

A FAITH THAT WORKS

(A Study of the Book of James)

Waiting for Christ's Coming

TEXT: James 5:1-12

INTRODUCTION: It is so good to see each of you as we welcome a New Year. I hope that you and your family had a blessed Christmas and that the new year of 2017 begins wonderfully for you.

We come today to the final chapter of the Book of James. And while you may have noticed that James writes in short, pithy paragraphs, requiring often that we break each chapter into many segments to capture his meaning, the final chapter begins with a long passage – thirteen verses.

James writes about the soon coming of our Lord. In verse seven he says

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. ...

But he addresses two audiences: the lost and the saved.

To those without Christ James says,

James 5:1–6 1 Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!* 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

Frankly, **The scene described here is bizarre.**

- **The rich weep and howl in misery.**
- **Riches are corrupted (literally decayed).** And this is no metaphor. They are literally physically deteriorating
- **Expensive clothing has holes in it.**
- **Even the precious metals of gold and silver are corroded.**

We all know that wealth often insulates people from the extremities of pain resulting from life tragedies.

- Hurricanes strike the rich and the poor.
 - But those with enough money can go to a nice hotel while they rebuild.

- The poor have to stay in a shelter.
- Death snatches away loved ones regardless of how much you have in the bank.
 - But those with money in the bank can afford a nice funeral.
 - The grief of those without any money is multiplied because they cannot.

And that is what is so striking about what James is describing. Even those with great riches are not being protected from the pain being inflicted by some great disaster.

When did this happen? When was this time period?

James told us. Did you catch it? It is at the end of verse three.

James 5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

The last days refers to that period of history immediately before and during a period of horrific judgment that will fall upon the earth. **Jesus called that time period The Tribulation.** Jesus said,

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The Holy Spirit is speaking through James about this time, and He is saying,

I. EVEN THE WEALTH OF THE RICH WILL NOT PROTECT THE LOST FROM THE TERRIBLE DAYS OF TRIBULATION.

The majority of the Book of Revelation deals with the details of these days. Those of you who have studied through that book with me or on your own, know how true this statement is.

- In the first portion of these seven horrible years, a single war and its aftermath will cause the death of a quarter of the population of the earth.
- A world-wide famine will begin.
- Later massive fires will destroy a third of the vegetation in the world.
- Demonic creatures will be loosed from the abyss in the center of the earth and will plague men with pain so intense they will seek death but cannot die.

And what I have mentioned here is not even the worst of it.

Folks, James is saying to people of financial resources, who normally are insulated from some of the pain that troublesome times can bring – he is warning them – don't think your money is going to rescue you from the righteous judgments the Lord sends in the last days.

James 5:1 Come now, *you rich*, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!*

Many of you may be saying, but Bro. Mike, let’s move on here in the text. I’m not rich. Before you settle that question, let me ask, rich compared to whom? You may not be rich compared to those you would call rich Americans, but compared with the rest of the world, Americans are very rich.

Gallup Media per-capita income

United States	\$15,480
Rest of the World	\$ 2,920

Just to get a picture of what this means: **Every time you earn \$10, on average, the rest of the people on the globe earn \$1.80.**

When people in other countries call us “Rich Americans,” it is not without reason. We have genuinely poor people in the United States. We have genuinely poor people in our church. Some of you here today may be genuinely poor, but what I want us all to see is that the vast majority of us here in the United States, when compared with the rest of the world, would more accurately be grouped with those the Spirit labels as rich than those He would label as poor.

But, now get this. When the Holy Spirit through James says, “You rich, weep and howl for your miseries are coming.” He is talking to the rich people who are lost, not to the rich people who are saved! Please remember that Jesus is going to appear in the air and snatch up all believers to come with Him to the protection of Heaven before this time of tribulation begins. Who is taken to Heaven depends not on the balance in their bank account, great or miniscule, but upon their faith, whether they have trusted Jesus as their Lord and their Savior.

But now, those of you who are here, do be warned. If you have not yet trusted Christ, and you are a person with some degree of financial security, that security may also make you less sensitive to the gospel. Generally speaking, the more money a person has, the less responsive they are to the gospel that brings salvation. Jesus said it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

I remember the first time I experienced this truth in the U.S.

It is the same in every country we go to.

So, if you have not yet trusted Christ, regardless of your level of income or financial security, believe the gospel!

And now **in this second part of James’ message, he speaks a word to believers**, to the brethren, as he calls them.

James 5:7–12 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. 12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.

James says, “Listen up, brothers and sisters in Christ, the Lord is coming back. And knowing that, there are certain ways we should act.”

II. WE DEMONSTRATE OUR CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST’S RETURN BY OUR BEHAVIOR.

- **Be patient like the farmer - knowing seed will grow but not anxious about it.**
- **Establish your heart - Strengthen your heart.**
- **Don’t grumble against fellow believers - Don’t be a complainer.**
- **Speak the Word of the Lord like the prophets - Be willing to endure suffering for doing so! (Do not forget the Lord’s reward for those who endure like Job!)**
- **Speak simple truth - not embellished by oaths or swearing.**

CONCLUSION: The Lord Jesus is coming again!

He will appear in the air, and the bodies of all the believers across the ages will be resurrected, joined to their soul and spirit, to meet Him in the air. Hot on their heels, all of us believers who are still alive will rise off this earth to meet the Lord in the sky, and He will take us home to the safety and joy of Heaven while tribulation and judgment fall upon the lost who remain upon the earth.

When is this going to happen? I don’t know. Jesus said we will not know the day or the hour, but He said we should recognize the season. I remain convinced you and I live in the season of His return.

Have you trusted Him? You can today.

Are you actively serving Him through His local church as He told you to? You can begin today.

Are you living the way you want to be living when the trumpet announces His coming? You can repent and make your life right today.