

Reasons Why James 5 is Speaking Directly About the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

1. James was located in Jerusalem and worked with the church there. (This means that the message of James 5 would be given to the Jews in Jerusalem who would be in immediate danger of losing their lives and their city.)

- a. Verses in the Book imply this:
 - i. Jas. 1:1 - James was writing to the 12 tribes scattered abroad.
 - ii. Jas. 5:7 - The early and latter rain were characteristic of Palestine.
 - iii. Jas. 3:11 - There were springs which produced salt water exclusively and springs which produced only fresh water.
 - iv. Jas. 3:12 - Wine, figs and oil were main produce items in Palestine.
 - v. Jas. 3:4; 1:6 - Palestine was near the sea with the accompanying fierce winds.
- b. Other Scriptures imply this:
 - i. Gal. 2:1, 9 - When Paul went to Jerusalem he met James who was a pillar in the church at Jerusalem. James worked with the circumcised (Jews).
 - ii. Acts 12:17 - When Peter escapes prison and flees Jerusalem, he asks that the brethren inform James.
 - iii. Acts 15:13-21 - James is in attendance at the Jerusalem conference and offers some conclusive instructions for the dilemma they were facing.
 - iv. Acts 21:18 - When Paul comes to Jerusalem he speaks to James about the troubling Jewish believers.
- c. Tradition also bears this out:
 - i. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, quotes Hegesippus' account of James from the fifth book of his lost Commentaries: "After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the Church at Jerusalem... and went alone into the temple and prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees."

2. Verses 1-6 contain a warning and a rebuke toward the rich. Would the Jews be fitting recipients of this warning?

- a. The Bible says:
 - i. Luke 16:13-14 - The Pharisees (Jewish leaders) were lovers of money.
 - ii. Matt. 23:16-19 - Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for putting more emphasis on the gold of the temple than the temple itself, and the gift offered on the altar than the altar itself.
 - iii. Rev. 17:4; 18:3, 7, 9-20 - The woman clothed in purple and fine jewels, which is Babylon the Great, i.e., Jerusalem, is described as very materialistic.
- b. Uninspired quotes:
 - i. "Whoever has not seen Jerusalem in its splendor has never seen a fine city."
- *Babylonian Talmud (Succah, 51b)*
 - ii. "By far the most distinguished city not in Judea only, but of the whole Orient."
- *Pliny*

- iii. "A city, the fame of which has gone out from one end of the world to the other."
- *The Talmud*

3. What about the phrase “the last days” in verse 3?

- a. The phrase, “the last days,” has been given three different meanings:
 - i. The end of time
 - ii. The Christian age
 - iii. The end of the Jewish dispensation
- b. Does this phrase refer to the end of time?
 - i. Acts 2:16-17 - Peter said he was living in the last days.
- c. Does it refer to the Christian age?
 - i. Isa. 2:1-4 - In the last days the church would be established.
 - 1. The church was established during the last days of Judaism
 - 2. If “the last days” means the Christian age, then Isaiah would basically be saying that the Christian age would be established in the Christian age.
- d. Does it refer to the end of the Jewish dispensation?
 - i. Heb. 1:1-2 - God spoke through the prophets (in the old covenant age), but now in the last days has spoken through His Son.
 - ii. Matt. 24:14 - The gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all the world, then the end will come.
 - 1. Col. 1:6 - The truth has gone into all the world.
 - 2. Col. 1:23 - The gospel was preached to every creature under heaven.
 - iii. 1 Pet. 4:7 - The end of all things is at hand.
 - iv. Heb. 8:13 - The old covenant is ready to vanish away.
- e. In mentioning the last days, James is calling attention to the fact that this is the end for the Jews.

4. Why does James mention the “Lord of Sabaoth” in verse 4?

- a. The word Sabaoth “is a transliteration of a Hebrew word which denotes “hosts” or “armies.” (Vine’s, p.542)
- b. Sabaoth is a military term in the Old Testament.
 - i. 1 Sam. 17:45 - David came to Goliath in the name of the Lord of Sabaoth.
 - ii. Ps. 46:7-9 - The Lord of Sabaoth makes wars to cease.
- c. The military might of the Roman army would soon be directed by God to bring about the destruction of the Jewish people (Luke 21:20-24).

5. Why does James mention “a day of slaughter” in verse 5?

- a. The Bible says the destruction of Jerusalem was *the* great tribulation:
 - i. Matt. 24:21 - Then (at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem) there will be great tribulation
 - ii. Rev. 7:14 - These came out of the great tribulation
 - iii. “This (The Book of James - C.D.) was written not long before the siege of Jerusalem; during which, as well as after it, huge calamities came on the Jewish nation, not only in Judea, but through distant countries.” - *Wesley’s Notes*
- b. Josephus records the atrocities of the Jewish wars

- i. 1,100,000 people were killed; 97,000 were taken captive (Wars 6.9.3).
- ii. The famine had grown so bad that elders and children were beaten for their bread (5.4.24-38).
- iii. Some were reduced to eating the leather from shoes and belts (6.1.97-98).
- iv. Some even succumbed cannibalism of their own infants (6.2.5-12).
- v. Josephus said that this was the worst suffering since the beginning of the world (5.4.42; cf. Matt. 24:21).
- vi. There was room wanting for crosses, crosses wanting for the bodies (5.11.1).

6. What is this statement, “you have murdered the just,” in verse 6?

- a. The passage could be translated “the just (or righteous) one.”
 - i. The Greek word δίκαιον, is an adjective, accusitive in case, singular in number, and masculine in gender.
 - ii. The same word is used in 1 John 2:1, “Jesus Christ the righteous one (δίκαιον).”
 - iii. Also note the use of this word in: Matt. 10:41; Mark 6:20; Acts 3:14.
 - iv. Several versions translate James 5:6 as “the righteous one,” including: ASV, NASB, ESV, YLT, RSV, NRSV, etc.
- b. The Jews were the ones who murdered the just one, Jesus Christ.
 - i. Matt. 16:21; 20:17-19 - Jesus predicts His suffering, which will take place at Jerusalem, and come from the Jewish elders, chief priests, and scribes.
 - ii. Matt. 26:3-4; 27:1-2, 22-26 - They plotted to put Him to death and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate. They accepted His blood upon themselves and their children.
 - iii. Acts 2:36; 3:14-15; 4:8-10 - Peter told the Jews that they murdered the Christ.
 - iv. 1 Thes. 2:14-16 - Paul says that the Jews “killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us.”

7. What about “the coming of the Lord” in verses 7-9?

- a. This “coming” was something that was to take place within the lifetime of some of the original recipients of this letter.
 - i. Jas. 5:7 - Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord
 - 1. They were not told to be patient until they died, but until the coming of the Lord. This coming would take place within their lifetime (Matt. 23:34-37; 24:29-34).
 - 2. Guy Woods took the position that this coming is still unfulfilled.
 - a. He said, “The return of Christ is so real, so certain, so sure of fulfillment, that he is always regarded as near at hand” (Commentary on James, p. 277). But one wonders if he would allow the same interpretation of the words in Matt. 3:2 and 4:17 concerning the kingdom of God.
 - b. He also said, “Some are disposed to interpret the clause, “the coming of the Lord is at hand,” to mean that it was then imminent. That such was not its significance is clear from the fact that nearly two-thousand years have elapsed since these words were penned, and the Lord has not yet come” (p. 278). But what would brother Woods say about the coming of Christ that is mentioned in Matt. 24:29-34, which Jesus said would take

place within a generation (cf. Matt. 23:34-37)? Maybe bro. Woods, as well as many others, have a wrong understanding of the coming that is spoken of in this passage.

- ii. Jas. 5:8 - Be patient... the coming of the Lord is at hand
 - 1. The phrase "at hand" is translated from the Greek word ἤγγικεν.
 - a. Vine's - "Near, nigh, frequently rendered 'at hand'"
 - b. Thayer's - 1.) of Place and position, near; 2.) of Time, concerning things imminent and soon to come to pass.
 - 2. The word is found in:
 - a. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7 - The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - b. Matt. 26:45 - Jesus, speaking of His death, said, the hour is at hand.
 - c. Luke 21:20 - When Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, then its desolation is at hand.
- iii. Jas. 5:9 - The Judge is standing at the door!
 - 1. Matt. 24:33-34 - Jesus gave various signs of the coming destruction. When those signs began to appear, then the fulfillment was "at the doors."
 - 2. Luke 21:8 - Jesus warned against false prophets who would prematurely say, "the time has drawn near." James was no false prophet. The time was actually near in the first century.
- b. The coming of the Lord is elsewhere described as something that was imminent in the days of the apostles (Matt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:29-34; 26:64; John 21:22-23; 1 Cor. 1:7-8; 16:22; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

Other Notes:

(vv.10-11) Christians suffered greatly at the hand of the Jews. They were told to be patient as Job and the prophets were. Jews persecuted the faithful prophets, and Satan tormented righteous Job. Despite the fact that Christians suffered, they were God's people (not the Jews). And if they remained faithful, they would receive their reward (Rev. 2:10; 14:13).

(v.12) James provides a warning against swearing, which was apparently common among Jews. Jesus spoke as though this type of swearing was popular with the Jews (Matt. 5:33-37).

(v.17) The mention of the "three years and six months" may be coincidental, or not. That was the length of time that the Romans would take to finish Jerusalem (Rev. 11:2; 12:14; 13:5; Jos. Wars 4.4.5). Three and a half years would be "taken by the Jews as a symbol of times of tribulation (cf. Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2)" (Pulpit Commentary, vol. 21, p.72).

(vv.19-20) Brethren were falling from the Way. Jews were leaving the faith for the law, which would lead them to spiritual death as well as a brutal physical death (Gal. 5:4; The Book of Hebrews; etc.). Since the siege of Jerusalem would take place during the celebration of the Passover, Jews from all over the world would be trapped in the city.