and widows, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world, according to the perfect law of freedom (vv. 19-27). Paul tells us clearly that the law of letters is a law of bondage. In Galatians 5 he says that Christ has released us from the bondage of the law of letters. But here James refers to the law as the perfect law of freedom. James uplifts the law in the Old Testament dispensation to the

uttermost, mixing God's New Testament economy with the outdated Old Testament economy (Acts 21:18-20).

Having No Respect of Persons by Not Dishonoring the Poor and by Not Regarding the Rich

The kingdom is an incentive, inciting us not to have respect of persons by not dishonoring the poor, because they also are heirs of the kingdom, which has been promised by God to His lovers. Furthermore, James says that we should not regard the rich, who oppress the believers and drag them to the courts and blaspheme the honorable name by which the believers are called. Also, we should love our neighbor as ourselves to fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture that we may not be judged by the law of freedom without mercy (James 2:1-13). The royal law is the law of Moses. The law of Moses says that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. The commandment of the law of letters was crowned by James, because to him it was the royal law.

According to Romans 2, God will judge people according to the law in a general way. The New Testament also teaches that Christ will judge His believers at His coming back at His judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:10). That judgment will not be according to Moses' law but according to the law of life. We were condemned under God's judgment, but we passed that judgment by believing into Christ. Now in Christ we should have a life according to the law of life. Then when Christ comes back, He will judge us not according to Moses' law, the law of letters, but according to the new law, the law of life. But James still exalted the law of letters, calling it the royal law.

James's vision was vague. In the English language the capital letter *I* looks similar to the Arabic number *1* and the lowercase letter *l*. It is difficult for someone who is not familiar with the language to have a clear vision of this. When little children, especially foreigners, learn English, they may confuse certain words and letters because their vision of the English language is vague. Because of his vague vision, James uplifted the law, but in the Bible there are two kinds of laws: the law of letters for bondage and the law of life for freedom. In the New Testament we should live according to the law of life, not according to the law of letters.

Being Justified by Works, Not by Dead Faith, in Supplying the Daily Necessities of the Needy Ones, as Both Abraham and Rahab Were Justified by Their Works after Being Justified by Faith

Being justified by our works is a virtue. James says that we need to have the works after we have the faith, just as Abraham and Rahab did (2:14-26).

Not Stumbling in Word by Bridling the Tongue

James also exhorts the believers not to stumble in word by bridling the tongue (3:1-12). Who can avoid stumbling in word? Often we regret that we spoke some words that stumbled others. The less we speak, the fewer mistakes we make. The more we speak, the more mistakes we make.

Not Cursing Man, Whom God Made according to His Likeness, by the Mouth with Which One Blesses the Lord

James tells us not to curse any man. Even if a man is very bad, very poor, we should not curse him, because he bears the likeness of God (v. 9). But often after we bless the Lord, we may curse certain persons. If we honor God, we would not despise one who was made according to God's likeness. This is a virtue.

Behaving in Wisdom

James exhorts us to behave in wisdom, showing a good manner of life in meekness, purity, peace, forbearance, compliance, mercy, and impartiality, without jealousy, selfish ambition, boasting, lying, and hypocrisy (vv. 13-18).

Dealing with Pleasures, the World, and the Devil by Loving God, by the Indwelling Spirit Given by God,

and by the Grace Given to the Humble

We deal with pleasures, the world, and the devil by three things: by loving God, by the indwelling Spirit given by God, and by the grace given to the humble (4:1-10). No doubt, we can do this by the new man, not by the old man.

Not Speaking against the Brothers by Keeping the Law

James tells us not to speak against the brothers by keeping the law (vv. 11-12). But Paul says that he lived no longer to the law and that he was not in debt to the law (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:19).

Confiding Not in Self-will but in the Lord

We should confide not in our self-will but in the Lord (James 4:13-17). This can be carried out only by the new man.

Awaiting the Lord's Coming with Long-suffering

James exhorts us to await the Lord's coming with long-suffering (5:7-9).

Taking the Prophets and Job as Examples in Suffering Evil with Endurance

James also tells us to take the prophets and Job as examples in suffering evil with endurance (vv. 10-11). But at Job's time there was no new man. Here we can see the mixture in James.

Speaking Honestly without Swearing

James 5:12 tells us to speak honestly without swearing.

Praying according to the Example of Elijah

James 5:13-18 speaks of praying according to the example of Elijah.

Turning Back the Brother Led Astray from the Truth

Finally, James tells us to turn back the brother led astray from the truth (vv. 19-20). All the above items are the virtues of Christian perfection stressed by James.

THE ITEMS LISTED ABOVE IMPLYING:

The Factors of Which the Christian Perfection Stressed by James Is Produced

Now we want to see the seven factors of which the Christian perfection stressed by James is brought forth, or produced.

All Good Giving and Every Perfect Gift

The first factor is the giving and gifts by God to His people (1:17a, 5).

The Begetting by God, the Father of Lights, to Be the Firstfruits of His Creatures

The second factor is our being begotten by God, the Father of lights, to be the firstfruits of His creatures (vv. 17b-18). This is God's regeneration.

The Word of Truth

Another factor of the Christian perfection that James stresses is the word of truth (v. 18). Psalm 119 refers to the law as the word of truth (v. 43). The law is the word of God, and the word is the truth.

The Implanted Word

James also speaks of the implanted word (1:21). This is also a reference to the word of the law.

The Scripture

In 2:8 James speaks of the royal law according to the Scripture. I believe that James trusted in the Old Testament Scriptures very much. The Old Testament is a major factor of Christian perfection stressed by James.

The Indwelling Spirit of God

The top factor stressed by James is the indwelling Spirit of God (4:5).

The Grace Given by God

The seventh and final factor of which the Christian perfection stressed by James is produced is the grace given by God (v. 6). James mentions grace only in an elementary way by saying that the Lord gives grace to the humble.

The Means by Which the Christian Perfection Stressed by James Is Carried Out

Faith

Faith is one of the means of Christian perfection stressed by James (1:3, 6), but in the entire New Testament the means is much higher than this.

Wisdom Given by God to Know How to Be Perfect

James speaks of the wisdom given by God, not to know how to fulfill God's eternal economy but to know how to be perfect (v. 5; 3:13, 15, 17). James says that if we are not wise in our behavior, we should pray for God to give us the wisdom. He does not speak of a high wisdom according to God's New Testament economy but of a low wisdom according to perfection in behavior.

The Crown of Life

The crown of life is used in James as a kind of incentive for us to endure trials (1:12). This may be the highest among the means stressed by James for Christian perfection.

The (Perfect) Law (of Freedom)

James also speaks of the law as a major means of Christian perfection (v. 25; 2:8-12; 4:11). In chapter 1 he speaks of "the perfect law, the law of freedom." In chapters 2 and 4 he speaks of "the royal law" and of "the law." No doubt, this is the law of Moses, the law of letters. When I had the life-study on James a number of years ago, I was troubled with these three laws: the law, the royal law, and the perfect law of freedom. Then I considered that in the Bible there are only two kinds of laws. The first is the law of Moses, the law of letters, the Old Testament law. Jeremiah 31 indicates that this law did not work, so God promised to give His people another law, which is not written on tablets of stone but written on our heart, on our mind (vv. 31-34; Heb. 8:10). This is the law of God's life, not the law of letters. In Romans 8:2 Paul speaks of the law of the Spirit of life, which is the law of life.

At the time of James he had not come to know the law of life. Surely he had not read Paul's writing of Romans. In the past I gave credit to James by saying that the perfect law of freedom refers to the law of life. But after studying this matter more thoroughly, I found out that actually James refers to only one law, the law of letters. In 2:8 he speaks of fulfilling the royal law in reference to the commandment to love our neighbors. James considered this as the top law, the royal law. Then in verse 12 he speaks of our being judged by the law of freedom. According to the context, the royal law and the law of freedom, also referred to in 1:25, both refer to the law of letters. Thus, the three laws referred to by James are actually one law. This is why I have put *perfect* and *of freedom* in parentheses. The (perfect) law (of freedom) is the law of letters.

I believe that James as a pious man knew the Psalms very well. No doubt, James quoted from Psalms 1, 19, and 119. Psalm 19 says that the law is perfect, so the word *perfect* is used in James. Psalm 19 also says that the law revives people, that is, gives people freedom (vv. 7-8). This probably is where James got the perfect law of freedom. Psalm 119:11 says, "In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You." I believe this is what James considered as the law of freedom. When we keep the law in our heart, the law releases us from sinning. James also speaks of the word of truth (1:18), which is mentioned in Psalm 119:43. Psalm 1 shows how much the psalmist treasured the law of God. The Old Testament psalmists believed that if you meditated on the law of God and treasured it, you would not sin. That was the release, the freedom. This was the concept of James that he received from the Psalms. But today we do not consider the law of Moses as a means

by which we can carry out Christian perfection. Rather, Paul says that the law cannot do anything for our perfection.

The Promised Kingdom of God

Another means of Christian perfection stressed by James is the promised kingdom of God (2:5).

The Judgments of God

God's judgments were a means spoken of by James to carry out perfection because the judgment of God warns people (vv. 12-13; 3:1; 4:11-12; 5:9). If you consider the warning of God's judgments, you are helped not to sin.

The Examples of the Old Testament: Abraham, Rahab, the Prophets, Job, and Elijah

James also mentions the examples of the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Rahab, the prophets, Job, and Elijah, as being a means for Christian perfection (2:23-25; 5:10-11, 17-18).

The Likeness of God according to Which Man Was Made

James 3:9 says that with our tongue "we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made according to the likeness of God." James points out that although man is sinful, he still bears the likeness of God. So if we curse any man, that means that we curse a person made by God according to His likeness. This becomes a kind of incentive to help us not to curse, so to James this was a means of Christian perfection.

Confiding in the Lord

James also speaks of our need to confide in the Lord (4:15).

The Lord's Coming Back

James 5:8 says, "You also be long-suffering; establish your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near." When we think about the Lord's coming back, we will behave properly. His coming back is a means of carrying out Christian perfection in the book of James.

Prayer

James mentions prayer as a means in 5:14-15.

Probably the Cultivation of Man's Natural "Bright Virtue" Created by God, Thus Becoming the Cultivation of Man's Self

Bright virtue is a particular term used by Confucius. The highest point of his teaching is to develop the bright virtue, which is the conscience of man. Thus, what James mentions is very close to Confucius's teaching, and that teaching is to develop, to promote, the conscience, the bright virtue, by the natural man, the self. What James says is a mixture. The virtues of his perfection are not produced by God as our supply but are produced by the cultivation of the natural bright virtue.

The Functions of the Christian Perfection Stressed by James

Making Oneself Perfect in Living a Pious Life but Not in Fulfilling God's Eternal Economy

James stresses making oneself perfect in living a pious life but not in fulfilling God's eternal economy (1:4; 3:2). I do not believe that James knew anything about God's eternal economy. He knew only how to be pious, how to be godly, how to fear God, how to behave righteously, how to be perfect, and how to be upright. He does not mention anything to give even a hint that he knew the eternal economy of God. The function of his kind of perfection cannot serve the fulfillment of the eternal economy of God.

Benefiting Others

The function of the Christian perfection stressed by James is also for benefiting others.

Glorifying God

It is also for glorifying God. In James's sense, glorifying God is to have good behavior among men.

In an upcoming chapter we want to go on to see the positive side of the genuine Christian perfection revealed in the entire divine revelation of the New Testament. This is in contrast to the Christian perfection stressed by James.

CHAPTER TWO

ITS STRESS—

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION (2)

Scripture Reading: James 1:1

OUTLINE

III. The genuine Christian perfection revealed in the entire divine revelation of the New Testament:

A. The factors of which the genuine Christian perfection (Christian living) is brought forth:

1. The processed and consummated Triune God—Matt. 28:19; John 14:8-11, 16-20; 2 Cor. 13:14.
2. The all-inclusive Christ—Eph. 1:23; 4:10.
3. The consummated, compounded, all-inclusive, life-giving, indwelling, sevenfold Spirit of Jesus Christ (Exo. 30:23-25; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:11; Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6; Phil. 1:19), who was not yet before the resurrection of Christ (John 7:38-39).
4. The divine life—1:4; 10:10b; 3:15; 14:6; Col. 3:4; Rom. 5:17, 21.
5. The divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4.
6. The hand of love of God the Father and the hand of grace of God the Son—John 10:28-29.
7. The unlimited fullness of the Father—Col. 1:19.
8. The unsearchable riches of Christ—Eph. 3:8.
9. The bountiful supply of the Spirit—Phil. 1:19.
10. The abounding and sufficient grace—Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.

B. The means by which the genuine Christian perfection (Christian living) is carried out:

1. The vision of God's eternal economy—Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4b.
2. The organic Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God—Eph. 1:23; 4:4-6, 12, 16.
3. The power of Christ's resurrection—Phil. 3:10.
4. The cross of Christ—Gal. 6:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 2:20; 3:1.

5. The union and mingling of the believers with the Triune God—Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6.
6. The joining of the believers to the Lord as one spirit—1 Cor. 6:17.
7. The regenerated spirit of the believers—Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22.
8. The discernment of the believers' spirit from their soul—1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12.
9. The denial of the believers' self (soul) through the cross of Christ (Matt. 16:24-25) leaving no ground for self-cultivation.

Note: The factors of which and the means by which the genuine Christian perfection is brought forth and carried out are much more, much greater, higher, richer, stronger, more divine, more spiritual, more heavenly, more organic, more productive, more excellent, more profound, more unfathomable, and more for the union and mingling of the believers with the Triune God than the factors and means for the producing and carrying out of the Christian perfection stressed by James.

C. The functions of the genuine Christian perfection (Christian living):
1. Making oneself perfect and maturing oneself in life to live Christ and magnify Christ as the preeminent One, who is revealed in him, who lives in him, who is formed in him, and who is making His home in his heart—1 Thes. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:2; Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:15; Phil. 1:20-21; Col. 1:18; Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17.
2. Perfecting the members of Christ—4:12.
3. Making the church the fullness of both God and Christ as Their expression—1:23; 3:19.
4. Building up the Body of Christ—4:12, 16.
5. Consummating the New Jerusalem as the eternal enlargement and expression of the processed and consummated Triune God—Rev. 21:1-21.

Note: There is no comparison between the functions of the Christian perfection stressed by James and those of the genuine Christian perfection. The Christian perfection stressed by James is far off.

D. A concluding word.

THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN PERFECTION REVEALED IN THE ENTIRE DIVINE REVELATION

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We have seen the virtues of Christian perfection stressed by James. In this chapter we want to see the genuine Christian perfection revealed in the entire divine revelation of the New Testament. There is a vast difference between these two kinds of perfection. The same subject of mathematics may be taught to both elementary-school students and college graduate students. Although the subject is the same, the lessons are vastly different. We have seen the elementary school of Christian perfection in James. Now we come to the graduate school of Christian perfection in the entire New Testament.

The New Testament is of twenty-seven books. James is only one of the twenty-seven and is only five chapters long. As a short single book, James cannot compare with the entire New Testament. The perfection stressed by James is according to James's view. But the genuine Christian perfection is according to the entire New Testament.

The Factors of Which the Genuine Christian Perfection (Christian Living) Is Brought Forth

The Processed and Consummated Triune God

Now we want to see the factors that bring forth, or produce, the genuine Christian perfection. The first factor is the processed and consummated Triune God (Matt. 28:19; John 14:8-11, 16-20; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Triune God passed through the processes of incarnation, human living, the all-terminating death, the germinating resurrection, and the transcending ascension. Many in Christianity teach that God never changes. I believe that God never changes in His attributes. He never changes in His love, in His holiness, etc., but He did have a big change in His person. He was God becoming a man. What a big change! He was God conceived in the womb of a virgin for nine months and born out of her to be a man, and that man was called Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). Isaiah 9:6 reveals that the little child Jesus in the manger was the mighty God, the eternal Father. If you say that God never changes, you either do not know or do not believe the Bible. The Bible says that God changed, but in His Godhead He never changed. The

Triune God was processed and consummated as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. The processed and consummated Triune God is the first factor for our Christian perfection.

The All-inclusive Christ

The second factor is the all-inclusive Christ (Eph. 1:23; 4:10). *The all-inclusive Christ* is a term invented by us. I started my ministry in the United States in December 1962, and the first set of messages that I gave was on the all-inclusive Christ. That book on the all-inclusive Christ is based upon only three verses in Deuteronomy (8:7-9). Since that time I have spoken concerning the all-inclusive Christ in thousands of messages.

The Consummated, Compounded, All-inclusive, Life-giving, Indwelling, Sevenfold Spirit of Jesus Christ, Who Was Not Yet before the Resurrection of Christ

The third factor of the genuine Christian perfection is the consummated, compounded, all-inclusive, life-giving, indwelling, sevenfold Spirit of Jesus Christ (Exo. 30:23-25; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:11; Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6; Phil. 1:19). Such a Spirit was not yet before the resurrection of Christ (John 7:38-39).

The Divine Life

Another factor that produces the genuine Christian living is the divine life (1:4; 10:10b; 3:15; 14:6; Col. 3:4; Rom. 5:17, 21).

The Divine Nature

Second Peter 1:4 says that we have become partakers of the divine nature, which is the divine element.

The Hand of Love of God the Father and the Hand of Grace of God the Son

John 10:28 and 29 speak of God the Father's hand of love plus the Son's hand of grace. These are factors of Christian perfection. No one, including Satan, can snatch us away from these two hands.

The Unlimited Fullness of the Father

The Father's fullness is unlimited (Col. 1:19). The fullness means the overflow of the riches. When a cup is filled with water to overflowing, that overflow is the fullness. John 1:16 says, "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace."

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

The unsearchable riches of the all-inclusive Christ also bring forth the genuine Christian living (Eph. 3:8).

The Bountiful Supply of the Spirit

The bountiful, the sufficient, the complete supply of the Spirit is spoken of in Philippians 1:19.

The Abounding and Sufficient Grace

The tenth factor is the abounding and sufficient grace (Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10).

We can see from the above ten factors that James's teaching concerning Christian perfection is on the kindergarten level, whereas the entire New Testament teaching concerning the genuine Christian perfection is on the top graduate school level.

The Means by Which the Genuine Christian Perfection (Christian Living) Is Carried Out

The factors are to produce, to bring forth. They are the source. The means are the carrying out of the genuine Christian perfection.

The Vision of God's Eternal Economy

The first means is the vision of God's eternal economy (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4b). Many Christians cannot have the genuine Christian living because they have never seen God's eternal economy. *Economy* is an anglicized word from the Greek word *oikonomia*.

The Organic Body of Christ as the Organism of the Triune God

The organic Body of Christ is the organism of the Triune God (Eph. 1:23; 4:4-6, 12, 16). The organic Body of Christ is a great means of Christian perfection. If you do not know the church as the Body of Christ, how can you be perfected? Today there is no possibility for those in Christianity to know the genuine, proper Christian perfection in the New Testament, because they have not seen these things.

The Power of Christ's Resurrection

Paul speaks of his desire to know the power of Christ's resurrection in Philippians 3:10. Resurrection is God Himself. The Lord said that He is the resurrection (John 11:25a). The power of resurrection is the power of the almighty, omnipotent God.

The Cross of Christ

The cross of Christ is another means of carrying out the genuine Christian living (Gal. 6:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 2:20; 3:1). The real significance of the cross of Christ is His all-terminating plus life-releasing death. He terminated all the negative things in the whole universe. He also released the divine life from within Him.

The Union and Mingling of the Believers with the Triune God

The union and mingling of the believers with the Triune God is the fifth means of the genuine Christian perfection (Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6).

The Joining of the Believers to the Lord as One Spirit

First Corinthians 6:17 says that we are joined to the Lord as one spirit. This joining of the believers to the Lord is another means of our Christian perfection.

The Regenerated Spirit of the Believers

Another means of Christian perfection is the regenerated spirit of the believers (Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22). James never says a word concerning our spirit. When I began to minister in the United States, many people told me that they had never heard before that they had a human spirit. Three particular verses in the New Testament show the divine Spirit and the human spirit. Romans 8:16 says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. John 3:6 says that what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Finally, John 4:24 says that God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit.

The Discernment of the Believers' Spirit from Their Soul

Some argue that the spirit is the same as the soul. Hebrews 4:12, however, speaks of the division of the spirit from the soul. First Thessalonians 5:23 says clearly that man is composed of three parts: body and soul and spirit. If you do not know the difference between your spirit and your soul, how can you be spiritual? How can you experience Christ as life? If you do not know your human spirit, you can never know the spiritual things.

The Denial of the Believers' Self (Soul) through the Cross of Christ, Leaving No Ground for Self-cultivation

James's perfection is somewhat of self-cultivation. He speaks of bridling the tongue (3:1-12). To exercise to bridle your tongue is a kind of self-cultivation. He also teaches that man's wrath does not work out God's righteousness (1:20). To resist your temper is also the cultivation of self. The Lord Jesus in the New Testament taught that to follow Him, we have to deny ourselves and bear the cross (Matt. 16:24-25). To follow the Lord you must have your self crossed out. The Christian life is not a life of self-cultivation but of self-denial. Self-denial leaves no ground for self-cultivation. This is quite different from James's teaching.

The factors of which and the means by which the genuine Christian perfection is brought forth and carried out are much more, much greater, higher, richer, stronger, more divine, more spiritual, more heavenly, more organic, more productive, more excellent, more profound, more unfathomable, and more for the union and mingling of the believers with the Triune God than the factors and means for the producing and carrying out of the Christian perfection stressed by James.

The Functions of the Genuine Christian Perfection (Christian Living)

Making Oneself Perfect and Maturing Oneself in Life

Now we want to see the functions of the genuine Christian perfection, or living. The first function is making oneself perfect and maturing oneself in life to live Christ and magnify Christ as the preeminent One, who is revealed in him, who lives in him, who is formed in him, and who is making His home in his heart (1 Thes. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:2; Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:15; Phil. 1:20-21; Col. 1:18; Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17). Our perfection is for living Christ and magnifying Christ. He is revealed in us, lives in us, is formed in us, and is building His home within us day by day.

Perfecting the Members of Christ

The genuine Christian perfection also functions to perfect the members of Christ (4:12).

Making the Church the Fullness of Both God and Christ as Their Expression

Making the church the fullness of both God and Christ as Their expression is another function of the genuine Christian perfection (1:23; 3:19).

Building Up the Body of Christ

The genuine Christian perfection builds up the Body of Christ (4:12, 16).

Consummating the New Jerusalem

Our Christian perfection is now working to consummate the New Jerusalem as the eternal enlargement and expression of the processed and consummated Triune God (Rev. 21:1-21). We Christians today are building the New Jerusalem. We are consummating the New Jerusalem.

Strictly speaking, the new creation of God does not include the new heaven and the new earth. Only the New Jerusalem will be the new creation. It is the old creation rebuilt with the element of God. The new heaven and new earth are not produced in this way. They have no element of God. The difference between the new creation and the old creation is God's element. Through regeneration God's element has been constituted into His redeemed to make them the new creation.

The new heaven and new earth are called *new,* but they are not the new creation. The New Jerusalem is also called *new,* yet it is new with God's element. The new creation is composed only of God's redeemed, who are reconstituted, remade, with God Himself as the element. Second Corinthians 5:17 says that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. Galatians 6:15 says, "Neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters." We are God's new creation, and the aggregate, the totality, of all of God's redeemed people as the new creation is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the Triune God mingled with His redeemed people.

The consummating work of the New Jerusalem as His new creation started in Genesis. All of God's redeemed, probably from Adam, the latest from Abel, have been participating in the consummation of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is built by God with Himself and all His redeemed. Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham was expecting to enter into that city, the city designed and built by God (vv. 8-10). God builds the New Jerusalem within the four ages of the old creation: the age before the law, the age of law, the age of grace, and the age of the kingdom. Out of the old creation God builds the new creation with Himself plus all His redeemed.

We can see from this fellowship that there is no comparison between the functions of the Christian perfection stressed by James and those of the genuine Christian perfection. The Christian perfection stressed by James is far off.

A Concluding Word

According to all the marvelous items of the factors, the means, and the functions, as seen above, the Christian perfection (Christian living) should be the issue of the processed and consummated Triune God working Himself, in the all-inclusive Christ as the compounded Spirit, into His redeemed as their life and everything for the expression of Him. This excellent issue is nothing less than the glorious manifestation of the union of the processed divinity with the transformed humanity and the mingling of the Triune God with the tripartite man. This far, far transcends the human cultivation of one's self in developing his "bright virtue," which is merely the creation by God in man and not the God of glory wrought into man as the divine element for His mingling with man, making man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MISTAKE OF JAMES

Scripture Reading: James 1:18, 25; 2:8, 10-12; 4:11

We have seen that James made the great mistake of uplifting the Old Testament law of letters, but his mistake is covered by a beautiful cloak. James treasured the law of letters through Moses, and he seemingly mentioned another law that he called the perfect law of freedom (James 1:25). In the past we thought that this perfect law of freedom was the law of life. But actually, the words *perfect* and *freedom* are the top cloak to cover James's mistake. Jeremiah prophesied concerning the law of life that would be written in our hearts (Jer. 31:31-34), and Paul spoke of the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). In our crystallization-study to get into the intrinsic significance of the Bible, we now realize that James was not speaking of the law of life but of the law of letters.

JAMES'S BEAUTIFUL PORTRAIT OF THE MOSAIC LAW

James seemingly talks about three kinds of laws: the law of letters (the Mosaic law), the royal law, and the law of freedom. James 2:8 says, "If indeed you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well." James appreciated the law so much that he called it "the royal law." Psalms 1, 19, and 119 uplift the law to the uttermost, but even the psalmist in those three psalms did not appreciate the law as highly as James did.

James 2:10 and 11 say, "Whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all. For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law." No doubt, when James refers to the law in verses 10 and 11, he is speaking of the Mosaic law. He continues in verse 12 by saying, "So speak and so do as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom." According to the context, the royal law, the Mosaic law, and the law of freedom are one and the same law.

James was one hundred percent for the law. He taught people to observe, to keep, the Mosaic law. When James spoke of the royal law, he was speaking of only one commandment of the Mosaic law, that is, to love our neighbors. He was for perfection, and a perfect man should love his neighbors. This is a high point of human perfection, so James called this the royal law. By this we can see that he appreciated the law more highly than the psalmists did.

James 4:11 says, "Do not speak against one another, brothers. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge." This indicates clearly that James wanted the believers to be doers of the law of Moses. If the royal law refers to the Mosaic law, surely the law of freedom also refers to the Mosaic law. He says that this law is perfect.

We may wonder how James could consider the Mosaic law as the perfect law, the law of freedom. Psalm 19:7 and 8 say, "The law of Jehovah is perfect, / Restoring the soul; / The testimony of Jehovah is faithful, / Making the simple wise; / The precepts of Jehovah are right, / Making the heart joyous." The term *the perfect law* did not originate with James but with the psalmists. Surely James must have been a lover of the Psalms. The thought of freedom regarding the law is also in Psalm 19. Psalm 19 tells us that the law of Moses is perfect and that it causes people to be restored and to rejoice. To restore the soul is to make one's dead soul alive. This is to release him. Restoring and rejoicing imply release, liberty, freedom.

Psalm 1 says that the one who meditates in the law day and night will be like a tree growing beside streams of water (vv. 2-3). The law is likened to flowing streams, and these flowing streams make a person living and released. Thus, the thought of the law being the perfect law of freedom was already in the Psalms.

James uses another two terms to describe the Mosaic law, which he appreciated. James 1:18 says that God brought us forth by the word of truth. In Psalm 119:43 David says that the word of the Lord's law was the word of truth. The New Testament teaches us that God regenerated us by the word of the gospel, not by the word of the law. Paul says that he begot the Corinthians through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15). Then Peter says that God regenerated us with an incorruptible seed, and this incorruptible seed is the living and abiding word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). These are New Testament gospel terms, but James

says that God regenerated us with the word of the law. This shows us the mixture of James.

James 1:21 says, “Receive in meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” The implanted word here also refers to the Mosaic law. Psalm 119:11 says, “In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.” This is the implanted word. If the law were only outside of people, it would not work out anything for them. They have to keep the law in their heart. The law has to be implanted in them. Then this law will keep them from sinning against God. This is also the liberty to which James refers.

Thus, all the different terms used by James for the law refer to the Mosaic law. The law, the royal law, the perfect law of freedom, the word of truth, and the implanted word refer to the same Mosaic law. By this we can see how highly James appreciated the law. It is no wonder that he was so zealous for the law. But the New Testament teaches us that the age of the law is over. The law should not be used in the age of grace. The law was given through Moses. That was of the old age, the age of the law. But grace came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). The age of Moses is over. Now the age of grace is with Christ.

Even Peter made a mistake by putting Moses and Elijah on the same level as Christ. When the Lord Jesus was transfigured on the mount, Peter said, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You are willing, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (Matt. 17:4). By this word Peter gave the Lord Jesus the same rank as Moses and Elijah. But while Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!” (v. 5). This means that the law, represented by Moses, and the prophets, represented by Elijah, are over. When the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw Jesus only (v. 8). Therefore, in the New Testament, the age of grace, there is no ground for the law.

The top seer of God’s eternal economy was the apostle Paul. Paul did not appreciate the law in any of his writings. Instead, he said that we are not under the law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). He said that he died to the law (Gal. 2:19) and that no one can be justified by God through observing the law (3:11). Paul belittled the law to the uttermost, but James uplifted the law to the heavens. What a mistake he made! However, not many have seen that

James was mistaken to the uttermost in the matter of the law. James's mistake was covered by his beautiful portrait of the law.

Humanly, everyone appreciates the doers of the law. Whoever keeps the law by loving his neighbor is a good man. Keeping the law fits with the natural concept of fallen people. Acts 21 shows that James was zealous for the law, but in Galatians Paul says that we are dead to the law, the law profits us nothing, and we are not under the law. After he had written Galatians, Paul went to Jerusalem where James had become a high authority, just because of the human concept. He was made the first of the three pillars in the church at Jerusalem (2:9). He was greatly appreciated by the Jewish believers because he was zealous for the law. When Paul came to Jerusalem, James advised him to do something to keep the law in order to appease the Jewish believers, and Paul was ensnared (see footnote 1 of Acts 21:26, Recovery Version).

THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN HAVING JAMES AS A BOOK OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We need to see that God inspired James to write the Epistle of James with a purpose. This purpose is to expose James's mistake. James's own writing exposes his fault. In a later chapter we will see more concerning the purpose of God in having James as a book of His Holy Scriptures. The purpose of God is just to expose James; however, throughout the centuries most of the readers of the Bible approve James. The whole Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, but not every word in the Bible is the word of God. The word itself may not be the word of God, but it was recorded by some writer under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). The word in the Scripture and the scriptural record itself are two distinct things. For example, the word in Genesis 3:1 is the word of Satan, but the record of that word is through Moses. Moses wrote that word under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

Now let us read Galatians 5:1-4 to see what Paul's attitude was concerning the law: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not be entangled with a yoke of slavery again. Behold, I Paul say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to do the

whole law. You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace."

Paul shows us that the yoke of slavery is the bondage of the law, which makes the law-keepers slaves under a binding yoke. To deviate from Christ to the law is to be entangled or held in a snare. We need to stand fast in the freedom from the slavery of the law, not deviating from Christ, not falling from grace.

CHAPTER FOUR

ITS LACKS (1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 2:11-15

OUTLINE

I. The genuine Christian perfection is not only for living a pious life but mainly for fulfilling God's New Testament economy to make the believers God-men for the constitution of the Body of Christ that the New Jerusalem may be consummated as the eternal enlargement and expression of the consummated Triune God:

A. Although James mentions God's begetting of the believers to make them the firstfruits of all His creatures (1:18) and the Spirit's indwelling of the believers (4:5), his application is only on the negative side for the resisting of temptations and for the dealing with pleasures, the world, and the devil.

B. But in the New Testament, whenever God's economy is mentioned, its application is always on the positive side for the heading up of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10), for the ministering of the unsearchable riches of Christ to God's chosen people for the producing of the church (3:8-10), and for the unique teaching of the New Testament, the stress and the center of which are Christ, the church as the organic Body of Christ, and the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's eternal economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

C. In this sense, James is very much devoid of God's eternal purpose and His ultimate goal.

II. James does not say a word concerning the cross of Christ, but the New Testament teaching strongly emphasizes the cross of Christ:

A. The Lord said that anyone who wants to follow Him should deny himself (his soul) and take up his cross, indicating that the self, or the soul, of the Lord's followers should be denied by being crucified with Him that they could live not by themselves but by Christ as their life—Matt. 16:24-25.

B. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me," indicating that the old "I" of the believers has been crucified, crossed out; in the Christian life it should

no longer be their old crucified "I" who lives but Christ who lives in them—Gal. 2:20.

C. Paul also says, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified"—1 Cor. 2:2.

D. Paul also says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom...I [have been crucified] to the world"—Gal. 6:14.

E. Paul also says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts"—5:24.

F. Paul lived a life of being conformed to the death of Christ—Phil. 3:10.

G. Thus, how could we have the genuine Christian perfection without the cross of Christ?

H. In the light of the divine revelation referred to above, the cross of Christ is the greatest lack of James.

III. Except in 1:1 and 2:1 where the title *Christ* is mentioned, James does not say anything further about the many marvelous aspects of Christ as the New Testament teaching stresses:

A. The all-inclusive Christ, who fills all in all—Eph. 1:23; 4:10.

B. The unsearchable riches of Christ—3:8.

C. The embodiment of the fullness of God—Col. 2:9; 1:19.

D. God's allotted portion to the saints as the good land for us to walk in, that is, to live, to walk, and to have our being in Him—v. 12.

E. The preeminent One in both God's old creation and God's new creation—vv. 15-18.

F. The Head and all the members of the Body and the One who is in all the members of the Body—v. 18a; 3:10-11.

G. Christ as the life of the believers (3:4), who is revealed into the believers (Gal. 1:16), who lives in and with the believers (2:20), who is formed in the believers (4:19), who makes His home in the believers (Eph. 3:17), to the glorious image of whom as the firstborn Son of God the believers as the many sons of God are transformed (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29), and whom the believers live and magnify through the bountiful supply of His Spirit (Phil. 1:19-21).

H. Without experiencing such a Christ, how can a believer have the genuine Christian perfection, which is the issue of a life lived not by the natural life of the believer but by such a marvelous Christ who lives in him?

I. The above portrait of Christ also shows the defect in James's presentation of Christ.

IV. James mentions the Spirit of God only once as the indwelling Spirit in us (4:5); in the whole book there is no indication of the Spirit of God as the following items, which items the Spirit of God was not yet before the resurrection of Christ (John 7:39):

A. The life-giving Spirit as the consummated Spirit of God, even as the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God—1 Cor. 15:45b.

B. The compound Spirit compounded with Christ's divinity, humanity, death with its effectiveness, and resurrection with its power to be the anointing ointment to sanctify all the people, matters, and things in the service of God (Exo. 30:23-28; 1 John 2:20, 27).

C. The all-inclusive Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ with His bountiful supply through which the believers live Christ and magnify Christ (Phil. 1:19-21).

D. The Lord Spirit, indicating that Christ the Lord is the Spirit from whom the believers are transformed into Christ's image of glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

E. The sevenfold intensified Spirit for the believers to overcome all the negative things in the degradation of the church (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

F. The above items A to E indicate strongly that the book of James falls far behind the highest revelation concerning the Spirit of God revealed to Paul and John in the age of grace.

In this chapter we want to begin to see the lacks in the Epistle of James.

THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN PERFECTION BEING NOT ONLY FOR LIVING A PIOUS LIFE BUT MAINLY FOR FULFILLING GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

The genuine Christian perfection is not only for living a pious life but mainly for fulfilling God's New Testament economy to make the believers God-men for the constitution of the Body of Christ that the New Jerusalem

may be consummated as the eternal enlargement and expression of the consummated Triune God. Living a pious life has nothing to do with God's economy. When I was young in China, I saw some disciples of Confucius who were highly ethical in their living. They seemed to be more honest than the missionaries, but what they were was only for themselves. They did not know God and did nothing for God. The genuine Christian perfection is not for our interests. It is for fulfilling God's New Testament economy so that ultimately the New Jerusalem may be consummated to be God's enlargement.

In Genesis 1 God is only Elohim, but He planned to have Himself, the unlimited Triune God, enlarged to be the New Jerusalem as seen in Revelation 21 and 22. The length, breadth, and height of the New Jerusalem are twelve thousand stadia each (21:16). This is the size of the enlarged God for His expression in the whole universe of the new heaven and new earth. A stadion equals about six hundred feet. The New Jerusalem is a big cube, which can never fall or be shaken. The New Jerusalem is God Himself enlarged with His redeemed by the way of constituting, uniting, and mingling. The unlimited Triune God is constituted into His redeemed by being united and mingled together with them as one entity. James does not say anything about the fulfilling of God's New Testament economy to consummate the New Jerusalem.

James's Application on the Negative Side

Although James mentions God's begetting of the believers to make them the firstfruits of all His creatures (1:18) and the Spirit's indwelling of the believers (4:5), his application is only on the negative side for the resisting of temptations and for the dealing with pleasures, the world, and the devil. Regeneration, however, is mainly for the producing of many God-men to be constituted together as the church, the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. The indwelling of the Spirit surely enables us to resist temptations, but that is not the main thing. The main purpose of the Spirit's indwelling is to enliven us, to germinate us, to sanctify us, to renew us, to transform us, and to dispense all that the Triune God is into our being to make us parts of God's enlargement.

The New Testament's Application

on the Positive Side

In the New Testament, whenever God's economy is mentioned, its application is always on the positive side for the heading up of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10), for the ministering of the unsearchable riches of Christ to God's chosen people for the producing of the church (3:8-10), and for the unique teaching of the New Testament, the stress and the center of which are Christ, the church as the organic Body of Christ, and the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's eternal economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

James Being Devoid of God's Eternal Purpose

In this sense, James is very much devoid of God's eternal purpose and His ultimate goal.

JAMES NOT SAYING A WORD CONCERNING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

James does not say a word concerning the cross of Christ, but the New Testament teaching strongly emphasizes the cross of Christ.

Denying Ourselves and Taking Up Our Cross

The Lord said that anyone who wants to follow Him should deny himself (his soul) and take up his cross, indicating that the self or the soul of the Lord's followers should be denied by being crucified with Him that they could live not by themselves but by Christ as their life (Matt. 16:24-25).

In the Christian Life It Needing to Be No Longer Our Old Crucified "I" Who Lives but Christ Who Lives in Us

Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me," indicating that the old "I" of the believers has been crucified, crossed out; in the Christian life it should no longer be their old crucified "I" who lives but Christ who lives in them (Gal. 2:20).

Not Determining to Know Anything except Jesus Christ and This One Crucified

Paul also says, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Many in today's Christianity determine to know everything except the cross. In today's Christian bookstores there are books about things such as dating and marriage life but very little about the genuine, intrinsic significance of the cross of Christ, which crosses us out and ushers in Christ.

Boasting in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul also says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom...I [have been crucified] to the world" (Gal. 6:14). We have no boast but the cross.

Crucifying the Flesh

Paul also says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (5:24). Merely to resist temptations is insufficient. We must crucify our flesh with its passions and lusts.

Conformed to the Death of Christ

Paul lived a life to be conformed to the death of Christ (Phil. 3:10). The more he lived, the more he was in the pattern, the mold, of Christ's death.

No Possibility of Having the Genuine Christian Perfection without the Cross of Christ

Thus, how could we have the genuine Christian perfection without the cross of Christ?

The Cross of Christ Being the Greatest Lack of James

In the light of the divine revelation referred to above, the cross of Christ is the greatest lack of James. The Christian perfection in James leads to self-cultivation, but Paul says that he had been crucified with Christ and was being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of His resurrection. It is this life that produces the Body life, which consummates in the New Jerusalem.

Regardless of whether we are a good man or a bad man, we have to be crossed out. It is no longer I, but Christ lives in me as the life-giving Spirit to issue in the Body of Christ. Self-cultivation does not carry out God's economy, but self-denial does. We have to deny ourselves, realizing that whatever we are in the old creation has been crossed out, crucified. Every day we are dying. We are being conformed to the death of Christ so that Christ can live in us to bring forth the Body life, which will issue in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal goal in His eternal economy. This is the proper insight of the New Testament revelation. These three great things—the Triune God, the all-inclusive Christ, and the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit—are for the producing of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the real embodiment of the Triune God in Christ as the Spirit, and this Body will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

In 1 Timothy Paul teaches concerning godliness. He reveals that it is the manifestation of God in the flesh (3:16), not something of self-cultivation. Peter also speaks of godliness, saying that the divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Godliness does not depend upon self-cultivation but upon the divine life. Godliness is the expression of the divine life, but self-cultivation is to build up the self. The real godliness issues in the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem for the fulfillment of God's New Testament economy.

James pointed out to Paul in Acts 21 that there were thousands of Jewish believers who were zealous for the law (v. 20). This shows the terrible mixture in the church at Jerusalem. This mixture was also a cause for God's sending Titus, a prince of the Roman Empire, with the Roman army to destroy the city of Jerusalem, including the temple. This took place in A.D. 70, just a short time after Paul's martyrdom, and was a fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy that Jerusalem with the temple would be destroyed (Matt. 24:2). If this had not happened, the mixture of Judaism with God's New Testament economy might have continued for centuries. God, however, would never sanction or justify

such a mixture. This shows that it is not a small thing to be mistaken in God's economy.

James's concept of Christian perfection was very much in the realm of self-cultivation. Job also was perfect in his way, but God stripped Job of what he was so that he could be rebuilt with God Himself. Our integrity means nothing. Only God means everything.

In the New Jerusalem there are three main items: gold, pearls, and precious stones. The whole city has the appearance of a jasper stone (Rev. 21:11). God's appearance, as the One sitting on the throne, is also like jasper (4:3). This shows that the New Jerusalem is the enlargement of God as the consummation of the Body of Christ. In the church today, people should see only jasper, God Himself. We should teach only that which remains in the New Jerusalem. We have to teach Christ with ourselves crucified by the life-giving Spirit as the power of resurrection.

JAMES NOT SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT THE MANY MARVELOUS ASPECTS OF CHRIST STRESSED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Except in James 1:1 and 2:1 where the title *Christ* is mentioned, James does not say anything further about the many marvelous aspects of Christ as the New Testament teaching stresses. Instead, he uplifts and exalts the law with six kinds of particular terms: the word of truth, the implanted word, the perfect law, the law of freedom, the royal law, and the law that all believers have to keep. James was a lover, exalter, and promoter of the law, but Paul was different. In Colossians, a book of only four chapters, he exalts Christ as the preeminent One in the old and new creations (1:15-18) and as the embodiment of the Triune God (2:9). *Hymns,* #189 is a marvelous song on the Christ unveiled in Colossians.

Now we want to point out some of the marvelous aspects of Christ stressed in the teaching of the New Testament that cannot be seen in the book of James.

The All-inclusive Christ, Who Fills All in All

In Ephesians Paul speaks of the all-inclusive Christ, who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23; 4:10).

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

Paul also speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ (3:8).

The Embodiment of the Fullness Of God

Colossians tells us that Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of God (2:9; 1:19).

God's Allotted Portion to the Saints as the Good Land for Us to Walk In, That Is, to Live, to Walk, and to Have Our Being in Him

Christ is God's allotted portion to the saints, just as the good land was God's allotted portion to Israel (v. 12). The good land is a type of Christ allotted to us as our portion for us to live, walk, work, and move in Him. He is the land to us. (See *Hymns*,#1164-#1169 on Christ as the good land.)

The Preeminent One in Both God's Old Creation and God's New Creation

Christ is the preeminent One in both God's old creation and God's new creation (vv. 15-18).

The Head and All the Members of the Body and the One Who Is in All the Members of the Body

Colossians 1:18a and 3:10-11 reveal that Christ is the Head of the Body, all the members of the Body, and the One who is in all the members of the Body.

The Life of the Believers

Christ is the life of the believers (3:4), who is revealed into the believers (Gal. 1:16), who lives in and with the believers (2:20), who is formed in the believers (4:19), who makes His home in the believers (Eph. 3:17), to the

glorious image of whom as the firstborn Son of God the believers as the many sons of God are transformed (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29), and whom the believers live and magnify through the bountiful supply of His Spirit (Phil. 1:19-21). There is no comparison between Paul's word and James's word.

The Need to Experience Such a Marvelous Christ

Without experiencing such a Christ, how can a believer have the genuine Christian perfection, which is the issue of a life lived not by the natural life of the believer but by such a marvelous Christ who lives in him?

The Defect in James's Presentation of Christ

The above portrait of Christ also shows the defect in James's presentation of Christ.

JAMES MENTIONING THE SPIRIT OF GOD ONLY ONCE AS THE INDWELLING SPIRIT IN US

James mentions the Spirit of God only once as the indwelling Spirit in us (4:5); in the whole book there is no indication of the Spirit of God as five marvelous items: the life-giving Spirit, the compound Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Lord Spirit, and the sevenfold intensified Spirit. Such a Spirit was not yet before the resurrection of Christ (John 7:39). James does not say anything about these rich items of the Spirit. Such a Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified in His resurrection. Thus, after Jesus' resurrection such a Spirit came into existence.

The Life-giving Spirit

James does not speak of the life-giving Spirit as the consummated Spirit of God, even as the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God. First Corinthians 15:45b says that the last Adam (Christ in the flesh) became a life-giving Spirit. The Spirit Himself is the processed and consummated Triune God. The Father is embodied by the Son and the Son is realized as the Spirit, so this Spirit is the consummation and the totality of the Triune God.

I came to the United States with the burden to teach that Christ is the life-giving Spirit. *Hymns*, #539 is on this truth. I wrote it in 1963. The first two stanzas of this hymn say,

O Lord, Thou art in me as life
And everything to me!
Subjective and available,
Thus I experience Thee.

O Lord, Thou art the Spirit!
How dear and near to me!
How I enjoy Thy marvelous
Availability!

To all my needs both great and small
Thou art the rich supply;
So ready and sufficient too
For me now to apply.

The Compound Spirit

The compound Spirit compounded with Christ's divinity, humanity, death with its effectiveness, and resurrection with its power is the anointing ointment to sanctify all the people, matters, and things in the service of God (Exo. 30:23-28; 1 John 2:20, 27). The complete God and the perfect man are in this Spirit. Christ's death with its effectiveness and His resurrection with its power are also in this Spirit. When we have this Spirit, all these ingredients become our bountiful supply.

The All-inclusive Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Philippians 1:19-21 reveals the all-inclusive Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ with His bountiful supply through which the believers live Christ and magnify Christ.

The Lord Spirit

Second Corinthians 3:18 refers to the Lord Spirit, which indicates that Christ the Lord is the Spirit from whom the believers are transformed into Christ's image of glory. *The Lord Spirit* is a compound divine title like *the Father God* and *the Lord Christ*. This means that the Lord is the Spirit (v. 17). There are a number of people in today's Christianity who do not recognize this. They say that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three separate persons. The Bible, however, reveals that the three of the Divine Trinity are distinct but can never be separated.

The Sevenfold Intensified Spirit

In Revelation we see the sevenfold intensified Spirit for the believers to overcome all the negative things in the degradation of the church (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

The above items (A to E) concerning the Spirit indicate strongly that the book of James falls far behind the highest revelation concerning the Spirit of God revealed to Paul and John in the age of grace.

We need to realize that many Christians today are, in principle, like James. James was a pious person fearing and worshipping God. What he wrote was very good ethically, helping the people who fear God to be perfect. But James was devoid of the visions of God's high revelation. Today many in Christianity are like this. They teach the right things concerning God, yet they are devoid of the higher vision of God's high revelation.

They preach and teach that God is unique and that He created the heavens, the earth, and all things. He also created man, but man fell. Thus, because God loved man, He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. Jesus came and lived on this earth as recorded in the four Gospels to show God's love, God's kindness, and God's goodness to people, healing them and doing miracles to rescue them for three and a half years. Then He went to the cross and died for man's sins to be man's Redeemer. He resurrected to show His power, in which death could not bind Him. Then He ascended to the heavens to be glorified, crowned, and enthroned. Finally, He sent His believers into all the earth to preach Him, which is to establish the kingdom of God. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this teaching, which they call the fundamental teaching.

But what the Lord's recovery has seen and picked up from the New Testament is so high, concerning God's eternal economy, the all-inclusive God processed and consummated, the all-inclusive Christ, the life-giving compound Spirit, the divine eternal life, and the church as the Body of Christ. This mystical Body of Christ consummates in the New Jerusalem. In today's fundamental teaching of Christianity, not one of these items is fully, adequately touched. They say that God never changed. The Bible tells us that God never changed in His nature, but He did become a man. Was that not a change? The procedure for Him to become a man was a process, the process of conception. He entered into a virgin's womb and stayed there for nine months to be born as a man. He was God, but after being processed, He became a God-man. No longer was He merely God, but He was God plus man. He passed through the process of human life as God living on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. He went to the cross and was buried in the tomb for three days. Was that not a process? Then He entered into resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit. Surely this is also a process. By this we can see that today's teaching in Christianity is inadequate.

Who today sees the intrinsic significance of God's incarnation, Christ's death, and Christ's resurrection? Many say that God came to be a Savior. That is not wrong, but the Lord has shown us that God's incarnation indicates that God became one with man. God brought Himself into man and joined Himself with man, even mingled Himself with man that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. All the items in the Bible have their intrinsic significance. We do not eat the skin of an orange but the intrinsic content of the orange. The inner content is the real significance of the orange.

One wrong teaching today is that the believers in Christ go to heaven when they die. The Bible shows that God has prepared two Paradises for His believers. The first Paradise is for today. When a believer dies, his body is buried in the earth, but his spirit and soul go to the first Paradise. The Lord Jesus told the criminal on the cross, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). This Paradise is the pleasant section of Hades. Hades is divided into two sections: the section of torment for the perished unbelievers and the pleasant section called Paradise. That is the place where the Lord Jesus went after He died (Acts 2:27, 31) and the place where Abraham and the poor man Lazarus are, as described in Luke 16:19-31.

They remain in Paradise, a place of comfort, waiting for the Lord's coming back. When the Lord comes back, they will be resurrected from Paradise and from the earth with a body, soul, and spirit. Then they will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). If they are overcomers, they will go into the New Jerusalem in the thousand years of the kingdom. That initial stage of the New Jerusalem is called "the Paradise of God" in Revelation 2:7. But if you are a defeated genuine believer, you will be condemned at the Lord's judgment seat. Then what you did as wood, grass, and stubble will be burned (1 Cor. 3:12-15), and you will be disciplined in the thousand years of the kingdom to get yourself matured, perfected, and transformed. At the end of the thousand-year kingdom, you will enter into the New Jerusalem in its consummate stage in the new heaven and new earth to meet together with all the overcomers.

I share this to show again that the teaching of today's Christianity is like that of James—right to a certain degree but devoid of the highest peak of God's revelation. The Lord's recovery is absolutely different. For over seventy years we have dived into the intrinsic significance of the Bible. We have read the different interpretations of the Bible throughout the church's history, and the Lord has given us the discernment to see what is according to His eternal economy. We need to see the difference between the Lord's recovery and today's Christianity. The Lord's recovery is up to the standard of the divine revelation, but Christianity is devoid of it.

CHAPTER FIVE

ITS LACKS (2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 2:11-15

OUTLINE

V. Although James tells us that God brought us forth by the word of truth, he does not stress the divine life with which God has brought us forth in regeneration as the New Testament does:

A. The Lord Jesus said that He came that we may have life and may have it abundantly and that He is life to us—John 10:10; 11:25; 14:6.

B. God's salvation commences with His life through regeneration and consummates in the divine life through transformation—3:3, 15; Rom. 5:10; 12:2a.

C. God has given the sinners repentance unto life—Acts 11:18.

D. All the believers are God's heirs of the grace of life—1 Pet. 3:7b.

E. God's divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness—2 Pet. 1:3.

F. God's grace in Christ enables us to reign in life, ruling over all the negative things that are against God and His economy—Rom. 5:17, 21.

G. The Lord promised that the overcomers will eat of the tree of life—Rev. 2:7.

H. The Triune God flows as a river of water of life in which the tree of life grows for the supply to the entire city of the New Jerusalem—22:1-2.

I. The tree of life is a great blessing to the redeemed—v. 14, cf. v. 19.

J. The Epistle of James, as a book stressing Christian perfection, only refers to the divine life in speaking of the crown of life as a reward promised by God to His lovers (1:12) but does not speak anything concerning the divine life to be the believers' life for their spiritual existence and the divine life's capacity and function. What a critical lack this is!

VI. James mentions the church only once, charging the sick members of the church to ask the elders of the church to pray for healing (5:14), but he does not speak a bit concerning the church as the organic Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6), which is the

center and goal of God's eternal economy (3:9-11) and which will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21—22).

VII. In addition to its lack in the above six items, the Epistle of James does not tell us about the following items:

A. The divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4.

B. The hand of love of God the Father and the hand of grace of God the Son—John 10:28-29.

C. The unlimited fullness of the Father—Col. 1:19.

D. These are also elements of the tremendous lack in the Epistle of James.

Note: Without seeing a clear vision of God's eternal economy, without the all-inclusive Christ, without the all-inclusive Spirit, without the divine life that enables us even to reign over the things that are against God, without the all-inclusive power of the resurrection of Christ, and without the all-terminating cross of Christ, there is no possibility for anyone to live out Christian perfection (Christian living). According to the entire teaching of the New Testament, Christian perfection is produced by the believers with the rich element of all that Christ is, by the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive consummated Spirit, and through the power of Christ's resurrection and the death of Christ's cross. Without the termination of our natural life by the cross, we may have a kind of perfection not by self-denial but by self-cultivation, which is considered by most Christians as the genuine Christian perfection. Such a Christian perfection is a pretense and is the product of the natural life endeavoring to develop the "bright virtue" in the man of God's old creation. It is hard to discern how much the Christian perfection stressed by James implies these all-inclusive items in the New Testament.

According to the New Testament teaching, the Christian living should also eventually be for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:15-16), not merely for the believers' personal benefit and blessing, nor merely for them to glorify God in their excellent living and good conduct. The goal of God's New Testament economy is the Body of Christ (for the consummation of the New Jerusalem), at which the Christian living, Christian perfection, should be aimed.

VIII. Besides the above lacks, the Epistle of James is devoid of the five following critical items concerning the believers' spiritual experiences in life, without which the New Testament becomes only a book of doctrine and no longer a book of experience in the divine life:

A. The union and mingling of the believers with the Triune God—Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6.
B. The believers being joined to the Lord as one spirit—1 Cor. 6:17.
C. The believers' regenerated spirit—Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22.
D. The discernment of the believers' spirit from their soul—1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12.
E. Living by the Spirit and walking according to the spirit—Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4b.

Note: All the lacks and defects in the Epistle of James mentioned above are evidences that the Christian perfection stressed by James is not one up to the standard of the high level of the genuine Christian perfection as revealed in the New Testament, but one which is inadequate in fulfilling God's New Testament economy and which is even mistaken under the vague vision concerning God's eternal economy.

In the previous chapter we saw four lacks in the Epistle of James. The first lack is the economy of God, which is for the building up of the Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God consummating in the New Jerusalem. The second lack is the cross of Christ. The third lack is the marvelous aspects of Christ. James mentions that Christ is the Lord of glory, but he does not explain what glory is. The fourth lack is the Spirit in five items. These five items are the life-giving Spirit, the compound Spirit, the all-inclusive Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Lord Spirit, and the sevenfold intensified Spirit. These five aspects of the Spirit were "not yet" before Christ's resurrection (John 7:39). After Christ's resurrection the Spirit in these five aspects came into existence. In this chapter we want to continue our fellowship on the lacks of the Epistle of James.

NOT STRESSING THE DIVINE LIFE

Although James tells us that God brought us forth by the word of truth, he does not stress the divine life with which God has brought us forth in regeneration as the New Testament does.

The Lord Jesus Being Life to Us

The Lord Jesus said that He came that we may have life and may have it abundantly and that He is life to us (John 10:10; 11:25; 14:6). James refers to the regeneration by God, but he only says that this rebirth was by the word of truth, which is a term adopted from the Psalms (119:43). He does not say that regeneration basically is with Christ as life. Peter also speaks of regeneration, but he says that this was through the living and abiding word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). He calls this word the incorruptible seed. This living seed is of life. Without Christ as life, we cannot be regenerated.

God's Salvation Commencing with and Consummating in the Divine Life

God's salvation commences with His life through regeneration and consummates in the divine life through transformation (John 3:3, 15; Rom. 5:10; 12:2a). God's salvation begins with life, continues with life, and consummates with life. A number of Christians are very enthusiastic for gospel preaching. They call it soul winning. They feel that we merely need to save sinners so that they can be justified and eventually qualified to go to heaven. God's salvation, however, does not consummate in going to heaven. It consummates in life, which is Christ Himself.

Repentance unto Life

God has given the sinners repentance unto life (Acts 11:18).

Heirs of the Grace of Life

All the believers are God's heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7b). The grace of life is our inheritance.

God's Divine Power Granting to Us All Things Relating to Life and Godliness

God's divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life—concerning life within and godliness in our living without (2 Pet. 1:3). Godliness is the living of the divine life. The divine life within us becomes our living, and that is godliness.

Reigning in Life

God's grace in Christ enables us to reign in life, ruling over all the negative things that are against God and His economy (Rom. 5:17, 21). James speaks merely of being able to resist temptation, but the life presented in the New Testament enables us to reign over sin and Satan. Eventually, we will reign over the nations. We receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness to reign in life. Then grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. We reign in this age, and grace reigns in the eternal age. We should be vital not merely to overcome but to reign. The vital groups are producing not only overcomers but also kings. As kings, we should go to visit people with the gospel. When we do this, we reign.

Eating of the Tree of Life

The Lord promised that the overcomers will eat of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7).

The River of Water of Life

The Triune God flows as a river of water of life in which the tree of life grows for the supply to the entire city of the New Jerusalem (22:1-2). The Triune God flows out with two provisions: the river of life and the tree of life. One is for drinking, and the other is for eating.

The Tree of Life
Being a Great Blessing to the Redeemed

The tree of life is a great blessing to the redeemed (v. 14, cf. v. 19). The greatest blessing is the tree of life.

James Speaking Only of the Crown of Life

The Epistle of James, as a book stressing Christian perfection, only refers to the divine life in speaking of the crown of life as a reward promised by God to His lovers (1:12) but does not speak anything concerning the divine life to be the believers' life for their spiritual existence and the divine life's capacity and function. What a critical lack this is!

JAMES MENTIONING THE CHURCH ONLY ONCE

James mentions the church only once, charging the sick members of the church to ask the elders of the church to pray for healing (5:14), but he does

not speak a bit concerning the church as the organic Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6), which is the center and goal of God's eternal economy (3:9-11) and which will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21—22).

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES NOT TELLING US ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

In addition to its lack in the above six items, the Epistle of James does not tell us about the following items.

The Divine Nature

James does not tell us about the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Something that has the dog nature is a dog, and someone who has the human nature is a man. How wonderful it is that we have God's nature! We are partakers of His divine nature, so that makes us God in His nature but, of course, not in His Godhead. The Bible's teaching is very logical.

The Hand of Love of God the Father and the Hand of Grace of God the Son

The hand of God the Father is of love and the hand of God the Son is of grace (John 10:28-29). Love and grace are one. Love is the source; grace is the manifestation. When love is expressed, it becomes grace. We can use a gift as an illustration of this. If someone gives you a New Testament, that is out of his love and is an expression of his love. This expression is grace, which is free. The grace of the Son is the expression of the Father's love.

The Unlimited Fullness of the Father

Colossians 1:19 speaks of the unlimited fullness of the Father.

The Elements of James's Tremendous Lack

These are also elements of the tremendous lack in the Epistle of James. James's lack is not light. It is tremendous.

Without seeing a clear vision of God's eternal economy, without the all-inclusive Christ, without the all-inclusive Spirit, without the divine life that enables us even to reign over the things that are against God, without the all-inclusive power of the resurrection of Christ, and without the all-terminating cross of Christ, there is no possibility for anyone to live out Christian perfection (Christian living). According to the entire teaching of the New Testament, Christian perfection is produced by the believers with the rich element of all that Christ is, by the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive consummated Spirit, and through the power of Christ's resurrection and the death of Christ's cross. Without the termination of our natural life by the cross, we may have a kind of perfection not by self-denial but by self-cultivation, which is considered by most Christians as the genuine Christian perfection. Such a Christian perfection is a pretense and is the product of the natural life endeavoring to develop the "bright virtue" in the man of God's old creation. It is hard to discern how much the Christian perfection stressed by James implies these all-inclusive items in the New Testament.

According to the New Testament teaching, the Christian living should also eventually be for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:15-16), not merely for the believers' personal benefit and blessing, nor merely for them to glorify God in their excellent living and good conduct. The goal of God's New Testament economy is the Body of Christ (for the consummation of the New Jerusalem), at which the Christian living, Christian perfection, should be aimed.

BESIDES THE ABOVE LACKS, THE EPISTLE OF JAMES BEING DEVOID OF THE FIVE FOLLOWING CRITICAL ITEMS

Besides the above lacks, the Epistle of James is devoid of the five following critical items concerning the believers' spiritual experiences in life, without which the New Testament becomes only a book of doctrine and no longer a book of experience in the divine life.

The Union and Mingling

of the Believers with the Triune God

The believers are united and mingled with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6).

The Believers Being Joined to the Lord as One Spirit

First Corinthians 6:17 says that we believers are joined to the Lord as one spirit. This means that we become Him and He becomes us. This is not merely union but also mingling.

The Believers' Regenerated Spirit

James is devoid of the truth concerning the believers' regenerated spirit (Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22).

The Discernment of the Believers' Spirit from Their Soul

James is also devoid of the revelation concerning the discernment of the believers' spirit from their soul (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). A sister may want to go shopping for items that are on sale out of the desire from her soul. But another part of her being tells her not to do this. This is her spirit. We need to learn to discern our spirit from our soul.

Living by the Spirit and Walking according to the Spirit

James also lacks the thought of living by the Spirit and walking according to the spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4b).

All the lacks and defects in the Epistle of James mentioned above are evidences that the Christian perfection stressed by James is not one up to the standard of the high level of the genuine Christian perfection as revealed in the New Testament but one which is inadequate in fulfilling God's New Testament economy and which is even mistaken under the vague vision concerning God's eternal economy.

The New Testament, which is of twenty-seven books, is composed of mainly nine items. If we see them, we understand the New Testament. These items are the economy of God; the all-inclusive God with His fullness; the all-inclusive Christ with His riches; the all-inclusive Spirit with His supply; the divine life, which is Christ Himself as the embodiment of the Triune God; Christ's death; Christ's resurrection; and the Body of Christ. All these items consummate the New Jerusalem (the final item) as the ultimate goal of God. The economy of God is a plan to produce the Body of Christ through the Triune God (the Father, the Son, and the Spirit), through the divine life, and through Christ's death and resurrection. The building up of the Body of Christ will consummate the New Jerusalem. The entire New Testament covers these nine items. All the other things in the New Testament are like the leaves of a tree, whereas these items are the fruit.

The book of James touches only two of the above items: the begetting Father and the indwelling Spirit. But even these items are spoken of by James in an inadequate way. Thus, the book of James is devoid of the main items in the New Testament.

CHAPTER SIX

ITS VAGUE VISION, THE SIDE EFFECTS OF JAMES'S TEACHING, THE TRAGIC ISSUES OF JAMES'S MISTAKE, AND THE WIPING OUT BY GOD

Scripture Reading: James 1:1

OUTLINE

I. Its vague vision concerning God's dispensation:

A. Calling the Jewish believers "the twelve tribes"—James 1:1:

1. The Lord Jesus told His Jewish disciples that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to the church—Matt. 21:43.
2. According to God's economy in His New Testament dispensation, the church is separate from the Jews—1 Cor. 10:32.

B. Calling the meeting place of the Jewish believers a "synagogue"—James 2:2:

1. *Synagogue* is a particular designation used for the meeting place of the scattered Jews—Acts 6:9.
2. The synagogue was the place where the Jews persecuted the believers—Matt. 10:17; 23:34.
3. The synagogue was called by the Lord Jesus the "synagogue of Satan"—Rev. 2:9.

C. Teaching the Jewish believers to keep the law of the Old Testament—James 1:25; 2:8-12; 4:11-12:

1. This is confirmed by James's word in Acts 15:21 and 21:20-25.
2. James appreciated the law, calling it the "perfect law, the law of freedom" and the "royal law," as the psalmists did in the Old Testament—Psa. 1:1-2; 19:7-11; 119:10-11, 43, 142, 151.
3. But in God's New Testament dispensation Christ has ended (terminated and taken away) the law—Rom. 10:4; Heb. 10:9.
4. According to God's New Testament dispensation, the believers are not under the law but under grace—Rom. 6:14.

5. In the New Testament economy the believers have been freed by Christ from the law's yoke of slavery, no longer indebted to the law; if they will still keep the law, Christ will profit them nothing, they will be separated from Christ, and they will fall from grace—Gal. 5:1-4.
6. Hence, Paul says that the believers have died to law—2:19.

II. The side effects of James's teaching under his vague vision concerning God's economy:

A. A mixture of God's New Testament dispensation with God's Old Testament dispensation:
1. James uses the terms of the Old Testament Jews, such as *the twelve tribes, synagogue,* and *the Lord of hosts*[Jehovah of hosts] in 1:1; 2:2; 5:4.
2. Its words in 1:27 and 4:14 bear the element and flavor of the Old Testament.
3. The examples it uses are only of the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Rahab in 2:23, 25 and the prophets, Job, and Elijah in 5:10-11, 17.

B. A mixture of God's New Testament chosen people—the believers—with God's Old Testament elect—the Jews.

C. A mixture of the church practice with the Jews' way of meeting to worship God in the synagogues.

D. In his teaching of the Jewish believers concerning the virtues of Christian perfection, James did not warn them, as Paul did in dealing with the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 2:14), that the virtues of Christian perfection should be produced and carried out only by the regenerated persons and not by the natural persons. Here a hidden mixture is implied: a mixture of the regenerated persons in their regenerated humanity mingled with divinity, with the natural persons in their fallen humanity, in the producing and carrying out of the virtues of Christian perfection. In the church as the organic Body of Christ everything must be done by the regenerated persons, in whom is God's delight, and nothing should be done by the natural persons, for whom is God's condemnation.

III. The tragic issues of James's mistake:

A. The blinding of thousands of believers:
1. From James's time to today.

2. From seeing the clear view concerning the economy of God that they may participate in the producing and building up of the Body of Christ as a precursor of the New Jerusalem.
3. The divine revelation in the Scriptures is progressive in different degrees, and its progression is according to the four different ages of the Scriptures:
    a. Job's perfection (Job 1:1, 8) was according to the divine revelation of the age before the law, which was Job's goal in seeking after God and replaced God in Job's satisfaction; thus, Job was stripped by God of his perfection.
    b. Saul of Tarsus's perfection (Phil. 3:6) before his salvation was according to the divine revelation in the age of law, which was opposing God's New Testament economy and was rejected by him after his salvation by receiving the vision of the divine revelation of the age of grace.
    c. The perfection stressed by James was according to his vague view of God's divine revelation and was a mixture of the divine revelation according to the age of the law with the divine revelation according to the age of grace.
    d. The genuine perfection is according to the pure vision of God's highest divine revelation of the age of grace and is brought forth by the fullness of the riches of the consummated Triune God and through the crucifixion of the cross of Christ for the bringing forth of the Body of Christ to consummate in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal enlargement and expression.

B. The snaring of the top apostle:
1. Paul, according to the pure vision of the divine revelation concerning God's eternal economy, rejected the law in Galatians 2:16, 19; 3:2, 5, 10-13; 5:1-4, 18 and condemned the Jewish believers who sinned willfully by going back to Judaism and offering the sacrifices of cattle in Hebrews 10:18, 26.
2. James persuaded Paul to go back to the law, even to enter into the temple and wait to offer sacrifices for the completion of others' Nazarite vow.
3. But the Lord did not tolerate it and came into the situation to blow away the whole deal.

4. However, that snare caused Paul to be arrested and eventually transferred to the prison of Caesar in Rome—Acts 21:18-36; 25:10-12.

IV. The wiping out by God:

A. By the thorough destruction of the city of Jerusalem with its temple in A.D. 70, God terminated the Jewish religious service to Him, symbolized by the temple, and the nation of the Jews, symbolized by the city of Jerusalem.

B. By the destruction of Jerusalem God also wiped out all the vague situation and mixtures among the believers caused by James's vague vision and mistake and separated the believers from the Jewish people and anything Jewish.

Stanza 3 of *Hymns,* #541 says, "Not philosophy nor / Any element / Can to Christ conform us / As His complement; / But 'tis Christ Himself who / All our nature takes / And in resurrection / Us His members makes." No philosophy, regardless of how good or high it is, can produce the Body of Christ as the complement to Christ. Ethical teaching, such as James's mixed teaching, can never make members of Christ. The members of Christ can be produced only by the teaching according to God's New Testament economy. Stanza 4 says, "Not religion, even / Christianity, / Can fulfill God's purpose / Or economy; / But 'tis Christ within us / As our all in all / Satisfies God's wishes, / And His plan withal."

In this chapter we want to see four main items: (1) the vague vision in the Epistle of James, (2) the side effects of James's teaching, (3) the tragic issues of James's mistake, and (4) the wiping out by God. Certain medicines have side effects. James's teaching is a kind of medicine that heals you to some extent in some sense, but the side effects are greater. Because of James's vague vision and his teaching that produced side effects and issued in tragedies, God came in to wipe out the vague situation and mixture in Jerusalem.

ITS VAGUE VISION CONCERNING GOD'S DISPENSATION

The word *dispensation* is a subsidiary word to *economy*. A dispensation is a part of the economy. For God to carry out His economy as a whole in the Old Testament and the New Testament, He needs four dispensations. *Dispensation* means the way to deal with something. To carry out anything, you need a way to deal with things. God uses at least four ways to deal with His people in four ages in order to carry out His economy. The first age is the age before the law, or the age of the fathers, from Adam to Moses. The second is the age of the law, from Moses to Christ's first coming. The third is the age of grace, from Christ's first coming to His second coming. The fourth is the age of the kingdom. Every age has its own dispensation. In the dispensation before the law, God dealt with His people in a particular way. In the age of the law, the way God used to deal with His people was by the law. In the age of grace, God's dispensation to deal with His people is by grace. Then in the age of the kingdom, God's dispensation will be to deal with people according to His kingdom.

In God's way to deal with people, James was very vague. He was not clear. James was born and reborn in the age of grace, but he carried out God's work in two ways, in two dispensations, that is, in the way of the dispensation of the law and in the way of the dispensation of grace. In James's short Epistle of five chapters, these two ways in which God deals with His people are mixed up. James says that we have been brought forth, or born, of God by the word of truth, the law, from the Old Testament (1:18). This is a mixture of two ways. James speaks of regeneration, but there was no regeneration in the Old Testament. He also says that the Spirit of God indwells us (4:5), but the Spirit's indwelling was not the way God dealt with His people in the Old Testament. It is the way with which God deals with His people in the New Testament. Not only so, James's opinion was that God regenerated people to keep the law. Regeneration, however, is in the new dispensation, and to keep the law is in the old dispensation.

Calling the Jewish Believers "the Twelve Tribes"

James calls the Jewish believers of the New Testament "the twelve tribes" (1:1). The twelve tribes belong to the Old Testament. This is like putting the hat of one person on another person's head. It is a mixture. James puts the "hat" of Israel on the "head" of believers.

The Kingdom of God Being Taken Away from the Jews and Given to the Church

The Lord Jesus told His Jewish disciples that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to the church. In Matthew 21:43 the Lord told the Pharisees that from that day God would take His kingdom away from Israel. Israel became no longer the kingdom of God. God took the kingdom away from Israel and gave it to another people, the church.

The Church Being Separate from the Jews

According to God's economy in His New Testament dispensation, the church is separate from the Jews and also from the Gentiles. In 1 Corinthians 10:32 Paul speaks of the Jews, the Greeks, and the church of God, showing that there are three kinds of people today on earth. The Greeks represent the Gentiles. Those in the church are God's new people in the New Testament, but James mixes them with the Jews.

Calling the Meeting Place of the Jewish Believers a "Synagogue"

James calls the meeting place of the Jewish believers a "synagogue" (2:2).

The Meeting Place of the Scattered Jews

Synagogue is a particular designation used for the meeting place of the scattered Jews (Acts 6:9). This shows again that James lacked a clear vision of the distinction between God's chosen people of the Old Testament and the believers in Christ of the New Testament.

The Place Where the Jews Persecuted the Believers

The synagogue was the place where the Jews persecuted the believers (Matt. 10:17; 23:34).

The Synagogue of Satan

Also, the synagogue was called by the Lord Jesus the "synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9).

Teaching the Jewish Believers to Keep the Law of the Old Testament

James taught the Jewish believers to keep the law of the Old Testament (James 1:25; 2:8-12; 4:11-12). What a mixture this is! Keeping the law was the responsibility of the Jews, not of the believers.

Confirmed by James's Word

This is confirmed by James's word in Acts 15:21 and 21:20-25. In Acts 21 we are told that James and his co-elders in Jerusalem told the apostle Paul that thousands of believers in Jerusalem were zealous for the law. Based upon this, they asked Paul to show the Jews that he was not against the law but keeping the law. They proposed, according to the Jewish custom, that Paul make a Nazarite vow with God. This vow was completed with the offering of sacrifices. Paul went to the temple and waited for the last day of his vow to offer the sacrifices. He carried out this vow to such an extent, but God would not tolerate his offering the sacrifices and came in to disrupt it. Paul was arrested and eventually sent to Caesar's prison in Rome. God would not allow Paul to participate in carrying out the Nazarite vow, a strict Judaic practice.

James Appreciating the Law

James appreciated the law, calling it the "perfect law, the law of freedom" and the "royal law," as the psalmists did in the Old Testament (Psa. 1:1-2; 19:7-11; 119:10-11, 43, 142, 151). No doubt, these words were quoted by James from the Psalms to describe the law. He uplifted the law to the uttermost.

Christ Having Ended the Law

But in God's New Testament dispensation Christ has ended (terminated and taken away) the law (Rom. 10:4; Heb. 10:9). The law was the way by which God dealt with His people in the Old Testament, but James is in the New Testament. In the New Testament the way God takes to deal with His people is no longer by the law but by grace. Actually, the law was ended and taken away by Christ on the cross. Colossians 2:14 reveals that the ordinances

of the law were crucified on the cross. Christ brought many things to the cross to be crucified with Him. He terminated you and me, the old man, Satan, sin, the world, and the ordinances of the law.

The Believers Not Being under the Law but under Grace

According to God's New Testament dispensation, the believers are not under the law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). The law was the way God dealt with His Old Testament saints, and grace is the new way in which God deals with His New Testament saints. Thus, we, the New Testament people, are not under the law anymore; we are under grace.

Freed by Christ from the Law's Yoke of Slavery

In the New Testament economy the believers have been freed by Christ from the law's yoke of slavery, no longer indebted to the law; if they will still keep the law, Christ will profit them nothing, they will be separated from Christ, and they will fall from grace (Gal. 5:1-4). The law is not to release people but to yoke them, and that yoke is the yoke of slavery. The law puts us into a situation of slavery, which Paul says is the yoke of the law.

The Believers Having Died to Law

Hence, Paul says that the believers have died to law (2:19). We were crucified with Christ on the cross (v. 20) and died to law there. James taught the believers, who were dead to the law, to keep the law.

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF JAMES'S TEACHING UNDER HIS VAGUE VISION CONCERNING GOD'S ECONOMY

Now we want to point out the side effects of James's teaching.

A Mixture of God's New Testament Dispensation with God's Old Testament Dispensation

First, James is a mixture of God's New Testament dispensation with God's Old Testament dispensation.

Using the Terms of the Old Testament Jews

James uses the terms of the Old Testament Jews, such as *the twelve tribes, synagogue,* and *the Lord of hosts* [Jehovah of hosts] in 1:1; 2:2; 5:4.

Its Words in 1:27 and 4:14 Bearing the Element and Flavor of the Old Testament

In 1:27 James says to take care of the orphans and widows, and in 4:14 he says not to have confidence in what we will do in the future, since we are a vapor and do not know what the future will bring. This is an idea of the Old Testament, especially in Psalm 90 where Moses speaks of the brevity of human life (vv. 3-10).

The Examples James Uses Being Only of the Old Testament

Also, the examples James uses are only of the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Rahab in 2:23 and 25 and the prophets, Job, and Elijah in 5:10-11 and 17.

A Mixture of God's New Testament Chosen People with God's Old Testament Elect

James's teaching was a mixture of God's New Testament chosen people—the believers—with God's Old Testament elect—the Jews.

A Mixture of the Church Practice with the Jews' Way of Meeting

James brought in a mixture of the church practice with the Jews' way of meeting to worship God in the synagogues.

A Hidden Mixture of the Regenerated Persons with the Natural Persons

In his teaching of the Jewish believers concerning the virtues of Christian perfection, James did not warn them, as Paul did in dealing with the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 2:14), that the virtues of Christian perfection should be produced and carried out only by the regenerated persons and not by the natural persons. Here a hidden mixture is implied: a mixture of the regenerated persons, in their regenerated humanity mingled with divinity, with the natural persons in their fallen humanity, in the producing and carrying out of the virtues of Christian perfection. In the church as the organic Body of Christ, everything must be done by the regenerated persons, in whom is God's delight, and nothing should be done by the natural persons, for whom is God's condemnation.

First Corinthians 2:14 says, "A soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually." The spiritual things can be understood only by the spiritual, regenerated persons. A regenerated person in his regenerated humanity mingled with divinity is a spiritual person. There is also a natural person in his fallen humanity.

Among men, there are three kinds of persons: the ethical, moral person; the natural person; and the regenerated person. Paul says that before he was saved, when he was Saul, he was blameless, perfect, according to the righteousness of the law (Phil. 3:6). Even before Paul was saved, he was a very ethical, moral person. But after he received God's life and God's Spirit through regeneration, he lived no more as an ethical person but as a spiritual person. He was a regenerated person in his regenerated humanity, and this humanity was mingled with divinity because God lived in him.

James, however, was a mixed person. In his Epistle he speaks of regeneration and the Spirit's indwelling, but he also talks about perfection in the realm of self-cultivation. This is a hidden mixture. Many of us Christians today are like James in this respect. We are mixed persons. We still act and live by trying to be perfect in our natural man. We may say that we love the Lord and that we are good brothers and sisters. We may be good and ethical but not spiritual. We may be spiritual to a certain extent, but we are still natural in our humanity, which is a mixture. We are ethical persons in our humanity mingled with divinity. This is a mixture of the regenerated persons, in their regenerated humanity mingled with divinity, with the natural persons in their fallen humanity.

THE TRAGIC ISSUES OF JAMES'S MISTAKE

The Blinding of Thousands of Believers

From James's Time to Today

The first tragic issue of James's mistake is the blinding of thousands of believers from James's time to today.

From Seeing the Clear View concerning the Economy of God

Thousands and thousands of real believers have been blinded by James's vague teaching from seeing the clear view concerning the economy of God in order that they may participate in the producing and building up of the Body of Christ as a precursor of the New Jerusalem.

The Divine Revelation in the Scriptures Being Progressive

The divine revelation in the Scriptures is progressive in different degrees, and its progression is according to the four different ages of the Scriptures.

Job's Perfection

Job's perfection (Job 1:1, 8) was according to the divine revelation of the age before the law, which was Job's goal in seeking after God and replaced God in Job's satisfaction; thus, Job was stripped by God of his perfection. Job's perfection was a replacement of God. God wants His people to be satisfied with Him, with God Himself. But Job was satisfied with his perfection, so God came in to take away Job's perfection.

Saul of Tarsus's Perfection

Saul of Tarsus's perfection (Phil. 3:6) before his salvation was according to the divine revelation in the age of law, which was opposing God's New Testament economy and was rejected by him after his salvation by receiving the vision of the divine revelation of the age of grace.

The Perfection Stressed by James

The perfection stressed by James was according to his vague view of God's divine revelation and was a mixture of the divine revelation according to the age of the law with the divine revelation according to the age of grace.

The Genuine Perfection

The genuine perfection is according to the pure vision of God's highest divine revelation of the age of grace and is brought forth by the fullness of the riches of the consummated Triune God and through the crucifixion of the cross of Christ for the bringing forth of the Body of Christ to consummate in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal enlargement and expression.

The Snaring of the Top Apostle

Paul Rejecting the Law in Galatians

Paul, according to the pure vision of the divine revelation concerning God's eternal economy, rejected the law in Galatians 2:16, 19; 3:2, 5, 10-13; 5:1-4, 18 and condemned the Jewish believers who sinned willfully by going back to Judaism and offering the sacrifices of cattle in Hebrews 10:18 and 26.

James Persuading Paul to Go Back to the Law

James persuaded Paul to go back to the law, even to enter into the temple and wait to offer sacrifices for the completion of others' Nazarite vow.

The Lord Not Tolerating It

But the Lord did not tolerate it and came into the situation to blow away the whole deal.

That Snare Causing Paul to Be Arrested

However, that snare caused Paul to be arrested and eventually transferred to the prison of Caesar in Rome (Acts 21:18-36; 25:10-12).

THE WIPING OUT BY GOD

By the Thorough Destruction of the City of Jerusalem with Its Temple

By the thorough destruction of the city of Jerusalem with its temple in A.D. 70, God terminated the Jewish religious service to Him, symbolized by the temple, and the nation of the Jews, symbolized by the city of Jerusalem. The nation of the Jews and their religion were wiped out by the destruction of the Roman prince Titus. This was prophesied by the Lord Jesus. One day the Lord Jesus was lamenting over Jerusalem, and He told the disciples that not long from that time the temple would be torn down, leaving no stone upon another stone (Matt. 23:37—24:2).

God's Wiping Out the Vague Situation and Mixtures among the Believers

By the destruction of Jerusalem God also wiped out all the vague situation and mixtures among the believers caused by James's vague vision and mistake and separated the believers from the Jewish people and anything Jewish.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A CRITICAL WORD TO THE STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:16a

OUTLINE

I. The genuine Christian perfection as taught in the New Testament:

A. The genuine Christian perfection taught in the New Testament is according to God's New Testament economy that God wanted to become a man that many men may become the God-men for the producing of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem as God's ultimate goal.

B. Such a Christian perfection is the issue of the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God into the believers—the God-men:

1. By God the Father as the source, the origin—Matt. 5:48.
2. With God the Son as the element—2 Cor. 13:3, 5, 9, 11.
3. Through God the Spirit as the dispensing fellowship—vv. 9, 11, 14.
4. Second Corinthians 13 was written to encourage the believers to be perfected by the experience of Christ as life and the enjoyment of the processed and consummated Triune God in the Father's love, with Christ's grace as the expression of the Father's love, and through the Spirit's fellowship that dispenses the Father's love in Christ's grace into the believers.

C. This kind of Christian perfection is for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12.

D. The perfecting ones of this kind of Christian perfection are the gifted persons, such as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers—vv. 11-12:

1. The apostles define the truths for the establishing of the church.
2. The prophets prophesy for the building up of the church—1 Cor. 14:3-5.
3. The evangelists preach the gospel to make sinners the members of Christ for His Body.

4. The shepherds feed the young believers that they may grow up for the building of the Body of Christ—John 21:15-17; Eph. 4:15-16.
5. The teachers teach the believers for their edification to establish the churches—cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17.

E. The standard of such a Christian perfection is much higher than the standard of that stressed by James, which resembles the kind of perfection in the Old Testament on the lower level of God's Old Testament revelation.

II. The Scripture being God's breathing:

A. Second Timothy 3:16a says, "All Scripture is God-breathed," that is, written by the breathing of God, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, indicating clearly that all the sixty-six books of the Holy Scriptures were written through the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

B. This does not mean that every word written through the Spirit of God as a portion of the Holy Scriptures is the word of God. Many portions of the Holy Scriptures are rather the words spoken by persons (including Satan) other than God. The most evident illustrations are as follows:

1. Genesis 3:1b, 4-5 is the word spoken by the old serpent, the devil, but recorded by Moses through the inspiration of the Spirit of God for God's purpose to expose His enemy Satan's subtle deceiving and his devilish temptation that mankind may know that Satan is a real deceiver and devilish tempter (1 Tim. 2:14; Matt. 4:1-3; 6:13; 1 Thes. 3:5).
2. In the book of Job, thirty-five chapters, 3 through 37, are a record of the words spoken by Job, his three friends, and Elihu. All these five persons were God-fearing and God-seeking people, but the words spoken by them in the book of Job were very much according to their concepts concerning God's will for man, their understanding of the meaning of human life, and their realization concerning the perfection of human virtues, all of which contradict God's purpose in man, that is, that man should be filled with God to express God rather than all other things, including man's perfection of human virtues. Hence, God stripped Job of his uprightness and integrity that he might seek God Himself instead of anything else. Yet their words, which were against God's will in man, were written by them under the inspiration of the Spirit of God to serve the purpose of God to expose the mistake of Job, his three friends, and

Elihu in knowing God that man may be enlightened to realize that, according to God's good pleasure of His heart's desire, man should be the expression of God only, rather than the expression of man's perfection of his uprightness and integrity.

3. In Psalms the words concerning the psalmists' hating of their enemies (18:37-42; 40:14-15; cf. Prov. 25:21-22), their asking of God to avenge for them (Psa. 3:7; 43:1; 54:1-3), and their cursing of others (35:4-7; 70:2-3; 109:1-15) were surely not God's words but words that came out of the psalmists' mouth from their natural sentiment while they were praising God. Yet they were recorded by the Spirit of God in the Holy Scriptures to serve God's purpose to expose the degree of the psalmists' spirituality that, on the one hand, they loved God and sought God, but on the other hand, they were still so natural in their sentiment.
4. Peter's word in Matthew 16:22, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" was clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter, occupied by, usurped by, and even having become Satan, as the Lord rebuked him saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men" (v. 23):
    a. It was after he received the Father's revelation concerning Christ's person and the teaching of Christ concerning His building of the church and heard the Lord tell him and the other disciples that He must be crucified and raised (v. 21) that he spoke this satanic word.
    b. His intention in speaking this word was to frustrate the Lord from going to accomplish His death and resurrection for the accomplishment of God's eternal redemption and His dynamic salvation.
5. Peter's word in Matthew 17:4, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You are willing, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah," was also clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter under his vague vision concerning Christ's person and His commission:
    a. It was after he saw the vision of Moses and Elijah's coming to converse with Christ in His transfiguration on the mountain that he spoke this word, which was stopped by the voice from heaven:

"This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!" (v. 5).

b. This stopping word spoken by God indicated that:

1) Peter should not rank Christ with Moses and Elijah.

2) Peter did not know the preeminence of Christ both in God's old creation and in God's new creation (Col. 1:15-18).

3) Peter could not differentiate that Christ's commission received from the Father for His New Testament economy is much higher than Moses' ministry of law and Elijah's ministry as a prophet.

4) Thus, Peter and all others should listen only to Christ as the Son of God, the Beloved, in whom God has found His delight.

c. Peter's word was spoken under his vague vision that brought down Christ's most high person and His most divine commission to the lower level of Moses and Elijah, but it was written by Matthew in his Gospel, even the Gospel of the kingdom of the heavens, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God for the purpose of God to teach and enlighten Peter and his two contemporaries, John and James, and also all the believers in Christ in the entire age of grace that they may have a clear vision concerning Christ's person and His commission.

6. Peter's word in Acts 10:14, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common and unclean," was also clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter according to his religious concept concerning eating the unclean animals (contacting and receiving the unclean Gentiles):

a. Peter's word here was stopped by the voice from heaven, saying, "The things that God has cleansed [the Gentiles whom God sanctifies], do not make common" (v. 15).

b. This stopping word indicates that:

1) Peter, even as the first apostle in the New Testament who followed the Lord for three and a half years and experienced Pentecost by speaking a very clear word, witnessing to Christ in His death and resurrection, which produced the first church in Jerusalem, still was vague in the divine revelation concerning the spreading of the gospel for Christ's increase from the Jews to the Gentiles, as what the Lord told him and the other disciples in Acts 1:8.

2) God would confirm Peter's visit to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, for the spreading of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles.

c. Peter's word was spoken according to his revelation concerning God's Old Testament economy, which was very much below the standard of God's revelation concerning His New Testament economy, yet it was written by Luke in Acts under the inspiration of the Spirit of God to enlighten Peter and all the believers in the age of grace that God's gospel is not merely for the Jews but for the Gentiles unto the uttermost part of the earth also.

Note: The above three illustrations of Peter recorded in the Scriptures under the inspiration of the Spirit of God are like three lamps shining over the believers in their darkness that they may be enlightened to see clearly that:

d. The believers in Christ as His followers should not remain in their natural self but should take up the cross to have themselves conformed to the death of Christ that Christ may live in them and that they may live with Christ, walk with Christ, and work with Christ for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ, which consummates the New Jerusalem as God's ultimate goal.

e. The believers in Christ as His close followers should appreciate and exalt Christ in His preeminent person and in His most high commission as the beloved Son of the Father in whom is the Father's delight, according to God's New Testament economy, above Moses and his ministry of law and above Elijah and his ministry of the prophets, who were on the lower level of God's eternal economy.

f. The believers in Christ as His witnesses should not limit the spreading of His gospel only to the circle of the Jews, but they should spread it for His unlimited increase (John 3:29-30) to all the Gentiles unto the uttermost part of the earth for the producing of the universal Body of Christ as the fullness of Christ, who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23).

7. The words in the Epistle of James that exalt the Mosaic law and charge the New Testament believers to keep it, that confuse God's dispensation of the ages, and that are devoid of Christ, His death, His resurrection, and the Spirit are surely not the words of God but words spoken by James according to his Old Testament concept

concerning the Mosaic law, which is in contrast to the grace in God's New Testament economy and according to his vague vision of the difference between God's Old Testament dispensation and His New Testament dispensation. Yet these words were written by James in his Epistle under the inspiration of God for the divine purpose to expose him in his wrong concept concerning the law and in his vague vision concerning God's dispensation of the ages in order to teach and enlighten all the believers in Christ that they may know that they should not be frustrated by James's defective words from going on further to seek the all-inclusive Christ, the consummated Spirit, the old-creation-terminating death of Christ, and the all-new-creation-germinating resurrection of Christ for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy.

III. Two governing principles of the interpretation of the Scripture:

A. The first principle—all Scripture should be interpreted with Scripture. Every portion, even a single word, of the Scripture should be interpreted with and according to the entire Scriptures. If any interpretation of the Epistle of James, as a book in the Scripture, is not interpreted according to the entire Scriptures, it becomes a book other than the Scripture.

B. The second principle—the eternal economy of God is the central line of the entire Scriptures. The interpretation of the Scripture should be strictly governed by this central line under its adequate enlightenment. If any interpretation of the Epistle of James is not in harmony with God's economy, it is off. No saint of God who is a genuine seeker of the scriptural truth and who is enlightened with the central line of the Holy Scriptures would ever accept such an off-track interpretation that he might not be sidetracked as many have been.

THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AS TAUGHT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We need to be reminded of the genuine Christian perfection as taught in the New Testament. In order to see the genuine Christian perfection, we need to see the revelation of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the genuine, real Christian perfection.

The New Jerusalem has a strong base, and this strong base is God the Father's divine nature, signified by gold (Rev. 21:18b, 21b). The holy city is a golden mountain. Surely, that is strong and sufficient to bear any weight. The entire holding strength of the holy city is God's divine nature, and this base should be the base of our Christian life and work. The base, the gates, and the wall of the city are the basic building, whereas the throne, the temple, and the light are the furnishings. The intrinsic significance of all these items shows us what the genuine Christian perfection is. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate consummation of the Body of Christ, so the genuine Christian perfection is also the Body of Christ, which is the aggregate of all the God-men living the life of the God-man.

The Genuine Christian Perfection Being according to God's New Testament Economy

The genuine Christian perfection taught in the New Testament is according to God's New Testament economy that God wanted to become a man that many men may become the God-men for the producing of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem as God's ultimate goal. In the Lord's recovery the Christian perfection is the living of the God-man.

The Issue of the Dispensing of the Processed and Consummated Triune God into the Believers

By God the Father as the Source, the Origin

Such a Christian perfection is the issue of the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God into the believers, the God-men, by God the Father as the source, the origin (Matt. 5:48). The Father in His nature is the golden base of the New Jerusalem as its source, its origin.

With God the Son as the Element

The genuine Christian perfection is also with God the Son as the element (2 Cor. 13:3, 5, 9, 11). This is typified by the pearl gates of the New Jerusalem. An oyster (Christ) lives in the salty water (the world of death) and is wounded by

a grain of sand (crucified for the sinner) to produce a pearl by secreting its life-juice (dispensing His life element). The Father is the base, and the Son is the element.

Through God the Spirit as the Dispensing Fellowship

The dispensing fellowship of God the Spirit (vv. 9, 11, 14) is to secrete the divine life-juice around us by six steps: regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification. By these six steps the Spirit, as the third of the Divine Trinity, will finish His transforming work to make us completed pearls.

Second Corinthians 13 Encouraging the Believers to Be Perfected

Second Corinthians 13 was written to encourage the believers to be perfected by the experience of Christ as life and the enjoyment of the processed and consummated Triune God in the Father's love, with Christ's grace as the expression of the Father's love, and through the Spirit's fellowship that dispenses the Father's love in Christ's grace into the believers. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?" Verse 9 says, "We rejoice whenever we are weak and you are powerful; this also we pray for, your perfecting." Verse 11 says, "Finally, brothers, rejoice, be perfected." Then verse 14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." In 2 Corinthians 13 Paul teaches his kind of Christian perfection by Christ in us. The grace of Christ, God the Son, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit as the third of the Trinity are with us all the time secreting the Triune God in His life element around us to perfect us. James's perfection is far off from this.

This Kind of Christian Perfection Being for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

The genuine Christian perfection is for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). It is not for us to love our neighbors, to help the needy orphans and widows, to help us to reject temptation, or to help us overcome worldly pleasure. That is James's perfection.

The Perfecting Ones of This Kind of Christian Perfection Being the Gifted Persons

The perfecting ones of this kind of Christian perfection are the gifted persons, such as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers (vv. 11-12).

The Apostles

The apostles define the truths for the establishing of the church. With James there was a shortage of the truth of God's New Testament economy. James did not realize four pairs of things. First, God has two testaments: the Old and the New. Second, God has two parts of His economy: the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation. These should not be mixed up. Third, God has two peoples: the Old Testament people, Israel, and the New Testament people, the church. Fourth, a regenerated person has two men: the old man and the new man. James's writing mixes up these four pairs of things. Actually, he needed a proper apostle to define the truths to him, to perfect him.

The Prophets

The prophets prophesy for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:3-5). Proper prophets prophesy the divine word, not mainly to predict but mainly to speak forth the Lord. This is what Isaiah did when he spoke concerning a virgin bringing forth a child whose name is Mighty God and Eternal Father (Isa. 9:6).

The Evangelists

The evangelists preach the gospel to make sinners the members of Christ for His Body. They preach the gospel not for soul winning but for Christ's

member winning. They win sinners to make them the members of Christ for His Body, not to gain souls for them to go to heaven.

The Shepherds

The shepherds feed the young believers that they may grow up for the building of the Body of Christ (John 21:15-17; Eph. 4:15-16).

The Teachers

The teachers teach the believers for their edification to establish the churches (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17).

The Standard of Such a Christian Perfection

The standard of such a Christian perfection is much higher than the standard of that stressed by James, which resembles the kind of perfection in the Old Testament on the lower level of God's Old Testament revelation.

THE SCRIPTURE BEING GOD'S BREATHING

All Scripture Being God-breathed

Second Timothy 3:16a says, "All Scripture is God-breathed," that is, written by the breathing of God, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, indicating clearly that all the sixty-six books of the Holy Scriptures were written through the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Not Every Word Written through the Spirit of God Being the Word of God

The entire Scriptures were written by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but this does not mean that every word written through the Spirit of God as a portion of the Holy Scriptures is the word of God. Many portions of the Holy Scriptures are rather the words spoken by persons (including Satan) other than God. I would like to present seven evident illustrations to show this. Three are from the Old Testament. First, there is Satan's word in Genesis 3.

Second, there are Job and his three friends plus Elihu in Job 3—37. The third illustration from the Old Testament is the psalmists' natural sentiment. Three illustrations from the New Testament are concerning Peter, and the fourth one is concerning James.

The Serpent's Word Recorded by Moses

Genesis 3:1b, 4-5 is the word spoken by the old serpent, the devil, but recorded by Moses through the inspiration of the Spirit of God for God's purpose to expose His enemy Satan's subtle deceiving and his devilish temptation that mankind may know that Satan is a real deceiver and devilish tempter (1 Tim. 2:14; Matt. 4:1-3; 6:13; 1 Thes. 3:5). Satan's word is recorded in the Bible, and that record is by the inspiration of the Spirit, but the word recorded is not the word of God. The serpent said, "Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?...You shall not surely die! For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1b, 4-5). This was Satan's word, but it was recorded by Moses as a part of the Holy Scriptures. This shows that not every word recorded in the Bible is the word of God, but the record is by the inspiration of the Spirit.

The Speaking of Job, His Three Friends, and Elihu

In the book of Job, thirty-five chapters, 3 through 37, are a record of the words spoken by Job, his three friends, and Elihu. All these five persons were God-fearing and God-seeking people, but the words spoken by them in the book of Job were very much according to their concepts concerning God's will for man, their understanding of the meaning of human life, and their realization concerning the perfection of human virtues, all of which contradict God's purpose in man, that is, that man should be filled with God to express God rather than all other things, including man's perfection of human virtues. Hence, God stripped Job of his uprightness and integrity that he might seek God Himself instead of anything else. Yet their words, which were against God's will in man, were written by them under the inspiration of the Spirit of God to serve the purpose of God to expose the mistake of Job, his three friends, and Elihu in knowing God that man may be enlightened to realize that, according to God's good pleasure of His heart's desire, man should be

the expression of God only, rather than the expression of man's perfection of his uprightness and integrity.

After the speaking by those five persons in thirty-five chapters, God came in to rebuke Job by telling him that he darkened God's counsel by words without knowledge (38:1-2). Some colleges use the book of Job to teach philosophy, but God told Job that his words were without knowledge. After the Lord finished His speaking, Job said to Him, "I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You; / Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes" (42:5-6). Once Job saw God, he abhorred himself and repented. No doubt, he gained God instead of his perfection, uprightness, and integrity.

Today who understands the book of Job? Even James did not understand it properly. He says that when we are suffering, we have to learn of the endurance of Job (James 5:10-11). Job's words without knowledge, however, darkened God's counsel concerning man. God's counsel concerning man is simple. He wants us to receive Him into us to be our everything, even to transform us into His image so that we can become His expression. The Christian perfection is for the expression of the Triune God, not for the expression of our integrity or uprightness.

Job highly esteemed his perfection, integrity, and uprightness, so God came in to strip him of this. Then God showed Himself to Job, and Job abhorred himself and gained God. But just to abhor ourselves is not sufficient. The Lord Jesus said that whoever would follow Him must deny himself and take up his cross (Matt. 16:24). To deny the self is to leave the self on the cross. To bear the cross is to remain on the cross. In today's Christianity there is a wrong thought that the cross is for suffering. This is the thought in the book *The Imitation of Christ*. We need to see, however, that the ultimate goal of the cross is not suffering but terminating. To bear the cross is a killing. Christ has crucified us on the cross, and we should remain there. We should leave ourselves on the cross. Then the self is terminated. James's teaching of Christian perfection, though, is self-cultivation; it is to cultivate the bright virtue in man created by God. But the New Testament teaches that we have to deny ourselves and leave ourselves on the cross.

The Natural Sentiment of the Psalmists

In Psalms the words concerning the psalmists' hating of their enemies (18:37-42; 40:14-15; cf. Prov. 25:21-22), their asking of God to avenge them (Psa. 3:7; 43:1; 54:1-3), and their cursing of others (35:4-7; 70:2-3; 109:1-15) were surely not God's words but words that came out of the psalmists' mouth from their natural sentiment while they were praising God. Yet they were recorded by the Spirit of God in the Holy Scriptures to serve God's purpose to expose the degree of the psalmists' spirituality that, on the one hand, they loved God and sought God, but on the other hand, they were still so natural in their sentiment. While the psalmists were praising God, they were also asking God to avenge them. This is recorded in the Bible in order to let us know that regardless of how much we praise God, we can still be natural.

Peter's Word in Matthew 16:22

Peter's word in Matthew 16:22, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" was clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter, occupied by, usurped by, and even having become Satan, as the Lord rebuked him, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men" (v. 23).

After He Received the Father's Revelation

It was after Peter received the Father's revelation concerning Christ's person and the teaching of Christ concerning His building of the church and heard the Lord tell him and the other disciples that He must be crucified and raised (v. 21) that he spoke this satanic word. In Matthew 16 Peter received the clear revelation from the Father that Jesus is God's Christ and God's Son. Then the Lord told him that He was going to be crucified and resurrected on the third day. But Peter still spoke a word to the Lord that caused the Lord to call him "Satan." Peter received the divine revelation from the Father, and shortly after this he spoke the word of Satan. This shows that we can receive a genuine revelation from God and afterward speak Satan's word. This is recorded in the Bible in order to teach us that we have to be watchful and pray that we would not be deceived.

Peter's Intention in Speaking This Word

Peter's intention in speaking this word was to frustrate the Lord from going to accomplish His death and resurrection for the accomplishment of God's eternal redemption and His dynamic salvation. Peter was usurped and possessed by Satan to frustrate the Lord from going on to accomplish God's redemption.

Peter's Word in Matthew 17:4

Peter's word in Matthew 17:4, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You are willing, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah," was also clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter under his vague vision concerning Christ's person and His commission. Peter did not realize that his word offended God and contradicted God's economy.

Stopped by the Voice from Heaven

It was after Peter saw the vision of Moses and Elijah's coming to converse with Christ in His transfiguration on the mountain that he spoke this word, which was stopped by the voice from heaven: "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!" (v. 5). Moses and Elijah should not be ranked with Christ. They are far, far inferior in their person and ministry. Moses' ministry was the ministry of law. Elijah's ministry was the ministry of prophecy. But Christ as the Son of God has the ministry of grace for accomplishing God's eternal economy to establish the church as His Body.

The Indication of This Stopping Word

This stopping word spoken by God indicated that Peter should not rank Christ with Moses and Elijah. It also indicated that he did not know the preeminence of Christ both in God's old creation and God's new creation (Col. 1:15-18). In the old creation and in the new creation of God, Christ must have the first place. Peter could not differentiate that Christ's commission received from the Father for His New Testament economy is much higher than Moses' ministry of law and Elijah's ministry as a prophet. Thus, Peter and all others should listen only to Christ as the Son of God, the Beloved, in whom God has found His delight.

Peter's Word Being Spoken under His Vague Vision

Peter's word was spoken under his vague vision that brought down Christ's most high person and His most divine commission to the lower level of Moses and Elijah, but it was written by Matthew in his Gospel, even the Gospel of the kingdom of the heavens, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God for the purpose of God to teach and enlighten Peter and his two contemporaries, John and James, and also all the believers in Christ in the entire age of grace that they may have a clear vision concerning Christ's person and His commission.

These illustrations show that in the Bible, which is a book of God's inspiration, a number of words are not by God but by man and even by God's enemy, Satan. This is the view that we need in evaluating James. We have seen that James mixed the Old Testament with the New Testament, the Old Testament economy with the New Testament economy, God's old people with God's new people, and man's fallen old man with man's regenerated new man. In this he was altogether wrong and his standard was too low.

Peter's Word in Acts 10:14

Peter's word in Acts 10:14, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common and unclean," was also clearly not the word spoken by God but the word spoken by Peter according to his religious concept concerning eating the unclean animals (contacting and receiving the unclean Gentiles).

Stopped by the Voice from Heaven

Peter's word here was stopped by the voice from heaven, saying, "The things that God has cleansed [the Gentiles whom God sanctifies], do not make common" (v. 15).

The Indication of This Stopping Word

This stopping word indicates that Peter, even as the first apostle in the New Testament who followed the Lord for three and a half years and experienced Pentecost by speaking a very clear word, witnessing to Christ in His death and resurrection, which produced the first church in Jerusalem, still was vague in the divine revelation concerning the spreading of the gospel for Christ's increase from the Jews to the Gentiles, as what the Lord told him and the other disciples in Acts 1:8. This stopping word also indicates that God would

confirm Peter's visit to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, for the spreading of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles.

Spoken according to Peter's Revelation concerning God's Old Testament Economy

Peter's word was spoken according to his revelation concerning God's Old Testament economy, which was very much below the standard of God's revelation concerning His New Testament economy, yet it was written by Luke in Acts under the inspiration of the Spirit of God to enlighten Peter and all the believers in the age of grace that God's gospel is not merely for the Jews but for the Gentiles unto the uttermost part of the earth also.

The above three illustrations of Peter recorded in the Scriptures under the inspiration of the Spirit of God are like three lamps shining over the believers in their darkness that they may be enlightened to see clearly that the believers in Christ as His followers should not remain in their natural self but should take up the cross to have themselves conformed to the death of Christ that Christ may live in them and that they may live with Christ, walk with Christ, and work with Christ for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ, which consummates the New Jerusalem as God's ultimate goal. Also, the believers in Christ as His close followers should appreciate and exalt Christ in His preeminent person and in His most high commission as the beloved Son of the Father in whom is the Father's delight, according to God's New Testament economy, above Moses and his ministry of law and above Elijah and his ministry of the prophets, who were on the lower level of God's eternal economy. Furthermore, the believers in Christ as His witnesses should not limit the spreading of His gospel only to the circle of the Jews, but they should spread it for His unlimited increase (John 3:29-30) to all the Gentiles unto the uttermost part of the earth for the producing of the universal Body of Christ as the fullness of Christ, who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23).

The Words in the Epistle of James according to His Old Testament Concept

The words in the Epistle of James that exalt the Mosaic law and charge the New Testament believers to keep it, that confuse God's dispensation of the ages, and that are devoid of Christ, His death, His resurrection, and the Spirit

are surely not the words of God but words spoken by James according to his Old Testament concept concerning the Mosaic law, which is in contrast to the grace in God's New Testament economy and according to his vague vision of the difference between God's Old Testament dispensation and His New Testament dispensation. Yet these words were written by James in his Epistle under the inspiration of God for the divine purpose to expose him in his wrong concept concerning the law and in his vague vision concerning God's dispensation of the ages in order to teach and enlighten all the believers in Christ that they may know that they should not be frustrated by James's defective words from going on further to seek the all-inclusive Christ, the consummated Spirit, the old-creation-terminating death of Christ, and the all-new-creation-germinating resurrection of Christ for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy.

TWO GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

The First Principle

The first principle is that all Scripture should be interpreted with Scripture. Every portion, even a single word, of the Scripture should be interpreted with and according to the entire Scriptures. If any interpretation of the Epistle of James, as a book in the Scripture, is not interpreted according to the entire Scriptures, it becomes a book other than the Scripture.

The Second Principle

The second principle is that the eternal economy of God is the central line of the entire Scriptures. The interpretation of the Scripture should be strictly governed by this central line under its adequate enlightenment. If any interpretation of the Epistle of James is not in harmony with God's economy, it is off. No saint of God who is a genuine seeker of the scriptural truth and who is enlightened with the central line of the Holy Scriptures would ever accept such an off-track interpretation that he might not be sidetracked as many have been.