

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

THE RICH AND THE POOR

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

PART SIX OF SIXTY FOUR

The epistle of James is sometimes called "The Christian's Book of Proverbs." It contains very practical teaching. While some say that religion is impractical, James shows otherwise. He writes to promote a practical, ethical life. He gives an application of God's truth to our every day situations.

As today, there were two classes of people in James' day, the rich and the poor. The gap between them may have been greater in his day, but the distinction between rich and poor will always exist (Mark 14:7). If the gospel of Christ is practical, it must work the needed result in the varying circumstances in which men find themselves. It must give to man the proper view of life for his particular situation. James addresses himself to both the rich and poor when he says, "But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate, and the rich in that he is made low because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away" (James 1:9,10).

The Christian who is poor in this world's goods should rejoice that he is an heir to a heavenly estate, "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (I Peter 1:4). Poverty can be a severe trial especially when we can see others prospering who seem to care nothing for God. The poor, if he is a part of the "royal priesthood", should exult in the hope of heaven. There is no position on earth higher than that of being a Christian. All the wealth in the world cannot buy the favor of God. The gospel is practical as it gives to the poor a source of joy and hope.

The disciple who is rich should likewise rejoice because through the gospel he is humbled. He should recognize the transitory nature of all earthly things. As the flower, he shall pass away; and his wealth will not save him. He is humbled by knowing that regardless of what he possesses, he can only be saved by the mercy of a loving God. He is humbled by his need for forgiveness which money can't buy. He may be ridiculed by his fellow rich, but he should rejoice. Man will leave riches behind. He must have something higher for which to live. That can only be God.

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