

The Temptation and Temporary Nature of Wealth

James 5:1-6

James 5:1–6 (NKJV)

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.

Introduction

If there has ever been a culture that epitomizes what it means to be materialistic and seekers of wealth, it is our culture. We are consumed by it in many respects. Many believe that success is the possession of things or that life consist in the things you possess. The more things you have, the more successful and happy you are. The more money you have, the happier you will be.

For some, the very meaning of life is wrapped in the package of possession and wealth. This is not a new problem that only 21century Americans have struggled with. This has always been a problem and will be until the Lord returns. As long as there are humans in a fallen condition on this planet there will always those who focus on the temporary, the physical and accumulation of wealth.

The root of this problem is sin, of course, but the way that sin fleshes itself out, is found in a number of scriptures.

First, would be the immediate context, where we we those the presume to have the ability to plan there wealth and to live long enough to accomplish it.

James 4:13–16 (NKJV)

¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

So many believe that they actually control their life. There is not acknowledgement or willing submission to the will of God. It is about me, me and more me. What I want and what I desire with no recognition of desire for the will of God.

You may go to a city, You may be able to make a profit, but you have no assurance of tomorrow.
NONE.

Luke 12:16–20 (NKJV)

The Five Foolish “I Wills” of the Rich Man

¹⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “**The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.**

¹⁷ **And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’** ¹⁸ So

he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

Luke 12:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

The rich man thought he had control over his future.

A number of the "I wills" in the text are Future tense. He assumed He would be around to enjoy his wealth.

What he didn't realize is what a lot of people, even christians, don't realize.

You have not control over the length of your life
And you don't own anything.

Luke 12:20 (LSB)

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you prepared?'

Answer --NOT YOU!

You do realize that you don't own anything...right? You may say, "I finally paid off my house... I finally own it". No, not really... Try not paying your annual property taxes.

You may have a house that if valued at \$200,000, but if you don't pay your \$1200 annual property tax, they will seize your property and sell it to the highest bidder.

The same with you car.

You might say, well, at least I have my clothes and food that I own. No, In one storm or as the Maui residents found out, God can take all of that away in an instant. You need to hold on to the things you have with a loose grip. All that you have and even your life is on lease agreement with God and he holds all the terms of the lease.

You may have heard of the goal of the World leaders that by 2030, "You will own nothing and be happy."

[Klaus Schwab](#), the infamous leader of the WEF (World Economic Forum), who bears a [striking semblance to Dr. Evil](#), proclaimed in [2016](#): "You'll own nothing and you'll be happy."

While some write off the concern for the WEF's agenda as nothing more than the rants of conspiracy theorists, Schwab's words are less prophetic than they are an inevitable outcome of orchestrated urban planning. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/realestate/forget-owning-a-home-is-the-future-moving-toward-owning-nothing/ar-AA1fsLqd>

What ever you think of this at this time is not the point. But you do need to pay attention. Watch and be sober.

Have you noticed the trend. Like the ownership of content. It is getting easier and easier not to be in possession of things. i.e, books, movies, documentaries, Seminary teaching, educational courses.

They are all becoming digital. Online streaming services have grown to replace the actual possession of a movie or a educational lesson.

We used to have books. Physical, tangible written books. Now we have electronic books that are read to you. Entire Bible study resources are all online and in the cloud.

Movies used to be VHS, DVD.... physical tangible, repeatable. But now it is wholly digital, streamable and offsite. You don't own the movie, you rent rights to the movie.

Cars and trucks now have expiration dates. Did you know that... Your car will expire.

More and more housing is rentable space. Less headache of ownership.

Your own health and the determination of what medications you will receive is rapidly becoming not something you control. Someone else makes those decisions for you.

So not only do you not own anything from God's perspective, and from the taxable perspective, but more and more we are lining up to rent.

It is a good reminder from Jesus,

Luke 12:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And He said to them, **“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life**

does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

Not only do we not have control of our accumulation of wealth and our continued ownership of that wealth,

But we are building our bigger barns on a planet that will be destroyed.

1 John 2:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

All that you build will be destroyed. All that you buy will decay. We are living in a fallen world affected by the decreed 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. The Law of decay and the decreed coming judgment, which will consume this world with fire.

There is nothing wrong with having a house, a car a saving account, a retirement account. But all

these things need to be seen through the lens of eternity and the brevity of life.

We also need to be thinking long term and so much short term.

Jesus said at the end of the parable of the rich man who stored up foolishly not regarding his soul could be taken at any moment,

Luke 12:21 (NKJV)

²¹ “So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Matthew 6:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

You would be surprised as to how many in a local church congregation give no thought to this verse.

Giving to the ministry is a secondary issue to them or even not an issue.

No priority or thought is given to it at all.

And when it comes to estate planning or retirement planning. It is highly likely that God, his church and his kingdom are even considered. We will waste untold thousands of dollars on things but will give very little thought to eternity.

What you invest in here will vanish. What you invest in for the kingdom of God will last forever.

We have a stand out in the foyer from Grace to You that at the moment I set it up, came full of booklets from John MacArthurs sermons in print. The stand and the booklets where given to our church for free, with the promise of free refills. Well all the booklets where taken within a couple of weeks. I have since contacted them, and they said, they have been so overwhelmed, but they are trying to get free refills of the booklets out as soon as possible.

How did this happen. How could you open the door to 1000's of churches to offer a free stand with free booklets, to be refilled forever for free?

Someone willed a huge amount of money to the church to be used that way.

This is laying up treasure in Heaven. This is giving for something that last.

The lowest if found was 5% of churchgoers tithe

While a majority of evangelicals say tithing — giving 10% of one's income to the church — is a **biblical commandment**, only an estimated 13% engage in the practice, while half give away less than 1% of their income annually, a new study shows. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/only-13-of-evangelicals-tithe-study.html>

At the median mark, however, evangelicals only gave \$340 to the Church and \$50 to charity, for a total of \$390. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/only-13-of-evangelicals-tithe-study.html>

Now to be clear, there is a clear obligation to support your local church, but that is not the only way to invest in eternity. You can help a homeless person out, You can minister to the poor, but doing a repair on there home. You can give a car to a person in need. You can carry a dish of food to the sick and shut it. 1000s of ways to store up treasure in heaven.

Believers should be know as those not consumed by the things of the world, but rather those that use those things of the world to invest in the lives and needs of others for the furtherance of the gospel.

Our text this morning is a reminder of
The Temptation and Temporary Nature of
Wealth

It addresses the wealthy man who needs to be reminded of the temporary nature of his wealth and condemns the man who makes financial gain at the expense of others.

It is a rebuke of the materialistic self centered man who disregards the will of God for his life.

You may say, “Well, pastor, I can’t sit this one out. I’m not rich, so this is not for me.”

Not so fast, my christian brother or sister. The poorest of us are richer than most of the world. We live in the lap of luxury. We have more than we need and most of us have 2 or more of what we need.

You might not be a millionaire, but you have more than most. Most of us don’t know what it is to be really hungry, to be starving. Most of us grew up in comforts of A/C and Heat and didn’t have to walk 4 miles in the snow to collect wood or go to school.

We spend more money on junk food in a week, than the average pastor makes in a month in Kenya.

So let's keep our perspectives right on wealth. We are the rich of the world. We are the wealthy.

Granted, there are some who are much more wealthy than us, but they don't come here. At least I don't know them.

But if you are here in stealth and you want to help with the building we need, let me know.

So this passage is not for elite of the world, or just the "rich men in Richmond." It is for us.

The Jews that James was writing to were mostly very poor. Living day to day, working hard to insure they had food on the table.

This was more common place in O.T and N.T.

The gulf between the poor and the rich was wide.

Their was no such thing as a middle class.

78 passages that demand kindness and generosity to the poor (often referred to as 'the widow' or 'the orphan'),

poor

Hebrew: עָנִי —transliteration: ani

עָנָו —transliteration: anav

עָנָו —transliteration: anav

עָנִי —transliteration: ani

Meaning: poor, needy or afflicted or humble or meek

Greek: πτωχός —transliteration: ptóchos (ptochos)
—meaning: (of one who crouches and cowers,
hence) beggarly, poor

The Mosaic laws regarding the poor are important to understand, as they illustrate God's love and care for those who are impoverished. These were the commands to the children of Israel and how the poor in their midst were to be treated. These laws apply to Old Testament times, before the Messiah's redemption.

1. GLEANNING—The poor had the right to glean the fields (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19; Deu. 24:21).
2. SABBATICAL YEAR PRODUCE—In the sabbatical year, they were to have their share of the produce of the fields and the vineyards (Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 25:6).
3. PROPERTY LOST TO DEBT RETURNED—In the year of jubilee, they recovered their property.

“If a fellow countryman of yours becomes **so poor he has to sell part of his property**, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold.

Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but **at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property.**” —
Leviticus 25:25-28 NASB

4. Usury (interest on a loan) was forbidden.
5. Pledged clothing was to be returned before the sun went down (Exodus 22:25-27; Deuteronomy 24:10-13).
6. The rich were to be generous to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7-11).

7. DEBT SERVITUDE CANCELTION—In the sabbatical and jubilee years, the bond-servant was to go free (Deuteronomy 15:12-15; Leviticus 25:39-42, 47-54).
8. Certain portions from the tithes were assigned to the poor (Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-13).
9. SHARE IN FEASTS—They shared in the feasts (Deut. 16:11; Deut. 16:14; Neh. 8:10).
10. QUICK PAYMENT—Wages were to be paid at the close of each day (Leviticus 19:13).

In New Testament times

In the New Testament, we have similar commands given with reference to the poor (Luke 3:11; Acts 6:1; Gal. 2:10).

Luke 3:11 (LSB)

11 And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”

Galatians 2:10 (LSB)

10 Only *they asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

“...when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” —Luke 14:13 NASB

“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?” —James 2:15-16 NASB

Begging

Begging was not common under the Old Testament, but it was at the time of Christ and the apostles (Luke 16:20-21, etc.).

But begging in the case of those who are able to work is forbidden, and all such are urged to “work with their own hands” as a Christian duty (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:7-13; Eph. 4:28).

I point this out so you know that this is a passage for us. When you see rich, don’t think of the filthy

rich Billionaires with there Million dollar mansions and 6 car garages and yachts in the cove. Better, thing of the family of 5 with living in the AC doublewide mobile home with a car and truck and plastic battery powered toy car for their toddler and a trampoline in the back yard. They might even have a push mower for their grass. And don't think if you live in a single wide you are exempt.

Lesson

There are 2 major themes running thru the first 6 verses

1. The Temporary nature of wealth.
2. The Temptation to take advance of people to get your wealth.

This is all a fruit of the Worldliness James condemned earlier.

James 4:2–4 (NKJV)

² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with

the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

For today, we will consider

1. The Temporary nature of Wealth James 5:1–6 (NKJV)

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

James 5:1 (LSB)

Come now, you rich, cry, howling over your miseries which are coming upon you.

“Now listen, you rich people” at once identifies the group to whom the announcement is directed. “Now listen,” the identical formula used in 4:13, does not imply a continuation of the subject treated in 4:13–17; rather, it is a sharp call for the attention of the new group addressed

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 259). BMH Books.

James’ message is a burst of righteous indignation reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets

Prime, D. (1995). [James](#) (p. 136). Christian Focus Publications.

(*hoi plousioi*) denotes those who are materially wealthy

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 259). BMH Books.

πλούσιος *plóúsios*; fem. *plousía*, neut. *plóúsiōn*; adj. from *plóutos* (4149), wealth, abundance, riches. Rich, wealthy. In the NT, only in the masc. (Matt. 27:57; Luke 12:16; 16:1, 19); pl. (Luke 14:12). Figuratively meaning happy, prosperous, lacking nothing (2 Cor. 8:9; Rev. 2:9; 3:17; Sept.: 2 Sam. 12:1, 2, 4; Prov. 28:11).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

James is not opposed to them simply because they are wealthy; the evils they are guilty of (vv. 4–6) establish their ungodly character. He is not denouncing rich men indiscriminately. The assertion of Barclay that “he aims to show the detestable character of those who possess riches” is unwarranted.

Wealth is not in and of itself sinful, but the hoarding of it often creates a false sense of security. The accumulation of it is often accomplished through unjust and sinful means. It is those two dangers related to wealth that Scripture condemns.

Doerksen, V. D. (1983). [James](#) (p. 114). Moody Press.

James should not be charged with the unscriptural view that wealth in itself is sinful,³ but he well knew that its accumulation was often associated with evil practices. James is denouncing “the peril of unsanctified riches.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 259). BMH Books.

Some interpreters assume that “James is addressing those within the Christian community who have become entangled in the deceitfulness of riches.” But it is more probable that they are non-Christian Jewish owners of large estates in the communities where the readers live. Those addressed in verses 1–6 seem clearly to form a distinct class from the “brothers” addressed in verse 7.

James 5:7 (NKJV)

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.

The term “brothers” does not appear in these six verses but occurs three times in verses 7–11. Those addressed are not called to repentance; nor is there any indication that they must amend their ways as inconsistent with their faith. Rather, he simply announces the fact that judgment awaits them. Calvin comments that “all that he says tends only to despair.” The attitude ascribed to these rich is not that of 1:10, where a rich believer is in view, but rather that seen in 2:6. Smith well observes that James “is not concerned with any economic theory, but with the sins of individuals.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 259). BMH Books.

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

Come now, you rich, cry, howling over your miseries which are coming upon you.

Weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you” is an animated proclamation of impending doom. It is addressed “to the *poor rich*, who have nothing more than their riches.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 260). BMH Books.

“Weep and wail” is not a call for repentance, as in 4:9, but indicates the response of despair these rich men will have when the judgment strikes. “Weep” (*klausate*), “sob aloud, lament, weep bitterly,” was used of wailing for the dead (Luke 7:13, 32; John 11:31–33); but it was also used of weeping for shame or remorse (Matt. 26:75; Luke 7:38). Here it denotes the emotional outburst of those who have disregarded God’s claims and will be overwhelmed with the realization of their loss when He appears in judgment. The use of the aorist tense, in view of the impending judgment, urgently summons them to do what they already should be doing in view of their fate. “And wail” (*ololuzontes*), or “howling,”

intensifies the scene of despair. This onomatopoetic verb, which occurs only here in the New Testament, was originally used of the cry of jubilation as well as of the wail of grief and pain; but in the Septuagint it occurs only in the expression of violent grief (Isa. 13:6; 15:3; 16:7; 23:1; Jer. 48:20; Ezek. 21:12; Amos 8:3; Zech. 11:2). The present tense participle pictures their audible sobbing being repeatedly pierced by their howls of agony at the return of the rejected Christ in judgment

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 260). BMH Books.

This reminds me of
Revelation 17:1–2 (NKJV)

17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

Revelation 18:9–19 (NKJV)

The World Mourns Babylon’s Fall

⁹ “The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

¹¹ “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: ¹² merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; ¹³ and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. ¹⁴ The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. ¹⁵ The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, ¹⁶ and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! ¹⁷ For in one hour such

great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance ¹⁸ and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What *is* like this great city?’

¹⁹ “They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’

1. Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your **miseri**es that are coming upon *you!*

James 5:1 (LSB)

*Come now, you rich, cry, howling over your **miseri**es which are coming upon you.*

ταλαιπωρία. PLURAL *talaipōría*; gen. *talaipōρίας*, fem. noun from *talaipōréō* (5003), to afflict. Affliction, distress, misery (Rom. 3:16 quoted from Is. 59:7; James 5:1).

Syn.: *kákōsis* (2561), affliction, ill-treatment; *thlípsis* (2347), pressure; *básanos* (931), torture, torment; *páthēma* (3804), affliction, suffering.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

The rich are called upon to weep and howl because of their “coming” miseries. That speaks of the imminency of the Christ’s return (cf. vv. 7, 8, 9). The judgment has not yet come, but it is so certain that it can be spoken of as in the process of coming.

“Miseries” speak of wretchedness as the result of calamity coming upon them. The return of the Lord is not a blessed hope for the unbeliever.

Doerksen, V. D. (1983). [James](#) (pp. 115–116). Moody Press.

James 5:7–8 (NKJV)

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.

The present participle, “the one coming” (*tais eperchomenais*), ἐπέρχομαι *epérchomai*; seems best taken as picturing these miseries as already approaching and about to strike. “Upon” (*epi* alone as well as with the participle) stresses that these miseries will fall upon them personally. Though it is

quite possible to see a preliminary fulfillment of the picture in the destruction of Jerusalem, the reference is best understood as denoting the parousia, which the early church eagerly anticipated. “Like Isaiah (Isa. 13:6),” Davids notes, “James looks with divine foresight and sees the dark hurricane cloud of the Day of the Lord about to strike them down.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [*James*](#) (Revised Edition, p. 260). BMH Books.

His warning to rich oppressors provides an indirect encouragement to Christians who find themselves dismayed by the injustices of contemporary society. Many Christians throughout the world today ask, ‘How long will these injustices with which we have to live last? Why doesn’t God bring them to an end?’ The answer is that they will all end at God’s judgment of the world, and they will all be put right.

James’ warning is relevant too to double-minded Christians, to Christians who try to face two ways at once, whose allegiance is divided between God and the world.

Prime, D. (1995). [*James*](#) (p. 136). Christian Focus Publications.

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

3 Your gold and silver are corroded,

The food you hoard is rotting

The clothes you pile up are ruined

The metals you trust in are rusting.

James first pictures the impact of the coming judgment upon their wealth: “Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded.” The three verbs, all in the perfect tense, have been viewed as instances of the Hebrew “prophetic perfect,” denoting future events “which to prophetic intuition are so certain that they can be spoken of as having actually happened.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 260–261). BMH Books.

2. Your riches are corrupted

For us today wealth tends to mean money in the bank and the material assets represented by bricks and mortar in a house. But in earlier times people’s principal assets were grain, clothes and precious metals. The rich fool felt that he was well off because of the grain stored in his extended barns (Luke 12:18). When

Gehazi, the unfaithful servant of Elisha, tried to benefit from Naaman’s healing from leprosy, he asked Naaman for ‘two sets of clothing’ (2 Kings 5:22). Our Lord Jesus told a parable of how a man found someone else’s treasure in a field, treasure that someone had hoarded and hidden in the ground (Matthew 13:44).

Prime, D. (1995). [James](#) (p. 138). Christian Focus Publications.

2. Your riches are corrupted—may refer to grain.

σῆπω; φθορά^b, ἄς *f*; διαφθορά, ἄς *f*: to rot or decay, in reference to organic matter—‘to rot, to decay, decay.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 276). United Bible Societies.

σῆπω *sēpō*; fut. *sēpsō*. To rot, corrupt, destroy (Sept. Job 40:12). Usually in the NT in the pass. *sēpomai*, 2d perf. *sēsēpa* intrans. meaning to rot, be corrupted, i.e., to perish (James 5:2, “your wealth has rotted” [a.t.], meaning your hoarded stores or goods).

Deriv.: *saprós* (4550), corrupt.

Syn.: *phtheírō* (5351), to bring into a worse state, to decay;

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

your garments are moth-eaten.

In the Orient “clothes” (*himatia*), the long, loose outer robes that often were richly embroidered and decorated, were a recognized form of wealth and were commonly passed on as heirlooms (cf. Judg. 14:12; 2 Kings 5:5; Job 13:28; Matt. 6:19; Acts 20:33). When such garments were stored in quantity in Oriental countries where there was a fairly high temperature during much of the year, damage by the larva of clothes moths was frequently extensive. Garments that had become “moth-eaten” were practically worthless

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 261). BMH Books.

Paul declared, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes” (Acts 20:33). A moth-eaten garment was practically worthless. Those who amass to themselves an excessive surplus of clothing will awaken to find them filled with ugly holes.

Doerksen, V. D. (1983). [James](#) (p. 116). Moody Press.

3 Your gold and silver are corroded,

“Your gold and silver are corroded” (v. 3) declares the worthlessness also of this form of their wealth in that coming day. The verb “are corroded” (*katiotai*), occurring only here in the New Testament, is a compound form, the preposition *kata* giving it an intensive force, “are thoroughly or completely corroded or rusted.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 261). BMH Books.

since these metals do not actually rust or corrode..... More probable is the suggestion that “the coins of that time were mixed with quite a large percentage of alloy, and did actually rust.”¹⁶ Most probable is the view that James intentionally applied this strong verb to their hoarded gold and silver to remind them that in the Judgment Day this wealth would prove to be as worthless as rusted-out iron. Others, such as Davids, suggest a figurative meaning for the verb “corroded” by remarking that today “one might say, ‘Your money is devalued by inflation.’ ” But Blue points out that there is an element of literal truth in the term James uses: “Though they do not rust, they can become *corroded*. Gold can darken and silver tarnish.” And Roberts asserts that “even those of New Testament times were

intelligent enough to realize that everything on this earth, including gold and silver, is in the process of *decay*.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 261–262). BMH Books.

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 use of *kai* (“and”), not in NIV, links this testimony concerning the worthlessness of their gold and silver in the judgment with the personal doom of the rich. It indicates how closely they linked their lives and aspirations with their wealth. “In the ruin of their property their own ruin is portrayed.”²⁰

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 262). BMH Books.

and their corrosion will be a witness against you

ἰός ἰός; gen. *ιοῦ*, masc. noun from *híēmi* (n.f., see below), to send. Something sent out, emitted, hence venom that serpents eject from their fangs (Rom. 3:13 quoted from Ps. 140:3; James 3:8); rust as

being emitted or formed on metals (James 5:3; Sept.: Ezek. 24:6).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

for in that day it will speak as a mighty witness whose testimony cannot be silenced. It will appear as a witness for the prosecution, bearing witness “against you” (*humin*), more literally, “to you,” and all observers, declaring your undeniable guilt.

....Winkler suggests that “the rust that had gathered upon the unused treasures would testify to the hard-heartedness of their possessors.”²²

Instead of using their money to aid the poor and needy around them, they have hoarded it callously for their own selfish enjoyment in the future

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 262). BMH Books.

Like the mountains of clothes, shoes, jewelry and gold that the German Nazi’s accumulated in the death camps. As the slaughter millions, the would strip them naked first and take all they had.

Mounds and mounds of evidence of the greed of your evil heart.

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.

James warns them that in the Day of Judgment their rusted wealth, like a rusty chain, will eat into their pampered flesh like a festering sore. Its effect will be “like fire,” torturing while it devours. Rust consuming iron is a slow process; but James greatly intensifies the terror of the process by likening it to fire, a familiar element in the biblical picture of the judgment.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 263). BMH Books.

3 You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

θησαυρίζω *thēsaúrizō*; fut. *thēsaúrisō*, from *thēsaúros* (2344), treasure. To lay, store or treasure up goods for future use (Matt. 6:19, 20; Luke 12:21; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 12:14; Sept.: 2 Kgs. 20:17; Amos 3:10; Zech. 9:3). Metaphorically, to treasure up wrath

or future punishment (Rom. 2:5; James 5:3 [cf. James 5:5]; Sept.: Prov. 1:18). By

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

The rich have been hoarding up treasures “in the last days.” That is an eschatological phrase referring to the period of time before the return of Christ. Since New Testament times Christians have looked for His imminent return, and the church has thought of itself as living in the last days. Peter, quoting Joel, identified the Pentecost experience as being “in the last days” (Acts 2:17; cf. Joel 2:28). He also spoke of mockers coming “in the last days” (2 Pet. 3:3); Paul mentioned difficult times occurring “in the last days” (2 Tim. 3:1), and John declared, “It is the last hour” (1 John 2:18). At a time when people should have been concerned about the imminent return of Christ, the rich were selfishly storing up for themselves perishable treasure, not heeding the warning and counsel of Jesus, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust

destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19–21).

Doerksen, V. D. (1983). [James](#) (pp. 117–118). Moody Press.

Waste is abhorrent to God, whether it comes through hoarding or extravagance. As Calvin wrote, ‘God has not appointed gold for rust nor garments for moth; but on the contrary He has designed them as aids to human life’. When food rots, clothes become moth-eaten, and hoarded money loses its value, it may sometimes be evidence of their misuse

Prime, D. (1995). [James](#) (p. 139). Christian Focus Publications.

Luke 16:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

¹⁴ Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.

Luke 16:19–31 (NKJV)

19 “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

was clothed - Imperfect verb, was continually clothed

in purple— —The purple mussel, a type of shellfish found on the coasts of the Mediterranean yielding a reddish–purple dye of great value in biblical times. In the NT, used to refer to something dyed with purple, such as clothes or robes of purple worn by persons of rank and wealth

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

fine linen— the finest of cloth of that day.

feasted εὐφραίνομαι^b: to celebrate an occasion, with the implication of happiness and joy—‘to celebrate

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 528). United Bible Societies.

sumptuously — —Or “celebrated with ostentation” (L&N 88.255), that is, with showing off

Biblical Studies Press. (2005). [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#). Biblical Studies Press.

Luke 16:19 (LSB)

19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor **every day**.

²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

²⁷ “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest

they also come to this place of torment.’²⁹ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’³¹ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’ ”

