

The Fatherless And The Widows In Their Affliction

I. Introduction:

A. In our study, we are going to see the English word “visit.” It is from the Greek word “ἐπισκέπτομαι” which is defined as: “to inspect, that is, (by implication) to select; by extension to go to see, relieve: - look out, visit” (Strong’s # 1980).

1. Just consider a few examples of the term being used: **Matthew 25:31-46** [“visited” vs. 36; 43], **Acts 6:1-6** [“look ye out” vs. 3], and **Acts 15:36** [“visit”].

2. You can see the idea is to actually see how someone is doing (**Acts 7:22-23**).

B. In our study, we are going to see the English word “affliction.” It is from the Greek word “θλίψις” which is defined like this: “pressure (literally or figuratively): - afflicted, (-tion), anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble” (Strong’s # 2347). Cf. **Matthew 24:9**, **Mark 4:17**, **Mark 13:19**, **Acts 7:10-11**, **Acts 20:23**, etc.

1. It is translated also “tribulation” (**Matthew 13:21**, **Matthew 24:21**, **Matthew 24:29**, **Mark 13:24**, **John 16:33**, **Acts 14:22**, **Romans 2:9**, **Romans 5:3**, **Romans 8:35**, **Romans 12:12**, etc.).

2. It is translated also “anguish” (**John 16:21**).

3. It is translated also “trouble” (**II Corinthians 1:8**).

4. It is translated also “burdened” (**II Corinthians 8:13**).

II. Body: **James 1:12-27**; **2:14-26**

A. This epistle is written to Jewish Christians that were scattered abroad because of persecution (**James 1:1-4**).

1. Biblical history says this started after Stephen was stoned (**Acts 7:51-8:4**).

2. We can see they were still scattered for some time (**Acts 11:19**). **The Greek word translated “affliction” in James 1:27 appears here translated as “persecution” (KJV).*

B. Those Jews in Christ which knew God knew that He did not disregard the fatherless and the widow (**Psalms 146:9**).

1. During harvests, they were to leave some for the fatherless and widow (**Deuteronomy 24:20-21**).

2. There were tithing laws in place to benefit the fatherless and widow (**Deuteronomy 26:12-13**).

3. There were warnings not to take advantage of them too (**Deuteronomy 27:19**).

C. However, their history shows something rather dark (**Isaiah 10:1-2**).

1. This wasn’t an “oversight.” It was sinful behavior that had to be repented of (**Isaiah 1:17-23** and **Jeremiah 7:1-7**).

2. Even after they spent 70 years in Babylon the teaching against oppressing the fatherless and widow continued as they were told to look back on Israel's sinful past as a people in general (**Zechariah 7:8-14**).

3. When we come to the New Testament, guess what happens? The scribes and Pharisees stripped widows of their houses (**Matthew 23:14** and **Luke 20:45-47**).

4. In the New Testament, we do not have other instructions specifically concerning God's will about the fatherless. We do have instructions concerning needy widows (**I Timothy 5:3-16**) and even see things that were done to help them when the church was early in her infancy (**Acts 6:1-4**).

5. On an interesting side note, the word translated "fatherless" [ὀρφανός] appears only one other time in the N.T. (**John 14:18**). It is translated there in the KJV as "comfortless."

D. The lesson was taught to Jewish Christians because generations present tend to follow what was done in the past among "their people" (**Mark 7:1-13** and **Acts 7:51**).

1. Stop following the errors of the past (**II Chronicles 30:7** and **Ezekiel 20:13-18**).

2. In the context of **James 1**, be doers and not hearers only. Work instead of just verbal profession of faith. Why? Consider what was taught to Israel long before this (**Zechariah 1:1-6**).

III. Conclusion: We should learn from things that happened long ago and apply the truth so they do not happen now (**Proverbs 21:12** and **Romans 15:4**).