

18. They are driven by the accomplishment of a frantic search for happiness. They are blinded from the immutable concepts of biblical guidance that provide divine viewpoint.
19. Despite all of this, they have available to them a tremendous amount of money. They can pursue whatever crosses their mind but, regardless of the situation, they simply are unhappy people.
20. This is Operation Venom: they are in a frantic search for happiness but the venom in their souls is the evidence that will convict them.
21. The verse continues in verse 3 with this phrase in the New American Standard Bible, "... it will consume your flesh like fire."
22. However, the phrase is far more graphic than this as we observe the grammar and the expanded translation. We have already established the fact that the words, **ὁ ἰός (ho iós)** is not translated "rust," but "venom." However, we have established that this phrase does seem to associate the passage with snakes.
23. The víperids: rattlesnakes and moccasins, and the ḗlapids: cobras, mambas, and corals, do eject venom from their fangs.
24. However, this venom is personified as eating their flesh as if by fire. This statement correlates with this description of the effects venoms have on a snake's victims:

Some snakes have specialized salivary glands that elaborate a potent poison, along with either grooved or tubular teeth to permit internal injection of the venom. As for the venoms, it is true that the terms neurotoxic [nervous system], hemotoxic [circulatory], and cardiotoxic [heart], ... are too simple for accurate statements concerning venom composition, but it is still accurate to say that some of the components of venoms cause changes in the red blood cells, coagulation defects, and blood-vessel injury, while others produce deleterious changes in sensory and motor functions and in respiration, and still others have a direct effect on the heart. Other venoms kill more slowly, and the snake bites, retires, and waits, finally trailing the bitten prey ... until it finds the already stiffening body.



Some snakes, in particular, the rear-fanged species [ēlapids], bite, chew, and hold on, eventually bringing the hindmost maxillary teeth into play, which permits the injection of toxins.³

25. The venom depicted in James 5:3 is emblematic of the venom in the souls of the two men in James's drama. No snakes are mentioned in the context, but the venom depicted is found in these men's souls.
26. They follow the well-worn path of the advanced stages of reversionism in their frantic search for happiness.
27. The venom is used to convict these men which will warrant divine discipline, first with illness then by the application of the sin unto death.
28. This venom is forecasted to eat their flesh as the English text suggests. The verb is predictive future active indicative of **ἐσθίω (esthiō)**: which is a predictive future describing the venom's future act of eating the men's flesh.
29. This is followed by a new sentence which begins with the relative adverb, **ὡς (hōs)**: "like," followed by the noun, **πῦρ (pūr)**: "fire."
30. This is followed by the plural aorist middle indicative of the verb, **θησαυρίζω (thēsaurízō)**: "treasure."
31. This stream is translated, "like fire you have accumulated treasure" and is followed by the phrase: **ἔσχατος (éschatos)**: "for the last," followed by **ἡμέρα (hēméra)**: "days." The "last days" refer to something that is catastrophic.
32. Here is the expanded translation of:

James 5:3 Your silver and gold have been tarnished [**no capacity for life**], and their venom of reversionism shall be for evidence against you, and it shall eat your pieces of flesh. Like fire, you have accumulated treasure for the crisis days. (EXT)

James 5:4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. (NASB)

1. The rich men of this chapter still retain the same amount of money they had before when they hired the workers to harvest their crops. The assets they owned, including their gold and silver, are still theirs.

³ Heinz Fritz Wermuth, "Reptiles," in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2010), 26:718–19.

2. As believers, they had the same opportunity to advance in the plan of God and enjoy all the benefits of the super-grace life, however, they had spent their time retrogressing into the advanced stages of reversionism.
3. Those who are in reversionism never experience what would have been the source of happiness becomes the source of misery. These men have lots of money, but instead of enjoying their financial prosperity they find it to be a curse.
4. James 5, verse 4, begins with the particle, **ἰδοὺ (ἰδοί)**: “Behold” or “Look.” Used as an exclamation and is designed to focus the attention of those addressed.
5. These reversionists are indeed rich. They are believers, but their spiritual life has for a long time been spent in reversionism. Any doctrine they had previously learned is now encrusted with scar tissue.
6. Their rate of forgetting exceeds the rate of recall. Vocabulary is diminished, norms and standards degenerate, momentum halts, and wisdom is lost, thus all spiritual functions shut down.
7. These men hired field workers to harvest their crops with a promise to pay them the standard wage at the end of the harvest. Here is a passage that addresses this situation:

Deuteronomy 24:14 “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.

v. 15 “You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the Lord and it become sin in you. (NASB)

8. This excerpt addresses this circumstance:

Prompt payment would have been very important for the laborer, who often got by at a barely subsistence level and who needed a steady income to provide “daily bread” for himself and his family. In a society where credit was not available, the failure to pay workers promptly could jeopardize life itself.

In an echo of Deuteronomy 24:15, which describes defrauded workers “crying out” to the Lord against their employers, James claims that the wages themselves *are crying out against you.*



What the rich think they do in secret, and without danger of prosecution, is not hidden from the *Lord Almighty*. *Almighty* captures the sense, if not the form, of the Greek here, which has the noun, σαβαώθ (*sabaōth*), the transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “armies.”

The [Hebrew] title *Lord of Hosts* [יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת] (*Yehowah Sevaō'th*) pictures God as the powerful leader of a great army. Sometimes this army is an earthly one, as when David expresses his confidence in the outcome of his fight by claiming to come “in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied (1 Samuel 17:45).

Therefore, when James affirms that the wrongdoing of the rich has become known to God, he makes clear that this God is holy, powerful, and determined to judge those who infringe his commandments.⁴

9. We encountered a similar situation back in James, Chapter 4. We had a difficult time with it then because stuck in the middle of James was Chapter 4, verses 4–6. Here is a brief review our efforts to decipher the Greek as apposed to the botched translation in the *King James Version*.
10. The original Greek text of the passage simply did not coalesce with the English translation of that passage which required an inordinate period of time to hash it all out. Here’s that review to compare that experience with what we have before us in James 4:4–6. So, here we go:

James 4:4–6 presents problems regarding its exegesis. Verse 4 has a poor translation in the King James Version that was somewhat improved by the New American Standard. Also, James’s Greek text provides a possible synopsis of a quote by Solomon in Proverbs 3:3–4. Whatever his source, James summarizes it in a parenthesis. Afterward, James then quotes Solomon’s text in verse 6. We start by quoting James 4, verse 4, from its expanded translation followed by the translation of verse 5 from two versions:

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 215–17.



James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not already know that keeping on being a lover of *cosmos diabolicus* is tantamount to alienation from God? Therefore, whoever has decided to be a lover of *cosmos diabolicus* does with enmity appoint himself an enemy of God. (EXT)

James 4:5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? (NASB)

1. It is also important to note that the *King James Version*’s translation of James 4:5 contains a blasphemous statement:

James 4:5 Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, “The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy [φθόνος (*phthónos*): best translated “jealousy”]?” (KJV)

2. How that got past the proofreaders at Westminster is a mystery, but there it sits in the clear light of day: “The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.” I don’t think the word “blasphemy” even starts the process of critiquing this sentence. Words to describe its use in this verse challenge the vocabulary of the English language, but what follows offers a paltry effort:

Profanation (prŏf'-a-nā'-shun). Act of profaning; specifically, act of violating sacred things; desecration. **Syn.** **Profanation** implies irreverence or contempt as shown in vulgar intrusion or vandalism; **desecration**, a loss of sacred character, as through pollution, defilement, or reduction to secular usage; **sacrilege**, a maltreatment of something sacred. **Profane** (prō-fāne). **1.** To violate or treat with irreverence, obloquy (ŏb'-lō-quy), or contempt (something regarded as sacred). **2.** To debase by a wrong, unworthy, or vulgar use. **4.** Serving to profane or defile that which is holy; blasphemous; irreverent.⁵

3. In James 4:5, the phrase, “The spirit that dwelleth in us” can only refer to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all Church-Age believers. In the KJV, the Holy Spirit is said to “lusteth to envy.” Yes, this is found in a Bible, but only in the King James Version’s English translation published in 1611.
4. In Scripture, the nouns, φθόνος (*phthónos*) and ζήλος (*zēlos*) are translated into English by both “jealousy” and “envy.” However, context determines which to use.

⁵ Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 2d ed. (1953), s.vv. “profanation,” “profane.”



5. This statement is a profanation as noted above so it is at first impossible to choose one. Nevertheless, as we go through the exegesis it will be revealed.
6. Now let us start serious exegesis of James 4:5. It begins with the disjunctive interrogative, **ἢ (hē)**: “Or,” followed by the phrase, “do you think.” “Think” is the present active indicative of the direct question, **δοκέω (dokéō)**: “presume.” This is the best translation because of the subjectivity of the statement.
7. James is pointing out that these miscreant believers expose the subjectivity of their thinking by asking the question, “Or do you presume,” followed by the conjunction **ὅτι (hóti)**: “that,” which follows the verb of perception, *dokéō*, “presume.”
8. What they are presuming is revealed by where they are in their spiritual lives, “the Scripture”: **ἡ γραφή (hē graphē)**. This refers to a principle communicated in the New Testament, but not specifically cited here.
9. Yet it clearly indicates that the Scripture does not communicate its doctrines in vain, the adverb, **κενῶς (kenōs)**, which is best translated, “to no purpose.”
10. At this point, James inserts a parenthesis that possibly paraphrases a verse from Scripture. It could be his summary of an Old Testament verse or his own personal contribution. Later he summarizes a verse from the *Tanakh*’s *Kethuvim* in James 4:6 which is clearly from Proverbs 3:34.
11. I think the following analysis addresses the dilemma faced by those who attempt to source the quotation in verse 5, yet we are left with no confirmed citation:

We find 4:5 difficult for two reasons: first, its meaning is ambiguous; second, it appears to offer a quotation from Scripture, even though nothing quite like “the spirit that he caused to dwell in us yearns jealously” (or any other meaning that can be construed from the Greek) corresponds to any known text, canonical or otherwise. If we knew what text James had in mind, the ambiguity of the statement no doubt would be more easily resolved, but without a known context for reference, the meaning of the verse stands very much a mystery.⁶

12. Some who have made the effort to discover this citation have concluded, including McCartney, that it is simply James’s summary of what he will cite from Solomon in verse 6, yet none of them put much stock in the idea.
13. Before James quotes Solomon, he offers a synopsis of what Solomon wrote:

⁶ Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 210.



James 4:5a Do you presume that Scripture speaks to us for no purpose with regard to jealousy? (EXT)

14. Next James inserts his parenthesis. It initially contains his assumed summary of Solomon's quote in Proverbs 3:34 which he cites in verse 6b.
15. All the English translations get tangled up with the King James Version's use of the terms, "envy" or "lust":
 - a. *The NET Bible* offers, "The spirit of God caused to lie within us has an envious yearning?"⁷
 - b. *The NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* reads, "He jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?"⁸
 - c. *The NIV Archaeological Study Bible* rephrases the verse to read, "Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?"⁹
 - d. *The Ryrie Study Bible: NASB* proposes, "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us."¹⁰
 - e. *The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV* updates the original with this translation: "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?"¹¹
16. In James 4:5b, James writes His paraphrase which in the Greek text begins a parenthesis that continues through verse 6a. Verse 5b is James's summary of Proverbs 3:34 which he then quotes in verse 6b.
17. The parenthesis begins with the proper pronoun, He: "He, the Holy Spirit, jealousy desires." The word "jealously" is the noun, φθόνος (*phthónos*), but as just noted above, this word "jealousy" belongs in the first half of the sentence which speaks of the Scripture addressing the issue of jealousy.
18. To repeat: the Holy Spirit is the subject of the second sentence regarding His indwelling ministry. Verse 5a addresses the Scripture's opposition to jealousy which is being practiced by the reversionists who are cited in the verse. **12**

(End JAS5-05. See JAS5-06 for continuation of study at p. 51.)

⁷ For more commentary see: James 4:5b, in *The NET Bible* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 2355n24tc.

⁸ *Biblical Theology Study Bible: NIV*, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 2232n4:5.

⁹ *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 2006: "Or that God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us; or that the Spirit he caused to live in us longs jealously."

¹⁰ See alternate reading in Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: NASB*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995), 1972n4:5.

¹¹ *The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV*, gen. ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2018), 2109n4:5.

12 All five English translations cited above miss this. To understand their conundrum, read the *NET Bible's* **Text-critical Note: tc 24** at James 4:5: "the more reliable and older witnesses have the causative verb, κατώκισεν (*katókisen*), which implies a different subject and πνεῦμα (*pneúma*) as the object: "The spirit that he causes to live within us ... κατώκισεν is the preferred reading."

