

## THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

### Theme: "The Testing of Your Faith"

Lesson: 29

Text: 4:11-17

Date: 10-15-23

Trinity Lutheran Church

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INSTEAD  
YOU OUGHT  
TO SAY,

**IF THE  
LORD  
WILLS,**  
WE WILL  
LIVE AND  
DO THIS  
OR THAT.

### TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(11) Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against **the law** and judges **the law**.

But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

(12) **There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy**. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

**(Ex 20:16; Lev 19:16; Ps 15:3; 50:19,20; 101:5; Prov 6:16,19; Is 33:22;  
Mt 7:1; 10:28; Rom 1:30; 14:4; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 6:1,2; 1 Pet 2:1)**

(13) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—

(14) yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life?

For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

(15) Instead you ought to say, "**If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.**"

**(Job 7:7; Ps 39:5; 102:3; 144:4; Prov 27:1; Is 2:22;  
Mt 6:10; Mk 3:35; Lk 12:18-20; 22:42;  
Acts 18:21; 21:14; Rom 8:27; 2 Cor 8:5;  
Eph 5:17; 6:6; Col 4:12; 1 Thess 4:3; 5:18;  
Heb 10:36; 1 Pet 2:15; 4:2; 1 John 2:17; 5:14,15)**

(16) As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

(17) So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

**(Lk 12:47,48; Jn 9:41; 1 Cor 5:6; 2 Pet 2:21)**

The phrase “There is one Lawgiver and Judge, He who is able to save and to destroy” is generally seen as a reference to God.<sup>10</sup> Since in this section James is making clear allusions to the words of Jesus, it is natural to assume that the “Lawgiver and Judge . . . who is able to save and destroy” is specifically Jesus Himself. Jesus is Lawgiver since in Him God authoritatively gives the new law, i.e., the new revelation of salvation in the Gospel. It is inadequate to understand Law here as Decalog, God’s prohibitions. He is the Lawgiver, and all His words constitute the Law, i.e., the *torah*, the divine revelation.

In Matthew Jesus sees Himself as God’s appointed Judge at the world’s end (25:31-46). He is the One who “separates the sheep from the goats” (v. 32) and passes sentence (vv. 34, 41). The judgment is based on whether love was extended to those who were in distress, the same problem James’ readers have. As mentioned, understanding the Judge as Christ is preferable to understanding Him as God. In the Old Testament the Son of Man comes to carry out God’s judgment (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus sees Himself as the Son of Man, to whom judgment has been given. Paul in speaking of the appearing of “the righteous Judge” is clearly referring to Christ (2 Tim. 4:8). James’ reference in 5:9 to “the Judge . . . standing at the doors” is also to Jesus. Characteristic for the New Testament is understanding Jesus and not the Father as Judge.<sup>11</sup> In the Fourth Gospel Jesus says that “the Father . . . has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22).

“If the Lord wills” is more than a recognition of divine control over all of life; it is a confession that Jesus can appear at any time as God’s appointed Judge and terminate the ordinary course of time.<sup>12</sup> The boasting condemned by James is that supreme confidence that a human being can direct his future affairs without fear of divine intervention. “All such boasting is evil (*ponēra*)” (4:16). “Evil” here has the same intent as it does in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:13), an attitude inspired by the devil. Boasting about what a man is able to accomplish in the future is not only silly, because no man is totally in control of his destiny, but worse, the boasting man puts himself in the place of God the Creator. This is, of course, an affront against the First Commandment in not letting God have that honor which can only rightly belong to Him. This is the most satanic of all sins. For this reason James sees boasting about the future as evil from Satan. It is the opposite of faith which relies totally on God.

#### LIFE APPLICATION

Since we stand under the Law, not above the Law,  
how does this shape our relationships to others and to the Lord?