



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

THE UNIQUE RIGHT OF GOD HIMSELF- JAMES 4:12

COLORADO

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James knows obedience is no simple matter. But we must commit ourselves to God and His Word, daily seeking His face and doing His will by the power of the Holy Spirit which enables us live godly lives that please Him. Everything we are and have must be devoted to hearing and doing, loving and honoring, adoring and serving God. And really loving God means honoring Him by obeying, for James stands as a warning to any who would think differently.

THE UNIQUE RIGHT OF GOD HIMSELF- JAMES 4:12

James 4:11-12: “(11) Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. (12) There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?”

James demands that we do not to speak against or judge our brother or sister in Christ with malicious intent. When we do, we set ourselves above God’s law and as a judge of God’s law; a position which belongs to God alone. We must take our proper place under His law. James now sums up his warning in James 4:12 by saying that the reason slander is wrong is because it infringes on the unique right of God Himself as the Lawgiver and Judge.¹

I. THE AUTHORITY OF GOD ALONE- JAMES 4:12A

James 4:12a - “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge,…”

When you speak against and condemn your brother in Christ, you are not only speaking against the law, but you are judging the law; discriminating between what is right and wrong. This reveals a disregard for God’s divine standard and by such habitual slander you are actually placing yourself above God’s law as its judge. You are claiming to be superior to God’s law by your habitual, sinful speech and asserting that you are the one who knows what is the right course of action to take. You are acting as judge of the law of God. And as judge, you are not only condemning God’s people with your speech, but you are condemning God’s holy law. This is a sobering indictment brought against the church by James. And James goes one step further insisting that by placing yourself above the law, you attempt to place yourself above the Lawgiver and Judge; God Himself.²

A. ONLY ONE LAWGIVER

James 4:12a: “There is only one Lawgiver…”

God alone is the ultimate source of all law and all authority.³

%Lawgiver+Greek %Nomotheses,” used only here in the New Testament, refers to one who puts or sets law into place. A legislator.

James applies this word “Lawgiver” to God Himself. So when we disobey God’s law, we dispute His authority. To value our opinion above what God’s law says is to value ourselves above God. God’s law is the expression of Who and what He is and we are called to obey Him. Through obedience to His law, our lives are fashioned into His image and we become more like Jesus Christ.

B. ONLY ONE JUDGE

James 4:12a: “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge…”

Secondly James says that there is only one Judge and Scripture repeatedly portrays God as Judge. A judge refers to the one who applies the law. God and God alone is the One Who applies the law in the lives of all.

%Judge+Greek %Krites” refers to the one who applies the law. He who decides or discerns as to the character and actions of others.

So God is the ultimate Legislator and Judge; the One Who gave the law and the One Who applies the law. God’s uniqueness as Lawgiver and Judge belong together; God gives the law and God alone enforces the law.⁴ He alone knows the hearts and motives and can perfectly apply the law He has given. And this would set God in contrast to all who are speaking slander and condemning one another as though they are trying to usurp what is God’s divine right alone.

James makes it clear that there is only “one” Lawgiver and Judge. The text stresses the one, “*heis*”, meaning there are not many, but one and only one Lawgiver and Judge. We don’t have many lawmakers coming from various positions and beliefs determining law in God’s economy. Rather, all people face one and the same Lawgiver and Judge and all of His laws are harmonious and all His judgments are in perfect accord with Who He is. As the Lawgiver; God reveals and declares His will for His people and as Judge; He upholds and reinforces His revealed will, given through His law.

So, the one who slanders and condemns his brother or sister places himself above the law as James 4:11 says. By doing so, the one who slanders attempts to place himself above the Lawgiver and Judge who is God Himself. This desire to usurp the place of God has been the essence of every sin ever committed. Sin seeks to dethrone God, to remove Him as Lawgiver and Judge and rule in His place.⁵ To value our opinion above what God’s law says is to value ourselves above God. To take a position as Judge is to elbow God off His throne. Where now is the lowliness and humility before God?⁶

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0107

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II. THE WORK OF GOD ALONE- JAMES 4:12B

James 4:12b: "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy;"

James makes it clear as to the kind of judging he is referring to by this next phrase, "the One Who is able to save and destroy."

the one who is able+Greek word **ho dunamenos**, "possesses the unfailing power and ability to carry out a plan.

So first we see that God possesses the constant, lasting, enduring power, ability and authority to save and destroy. God has the authority and sovereignty to do what He says. (Deuteronomy 32:39) James summarizes how God exercises His sovereign power. Two aorist infinitives "to save and destroy" are used to indicate present application (salvation) and future application (future judgment) as well. And remember, "the One" reminds us that this position and work belongs to God alone!

A. ONE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE

James 4:12b: "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save..."

Our sovereign God is able to save those who repent and put their faith in Him alone for salvation. His purpose in coming to this earth was to provide salvation to save us from our sins. (Matthew 1:21, Romans 1:16, Hebrews 7:25) He alone has the power to rescue and save us from our sins. There is salvation in no one else.

B. ONE WHO IS ABLE TO DESTROY

James 4:12b: "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy;"

God is able to save and He is able to judge and condemn the unrepentant sinner to hell. (1 Corinthians 1:18-31) This is the one we don't like to talk about. What does James mean by "destroy"?

destroy+Greek word **apollumi**, "does not refer to annihilation, but rather eternal destruction in hell.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." God alone is able to "destroy both the soul and body in hell." If we have not put our faith in Jesus Christ and repented of our sins, then God has warned us that there is a judgment for such unrepentance and that is eternal destruction in hell. (Matthew 25:31-46, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) So do not be foolish with the status of your soul. God has the authority and sovereignty to do what He says.

The sin of slander and judgmental words against our brother or sister in Christ is no small matter. No, for it is reckless treason against the sovereign Lawmaker and Judge of the universe.⁷

III. WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? - JAMES 4:12C

James 4:12c: "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

The believer in Jesus Christ has no right to make any such determination against their sister or brother. James was purposeful in using, "neighbor" referring back to the royal law of love and rebuking their lack of obedience to it. James boils it all down to this one question, "Who do you think you are. Who are you to exalt yourself over a brother or sister?" By using the contrasting word "but", James sharpens the disparity between sovereign God and the foolish man who is assuming God's place as Judge. And by use of the personal pronoun "you", James zeros in at an individual level as he addresses the harsh, critical, malicious spirit of constantly finding fault with others. You have made it your business to pass judgment on "your neighbor". You who live side by side, you who are called to love one another, you who will live eternally together in heaven are involved in such sin. And James demands a response of humility and love towards our neighbor that God calls us to. Romans 12:3 reminds each one: "not to think more highly of himself than he ought." This behavior must stop and requires a deep felt repentance from such sinful pride. James 4:6-10 reminds us how to deal with it. And our conduct must be replaced by the behavior described in James 3:13-18:

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

¹Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg.199.

²MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.224.

³Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 244.

⁴Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 244.

⁵MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.224.

⁶Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.159.

⁷MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.225