

# The Return of the King Revelation 6-19

## Peter's Lessons on: the End of the World, Materialism, Contentment & the Un-Cluttered Life

2 Peter 3:12-13

Jesus sat down and shared with us His disciples the facts of earthly life. That's how I describe the Sermon on the Mount.

### The Facts of Earthly Life

Those chapters contained Jesus explaining the basics about salvation, prayer, relational dynamics, and earthly treasures. We've studied the prayer portion at length, as well as the salvation portion. But the treasure lesson is what we'll see today. Look at Mt. 6:19-24.

“Do not **lay up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your **treasure** is, there **your heart** will be also. 22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 “**No one can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and riches** (Greek word *mamonas*).

Jesus told us clearly that materialism, or the craving after the things riches can buy, first **enslaves our hearts** (v.19-21); then it **takes captive our minds** (v. 22-23), and finally **conquers our will** (v. 24):

Either we **lay up treasures in Heaven** that can never be lost (Mt. 6:19-21);  
Or we **clutter our life on Earth with things** & lose our treasures in Heaven.  
There is no middle ground Jesus said. We **can't serve two masters** (Mt. 6:24).

Peter heard those facts from Jesus in person. He chose to act on what Christ said.

### Peter Never Forgot

As we open to 2 Peter 3, we are opening into a final session Peter had with the growing churches he had poured his life into. They were now scattered across the heart of the Roman Empire.

They were facing both fiery trials, and glittering allurements. They were torn between: loyalty to Christ and painful persecutions, or floating along with the world and its endless pursuits of pleasure and possessions.

Peter's congregation sounds eerily similar to the church in America, of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **Are You Floating or Fighting?**

We either stop floating along with the crowd that lives for the weekend sports, the weekend parties, the weekend fun, and live every day as sacred for Christ: and suffer.

Or, we just float along with the world as believers; and enjoy, as much as we can, the best of both worlds.

Are you floating along in the river of materialism this morning? Or are you fighting against its control of your heart, mind, and will? That is the proof of who we really serve.

We try to stay focused on the Lord especially on Sundays, but so much of our life is consumed with things, activities, and pursuits: that it is very hard to focus on God. Jesus said how hard it is to follow His path. Peter agrees:

## **Godly Living is a Struggle**

We can see that very little has changed from Peter's day to ours; and God's Word speaks so clearly to our lives as it did to theirs, twenty centuries ago. That is the power of the supra-cultural, timelessness of the Scriptures.

So, what were Peter's lessons to them, and to us, by the power of the Spirit of God's inspired Word?

Peter targets them and us with a reminder that all of our homes, cars, collections, gadgets, trophies, treasures, investments, and anything else material in our lives: face a future, fiery destruction by God Himself.

Please join me 2 Peter 3:11-13 (NKJV), and learn from Peter how to live for things in life that won't ever get burned up and be forever lost. Please stand as we hear God speak through His Word.

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Peter said, if you know in advance that everything around you is going to get dissolved like trash in an incinerator, what should you focus on? In other words, two thousand years ago Peter asked these believers:

## What on Earth are You Living For?

Peter heard Jesus warn him that materialism, or the craving after the things riches can buy, first **enslaves our hearts** (v.19-21); then it **takes captive our minds** (v. 22-23), and finally **conquers our will** (v. 24). Peter knew Jesus meant that:

Either we **lay up treasures in Heaven** that can never be lost (Mt. 6:19-21);  
Or we **clutter our life on Earth with things** & lose our treasures in Heaven.  
There is no middle ground Jesus said. We **can't serve two masters** (Mt. 6:24).

So Peter is asking them and us:

Should we spend our lives collecting and guarding, seeking out and holding onto trash that will only be taken away from us by God and burned (1 Cor. 3:13-15), or eternal treasures that last, stay with us forever, and that we can give as endless offerings of worship to God (Mat. 6:19-21)?

That seems like quite a clear-cut choice, doesn't it? Which led to the writing down of:

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So Peter lays it out for those saints in Century 1, and for all of us since. Inspired by God who jealously wants all of our attention, all of our affections and cravings, Peter passionately pens his final words in 2 Peter 3.

Here are his five lessons, and as we will note that each revolves around a warning about materialism:

- Materialism Blurs our Purpose in Life as Disciples: **Live Redemptively** (v.1-9)
- Materialism Clouds our Minds with the Idolatry of Coveting: **Keep Alert** (v. 10-11)
- Materialism Clutters Our Lives with Discontent: **Build Fireproof** (v. 12-13)
- Materialism Blinds Our Eyes with Earthly Treasures: **Look Up** (v. 14-17)
- Materialism Corrodes Our Wills by Serving Two Masters: **Obey Jesus** v.18

There never a more relevant message for any group of people than those at the heart of the Roman Empire in Peter's day; and us in the heart of American materialism today. Peter's second lesson was:

## **Beware of Materialism Clouding Your Minds with the Idolatry of Coveting v. 10-11**

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, since **all these things will be dissolved**, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

Peter notes the choices we are to pursue all through life by what he said at the end of v. 11. Note the pair of words he uses: "in holy conduct and godliness". These two words are nearly un-translatable into English because they are both plural. To put them in the plural form is the way in Greek that you would communicate that they are to be spread all over every part of our lives.

The sense is that **holy conduct is the action** of how I live my life.

**Godliness is the attitude** of reverence that is central to my life.

Both holy conduct and godly reverence should be all over everything we are and do.

Holy conduct is to rule my behavior, and godliness is to rule my heart; and that means that it overflows and spreads out to cover and influence everything in my life.

## **We Are All Designed to Crave**

Peter already reminded them in his first letter that we were born with a hard-wired desire for things. It is part of what 1 John 2 calls the lusts of the eyes and flesh. We long for things, and crave them like the Israelites craved in the wilderness. Craving for things displeases God who has asked us to crave after Him.

Look back at 1 Peter 1:13-17 (NKJV).

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and **rest your hope fully** upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, **not conforming yourselves to the former lusts**, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." 17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, **conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear**;

## Crave God not Things

We are to deny the urge for living just to satisfy our eyes and our pleasures. We are to think often about what God wants us to do. How He wants us to live. We must not find our joy in things, our satisfaction in things, our hope in things. That is materialism. If we have any questions, God's Word makes it clear.

Peter says that the way we know we are headed the right way, following the right path is when we feel like aliens on earth, and strangers to the system. Look across the page at 1 Peter 2:11-12 (NKJV):

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts** which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

So what is the answer God prompts Peter to write?

## Resisting Idols: Pleases God

So what is the answer God wants from us? Look back at 2 Peter 3:10-11. God said we keep our lives from suffering loss, from having the legacy of our life destroyed:

- **By living for what lasts** v. 10 or what do we have that won't burn!
- **By living for what pleases Him** v. 11 so we won't be ashamed when He shows up unexpectedly!

What exactly is Peter talking about that displeases God? Years after Peter, we find in 1 John that the last living Apostle uses the same word Peter was instructed to use. It does

not please God for us to crave and sacrifice for what He is telling us to abandon. Look at 1 John 2:15-17:

**Do not love** the world or **the things in the world**. If anyone **loves the world**, the love of the Father **is not in him**. 16 For all that is in the world—

- the **lust of the flesh**: (the craving of the body chasing pleasures);
- the **lust of the eyes**: (the lusting of the eyes chasing stuff)
- the **pride of life**: (the boasting of the mouth chasing status)

—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 **And the world is passing away, and the lust of it**; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Just like Lot's wife, **when we long** for what God has already said He is going to destroy, **we displease Him**. One of the last words to the church from the Apostles are John's words that end his epistle. He said to believers: keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21).

Should we spend our lives collecting and guarding, seeking out and holding onto trash that will only be taken away from us by God and burned (1 Cor. 3:13-15)? That is idolatry.

Or should we spend our lives laying up eternal treasures that will stay with us forever, and that we can give as endless offerings of worship to God (Mat. 6:19-21)? Which means we are back to asking:

## What are some 21<sup>st</sup> Century Idols?

Do you remember the 10<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments?

Exodus 20:17 (NKJV) *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."*

In 21<sup>st</sup> Century terms, God is saying watch out for six dangerous idols that can ruin your life, destroy your eternal legacy, and pierce you through with many pains:

- *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house"*.  
Don't long for all the bigger, better, beautiful, spacious, comfortable houses you've seen and don't have.

Don't wish for it, or get a second job to earn more money for it, or spend all your time looking for it: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with the house you have; and use all your extra time to serve Me instead of longing for a bigger and better house.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife”.*

Don’t long for all the externally looking prettier, skinnier, younger women you’ve noticed in life.

Don’t wish you had one like the ones you see at work, don’t wish you had one like you see on TV, in movies, or online.

Don’t wish she looked like a gymnast, or a cheerleader, or an actress/model: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with the wife God has given you; and use your extra time to serve your wife and children instead of longing for a better wife.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s male servant, nor his female servant”.*

Don’t long for a more comfortable life with less hard work, with less struggles and cares, and with more free time to do what you please, like all the rich and the famous you’ve watched, and heard about: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with the place in life where God has put you; and use your extra time live more of each day for His glory, surrendering for His will to be done in your life.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s ox” [his plow animal or job].*

Don’t long for that dream job that everyone else has, with all the freedom, perks, security, and high pay like you’ve seen or heard about: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with what God has placed into your hands to do for Him, and trust Him to guide your path; and use your extra time to stay tuned into His Word, and following God’s leading, and you will have the very best job in life that is possible to have.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s ox” [his transportation].*

Don't wish you had a car (or truck, or boat, or bike, or motorhome, or snowmobile, etc.) like others have, that is bigger, newer, fancier, sportier, or more powerful or impressive: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with what you have, and thank God for all the struggles your car gives you because that is what God uses to increase our faith, our patience, and our dependence upon Him; and use your extra time and energy you save in not trying to impress everyone around you to start spending more time pleasing God.

- *"You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's."* God says we are not to long for anything we don't have that someone else has: ***because that is idolatry!***

Which takes us back to where we started. Look at 2 Peter 3: 12 Peter's warning is that:

## **Materialism Clutters Our Lives: Build Fireproof v. 12-13**

*Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

That is where we start next week. But before we go, we need to say something as a response to God. Reach down, take your hymnbooks and turn with me to # 366: All to Jesus.

Please stand with me and offer this surrender to God:

1. All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.

I surrender all, I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

2. All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow, Worldly pleasures all forsaken; Take me, Jesus, take me now.
3. All to Jesus I surrender, Make me, Savior, wholly Thine; Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit, Truly know that Thou art mine.
4. All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee; Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me.

Lyrics: Judson W. Van de Venter (1855-1939)