

**TITLE:**

# **THE UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE**

## **Scripture Reading: James 4:13-17**

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

**14** Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

**15** For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

**16** But now ye rejoyce in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

**17** Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

As to the phrase found in **James 4:13**, 'come now, you who say', it is uncertain to which group of recipients this refers to:

- Unbelieving Jews
- Believing Jews
- A continuing diatribe (attack, tirade) with a supposed dissenter or objector

They says, 'today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' This refers to the specific plans of Jewish businessmen who do not take God into account

God, constantly reminded everyone of us, we are just a vapor. The word 'vapor' comes from the Greek word, 'atmis', from which we get the English word 'atmosphere'. The frailty and fleetingness of human life is often alluded to in the Bible as:

- A shadow
- A breath
- A cloud
- A wild flower
- Vanity or mist



**James 4:14 says,** 'it appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away'. The word 'appear' in Greek is 'phainomene' and it sounds like another Greek Word that is also mentioned here: 'aphanizomene' which means 'vanishes away.' Life appears and suddenly vanishes away. Human plans come and go; only God's plan remains.

**James 4:13-17** is a denunciation of over-weeding confidence in our own plans and our ability to perform them.

There is this famous saying, 'Man proposes, but God disposes.'

James solemnly rebuked those who formed their business plans without taking into account the providence of God, or even the uncertainty of human life.

Please understand that God is not against businesses. He is far from stigmatizing commercial enterprise as a form of worldliness. Commercial business is not a form of worldliness. God does not censure the formation of business schemes even for long years to come, provided such be contemplated in subordination to the Divine will and be not allowed to interfere with spiritual consecration to His service.

There are a few truths we can learn of life.

## **1. There is the uncertainty of life**

Not a day passes without a reminder that our earthly life can come to an end at any moment. The Newspaper, the television, the radio, our friends, our neighbors, our relative will inform us everyday that another life has just perished.



**Isaiah 50:10-11** which says, 'who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servants, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of mine hand: ye shall lie down in sorrow.'

God is speaking to a group of people that fear God and obey the voice of God's servant, yet walk in darkness and had no light. He is confused and couldn't understand things around him. God tells this man to trust in the name of the LORD and stay upon his God. It means fix your focus upon God and he will give you perfect peace.



Yet there is another group of people that light their own fire, make their own plan, kindle their own fire. You know what will happen to this group of people. This they shall have from the hand of God: they shall lie down in sorrow.

**Isaiah 50:10-11** apparently is giving a contrast between two kinds of 'light'.

**A.** The darkness (intense darkness) of those who have faith in God and His Messiah but do not fully understand.

- Let him trust in the name of the Lord
- Let him rely on His God

**B.** Those who make their own light (fire) and walk in it which will eventually consume them: i.e. lie down in torment.

If we walk in the light of that fire and in the sparks you have kindled, then we shall have torment from the hand of the LORD. Those who 'light fires' refer to men who had their own schemes and their own gods. Because they had rejected the light of God's word, they would face terrible punishment. 'Torment' is only found here but its verb, guarantees its meaning of grief, pain and displeasure -even the 'place of pain' - specifically the pains of sin under the curse of God.



## 2. Life is brief

James, the brother of Jesus expressed this truth when he wrote: 'do you know what is going to happen tomorrow?

**1 Peter 1:24 says,** 'For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flowers of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.'

### **3. The Future is Hidden**

We not only do not have long life but we do not know about the future. **Proverbs 27:1 says**, 'Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' **Ecc 9:12** says, 'For man also knoweth not his time as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.'

### **4. The danger of life is given to work**

Job says, 'For I know that thou will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living.'

## **5. The danger of life given to the world**

Please don't misquote me by saying that seeking security, and a better standard of living is wrong. Such pursuits may not be wrong in themselves. But it is pursuing these things without reference to God and his ways that is wrong. It is disregarding God's rightful claim on all our time and resources, acting as if they were our own creation, possession.



## **In conclusion**

How about a life that is lived for God? Then the story is totally different for those who lived to please God. They know the teaching and the law of God and they learned to obey them.

### **Psalms 1:1-3**

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

**2** But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

**3** And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

In this brief life they will be blessed. They will not be afraid of death.

What happens to one whose life is lived for God.

## **1. Assured of the future**

Nothing is certain in the world but we can be assured of his care and protection and even of the future.

## **2. Their place will be found in heaven**

How can one be so sure of that?

**Heb 11:5 says,** Enoch trust God too, and that is why God took him away to heaven without dying. Suddenly he was gone because God took him. Before this happened, God had said how pleased God was with Enoch.'



It is sad that life is uncertain and yet we lived as if we are going to live eternally. We have failed so miserably and our faith failed us many times. We have lived for the world and for our career and for our business. But there is a greater man who did not fail and that person is Jesus. Jesus too knew that life is uncertain but he lived for God. He knew life is brief because he lived only until the age of 33. His work is, 'I must do the work of Him that called me. The night cometh where no man can work. He lived his life for the Father and not for the world or the pleasures of this world. Yet he went to the cross for all the failures of our lives and uncertainties of life. So that when we believed and received Jesus, we can have assurance of the future and our place can be found in heaven. He died so that we can have life, access to the heavenly father, so that our short life lived can count for eternity.

