

- A. We should hate all forms of abuse. One of the most common abuses when interpreting Scripture happens when context is ignored. Today’s text is a classic example of that.
- B. Earlier in this general epistle, James gave some valuable encouragement and very useful help in dealing with trials, testing, and temptations. At the end of chapter 4, he warned of the sin of presumption.

God’s judgment upon the unjust rich.	I. REASONS WHY JAMES REBUKED THE UNJUST RICH II. GOD’S JUDGMENT UPON THE UNJUST RICH
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I. **REASONS WHY JAMES REBUKED THE UNJUST RICH** -

A. James could not have been addressing this to the rich in the church who ministered to the needs of other saints. This would set the truth of Scripture against itself.

1. **Prov 10:22** says, “**It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.**”
2. Paul did not condemn the rich yet instructed Timothy how he was to teach the rich to live as fruitful parts of the Christian community. → **1 Tim 6:17-19**

B. James was addressing the rich who were outside the household of faith.

1. John Calvin suggested James rebuked the rich outside of the church. Dr. Simon Kistemaker wrote, “Apparently, these rich people were not part of the Christian community but were oppressing the believers who lived in poverty. . . Whether the rich would hear the rebuke of James remains a question. But the poor and oppressed in the Christian community derived comfort and encouragement from the knowledge that God knew of their hardship.”
2. One argument that James wrote against unbelieving rich is found in **v1**: “**Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.**”
 - a. James had eternal miseries in mind when he wrote this.
 - b. These unjust, unbelieving rich were headed for a “**day of slaughter**” according to **v5**.
 - c. Such eternal condemnations tell us that James wrote against these unrighteous rich persons because they were unbelievers.
3. In a similar fashion in Scripture, God through the prophets condemned the unbelieving nations. Such pagan kingdoms likely never read these particular passages, yet God’s people were comforted by God’s these writings of condemnation against their enemies.
 - a. In **Jeremiah 49**, God promised to make Edom a wasteland.
 - b. In **Isa 13**, God promised to lay the land of Babylon desolate.
 - c. In a similar fashion to these prophetic OT pronouncements, James proclaimed that the unbelieving and unrighteous rich would be made desolate.

B. James rebuked the unjust rich because they abused their workers by not paying them. → **v4**

1. There are two things that cried out to the Lord of Sabaoth [“the Lord of Hosts”].
 - a. The injustice itself— the unpaid wages— cried out to the ears of God
 - b. God’s children who did the harvesting without pay made an outcry which reached God.
2. These rich men may have gotten wealthy by ill-gotten gain. Abuse of the poor was likely just one example of this. → **Ja 2: 6-7**

C. James condemned the unjust rich because they were guilty of murder. → **v6** “**You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.**”

D. Getting into a future sermon, we can also conclude that James was speaking to the unbelieving rich because in **v7** he then shifted to speaking to the household of faith again.

II. GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE UNJUST RICH → vv1-2

A. In Lu 12, Jesus spoke of a parable of a rich man who had a very productive land.

1. Before the modern, widespread use of banks to store wealth, it was common for people to store up wealth by using something like grain.
2. Still, in the case of this man who tore down his barns to build larger ones to hoard his grain, such a valuable commodity would have likely rotted before he could use all of it in his retirement.

B. Storing up an abundance of garments can also lead to them being good for nothing over time. This was especially the case before people knew of chemicals and the use of cedar furniture to keep moths away.

C. In the next proclamation of judgment, we can be sure that James was speaking about more than God's chastisement during this life. →v3

1. Because gold and silver do not rust and because rust does not consume one's flesh like fire, James must have been speaking figuratively concerning the eternal wrath of God to come upon the wicked.
 - a. Rather than living for God such men and women were living for themselves and for their own pleasures. → v5
 - b. The NASB95's use of "wanton pleasure" in v5 is extremely outdated.
 - 1) The Greek here can be translated as "self-indulgence" as the ESV has it.
 - 2) The NKJV's use of "luxury" here is also good.

2. Storing up treasure in this life would be worthless if a man, woman, or child is not rich towards God by means of saving faith.

3. → Mat 6:19-21, v24.

D. This text reminds us not to place our hope upon the uncertainty of riches of this world but upon the eternal riches found in Christ.

Review, further application, and conclusion.