

The Gospel According to Matthew

By

G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.

Copyright © 1929

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

No Evidence of a Current Copyright for the Printed Book Found

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MATTHEW 6:19-24

THE King having declared the laws of human inter-relationship, and having dealt with the principles of Divine relationship, proceeded to the discussion of the attitude of His subjects towards earthly things. The subjects of the Kingdom still have necessary relationships with the earth. They are spiritually minded, but they have to touch material things. However much the inner life may be, and ought to be, in communion with that which is essentially spiritual, we can only continue to live at all as we touch and handle things which are seen and temporal.

The Manifesto of the King proceeds, therefore, to make clear what our relationship ought to be to the material things by which we are surrounded, and with which we have to deal.

Here, as on all former occasions, there is a remarkable absence of rules, but there is the clearest revelation of principle. Not by legal enactments, formulated, tabulated, and learned by heart; but rather by the creation of an atmosphere, and the indication of an attitude, does the King correct and condition our relationship to the things of the present life.

Broadly, He teaches that, in all contact of His subjects with earthly things, they must be dominated by a super-earthly consciousness. Men must deal with the wealth of the world, but if their consciousness is conditioned merely within that material wealth, they fail. If all their dealing with wealth is motivated by, and conditioned within a spiritual conception, then they will have found the deepest secret of life, and fulfilled the highest purpose of their Master. Men must have food to eat, must have clothes to wear; but if they spend all their days thinking about what they shall eat, or what they shall wear, they are not understanding or realizing the ethic of JESUS.

If, on the other hand, they recognize their Father's recognition of their need, and trust it; and then seek the Kingdom, in matters of food and in clothing, they are living in the realm of the true morality.

This section consists of two parts, each characterized by warning and instruction.

- The first is a revelation of the attitude of the subjects of the Kingdom toward wealth they are to be without covetousness.
- In the second section, which we shall take for our next study, the attitude of the same subjects toward necessary things is indicated they are to be without care.

This is the whole of His will for His people. This is not irrational; He proves it to be reasonable. This is not an appeal to credulity; it is a call for faith. This is not fatalism; it is the essence of fidelity, fidelity to the principles afore enunciated, to the purposes perpetually revealed, and to the great Lord and Master to Whom allegiance is owned.

In this first section, in which our Lord deals with the true attitude of His subjects toward wealth, let us first notice His distinct commands: "**Lay not up,**" . . . "**Lay up.**" Here is a negative and a positive "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.**" "**Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.**"

Then let us notice the comparison of values:

- On the one hand are treasures laid up on earth which moth and rust consume, and thieves break through and steal.
- On the other are treasures laid up in heaven, to which neither moth, rust, nor thieves have access.

Next we will notice CHRIST's reason for this injunction, and revelation of attitudes. "**Where thy treasure is, there will your heart be also.**"

Still further we will look at CHRIST's exposition of the urgency of His commandments. The single eye necessary to the true illumination of the life.

Finally, we will consider CHRIST's last word, "**No man can serve two masters.**"

First as to CHRIST's distinct command, "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.**" The same word occurs twice; in the one case as verb, and in the other as substantive. We come nearer to an appreciation of what He said when we read, "Treasure not up treasures upon the earth, but treasure for yourselves treasure in heaven."

The simple idea of the word treasure is that of placing something somewhere; but it is in striking contrast to other words which also mean to place something somewhere. There is a peculiar quality in the Greek word which is not suggested by our word "**treasure.**" Very literally the idea is to place something horizontally. There are other Greek words which mean to place something perpendicularly. Here we have an instance of the figurative element in language.

What was meant by placing horizontally? To place in a passive condition, as the word which indicates to place something perpendicularly means putting it in an active relationship. This word means to lay something aside horizontally that is, to store something up, to keep it; not to place something perpendicularly, ready for activity and work, but to hoard it.

It is the laying of things up, one thing upon another, piece upon piece, horizontally, that we may possess them, take care of them, and accumulate them. Every boy remembers that he has often been told, that the miser says coins are flat that they may rest; and the spendthrift says they are round that they may roll.

Now the King does not say that it is wrong to lay up, for while He says "**treasure not up**," He also says "**treasure up**."

We need to recognize the positive as well as the negative part of the command.

The common capacity to which He is here appealing is that of the passion for possession. There is not a single capacity of human life wrong inherently. The abuse of it, the misuse of it, is wrong. Whenever we see a man passionately desirous of possession we may say: That is all right. It may be made all wrong by his method and motive; by the way in which he attempts to possess, and the purpose for which he desires to possess. It is always the purpose at the back of things which matters. The King does not begin with externalities; He gets back to the deepest thing in a man's life, and deals with that.

It is as though He said: You have a passion to possess wealth, you want to be able to place things horizontally; and it is quite right that you should do so GOD made you so. Being, having, doing; that is the story of human life. There is no Beatitude on possessing, but possession may be sanctified.

We want to make our fortunes. We have desires as passionate as those of any man to possess. And the nearer we come to our Lord, and the more we know of the indwelling Spirit, the more powerfully is the passion to possess burning in our heart and life. But the question of importance is as to the principle upon which we seek possession.

- Passion without principle burns out the life.
- Principle without passion sterilizes it, and makes it hard and cold and stony.

That is a great word in the book of Ezekiel, spoken to the Prince of Tyre: "**I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.**"

What a strange bringing together of contradiction! "**Stones of fire.**"

- A stone is the last embodiment of principle hard and cold.
- Fire is of the essence of passion warm and energizing.

Put the two together, and we have stones principle; fire passion; principle shot through with passion, passion held by principle. Men have the passion to possess, to treasure up. What principle is going to govern us? That is the matter with which the Master is dealing.

The principle revealed is not that it is wrong to lay up treasures for ourselves, for when the Master comes to the positive statement, He distinctly says, "**Lay up for yourselves.**" We have not yet discovered the secret.

It is discovered in the phrases, "**Treasures upon earth.**" "**Treasures in heaven.**"

CHRIST says to His subjects, You are to fulfil that passion for possession by making your fortune, not for the present, the perishing, the passing; but for the future, the lasting, and the eternal.

You are to remember, with the passion burning within you, that you are not the child of to-day, you are not of the earth, you are more than dust; you are the child of tomorrow, you are of the eternities, you are the offspring of Deity. The measurements of your lives cannot be circumscribed by the point where blue sky kisses green earth. All the fact of your life cannot be encompassed in the one small sphere upon which you live. You belong to the infinite.

If you make your fortune on the earth, poor, sorry, silly soul, you have made a fortune, and stored it, in a place where you cannot hold it. Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning, when old earth passes from you. Make your fortune there. Possess not the things of the now; but the things of the now and the forever.

In dealing with CHRIST's comparison of values, we must allow for the Eastern coloring. Wealth consisted in those days very largely of fabrics, purple and fine twined linen: and the King says, I will tell you the story of them moths! That is a fine touch of tender sarcasm. There is no anger in it. There is no thunder in it. It is a fine play of the summer lightning. Moths! Your immortal life cannot be hurt by a moth; do not try to enrich it with stuff which moths eat.

Or, if you will take some other currency, such as metal, store it up, lay it horizontally, pile it up, make it your treasure. The King says, Rust! What is rust? Fire. Present in all things is this *eremacausis*, this slowly burning fire, which eats into, disintegrates your most solid metal, melting it into azure air. The subjects of the King are not to try and make themselves rich with things which the frail moth can ruin, and the silent rust destroy.

And once again, "**Where thieves break through and steal.**"

We need not dwell upon that. That is so modern that it needs no exposition.

What does JESUS say about the storing of the heavenly, about the laying up of treasure in heaven? Nothing positive; it is all negative, but thank GOD for the negatives of the spiritual world. No moth, no rust, no thief. If we can only store the true riches, as we work and toil, we shall know that no moth can ever eat the garment, or destroying fire touch the fine gold, or marauding thief rob us of that which is our own.

But next, why this urgency? - "**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**"

There is a passion for possession.

We must satisfy it. The thing which matters is not so much the possession of the treasure, as the effect the possession of the treasure will have upon us.

Here we hear our Lord's deepest heart speaking, and it is as though He said: "My child, I know that passion for possession; it is quite right; GOD made thee so. It must be met and satisfied; but I am seeking, even more than the satisfaction of any desire of thy life, proper as it may be, to teach thee that everything depends upon where thy treasure is as to where thy heart will be; and everything depends upon where thy heart is, as to what thou wilt be, for as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.

"If we take our treasures and place them here, our heart will be here, and we shall be here, and we shall become of the earth earthly, sensualized, materialized, degraded, because we have put our treasure here. But if we put our treasure out yonder in the infinite, if we somehow learn the secret of laying up treasure beyond, our heart will be beyond, and our life will be lifted, and all the light of the infinite spaces will be within us, and all the love of the Infinite Heart will dominate us, and all the undying life of the infinite GOD will be ours, surging, beating, thrilling, throbbing through us."

And then, as though the Lord turned from these things to give an exposition of the meaning and urgency of it all, He says, "**The light of the body is the eye.**" The light is outside it, beating all round about it, but it is the lamp which catches the light, and enables us to see and to realize.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

The word "**evil**" here does not mean wicked, but *out of order*.

Evil is a larger word than sin. Evil includes sorrow, and affliction, and calamity, and fault, as well as definite and positive and willful sin. "**If thine eye be evil**" - out of order - "**thy whole body shall be full of darkness.**"

Here JESUS seems to say, the thing of utmost importance is that you should have a right view of these things in satisfying the passion for possession. You must have a true view, and that is what He has been attempting to give. The single eye. The evil eye. These are the contrasts.

- The single eye is the eye that is unified or simple.
- The evil eye is the eye that is not simple.

An oculist will tell you that there is such a thing as astigmatism a malformation of the lenses, of such a nature that rays of light proceeding from one center do not converge in one point. The single eye is the eye without astigmatism. It is the eye with the lenses properly adjusted, of such a nature that rays of light proceeding from one center do converge at one point.

JESUS was not using the word here carelessly when He said "**single.**"

It is the eye which has no obliquity, which sees everything true, and in proper proportion. If the eye be evil, then how great is the darkness, what misunderstanding of life, what dire and disastrous failure!

In *Modern Painters* John Ruskin says: "Seeing falsely is worse than blindness. A man who is too dim-sighted to discern the road from the ditch may feel which is which; but if the ditch appears manifestly to be the road, and the road to be the ditch, what shall become of him? False seeing is unseeing, or the negative side of blindness."

That is the modern method of saying what JESUS said in far more remarkable language: If your eye is single your body is full of light. If it is evil, suffering from malformation, distorted in its view, then your conceptions will be false. The single eye is the eye that looks always toward the infinite, and answers the passion of the soul to possess, in the light of it. The evil eye is the eye that suffers from astigmatism, or obliquity, and has varying centers, and varying reasons, and no focused light, and consequently produces a degraded conception of things.

Finally, the King sums up, saying, "**No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.**"

Here is the deepest thing of all. We want to possess. What shall we do with this passion of our life? We must worship with it, as we must worship with every passion. With it we may worship Mammon. With it we may worship GOD. We cannot do both.

That is the great distinctive principle. No man can become the slave of his treasure and worship it, without thereby proving himself traitor to GOD. No man can be the bond-slave of GOD, worshipping and serving Him with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the strength, and be enslaved by Mammon.

- "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.**"

- "**Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.**"

Does our Lord, then, mean that we are to have nothing to do with the wealth of the earth when He says, "**Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**"?

Does He simply mean we are to pray, and strive, and work for the salvation of men? All that we are to do, but that is not what the Lord means here. He is simply speaking of earthly treasure from beginning to end.

He is referring to the same class of treasure when He says, "**Lay not up treasures upon earth,**" as when He says, "**Lay up treasure in heaven.**"

He does not mean by this second "**Lay up treasure,**" your toil and prayer and work. He is speaking of the self-same material, earthly wealth. He teaches His people what is the right and wrong use of wealth. He tells them how to deal with a super-abundance of wealth.

You may say: There is not a man who has a super-abundance. There is not a man who has not a superabundance! This is not an attempt to put any measure upon the quantity of it. Do you know what is necessary after all?

What GOD has promised to supply us with in the matter of material things is that which is necessary for our life to-day - bread and water; that is all GOD has promised.

His "**bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure.**" Whatever additions you have had to bread and water, have been superabundance. Think it out in the light of all CHRIST's habit of teaching, and you will come to the recognition of the fact that we are living in an age which is being spoiled by its softness. We call very many things necessary to-day that our fathers called luxuries.

A man may say, What shall I do? "I cannot lay purple up in heaven, ducats up in heaven! Oh, yes, you can! CHRIST hereby declares that every child of His love, and every subject of His Kingdom, is the steward of all he possesses, and that, beyond the necessities, with which we shall deal in our next study, all the superabundance is to be at the disposal of the King, in the interests of the Kingdom of heaven.

On another occasion He said, "**Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail**" - the friends that you have made by means of the mammon "**may receive you into everlasting habitations.**"

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

Do not take the mammon and pile it to possess it. So use it as to make friends by its means, that presently they, the friends, shall meet you, and greet you in the everlasting habitations.

Let us make such a fortune that when at last we come home we shall be greeted by the friends that we have helped to reach home. Let us rather have our fortune on the other side than on this.

~ end of chapter 14 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
