

Series and Lesson Synopses

WISDOM FROM ABOVE with Deacon Alex Jones

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WISDOM FROM ABOVE is a 13-part expository Catholic Bible study on the Epistle of James featuring former Pentecostal minister, Deacon Alex Jones. Respected and sought after as a preacher of the Gospel in Detroit before his conversion to Catholicism, Deacon Alex Jones today travels the country and the world, exciting Christians like you with his energetic, insightful, and interactive teaching of the Bible.

In many ways, our lives today are no different than first century Christians who struggled with trials, temptations, obedience to the Word of God, dealing with the rich and poor, and getting in squabbles about the role of faith and works in the Christian life. Like then, today we also struggle with keeping our tongue under control, becoming friends with the things of this world, and we exhibit too little patience, humility, and time in prayer or doing penance. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, wrote this letter to Christians scattered throughout the known world, and to you, in order to provide us with practical and timely wisdom from above. Today, the Epistle of James is a favorite of Christians because of its directness, brevity, and practicality. In the face of trials, temptations and sufferings, James explains clearly how to live happily and successfully within the will and love of God. You will be engaged and enlightened by this series.

Lesson 1, Trial and Temptation

The writer of the Epistle of James tells us, "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials." Yes, the Christian life is full of all kinds of challenges, trials, sufferings, and temptations. Such experiences can seem like cruel paradox or irony. And that must have been especially true for James, who was beaten to death for proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah. How is it possible to accept, and even look forward to suffering, even death, for the sake of our faith in Christ? Are the sufferings, trials, and temptations we experience ever a blessing? Is there ever a good purpose behind pain? What if any is the advantage of being poor, or even disabled? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus how the writer of James was related to our Lord Jesus Christ, when the Epistle was written and many other things about the era in which the author lived. You'll hear how difficult the normal Christian life was for the first Christians and what we can expect when we pray for a stronger faith. You'll also discover what is really happening in our spiritual life when we face physical trials and temptations. The reason God tests us will also be revealed. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 2: Poverty and Riches

The Epistle of James claims that the poor should take pride in their high standing and riches. How is that possible? More bewildering, how is it possible that the rich should look forward to miseries? Is that some kind of cruel misunderstanding? Are the rich motivated by greed; do they oppress the poor? If that's true then why does God bless people with wealth and condemn others to poverty? Why would He do that? Can the poor become rich, and the rich become poor? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus how the Old Testament and New Testament differ in their definition of riches and how the emphasis changes once Christ comes on the scene. We'll also delve into the good purpose and the potential evil of money. Can you imagine the benefits of being poor? James has some startling answers. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 3: Wisdom From Above

The Epistle of James suggests there's a difference between knowledge and wisdom. They're not necessarily the same. So, is it possible to be a genius and still play the fool? What kind of wisdom is righteous? The psalmist tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But then Jesus comes along as says

fear not. How does that all work? Is there a wisdom that does not come from God? Is there a wisdom that's demonic? In the midst of experiencing hatred and suffering, is there a wisdom that will reveal what is right -- or a wisdom that will lead us to happiness? In this lesson you will learn the answers to those questions such as the difference between righteous and demonic wisdom, and the similarity between how the Old Testament and New Testament define that which Solomon sought. You'll also learn about the redemptive aspect of suffering, how our suffering can help others, and how we should talk with God about the suffering we experience. Finally, you'll learn the five ways that God's wisdom can be applied to your life. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 4: *"Wisdom" from Below*

The Epistle of James says that "wisdom" can be unspiritual, or even demonic? Really?! James also tells us that jealousy and selfish ambition confuse our discernment of wisdom. We may ask, "What's wrong with being a little jealous, or even ambitious? Isn't that just part of being human?" But, as you might expect, James has some poignant instruction about such an attitude. In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus what human attitudes of the heart are associated with those things that are "earthly, unspiritual, and demonic." You'll also discover the difference between wisdom, intellectual knowledge and understanding. We'll delve into the stories of Lucifer's fall, Persia's Prime Minister Haman's pride, and King Nebuchadnezzar's destructive arrogance. Finally, we'll investigate the difference between Adam and Christ and the role that demonic influences and that of the Holy Spirit play in our lives. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 5: *Hearing and Doing the Word*

The Epistle of James says there should be a connection between what we hear and what we do. This is especially true if what we hear is from God. If God tells us to do something and we don't do it, can that be foolish? Do we like listening to a good preacher but then ignoring what he tells us to do? Is that how we respond to God's will for our lives? In this lesson we'll learn the answers to those questions plus how God speaks to us at Mass. Do you think that God will never ask you to do something you don't want or don't have the talent to do? The answer may surprise you. You'll learn about the four behaviors for everyone who thinks they are good Christians. When you look into a mirror, you should see something other than yourself; we'll tell you what it is. Finally, we'll learn about the important relationship between the wise and foolish men who built upon different spiritual foundations and what that means for us today. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 6: *Warning Against Partiality*

The Epistle of James says that showing partiality to the rich is a problem. Are not the rich the ones who are most capable of helping the poor? And isn't that what we should be doing? Or should all persons regardless of riches or poverty have equal dignity? If so, what does that mean to me? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus how the First Christians, in just 30 years, changed dramatically, and how today we inadvertently show preference or bias for one segment of society and against another. You'll also learn how Jesus identified closely with the poor, and the two different classes of the poor. Finally, we'll learn how not to sin against another person or against God, and how that solution applies to everyone's life. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 7: *Faith and Works*

The Epistle of James says that faith without works is dead. How can that be? Some Christians believe that faith alone saves. Besides, can works performed by the fallible be perfect enough for heaven? If I say I have faith, how does anyone know it? How can they see my faith? Why were Abraham, and Rahab the harlot, justified by their works? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus the

fundamental truth about the relationship between faith and works; it's not what you might think. You'll learn what Scriptures Protestant Christians ignore when they claim that we are saved by faith alone and what derogatory label Martin Luther gave to the Epistle of James. When Jesus tells the parable of the wedding guests that are thrown out of the banquet for not wearing the right clothes, you'll discover why that happened and why it's important to you. And finally, you'll hear the best place to start -- as an evangelist for Christ. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 8: *The Tongue*

The Epistle of James says we need to be careful what we say. Yet, being a Christian is all about bringing the truth out into the light. Right? Should we ever keep a secret, be silent, and not tell the truth? Public profanity is wrong. But quiet gossip with my friends -- is that wrong, too? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus you'll hear stories about gossiping, what makes a rumor believable and why rumors are dangerous and sinful to pass on. You'll also learn the best way to stop a rumor and how to speak the truth in love. Do you know the three sinful uses of the tongue, or the healthy selfish reason to be careful what we say about others? This lesson will reveal the very best kind of response to others in a stressful situation. We'll also discuss the permanent consequence of cursing another person and what cursing another person really does against God. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 9: *Friendship with the World*

The Epistle of James asks where do wars and conflicts come from? James suggests they come from the passions within us, and our desire to be part of the world. But the world is where we were born, where we live, and where we'll die. Is it possible to avoid or ignore all of who we are? Many of us were taught to fight for what we passionately believe. Or is there a difference between right passions and wrong desires? What should we do? What can I do to be more like God wants me to be? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus the necessity of both mountaintop experiences and living daily in the valley of tears, and how we have access to the mountaintop every week. We'll discover that the Early Church was filled with sinners, covetousness, murder, adultery, and many other problems as we investigate the common moral problem from the moment that Lot left Abraham to today. And finally we'll learn how to embrace both the moral dilemma of living in this world and the solution to living in it victoriously. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 10: *Judging and Correcting a Brother*

The Epistle of James warns us: Don't speak evil about another person. Should we, therefore, only say good things about everyone and anyone—even those that promote evil? Are we supposed to be tolerant of what is bad? We're also told that we should confront a brother or sister about their sin, and to do so without judging them. But, we've all sinned. So, how do we tell someone else they're wrong, even if we speak gently; won't we come off as unkind, harsh and arrogant? Does confrontation bring sinners to repentance? Or does it bring them to bitterness? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions and discover our responsibility for our brothers and sisters in Christ. You'll also learn when we should pass on detrimental information about a person, or when we should refrain because doing so will be a sin. We'll also discover the first thing we should do when the need arises to correct a brother or sister, and what kind of spirit should occupy us on the occasion. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 11: *Warning Against Boasting*

The Epistle of James says: do not boast about what you are going to do. But we have to make plans, don't we? Most of us have calendars, schedules, and budgets that we must follow...until something happens that

we don't expect. Maybe that's the point. Are we too arrogant? Can we really control our future? Proverbs says: "We make our plans, but is God convinced?" And what about those things that we don't plan or do -- but should? Does God have some suggestions? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus the difference between boasting about our plans, and having plans that we relinquish to the will of God. You'll learn the importance of acknowledging the Lord in all you do, so he can direct your paths. You'll also discover the various sins of omission that we may commit inadvertently. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 12: *Patience and Humility*

The Epistle of James says we must be patient in waiting for the lord's coming. What does that mean for us - *today*? Are we anxious? Are we gazing at the sky hoping to see Jesus burst through a cloudbank ... even as we "*we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears?*" How can we best prepare for the Second Coming of Christ? What does God expect of us? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions, you'll learn about patience, and you'll learn about what all Christians should expect when Christ returns again. You'll also learn why Catholic teaching does not subscribe to the recent Protestant concept of *the rapture*. There are ways, however, that we should prepare for Christ's return and this lesson tells you how... and best of all the best way is available everyday to all Catholics. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.

Lesson 13: *Prayer and Confession*

The Epistle of James tells us that prayer can be a powerful force in our life. Is there a right time to pray? Are there things we should invariably pray for? Some prayers are never answered. Or the answer is: "No!" Why is that? Why does God answer some prayers with a "Yes!" And what does it mean to *pray in earnest*? In this lesson you'll learn the answers to those questions plus how the Second Vatican Council modified the Church's understanding and practice of the Sacrament of Anointing. We'll also discuss how important the sacrament is to all Catholics facing a potential life threatening illness or event. Do you know what Biblical symbols and tonics are associated with healing, and why? We'll tell you. This lesson will also cover the relationship between sickness and sin. Sometimes there is a connection and we'll tell you what Jesus said about that. And finally, this lesson will explain who in the Church can perform the Sacrament of Anointing and when it can be celebrated. Please join us for this lesson on the Epistle of James with Deacon Alex Jones.