



Sunday, May 30, 2010: "God's Righteous Judgments"

Scripture: James 5:1-12

Speaker: Joe Boot

Sermon Notes:

1. James is making a declaration primarily against the ungodly rich, and is warning of coming judgment for their crimes.
2. The unbelieving rich were guilty of: 1) hoarded wealth, 2) unpaid wages, 3) luxury and self-indulgence, and 4) murder of the innocent.
3. This passage bears a connection to Acts 6, and the Church's, or more specifically the deacon's, responsibility to care for the needy.
4. James is concerned to recognize the Church's responsibility to care for the needy.
5. In this passage, James refers to the laws of compensation (e.g. do not withhold the worker's wages) found in Leviticus 19:13-17.
6. James has in mind the dangerous neglect of charity and justice.
7. V2-3. "Wealth is rotten," "garments are moth-eaten." In James' day, beautiful garments were a form of wealth and sometimes used as payment. The garments, however, were susceptible to damage by moths while in storage (cf. Matt 6:19-21).
8. The uncontrolled greed of the ungodly rich was matched by their oppressive attitude towards others.
9. When we have an ungodly attitude towards wealth, God stands at the door in judgment. The most secure forms of wealth are then not secure.
10. The market is only as good as the morality of the people in it.
11. V4. God hears the cries of the oppressed and the helpless, not the cries of the proletariat. This is not revolutionary Marxism.
12. V5. James tells the ungodly rich that all the pleasure and luxury they're enjoying is God's work of fattening them for the day of slaughter.

13. V6. "Murder of the innocent" is both figurative and literal. By withholding wages the rich were depriving the defenseless workers and their families of their basic requirements for life.
14. People nowadays look for salvation through politics. But James isn't appealing to politicians. He's writing to the church about these injustices.
15. We need to reject the political illusion and stop turning to politics for the answer to every need. We need to believe that God can do in the future what He's done in the past through His people.
16. V7-8. We are not called to revolution. James tells us to be patient in the midst of oppression.
17. Judgment and salvation always come together (e.g. Jesus' ministry).
18. History is a series of judgments, culminating in the final Judgment.
19. People's sin has its own reward. Our time resembles that of Egypt being plagued for the hardness of Pharaoh's heart.
20. V9. Amidst instability, as a counter-cultural example "do not grumble against one another."
21. This is a time of instability all around the world. We cannot bury our heads in the sands and ignore what is going on.
22. In all things God works for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).
23. Patience means recognizing that there can be no peace without judgment.

Application Questions:

1. In verses 1-6, James addresses the ungodly rich. How is this passage also applicable to us?
2. Who does God hold responsible to care for the needy? What am I doing as a member of the Church and of the body of Christ to meet this responsibility?
3. Do I have an ungodly attitude towards wealth? Am I trusting in my money or assets for security in this world?
4. Do I look to politics and the government to fix society's problems?