

# **The Book of James**

## **Prayer, Healing, and Restoration**

Lesson #12 for December 20, 2014

Scriptures and Key References: James 5:13-20; 1 John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Hebrews 12:12-13; John 8:43-45; Proverbs 10:12; *Desire of Ages* 267-271; *Ministry of Healing* 73-79.

1. This lesson will focus on prayer, healing, and ultimate restoration. Don't we believe that God would be happy to have everyone perfectly healthy? Isn't that how He made Adam and Eve? Won't that be the condition of all who enter the kingdom of heaven? What happened?
2. In his final passage of the book, James talked about Elijah. Elijah and John the Baptist were like voices crying in the wilderness. And Elijah was translated directly to heaven? Could we be like Elijah? Or, John? In what ways? Do you think that Elijah's time was more godless or wicked than our time? Very doubtful! How do you understand Malachi 4:5-6? Is that talking about God and His children? Or, about us and our children?

John separated himself from friends and from the luxuries of life. The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel's hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests, and of the people generally. His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey, was a rebuke to the indulgence of appetite and the gluttony that everywhere prevailed.... The great subject of reform is to be agitated, and the public mind is to be stirred. **Temperance in all things is to be connected with the message, to turn the people of God from their idolatry, their gluttony, and their extravagance in dress and other things.**

The self-denial, humility, and temperance required of the righteous, whom God especially leads and blesses, is to be presented to the people in contrast to the extravagant, health-destroying habits of those who live in this degenerate age. **God has shown that health reform is as closely connected with the third angel's message as the hand is with the body.**—Ellen White, *3 Testimonies* 62.1-2; *Mar* 22.3-5; *CC* 273.3-4; compare *FLB* 290.2-5; *4BC* 1184.7-8.

As John the Baptist . . . called their attention to the Ten Commandments, so we are to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." [Revelation 14:6] **With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ's second advent.**—Ellen White, *Southern Watchman*, March 21, 1905, par. 14. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

How should we do that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are Adventist radio and television channels doing it? Was John the Baptist preaching a new message to his audience? Are we? John the Baptist shook up the whole nation! What would happen if we as Adventists would take time on a Sunday morning to attend a Sunday church and become their friends and look for opportunities to witness in a biblical and Christian way? What was John's background?

3. Read James 5:13. James seemed to be giving us some final thoughts near the end of this book. We are to pray for those who are in trouble and sing if we are happy. If we remember the book of Psalms, we will realize that prayer and song are very closely linked.
4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been known since its early days as having a major emphasis on health. We operate hundreds of clinics, even hundreds of hospitals around the

world. We have several medical schools. But, how well are we doing at healing souls?

5. Read Mark 2:1-12; Hebrews 12:12-13; and 1 Peter 2:24-25. Also review the story of the paralyzed man as recorded in *Desire of Ages* 267-271 and *Ministry of Healing* 73-79. People of that time believed that every sickness was a result of that person's sin and God's resultant curse. Thus, in order to heal a person, his sin must be dealt with. This paralyzed man knew that his condition was a result of his previous life of sin. What he wanted most of all was healing from the sin and forgiveness from God. In this story which took place in Peter's house, Jesus directly confronted the scribes and Pharisees and proved that He could forgive sin as well as heal bodies. After his healing, this man was ready even to die for Jesus. What would you have done if you had been one of the scribes or Pharisees on that day? To their way of thinking, Jesus was either blasphemous or He had just proved that He was God; and, of course, they refused to accept the latter. Today, we have modern medical techniques, medications, even surgeries to deal with many illnesses. How well are we doing at healing souls, physically, mentally, and spiritually? It is much easier to measure physical illness—and physical healing—than other types of illness. We need to remember that healing includes the repairing of relationships. Many of the illnesses that people have are a result of depression, anxiety, or other forms of mental illness.
6. Read James 5:17-18. Why do you think James mentioned Elijah's prayer in this context? Read Deuteronomy 11:13-17. Was Elijah praying for God to fulfill this prophecy? Would it be fair to conclude that Elijah was praying earnestly for the healing of the people of Israel—and the land as well—before God called him to his prophetic ministry? Surely, Elijah was particularly concerned for the spiritual health of the children of Israel. Jezebel was Ahab's wife. She was from a pagan nation, Sidon. The primary god of Sidon was Baal the so-called "god of storm and lightning," believed to be responsible for sending rain on the land. She was determined to convince Israel to abandon Jehovah and worship Baal. No doubt, as Elijah saw this apostasy spreading over the land, he remembered the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 11 and prayed earnestly for healing of Israel and Judah. So, what did God call him to do? Read 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah's short statement did not give them any room to look for other causes of the drought! Baal could not do anything! Did Jezebel have the right idea but just the wrong god?
7. Read Daniel 9:2-3. Daniel was praying for the end of the 70-year prophecy. Should we be praying for fulfillment of prophecy? Several of the great prophets of the Old Testament prayed for answers to the words of a previous prophet. How well are we doing at connecting our prayers with Bible study? Did God give Elijah the idea of praying for a drought to defeat the forces of Baal? Or, was that Elijah's idea? In these last days of the world's history, can we work as closely with God as Elijah did? Read Malachi 4:5-6. With our three angels' messages, could we as a church become an end-time Elijah to the world? If we want to see revival and reformation in the church and then in the world, shouldn't we begin in our own lives? In the great controversy, whose side are we going to be on? Are we living totally-unselfish lives, ministering to others as we have opportunity? Or, are we living self-indulgent lives, following the example of Satan?
8. Most of us will recall easily the major events in the life of Elijah. What we may not remember is the fact that most of his time was spent working with the schools of the prophets and working with people in their homes, one family at a time, to bring about reform.
9. Read James 5:19-20. Compare Luke 1:16-17 and Acts 3:19. What would happen if we as a church repented and turned to God and saw as our highest duty the finishing of the work? Could a whole church repent? From what do we need to repent? How are we supposed to respond to the widespread apostasy and worldliness that surrounds us? How do we turn

hearts toward God as did Elijah and John the Baptist? How do we get people's attention long enough to even give them the message?

10. Christ often grabbed attention by performing miracles. Television evangelists in our day claim to be performing miracles and get a lot of attention. If someone on television performs a so-called miracle, does that prove that what he says later is the truth? Certainly not!

Christ ... asks us to become one with Him for the saving of humanity. "Freely ye have received," He says, "freely give." Matt. 10:8. Sin is the greatest of all evils, and it is ours to pity and help the sinner. There are many who err, and who feel their shame and their folly. They are hungry for words of encouragement. They look upon their mistakes and errors, until they are driven almost to desperation. These souls we are not to neglect....

Speak words of faith and courage that will be as a healing balsam to the bruised and wounded one.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 504.3-4.

11. It is a well-known fact that when people are hurting or in crisis, they are more likely to listen. Think of your own experiences. In times of change or hurt, we reach out to those who are willing to listen or help. When someone in the church messes up, do we try to avoid them? Or, do we reach out and embrace them and encourage them to return to Jesus?
12. Read James 5:16. What is an "effectual, fervent prayer"? What is special about that person's prayer? Doesn't God answer prayers in the way He knows is best? Are we praying for those around us? Have your prayers led others to Christ? If it were the right thing to do in the context of the great controversy, doesn't God have the power to heal everyone who is sick? Why doesn't He?
13. Read James 5:17-20. How many steps did James call for in the healing of the sick? Have you ever been involved with an anointing and found that the patient died or did not quickly recover? Is that proof that someone in the room did not have enough faith? At times, it has been suggested that if we had enough faith, all such people would be healed. Is that true?
14. Certainly, we would all agree that there is nothing that God cannot heal, transform, undo, bind up, or restore. God is perfectly capable of healing all our maladies.
15. How can we take these words of James seriously? First of all, James was not recommending that we forget regular medical care. There was medical care of a primitive form available even in his day. Remember that Luke, the Gospel writer, was a Greek physician. So, while we seek the best possible medical care, we also need to turn our hearts to God and pray for His healing hand. In our day, almost every disease has a spiritual component.
16. So, what kind of case should lead us to an anointing? James said we should pray for the sick among us. Does that mean that if a child has a fever, we should pray for her/him? What if s/he has a congenital defect or some other life-threatening illness such as leukemia or some other form of cancer? The word *sick* in James 5:14 is a translation of the Greek word *astheneō* which means to be diseased, impotent, sick, or made weak. It implies being feeble in some sense. See *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. So, does that mean that any person who is ill in any way should pray for healing and it will come? Making assertions of that nature especially when facing life-threatening diseases may lead some to become skeptical; and, if the healing does not occur quickly, believe that faith has failed.
17. But, there is a deeper and more comprehensive answer to the question. God would love to heal everyone completely of all their diseases not only physical but mental, spiritual, and social. Thus, we could say that whenever people pray in faith, God will answer their prayers in the affirmative. But, what do we mean by that? The question is not *if* God will heal the sick

but *when* He will do it. The Bible gives several examples of healings. 1) Sometimes, the healings are instantaneous, or immediate as in the case of the paralytic in Mark 2 and Matthew 9. 2) Sometimes, the healings are gradual as in the case of Naaman the leper as recorded in 2 Kings 5:8-15. 3) But, there are times when God says: “Not now. You will be healed at the resurrection.” Compare Paul’s thorn in the flesh and Jacob’s hip. See 2 Corinthians 12:7 and Genesis 32:25. Were those reminders that God gave them?

18. So, we can conclude that some will be healed immediately; but, others will not be healed until the resurrection. Are we willing to leave that decision in God’s hands? It is not a matter of how much faith we have but of His wise decision as to what is best for us. This might not be easy to accept.

19. There are at least five steps that James encouraged us to go through when praying for divine healing. We should: 1) Call the elders to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the Lord’s name. It should be noted that the oil in this case was a specific mention of olive oil, and in Scripture that oil is representative of the Holy Spirit. It was used to anoint priests and even kings in the times of the Old Testament.

2) In addition, the word *aleiphō* meaning “to anoint” comes from two words; one word meaning “unity” or “a sense of union” and another word that means “grease” or “fat”—in this case olive oil—and suggests that God is generously and extravagantly pouring out His Holy Spirit without measure on His children in healing and blessing.

3) We are to pray with the prayer of faith, and that prayer will save the sick, and the Lord will restore him. (James 5:15, *Amplified*) Some people may think that no instantaneous healings are happening in our day, but that is not true. There are examples in modern times of people through prayer even being raised from the dead. The Greek word *egeirō* means “to waken, to rouse from disease or death, literally or figuratively.” It is the same word used in Acts 26:8 where it talks about God raising the dead. Clearly, the healing power to remove sickness is the same power that created life in the beginning and can bring the dead back to life again. In this context, we need to realize that the resurrection of the righteous at the end of this world’s history will be the greatest healing miracle of all time.

4) Finally, James admonished the sick to “confess to one another therefore your faults,” and, 5) “Pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored.” (James 5:16, *Amplified*) Notice especially the word *therefore* which is significant. It suggests that there is a causal relationship between the confession of sin and healing. We are not suggesting that every illness is a direct result of some current sin; but rather, we are suggesting that all illnesses are ultimately a result of sin.

20. Is it a lack of faith to recognize that some will not be healed until the resurrection day? If we had more faith, would we be able to pray over every kind of illness or disease and cause instantaneous healing? Or, does having more faith mean that we trust God to heal at the right time and in the right way according to His will?

21. We live in a sin-polluted and sin-damaged world. Despite our most fervent efforts and prayers, some are going to die. All of us will die sooner or later if the second coming is further delayed. If our prayers are not immediately answered, how can we avoid losing our faith? Are we willing to trust God to make the right decision about the healing of individuals? Isn’t that an example of trusting God, and trusting God is faith?

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