

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 10 “Weep and Howl!”

Read for this week’s study

James 5:1–6; Ps. 73:3–19; 1 Sam. 25:2–11; Lev. 19:13; Luke 16:19–31; Matt. 5:39.

Memory Text

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Justice Will Be Done!
- III. When Wealth Becomes Worthless
- IV. Cries of the Poor
- V. Fat and Happy (for Now)
- VI. Blame the Victim
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

WARNING TO OPPRESSORS (JAMES 5:1-6)

A. Introduction

1. Wisdom topics in the Bible
2. Non-Christian audience
3. Old Testament judgments on the nations

B. Judgment is Coming (5:1-3)

1. Consider prophetic calls to lament. What do they teach us about divine judgments (Joel 1:8; Micah 1:8)?
2. Why are the coming disasters announced with verbs in the past and present tenses?
3. James talks about “rust” and “moth” just like Jesus did in Matthew 6:19. Do the two passages make the same point?
4. Wealth, garments and gold are only temporary goods. How will their destruction testify against their unjust owners?
5. To the poor rural population in Palestine, James gave promises of joy. Was their coming joy as sure as the promised doom on their oppressors?

C. Reasons for Judgment (5:4-6)

1. Why was it important for day laborers to receive their pay at the end of each day?
2. In contrast to the expensive clothes worn by the rich, how many garments did the poor own (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14-15)?
3. How do you picture the cries of oppression reaching the very throne room of the Divine Warrior? (cf. Genesis 4:10)
4. While God's people are often called the "flock of His pasture" James compares the oppressors with "fatted cattle." What does he accomplish by doing that?
5. As we study James 5:1-6 how do the following biblical passages compare to it:
 - a) 1 Samuel 25; Story of David and Nabal
 - b) Luke 16; Rich Man and Lazarus
 - c) 2 Kings 6; Elisha and the Aramean army

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But look at verse 20. "He lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you poor.'" Now, are all poor people poor in spirit? And the meaning of being poor in spirit, I'm sure you would agree is "Blessed are those who recognize their spiritual need." And some versions so translate it. Ellen White adopted that. "Blessed are those who recognize their spiritual need, because I can help them. Laodiceans don't recognize their spiritual need, and I'll spit them out of My mouth; I can't help them. So, happy are you who realize you are in need; you will let Me help you." "Blessed are you poor"? Some poor people are just as hard to help as rich people. But some poor people are more likely to recognize their need. It makes one wonder precisely what Jesus said. Maybe He said a third thing, which Matthew took one way and Luke took the other, but the message is clear, isn't it? If we're proud and self-satisfied, God cannot help us. Doesn't that come through clearly in both of them? That's the point, you see. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Deuteronomy, recorded November, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/9MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/10MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And Jesus told this one. What do you think of an illustration like that? If you've ever read Billy Graham's book on angels, this is his key text for his doctrine that when he dies, the good angels will come and take his "soul" to the bosom of Abraham. That's his faith. That's his belief. And if you say, "But that's not biblical," he will say, "But my Bible says that. Moreover, the Lord Himself said that." Then what do you say? You say, "Well you have to interpret the meaning;

that's just an illustration." He'll say, "That's the trouble with you Adventists. You won't you take the Bible just the way it reads. I take it just the way it reads."

Of course, you know what you can do then with some other passages. Everybody interprets at least part of the time. You have to interpret all of the time. What do you do with the rich man and Lazarus story? How literally are we to take some of these illustrations? Or are we, most importantly, not to miss the main point of the story? Now in the rich man and Lazarus story, is the main point clearly made? The main point is: if they won't listen to the Bible, they wouldn't listen to someone who would rise from the dead. And Jesus was saying, "Go to the Bible. There's enough information there, and you don't need this other." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Chronicles, recorded November, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/21MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/22MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Is Jeremiah pleased that finally God's justice and wrath are being demonstrated? Do you remember Jonah? When God did not destroy Nineveh on time, was Jonah pleased? No, he wished they would be, because that would have proved that he was a good prophet. Was Jeremiah pleased that now they were getting what they so richly deserved? No, he was a much better friend of God than Jonah was. Jeremiah weeps because finally all that he had been predicting had come. How do you think Adventists should feel if finally in the end all the terrible things we have predicted will come? Will we say, "Well, that's good; God is keeping His promise, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,'" and I, in a sense of justice, will be deeply satisfied? Or would you weep? When the wicked die at the end of the millennium, how do you think God will behave? Hosea 11, He'll cry? God is not willing that any should perish. Think of all the verses like that in the Bible. I think Jeremiah knew God very well. Think how they had treated him. Think how he had been abused, and no one would listen. And yet when the trouble came, he wept over them. I think it speaks very well of him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah and Lamentations, recorded February, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Well, this even fits in a bit with Jonah. You remember they said, "You must be being punished by your God. You must have done something very bad." You see, people who are being

punished, who are getting into trouble, or who are being conquered by other nations, obviously their God is not blessing them, and others then would gloat in pride, as you have suggested. So that could enter into it. When we watch, if we are within the city, the wicked being destroyed, will we feel, "I thank Thee, God, that I am not like these outside being destroyed." And the Lord would say, "Some error was made, you should be out there with them if you feel that way."

Don't you think that God's whole attitude toward vengeance is involved here in the book of Obadiah? Since at the end, assuming that we will be saved, and we watch as the glory of God is unveiled, and all that is out of harmony with Him is consumed, and to use the words of Scripture, "Fire comes down from God out of Heaven and the wicked are destroyed." How do you expect to feel, at the time? Might we be saying "Well, they surely deserved it"? I had someone say to me just a little while ago, "If Idi Amin doesn't get what he fully deserves then God is not a just God." And this individual really meant it. And that's not unique. I've heard it said of other individuals in history.

How *will* we feel? Well, do we have any indication, from Hosea, for example, how God will feel? Are bad people His children, just as much as good people? And He's losing His own children, and will never see them again. And Hosea has God crying, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" And if we are within the city, we will feel as He does. So I hate any suggestion that there will be any deep sense of satisfaction, of justice, within us as we look and say, "Well, that person is really getting what he deserves." I don't think there will be any room for that feeling. It will be a time of very great grief. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/45MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/46MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I have heard servants sometimes charge that friends lack a keen sense of justice. They do not leave room in their understanding of God for just and essential punishment. Their God is simply too weak and kind. "You have a marshmallow God," I heard one servant say.

The truth is precisely the opposite. Friend-believers have great concern about righteousness, which is the literal meaning of the Greek word often translated "justice." The English word "justice" comes from the Latin translation of the Greek. (Latin, "justitia")

Friends admire God's righteousness and would love to be like him. And to do what is right is, of course, to do what is just. But servants tend to think of justice in terms of retribution and punishment.

"I find comfort in the thought that some day God will bring retribution on those who have hurt me so much," I heard a believer say. "Now, I'm not asking for vengeance, you understand. I'm

just asking for justice.” {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 109-110. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

But “under the demands of law.” That belongs to a very legal conception of what has gone wrong in the universe, which we discussed in our second conversation. That what has gone wrong is that we have “broken the rules,” and the law demands that God execute us for breaking the rules. And Jesus died so that somehow God could justly forgive us even though we have broken the rules.

I don’t think we have been able to make too much sense out of that. But it goes along with the other one, “satisfying justice.” Whose justice? I have friends who say, “If God does not give Idi Amin several days in the fire, I will not regard Him as a just God.” They have that feeling about the satisfaction of justice. And I think they really mean it, and I would respect them for that. I would love to relieve them of that burden. If I want to know why Jesus died, I should go right to the cross and watch Him die and hear His cry and see how the Father is involved, and then fit that back into Scripture. I don’t see Him fulfilling the requirements of a legal model. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, session 8, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The Bible does not condemn the rich man because he is rich; it does not declare the acquisition of wealth to be a sin, nor does it say that money is the root of all evil. On the contrary, the Scriptures state that it is God who gives the power to get wealth. And this ability is a precious talent if consecrated to God and employed to advance His cause. The Bible does not condemn genius or art; for these come of the wisdom which God gives. We cannot make the heart purer or holier by clothing the body in sackcloth, or depriving the home of all that ministers to comfort, taste, or convenience. {CS 138.2}

The Scriptures teach that wealth is a dangerous possession only when placed in competition with the immortal treasure. It is when the earthly and temporal absorbs the thoughts, the affections, the devotion which God claims, that it becomes a snare. {CS 138.3}

It is the love of money that the word of God denounces as the root of all evil. Money itself is the gift of God to men, to be used with fidelity in His service. God blessed Abraham, and made him rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And the Bible states, as an evidence of divine favor, that God gave David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, very much riches and honor. {CS 139.1}

Like other gifts of God, the possession of wealth brings its increase of responsibility, and its peculiar temptations.—R. & H., May 16, 1882. {CS 139.2}

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, “Follow Me.” But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. If we do walk in His footsteps, it is the result of deliberate choice.—R. & H., March 31, 1896. {CS 138.1}

Not by their wealth, their education, or their position does God estimate men. He estimates them by their purity of motive and their beauty of character. He looks to see how much of His Spirit they possess and how much of His likeness their life reveals. To be great in God’s kingdom is to be as a little child in humility, in simplicity of faith, and in purity of love. {MH 477.5}

Satan has nets and snares, like the snares of the fowler, all prepared to entrap souls. It is his studied purpose that men shall employ their God-given powers for selfish ends rather than yield them to glorify God. God would have men engage in a work that will bring them peace and joy, and will render them eternal profit; but Satan wants us to concentrate our efforts for that which profiteth not, for the things that perish with the using. {OHC 200.2}

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. . . .The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}