

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**A0747 – November 25, 2007 – Jas 5:4-6 – Eschatological Day Of Slaughter**

Okay, we're closing out the body of the letter today in James 5:1-6 so that all we'll have left is the epilogue in 5:7-20. We've been working with trials, persecution and suffering and how to respond as regenerate creatures to such things. This book is written to regenerate people and how they should deal with trials. Before we were regenerate we were in Adam, conceived in sin, born with a sin nature and a part of the world system which is anti-God. At a point in time, by God's grace, you heard the gospel, that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead. When you believe in Christ and Christ alone then you are imputed Christ's righteousness (justification) and given eternal life (regeneration). At that point you are no longer in Adam but in Christ, you are no longer looked upon as a sinner but as righteous and you are eternally secure; nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. But we are infants in Christ and when God called us out by His grace He did not intend that we remain infants. He wants us to grow into mature adults. That process of growth over time is what we often call "sanctification". One of the mechanisms God uses to stimulate growth toward mature adulthood is trials, sufferings, persecutions. No pain no gain we might say. What He wants us to do is study and apply Bible doctrine in the midst of trials, sufferings and persecutions, not using pagan coping strategies but biblical coping strategies, that's basically what James is about. And he gives us three DVP responses or coping strategies to cultivate. Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. The first sermon is about being quick to hear and it's in 1:21-2:26. The second sermon is about being slow to speak and it's in 3:1-18. The third sermon is about being slow to anger and it's in 4:1-5:6. We're studying the third sermon and in this sermon James is warning us about the dangers of worldliness. How, when we look out at the world and we see the power, position, privileges, control and wealth of the world it's

tempting to pursue these things the way the world pursues these things, in our own strength, at the expense of others and this means we fail the trial because it causes anger, strife and bitterness. This is not the Christian way. So, that's what he's arguing, in particular, in 5:1-6 he's making the argument about pursuing riches and it's a very interesting argument because he uses the method of an OT prophet where he takes a look at the demise of the other side. So, you've got the unbelieving world and they are pursuing all this wealth and it's tempting for us to want that wealth until we consider the misery that will come upon them in the Tribulation and the end of all human wealth in eschatological Babylon. Logically, as Christians, we should not partake of such sins. Today we have a real challenge living in an American culture. We are wealthy, extremely wealthy, and many of you have lived from the depression of 1929 till today and you've seen the progress, you've seen how far we've come economically in the last 80 years and it's tempting to fall into the trap of wanting all that, pursuing all that to no end. It's the keep up with the Jones' mentality. And it's very sad because we were once a great nation. We were great because we worshipped God but now we worship wealth. So, I want to continue with this theme in James 5:4-6, the end of human wealth, the temporal-ness of human wealth.

**James 5:4-6** Ἴδου, ὁ μισθὸς τῶν ἐργατῶν τῶν ἀμησάντων τὰς χώρας ὑμῶν, ὁ ἀπεστερημένος ἀφ' ὑμῶν, κράζει· καὶ αἱ βοαὶ τῶν θερισάντων εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου Σαβαώθ εἰσεληλύθασιν. <sup>5</sup>Ἐτρυφήσατε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐσπαταλήσατε· ἐθρέψατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς.

<sup>6</sup>Κατεδικάσατε, ἐφονεύσατε τὸν δίκαιον· οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν. **(BYZ)**

**James 5:4-6** Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you stole, cries out from you, and the shouts of the harvesters have reached into the ears of the Lord of Armies. <sup>5</sup>You lived for pleasure and luxury upon the earth; you fed your heart in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You pronounced guilty, you murdered the righteous; he does not resist you. **(Author's Translation)**

**James 5:4-6** 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 Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup>You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you. **(NASB95)**

**Behold**, now, this is a word (Gk *idou*) James uses to grab attention. It's a marker of strong emphasis that could be translated "Look", "See" or "Listen" used to enliven a narrative. Listen here you rich of the latter days, he's saying, "the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you stole, cries out from you, and the shouts of the harvesters have reached into the ears of the Lord of Armies. <sup>5</sup>You lived for pleasure and luxury upon the earth; you fed your heart in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You pronounced guilty, you murdered the righteous; he does not resist you." So, this is a warning against a very exploitative method of getting rich, stealing from the poor because we can never get enough, we've got to have more and more and more. They became wealthy unjustly as James says; **the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you.** This is a violation of the principle that "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Tim 5:18). The word **pay** or "wages" is the Greek word *misthos*. It is the word we often translate as "reward" when we talk of the Judgment Seat of Christ; what we earn for doing good deeds in the body (1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 5:10). Here it is what a person earns for doing work. After a long days work you expect payment for your labor. The principle that the laborer is worthy of his wages is ancient, rooted in the OT. Turn to Deut 24:15. This is in the context of the Mosaic Law given to the nation of Israel. And what we have is a poor man, someone who has to go out each day and look for work, he doesn't have a steady job and employers sometimes tend to cheat these people because they don't have full time jobs, they won't be around tomorrow. And here a poor man has worked all day and the Lord says, "You shall give him his wages on his day [of work] before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you." (also cf Lev 19:13). He's depending on it for physical survival so its sin, its theft not to give him his wages. The principle is also found in the NT in 1 Tim 5:17-18. Here you have a paragraph on elders and the principle that if an elder works hard, especially at preaching and teaching then his labor is worthy of compensation. He says, "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup>For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." So, this principle stands now as well as then. It will also stand in the future Tribulation when it will be very difficult to make a living for many people. People will either be very rich or very poor.

The rich will exploit the poor to become richer but this injustice will be dealt with by Christ.

The workers **work** but the rich withhold their pay. The words **has been withheld by you** are a single Greek word which literally means “to steal, to rob”. Normally when we think of stealing we think of breaking into someone’s house or car and taking things but one form of theft is simply not paying what is due. For example, did you realize that every time you receive a paycheck an act of theft has occurred? Federal withholding. You worked for the money, what gives them the right to take it before you even see it? It’s a legalized form of stealing; it’s immoral; it’s been mandatory since 1943. Before that they only used it for a few years during the Civil War and during WWI, but now it’s become a permanent fixture. The government used a lot of propaganda in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to influence people into thinking that paying income tax was a privilege and expression of patriotism. Disney did a film in 1942 called *The New Spirit* which one author called “the crown jewel of tax propaganda.” It’s legalized theft. It’s a corrupt system. And James’ point here is that when someone works and doesn’t get paid theft has occurred. Mal 3:5 says when the Lord draws near for judgment He will be a swift witness “against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages”. Our government does just that. Withholding pay for labor is theft plain and simple.

Now, James says the pay the workers deserved **cries out**, it calls out in a loud voice. And it’s a present tense, the pay continually **cries out**. It’s an odd expression. How can a workers pay cry out? What we have is a figure of speech quite common in Scripture. For example, in Gen 4:10 God says Abel’s blood was crying out to Him from the ground. Or when Jesus said that if His disciples become silent “the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40). The point here is that God knows about their theft and it will be righted in the Day of Judgment. The Day of Judgment in this context is the final battle of Armageddon. Note how the NASB says the pay **cries out against you**. See the italics. That means the word **against** is not in the original text. What it literally says is **cries out from you**, that is, the thief. What does that mean that the pay cries out from the thief? It means that the pay they owed is on their conscience; their conscience has been violated and is screaming out; they know withholding wages is theft. The conscience is like a witness that is bearing witness against them, crying out for justice (Rom 2:15). All men have

a conscience and that conscience is like a tape recorder, it records all your thoughts and can be brought up at the judgment as evidence. **and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.** In other words, not only do the wages cry out but also the workers who harvested. This goes back to Deut 24:15, “You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.” Harvesting is seasonal work (Lev 23:10; 1 Sam 8:12) and when they did not get paid they cried out to God for justice and the cries reached the Lord. The verb **has reached** is a perfect voice which means they reached Him with the effect that they remain with Him. He won't forget. Divine justice is perfect justice so that the more they do this the more they are storing up wrath for themselves, accumulating judgment. Literally it says these cries **reached into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth**, into the inner ear where the mind decodes the sound waves. Obviously God is Spirit and does not have physical **ears** but this is anthropomorphic language meant to communicate the concept, yet if man were not made in God's image then this description wouldn't mean anything to us. So, the human language about God is God's way of condescending to man so that we can understand that God knows about these injustices. Note the title **Lord of Sabaoth**, not “sabbath”, but **Sabaoth**. This is an important title so let's break it down into its parts. The first word **Lord** is the Greek word *kurios*. Anytime we find this word in reference to a divine person it is the equivalent of the Hebrew YHWH. So, it is a divine title. Whoever **Lord** refers to here is God. He's not 'a god' or 'like God' but He is God (also cf Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8; 1 John 5:20; John 1:1; et. al.). All three members of the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit share an equality of essence. Father, Son and Spirit are God. One is not greater than the other in nature or being or essence. Here, the Son, Jesus Christ is **Lord**, not the Father or the Spirit. We can tell this from vv 7-8 and Rev 19. So, when we find this divine title referring to Jesus it means He is God and I do not think that a person can be saved if they do not believe that Jesus is God because only God can save and if Jesus is just a man then he cannot save. So, the Jesus a person must believe in to be saved is God and nothing less. Not only is **Lord** a divine title it also means that He is a “sovereign, a master” over some realm. That realm here is the angelic realm as we'll discuss in a minute. So here Jesus is called **Lord** and that means He is a sovereign master over the angelic realm. What is He Lord of? **Of Sabaoth**. What is **Sabaoth**? **Sabaoth** is a Hebrew word carried over into the Greek. It means

“Armies”. Jesus Christ is the Lord of Armies, namely the angelic armies, sometimes called the “Lord of Hosts”. Virtually every context this title is used in is a war context (cf 1 Sam 15:2; Isa 1:9; 2:12; 5:9; 6:3). The Greek LXX translates this word with *pantokrator*, the word used in the NT to describe YHWH’s omnipotence, we say God is “Mighty” or “All-Powerful” and that’s a part of Jesus Christ being the Lord of Armies. He’s the “all-powerful” Master of Armies. It’s also closely associated with God’s holiness which is the standard by which He makes war against those who oppose Him (Isa 6:3). Clearly the use of this title in James 5:4 is another proof that what’s being discussed is a great end-times battle led by the Lord of Armies, Jesus Christ. This has Rev 19 written all over it so turn over to Rev 19:11. In this passage we see what will happen on the day of Christ’s Second Coming, this is “the great and terrible day of the Lord”, clearly a war context. Christ’s robe is dipped in blood, these are His Holy War garments, His battle garments, and on this day will be the greatest battle ever, the removal of human systems and the establishment of a Theocracy. The armies of the antichrist will have gathered against the Lord and His Anointed (Ps 2) to go to war. Now, according to verse 11-13 Jesus Christ is leading the attack. And who is with Him? Verse 14, “And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses.” So, with Him are His armies, namely the angels, signified here by the white horses and the Church victorious who were dressed in the fine white linen garments in the previous verses (cf 19:19). However, we can’t read this fuller revelation of armies back into James. James did not know about the Church victorious being a part of the Lord’s armies. All throughout the OT the Lord’s armies refers to the angels, various ranks and divisions of Christ’s armies, the angels were created in various ranks and divisions. So, when James says Lord of Sabaoth he means that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Master of the Angelic Armies that will make war in the last days against those who did not pay the laborer his wages. This is also taught over in 2 Thess 1:6-10. Turn there. “For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup>dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup>when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.” So,

James is just making the polemic that Christians should not behave like those who chase wealth to the degree that they rip off poor laborers.

Verse 5, **You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.** These are three aorist verbs looking at their lives from the standpoint of their completion, as a totality. First, **You have lived luxuriously** (*truphao*) is better translated “You lived for pleasure”. They did not live for God but for pleasure that can be enjoyed because of their wealth. Second, **and led a life of wanton pleasure** (*spatalao*) is better translated “and you lived luxuriously”, no expense was spared. One author suggests that the word *spatalao* comes from *spao* which means “to suck something in” so that what James is saying here is they sucked life dry so to speak, trying everything, doing everything the world has to offer. They live as if this world is all that exists and that God does not exist. Third, **you have fattened your hearts.** The word **fattened** (*trepho*) usually refers to the food used to nourish a baby or animals but here it is used negatively as having an excessive amount of food and drink to sustain physical life. Turn to Ps 104:15 where this word is used in the LXX. “And wine which makes man’s heart glad, So that he may make *his* face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man’s heart.” The **heart** here and in James is referring to the center and source of physical life. We have to have food and drink to stay physically alive. They have an abundance. If you remember, early in the Tribulation the economy starts to crumble and only the very wealthy will be able to purchase food and wine (Rev 6:5-6). But by the end of the Tribulation, the global economy under the Antichrist will be on the rise for the wealthy and they will have abundance (Rev 18). They are very foolish for they do this **in a day of slaughter**, another end times statement, clearly referring to the final battle of Armageddon in Rev 19 where the greatest slaughter of mankind will occur. It’s the Greek word *sphage* and means “a blood bath, a massacre”. The final battle of Armageddon is Holy War and when God goes to war in Holy War the enemy is totally annihilated. This is exactly what is described in Rev 19:20-21, “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. <sup>21</sup>And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.” It’s a total annihilation.

So, all they did is fill their life with pleasures and their end is a great slaughter. Also you could look at passages like Rev 14:9-10 and 16 for very vivid pictures of the blood bath.

In verse 6 we see the saints behavior during the Tribulation as they are persecuted by these wealthy crooks. **You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you. You have condemned** (*katadikazo*) or better “pronounced guilty”, a legal word implying some judicial procedure in which they pronounce **the righteous man** “guilty” and then **put him to death** (*phoneuo*) or better, “murder”. This is the word used in the Ten Commandments where it says “You shall not murder”, that is, take life innocently. Clearly the court system in the Tribulation is unjust and unlawful. One of the titles of the Antichrist is “the lawless one” (2 Thess 2:8). The Bible makes a difference between “killing” and “murdering”. Murdering is the taking of innocent life. Killing is protecting the innocent from murderers and is valid for personal as well as national protection. Here, this is murder. They unlawfully condemned someone who was not unrighteous but righteous, **the righteous man. Righteous** here refers not to positional righteousness which all believers have by virtue of the legal declaration of God at the moment of faith alone but to experiential righteousness, behavior that conforms to a standard of law. For example, of Noah in Gen 6:9 it says, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time, Noah walked with God.” There’s a movement to this word, an upright walk with God. That’s what James has in mind; the experience of a believer walking uprightly with God, walking justly with God, walking fairly with God. So, these people in the end times will murder believers who are just, upright and fair, believers who have done nothing to deserve capital punishment. Despite his innocence what is his response? **He does not resist**. Now, take into consideration a few things here. The word **resist** (*antitassomai*) is a military word and it means “to meet in battle, to range in battle against”, it’s a hostile stance. He does not do this, he let’s them pronounce him guilty and murder him. Keep in mind that this is a Tribulation context but I don’t really think it matters either way. We all wonder, “What should we do if our government turns unlawful?” On the one hand we are told to obey our civil authorities because they are appointed by God. On the other hand if they are unlawful should we still obey them? In this case it’s obvious what the righteous response is. To **not resist** but to willingly die for the faith. Paul, Peter, most of the apostles died as Christian



martyrs under the corrupt tyrannical human government of Rome. People die every day as Christian martyrs at the hands of corrupt human governments. In the Tribulation you will have the most corrupt form of human government ever in human history run by the most corrupt person ever to walk the face of the earth, the Antichrist. Rev 14:12-13 says, “<sup>12</sup>Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

<sup>13</sup>And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.” So, we resolve the tension this way. On one hand you have to obey your civil authorities (Rom 13) but on the other hand if they command you to disobey something God has said you have to obey God not men (Acts 5:29) and suffer the temporal consequences. This is your testimony. If you come under persecution and do not endure it but try to escape it then there is no testimony. We are indeed called to suffer with Him and if we love Him we will indeed suffer with Him (Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29). As Tertullian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” Is this really true? Does the church only grow on the basis of shed blood? “If martyrdom is not essential to the growth of the Church, then the Church might advance just as well, even better, without it. But if the blood of the martyrs truly is the seed of the Church, then without it, the Church does not grow.” It seems from a cursory reading of Scripture that Tertullian was right. Jesus Christ came to shed His blood that we might live. Without the shedding of His blood there is no eternal redemption. But what about the shedding of our blood? What about Christian martyrdom? Is that necessary for the church to grow? Turn to Col 1:21-24, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.” The obvious question is “What could be lacking in Christ’s afflictions that Paul by suffering could fill up? What more can be done than the finished work of Christ on the cross? It cannot mean that what Christ did on the cross is unfinished, insufficient for eternal salvation? What then can it mean but that Paul is teaching us that, just as Christ’s death was necessary and sufficient to *accomplish* redemption; so the suffering and martyrdom of his witnesses is necessary and sufficient to carry out to the nations the *application* of that substitutionary, life-giving accomplishment of Christ. In other words, Christ *had to* suffer in order to purchase our eternal life; and now we as his witnesses *have to* suffer in order to spread the effects of that fully-accomplished redemption. Without suffering and martyrdom, the great

effects of Christ's great success will never be fully realized. We are graced with the ministry of a *necessary*, bloody witness to the nations, so that people from every people, tribe, tongue, and nation, might be gathered together to God. By God's design, the blood of his Son is the only source of life for the Church; but the blood of the martyrs is the seed by which the Church grows. It is the blood of the martyrs that gives an undeniably powerful testimony of the truth of Christ's life, joy, and peace, operative no matter how adverse the circumstances. It is the willing, joyful self-sacrifice of the martyrs that God uses as the primary means of evangelizing the lost and dying regions of a world opposed to him. Their suffering, which is a following in the footsteps of Christ's suffering, is God's chosen means for delivering the good news of Christ Jesus to them. The blood of the martyrs truly is the seed of the Church. So, here we have a man who suffers unjustly in the courts of law and is murdered. His blood will only further the reach of the gospel during the Tribulation so that the good news and the power of the gospel will be realized in the lives of others. The humans that carry out his murder are guilty of blood and will be judged but God uses this evil for good. Indeed God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God (Rom 8:28).

Okay, so once again, in James 5:1-6 he's warning them against the dangers of worldliness, the keep up with the Jones' mentality. And he's arguing that we, who have been called out of the world, should not seek riches autonomously like the world, lest we be like the end times unbelievers who have stored up all this wealth and will be slaughtered. You cannot worship both God and wealth. Worldly wealth is not where it's at. And it's one or the other. Everyone worships one or the other. Friday was ridiculous. There were stores opening at 4am in Lubbock for the biggest shopping day of the year. Christmas has become a joke in America. Rather than being a time of spiritual worship it's become a time of material worship. This is a deception and we as Christians should lead the charge in returning to a true view of Christmas with Christ at the center and not some fringe benefit. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), not in this world. And it's very difficult to keep your eyes off the world and on Christ. But you can't take any of this world with you. So, this is a polemic to not get caught up and carried away by the things of this world. In the next few verses he will continue to challenge us to live godly lives in the present age in light of Christ's any moment coming and to give us examples of those who lived godly in the midst of suffering situations like Job.

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