

BOOK OF JAMES
WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?
JAMES 4:13-17

Introduction

We have seen in this book thus far how that these Jewish believers James originally addressed were immature in many respects as revealed by both their attitudes and behavior.

One big area which showed their immaturity is seen in our text.

They boasted how that they would “. . .go into such a city, and continue there a year and buy and sell, and get gain. . .” (*Vs 13*)

But, the fact of the matter was as James said in the next verse (*Vs 14a*)
“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.”

Then James asks them a question, “For what is your life?”

That was a good thing for them to contemplate. **WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?**
It is also good for us! Let me ask you this evening, **WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?**

Do you ever ponder your life and ask yourself that question?

Do you see your life as something that you’ve got control of or something that is in the hands of God?

Do you see your life as bunch of random happenings or are you living a purposeful life, the abundant life that Jesus talked about in John 10:10.

The way we see our life helps shape our life! One of the best ways to understand other people is to ask them, “*How do you see your life?*”

- (1) **If a person sees life as a party** then their ongoing goal will be to have as much fun as they can and get all the gusto out of life that they can! Do you know some people like that? For them life all about partying or having a good time and they don’t take anything serious. They want to move from one good time to the next! They are focused on the nasty now and now and couldn’t care less about their future in eternity! It’s the attitude of, “*This is the only life there is, so let’s live it up!*”

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- (2) **If a person sees life as a race** they will value speed and will probably be in a hurry much of the time and live their lives in constant competition with others. Because they are so busy here on this earth, **it is hard to get such an individual to take the time to think about eternity and where they are going to be in the hereafter!**

- (3) **If a person sees life as a marathon** they will value endurance. Often this person has life planned out with their goals in place. They can tell you where they want to be in their life in five years, ten years, and other spans of their life. They have it all planned out! But sadly, **many have not planned an interruption to their plans or an early termination and too many have not planned for eternity!**

- (4) **If a person sees life as a battle or a game**, winning will be very important to them. In fact winning is prized so high that they will do anything to win and are devastated at losses!
(e.g. *The gunman in the Jacksonville Landing shooting.*)

So let me ask you: What is your life? How do you see it? Let’s look at this Scripture and see what God has to say about it:

- I. WE SEE THAT OUR LIFE IS COMPLEX! (Vs 13)**
Not only is life complex, but we can clearly see that it is getting more complex all the time! It is so easy for us to have trouble keeping up with all the changes and advances in things!

Here James is referring to the various things that our life is involved in. I like to call it the “*rat race.*”

Most people live their lives as if THEY are in control of their life:

- time** – “*today or tomorrow*”
- purpose** – “*we will go*”
- place** – “*into such a city*”
- longevity** – “*and continue there a year.*”
- goals**- “*and buy and sell*”
- reward**- “*and get gain*”

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Our lives are made up of **people and places, activities and goals, days and years**; and each of us make many **decisions day after day, some of which can have a long lasting impact on our lives!**

In a play by Arthur Miller called "The Price," a middle-aged couple is reminiscing. Their life had turned out to be a disappointment. They thought they had it all mapped out. They knew what they wanted to do, the academic degrees they needed. Their goals had seemed clear. But they never realized those goals. At a climatic moment of the play, the woman says to her husband, "Everything was always temporary with us. It's as if we never were anything. We were always just about to be."

Isn't that tragic?—but its not uncommon! Many of us who have lived for a while may look at our lives at mid-life or even later and **wonder not only how it went by so fast but wonder what it was all about!**

Listen, **the most important thing in life is the will of God! Apart from the will of God, life is a mystery and doesn't make any sense!**

The only way to make sense of it all is FIRST to know Jesus Christ as your Saviour and THEN know and seek to do the will of God for your life!

When we realize as the song says, "*This is my Father's world*" even the physical world takes on new meaning.

Let God help you make sense out of your complex life!

What is your Life? We See That Life Is Complex,

II. **WE SEE THAT OUR LIFE IS UNCERTAIN! (Vs 14a)**

What James is saying in *verse 14* is , "*Don't be arrogant about your life.*"

James' statement here is based on *Proverbs 27:1* where it is written,

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"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Many today, including myself, are making all kinds of plans for the rest of this year, next year, and the next year and so on. **And there is nothing wrong with that as long as we realize that God is in control of our plans and God may even mess with our plans as He sees fit!**

The truth is, we cannot see even one day ahead or one second ahead for that matter!

The attitude of these Jewish Christians reminds us of the farmer in **Luke 12:16-21** who had a bumper crop and then boasted about what he was going to do.

God's reply to this boasting was is found in **Luke 12:20**.

Luke 12:20—"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

James speaks of it when he writes, "*But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.*"

What is your life? It is complex, it is uncertain. . .

III. **WE SEE THAT OUR LIFE IS BRIEF! (Vs 14b)**

Life can seem long to us sometimes. (Like when we were kids.) We measure life in years, but those years seem to speed up at the end! **In reality, no matter how long life is, it is not very long at all!**

Some folks live as if their lives on this earth will go on and on without end! It won't! They live as if they will somehow win this battle with their earthly mortality. They won't!

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Listen to me, OLD AND YOUNG ALIKE! One of these days—AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN!—you will take a trip to the cemetery in one of those long limousines. Some folks will hopefully shed some tears for you. Someone will say some words over you. Then they will put your coffin in a six foot deep hole and throw some dirt on it, and then they'll go back to the Church and eat fried chicken, ham, and potato salad. That time could be VERY SOON! WE DON'T KNOW! But we DO KNOW that ever how long this life is, IT IS BRIEF!

Our lives are like a vapor! Not as a cup of water...not as an ice cube...but as a vapor that appears for a little while! **Compared to eternity life is only a vapor!**

The Bible repeats this fact many times and in many ways!

Job 7:6—“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”

Job 7:9—“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.”

Job 8:9—“. . .our days upon earth are a shadow. . .”

Job 9:25-26—“Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.”

Job 14:1-2—“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”

Look at **Psalm 90**

Since life is so brief, we cannot afford to merely “*spend our lives*” or “*waste our lives.*”

But rather, ***we must invest our lives*** in those things that are eternal!

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We see that life is complex, uncertain, brief. . .

IV. WE SEE THAT OUR LIFE IS GOD’S, NOT OURS! (Vs 15)
We are called to live our lives with the attitude found in verse 15. Our lives are really in God’s hands!

The Questions of Life find their TRUE answers in God!

Who Am I?

Why Am I Here?

Where Am I Going?

God determined when to give us this life, and God determines when this life is over! Our life is in HIS HANDS!

When God has His proper place in our life, then He will affect everything about our life! *1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

He not only wants to affect our worship, but our handling of others, our giving, our goals in life—everything about life!

We who are believers are to realize that we have been bought with the price of the life of God’s precious Son! The life we live is NOT our life! It belongs to God!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20—“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

V. WE SEE THAT OUR LIFE IS FRAIL! (Vs 16)
James teaches that our boasting or bragging of our future activities is evil.

Man is a frail being. Man’s boasting is only an attempt to cover up his weakness.

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But, in reality, man cannot control future events. Man does not have the wisdom to see the future nor the power to control it!

For man to boast is sin for boasting is making himself to be as God!

It is foolish for us to ignore the will and sovereignty of God in our lives. **(Vs 15)**

Conclusion

How should we then live, knowing our lives are like a vapor—so temporary?

We should live life on earth as a test—

Words like *trials, temptations, refining, and testing* occur more than 200 times in the Bible.

We know from folks in Scripture how that some folks passed some tests and failed some tests.

Since life is a test we ask questions like these:

“Should I move ahead with this relationship?”;

“How am I using the resources God has blessed me with?”;

“What does God want me to do with the life I have left?”

“Lord, what would thou have me to do?”

We should live life on earth as a trust—

The more God gives us the more responsible He expects us to be.

So, Life is: complex, uncertain, brief, God’s, frail.