

THE JOURNEY OF THE TRUE DAWN-TREADERS

The Mission and Mindset of Messiah's People

“A Journey Through James”

Sermon 5

Texts: (various)

James 1:1: *James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, **To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad:** Greetings. (NASB95)*

Psalm 107:1–3: *Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, **Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary** 3 **And gathered from the lands,** From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south. (NASB95)*

Isaiah 11:11–12: *Then it will happen on that day that **the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people,** who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. 12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (NASB95)*

Jeremiah 31:10: *Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare in the coastlands afar off, And say, “**He who scattered Israel will gather him** And keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.” (NASB95)*

Ezekiel 37:21–22: *“Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and **I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;** 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. (NASB95)*

***Zechariah 10:6:** “I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph, **And I will bring them back**, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am the Lord their God and I will answer them. (NASB95)*

***Matthew 19:28:** Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (ESV)*

***Acts 3:19–21:** Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (ESV)*

Introduction:

Many if not most of us are familiar with C S Lewis’ The Chronicles of Narnia. I remember reading them as a teenager and being captivated by the stories contained in the Chronicles. Later, I was even more impacted when I had a chance to see the movies that were produced for each of the first three books in the Chronicles. Lewis wrote the Chronicles as stories for children living during and after the disruption and devastation that WW2 brought upon their lives and upon the world in which they now lived and were called to rebuild. Eventually, the Chronicles were composed of seven books. However, the main storyline is introduced and developed in the first three books written in the mid-’40s and published in the early 1950s.

In short, the first book in the Chronicles – *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* – tells the story of an ancient land under an even more ancient curse that would only be broken when an ancient prophecy came to pass – a prophecy that promised deliverance when long-awaited sons of Adam and daughters of Eve appear in Narnia in faithful service to the true king of the realm, Aslan the Lion. By the end of the book, the curse has been broken and a new day has dawned in Aslan’s realm.

The second book – *Prince Caspian* – is the story of how that freedom was lost by Adam’s race until once again, the four champions reappear in Narnia to protect the freedom Aslan had won when the curse was broken; to restore the throne to its rightful heir, Prince Caspian; and to re-establishing conditions of peace to the land.

The Voyage of the Dawn-Treader is the third and final book in the main storyline. In this book, two of the four champions are charged to take the freedom that has been restored to Narnia and extend it to the far corners and remote islands in Aslan’s kingdom through the journeys and exploits of fearless citizens of Narnia on a ship called the Dawn-Treader.

So, what do the Chronicles of Narnia have to do with the book of James? More than you might initially think. As we have noted, James is the first pastor of the first church of believers living in the dawn of a brand-new age predicted by the prophets and anticipated throughout the entire Old Testament; all the way back to the promise given by God to Adam and Eve.

For more than 4000 years, life under the sun was marked by the effects of sin and death brought about by an ancient enemy and resulting in futility and spiritual darkness due to an ancient global curse. However, throughout those long years, God continually reminded His people that one day the ancient curse would be broken, the ancient enemy defeated, and the darkness lifted by the dawning of a new and better age. The prophets referred to this amazing new Age as “the last days” or “the latter days.” And the signal that this new Age had dawned would be the arrival of a particular son of Adam – an anointed appointed champion who would accomplish what the first Adam failed to do. For more than 2000 years of written Biblical history, the prophets kept this hope alive in the hearts of God’s people – “God promised champion is coming and when He comes, He will regather His people, reconstitute His nation, establish His Kingdom, and restore all things to the state and purpose for which they had been created.”

And one day, the last prophet in the long line of biblical prophets was preaching and baptizing in the River Jordan when he spotted someone walking on the bank of the river. And immediately John knew that the dawn of the new age had come because the anointed appointed champion had appeared in their midst. Lifting his hand and

pointing to Jesus, John declared, “Behold! God’s own Lamb – the One bearing away the sins of the world!” And with these words, the dawn of the new age had arrived.

Jesus not only brought the dawn of a new age, but He also initiated a new and better covenant for His people and made them citizens and ambassadors of a new and better Kingdom. These people became the Church of Jesus Christ and James was their first pastor – and as their pastor, he writes to make sure they stay on mission as they bring the dawn of the new age to the darkest and most remote places under the sun.

For five weeks we have been following our guide, James who has helped us navigate a steep and difficult trail and we have reached a stopping point where James sits us down to catch our breath and to prepare us for the rest of the journey that lies before us.

As a good and wise pastor, James knows that he has things to say in the coming chapters that are both difficult and deeply personal as the Word of Truth begins to expose what is really going on in the lives and hearts of his beloved people. How will they receive what God has asked him to say to them? What will be their response when he confronts them about sins that damage their credibility as messengers of the powerful gospel they bear? How will they respond when James talks to them about the sin of partiality that exists among them? Or when he addresses the destruction and damage being done by the way they are using their tongues? What will be their response when James confronts them about their arrogance and pride that has shattered shalom by divisions and quarrels and has made a mockery of the gospel of peace? What will happen when he confronts the way they are living and doing business with little or no regard to the will of God? And will James continue to be their beloved pastor when he confronts them with undeniable evidence of their spiritual adultery against God coming from the double mindedness they have allowed to develop in their hearts toward God?

So, to prepare our own hearts to hear and receive what James has to say to us, let’s stop and make sure we understand why the things James has to say matter so much that he is willing to risk his relationship with them to speak truth to them.

And the best way to make sure we are ready to hear the frank truth, James has to say, is to answer five questions and make four specific applications to our life as a church and to our own lives as individual believers.

To go back to our opening illustration – What do we need to hear and embrace to be effective, compelling Dawn-Treaders of Christ’s Kingdom?

FIVE CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

1. Identity – Who are these People?

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

- The last time the twelve tribes existed together as one nation was during the time of Solomon’s reign (divided kingdom approximately around 930 BC).
- The last time the 12 tribes lived in the land God had promised them was in 722 BC before the Assyrian deportation of the 10 Northern tribes.
- For seven long centuries, darkness fell over the realm of the kingdom that had once enjoyed the gracious favor of God and had been given the glorious light of His Word, the Torah.
- But throughout those dark centuries, there were gracious reminders of God’s promise to lift the darkness, regather His people, reunite the broken kingdom, and reestablish them in the land He had promised to Abraham as an eternal possession.
- Here are two examples of the many such prophetic reminders:

*Ezekiel 37:21–22: “Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and **I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. (NASB95)***

Zechariah 10:6: “*I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph, And I will bring them back, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am the Lord their God and I will answer them. (NASB95)*

- And this regathering and restoration would be accomplished by an anointed, appointed champion – a Shepherd who would gather His people, reunite the tribes, and re-establish the kingdom of Israel as His own kingdom.
- James is making an astonishing announcement – Messiah has come! Jesus is the promised Shepherd and He has regathered and united His people and made them citizens together of His Kingdom!
- However, although they have been reconstituted as His people, the Kingdom of which they are now citizens has not yet physically arrived on earth. Instead, they remain dispersed throughout the little kingdoms of the world where they reside as aliens and strangers while they wait for the coming of their King and His kingdom which is why Jesus taught them to pray “***Thy Kingdom Come!***”
- And these people have been constituted as members of a community that belongs to Christ – the Church.

2. Purpose – What is their Mission?

- So, what is the mission of this community dispersed throughout the little kingdoms of a world that is in spiritual darkness, enslaved to sin, and under the control of the ancient enemy of God?
- They are to serve as ambassadors of Christ’s Kingdom preaching repentance and proclaiming forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus to the nations/kingdoms of the world (Lk 24:47).
- They are to model the values, morality and ethics, and priorities of the coming Kingdom while living in the morally broken and spiritually dark kingdoms of the world.

- Jesus put it this way – the citizens of his kingdom are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world and as the world’s lights they are to *“Let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”* (Matt. 5:13-16).
- James reiterates this mission by reminding his readers that they were born again by the will of the “Father of Lights” and, as light-bearers, they are examples of proto-types (first fruits) of what the Messiah’s Kingdom will be like when He comes to establish it on earth (1:18).
- Therefore, they must model the values, morals, ethics, priorities, and beauty of the gospel of peace that permeates and marks this coming kingdom and all of its citizens – something completely missing in the kingdom of darkness.

3. Manner – How will they accomplish this Mission?

- As we sit and listen to James he turns next to the explanation of how we are to accomplish this amazing gospel mission.
- James states that displaying kingdom values to the dark kingdoms of the world will require that we avoid worthless faith, and commit to live out an authentic religion in ways that are approved by God and that will cause men to accept the message of grace that is at the core of our faith.
- Here is how James states it: *“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”* (1:26-27)
- The way we have been articulating James’ main message is that we have been called to develop and display a living faith to a dying world. And we have noted that this kind of faith must be whole-hearted, single-focused, and fully-trusting in God and His Word.

4. Danger – What will keep them from accomplishing this Mission?

- James is going to confront multiple specific sinful behaviors that are damaging the credibility of the living faith of his readers. However, James goes deeper than the surface behavior to two root issues that damage our relationship with God and each other and that destroy the credibility of the gospel message we are called to embody and proclaim.
- First, James is going to expose the danger of having a divided heart to God and His Word – the term he uses is double-minded or having a divided inner man caught between two kingdoms(1:6-8).
- Second, James is going to confront the disloyalty that some have allowed to develop in their heart toward God by cultivating and embracing a friendship with the wrong kingdom – the world. James is going to hit this head-on by saying that one cannot be a friend of God and a friend of the world. In other words, you can't align yourself with God and with the Word. You are either a friend of God or a friend of the world and if you align yourself with the world, you have lined up on the wrong side and are at enmity with the King of your true kingdom! (4:4-5).
- And a divided and disloyal heart is no small matter – James uses a very strong and offensive image to help us see how seriously these heart conditions damage our relationship to God, to one another, and to the mission we have been given.
- James says that when we allow our hearts to be divided or disloyal to God we are guilty of adultery (4:4) – a sinful condition that God will not ignore (4:5).
- So what does God do when we are caught between two kingdoms? He pursues us and He gives us abundant grace to repent, return, resist, and be restored (4:6).
- But what exactly is this amazing grace that God has given as the means by which we can accomplish our mission?

5. Means – What has God provided them to accomplish this Mission?

- God has provided a wonderful, gracious means by which we can develop and display the kind of living faith that will powerfully impact a dying world and that will guide and direct our lives so that we will be true and faithful friends of God.
- This is important because the best way we can truly befriend those who are in the world is not by becoming friends of the world but by being loyal friends of God.
- So how do we navigate life in the kingdoms of the world as God's true and loyal friends? God has provided a specific body of wisdom to guide, protect, preserve, and advance us in our mission. James identifies and describes this wisdom:
 1. *Wisdom from Above* is available from God to those who ask in faith (1:5)
 2. The *Word of Truth* which delivers us from death and brought us into life (1:18)
 3. The *word implanted* in our hearts by the Holy Spirit when we entered into the New Covenant promised by the prophets and inaugurated by Jesus Christ.
 4. The *perfected Law* that Christ fulfilled that now perfects us and which we now joyfully obey by the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us which is also the *liberating Law* that frees us from the darkness of sin and leads us on the path of true freedom and abundant, joy-filled living (1:25).
 5. And this law is the *royal law* given by King Jesus that will shape the values and govern the lives of all who live in His Kingdom which He summed up in two stunning commands – Love God with an undivided heart and Love Others with a sacrificial heart.
- So what exactly is this wonderful means of grace that James describes in these five ways? **It is the Scripture** (2:8, 23).
- And even more importantly, what are we to do with the Bible we hold in our hand that James tells us is the marvelous means God has given for building and displaying a living faith to a dying world?

FOUR ESSENTIAL APPLICATIONS:

- Given our identity as citizens of this new kingdom and deployed as its ambassadors to the kingdoms of the world, what does James tell us to cultivate in our lives so that we fulfill our gospel mission? What will be required of every true Dawn-treader who desires to display a living faith to a dying world!
- More specifically, what are the commitments we must make personally and corporately as we prepare our hearts to hear the loving but frank truth that James is going to speak to us in the weeks ahead?
- Said differently, what must be our committed orientation toward the Word of God that James has told us is the essential means by which we can develop and display a whole-hearted, single-focused, fully-trusting faith that will please God and impact others.

We must develop and display:

1. *A Resilient Faith – (James 1:2-12)*

- Formed by unwavering confidence in God and His Word that endures even under the fierce pressure of an ongoing trial.

2. *A Resisting Faith – (James 1:13-18)*

- That strives to remain loyal to God and His Word even in the face of the compelling desires of our flesh.

3. *A Committed Faith – (James 1:19-25)*

- Marked by eager humility and wholehearted obedience to God and His stated will.

4. *A Gracious Faith – (James 1:26-27)*

- That extends the loving compassion of God to those around us who need it most by means of grace energized gospel deeds.

Conclusion:

The glorious voyage of the Dawn-Treader in the Chronicles of Narnia contains a hidden note of sadness – two of the original champions that liberated Narnia are missing from the story – Peter, the High King of Narnia, and Queen Susan the Gentle. Their absence is keenly felt but it isn't until the final book in the series that Lewis reveals a very sad detail about Queen Susan – she is no longer a friend of Narnia but has become captivated by the things of another world, namely nylons and lipstick and invitations to social events and gatherings.

I know this is only a work of fiction, but there is something very tragic when who once occupied such a glorious position, played such a strategic role, and had been given such an important mission – abandon all of it for the mundane things of this life. She abandoned her friendship with Narnia and exchanged it for friendship with her world.

I think this is exactly what James is going hard after in this book. His readers are in danger of forgetting the high position to which they have been exalted in the glorious kingdom of Christ and exchanging it for friendship with the world (4:4).

To use Lewis' language – some of James' readers were no longer friends of Jesus and His Kingdom. Instead, they had been captured by the glitter and glamor of this passing-away world and had formed a friendship and alliance with the wrong kingdom – the kingdom of darkness.

I am sure if you asked James' readers, they would immediately respond with loud proclamations and affirmations of their love for God and for Christ – but their words would be just words. ***And James has a piercing rebuttal to that kind of empty claim:***

“Go ahead and verify your faith (show me your faith) apart from your works – it is impossible to do since all you have is words that proclaim that your faith is real (2:18).”

“If all you have is words that say the correct things about God, you are in good company. The demons say and believe the correct things about God and their belief actually produces something in them that it should produce in you – they tremble in terror of what they know is waiting for them on the day of judgment. You on the other hand have no fear of displeasing and disobeying the God you claim to believe (2:19).”

“On the other hand, I will show you my faith by more than just my words. I will show you my faith by obedient deeds produced by that faith in God and His Words (2:18b; 20-24). And I too and in good company – I stand with at least five other people God calls friends – Abraham (2:21-23), Rahab the prostitute (2:25), the Prophets (5:10), Job (5:11), and Elijah (5:16-18).”

Let us commit to join James and remain true and loyal friends of God and of His kingdom!

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3. _____: How will they accomplish this Mission?
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