

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

JUDGES WITH EVIL THOUGHTS

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART TWENTY THREE OF SIXTY FOUR*

In his warning against partiality, James tells us that in showing personal favoritism we become "judges with evil thoughts" (James 2:4). Later he joins judging brethren with speaking evil of them (James 4:11). James' illustration is one of making distinctions on the basis of outward appearances. The rich man coming to the assembly is told, "Sit thou here in a good place," the poor man is told to stand or sit on the floor (James 2:1-4). The only basis for these distinctions is the outward appearances of the two visitors. To make anyone stand rather than provide him a seat, or to make him sit on the floor purely on the basis of his clothing, is to become a judge with evil thoughts. Who are we to judge one worthy of discourtesy when only God can read the hearts of men? The idea is that we become discriminators and have wavered from the faith of the glorious Lord.

If we make distinctions among visitors on the basis of outward appearance, do we not imply that the wealthy are more esteemed by God than are the poor? Do we not by this also suggest that poor saints are to be despised? The whole result is to make "distinctions among" ourselves. Why should we thus dishonor the poor man? (James 2:6). It is unjust to determine a person's worth or value by earthly possessions.

Jesus mentioned several sins that defile a man and among them are evil thoughts (Matthew 15:19,20). Evil judging arises from evil thinking. "Money-worship, adoration of things that perish, and subtle planning to obtain gifts and favor for honor bestowed would be particularly obnoxious to God" (Fream). Only God is qualified to judge hearts. He judges by a different standard than we. Let us "judge not that ye be not judged."

"James is dealing with the sin of showing partiality because of wealth. In our age it might be the same, or it might be social standing, occupation, nationality or color" (Roberts). Let us respect all men. To discriminate by outward appearance is to "become judges with evil thoughts" (James 2:4).
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