

# Faith Perceives

## Lesson for Sunday, January 7, 2024

### INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ We have made it to the final chapter of James! That means a new Bible verse: James 5:8. Read the verse together.
  - The chief subject of chapter 5 is the coming judgment of God.
  - In today's lesson (vs. 1-6) we will see a warning to those who trust their riches and not the Lord.
  - The rest of the chapter (vs. 7-20) are final instructions to Christians on how they are to persevere until the Lord returns.
- ⇒ Question: How much money does someone need to have to be rich? *Allow for some discussion and then consider these stats:*
  - If you make \$50,000 a year, you are in the richest 1.8% of the global population.
  - The poverty line in the US is \$14,580. That group (poor by our standards) is in the richest 14.3% of the global population. That means they have more money than 85.7% of the world.
  - How does that reality hit you? *Allow for some discussion...*
- ⇒ In today's text, James strongly warns the rich in this world. Often, we think of the rich as those Hollywood and Fortune 500 folks. But when we get a global perspective, we must remember that James is warning you and me!

### BIBLE STUDY:

1. Context
  - a. James's words in these verses are the strongest and harshest language in the entire book. He is emphasizing the fact that the judgment of God is coming soon.
  - b. Look at some of James's word choices:
    - i. Vs. 1: "Your miseries that shall come upon you..."
    - ii. Vs. 3: "the last days..."
    - iii. Vs. 5: "a day of slaughter..."
  - c. James is emphasizing God's end-time judgment, and it continues into vs. 7-9.
  - d. James is saying, "Get right! Jesus is coming back! And when Jesus returns He is going to do two specific things..."
2. Jesus is Coming to Judge the Sinful (vs. 1-6)
  - a. Most Bible scholars seem to believe that these first six verses are addressed to unbelievers. This is based on James's language.
  - b. They are told to "weep and howl for your miseries" (vs. 1). This is language that is similar to what the prophets would use to pronounce judgment on pagan nations.
  - c. Why would James address unbelievers? He is reminding the Christians that the justice of God is coming. This reality should enable them to be patient (vs. 7).
  - d. James brings four accusations against the unbelieving rich.
  - e. First, the rich will be judged for hoarding wealth (vs. 2-3).
    - i. The rich were storing away their wealth in barns (to borrow from Jesus), and James says that all that money and all those possessions is rotting.
    - ii. You think you are wise in your investments, but they are wasting away.
    - iii. The very things that we think will provide everything we need is wasting away.
    - iv. ILL: Discuss the booming business of storage facilities in our area. We have so much stuff we have to pay to keep it somewhere! Is James's warning applicable to us today? Remember: You can't take it with you!
  - f. Second, the rich will be judged for cheating workers (vs. 4).

- i. In James's day, there was a concentration of land in the hands of small numbers of wealthy landowners. It was not uncommon for their workers to struggle severely for their daily sustenance.
    - ii. The rich were accumulating wealth while others around them were dying. Does that ever happen today? Is this applicable to our culture?
  - g. Third, the rich will be judged for living in self-indulgence (vs. 5).
    - i. Look at the imagery in verse 5. These rich people were like cattle gorging on food on the day of their slaughter.
    - ii. Don't miss the application! Don't be like a cow! Don't spend your days enjoying all your stuff, unaware that we're about to be destroyed! Don't be overfed and unconcerned.
    - iii. Discuss: What is a better way for us to steward our riches?
  - h. Fourth, the rich will be judged for condemning men (vs. 6).
    - i. In the Jewish world, to deprive a person of their support was the same as murdering them.
    - ii. Often, we are surrounded by needs and legitimate needy people. Are they even on our radar? Do we care? Do we consider what we may be able to do?
    - iii. James's warning is aimed at unbelievers, but we would be wise to stop and think about this ourselves.
    - iv. James is not condemning wealth. But he is warning us to consider how put to use the wealth and resources that God has given to us to steward.
- 3. Jesus is Coming to Deliver the Faithful (vs. 7).
  - a. This will be the heart of our study next week in our final lesson in this series.
  - b. But put yourself in the shoes of the original audience who were struggling, persecuted Christians.
  - c. You hear the Word of God toward the unbelieving rich, and you know that Jesus is coming to judge the sinful, but even better, He is coming to deliver the faithful.
  - d. James's offensive words to unbelievers brought great comfort to the Christians.
  - e. We often live in a world where the righteous suffer and the evil men flourish. Remember that Jesus is coming, and the Lord of Hosts will make it right forever. This is our hope!

#### APPLICATION/DISCUSSION:

- ⇒ How do we develop the right perspective regarding our wealth? There is a balance between saving and giving it all away. We often criticize those who never save. Is there a danger in saving too much?
- ⇒ Often, we don't help the needy because we are cynical that they really are in need. How do we determine genuine needs and when we ought to help from the people we shouldn't?
- ⇒ How good are we at living with the coming judgment of God in our minds? What difference should that make in the way we live on a daily basis?