



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Misuse of Riches

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The Epistle of James' (AD 45-50) likely author was James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, a humble man, the leader of the Jerusalem church and the leader of the Council of Jerusalem. While James is addressing the twelve tribes that had scattered to all parts of the world and attempts to be encouraging to the believing Jews who were struggling with trials and tribulations, he confronts the issue of the testing and fruit of a faithful Christian's walk and the wise Godly righteous reactions of him when grounded in total faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers will battle the enemies of the world, their flesh and Satan (3:15). Wisdom's foundation is either from man or from God and people will need to make a choice. (James 5:1-6 NASB) James sounds a warning to the rich. How can riches be misused?

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!” (5:1-3)

The misuse of riches by hoarding. In the day of James, people were either rich and powerful or poor and slaves. While James is not condemning people in the church for being wealthy, he was warning against the misuses of wealth. James was directing this message to those who called themselves Christians, yet their real god was money, riches and power. Paul similarly provides direction (1Tim 6:17-19) to the rich in Timothy's congregation to do good, to be generous and be ready to share. Believers are to not store up treasures or riches here on earth, because those riches will rot, rust and fade away and will be a witness against them. Believers with a living faith will view themselves as a caretaker of God's riches that He provides and will seek His will in the use of those resources. What is a wrong way to riches?

“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.” (5:4)

The misuse of riches by stealing wages. James warns the rich and powerful that if they oppress and withhold money that is due workers, the Lord of Sabaoth (Lord of Host, Commander or Lord of the Armies of Heaven, God) will hear the cry of the laborers. A believer with a living faith will pay what is due.

“You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.” (5:5)

The misuse of riches by extravagant living. James warns that a consuming self-focused pursuit of personal pleasure and a lifestyle that is driven by a selfish heart will lead to judgment from God that is liken to a fattened calf ready for the slaughter. What is the result of the misuse of riches?

“You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.” (5:6)

The misuse of riches by injustice. James final warning to the rich in this passage who use their wealth and power to harm, kill or unjustly punish the poor and weak will answer to a just God. The believer with a living faith who is unjustly punished is not to take his own revenge, but to leave room for the wrath of God. A Christian is not to be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Ro 12:14-21)

“Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion,” (Pr 30:8)

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: SESSION OR HEARING WEDNESDAYS AT 7:30AM, STATEHOUSE RM. 44

STAFF, LOBBYISTS AND CAPITOL SQUARE COMMUNITY: WEDNESDAYS AT NOON, STATEHOUSE RM.44