

9. January 2026
EPISTLE OF JAMES
“Responsibility before God”

James 4:13–5:6

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain”; whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.

The apostle James continues with his warnings and utters serious words that should shake man and remind him of his transience. Human beings are not the masters of creation or history; ultimately, everything is in God's hands. Those to whom James addresses himself in today's passage clearly lack the humility and understanding necessary to recognize this, and so they are in danger of losing their way: “*you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*”

How beneficial it can be for human beings—who tend to overestimate themselves and believe themselves to be very important—to be reminded that they live in a false sense of security that can vanish at any moment! Sacred Scripture emphasizes this in various ways, for it knows well how harmful it is for human beings when they do not place themselves in the place God has assigned them. When this happens, they also fail to acquire a realistic view of their own life and that of others.

Was it not pride that blinded Lucifer to the point of aspiring, even to this day, to occupy the place that belongs only to God? Was it not thus that this high-ranking angel refused to serve and, in his arrogance, rebelled against God, stubbornly maintaining this

position? Did not the holy archangel have to expel him from the heavenly realms and remind him of the truth: *“Who is like God?”*

This presumption also dwells in us human beings, to varying degrees, and we become wise when we perceive it and try to overcome it.

The apostle James addresses those who boast and are arrogant, admonishing them and reminding them that *“Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”* This is what we call the sin of omission, and these words also exhort us to be attentive to the opportunities we have to do good and not to waste them.

In the following verses, the apostle addresses the rich who abuse their power. They live only for themselves and, moreover, they cheat those who have worked for them and enabled them to accumulate the wealth they now enjoy. Such people live in total illusion. That is the reality that the apostle James wants to make clear to them. They are not aware of what awaits them. They do not even remember God or that they will have to give an account of their lives to Him. Everything they now value and perhaps take pride in will rot and rust away. All that fleeting wealth in which they have placed their security may end up turning against them and accusing them. How will they be able to justify themselves when they stand before those whom they condemned and killed?

What terrible blindness many people live in, committing injustices without even realizing it, ignoring the voice that warns them from within and without to return to the right path!

The Epistle of James, like many other passages in the Holy Scriptures, emphatically reminds us that we will have to give an account of our lives to the Lord. This awareness is increasingly being lost in a society marked by modernism. Even in the Church, this forgetfulness of the transcendent dimension has taken hold. If we appeal too quickly to God’s mercy without first making clear the seriousness of sin, we lose the healthy fear that James’s words can instill in us—a fear that can shake us up and lead us to put our lives in order before God and seek His closeness. And this fear, in turn, can help us better understand the magnitude of God’s mercy.

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2020/01/09/>