

THE PURPOSE OF THE AGES

(PART 2)

Our part in the process of Jesus Christ

To fully apprehend how the purpose of the ages was accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, we need to first see how it was formed in Christ before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1:3 Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the [heavenlies] in Christ.” This verse is an item of the manifold wisdom of God that was formed in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. It shows us that in eternity past God said, “I am going to put you in My Son. And I am going to bless you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.” Because of this act of God over us we can say, “Universe, principalities and powers, look at what my God, in His wisdom, did with me before I was born. He put me in His Son and blessed me in His Son with every spiritual blessing.” This is not only one of the items of God’s manifold wisdom, but it also reveals how we are part of what was accomplished in the process of Jesus Christ from eternity to eternity.

Then Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without [blemish] before Him in

love.” This means that God chose us in Christ. Worship His wisdom. It is manifold, many-faceted. He blessed us in Christ. Then God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. This was part of the process of His executing the purpose of the ages in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, we have a long history related to Christ. Another part of this process is Christ’s incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and descension. Through every one of these steps in His process we are identified with Him. And the end of this process is our being incorporated into Him organically as His Body. So we are part of the process of Christ, in the sense of God’s working out His full economy to produce the Body of Christ as “the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23).

Our experiences as part of the purpose of the ages

It is an awesome thing to enjoy this Christ in any aspect of our experience. Whether we are struggling with our flesh or the world, for us to interact with this Christ, with this Person, is to interact with the One who has been the factor of the execution of God’s eternal purpose. When we are turning to the Lord,

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touching Him, fellowshiping with Him, opening to Him, just enjoying Him, *our experiences* become part of the purpose of the ages. This purpose was all executed in Christ Jesus. An aspect of that execution in Christ Jesus was to make us part of Himself organically by filling us with His life. This shows us the manifold wisdom of God.

Ephesians 1:5 shows us yet another aspect of this wisdom that was executed in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world: “Having predestined us [unto sonship through] Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Then verse 6 continues, “To the praise of the glory of His grace, [with] which He [graced] us in the Beloved.” This is also part of God’s wisdom that He executed in Christ — He graced us in the Beloved. The beloved One did a work over us to redeem us, to take away the problems that we had with God because of sin. He did such an effective work on the cross with the shedding of His blood that the Father is fully satisfied. Now we are dressed, robed, in Christ as our righteousness. We are not just negatively forgiven, pardoned, and made right; but positively we stand in Christ Himself, the One who has perfect obedience, who pleased the Father. We are in the Father’s good pleasure. Every touch with our spirit is an enjoyment of being in that pleasure.

Many trials may come, but these need not affect us. We are robed in Christ. We know Him as our righteousness, not just in a doctrinal way, but on the level of feelings, on the level of thought life. Christ is our righteousness for us to enjoy in our present experience. This is God’s wisdom — to grace us in the beloved One, the One who is being loved. This is how God executed the purpose of the ages. He did it by choosing us, predestinating us, and gracing us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of [offenses], according to the riches of His grace.” In verse 6 we have been graced in the Beloved. But we are not left with merely a general sense about that grace. Verse 7 speaks specifically of *the riches* of His grace in relation to our being redeemed and forgiven. This is God’s manifold wisdom that was executed in Christ Jesus. We are redeemed and we are forgiven — all according to the riches of His grace.

A prudent God with His purpose

Ephesians 1:8-9 continues speaking about the riches of His grace: ⁸ “Which He made to abound [to] us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will . . .” Not only are we forgiven sinners, not only do we have redemption, but the grace abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence. Prudence is a wonderful word. It refers to calculating with forethought to provide for every possible problem and to properly care for it. A prudent person is not a careless person. A prudent person knows not only how to plan, but also how to provide for everything he has planned for, so that success will be secured. In business, if you are not prudent, you will fail. But if you are prudent, you will calculate every angle so that you can successfully accomplish what you have planned. Our God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He is a prudent God. He knew the enemy. He knew the attacks that would come. He knew all the problems. But He calculated according to what He foresaw and foreknew, and He has abounded toward us in grace, making known unto us the mystery of His will. This means that He did not leave us to discover for ourselves what we are doing here on this earth. He unveiled His purpose to us. Oh, what a prudent God!

When we see the mystery of His will, we are surely calibrated. This calibration keeps us when the church is under attack in any period of time and when there is division. When negative things come in, we are kept because God has made known to us the mystery of His will. We realize there is something higher than my feeling and your feeling. There is something bigger. There is God between us. There is one Body that was produced by Christ on the cross, and we see this and we touch this. Connecting our relationships to what was accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord is God’s prudent way of preserving us together in the reality of one organic Body.

The corporate way God executed His purpose

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His [masterpiece,] created in Christ Jesus for good works, which

God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Here the church is referred to as His masterpiece. There is a purpose of the ages, and that purpose is a corporate masterpiece created in Christ Jesus. Look at the center of attraction — it is Christ! The masterpiece was created and prepared in Christ Jesus. This was the wisdom of God in eternity past — that we would be formed and prepared in Christ as a building and a dwelling place of God. Verse 10 introduces the remainder of chapter 2, which opens up the new man, the one Body, the one family, the one kingdom of citizens, as well as the one building. These things, all included in chapter 2, were prepared for us to walk in.

So, God executed His eternal purpose in Christ in a corporate way. God formed us in a corporate way, and God prepared us in a corporate way. The purpose of the ages is to live corporately filled up with Christ, mutually one with each other and with Him as His expression on this earth. This is the way God’s wisdom planned it. We were prepared beforehand for good works. These good works are not mere individual works. These works are in the context of God’s corporate building in Ephesians 2, where we are being builded together in spirit. Thus, Ephesians 2:10 shows us that God prepared us for the church life.

The church is what is executed in Christ Jesus

The church has no existence in and of itself. In other words, the church exists only in Christ Jesus. The church is simply a name for what was executed and accomplished in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:11 reveals that the execution of God’s purpose took place in Christ Jesus: “. . . the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Many commentators are not sure whether this verse refers to what God accomplished in Christ Jesus *before the foundation of the earth* or what He accomplished in Christ Jesus *beginning with His incarnation*. But the crucial point is that He accomplished it *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. “Christ” surely refers to His being the Christ, the appointed One, from before the foundation of the world. But He is spoken of here not only as Christ,

but as Christ Jesus. The moment you say Jesus, you are speaking of an incarnated God who became our Savior.

The purpose of the ages was formed in Christ Jesus in eternity past, where God blessed us in Christ, chose us in Christ, predestinated us in Christ, and graced us in Christ. But then our God executed His purpose by His Son being incarnated. So when Ephesians 3 says that the purpose of the ages was accomplished and executed in Christ Jesus our Lord, this includes all that He passed through in His process, that is, in the steps that He took to accomplish redemption and to bring us all into a corporate reality of one Body joined to Him.

The church meets together here on this earth to display what was done in Christ Jesus our Lord. May we never think of the church as something we like or do not like. May we never come down to that low level of your preference or my preference. The church is not a society that we choose to have. The church is what was executed in Christ Jesus our Lord. I cannot express how deep that goes. The church is not something merely on a human level. It does not come from man’s thought. It is what God did. He executed this purpose of the ages in Christ.

We see God executing His purpose in His Son’s incarnation and human living. And we also see the execution of His purpose in His Son’s crucifixion in Ephesians 2:14-15: ¹⁴ “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of [partition, the enmity] ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh [the law of the commandments] in ordinances, [that He might] create [the two] in Himself [into] one new man, thus making peace.” Part of the execution of the purpose of the ages in Christ Jesus was His making both peoples one, making peace through His crucifixion.

God further executed His purpose in His Son’s resurrection. Ephesians 1:19-20 says, ¹⁹ “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the [operation of the might of His strength], ²⁰ which He [caused to operate] in Christ [in raising] Him from the dead and [seating] Him at His right hand in the [heavenlies].” This is the execution of the purpose of the ages through the step

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The Family of God

“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love, predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved.” Eph. 1:4-6

These verses show us that God’s eternal purpose is inextricably tied to His good pleasure. Have you ever considered the fact that God has a good pleasure? The Bible tells us that before the earth was created, before there were planets, solar systems, and galaxies, God actually conceived something within His own heart that would satisfy Him. He planned something that would be His good pleasure. Then God *willed* to obtain His good pleasure. In other words, it became His will to get what He desired. It is one thing to desire something. It is another thing to will to obtain what you desire. God not only desires, but He also wills. Thus, we have the phrase from verse 5 “the good pleasure of His will.”

It is important to note that here in Ephesians God’s will is referring to His grand will for the whole universe. Too often we think of God’s will in terms of the small sphere of our own lives. We wonder what God’s will is for our life — “Who will I marry, what job will I hold, where will I live, what ministry will I have?” Of course, God has His will in all these matters. He has a choice in the details of our daily living which we need to closely heed. But to relegate God’s will exclusively to this level is embarrassingly self-centered. It exposes the fact that so often in our minds (whether conscious or unconscious) the world revolves around us. We often think that we are the center of the universe. But in the grand scheme of things, these personal matters are really rather minor. The question of greater import is “God, what is Your will — not merely for my life, but for the whole creation?” Let us step out of our narrow well for a moment, rise to a higher plane and ask, “God, why did You create the universe in the first place? What are You after? What is the overarching purpose of Your creation?” This is the level that the apostle Paul was on when he wrote the book of Ephesians.

Another word used in the New Testament for God’s will is God’s “purpose.” The word purpose implies that there is a reason for something. Having purpose is the opposite of being haphazard, aimless, random, or accidental. Purpose means that there is a goal, an aim. It

means that something is planned out and is being executed. It means there is a reason for things, and that things are heading somewhere. We must realize that our God is a God of purpose. He has a will, a goal, an aim. He is heading somewhere. He is not a haphazard, careless kind of person. He has planned, and He is now carrying out His plan.

Again, when the New Testament speaks of God’s purpose, it is not merely referring to the personal matters of our daily lives. In fact, when we examine the New Testament, we find that the *scope* of God’s purpose is both universal and eternal. In terms of space, His purpose includes all creation. That is, all creation came into existence for this purpose. He did not create all things and then step back and wonder what to do next. He did not create in a whimsical or haphazard fashion. When God created the universe, He had a clear-cut purpose. He knew what He was doing. He knew where He was going. He was exceedingly deliberate in His creating. Why? Because He is a God of purpose: “For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11). Thus, God’s purpose is universal.

Also, in terms of time, God’s purpose is eternal. It was conceived in eternity past, before the foundation of the world. It will be realized in eternity future. And between these two ends of eternity is time. What is the meaning of time? Time is for His purpose. This is why the New Testament refers to God’s purpose as an *eternal* purpose (Eph. 3:11).

Therefore, we can see that when the apostle Paul speaks of God’s good pleasure, will, and eternal purpose, he is addressing matters of immense significance and magnitude. He is talking about the reason for creation’s existence, the meaning of time, and, perhaps most significantly, the purpose for our own lives. He is answering those ancient questions that have been pondered and asked by millions: “What am I doing here? Where did we come from? Where are we going?” With this in mind, it certainly behooves us then to seriously consider Paul’s words.

God’s Purpose: A Family of Many Sons

What then is God’s good pleasure? What is His eternal purpose? To answer these questions, we must begin by examining the verses in Ephesians 1. Paul clearly states that God chose us and predestinated us unto sonship. That is, He wanted to have a large family of sons that would be “before Him in love.” It does not say that He predestinated us to be mere servants or worshippers or friends, though any of these positions would be a great

privilege to possess. But God has chosen us for something exceedingly higher. He has chosen us to be His sons! God wants sons! He does not want to be alone. Rather, He wants a family. He desires to be surrounded by many sons upon whom He can lavish His love, kindness, and infinite riches. He wants to redeem millions of men and women, put them in His beloved Son, and then richly “grace them in the Beloved”! This is God’s good pleasure. This is the desire that was deep in God’s heart in eternity past. And this is why, before God set out to create the universe, He chose and “predestinated us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself.” Paul expresses the same thought to the Roman believers. He says that God, according to His purpose, predestinated us “to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:28-29).

Hence, we can say that God’s purpose was planned in eternity past. Also, God’s choosing and predestinating occurred in eternity past. But now, during the period we call time, God is fulfilling what He planned. How? He calls us and saves us. He redeems and justifies us. He regenerates and fills us with His life. Day by day we enjoy and experience Him. We participate in His riches. What is all this for? What is God doing through all His work in our lives? Where is He taking us? The book of Hebrews tells us that He is leading many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10-11). He is obtaining sons who are being conformed to the image of the firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Then, when Jesus comes again in glory, who will come with Him? Sons! Indeed, Paul tells us that when the Son appears in glory, the many sons will also appear with Him in glory. In fact, the whole creation is eagerly awaiting the revelation of the sons of God. It is anticipating being set free from its enslavement to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-22). Then for eternity future we will be the heirs of God in glory. We will enjoy the unspeakable privilege of participating in God the Father — in His riches, His love, and His kindness (Rom. 8:17; Rev. 21:7).

The Church as God’s Family

Now, we must understand that in a corporate sense all the individual sons comprise the family. We all know that the word “family” is a corporate term. Sons are not meant to be isolated individualists. Sons, by definition, belong to the family. What then is God’s family? God’s family is simply the church.

That the church is a family explains why we find

numerous “family” designations throughout the New Testament. Such words as “brothers,” “sisters,” “sons,” and “children” are replete from Matthew to Revelation. For instance, the term “brother” is used over 300 times, and most occurrences refer not to brothers in the flesh, but to brothers in Christ. In fact, Paul uses the term “brother” 38 times in his epistle to the Corinthians, and in every instance he is speaking of brothers in Christ. Moreover, God is frequently spoken of as our Father, and Christ is spoken of as the firstborn Son and as our Brother. We are identified as heirs of God — a position reserved only for sons — and as joint heirs with Christ. What does all this mean? It means that we are in a family! And it reflects how much the reality of the family of God predominated the thought of the apostles. The church is not a formal institution or organization or hierarchy. No. The church is a family. Indeed, the church is the family of God.

Paul was imparting this understanding to the Ephesian believers when he said to them, “You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household” (Eph. 2:19). Notice the phrase “God’s household.” This particular word in the original Greek language does not refer to a house, but to a *household*. It refers to the family that inhabits a house. No wonder we are not strangers and aliens with other believers! We belong to the same family. We all have one Father, one firstborn Brother, and many fellow brothers in Christ.

Thus, we can conclude that God’s purpose is not to obtain many isolated, individual sons. Yes, His eternal purpose is indeed to have sons. But He does not want His sons to be isolated. God desires to have them together in His family. In other words, God’s purpose is to have the church as His household comprised of the many sons of God.

This revelation that the church is the family of God is most significant. There are many far-reaching implications for the practical church life today. However, let us consider three major ones. First, we must consider the fact that the church has entered into a position whereby we are now corporately the object of all God’s love and grace. Second, we must see that the life of the Son has entered into us so that we all have a common life. This common life is the factor of our oneness and far exceeds any factor that comes from our natural life. And third, we must realize that the atmosphere in the church should be a “family atmosphere” — one of receiving, acceptance, ease, and freedom.*

— Kirk Eland

* In next month’s issue of *the Christian*, we will examine in detail these three implications.

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of resurrection, in which Christ, in all the power of the Father, was the object of the divine operation that raised Him from the dead.

Now, watch the nature of the resurrection. Watch its extent. Watch *what* it includes. Watch *who* it includes. Verses 21-23 continue, ²¹ “Far above all [rule and authority and power and lordship], and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. ²² And He [subjected] all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” The Lord is in resurrection, and we are with Him who has become Head over all things to the church. How has He become Head over all things in this universe? He has become Head over all things through His process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, descension, and the producing of His Body.

The ultimate issue of the execution of God’s purpose is that He has put the Spirit within us. Ephesians 4:4 reveals that this Spirit within us is a Body Spirit. We do not have the Spirit in any other way but as a Body Spirit. This is *how* you and I have the Spirit. The Spirit helps us in our personal life, in our experience with the Lord. But the way I have the Spirit is with you, and you with me. That is why it is so serious in the church to take a thought against any saint. We are one Body. We have one Spirit. This is what God produced. Brothers and sisters, these are items of the manifold wisdom of God.

The church is what is executed in the acts of Christ

Finally, in Ephesians 1 and 2 we see that the church is executed by God in the acts of Christ: through His redemption, His resurrection, His heading us up, His making us heirs, saving us, guaranteeing us, making us alive together with Christ, raising us with Christ, seating us with Christ, displaying His kindness in Christ, making us one new man in Christ, making us His Body, making us His family and His citizens, and making us His building. Every one of the acts of Christ is another facet of God’s manifold wisdom. This is according to the purpose of the ages

which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord. This means the church is the vehicle to display all that was in God’s heart from eternity past, including all of God’s economy through the process of the Lord Jesus. All that Christ accomplished is now embodied in us.

Practically, to be part of this display of Christ is to forgive a saint, to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your heart (Col. 3:10-15). This is to be a part of the purpose of the ages which God executed in Christ. When we let the grace, the mercy, and the forgiveness that flows from Calvary be in our relationships, then *our relationships* actually become part of the purpose of the ages. This purpose of the ages is now being executed through the church — through our living out what was done in Christ and what is now made real by the Spirit.

After seeing what was executed in Christ Jesus, Paul utters another factor in Ephesians 3:12 — “In whom.” Paul is saying, “I am *in* this One in whom God executed His purpose. I am in the revelation of the purpose of the ages.” Paul seems to compound word after word in this verse: “In whom we have *boldness* and *access* with *confidence* through [the] faith [of] Him.” The three strong words in this verse — boldness, access, and confidence — show us what is ours in Christ Jesus, in the One in whom all the execution of God’s purpose has taken place. This boldness is freedom — freedom to pray, freedom to access Him together with much confidence through the faith of Him. This verse does not merely say “faith in Him,” but “the faith of Him.”

It seems that Paul was overwhelmed by seeing that our portion includes all that was executed in Christ Jesus our Lord. His spirit is mounting up to a pinnacle to begin to pray this revelation into being. This is the deepest meaning of prayer — you are now in Him and you have His boldness, you have His access, and you have His confidence. His boldness with the Father is our boldness. His access is our access. This is all for the display of the church on this earth — where Christ is exhibited, where Christ is all and in all — for the Lord’s coming back.

God made the ages with His Son, and now the purpose of the ages, in the fullness of the times, is to

head us all up in Christ. So just let Him head you up. His heading up is in that inward tug, that little nudge in you. That is what He is in you. By following that, by saying Amen to that, you fill your heart and your whole being with so much significance. You feel so valuable, so worthy, because on this earth you are living a life to express Christ.

Oh, may the Lord grant to us a vision, a heavenly vision, that we can obey. This vision will calibrate us. We will see that God wants to display Christ through the church in all His multifaceted wisdom. This display is to the principalities and powers, and it takes place as we allow God to execute His purpose in our spirit — in the realm, the sphere, where it has all been accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!

— Bill Freeman

Understanding the book of James

To understand the book of James it is important to see that he is writing to believers with the kingdom in view. Indeed, the kingdom is the presupposition of the entire book. James is not addressing unbelievers in order that they might become believers by grace for initial salvation. Rather, he is addressing born-again believers (1:18) in order that they might participate in a greater grace (4:6) to become firstfruits (1:18) and receive the crown of life (1:12) for the Lord's coming and kingdom (5:7-8). These are the crucial factors of the kingdom in the book of James. The whole book is related to believers presently living in the reality of the kingdom, that in the future they would enter into the manifestation of the kingdom at the Lord's coming. Thus, the main factors in the book of James are related to the kingdom.

Heirs of the kingdom with the crown of life

One of the factors of the kingdom expressed by James is seen in James 2:5: "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" In this verse we notice that the kingdom is mentioned in relation to those

who are rich in faith and who love God. In other words, the kingdom here is not referring to our initial believing. The kingdom in this verse is related to believers possessing two conditions: being rich in faith and loving the Lord. This confirms the fact that James is not speaking to unbelievers, but to believers.

The same thought of the kingdom is opened up in James 1:12: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been [approved,] he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." The crown of life here is something additional to the gift of eternal life spoken of in John 3:16. Eternal life as a gift is given initially at the time of the new birth. The crown of life as a reward is given not at the new birth, but at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:8). The gift of eternal life is given without any condition being met, except the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). The crown of life is given based on the condition of loving Him. The gift of eternal life is freely given (Titus 3:5-7), whereas the crown of life is a reward based on approval. So we can see that in his epistle James has the kingdom in view.

James' word in verse 12 of chapter 1 is very similar to Paul's word in 2 Timothy 4:8, which says, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." James speaks of "the crown of life," and Paul speaks of "the crown of righteousness." James speaks of loving the Lord as the condition for receiving the crown of life, while Paul speaks of loving His appearing as the condition for receiving the crown of righteousness. Both James and Paul were obviously under the same vision and revelation concerning the kingdom destiny of believers.

To be an heir of the kingdom (James 2:5), to receive the crown of life (James 1:12), and to receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) all speak of the same one condition — loving the Lord. Do you love Him? John says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). We cannot have a divided heart. Our heart was made to be single, to love only Him. So we must guard our heart. We must nurture it with care, not allowing one crack for other things to enter in. We need to pray, "Lord, purify my heart from every other affection that seeks to steal away my love for You. I want a crown of righteousness and a crown of life. And

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I want to be an heir of the kingdom.” The burden of the book of James is related to believers living in a condition that grants them an abundant entrance into the kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11). It is a book oriented to the judgment seat of Christ (James 1:12; 2:12-13; 3:1; 4:12; 5:9, 12). It is a book emphasizing the testing and approving of the genuineness of the faith that is in us. It is with this background of the kingdom that we must understand the book of James. Otherwise, we will not be able to reconcile his speaking about works in chapter 2 with other passages about works in the New Testament (Rom. 3:27-28; 4:4-6; Gal. 2:16).

James and the Sermon on the Mount

It is a recorded fact that the Lord Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7 are not directed toward unbelievers, but toward disciples (Matt. 5:1-2). In other words, on this occasion the Lord was not preaching the gospel as He did to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, but rather He was explaining the nature of the kingdom life to His disciples. Matthew 5—7 is an unveiling of the kingdom life to believers (Matt. 5:3, 10, 19-20; 6:10, 13, 33; 7:21). In the same way, the book of James is not directed to unbelievers as are Romans chapters 3 and 4. The book of James is like the Sermon on the Mount in that it is spoken to believers concerning living a kingdom life and being ready for the Lord’s coming and judgment seat.

To see the striking similarity between the book of James and the Sermon on the Mount, we need only to study the following comparison between these two sections of the Word. This comparison proves conclusively that James’ orientation in writing his Epistle was the kingdom life:

A COMPARISON BETWEEN JAMES AND MATTHEW 5—7

Inheriting the kingdom	James 2:5	Matt. 5:20
Perfect	James 1:4	Matt. 5:48
The crown of life	James 1:12	Matt. 7:13-14
Hearing and doing	James 1:22-27	Matt. 7:24-27
How the Father gives	James 1:5, 17	Matt. 7:9-11
How to pray	James 1:5-8	Matt. 7:7-11
Lusts and pleasures	James 1:13-15; 4:1-5	Matt. 5:27-32
Good gifts through prayer	James 1:17	Matt. 7:11
Anger and wrath	James 1:20	Matt. 5:22
The perfect law of freedom	James 1:25	Matt. 5:17-19
Religious deception	James 1:16, 22, 26-27	Matt. 7:21-23
Purity	James 1:27; 3:17;	
	4:8	Matt. 5:8

The rich man	James 1:9-11; 5:1-6	Matt. 6:19-34
Being led into temptation	James 1:13-14	Matt. 6:13
The realm of the poor	James 2:5	Matt. 5:3
Heirs of the kingdom	James 2:5	Matt. 5:3-10
Loving our neighbor	James 2:8	Matt. 5:43-48
The royal law	James 2:8	Matt. 7:12
Keeping the whole law	James 2:10	Matt. 5:17-19
Adultery	James 2:10-11	Matt. 5:27
Being merciful	James 2:13	Matt. 5:7
Reciprocal forgiveness	James 2:13	Matt. 6:12, 14-15
Reciprocal judgment	James 2:13	Matt. 7:2
Merciful	James 2:13; 3:17 ..	Matt. 5:7
Exceeding righteousness	James 2:14-26	Matt. 5:17-22
Good works as a testimony	James 2:18; 3:13 ..	Matt. 5:14-16
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Meekness	James 1:21; 3:13 ..	Matt. 5:5
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Asking and receiving	James 4:3	Matt. 7:8
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	2:12-13; 3:1;	25-26, 46;
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— Bill Freeman

the Christian

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