

WEEK 12

JAMES 5:1-6

READING PLAN

James 5:1-6
Proverbs 11:28; 15:16

Jeremiah 9:17-26
Luke 12:13-21

INTRODUCTION

That James' original audience had developed an infatuation with the wealthy is clear from the many passages in which he offers warnings to the rich or criticizes the church for giving deference to those with great means (1:9-11; 2:1-13; 4:13-17). In the face of great trials, it seems that many in this audience either placed great hope in their own wealth or had an inordinate longing to run in the same circles that the wealthy did. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Regardless of whether the rich people James condemns are believers or not, we all must also pay close attention to James' warning. His warning is given to those who use their superior resources (wealth, power, status, etc.) to oppress others and will ultimately stand accountable before God. The earthly wisdom that looks to money for security will fail in the last day, for when Christ returns, all that is not of eternal value will be destroyed.

REFLECTION

*¹Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. ²Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. ⁴For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. ⁵You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you. **JAMES 5:1-6***

What audience is James addressing in this section (v.1)?

- Compare the opening words of 5:1 and 5:7 – does he appear to be directing his words towards believers in 5:1-6, or not?

- Do you identify yourself in this category of people? If not, why?

Read the following Old Testament passages and make a quick note about what each has to say about handling money:

- Leviticus 19:13
- Deuteronomy 15:7-11
- Deuteronomy 24:14-15
- In what ways do the rich oppressors described in 5:1-6 show obedience to these commands? In what ways do they show disregard for them?

Read 5:2-3 and note the descriptions of the rich person's wealth:

- Wealth: _____
- Fine clothes: _____
- Gold and silver: _____
- "Wealth you were counting on": _____
- "Treasure you have accumulated": _____
- Is there a common theme to what James is saying about their wealth?

In verse 4, highlight each of the three distinct groups/people that are mentioned, and list them below:

- the victims:
- the oppressors:
- the one who will bring justice:

What is the significance of saying the workers' cries have reached the ears of "the Lord of Heaven's Armies," rather than simply saying "God"?

Do you think James is condemning the wisdom of financial savings? Based on what we see here between the rich and their workers, at what point might saving become sinful?

Do you view money, wealth, and resources as your own, or as things that God has entrusted to you to use for a specific purpose? In what ways are you tempted to hoard or indulge in self-centered ways?

IMPLICATIONS

WINDOWS What does this teach me about God? How does this text show God's attributes, character, cares/concerns, tendencies, etc.? What does this reveal about what He's like and how He acts?

MIRRORS What does this teach me about myself? How does this text show my own attributes, character, likes/dislikes, tendencies, etc.?

PICTURES What does this teach me about the way God and mankind should interact? Look for ways we are to live and respond to God for his glory, our good, and the good of others. Specifically...

Starting today, how should I...think?

...feel?

...act?