

James 5:1–5

KJV

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

1 condemnation of the rich Am 2:6-7; Lk 6:24; Mk 10:25 par.

rev. 1 by Martin Albl
27 Nov 2013 04:45:51
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Byz V S TR Nes

¹ Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.

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22 Dec 2013 23:48:45

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KJV

² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

2 moth-eaten Jb 13:28; Is 51:8; Mt 6:19 par.

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Byz V S TR Nes

² Your wealth has rotted,
and your clothing has become moth-eaten.

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KJV

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.

3 eat your flesh like fire
Jud 16:17; Ps 21:10

rev. 1 by Martin Albl
2 Dec 2013 23:20:07
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stored up treasure Rom 2:5

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³ Your gold and silver has rusted,
and their rust will be a testimony against you,
and it will eat your flesh ^{Byz V TR Nes} like fire.

You stored up treasure in the last days

^S *You have gathered up fire for yourself for the last days.*

rev. 1 by Martin Albl
22 Dec 2013 23:49:18

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KJV

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.

4 wages of the workers
Lv 19:13; Dt 24:14-15;
Tob 4:14

rev. 1 by Martin Albl
22 Dec 2013 16:25:37
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**into the ears of the Lord
of Hosts** Is 5:9
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Byz V S TR Nes

⁴ Look! The wages of the workers who have harvested your estates, which you held back from them by fraud, cry out. And the cries of the harvesters have come into the ears of the Lord of Hosts.

rev. 2 by Martin Albl
22 Dec 2013 23:49:30

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KJV

⁵ Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

5 day of slaughter Jer
12:3

rev. 1 by Martin Albl
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Byz V S TR Nes

⁵ You have lived a life of indulgence and luxury upon the land; you have fattened your *hearts*
S
bodies
as if for a day of slaughter.

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22 Dec 2013 23:49:41

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🌀 **Suggestions for Reading** 🌀

1–6 Intended Audience

Due to the harsh and condemnatory tone of this prophetic judgment oracle, some interpreters understand "the rich" as a group outside of James' church. But there is little evidence in the letter itself to justify such a conclusion. James clearly addresses the community in 4:1-12, calling on them to repent. The admonition in 4:13-17 is likewise a call to the community to repent. James gives no structural clue that the audience addressed in the prophetic oracle is different from the audience addressed in chapter 4, on the contrary, he begins with the identical phrase (*age nun*) with which he begins 4:13. The difference in tone is to be attributed to his address to a separate audience *within* the church, i.e., the rich who oppress the poor.

The interpretive key is to understand James' condemnation as a prophetic oracle. Just as prophets such as Amos condemned the oppressive rich in Israel, so too James condemns that same group in his church community.

**gen *ptes *chr*

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1–6 Rich and Poor This passage is one of several passages ad-

dressing the rich and poor in James' community (synthetic note, "Rich and Poor in James.") This passage is the harshest condemnation of the rich: a pronouncement of their punishment on the Day of Judgment. **cul *chr *theo*

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3b rust will be a testimony against you *What is the nature of the testimony?*

- **Option 1: Wealth not used properly.** Some commentators take the rust as a sign that the wealthy have simply accumulated their wealth, and not put it to good use (cf. Sir 29:10: "Lose your money for relative or friend; do not hide it under a stone to rot" or Jesus' parable of the talents: Mk 25:14-30).
- **Option 2: The fleeting nature of wealth.** Option 1 is unlikely, however, since in his other criticisms of the wealthy, James' point is the fleeting nature of this life and the folly of pursuing wealth and forgetting God (Jas 1:9-11: "the rich man will fade away in his pursuits" [1:11]; Jas 4:13-16: "you are a mist" [4:14]). The "rust" symbolizes the passing, fleeting nature or riches. **interp *voc *gra *dev *chr *theo*

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5b hearts In biblical anthropology, the heart is the source of a person's inner life: his thinking, feeling, and will. *bib1:26
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18 Oct 2013 03:17:58 PUBLIC

TEXT

🌀 Text 🌀

2 added description S adds "and has become putrid" after "has rotted." The same word (*sr'*) is used to describe the smell of Lazarus' body four days in the tomb (Jn 11:39).
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22 Dec 2013 16:35:02 PUBLIC

3d Some Latin MSS, desiring to supply an object for "you have stored up," add *iram*; cf. Rom 2:5: "storing up wrath." BEDE (*Comm. Jas.*) HILARY OF ARLES (*Comm. Jas.*), and *Glossa Ordinaria* also reads this variant. *tex *voc *dev *bib *chr *theo
rev. 4 by Martin Albl AWAITING APPROVAL
23 Dec 2013 00:11:05 PUBLIC

4b which you held back from them by fraud Sinaiticus and the original reading of Vaticanus read *aphustereô*, a verb with the straightforward meaning of "withhold"; Alexandrinus and a correction of Vaticanus read *apostereô*. Nes judges both readings of equal weight. *voc *cul *bibb *ptes *jew *theo
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22 Dec 2013 23:57:35 PUBLIC

5b hearts reading "bodies" for "hearts" Codex Athous Lavrensis and some minuscules read "bodies" (*tas sarkas*) instead of "hearts," apparently trying to make better sense of the unusual reference to "feeding the hearts." *com

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23 Dec 2013 04:37:12 PUBLIC

🌀 Vocabulary 🌀

2a has rotted The verb *sêpô* means to rot or decay; it is often used for the transitory or corruptible state of material things ("All human deeds surely perish" [Sir 14:19]). Referring to idols, *Diognetus* (2.4) asks, "Are they all not rotting?". James may allude to the storing up food as a form of wealth accumulation. *gra
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22 Dec 2013 23:58:42 PUBLIC

3a has rusted The verb *katioô* may refer to rust or other corrosion or tarnish; with the noun *ios* (5:3b) it seems that James intends some reference to rust or corrosion. James likely realizes that gold does not in fact rust, but apparently uses it as a general image for the corruptibility of all things, even gold. See Bar 6:23 [Ep. Jer. 1.24], which speaks of wiping the rust from gold of idols. *interp *voc *gra *dev *chr *theo
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23 Dec 2013 00:01:03 PUBLIC

3b rust rust and poison James uses the same Greek word *ios* to mean "poison" (3:8); referring to the deadly poison of the tongue. As rust eats the flesh like fire, so too the tongue is associated with fire (3:8).
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23 Dec 2013 00:02:26 PUBLIC

3d stored up treasure The word *thêsaurizô* refers to accumulating wealth and store it safely (e.g., HERODOTUS *Hist.* 2.121).

It normally takes a direct object, but can be used absolutely (Lk 12:21). *tex *dev *bib *chr *theo
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4b kept back from them by fraud The Greek *apostereô* has the sense of withholding something, but with a fraudulent intent. The meaning could be that the workers were paid less than a fair wage, or were not paid at all. The exact construction *ho misthos ho aposterêmenos* is found in Sir 34:22 and Mi 3:5.

The parallel with Sir 34:22 is especially striking: "The one who takes away the means of living of his neighbor murders him; the one who fraudulently withholds the wages of a wage-earner sheds blood." In Mic 3:5, the Lord himself will come as a witness against those that swear falsely in his name, those that defraud the wage-earner of his wages, and those that oppress widows and orphans (cf. Jas 1:27). *tex *cul *bib *ptes *jew *theo
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23 Dec 2013 00:31:29 PUBLIC

5a lived a life of indulgent Indulgent Lifestyle of the Wealthy The Greek *truphaô* and its cognate noun *truphê* can have a positive or negative sense. The Garden of Eden is a "garden of delight" (*truphês*; Gn 2:15 G). Thus *Hermas* distinguishes between enjoyments (*truphai*) that are harmful and those that "save people." The harmful enjoyments include drunkenness, slander, adultery, greed; on the other hand, "for many people enjoy themselves in doing what is good, carried along by their own pleasure" (*Sim.* 6.5.5-7). Jesus remarks that the ones who live indulgently are in royal palaces (Lk 7:25). *cul *ptes *chr
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23 Dec 2013 00:29:15 PUBLIC

5a upon the earth possible meanings of "earth" The Greek *epi tês gês* may mean simply living well upon the landed estate of the rich, *cul4a or "upon the earth" in the sense of human life as a whole, seen from the perspective of the Day of Judgment.
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5a luxury Indulgent Lifestyle of the Wealthy The Greek verb *spatalaô* is similar in meaning to *truphaô* (living in indulgence), but with an even sharper connotation of excessive, overindulgent living. Sirach describes him as one who despises wise sayings (21:15); Ezekiel describes it as the lifestyle of the rich who ignore the poor: "this was the sin of you sister Sodom, pride: she and her daughters lived in pleasure, in fullness of bread and in abundance: this belonged to her and her daughters, and they helped not the hand of the poor and needy (16:49) *cul *ptes *chr
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23 Dec 2013 00:28:22 PUBLIC

5b heart biblical anthropology In biblical anthropology, the heart is the source of a person's inner life: his thinking, feeling, and will (see 1:26; 3:14; 4:8; 5:8) *bib1:26
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23 Dec 2013 00:18:59 PUBLIC

🌀 Grammar 🌀

2a wealth has rotted "Prophetic perfect" of an oracle James' verbs in this verse are in the perfect tense, which normally indicates action that has been completed in the past. James' use of the perfect here, however, should be understood as a "prophetic perfect"-- the prophetic oracle announces a future action with such certainty that it uses the past tense, as if it had occurred

already (cf. Jas 1:11). So too CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*), "it is a prophetic mode of speaking: the ungodly have the punishment which awaits them set before them, and they are represented as already enduring it."***interp1-6 **bib1-6 **chr1*

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3b a witness against you *Witness for or against?* The phrase *eis marturion humin* could be understood as "as a witness to you," (dative of advantage) in the sense of a warning to the rich (cf. Mt 24:14 for the same construction with this sense). But the condemnatory tone of the passage (5:1-6) as a whole make it more likely that the sense is "as a witness or testimony against you" (dative of disadvantage; cf. the construction in this sense in Mk 6:11: "shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them."***interp *voc *dev *chr *theo*

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3c like fire what does "like fire" modify? Some commentators take the phrase "like fire" to apply to 5:3d, "like fire you have stored up [goods] in the last days." S drops the "like" (*hōs*) and reads, "you have gathered up fire for yourselves for the last days." The main motivation for applying the phrase to 5:3d is the sense that the verb *thēsaurizō* (store up; treasure) requires an object.

Thēsaurizō can in fact be used absolutely (see Lk 12:21), and so "like fire" should be taken with 5:3c: the rust acting like fire; some MSS repeat "rust" before "as fire" to clarify what the phrase modifies. **voc *dev *bib *chr *isl*

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🎭 Literary Devices 🎭

1 Come now James opens this passage with the same phrase that opened 4:13-17, emphasizing the parallel relationship between the two.

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24 Nov 2013 05:19:09 PUBLIC

1 weep *Echo* The passage parallels Jas 4:9 closely: both use "to weep" (*klaiō*); 5:1 uses the noun form (*talaipōria*) of 4:9's "be miserable." The word *klaiō* (Jl 1:5; Is 22:4; Lam 1:1) and *talaipōria* (Mi 2:4; Jl 1:10; Jer 4:13) are used in contexts of the weeping and misery due to those who have disobeyed God. **voc4:9*

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1 wail *onomatopoeia* The word *ololuzō* (wail) is *onomatopoeic*, emphasizing the intensity of the misery. CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*) comments that it is not the weeping of repentance but the wail of despair of those who are condemned. ***gen1-6 **chr1*

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2f clothing has become moth-eaten *Contrasting echo* James may well intend a contrast between the fine clothing and gold rings of the visitor to the church's assembly (2:2) with the moth-eaten clothes and rusted gold here. **cul *bib*

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2b moth-eaten *Imagery of destruction* The imagery of moth-eaten clothing occurs frequently in the Old Testament (Prv 25:20; Sir 42:13); Isaiah parallels James in applying it to the judgment of the unrighteous (33:1; 50:9; 51:8).

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3b testimony against you *Courtroom allusion* The word *marturion* means proof or evidence (e.g., Mt 8:4 par.). The rust (symbolizing the ephemeral nature of material wealth) is evidence against the rich of their folly in trusting in their wealth. (Alternatively, the rust symbolizes the fact that the rich did not use their wealth to help the poor.) James may well intend here a reversal of the scene suggested in 2:6, where the rich drag the poor into court-- here the rich themselves are accused (cf. also the legal allusion in 5:6: the rich condemn the just man.

The scene is manifestly one of final, eschatological judgment (cf. Jas 5:3d: "the last days").

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3c fire *Echo* The eschatological imagery of fire recalls Jas 3:5-6, especially the image of the fire of Gehenna. **voc *dev *bib *chr *isl*

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3d storing up treasure *Irony* James transforms a common image of a wealthy person storing up hordes of coins and other valuable items. The rich man thought he was building security and honor for himself, but in a bitter ironical twist, he was only storing up the means of his own eternal destruction.

The ironical sense is seen in Rom 2:5: "By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God (Rom 2:5). **tex *voc *dev *bib *chr *theo*

James continues the irony in 5:5.

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4 Look! *Call for attention* James uses the particle *idou* several times throughout the work, calling special attention to the following communication (Jas 3:4, 5; 5:7, 9; 11).

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4b cry out *Personification* James personifies the wages withheld from the workers as crying out. Like the rust of the owners' gold and silver (Jas 5:3), the withheld wages are a testimony against the rich. HILARY OF ARLES (*Comm. Jas.*) explains that the cry is not a volice, but a cry for punishment as when the blood of Abel cried out to God from the ground (Gn 4:10).

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5b fattened your hearts *Imagery of animal slaughter* James alludes to the familiar image of fattening an animal for slaughter (e.g., Lk 15:23, the "fatted calf"; cf. Jer 26:21 G in the context of a judgment oracle on Egypt).

James harsh image pictures the rich people indulging their appetites, unconsciously fattening themselves for the Lord's harsh judgment on the Day of Judgment, the day of slaughter.

James pictures the rich fattening their hearts instead of the expected fattening of bodies (**tex*) perhaps as an additional allusion to Isa 6:10: the "fattening" of the people's hearts when they become dull and insensitive to the Lord's voice. **bib*

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🏹 Literary Genre 🏹

1–6 Judgment oracle Announcement of God's justice James may well be patterning his condemnation of the rich on Old Testament judgment oracles: (e.g., Is 23; Am 1-2). CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*) too takes it in this sense, "It seems to me to be a simple denunciation of God's judgment, by which he meant to terrify them without giving them any hope of pardon," rejecting those interpreters who take the initial "Come now," as a call to repentance.

The real audience, in Calvin's view, is the faithful community. James hopes that awareness of the miserable fate of the rich will motivate the community to avoid the example of the wealthy, and to bear their own sufferings more easily, comforted by the example of God's justice. *bib *ptes

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CONTEXT

🏹 Ancient Cultures 🏹

2b clothing Social status Luxurious clothing was a mark of social status in the Mediterranean world; Jesus' parable speaks of a rich man "who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day" (Lk 16:19); cf. Lk 7:25; 12:27. The wealthy may have hoarded clothing; HORACE speaks of a certain Lucullus who had 5,000 cloaks in his house (*Ep.* 1.6). *cul2:2 *dev *bib

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3a gold and silver Uses of coins The gold and silver of the rich may have been in the form of coins or in the form of gold and silver objects. The silver denarius coin was the basic unit of the Roman monetary system, worth about a day's wage for a laborer (see Mt 20:9-10). Those with surplus money commonly stored up hoards of gold and silver, not so much for economic purposes as for purposes of prestige. Silver and bronze coins were more common (paying taxes in coins was required); only the wealthy elite possessed gold.

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4a workers Social status of agricultural workers

In the value system of the ancient Greco-Roman elites, workers who earned a daily wage were held in low esteem. CICERO (*Off.* 1.150-51), in his discussion on the "traditional" view of the social ranking of skills and occupations, writes, "ignoble (*illiberales*) and unclean (*sordidi*) is the occupation of all untrained day laborers (*mercenarius*), who are paid not for their skills but for the work completed. What they receive as wage is a lump sum for their labor." The wise, writes SENECA (*Ep.* 90), did not invent the agricultural trades; such activities are not worthy of philosophers

VARRO (*Rerum rusticarum* 1.17.2) recommends employing wage earners for unhealthy or unsafe agricultural work, since the possible death of a wagger earner was less of a financial risk than the death of a slave.

As a representative of the Hellenistic Jewish wisdom tradition, *ben Sirach* (38:24-34) also held agricultural and other workers and craftsmen in lower esteem than the scribes and other educated leaders of his day, although he does acknowledge their value in their own sphere: "The scribe's wisdom increases wisdom; whoever is free from toil can become wise. How can one become learned who guides the plow, and thrills in wielding the

goad like a lance, Who guides the ox and urges on the bullock, and whose every concern is for cattle?... All these are skilled with their hands, each one an expert at his own work; Without them no city could be lived in, and wherever they stay, they do not go hungry. But they are not sought out for the council of the people, nor are they prominent in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench, nor can they understand law and justice. They cannot expound discipline or judgment, nor are they found among the rulers. Yet they maintain the fabric of the world, and their concern is for exercise of their skill."

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4a workers Former landowners In addition to slaves, estate owners also employed tenant farmers (cf. Mk 12:1-12 par.) or daily wage earners (cf. Mt 20:1-16).

Several factors contributed to farmers losing their own land and being forced to work as daily wagger earners.

- Farmers paid a relatively high rate of taxes. In Palestine, a farmer would pay direct taxes to the Herodian government, including a tax on crops and a "head" tax on each adult person in the family. In addition, he paid "religious taxes" in the form of the Temple tax and various tithes.
- Small landholders often had less productive land in comparison with the landed estates. It would be difficult for them to buy tools with their small margin of profit. In the market place, it would be difficult for them to compete with the better quality and quantity of the large landholders.
- A farmer's landholding, moreover, was always in danger of expropriation by powerful elites employing flimsy pretexts (see 1 Kgs 21; JOSEPHUS *Ant.* 306-8).

The wage-earner thus lived a precarious existence. He was not guaranteed work (cf. Mt 20:1-16 on the many workers seeking employment), and the work he could get was often difficult or dangerous (VARRO *Rerum rusticarum* 1.17.2).

Wage-earners were required especially at harvest times. In choosing the location of an estate, CATO (*Agr.* 1.3) recommends a place that where a sufficient number of workers are available in the near vicinity. *tex *voc *cul *bib *ptes *jew *theo

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4a estates Large landed estates The word *chôra* refers to a large landed estate (e.g., XENOPHON *Cyr.* 8.4.28; 8.6.4) as opposed to a smaller field. See Jesus' parable, "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest" (Lk 12:16). James thus refers to an estate owned by a wealthy member of the elite class.

The owners (*kyrioi*; see Lk 16:5) of the estate typically lived in cities, and thus were absentee landlords. The on-site management of the estate was given to a manager or steward (*oikonomos*; Mt 24:45; Lk 16:1). Usually the large landholders did not own one contiguous property, but individual lots in various places.

In the first century, there was a trend towards large landholders seeking to increase their holdings, driving out the smaller landholders. SENECA, personifying greed (*avaritia*), writes that she "adds one estate to another, evicting a neighbour either by buying him out or by wronging him, although she extends her country-seats to the size of provinces and defines ownership as meaning extensive travel through one's own property..." (*Ep.*

90.39). PLINY (*Nat.* 18.37) writes that in his day "six landlords owned half of Africa."

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4a wages The average daily wage of a worker in first-century Palestine was a denarius, a silver Roman coin (Mt 20:1-16). Such a coin bore the image of Caesar (Lk 20:24 par.). **theo*

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23 Dec 2013 06:42:57

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4b kept back from them by fraud Little opportunity for justice Agricultural workers would have had little or no access to demanding a just wage or recourse to justice if defrauded. **tex *voc *bib *ptes *jew *theo*

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5a you have lived in indulgence Vice of indulgence ARISTOTLE (*Pol.* 1266B), in discussing the role of lawmakers in regulating the size of property, comments that a property that is too large leads to living in indulgence (*truphaō*); PLATO connects indulgence with idleness and neglect (*Leg.* 901A). **voc *cul *ptes *chr*

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🏹 Biblical Intertextuality 🏹

1–6 Judgment oracle on the rich James' pronouncement of judgment on the rich echoes similar pronouncements by the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Amos 2:6-7). It echoes the "woes" of Jesus recorded in Luke's Sermon on the Plain: "But woe to you who are rich (*plousios*), for you have received your consolation" (Luk 6:24 NAB; cf. Mk 10:25 par.; Lk 12:16-21; Lk 16:19-31).

1 Tm 6:9-10 warns that the desire to be rich is a "temptation" (*peirasmos*; cf. Jas 1:13-14), and that the love of money is the root of all evils." **gen *bib *ptes*

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1 wail Lamentation over destruction The Greek *ololuzō* is used often in the prophet Isaiah, referring to lamentation over an actual or impending disaster: "Howl, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it comes" (Isa 13:6; cf. 14:31; 15:2-3). **dev*

rev. 3 by Martin Albl
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2b moth-eaten Symbolism of dissolution and decrepitude James may well allude to Job's lament (13:28 G): "I am as that which grows old like a bottle, or like a moth-eaten garment"; both use the unusual verb *sêtochrōtos*.

**dev *cul*

rev. 2 by Martin Albl
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3c eat your flesh like fire Eschatological fire imagery Judith has a similar image of the Lord, on the Day of Judgment, punishing those who rise up against his people: "He will send fire and worms into their flesh, and they will weep and suffer forever (16:17). See also Ps 20:10: fire will devour the enemies of the Lord. **voc *dev *chr *isl*

rev. 1 by Martin Albl
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3d last days Day of Judgment The phrase "last days" is a standard reference to the eschatological Day of Judgment, both in

the OT (Mi 4:1; Isa 2:2; Ez 38:16; Dn 10:14) and in the NT (Jn 6:39-44 ["Last Day"]; Acts 2:17; 2Tm 3:1; 2Pt 3:3).

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PUBLIC

3d stored up treasure Allusion to Jesus' teaching James' teaching may also be seen as a rewriting of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. (Mt 6:19; cf. Lk 12:33). Cf. also Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:15-21), where Jesus warns against storing up treasures for oneself, greediness, and neglecting God. **tex *voc *dev *chr *theo*

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4b which you kept back from them by fraud Justice for the workers The Torah explicitly condemns the exploitation of the hired worker, "You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your laborer" (Lv 19:13); "You shall not exploit a poor and needy hired servant, whether one of your own kindred or one of the resident aliens who live in your land, within your gates. On each day you shall pay the servant's wages before the sun goes down, since the servant is poor and is counting on them. Otherwise the servant will cry to the LORD against you, and you will be held guilty" (Dt 24:14-15 [G: 24:16-17]).

The prophetic and wisdom traditions of championing justice for the poor and weak also condemn defrauding workers of their wages; cf. Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5; Tob 4:14; Sir 34:26.

Two main points are made:

(1) **Payment should not be delayed**, since the wage-earner depends on prompt payments (Lv 10:13; Dt 24:14-15; Tob 4:14).

(2) **Payment should not be withheld completely**: Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5; Sir 34:26.

The parallel with Sir 34:22 is especially striking: "The one who takes away the means of living of his neighbor murders him; the one who fraudulently withholds the wages of a wage-earner sheds blood" (cf. Jas 5:6)

In Mal 3:5, the Lord himself will come as a witness against those that swear falsely in his name, those that defraud the wage-earner of his wages, and those that oppress widows and orphans (cf. Jas 1:27). **tex *voc *cul *ptes *jew *theo*

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23 Dec 2013 04:13:27

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4b cry out An urgent, prophetic witness and cry of the afflicted The cry of the workers carries several connotations.

Emotional cry. The Greek *krazō* connotes a deeply emotional cry: the cry of a woman in labor (Rv 12:2); Jesus' cry at this death (Mt 27:50).

An urgent prophetic message. It also connotes an urgent prophetic message: "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel... (Rom 9:27). Even inarticulate objects cry out: the stones themselves will cry out of Jesus' disciples are silent about his messianic identify (Lk 19:40). Similarly, the blood of the murdered Abel cries out, "the voice of your brother's blood cries to me out of the ground. (Gn 4:10); Genesis uses(cf. Jas 5:4c: the cries of the harvesters.

Cry of the afflicted. James may well have in mind a specific allusion to Dt 24:15 (G: 24:17), where the workers who did

not receive their pay promptly cry out to the LORD. The cry is also reminiscent of the cry of afflicted Israel, especially in Egypt (Ex 2:23; 3:7; Isa 19:20) **dev*

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4c Lord of Hosts Allusion to God's power to establish justice

The title for God renders the Hebrew $\text{YHWH } \text{çbâ'ôti}$ (Jo 6:17 (G); 1Sm 1:3; Hos 12:6; Zech 13:2; Isa 1:9). The original reference is debated: possibilities include the Lord's designation as Lord of Israel's armies, or armies of angels, or armies of stars (conceived as living beings).

The phrase connotes the Lord's power to establish justice for those who cry out to him. **chr*

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4c have reached the ears the Lord's judgment on oppressors

The parallel between Jas 5:1-6 and Isa 5:8-10 is striking. Isaiah first condemns those, "that join house to house, and add field to field, that they may take away something of their neighbor's" (Isa 5:8); this same drive to concentrate more land and wealth in the hands of fewer drove many into the work of the wage-earner. Isaiah then warns, "For these things have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (Isa 5:9). The Isaian oracle then pronounces a lengthy judgment on Israel.

The biblical tradition often records how the Lord hears the cry of the afflicted (Ex 3:7: the suffering of the people in Egypt; Ps 17:7 (G): the Psalmist is sure that his cry "will come into God's ears."

Ex 22:22-23 is a powerful expression of how the Lord hears and responds to the cry of the afflicted: "If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely listen to their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans."

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5b day of slaughter Allusion to the Day of Judgment James echoes Jeremiah's call to the Lord to bring judgment upon the wicked who are currently thriving: "set them apart for the day of slaughter" (12:3; cf. other prophetic images of slaughter associated with the Lord's eschatological judgment: Isa 32:1-6; 65:12; Jer 15.1-4; 19:6). The same image is found in *Enoch's* condemnation of the rich, "You have committed blasphemy and iniquity; and you have been prepared for the day of bloodshed and the day of darkness and the day of great judgment" (1 *En.* 94:9). ***interpl-6 **dev5b *bib1-6 **ptes1-6*

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Peritestamental Literature

1-6 Come now, you rich Judgment oracle *Enoch* also employs the genre of the judgment oracle against the rich, "Woe to you rich, for in your riches you have trusted; from your riches you will depart" (1 *En.* 94:8; cf. 94:6-8; 96:4-8). **gen *bib*

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4b which you held back from them by fraud Exploitation of workers Second Temple Jewish sources, drawing on Scripture, emphasize the importance of paying workers justly and promptly: Ps.-PHOCLIDES *Sent.* 19: "Give the laborer

his pay, do not afflict the poor." In the TESTAMENT OF JOB, Job alludes to his fulfillment of Lv 19:13, "Nor did I allow the wage earner's pay to remain at home with me in my house"; this is one sign of his piety and concern for the poor. **tex *voc *cul *bib *jew *theo*

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5a lived a life of indulgence Vice of indulgence The Hellenistic Jewish tradition understands indulgence as a vice. Specific examples include children who ignore their parents' discipline and indulge their passions (PHILO *Spec.* 2.240); those living luxuriously and excessively in royal chambers (T. *Jos.* 9.2). **voc *cul *ptes *chr*

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RECEPTION

Comparison of Versions

5b hearts S reads "bodies" for "hearts," apparently to make sense of the odd expression "feed your hearts"; cf. the reading *tas sarkas* in Codex Athous Lavrensis and some miniscules. **tex*

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5c day of slaughter allusion to feasting V reads, "You have feasted upon the earth, and in luxury fed your hearts on the day of slaughter." V apparently follows the tradition of interpreting "day of slaughter" as a day of feasting (so *Glossa Ordinaria*, ERASMUS [*Par.*] and CALVIN [*Comm. Jas.*]), not as the eschatological Day of Judgment. **chr*

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Jewish Tradition

4b which you held back from them by fraud The rabbinic tradition clarifies the rights of workers to receive their wages in a timely manner, commenting on Lv 19:13 and Dt 24:14-15 (see *m. B. Mezi'a* 9:11; *b. B. Mezi'a* 110a). **tex *voc *cul *bib *ptes *theo*

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Christian Tradition

1-6 Parallel warning to the rich in Hermas The *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Vis.* 3.9) offers a close parallel to the basic themes of Jas 5:1-6. In *Hermas*, it is clear that the rich are part of the church community.

"do not take an overabundance of God's creations for yourselves, but share with those in need. For those who enjoy many kinds of food make their flesh weak and harm it; but the flesh of those without enough food is harmed by lack of proper nourishment, and their body wastes away....Consider the judgment that is coming....take heed, you who exult in your wealth, lest those in need complain and their complaint rises up to the Lord...And so now I say to you who lead the church and sit in its chief seats...you have grown calloused and refuse to cleanse your hearts" (3.9.2-8).

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1-6 you rich Identity of the rich A basic exegetical question is to determine the identity of the rich. The tradition offers the following suggestions:

(1) Identifying the rich in 5:1-6 with the rich in Jas 2:1-7 (BEDE (*Comm. Jas.*), HESYCHIUS (*apud. Catena*)).

(2) The rich are the wealthy and powerful Jewish forces in Jerusalem (presumably high priests or Sadducees) who condemned Jesus to death: BEDE (*Comm. Jas.*), OECUMENIUS (*Comm. Jas.*); THEOPHYLACT (*Comm. Jas.*). This latter reading takes "the just one" of 5:6 as Jesus.

(3) Generic reference to the rich (CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*); ERASMUS (*Par.*); *Catenawhich* includes this passage under the heading: "Concerning greediness of the rich, and their luxury, and the righteous judgment of God."

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1 Come now, you rich *Chance for repentance?* Do the rich still have a chance to repent their sins?

(1) CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*) understands the passage as an oracle of judgment (**gen*), thus the rich have no chance at repentance; their condemnation is prophetically announced.

(2) HILARY OF ARLES (*Tract. Jas.*) takes the phrase as a call to repentance: "Come now, while there is still time for penitence."

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3b testimony against you *Hoarding, not sharing one's wealth*

An influential exegetical tradition takes the rust as a sign that the rich have not used their wealth to do good, but have simply stored it up uselessly. James is thus not making a general condemnation of gathering wealth, rather James condemns the rich for not using their wealth to do good, "as aids and helps to human life" (CALVIN [*Comm. Jas.*] or as alms that could have been given to the poor (BEDE [*Comm. Jas.*]; OECUMENIUS [*Comm. Jas.*]; ERASMUS [*Par.*]).

CAESARIUS OF ARLES admits, "I blame and rebuke myself because several times it has accidentally happened that through carelessness garments of mine, which the poor should have received, were eaten by moths. Thus I am afraid that my very clothing will be brought forward as evidence on the day of judgment, according to what the apostle James frightfully exclaims" (*Serm.* 199.5). Similarly the *Catena*.**interp1-6 *voc *gra *dev *chr *theo*

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3c eat your flesh like fire *Fires of hell* BEDE (*Comm. Jas.*) and HILARY of Arles (*Comm. Jas.*) apply this to the torments that the rich will suffer in hell. BEDE refers to outward suffering of hell fire and the inward suffering of regret that the rich will feel for not having given their money in alms to the poor.
***voc *dev *bib *chr *isl*

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4a workers who have harvested your fields *Allegorical reading* BAR SALIBI (*Comm. Jas.*) reads this allegorically: the harvesters are the apostles and teachers who collect from the fields (the souls of humans) the seed planted by demons and heretical teachings; the wage is a true faith with doing of works.

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4c Lord of Hosts *God's power to establish justice* BEDE (*Comm.*

Jas.) comments that James calls God the "Lord of Hosts," to terrify those who think the poor have no protector," citing Ps 10:14 [9:35 V] and Jb 35:13 as evidence of the Lord's help of the poor.

Generally, the term is understood to signify the Lord's power to establish justice (HILARY OF ARLES (*Tract. Jas.*); CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*)).

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5a life of indulgence and luxury *Call for moderation* *Hermas* also combines the verbs *truphaô* and *spatalaô* to describe a well-fed flock of sheep, an allegory for those who follow the "angel of indulgence and deceit" (*Sim.* 6.1.6-6.2.2).

CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*) finds that James does not condemn wealth *per se*, but an extravagant and wasteful use of wealth. Rather the Lord calls for moderation. CHRYSOSTOM (*apud. Catena*) also sees the passage as a condemnation of excess.

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5c day of slaughter *Differing interpretations* Distinct interpretations of this verse emerge in the tradition.

(1) **Allusion to feasting (Passover?)**. The "day of slaughter" is taken to allude to the slaughter of an animal for feasting. The feasting is understood as one aspect of the indulgent life of the rich (*Glossa Ordinaria*, ERASMUS (*Par.*) and CALVIN (*Comm. Jas.*)).

BEDE and the *Glossa Ordinaria* read "On the day of slaughter" with verse 6: "On the day of slaughter you have condemned and killed the just one..." They may allude specifically to the Passover feast. HILARY OF ARLES (*Comm. Jas.*) understands the "day of slaughter" as the "day of the cross," i.e., Jesus' crucifixion.

(2) **Destruction of Jerusalem**. OECUMENIUS (*Comm. Jas.*) perceives it as God's judgment of the Jews: Roman destruction of Jerusalem, understood as a punishment of "the Jews" for their crimes against the poor and above all for their killing of Jesus. **comp*

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✧ Liturgies ✧

1-6 In the current Roman Catholic lectionary, the epistle reading for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time is Jas 5:1-6.

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✧ Theology ✧

3b testimony against you *Catholic Social Teaching* Many commentators understood this verse as condemning the hoarding of wealth (**chr*); this reading accords with several principles of Catholic social doctrine.

Universal desination of goods. The Church clearly defends the right to private property (*Gaudium et spes* 71; *Centesimus Annus*30). But based on the principle of the "universal destination of goods," (*Gaudium et spes* 69) the rich have no absolute right to do with their wealth as they wish. Church tradition "has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone" (POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Laborem exercens* 14).

Solidarity. The principle of solidarity also applies: wealthier individuals, as well as wealthier nations, should show their solidarity with the poor through a sharing of resources (CCC 1939-41; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 332-34).

Preferential option for the poor. The principle of the universal destination of goods, together with the principle of solidarity, requires that the poor "should be the focus of particular attention" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of Church* 182; 449)

Thus the wealthy have a responsibility to assist the poor. POPE PAUL VI taught, "He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" Everyone knows that the Fathers of the Church laid down the duty of the rich toward the poor in no uncertain terms. As St. Ambrose put it: "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich." (*Populorum Progressio* 23; cf. LEO XIII *Rerum Novarum*, 36; Pope Paul VI *Octogesima Adveniens*23). ***interp1-6 *voc *gra *dev *chr*

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4a wages of the workers just wage The *Catechism* (2434) references Jas 5:4 in noting that it can be a "grave injustice" to refuse or withhold a just wage. The just wage is defined as "the legitimate

fruit of work." In determining a just wage, "both the needs and the contribution of each person must be taken into account." Vatican Council II teaches that, "Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural, and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good" (*GS* 67.2)

The Church also recognizes the right to rest, the right to decent working conditions, the right to a pension and old age insurance, and the right to unemployment benefits (JOHN PAUL II, *Laborem Exercens*18-19; *Compendium* 301).

Finally, the Church recognizes the worker's right to form unions and the right to strike (JOHN PAUL II, *Laborem exercens* 20; CCC2435). **cul*

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Islam

3d stored up treasure Eschatological judgment The *QURAN* (Sura 104:1-6) also knows of an impending eschatological judgment on those who store up wealth: "Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and back-biter, Who piles up wealth and lays it by, counting (penny by penny) Thinking that his wealth would make him last forever! By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into that which breaks into pieces...the Fire of (the Wrath) of Allah." **tex *voc *cul *bib *ptes *jew *theo*

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