



THE BOOK OF JAMES

SECTION THEME

In this section, James is going to address the misuse of riches among believers.

GO DEEPER

Learn more about God's view of wealth in the following Bible passages.

Proverbs 11:28; Jeremiah 22:13-17; Amos 6:1-7; Malachi 3:5

Jeremiah criticizes one king for his extravagant lifestyle and compares him with his father.

How would you describe the two different ways of life in this passage?

As you look over all four texts, what corrections and warnings do you see?

What similarities do you see between these passages and James 5:1-6?

According to these passages, what sort of future does wealth lead to?

JAMES 5:1-6

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

DIGGING IN

- **How would you describe the tone of this passage? Who is James addressing in this section?**
- **What is he predicting for them? Why will this happen?**
- **Do you think this is written to all “rich” people ever, to rich people in that time and place, or just to the rich people who were guilty of exploitation?**
- **In James 5:1, what’s the first thing James wants the “rich” people to do?**
- **How do you think this compares with their current attitude? (Do they spend a lot of time “weeping and howling”?)**
- **Why would this be important? What is there to weep about?**
- Someone turn to Luke 6:22–26, and read it for us.
- **Who gets “blessed” here? Who has “woe” pronounced on them?**
- **What comparison do you see here between the present and the future?**
- **What connections do you see with James 5? Do you think James might have had this teaching in mind as he wrote his epistle?**
- Someone turn to Matthew 6:19–21, and read it for us.
- **What connections do you see here with James 5? Why is it important to “lay up treasures in heaven”? What does this look like in our**
- We know God loves justice and hates the exploitation of the poor. **So as we participate in our world economy, how can we advance the cause of justice?**
- **Where are we storing our treasure? How can we break free from the idolatry of money and all the things it buys? How can we seek first God’s kingdom?**

5 MARKS FOCUS: GENEROUS LIVING

Take a moment to reflect on how you use what God has given you. What kinds of things could you sacrifice to help advance the gospel in your community? Discuss with you group. Discuss with your family.

USE THE 2 OF THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS IN YOUR WALK THIS WEEK:

Review: Think back through the group discussions today. Were there any ideas that you could try out in the coming weeks?

Read: Isaiah 58. This chapter bears a lot of similarities to the book of James. People were religious, proud of their frequent fasting. But God challenges them to a new kind of devotion—caring for the needy, treating workers fairly, etc. Then that will open up a whole new kind of relationship with God.

Prayer of Confession and Commitment: Talk with God honestly and humbly about the role of money and possessions in your life.

Research: Find out more about exploitation in our world today. Share your findings with other believers. Pray together about what you could do to change things.

Budget: Examine your household budget. How does your spending reflect your spiritual priorities? What might need to change?

A PEEK AT THE GREEK

Sometimes The ESV translation is a literal one: “You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.” The “righteous person” (*dikaion*) is singular, but it was a common literary device then (as now) for one person to stand for a whole class of people. A business leader today might say, “We want the employee to feel motivated,” meaning not just one, but all employees. And so some translations of James 5:6 put it in the plural. Righteous people are the victims, and that makes sense in context.

But there’s another tantalizing possibility. Could James be talking about Jesus? If any person could be called “the righteous one” (and other translations say “innocent one”), it would be Jesus. In fact, He is called exactly that in Acts 3:14. And Jesus did not resist his executioners, so that fits too. But why would James accuse his readers of killing Jesus?