

# The Letter of St James

## *A Better Way of Living*

### Answers to James Session Two: A Comparison to the Sermon on the Mount

We were comparing some of James' teaching with what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. I gave the references for the following topics in Matthew and you were finding what James said about each one. I'll just give the references in James.

1. How to pray: James 1:5-8 and 5:13-16 Talk to God and praise him. When you ask for something do it with faith and in the name of the Lord.
2. Lusts and pleasures: James 1:13-15 and 2:11 Be in control of our thoughts as well as actions.
3. Hearing and doing: James 1:22-26. Listen to Christ and obey his teaching.
4. Anger and wrath: James 1:19-20. Control your temper.
5. Judgement: James 2:13. Expect to be treated as you treat others.
6. Knowing things by the fruit: James 3:10-12,17. Be alert for false teaching.
7. Meekness/humility: 3:13 and 4:6 Humility pleases God.
8. Peacemakers: 3:17-18. Peacemakers are righteous in God's eyes.
9. Conflict between God and the world: James 4:4. God expects complete loyalty from us.
10. Judging others: 4:11-12. It is not our place to judge others.
11. Living one day at a time: 4:13-15. Concentrate on the present and celebrate God's goodness.
12. Oaths: 5:12. Be honest, so that everyone can trust your word.

Did you go on and find other topics of similarity?

"Blessed" or "happy" which word do you think is nearer to what Jesus and James meant?

I'm inclined to think they meant both to apply. Thinking of persecution as a good example, because surely no-one could really be happy about that? Yet think of James writing about joy in 1:2 and Peter of rejoicing in 1 Peter 4:13, both had experienced persecution and knew what they were talking about. Trust in Christ makes people happy and God's delight in that trust makes people blessed.

The above is my opinion, but then I came across this, which is more comprehensive and which describes James' use of 'blessed' in 1:12.

"It denotes an inner quality of life, a peace, contentment, or satisfaction that can be sustained in spite of adverse external difficulties. It is not so much an emotional feeling of happiness as it is a state of blessedness experienced in this life by citizens of God's kingdom and to be more fully realised in the future life. That blessedness comes not in freedom from trials, but rather through the endurance of testings."

*Vernon Doerksen: Everyman's Bible Commentary; James*

Stephen Startup has sent me an interesting note. He says that "blessed" is a traditional word used in Judaism (look at Psalm 1), often to start a prayer. For this reason he feels "happy" is a bad translation, because in one sense the beatitudes are the opening prayer to the sermon on the mount.

“The Royal Law”, love your neighbour comes into Matthew 22:36-40 v 39. It is also to be found in Mark 12:28-34 v 31. It is summed up in Matthew 7:12.

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