

Store Up Treasures in Heaven, Where Thieves Do Not Break in and Steal

Matthew 6: 19-24

DIG: How did the Pharisees and Torah-teachers misinterpret Deuteronomy 28? What alternatives does Jesus propose with respect to **treasures** in verses 19-21, generosity in verses 22-23, and **masters** in verse 24? What is the link between the **treasure** and the **heart**? The **heart** and generosity? **Master** and **money**? What are the five wise habits that can help you gain financial freedom?

REFLECT: Considering this past week, is your bank account on earth or in heaven? What are your priorities? Do you want to change accounts? Who has been the boss lately? Why can't you **serve two masters**? What choice have you made?

In the Lord's tenth example of true righteousness, He teaches us about attitudes toward material possessions and how the Torah differed from pharisaic Judaism. Once again **He** challenges us to evaluate our inner priorities and values in light of the world around us. There is nothing inherently wrong with wealth. We read about godly people like Abraham and Solomon who were extremely wealthy. But it is our attitude toward wealth that is crucial. **Money** is not the problem . . . **the love of money is the problem. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:10).**

In **Deuteronomy 28** **God** promised that **He** would bless the Israelites materially if they walked in obedience to **His** Word, and **He** also promised to discipline them by reducing them to poverty if they disobeyed. As a result, **the rabbis used their material prosperity as imagined evidence of their spirituality, proclaiming without shame that they were materially blessed because they were spiritually superior.** **Deuteronomy 38** describes blessing through obedience; however, any wealth accumulated by greed, dishonesty, deceit, or any other immoral means are not to be conceived of as blessings from **the LORD**. To claim **ADONAI's** approval merely on the basis on one's wealth, health, prestige, or anything else is to pervert **His** Word and **His** name. Nevertheless, the greatest goal in lives of the religious leaders during **Jesus'** day was to accumulate material wealth.

Both the rich and the poor have their own spiritual problems. But this passage is directed at the wealthy that are tempted to trust in their possessions and become self-satisfied in the false security of their **treasures.** **In the present passage Yeshua looks at materialism - particularly in regard to luxuries - from the three perspectives of priorities, generosity, and obedience.**

First, Messiah has us take a look at our priorities. What is really important to us and how can we demonstrate that belief? To begin with, the Lord reminds us not to put our entire faith in the material world. **Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal (Mattityahu 6:19).** The context here suggests a stockpiling of **money** that is not being used, but hoarded for its own sake to make a show of wealth. The key to Yeshua's warning here is **yourselves**. When we accumulate **possessions** simply for our own sakes, whether to hoard or spend lavishly, those **possessions** become idols. **But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal (Matthew 6:20).** Where we can reap eternal dividends. Christ is not saying that if we put our **treasure** in the right place our **heart** will then be in the right place, but that the location of our **treasure** indicates where our **heart** already is. Spiritual problems are *always* **heart** problems. Sinful acts come from a sinful **heart**, just as righteous acts come from a righteous **heart**.

It is clear from this passage, as well as from many others in Scripture, that Jesus is not advocating poverty as a means to spirituality. In all His many encounters, He only once told a person to **sell your possessions and give to the poor (Matthew 19:21).** In that particular case, the young man's case, his wealth was his idol, and consequently became a barrier between him and the lordship of Yeshua Messiah. It provided a great opportunity to test whether or not he was willing to give the steering wheel of his life to the Lord. It turned out that he would not. The problem was not in his wealth itself, but his unwillingness to part with it. The Galilean Rabbi did not explicitly require His apostles to give up all their money and other possessions to follow Him, although it may be that some of them did so. However, He did require obedience to His commands no matter what the cost. Evidently the price was too high for the wealthy young ruler, to whom **possessions** came first.⁵⁷²

For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be (Matthew 6:21). The most powerful life is the most simple life. The most powerful life is the life that knows where it's going, that knows where the source of strength is, and the life that stays free of clutter and haste. Being busy is not a sin. Jesus was busy. Paul was busy. Peter was busy. Nothing of significance is achieved without effort and hard work and weariness. Being busy, in and of itself, is not a sin. But being busy in the endless pursuit of things that leave us empty and hollow and broken inside - that cannot be pleasing to God. The result is only weariness and dissatisfaction.⁵⁷³

There are five wise habits for financial freedom. First, keep good records (**Proverbs 27:23-24**); secondly, plan your spending (**Proverbs 21:5; Ecclesiastes 5:11**); thirdly save for the future (**Proverbs 13:11 and 21:20a**); fourthly, tithe. We need to support those who feed us spiritually (**Matthew 10:5-11; Luke 9:1-5; and 13:29; First Timothy 5:17-18**), but after that the percentage we give will be determined by the love of our own hearts and

the needs of others (see **Do - When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**); fifthly, enjoy what you have (Ecclesiastes 6:9; Hebrews 13:5).

Second, Jesus wants us to look at our generosity, because that trait reveals much about our heart. Are we greedy, constantly seeking to satisfy our own desires, or are we generous, and concerned about others. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, that is, if you are generous, your whole body will be full of light. In Judaism, "having a good eye," or *'ayin tovah*, means *being generous*, and "having a bad eye," or *'ayin ra'ah*, means *being stingy*. **But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness (Matthew 6:22-23). The eye that is bad flows out of the heart** that is selfishly indulgent. The person who is materialistic and greedy is spiritually blind. The principle is simple and sobering: the way we look at and use our **money** is a sure barometer of our spiritual condition. That this is the correct interpretation is confirmed by the context, greed and anxiety about **money** being the topic in both the preceding and following verses. This passage is another link in the chain of evidence that New Covenant events took place in Hebrew.⁵⁷⁴

Third, Yeshua wants us to really understand where our obedience lies. Who or what is our master. We have to make a choice. There is no middle ground. Just as we cannot have our **treasures** both **in heaven** and **on earth**, be *generous* and *stingy*, we cannot **serve two masters** (Greek: *kurios*). Consequently, **Jesus** forcefully declares: **No one can serve two masters (Mattityahu 6:24a).**

Kurios, or **masters**, is often translated lord and refers to a **slave** owner, not merely an employer. A person could have several employers at the same time and work for each of them satisfactorily. Many people today hold two or three jobs. But the idea here is one of **slaves** and that a **slave** owner has total control over the **slave**. For a **slave**, there is no such thing as a part-time obligation to his **master**. He owns full-time service to a full-time **master**. He is totally owned and controlled by his **master**. He has nothing left for anyone else. To give anything to anyone else would make his **master** less than **master**. It is not simply difficult, but utterly impossible, to **serve two masters** and be obedient to both.

Over and over again the B'rit Chadashah speaks of **Meshiach** as **Lord** and **Master**, and of believers as **His bondslaves**. Rabbi Sha'ul tells us that before we were saved we were enslaved to sin, which was our **master**. **Don't you know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, then, of the one whom you are obeying, you are slaves - whether of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to being made more righteous.** But when we were saved, we became slaves to **God** and of **righteousness**. But by **God's** grace to you, you, who were once slaves to sin, obeyed from your heart the pattern of teaching to which you were exposed; and after you have been set free from sin, you became enslaved to **righteousness (Romans 6:16-18).**

Yeshua is not saying that we don't need work, that we don't need to eat, or that we shouldn't bother about how we dress. He was warning against those things becoming so important that we become slaves to **money** instead of trusting **Him**. We cannot claim **Christ** as **Lord** if our allegiance obedience lies with anything or anyone else, including ourselves. And when we know **God's** will but resist it, we show that our loyalty is with something or someone else. We can no more **serve two masters** at the same time than we can walk in two directions at the same time.⁵⁷⁵ We **will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24b)**. Such a teaching was designed to correct the Pharisee's false attitude toward **money**.

In 1915 Pastor William Barton started to publish a series articles. Using the archaic language of an ancient storyteller, he wrote his parables under the pen name of Safed the Sage. And for the next fifteen years he shared the wisdom of Safed and his enduring spouse Keturah. It was a genre he enjoyed. By the early 1920s, Safed was said to have a following of at least three million. Turning an ordinary event into an illustration of a spiritual truth was always a keynote of Barton's ministry.

We took a journey, I and Keturah, and we Changed Cars in a certain city, and we lodged there One Night in an Inn. And we walked abroad after we had Dined, and it was evening. And the Shops were closed, but the Movies were open. And we gave Two Dimes unto a Damsel in a Glass Cage, and we went in and sat down.

And we beheld a Moving Picture, the theme whereof was The Reward of Virtue. And it was concerning a Young Woman who loved Art with a Capital A, and who appeared not to love Dishwashing. And she left her Home and went to a Great City and Studied Art. And she was subject to Great Temptations, all of which were Shown to us, and the way she was Tempted was A Plenty. But nothing tempted her to go Back Home and help her mother Wash the Dishes in the Kitchen Sink. So she Came to the Very Brink. And the man who Tempted her Most was a Millionaire in Disguise. And the More he Tempted her the more he Loved her. And when he found that he could not have her without Marrying her, he offered to marry her. And they were Married. So the Reward of Virtue was Cash in the Bank. And we Sat Through this Highly Moral Movie. And we yawned, both of us.

Then spake I to Keturah, and said, There are Two More Films. Shall we stay for them?
And she said, This stuff doth not amuse me.
And I said, It is not up to Our Speed. Let us go.
So we went while the Going was Good.

And as we wandered, we came to a Down Town Church, where the rich had moved away, and the poor remained. And the door was open and we went in. And there was a Prayer

Meeting. And there were Not as Many people there as there were in the Movies. And they who loved the Lord spake there to each other, and comforted one another, and lifted their prayers to God for Courage for the Day's Job.

And we saw in their Faces, and heard in their Words such Dramas and Tragedies as No Movie ever invented. And the Reward of Virtue for them was in Faith to go on, and the Approval of Conscience, and the Peace of **God**.

And we Returned unto the Inn, and I answered Keturah, and said,
That also was a Moving Picture, and it was Great Stuff.
And Keturah said, That was the Real Thing. That was Life.
And when we knelt beside our Bed that Night,
we prayed for Both Companies of people.⁵⁷⁶