

Now a word of encouragement. A word for the victims of the greedy and covetous. Victims of the many. The many who were, and still are, living for the present ignoring the future consequences of their choices. Again, how timely is the word of God. These words of hope and patient endurance are comforting to us in the mad scene surrounding us these days as well. A scene which could easily infect us with its selfish character, when really we are only pilgrims on our way through, recruiting fellow travelers for the glory that shines before us. We aren't even told to try to fix what is broken in this world. Only to comfort the broken hearted and show them the Way. No quenching, smoking flax or breaking, bruised reeds we might pass. The divine Husbandman is patiently awaiting harvest time. Harvest time, a joyous time for the wheat and the Planter, a terror for the tares and the enemy who sowed them, Matthew 13:24-30. The early rain (autumn in hot Palestine) of the Spirit generated gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has fallen and has been spread worldwide. The latter rain remains to fall as the winter growing season draws to a close and spring harvest nears. The coming of the Lord draws closer. If then, when James was writing, how much nearer now nearly 2000 years after. Yet the Lord of the Harvest is patient not willing that any should perish, 2Peter 3:9. Patient that the church, His body, His bride, be competed here upon earth before being whisked away in an instant to meet Him in the air as the harvest commences. We will all go together, those asleep in Jesus momentarily preceding those then alive.

If we are going to go together and be together forever how should we then conduct ourselves while waiting here. "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." See Matthew 24:33; 1Corinthians 4:5. Though He is our Bridegroom, He is our Head and Lord. Won't He hold us each accountable for our conduct and faithfulness with what He left us to do for Him, the talents, Matthew 25:15? As the One who died on the Cross for our sins doesn't He have the right and duty to draw us to account before Him, cleansing off the dross and rewarding us for what was for Him? And after that, those who refused to receive Him as Lord will He not judge them for their deeds and judge them for rejecting Him? The Judge stands at the door all right. Happy those who endured much now asleep in Jesus, those such as the prophets or Job, Abel or James. Blessed those that are raptured, whether asleep in Jesus or alive. Blessed those who are awake expecting. Are we? Blessed those who, though drowsy, have oil in their lamps, Matthew 25. Abel died by the hand of his brother apparently with no earthly descendants. Job, clearly a righteous man who eschewed evil, patiently endured the chastening of the Lord including the deaths of his children. Chastening toward his perfecting here for his place in glory with His Lord. Job learned some deep personal lessons

about pride at the hands of his Lord, who is very pitiful and of tender mercy. Lessons which he preserved in written record for our instruction as well. And when it was over he was blessed and entrusted with ten new children to train up for the Lord, Job 42:10 doubling his original family. He likewise cleanses and perfect us today. The prophets also are cited, Matthew 5:11,12; Hebrews 12:1-13; 1Peter 4:12, and

*Luke 6:22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.*

Next another little, very telling, detail. While we are a heavenly people with a heavenly hope here in this scene of man's prideful "advances" we should not exalt ourselves by taking an oath of any kind. We will reign with Christ when He comes. James also seems to address those that will inherit the earth after we have been raptured as well. They, an earthly people with the prospect of a place of earthly authority and blessing in the coming glorious kingdom that will fill and dominate the earth. James reiterates what the Lord Jesus Himself said earlier, Matthew 5:33-37. If we are not confident that our word is sufficiently reputable for others to accept, that uncertainty in our hearts is displayed before all if we resort to an oath. And we should also be aware of veiled or disguised oaths we may utter spontaneously to punctuate rather mundane, exclamations for emphasis. "Gee," "Golly," "Gosh," not to mention the more serious careless taking the Lord's name in vain. "God, what a game!" These fall short of curses, also often carelessly uttered, but they dishonor the One whose name is taken in vain. Even disciples' names are used, "For Pete's sake." I'm sure the apostle Peter isn't pleased that his name is a popular recourse for an oath. He is erroneously viewed by many to be in charge of the "pearly gates," (probably though a careless misinterpretation of Matthew 16:19) so they swear by his name. Hmm. That won't do much to get them in. If we should be called upon to provide testimony in a court of law, instead of giving an oath, we can respectfully ask the judge to accept our affirmation that we will tell the truth, etc. It will go something like: "I affirm that I will tell the truth to the best of my ability," etc. Affirmation is normally acceptable before any court or official authority. But be sure to tell the truth, even if you would rather not disclose something you know. (Usually one is wise to limit each response to the specific question asked.) And even the world knows one doesn't have to worry about remembering exactly what he has stated if he consistently tells the truth. One whose word is trustworthy is counted credible when he has occasion to present the gospel as well.