

Given all of James' topics and observations, our text proves the most strident and condemnatory. James is not holding anything back. As difficult and harsh as the text proves, recall **Romans 15:4**: "**For all those words which were written long ago are meant to teach us today; that when we read in the scriptures of the endurance of men and of all the help that God gave them in those days, we may be encouraged to go on hoping in our own time.**"

James 5:1: "**Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.**"

- **Grammatical Usage**: "**Come now**" or in the Greek, "Age nyn" means, "Pay attention"; "**weep**" or "klaio" means to, "lament; cry out loud"; "**howl**" or "ololuzo" means, "shrieking; screaming"; "**miseries**" or "talaiporiais" meaning, "hardship; suffering; distress".
- **Literal Interpretation**: Pay attention you arrogant rich: cry out loud...scream...for hardship and suffering is your fate.
- **Contextual/Comparison**: God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. As we consider this passage, four questions: Who is James addressing in this passage? What is in store for these rich people? Why is God so angry at them? What applications can we draw from this passage?

I. WHO IS JAMES ADDRESSING IN THIS PASSAGE?

A. ARE THEY CHRISTIANS?

1. Are these rich Christians who had been guilty of oppressing their brethren?
2. Possibly, but unlikely for several reasons...
 - a. They are not addressed as "brethren" as is often done in this epistle - **James 1:2,19; 2:1, 14; 3:1, 10; 4:11**
 - b. There is no call to repentance in this passage, only condemnation
 - c. The brethren are not addressed until **v. 7**, in which THEY are told to be patient in light of what has just been said

B. MORE LIKELY, THOSE ADDRESSED ARE RICH UNBELIEVERS...

1. Who had been oppressing the Christians - cf. **2:6**
2. This tirade of judgment upon them appears to serve the purpose of comforting the brethren who were being oppressed by them - cf. **5:7**

II. WHAT IS IN STORE FOR THESE RICH OPPRESSORS?

A. MISERIES THAT WILL CAUSE THEM TO "WEEP AND HOWL"! (1-3a**)**

1. So certain are these miseries to come, that James speaks of them already occurring! Riches are corrupted; garments moth-eaten; gold/silver corroded

2. When this "corrosion" of their riches occurs...
 - a. It will serve as a witness against them (that they were guilty of the things to be mentioned shortly)
 - b. It will eat their flesh like fire

B. THE MISERIES SPOKEN HERE MAY HAVE REFERENCE TO WHAT LATER OCCURED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN 70 A.D.

1. Not long after this epistle was written, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans
2. Many of the rich Jews who had oppressed their Christian brethren literally "wept and howled"

III. WHY IS GOD SO ANGRY AT THESE RICH PEOPLE?

A. BECAUSE OF HOW THEY GOT THEIR WEALTH...

1. It was through wicked means – **v. 4**
2. Specifically, by withholding wages from those who had worked for them

B. BECAUSE OF HOW THEY USED THEIR WEALTH...

1. They hoarded their wealth – **v. 3b**
2. They spent it on themselves with pleasures and luxury – **v. 5**
3. They used the power that comes with wealth to oppress "the just" – **v. 6**

IV. WHAT APPLICATIONS CAN WE DRAW?

A. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL HOW WE OBTAIN OUR WEALTH...

1. To do so at the expense of others will bring God's wrath upon us! - cf. **Deuteronomy 24:14, 15**
2. It is wrong to think that success can only come by stepping on others
3. This might be an appropriate place to add what we learn from Paul in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**
 - a. It is not riches that are wrong, but the DESIRE TO BE RICH that is wrought with many dangers!
 - b. Riches are not wrong if they are the BY-PRODUCT of our endeavors, not the GOAL of those endeavors!
4. So how do we obtain our wealth?
 - a. If we do it honestly and in compensation for a job well done, then God is not displeased
 - b. But if we do it by hurting others and by making wealth our primary object, then we are in danger of God's wrath!

B. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL HOW WE USE OUR WEALTH...

1. To spend it on luxurious living when others are suffering...
 - a. Is exactly what James has described in this passage
 - b. Is an indication of the lack of the love of God – **1 John 3:17**
2. According to the New Testament, the purpose of working is not to obtain wealth for our own gratification, but to help those less fortunate!
 - a. As commanded by Paul - **Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:17-19**
 - b. As exemplified by Paul - **Acts 20:34-35**

➤ **Conclusion:** Am I living up to the God's call for generosity?