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A0722 – June 6, 2007 – Jas 2:5-6 – Heirs Of The Kingdom

James 2:5 Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. Οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τοῦ κόσμου πλουσίους ἐν πίστει, καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν; (BYZ)

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren. Did God not choose the poor of the world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those loving Him? (Author's Translation)

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of the world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those loving Him? (NASB)

Listen (*akouo*) “hear and do” a 2nd Person Plural Imperative, a general command to his beloved brethren, that is, Jewish Christians of the *diaspora* (James 1:1-2). James was written from the land of Israel to Jewish Christians living outside the land of Israel. The 2nd Person Plural Imperatives indicate shifts in James. **Listen** is a shift from the material realm to the spiritual realm. He’s been talking about material riches vs material poverty but now he’s going to shift to spiritual riches and spiritual poverty. You’ll notice he uses the words **rich** and **poor** and this ties 2:5 to 2:1-4 but only as a word play. These words are now being used in a spiritual sense. Clearly **rich in faith** is a spiritual quality and has nothing to do with material riches. It’s less clear at first glance that **the poor** is a spiritual quality. The prior and later context lead most interpreters to conclude **the poor** are the materially poor but this has several problems we explored last week. *First*, it makes God partial when the argument of the passage is not to be partial. *Second*, it makes material poverty a spiritual virtue which leads to asceticism. So, we have to find another solution and we did so by comparing Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount with Matthew’s. Commentators have long known that James relies heavily on the Sermon on the Mount and he’s picking up

Jesus' terminology here. Where Matthew says "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3) Luke simply says "Blessed are the poor" (Luke 6:20). Thus, when James says **did not God choose the poor** he's referring to the "poor in spirit" which is a Hebrew idiom for an "attitude of humility". The point is that God chooses believers that have an "attitude of humility". Clearly these Jews lack that attitude. Verse 1 says they have an attitude of "personal favoritism" and verse 6 says they have "dishonored the poor man". So, this is a *rebuke* and a *warning*. It's a *rebuke* to the Jews who demonstrate an attitude of personal favoritism by seating rich people in the chief seats and placing the poor people in the back or under their footstool. It's a *warning* that they if they do not put on the "attitude of humility" they will not be **heirs of the kingdom**. Before we deal with the **heirs of the kingdom** one more note about God choosing. The verb **choose** (*eklego*) is an aorist middle. This is probably a constative aorist which means it's not looking at the beginning (ingressive) or end (culminative) of the action but the action in its entirety. God chose humble believers as a class. The middle voice signifies He chose them for his own benefit. This ties in with their role as **heirs of the kingdom**. In the **kingdom** the **heirs** will co-reign as kings with the King of kings. He is the heir of all things and thus the King of kings and God chose humble believers to be the co-heirs with the King. Christ is the upper case *King* and the heirs are the lower case *kings* in the phrase *King of kings*. That explains the middle voice, that He chose humble believers for His own benefit since they will be in service to Him in the kingdom. So, let's deal with the **heirs of the kingdom**. First, what is the **kingdom**. *Basileia* is a "territory, sphere, or realm" ruled by a king. How would James' audience understand **kingdom**. Remember, James is the earliest NT book, written ~44AD, maybe even earlier. Having been raised in 1st century Jewish culture they were fully conversive with the OT. When confronted with the Messiahship of Jesus they believed He was the fulfillment of OT prophecy. It was perfectly logical for them to believe in Jesus. So, James spends ~95% of his time on application and about 5% of time on Bible doctrine because they already knew Bible doctrine from the OT. They just need to be exhorted to apply it in the midst of trials. So, they already knew a lot about the promised **kingdom**. So, where is James drawing his conception of the **kingdom**? From the OT. And what **kingdom** does the OT teach about the **kingdom**? That it's the earthly Messianic, Davidic, Theocratic Kingdom of God and in the NT we learn it is also Millennial. There is no other **kingdom** in Scripture, Old or New Testament, the kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven all refer to the

earthly Messianic, Davidic, Theocratic, Millennial Kingdom. The church is *not* the kingdom. The church is not the mystery ‘*form*’ of the kingdom. The church is *not* going to bring in the kingdom. The church is the church and the kingdom is the kingdom. *They are distinct arrangements or dispensations in the plan of God.* The church is *now* the kingdom is *not yet*. Of course, there is a connection between church age believers and the kingdom that is vital to understand. The believer has three relationships to the kingdom. *First*, all church age believers are citizens of the kingdom (Col 1:13). At the moment of faith alone in Christ alone your citizenship is transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son. *Second*, we are the prayer warriors for the kingdom (Luke 11:2). Jesus said, “When you pray, say, ‘Father, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come...’” We are to pray for the kingdom to come. *Third*, we are to seek for the kingdom. Jesus said, “seek first the kingdom and His righteousness” (Matt 6:33). The kingdom is of first importance. We are to be continually looking for it. Why? Just as looking for the pre-trib rapture purifies a believer (1 John 3:2) so looking for the kingdom purifies a believer. Why does it purify us? Because we know that our lifestyle now will determine our privileges and position then. As Arnold Fruchtenbaum said, “Believers’ lifestyle right now, in this age, will determine their future position in the Kingdom.”ⁱ James 2:5 is not a friendly reminder. It’s an outright warning that not all believers will be heirs of the kingdom. If you play favorites on the basis of race, gender, wealth or age then you are not in a position to be an heir of the kingdom. So, this third relationship to the **kingdom** is where James 2:5 comes into play. Believers who are humble right now, in this age, will be **heirs of the kingdom**. So, let’s develop the Doctrine of Inheritance.

First, the definition of the word **heir** (*kleronomos*) – “one who receives a possession, one who obtains a lot, a beneficiary”. When we talk about being an heir or inheriting something we mean we were the beneficiaries of our parent’s possessions when they died. For example, we might inherit their estate. Being an heir of an estate is much more than entering an estate. One who enters an estate does not possess it but one who inherits it does. There’s a fundamental difference between “entering” (*eiserchomai* – to come into) and “inheriting” (*kleronomos* – to possess; *echo* – to have, hold). In the same way, inheriting the kingdom is more than entering the kingdom. Inheriting the kingdom is receiving possession in it, an allotment of land in the millennial kingdom. Unfortunately, most people read the words inherit the kingdom or

heir of the kingdom and they think it means “enter the kingdom” or “get to go to heaven”. But it actually means to enter with abundance, receive an allotment, receive possessions and privileges in the kingdom.

Second, there are three heirships in the NT. An understanding of the three heirships is vital for understanding the pre-eminence of Christ, the position of the believer in Christ and the privileges of the obedient believer in Christ. The three heirs are: 1) Christ, the heir of all things, 2) believers, heirs of God and 3) spiritually obedient believers, co-heirs with Christ.

First, Christ is the heir of all things. Hebrews 1:2 “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” According to Psalm 2:8-9 “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’” So, Christ is the heir of all things and He will receive His inheritance in full only after the Tribulation. The ceremony that inducts Jesus Christ into His kingly office occurs in heaven at the time of the 7th Trumpet (Rev 11:15-19). He must be inducted into the office of King in order to exercise His full rights as heir of all things. In the meantime He is waiting at the right hand of the Father in heaven. When He returns He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and will rule with a rod of iron so that righteousness covers the whole earth. This is one of the most pervasive teachings in the whole Bible yet few people understand it or believe it. So, the first heir is Christ and He is heir of all things.

Second, by faith alone in Christ alone a person is united with Christ and becomes an heir of God, receiving a permanent inheritance, the pledge of which is the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:4-5; Romans 8:17a; Ephesians 1:11, 13-14; 3:6; Galatians 3:29; 4:30). This inheritance is received by all who believe at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. It is reserved permanently in heaven for all believers and it is imperishable (1 Peter 1:4-5). Being a permanent possession and imperishable is another support for the Doctrine of Eternal Security. At the moment of faith alone in Christ alone a person is justified, legally declared righteous on the merits of Jesus Christ. This legal decision takes place in the high court of heaven and cannot be overruled. Thus, all who have faith alone in Christ alone are heirs of God and are eternally secure. At the moment a person is justified the Holy Spirit comes to

indwell and seal the believer in Christ (Eph 1:11, 13, 14), another argument for eternal security. The Holy Spirit is the pledge or down payment that guarantees the full reception of this inheritance on the day of resurrection. So, all believers possess it now as a pledge but more fully in the future. Thus, the second heir is the believer and he is an heir of God.

Third, by living an obedient spiritual life a believer will receive the reward of being a joint-heir with Christ (James 2:5; Romans 8:17b; Colossians 3:23-25; 1 Peter 3:9; Titus 3:5-7; Revelation 2:26-27). That is, he will be a co-heir of the kingdom with Christ. He will “inherit the kingdom” or be an “heir of the kingdom”. A believer is rewarded as a joint heir by virtue of spiritual obedience. Some passages present an inheritance as a free gift received by virtue of faith in Christ while others present an inheritance as a reward earned if certain conditions are met (e.g. obedience). For example, Col 3:23-25 presents this inheritance as a reward for obedience. 1 Peter 3:9 and Titus 3:5-7 use a subjunctive verb to express the possibility of receiving this inheritance. Both are 3rd class conditions referring to the probable future, what will probably take place subject to the condition(s) being fulfilled. Some believers will some won’t. It just depends on whether they meet the conditions. If they are spiritually obedient then they will inherit the kingdom. If not they won’t. Thus, all who are heirs of God will enter the kingdom but only spiritually obedient believers will inherit the kingdom. Rev 2:26-27 says that all who keep Christ’s deeds to the end will co-rule with the Messiah in the kingdom. Several passages warn believers that if they continue carnal living they will not inherit the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5). Since they are believers they will enter but since they are not spiritually obedient they will not inherit. Romans 8:17 speaks of both inheritances using the phrase: “heirs of God” and “fellow heirs with Christ”. The first inheritance is conditioned on being a child of God which is by faith alone but the second is conditioned on suffering with Christ. All believers have the opportunity to suffer with Christ but not all do! That’s the whole point with James. He’s encouraging us to have a mental attitude of joy in the midst of sufferings and trials for three reasons: 1) it produces endurance (1:3), the ability to bear up under hardships, 2) it results in receiving the crown of life as a reward at the judgment seat of Christ (1:12) and 3) it results in receiving the reward of inheriting the kingdom (2:5). So, heirship in James 2:5 is talking about this third heir, the joint heirship with Christ received as a reward for humility. In the end I like Arnold

Fruchtenbaum's comments on James 2:5. He said, "All believers will enter the Messianic Kingdom but only those who live an obedient spiritual lifestyle will inherit the Kingdom (Gal. 5:21). This means that only such believers will be rewarded, honored, and given crowns of authority to co-rule in the Messianic Kingdom with Messiah, the King."ⁱⁱ

Thus, James 2:5 is a warning and a rebuke to believers showing favoritism to the rich. God does not choose arrogant believers but humble believers who are rich in faith to be heirs of the kingdom. All believers will enter but not all believers will inherit so as to co-rule with the heir of all things, the Lord Jesus Christ. By virtue of faith in Him we enter the kingdom (John 3:1-15). By virtue of obedience to Him we inherit the kingdom (Romans 8:17)

Finally, 2:5 closes by saying that being an heir of the kingdom is **promised to those who love Him** or literally, **those loving Him**. It's a present active participle, ongoing love, continual love. James has already used this exact phrase in the Greek in James 1:12, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him [literally loving Him]". There the crown of life was a promised reward and here being an heir of the kingdom is a promised reward. Both are promises made to believers who continually love Him. The present tense does not mean the believer will never fail to love Him. Perfectionism cannot be reached until we each receive our resurrection body. But what is meant is a sustained expression of love for Him. It may surprise you to know that all believers do not love God. Probably very few believers love God. When we read the word "love" in the Bible what does it mean? Typically, American's have a very shallow concept of love. If you don't believe me just look at the divorce rate, Christian or non-Christian because they're the same. The typical American defines love in terms of Romantic love; that warm, fuzzy feeling you had for a girlfriend when you first held her hand. So many marriages fail because the couples are trying to recover that warm, fuzzy, electric feeling they experienced. It's actually quite interesting to discover that worship in American churches is reflective of this idea of Romantic love. They try to create a mood where you can have a warm, fuzzy feeling and this is simply the religious outworking of an existential, romantic concept of love for God. People are trying to have sex with God in church. I've read works by some of the leading authors in this arena where they describe how we ought to be "kissing Jesus". It's sickening from a biblical perspective but what's clear is that very few American Christians

have a concept of biblical love. So, we have to understand what the Bible means when it says “love”. Of course, the Greek word here is *agapao* which is a love that is interested in the other person. It’s not selfish. It’s selfless. It’s not looking for a good feeling. Its action devoted to the interests of the other person. So, to love Christ a believer’s actions have to be devoted to His interests. Ooh, this doesn’t feel good. This isn’t about me. That’s right. It’s about Him. It’s about Christ. Do all believers love Him continually? Well, just ask yourself if all believers are selfless? Well, let’s turn over to John 14:21-24 to see what Christ had to say about love.

“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

So, again, it makes sense that being an heir of the kingdom is a reward for obedience since loving Him is defined in terms of obedience to His commandments. Not all believers are experientially sanctified by continually obeying His commandments under the filling of the Spirit so not all believers are loving Him. Those who do will be heirs of the kingdom. Those who don’t will enter but not inherit. The promise is for **those loving Him**. One of the commands we must follow in order to be loving Him is loving others (John 13:34; 1 John 2:7, 8; 2 John 5) and this is the bridge to the following verses. Let me ask you a question, “Were they loving the rich and poor man?” No, verse 6 says they had “dishonored the poor man” and verses 8-9 said they had violated the Royal Law of Lev 19:18. “If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,’ you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Far from loving the poor man they were committing sin, they were disobeying God’s commandments and thus not loving Him. This was serious enough to infringe up their being an heir in the kingdom. As I’ve said before, right doctrine is very important but right living is just as important. Right doctrine must come first but right

living should quickly follow. We should not be merely hearers of the word but doers also. Refusing to do the word will have an impact on our privileges and position in the kingdom.

James 2:6 Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχόν. Οὐχ οἱ πλοῦσοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια; (**BYZ**)

James 2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you and dragging you into courts? (**Author's Translation**)

James 2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? (**NASB95**)

You have dishonored the poor man. Now he's shifting back to the **poor man** of verses 2-3, the man who was poor materially. They were not showing poverty of spirit, humility, toward this **poor man**. Therefore, your actions **dishonored the poor man**. This, of course, is inconsistent with the Christian faith which centers on the glorious Lord Jesus Christ. Since all people are made in the image of God all people should be honored and respected as the image bearers of God. **dishonor** comes from the Greek word *atimazo*, it's the negation of *timazo* which means "to honor". The Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures were all strongly honor-shame oriented. For example, in Jewish cultures the rich and the elders of the land wore highly decorated robes and cords signifying their honor but the poor were often shamed. There was nothing culturally unacceptable about the honor-shame orientation in these cultures. So, when James says **You have dishonored the poor man** he means you have gone beyond even the cultures treatment of the poor. The BAGD says this word conveys "an especially grievous offense in the strongly honor-shame oriented Semitic and Gr-Rom. societies."ⁱⁱⁱ Of course, a continuation in such grievous offenses would disqualify them from being heirs of the kingdom.

So, in conclusion, we have studied the Doctrine of Inheritance. To inherit means "to possess, to obtain by lot". There are three heirs; 1) Christ is heir of all things, 2) All believers are heirs of God (a free gift), 3) Spiritually obedient believers are joint-heirs with Christ (a reward). James 2:5 fits in the third category of inheritance. It is a reward for putting on humility, being rich in faith and continually loving God by means of works of obedience. These will be heirs of the kingdom. The Jews at the assembly who are showing

partiality are in danger of not being heirs of the kingdom. But if they put on humility they will co-reign as kings with the King of kings in the earthly, Messianic, Davidic, Theocratic, Millennial Kingdom.

ⁱ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Commentary on II Peter*, 418.

ⁱⁱ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Commentary on James*, 244.

ⁱⁱⁱ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, "Based on Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Frhchristlichen [Sic] Literatur*, Sixth Edition, Ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, With Viktor Reichmann and on Previous English Editions by W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker.", 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 148.

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