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By Dan Maines

James 5

James 5:1

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

† James warns the wealthy oppressors of looming judgment. Their riches could not shield them from the wrath about to fall on Jerusalem.

† Josephus (Wars 6.1.1) describes how the rich leaders who had lived in luxury were reduced to misery when the city fell in

AD 70.

† This echoes **Luke 6:24**, where Jesus said, "Woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full."

James 5:2-3

Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have corroded, and their corrosion will serve as a testimony against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

† Wealth and possessions, once seen as blessings, had become witnesses against them. Their stored treasures would not save them in the "last days."

† Josephus (Wars 6.8.2) recounts how gold hidden during the siege was discovered by Roman soldiers and brought misery to its owners.

† Jesus warned in **Matthew 6:19-20** not to store up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy. James applies that warning directly.

James 5:4

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 armies.

† Withheld wages are a sin crying out to heaven. God hears the oppressed.

† This reflects **Deuteronomy 24:14-15**, which commanded Israel not to oppress hired workers but to pay them daily.

† Josephus (Wars 2.8.2) records how the elites enriched themselves while the poor suffered, showing the truth of James' charge.

James 5:5

You have lived for pleasure on the earth and lived luxuriously;

you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

† The wealthy lived in indulgence, unaware that judgment was near. Their luxury only prepared them for slaughter.

† This imagery recalls **Jeremiah 12:3**, which describes the wicked as fattened for slaughter.

† Tacitus (Histories 5.12) condemned the luxurious lifestyles of elites in Judea, even while their nation was collapsing.

James 5:6

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

† The wealthy used courts to oppress and condemn the innocent.

† This reflects how Jesus Himself was condemned unjustly, as well as His followers who faced persecution.

† Josephus (Antiquities 20.9.2) notes how judges and leaders in Jerusalem were corrupt, condemning the righteous.

James 5:7-8

Therefore be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

† James turns from condemning the rich to encouraging the faithful. Patience is required, for the Lord's coming was at hand.

† The early and late rains were covenant blessings promised in **Deuteronomy 11:14**, showing that the Lord would be faithful to His word.

† Jesus had promised in **Matthew 24:34** that His coming in judgment would occur in that generation, and James echoes that urgency.

James 5:9

Do not complain, brothers and sisters, against one another, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

† Complaints and divisions invited judgment. The Judge was already "at the door," a phrase Jesus used in **Matthew 24:33** to show His coming was imminent.

† Josephus (Wars 5.10.5) describes how factions within Jerusalem complained and turned on each other, hastening their downfall.

James 5:10-11

As an example, brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

† The prophets suffered but endured, proving God's faithfulness. Job's endurance is a pattern for believers under trial.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QpHab) reflect on the prophets as models of perseverance under persecution, aligning with James' counsel.

† James assures them that the Lord is merciful, even in judgment, rewarding those who endure.

James 5:12

But above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you do not fall under judgment.

† James echoes Jesus' teaching from **Matthew 5:34-37** that oaths should not be used to manipulate truth. Simple, honest speech is enough.

† Philo (On the Special Laws 2.10) condemned unnecessary

oaths, noting that truth should stand by itself.

James 5:13-14

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

† James directs believers to prayer in every circumstance: suffering, joy, or sickness.

† Oil symbolized consecration and healing, rooted in Old Testament practice (**Exodus 30:25**).

† The early church fathers confirm this practice: Tertullian mentioned anointing as part of prayer for healing.

James 5:15-16

And the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much.

† Prayer has power not only for healing but for forgiveness. Confession builds unity and brings spiritual health.

† Elijah is soon given as an example, showing how righteous prayer brings results.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 56) testified that confession and prayer preserved unity in the early church.

James 5:17-18

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

† Elijah's example proves that fervent prayer is effective. His prayer withheld rain for three and a half years, a prophetic period echoed in **Luke 4:25** and **Revelation 11:3**.

† James encourages believers that their prayers are powerful when aligned with God's will.

James 5:19-20

My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

† James closes by stressing restoration. Turning a sinner back to the truth saves from death and covers sin.

† Proverbs 10:12 says, "Love covers all offenses," which James echoes.

† Origen later noted that the highest work of love is restoring a wandering brother, directly in line with James.

How it applies to us today

† James 5 warns the arrogant rich and comforts the suffering faithful. The destruction of Jerusalem proved that wealth and pride collapse under God's judgment.

† Patience, prayer, and humility remain the marks of God's people today.

† The power of prayer, the endurance of the prophets, and the restoration of the wandering continue to guide believers in Christ's fulfilled kingdom.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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- † Matthew 23:12 – humble will be exalted
- † Matthew 24:33-34 – the Judge at the door in that generation
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