



JAMES 5: 1-6

*Condemnation of
Materialism*

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.



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: a,b 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!

James 5:1-3 a.b

1. **Who is James addressing here? In your initial opinion, are these ungodly people or godly people?**
 - Are believers addressed in Vs. 1?
 - J. Vernon McGee: quoting John Calvin; came to agree that Vs. 1-6 are to the ungodly/ unbelievers
 - Support for this: can miseries be directed to those in Christ? Can a believer's heart be 'fattened in a day of slaughter' (v. 5)? Will a believer be 'slaughtered for storing up and hoarding riches?
 - James begins epistle to scattered Jewish believers who are experiencing trials, they are to endure the trials... Would the fabulously rich who escaped Jerusalem because of Roman persecution experience these trials? Wouldn't their riches be able to buy them out of trials? Why then, would James be concerned with the above rich men's being able to endure trials in Chap. 1?
 - Therefore: 5:1-6 seems to be a short vignette, a brief monologue to: address the ungodly
 - He addresses the ungodly to show his flock, his brethren that God realizes and acknowledges these filthy rich men were responsible for James's flock's sufferings. He does this for the benefit of his Christian readers [Stulac, cited in Constable notes] In effect: God will circle back to these men and judge:
 - "Like an OT prophet James denounces the wanton luxury of the rich, warning of their coming doom."
(Adamson, quoted by Constable)



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James 5:1-3 a.b

2. The background to Verses 1-3:

- Jesus's words: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." [Mat 6:19-21]
- Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." [Luke 12:14-21]
- "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [Luke 12:33-34]



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James 5:1-3 a,b

2. Bonus Question: What did God institute to have earthly goods rot, be destroyed by moths and rust?

- The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics is how He has it accomplished naturally... It's most likely instituted as a consequence of original Sin
- 1st Law: states that energy cannot be created nor destroyed, under any circumstances, but can transfer from one form to another... $\Delta U = q+w$
- The Second Law also states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state
- Who put the energy into the system to begin with?

3. What is God's intended principle for the use of money

- Primarily: Used for His glory- also:
- Put to profitable use (McCalley). It is to be in movement and not sit and accumulate (e.g. the wealthy landowner building bigger barns...)
- Mat. 25: the servant given 1 talent buries it in the ground until his master returned (this was evil) but the servant with the 5 talents doubled the master's money . . . [ROI = 100%]
- To sum the supply of money, M1, is to move through one's hands to do productive, godly things, M2



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2. Wealth in the 1st Century Roman economy was comprised mainly of 3 types of goods: garments, oil & corn, and gold & silver possession

- ‘your riches have rotted’: oil and corn **will rot** if stored; not put to use
- Garments: if sitting in a closet, will be the **food of moths**. Garments were gifted and were heirloomed if the owner passed away. Christ’s garments were even valuable, what happened to them?
- Gold & silver: **rusts**, which is probably in modern language: corrodes [McCalley, Constable]

3. What is meant by the gold/silver’s corrosion/ rust will be a witness against them?

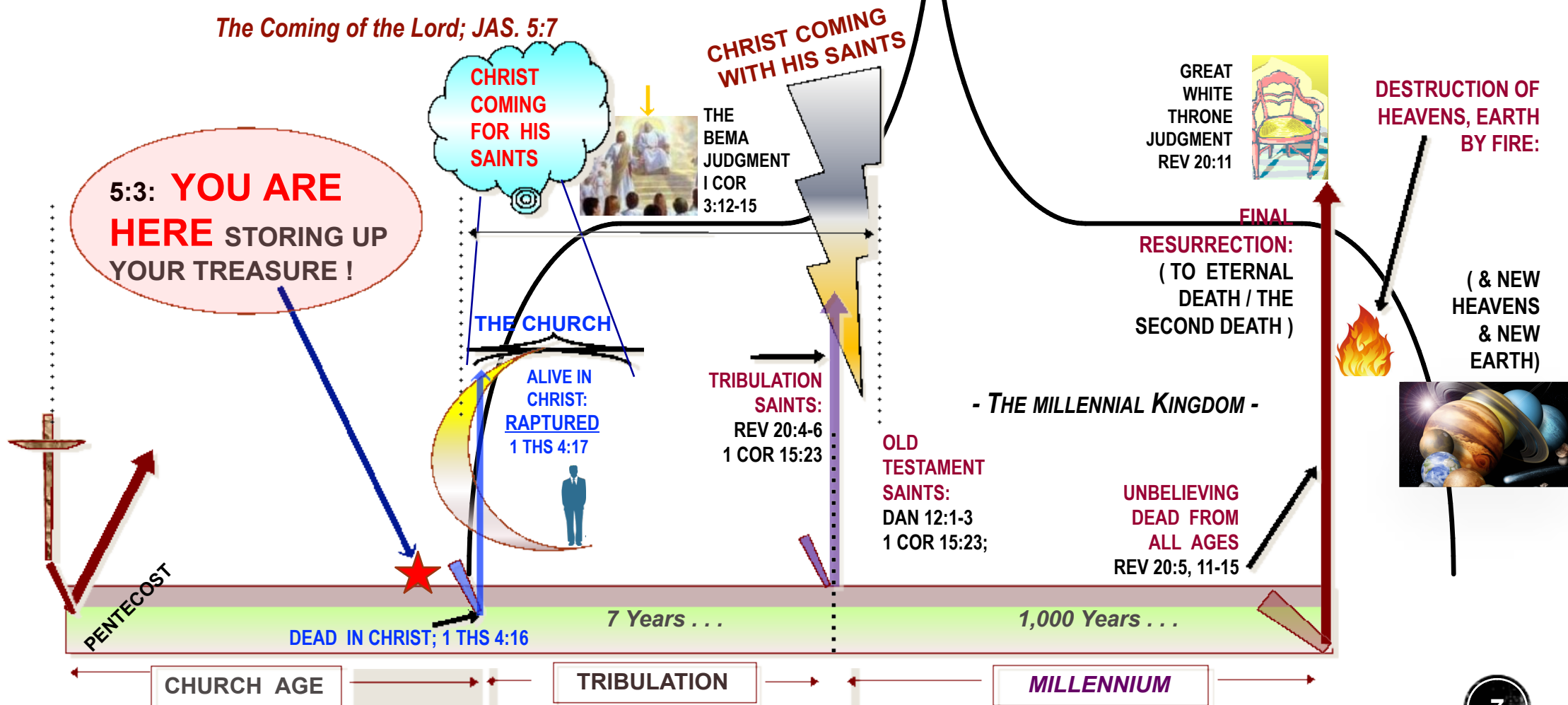
- *The gold and silver they have stored up will become cankered, and the rust of them will become a witness against them, testifying to the greed and covetousness that led them to lay up vast stores of useless pelf that might have been used to the glory of God in alleviating human misery; or, if the heart had been right, in furthering the work of the kingdom of God.* [H.A. Ironside; Selected Notes on James]
- Remember James 1: 10,11: and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. [cf. ‘all flesh is like grass.. It withers...the flower falls off’ | Pet. 1:24] For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.



3c. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

James 5: 3(c.)

THE DAY OF THE LORD:





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.

James 5: 4,5

1. Source of Verse 4:

- “YOU SHALL NOT OPPRESS A HIRED SERVANT WHO IS POOR AND NEEDY, WHETHER HE IS ONE OF YOUR COUNTRYMEN OR ONE OF YOUR ALIENS WHO IS IN YOUR LAND IN YOUR TOWNS. YOU SHALL GIVE HIM HIS WAGES ON HIS DAY BEFORE THE SUN SETS, FOR HE IS POOR AND SETS HIS HEART ON IT; SO THAT HE WILL NOT CRY AGAINST YOU TO THE LORD AND IT BECOME SIN IN YOU.” DEUT. 24:14,15
- Even though we are not under the Law, it shows what God’s mind and heart is on the matter of hiring and payment of services.
- The rich man’s job for hire was the poor/needys life-line in many cases they depended on the money you pay for food, clothing, shelter; withholding / squabbling about the money is immoral.
- The poor were not able to call Backus & Schanker, P.C. to bring their case against the wealthy employer, they had no advocate. But: they cried out to God. [Bad news for the wealthy, greedy man]
- Withholding pay and having a bountiful supply of crops to sell: is a tremendous multiplier to the rich’s man’s balance sheet. This sort of thing happens too often in my mountain town, the value added to a multi-million dollar second or third vacation home is tremendous, but the laborer does not get paid.
- Theory: many of James’s Jerusalem church’s flock fled the increasing Roman persecution, and they were working where they landed and had this very problem. James is advocating for their cause here.



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1. Verse 5:

- This unrighteous rich man is very similar to the rich man of Luke 16 and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
- Lazarus's master is described: "habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day." Luk 16:19
- Garments: here is an example of 1st century wealth as described before
- J.V. McGee: theorizes that Lazarus's horrid condition is somehow related to the Rich Man; the Rich Man was responsible for it. Did he withhold wages and Lazarus declined in health, vigor until he was physically unable to even walk?
- Not just living with wealth, but luxuriously- *tryphaō* living 'delicately', living a soft life. The interlinear has living 'daintily'.
- ADD TO THAT: 'living a life of waton pleasure' all one verb: *spatalaō*. Which adds the concept of 'voluptuous-ness'
- I think: chiffon and lace, bon bons, truffles and cream, champagne and caviar....
- McGee: God doesn't condemn wealth, but 1) the manner in which you got it and 2) what's done with it. Lazarus's Rich Man and Jas. 5:5's rich man is hoarding his money



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James 5: 4,5

1. The Result of Living in Luxury and Wanton pleasure:

- Eating bon bons, cream, champagne and cavier leads to weight gain, and most likely, *pericardial* fat!
- James 5:1-6 is not only a denunciation of ill-gotten riches, but an admonition to the wanton rich: you are becoming *foie gras* for God's righteous consumption.... Don't do it
- A fattened goose and a fattened cow are headed for bad times ahead

2. Review: *James is telling the godly they live in a godless world and the rich will oppress, impose hardships on them, take advantage of them, it's the consequence of being in the world. [McGee]*

- **“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Jn 16:33**



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1. Lawfare against the Christian:

- Again: the rich man is able to triumph against the poor wage-earner in court. The laborer is not even able to make a legal plea in court.
- The worker needs his wages for basic sustenance and if it is withheld, they can die (Constable) and McGee has Lazarus in his dire condition due to a similar situation
- Verse 6's charge by God against the rich, wealth hoarding man is more tremendous than those previous to this (Wm. Kelly; Exposition of the Epistle of James, p. 175) and this makes the rich man's guilt even less excusable by God, because our poor laborer is not even able to challenge him
- It is important to note the King James version here: the rich landowner is keeping Verse 4's back wages for himself **by fraud** and this throws the situation into a legal issue- but be of good cheer, the case will be heard by God Himself
- Court will be in session in Verse 6: the Coming of the Lord. One critical feature of Christ's Millennial Kingdom is His personal judgement- He is there physically, bodily as Judge, jury and Executioner
- But: He will judge righteously