

James 4-5

In the last two chapters we've seen James addressing this desire, that many of the Jews have, to be masters in the church. And he had told them before that they need to justify their faith. But now he is explaining that just having some position in the church doesn't justify their faith. Their faith needs to be justified with actual works, following the word of God, not just holding some arbitrary office.

And in fact, by being masters, they are actually coming under greater condemnation. Rather than justifying their faith, he said that they're not behaving like a teacher in the church ought to. They're not even behaving like a follower of Christ ought to at all. He said there is envying and strife and confusion and every evil work. There are wars and fightings among them. They are walking after the wisdom that earthly, sensual, and devilish, following their lusts, making friends of the world, and becoming enemies of God. Submitting to the devil, instead of submitting to the grace of God.

He said they were committing adultery against the faith, and needed to let their joy and laughter be turned into mourning and heaviness and weeping.

They need to stop seeking the gift of God just to consume it upon their lusts, and instead submit to God, and resist the devil. To ask in faith, nothing wavering. To set aside their pride, if they want to receive the grace of God. Because God resists the proud, but give grace unto the humble. So they should humble themselves in the sight of God, and then he will lift them up. He will give them more grace.

They can't get what they are after through fighting and warring. They need to ask God for it, in humbleness, in faith, and he will give it to them. They will be endued with wisdom and knowledge.

So they've been fighting, and envying, and speaking evil of one another. They've been walking after the lusts of their flesh.

And that has surely affected many areas of their lives, but James has been focused here particularly on the fact that they've been envying one another in regard to the gift of God, the grace of God, and desiring to be somebody within the church.

And now he's actually going to bring up some of those other things, other ways in which they've been walking after the lusts of the flesh, instead of submitting themselves unto God.

And of course as he does that, he's going to continue to focus on their speech, how what they are saying is wrong.

Verse 13

James 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

So these Jews, having been scattered abroad, are now feeling more free in their ability to move from one place to another.

And there's ways that they can use that to their advantage.

James says that some of them have plans to go to another city for a year, and take part in the markets there, buying and selling. And maybe like playing the stock market, buying some things and then reselling them at a higher price, and getting gain.

And James is not addressing that specifically, there's nothing wrong with that. James is going to address their attitude about it:

Verse 14

James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

So they've made these plans, but they have no way of knowing whether they will actually be successful or not.

They're talking about years in the future, but they really don't know what might happen tomorrow.

Their life is just like a vapor, the morning mist, that just lasts a little while, and then vanishes. They don't know how long it is going to last. But they've laid these grand plans. And again, it isn't that laying the plans is wrong, but its their attitude.

Proverbs 27:1 Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Verse 15

James 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

They should be saying, "Lord willing, I'll go to this other city next year..."

They don't know what is going to happen. They don't even know if they are going to be alive. But God does. And they should be recognizing that. That they can lay plans, but it is up to God whether they are fulfilled or not. Their will is not going to be done, they don't know what is going to happen. God's will is going to be done.

So they need to submit themselves to the will of God.

Verse 16

James 4:16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

So here is the problem. They are boasting. They're boasting about what they are going to do, and rejoicing in those boastings.

So James is still addressing the same kind of attitude that he was just talking about with those that wanted to be masters in the church.

They are proud, and want to do what they want to do, and aren't submitting themselves to God. They were doing that in regard to wanting to gain a position in the body of Christ. And they are also doing that in other parts of their life. In regard to wanting to gain wealth.

James said that they rejoice in their boastings, and he says that all such rejoicing is evil.

You remember how before, James told them to rejoice? He said let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich, in that he is made low.

So he wanted them to rejoice in their riches in Christ, not in earthly riches.

But now they are rejoicing in their boastings, in what they say that they are going to obtain for themselves. Instead of rejoicing in what Christ has obtained for them in his eternal kingdom.

Isaiah 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall **vanish** away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

So just as James said, their life, and even this world, is but a vapor that shall vanish away. But God's salvation is for ever. That is what they should be rejoicing in. But now they are rejoicing in their boastings, in things that will vanish. James said that that rejoicing is evil.

So here again they are rejoicing in the wrong thing, and he tells them to stop. Remember last time how he told them to cease their joy and laughter, and to weep and mourn. Because they were rejoicing in the wrong thing. They were rejoicing in what they were trying to gain for themselves, rather than what God had given them.

In that case it was a position within the body of Christ, not by God's grace, but by their own strife. And now it is wealth that they are trying to obtain, to consume upon their lusts. And they're rejoicing in their boasting about what they are going to do. And they haven't submitted themselves to God, and his will.

They need to realize that they don't know what is going to be on the morrow, that it is ultimately up to the will of God. They should be rejoicing in what they know that he has done and will do for them in Christ, and not in what they want to achieve in this life, that they've just decided of their own accord that they want to do.

They need to submit to the will of God, and say, if the Lord will, they'll do this or that.

In the sermon on the mount Christ told his disciples the same things.

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

So he told them to serve God, to submit to God, and not to serve the world.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to **morrow** is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

So it is here today, and gone tomorrow, as James said.

And he did indeed also compare the rich to grass before, that will one day wither.

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the **morrow**: for the **morrow** shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

So in their ministry, Jesus told them not to think about tomorrow. He had called them to follow him, and they had a special purpose, that God had called them to. And so they just needed to focus on fulfilling that, and know that God would take care of the rest.

And so they didn't need to worry about tomorrow.

Now, most of us haven't been called to go on that kind of an evangelistic mission.

But James still tells them here not to boast about tomorrow. That they may lay plans, but they need to be sure that they are within God's will.

They need to not boast about what they're going to do, but instead acknowledge that it is only if the Lord will. And to rejoice in God's will, and his promise, instead.

Verse 17

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

When Christ was on the cross he said:

Luke 23:34 ...Father, forgive them; for they **know** not what they **do**...

The people that were crucifying him, they didn't know who he was. They didn't know what he had done. They didn't know he was the Son of God. They thought he was a criminal just like every other man they'd crucified.

The centurion only realized that what he'd heard murmured about him was true, after Jesus was dead.

And so Jesus said "forgive them." Don't charge them with having crucified the Son of God, with having crucified a righteous man. They weren't complicit. They didn't know what they were doing.

They weren't trying to kill the Son of God, so don't charge them with that sin.

And so James says the same thing in regard to this boasting.

Up to now, they've just been ignorant and foolish.

They haven't been trying to replace the hope of the gospel with their own boastings, they haven't been intentionally ignoring God and his will.

Up to now, they've done it in ignorance. But to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. So from here on out, now that he's warned them about it, they need to take heed. Now they know what they are doing, and they need to be rejoicing in God and his will, and his promise, and his hope, and not in their own boastings.

As I was studying this, I just got to thinking, that I guess this would always be very relevant in an election year.

Especially this last time. There was much rejoicing in boastings, without considering the will of the Father. And all such rejoicing is evil.

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Jesus said something similar about knowing and doing to his disciples on the night that he was betrayed. Urging them to humble, and serve one another.

John 13:12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17 If ye **know** these things, happy are ye if ye **do** them.

So they should know that they are to serve one another.

And if they know these things, happy are they if they do them.

You know, that's kind of the message James has been trying to get across here. If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.

Faith without works is dead.

James 3:13 Who is a wise man and endued with **knowledge** among you? let him shew out of a **good** conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

So again, if they had knowledge, then they should show their works out of a good conversation. They should know, and do.

Just knowing, or saying, isn't accomplishing anything. You need to do.

And to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

In Revelation Jesus speaks of a church that doesn't know. They rejoice in their boastings, and don't realize what they are doing, don't realize that they are laying up treasures on earth, rejoicing in the things that will vanish away, instead of the things that God has laid up for us, that endure forever.

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

So he doesn't consider them to be in utter rebellion against him. He doesn't charge them with terrible sin.

He says they are neither cold nor hot.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and **knowest** not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

So they boast that they are rich and increased with goods, and don't know that they are actually poor in terms of their eternal inheritance.

They've taken thought for the morrow, but not for eternity.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

So he still loves them, and is going to rebuke and chasten them to seek to show them their folly. He hasn't cast them off as his enemies. He's treating them as if they are just ignorant. But he's going to rebuke them and warn them of their poverty. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

So he's seeking to connect with them, but they are ignoring him. They are feasting and rejoicing in their boastings, in their riches, and they're not acknowledging Christ, not having him be a part of it.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

But those that do, that overcome, will one day rejoice as they sit in his throne. They will be able to rejoice in that they are exalted.

And that is what James has been trying to tell them here. They need to rejoice in the work of Christ, not their own boastings. Boasting in things that may never come to pass. Instead they need to submit to God, and acknowledge the Lord, that if it is his will it will happen, and to rejoice in whatever his will is, and the work he has already done for them, and their hope in his kingdom.

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted. Not in that he hopes to become rich and get gain.

Chapter 5 Verse 1

James 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

James says that miseries are going to come upon those that are rich. They should weep and howl over it, if they only knew.

That's what is going to befall the rich men. He told them in the first chapter that the rich should rejoice in that they are made low, because as the flower of the grass they will pass away. Their riches won't make them better than anybody else. In fact it is harder for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

When Christ returns, the rich will be made low.

And instead of rejoicing in that, here they are rejoicing in their boastings that they are going to get richer.

Don't they know the fate of the rich?

Miseries are going to come upon them.

Why are they seeking so much to be rich?

So James is going to tell them about what is going to happen to the rich, to drive home his point, that their boasting and rejoicing is evil.

If they are so rich, then he tells them again that they ought to be mourning and weeping over it.

That's not something to rejoice in, that is something to howl over.

Why?

What is it that is going to happen to the rich?

Verses 2 & 3

James 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

He says that their riches have been corrupted, they are rusted and motheaten.

They've had them stored up a long time, until they have begun to rot and canker and deteriorate.

Now, I know some of you out there are thinking, "wait a minute, gold and silver don't rust. They don't corrode."

And that's true, in general. Gold does not oxidize, and a chemist would tell you that there's really no way to corrode it at ambient temperature and pressure other than to place it in a solution of aqua regia, or some other strong acid. It is only strong acids and radioactive elements that can react with gold, and cause it to corrode.

So if you had asked a chemist, they probably would have told you that the Bible was wrong, and that there is no way that gold could get corroded like that, unless it was immersed in heavy acids.

But in 2014, a paper was published in the journal *Rare Metal Materials and Engineering*, titled "Gold Leaf Corrosion in Moisture Acid Atmosphere at Ambient Temperature."

And what the authors discovered was that it is possible for gold leaf, or gold foil, to be corroded by a moisture atmosphere high in sulfur dioxide or nitrogen dioxide, at ambient temperature and pressure.

And in fact, the reason for the research was that there are many artifacts that have been found recently, that are covered with gold leaf, that have been seriously damaged by corrosion.

And so we're still learning about these metals, and what we're learning recently is that the Bible was right, and it is possible for gold and silver to be corroded under certain conditions.

And in fact, we've found that that is exactly what has happened to some ancient artifacts. Their riches were indeed corrupted.

But you say, gold leaf or gold foil is a little bit different than a solid gold coin being corroded. And that's true.

Gold is more likely to corrode when something has merely been covered with it, or it's not as pure.

Which is why he says that the rust will be a witness against them.

If your gold and silver is rusting that's probably an indication that there is something not quite right about them. It may either be impure or not solid.

But it is also a witness against them for the reason that it is proof that they've had these things for a long time. But they haven't used them, or dispersed them. They haven't been sharing with others or trading or giving. They've just been storing them up.

And now they are corrupted.

And then he says something interesting. He says that the rust of them will witness against them and will eat their flesh as it were fire.

You say, gold, eat your flesh as it were fire? That's silly. Gold is harmless. It is a noble metal, it is almost totally unreactive.

But remember what it is that can cause gold corrosion. It is highly reactive substances, like acids.

And what do acids do? If they are strong enough, they do indeed eat your flesh as it were fire.

They'll burn right into you.

Which is why he says that the rust of them will eat their flesh as it were fire. They've been corroded by acids, and the residue of those acids will still be there, and if they handle their riches, it will eat their flesh as it were fire.

So here are these people that have these riches that are being corrupted.

They've just stored them up, they haven't been using them, and now they are ruined.

He says that they've heaped the treasure together for the last days.

They've been storing it up for a certain time. For the last days.

Now, every time that the term "last days" is used in scripture, it is a reference to the same thing: the latter days, the last days before the end. The last times on this earth.

So he's saying that they've been saving up, and storing away goods and money and clothing, so that they'll have them in the last days, and will be able to survive through the trouble and anguish that will come on the earth.

And they've done it well. He says that in fact they've heaped up so much that there will still be some left over. Old and rusty and moth-eaten.

And it will be a witness against them, and will eat their flesh as it were fire.

So he's not talking about secular rich people. He's talking about people who fear God, and know that one day his judgment is going to come on this earth, and who are preparing for it.

But their riches won't be a witness that they believed God, that they feared him, and they were wise and prepared for his wrath, so they could survive and enter his kingdom. Instead he said the opposite. Their riches will witness against them. They'll be corrupted, and cause them bodily harm, eating their flesh as it were fire.

Sounds like the parable of the talents, and the guy that had the one talent.

Matthew 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

So he was a man who feared God very greatly.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

And God rebuked him, and said, why did you keep that money laid up? Why didn't you put it into circulation? And so it was a witness against him. He knew to do good, and did it not. And to him it was sin.

And he was cast into outer darkness, and there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. Misery did come upon him, and he wept and howled.

And then next Christ told the parable of the sheep and the goats.

And remember how he said, "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink, a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not."

And so you see, these rich men had money, they could have bought food for others, to feed them and give them drink, and take them in, or to visit them and give them. But they didn't. And now their gold and silver is cankered.

They had clothing, but they didn't cloth the naked. And now their garments are motheaten.

They didn't need these things. They weren't using them. They were just storing them up.

And so these rich men lay up treasures for the last days. Not so that they can help others, but just for themselves.

And now their treasure is corrupted.

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves **treasures** upon earth, where **moth** and **rust** doth **corrupt**, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves **treasures** in heaven, where neither **moth** nor **rust** doth **corrupt**, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your **treasure** is, there will your heart be also.

So Jesus warned his disciples against this very thing.

That this world's treasure will be corrupted, but their treasure should be in heaven.

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither **moth corrupteth**.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So he told them that it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Instead of laying up treasure here, they should be hoping in the treasure they have in the kingdom of Christ.

35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

They shouldn't be worried about earthly riches, about increasing their goods here. They shouldn't be taken with cares of this life. They should be looking for that coming of Christ, and his kingdom. That's where their treasure should be, and their heart should be.

They should be ready and waiting when Christ comes to set up that kingdom.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

So this is the attitude that the Jewish people should be having toward their Messiah. They should understand that he is going to come and fill all their needs, not be heaping together treasures for the last days.

But there were rich Jews at that time, who knew that the end is near, who were heaping treasure together, in preparation for the trouble that might come upon their people.

They weren't rejoicing in Christ and his coming redemption, they were instead focussed on making provision for themselves.

And James tells them not to be like that. Not to be focussed on earthly riches.

Not to get caught up in these boastings of how they are going to do this or that and get rich.

1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 But they that will be **rich** fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

So Paul warned against wanting to be rich, that those that did would end up erring from the faith, and would end up having many sorrows. Just as James told them to weep and howl for the miseries that would come upon them.

Paul went on to say this later on in the same chapter:

1 Timothy 6:17 Charge them that are **rich** in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain **riches**, but in the living God, who giveth us **richly** all things to enjoy;
18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;
19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

So those that already are rich, he tells not to trust in riches, but to trust in God. To distribute their riches to others, and in that way to lay up in store for the time to come. Not by heaping treasure together here, but by placing their treasure in Christ's kingdom, and their eternal reward.

The sun will rise with a burning heat, and the rich will be brought low.

*So there are miseries that are going to come upon the rich men.
And the Bible only gives us some hints here about exactly how that is going to happen. To go into that in depth is really a much bigger study of the end times.
But there certainly are a variety of things coming for them to weep and howl over.
It talks about that in Revelation. IN chapters 17 and 18 it speaks of some of the things that will come upon them even before the return of Christ.*

Revelation 17:16 *And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall **eat** her **flesh**, and burn her with **fire**.
17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

*So just as James said that the rust of their riches would eat their flesh and burn it as it were fire, the whore is going to made desolate and naked, and the horns will eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.
They'll give their power to the beast, and he'll do that to the whore.
Because God put it into their heart to fulfill his words.*

And so the destruction of Babylon is described in Revelation 18:

Revelation 18:1 *And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.
2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed **rich** through the abundance of her delicacies.

So it was through Babylon that the merchants of the earth were made rich.
And they will weep and wail at her destruction:

Revelation 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made **rich** by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, **weeping** and wailing,

It is interesting that they stood afar off for fear of her torment. As if, if they got too close, it would affect them somehow.

Like maybe if an atomic bomb was dropped, and they were scared of the radiation.

16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, **weeping** and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made **rich** all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

Now, they said that the riches were come to nought.

As if everything was completely and utterly destroyed. All of the riches were corrupted, and every garment moth-eaten, even the gold and silver cankered.

And I'd remind you that some radioactive elements can react with gold.

And then who knows what they would decay into. You'd have to study the chemistry of that, and the decay chains, and different reactions that would take place.

But it's possible that it would decay into something that would burn their flesh as it were fire.

Which is why they would stay far away for fear of her torment, and count all those riches as having come to nought. Being totally corrupted.

So miseries will come upon the rich.

And it talks about that in other passages as well.

In Zechariah there are several passages that talk about it.

Zechariah 11:1 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.

Now, do you remember how earlier in James, when we were talking about the grass, we also saw some passages that talked about the cedars of Lebanon?

The cedars and great trees represent the great men of the earth.

And when Christ comes back, he's going to bring judgment on them.

And so it says here, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars."

2 **Howl**, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: **howl**, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

And so the fir tree and the oaks are called upon to howl at the destruction of the forest. These are the trees that are a little lesser than the cedars, not quite as tall and great. But they will be greatly distressed and will howl when the cedars fall. Similar to how Babylon was destroyed, but the merchants remained to bewail her.

*3 There is a voice of the **howling** of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.*

So the shepherds also, who had the oversight of the flock, those that were supposed to feed them and lead them, and give spiritual direction, they also are spoiled. Similar to how James rebuked both those who wanted to be masters in the church, and those who wanted to be rich. At the end, both the wicked religious leaders and the rich will be destroyed.

4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

And their riches will be given to the flock.

*5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am **rich**: and their own shepherds pity them not.*

They have condemned and killed the just. And they don't think that they are guilty. After all, they believe there is one God. And they bless him for making them rich.

6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.

So they are going to turn against each other. That again sounds similar to how the ten kings and the antichrist will turn against the whore and destroy her.

And then he goes on at the end of that chapter to talk about how God will raise up the antichrist, the idol shepherd.

15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.

So he won't seek to restore those of Israel that have fled from him into the wilderness, during the tribulation.

Instead he'll eat the flesh of the fat.

And that is what Revelation says they will do to Babylon. They will eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

And so this shepherd is like an idol, he claims to be a god, but he is a false god. He will leave the flock, and fall away. And he'll receive a deadly wound.
But he'll eat the flesh of the fat.

Jeremiah 25:30 Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

Remember the fury of the winepress of the wrath of God. The antichrist will think that by slaying the 144000, he is pouring out his wrath. But it is actually the winepress of the wrath of God. And so it is then that God will pour his wrath out, ultimately culminating in the return of Christ. And when he comes he will come with a shout, as they that tread the grapes.

31 A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

32 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

33 And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

34 **Howl**, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

So they killed the just, and took their spoil.

And notice again how the shepherds and the principle of the flock are grouped together here. They have both conspired together against the just. The religious leaders and the rich men. And they will howl and suffer together.

And that once again relates the whore, because Babylon is not just a political entity, it is a religious entity. And so when Babylon is destroyed, both the shepherds and the principle of the flock, the rich merchants, will howl.

35 And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

36 A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an **howling** of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture.

37 And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

38 He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

It said that their land was desolate because of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger. So there was an oppressor, somebody else who made it desolate, before the LORD even got there to finish the job, and pour out his anger.

Which again sounds like what will happen when the antichrist destroys Babylon.

He will eat the flesh of the fat, and there will be a great howling of the principle of the flock.

Zephaniah 1:7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.

9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an **howling** from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.

11 **Howl**, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear **silver** are cut off.

So the rich, the merchants, the kings and princes, will be cut off.

12 And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.

13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

18 Neither their **silver** nor their **gold** shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the **fire** of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

So the rich will not be delivered by their silver and gold. The mighty man will cry there bitterly.

Verse 4

James 5:4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

So James is speaking to rich men that are crooks. Their gold and silver is cankered, and they defraud their laborers.

Leviticus 19:13 Thou shalt not **defraud** thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is **hired** shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Deuteronomy 24:14 Thou shalt not oppress an **hired** servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

15 At his day thou shalt give him his **hire**, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he **cry** against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

So they were told in the law not to oppress a hired servant, but to give him his pay at the end of each day. Otherwise he would cry out to God, and the LORD would count it as sin unto them. But these rich men don't do that. They keep back the wages of their hired laborers by fraud. And so they've cried out to God, and he has heard them.

So these men are in trouble. "The cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth."

Now what does that mean, "Lord of sabaoth"?

Well, that's a phrase that is used one other place in the NT:

Romans 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the **Lord of Sabaoth** had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

So there he is quoting from the OT, from the book of Isaiah. And it is clear that he has transliterated the Hebrew word "Sabaoth". So all we have to do is go back to Isaiah to see what that word means.

Isaiah 1:9 Except the LORD of **hosts** had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

So the "Lord of sabaoth" is the "LORD of hosts".

That's a name for God that is used 235 times in the OT. And just these two times in the NT.

So James is using an OT name for God.

Instead of just calling him the Lord, he calls him the Lord of sabaoth, the Lord of hosts.

By calling him that it emphasizes God's might, how that there are hosts of angels at his commandment, prepared to fulfill his word. He's the LORD of hosts, not just a God in name, but with hosts of servants, over which he rules.

So this is one of the more fearful and terrible names for God.

And because James is speaking to Jews that are rich, he uses a Jewish name for God, from the Hebrew OT.

And perhaps because it is used in Malachi 3:5:

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that *oppress the hireling in his wages*, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the **LORD of hosts**.

And these are people who are familiar with that verse. So he uses that Hebrew name for God to bring that to their mind.

These are rich men who are religious, who think they fear God, and are storing up wealth for the day of wrath.

But it is just selfishness. They are defrauding others so that they can heap treasures together. And those treasures will be corrupted, and witness against them.

He even says that the wages themselves cry out to God.
Just like the blood of Abel cried out to God from the ground, and witnessed against Cain.

Remember Cain, the religious man, who killed his brother because God had accepted him and not accepted Cain?

Well, that's what these guys are like.

Isaiah 2:6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

*7 Their land also is full of **silver** and **gold**, neither is there any end of their **treasures**; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots:*

8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:

9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

*12 For the day of the **LORD of hosts** shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:*

13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,

15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

22 Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Verse 6

James 5:6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

Just like Cain killed Abel.

James 2:6 ... Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

So the rich oppress them. They've condemned and killed the just.

The followers of Christ are being persecuted by the rich religious people, and they do not resist them. Like Christ they are led as sheep to the slaughter.

In the sermon on the mount, Christ told his disciples that that is how they should be during their ministry:

Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye **resist** not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And so in persecution for Christ's sake that is what we are all called upon to do.

And so in the next verse James tells them to have patience unto the coming of the Lord.

To have that patience that he talked about at the start, rejoicing in their temptations, as they wait for the day when the sun will rise with a burning heat, and those of low degree are exalted, but the rich are brought low, and as a flower of the grass, they pass away.

Their persecutors will be judged. The rust of their treasures will witness against them, and burn their flesh as it were fire.

And so let them not be like them. Let them not rejoice in riches, in the hope of gain, in the boastings of tomorrow, in the desire to be great. But let them rather keep rejoicing in the hope of Christ, and submitting themselves to the will of God.