

The Return of the King Revelation 6-19

Materialism Blinds Our Eyes to Christ

With Earthly Treasures

2 Peter 3:14-17

As we open to 2 Peter 3:14-17 this morning, we are coming to Peter's fourth element in how to build an uncluttered, focused life that survives the fires of Revelation 6-19's Return of the King.

Peter most clearly explains the Day, of the Lord's Second Coming as King, and we need to frame our understanding of Rev. 6-19 through the other Scriptures God has already given to us.

Avoiding the Pitfalls

Peter who is writing at the end of his life, lays out for the early church these very practical keys to a life that pleases God; and avoids the pitfalls that are so easily entangling and distracting believers from their calling in Christ.

Here again are his five lessons that revolve around warnings 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** to Christ with Earthly Treasures: **Look Up** (v. 14-17)
- Materialism **Corrodes Our Wills** by Serving Two Masters: **Obey Jesus** v.18

Our challenge today is to:

Beware of Spiritual Blindness

As we stand, listen to Peter's heart reflected in these words to Christ's Church, breathed out through Peter by the Spirit of God.

2 Peter 3:14-17 (NKJV) Therefore, beloved, **looking forward to these things**, be diligent to be found by Him **in peace, without spot and blameless**; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to

understand, which untaught and unstable people **twist to their own destruction**, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, **beware lest you also fall** from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

The Gospels are the Context of Peter's Epistles

Before Peter wrote his two Epistles in our Bibles called 1 & 2 Peter, he had already written down what we call the Second Gospel. The Gospel by Mark is Peter's account of Christ's life, using Mark as his scribe to capture the sights and sounds of 3 plus years with Christ that had so filled Peter's heart and mind.

The amazing element of the Gospel by Mark is its eyewitness flavor. Someone was recounting as an on-the-scene reporter, describing elements that could only have been noted by someone actually there. Most conservative Bible scholars agree with the early church that believed the person recounting those scenes in Mark was none other than Peter.

Among all the scenes in Christ's ministry, one is very insightful. Jesus said something that stunned Peter as he stood and watched this scene unfold with Christ.

Always remember that Peter heard and understood Jesus from the context of who he was.

Peter's Biography

Jesus found Peter along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where he lived and worked as a fisherman. Peter is presented in the Gospels as a hard-working, self-employed, diligent business man trying to support and care for his family. But Peter's motivation for his career, for his finances, and for his goals in life radically changed one day as he listened to and heard what Jesus was saying.

What Jesus had said, Peter just couldn't forget.

Look with me at that incredible moment of Peter's life in Mark 10:17-22.

A wealthy man enthusiastically came to Jesus. Peter watched as this man "ran", "knelt" in front of Jesus and then posed the ultimate of all questions to Christ: how can I be sure I have eternal life not eternal death. That is v. 17.

That must have made Peter's heart well up with joy. Such an important and wealthy man

could really help the work of Christ that Peter was a part of. The next exchange was what stunned Peter. These words must have made him shake his head to be sure he was hearing properly.

Jesus bluntly told this eager, zealous young man who wanted to join in following Christ that he must sell all of his vast possessions, give away the fortune to the poor, and then follow Christ. That was Christ's pathway for that man, to inherit eternal life. That is a summary of v. 18-21.

The result must have been so disheartening for Peter. In fact, Peter's eyewitness account even captured the emotional response that this man registered: "But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22, NKJV).

Christ's Unrelenting Lesson: Riches are a Handicap

As always, Jesus had an intentional teaching moment planned. The Lord Jesus was training Peter as the rest of the Twelve, and this lesson was vital. What did Jesus want them to know? *Riches are a handicap to eternal life, not an aid.* Jesus was unrelenting in His position: it is impossible for anyone trusting in riches to get into Heaven. Period.

Listen to what He said in v. 23-27:

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples **were astonished** at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. 26 And they were **greatly astonished**, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "**With men it is impossible**, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."(NKJV)

Peter and the rest of the disciples were astonished, greatly astonished. Money seemed to be the best thing to have, it made life easier; and that is so true from an earthly standpoint.

More money, more power. More money, more freedom. More money, more security. But Jesus added something they had never thought of. Money makes *earthly life easier*, but money can also make *eternal life impossible*.

Jesus was pointing out before their very eyes that material possessions tend to rivet the owner's attention upon earthly matters, to the exclusion of heavenly. Wealth can enslave us without us even realizing what is happening. So Jesus said: Beware. Riches are a

Handicap.

Peter had already heard Jesus explain the dangers that money, possessions, and pursuits posed to even listening to the Word that brings salvation. We can be captured and controlled by our recreations, comforts, and possessions. Look back at Mark 4:19:

Jesus warned: “and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (NKJV).

The rich young ruler of Mark 10 illustrates the most deadly byproduct of wealth: it hardens the soul against the requirement Jesus gave of simply clinging to Him for salvation. When our hands are full of earth’s treasures it is hard to really come to the point of trusting Christ alone and saying with the hymn Rock of Ages:

*Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to the cross I cling.*

Now, join me as we go back to 2 Peter 3:14-17.

Materialism Blinds Our Eyes to Christ With Earthly Treasures

Peter taught those early believers life lessons in protecting their spiritual sight. Note those lessons with me:

- **We are to live peacefully** v. 14 (“*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace*”). Materialism makes us restless and discontent.
- **We are to live evangelistically** v. 15 (“*and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation*”). Materialism makes us forget why we are really here, which is to invest our lives in making disciples for Christ's Church. That is what we were called, created, gifted, and placed on earth to do!
- **We are to live Biblically** v. 16 (“*, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*”). Materialism makes us neglect the Word, forget our fellowship times with Christ, and rob us of the needed daily nurture for our souls.
- **We are to live confidently** v. 17 (“*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked*”). Materialism deceives us into following the errors of wicked people who do not know and do not follow the Lord.

So Peter took to heart what Jesus said. Money is dangerous because it can distance me from God. Jesus actually spoke more about money and possessions than any other topic. Another lesson Peter heard was in Luke 12. We could call this:

Christ's Portrait of a Materialism-Blinded Person

As the largest crowds every to gather for Christ's teaching ministry assembled (Luke 12:1), Jesus answered a question, precipitating the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21).

Again, Jesus warns them that wealth is a handicap by the words, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). After the parable he stated, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34). Now, look at this amazing parable:

Luke 12:13-21 (NKJV) Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall *I* do, since *I* have no room to store *my* crops?' 18 So he said, '*I* will do this: *I* will pull down *my* barns and build greater, and there *I* will store all *my* crops and *my* goods. 19 And *I* will say to *my* soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The rich fool of Christ's parable was quite a model businessman by human standards. Note his resume:

First, he was **successful** in v. 16; and there is never anything wrong with success.

Second, he was **diligent** in v. 17; and diligence is commended by God in our lives.

Third, he was **conservative** in v. 18-19a; and that goes without saying that to be a careful planner and one who looks before they leap is a mark of wisdom.

Finally, in v. 19b he was a **retirement planner**, and all of us need to think about the winter of life when it is hard to work and things are hard.

The Danger was Not What He was, but What He Wasn't

Nothing was wrong on that resume. But the problem was not in his success, diligence, conservatism, and careful planning for the future. All of those elements in themselves are good and wise. The danger was not what he was, but what he wasn't.

He didn't see God in the picture. His riches blinded him to the need for God.

He left God out, and when you leave God out of the equation: you are godless. What did the rich man foolishly leave God out of?

- He left God out of his thoughts v. 16-17 ("thought within himself").
- He left God out of his plans v. 18 ("I will, I will, I will").
- He left God out of his future dreams v. 19 "take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry").

What happens to those who leave God out of their thoughts, plans, and dreams? They lose everything. The rich fool was unprepared for death. He was unprepared for the spiritual realm when everything we chose in this life comes back to haunt us.

The real danger was that the rich fool built his barns too big.

There is nothing wrong with planning, storing, and having a cushion in life. But there is everything wrong with being consumed with everything but God.

The goal of life Christ said is to be rich towards God. We are to declare by our choices and words that all we have belongs to God, that all we have is entrusted to us to use for God.

How do we start Becoming Rich Toward God?

Richness toward God begins with our divestments of any wealth that we think is ours. Do whatever it takes to be able to say: "All I have belongs to You, God. All I have has come from You. I own nothing, I possess nothing, it all belongs to You." That means all my riches are God's, He is in charge of my wealth, not me. The only way to maintain this choice is by a constantly renewed Romans 12:1-2 prayer.

We often miss something in missionary martyr Jim Elliot's famous words, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." We focus on his willingness to go to the mission field. That willingness started when he relinquished his hold on things as MINE!

Richness towards God is confirmed by our investments. We are to be regular, systematic, proportionate, sacrificial givers to Christ's Church. We must be following the investment plan, Paul prescribed in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, which says: v. 17 Avoid any haughtiness. Regularly ponder whether you trust in your wealth like it was yours and not uncertain. Enjoy what you have as a gift from God; v. 18 Do good with resources, rich in what God rewards, ready to give to others, feeling a fellowship of giving generously; v. 19 laying up treasures (same word as 1 Cor. 16:2 offerings), holding onto Heavenly ways here on earth.

John Wesley's rule of life was to *save* all he could and *give* all he could. When he was at Oxford he had an income of £30 a year. He lived on £28 and gave £2 away.

When his income increased to £60, £90 and £120 a year, he still lived on £28 and gave the balance away. The Accountant-General for Household Plate demanded a return from him. His reply was, "I have two silver tea spoons at London and two at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present; and I shall not buy any more, while so many around me want bread."¹

So God wants divestments and investments that make us rich in His sight. Two things stand out about this parable.

1. **The rich fool never looked beyond himself.** None of Christ's parables contains as many: "I's, me's, and my's". God does not peacefully co-exist with those who are aggressively self-centered. Rather, He resists them.
2. **The rich fool never looked beyond this world.** While all he thought about was enjoying life here, all Jesus saw was his death without God forever. He was totally unprepared for death and the world to come. His money stayed here, and could not buy back for him all the wasted opportunities while he thought of himself and ignored God and those in need around him.

Believers Can Get Blinded by Materialism

Solomon, who is immortalized in history as exceedingly wealthy and wise reminded us at the end of his life about the theology of wealth God taught him. Look back for a moment at Ecclesiastes 5:10-15.

I was deeply struck by these truths. See if they strike you like they struck me.

¹The Gospel of Luke. 1975 (W. Barclay, Ed.). The Daily Study Bible Series. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.

1. “Whoever loves money never has money enough” (v. 10). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more they want.***
2. “Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income” (v. 10). ***The more blinded materialists have, the less they’re satisfied.***
3. “As goods increase, so do those who consume them” (v.11). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more people (including the government) will come after it.***
4. “And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?” (v. 11). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more they realize it does no good.***
5. “The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep” (v. 12). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more they have to worry about.***
6. “I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner” (v. 13). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more they hurt themselves by holding on to it.***
7. “Or wealth lost through some misfortune” (v.14). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more they have to lose.***
8. “Naked a man comes from his mother’s womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand” (v.15). ***The more blinded materialists have, the more they’ll leave behind.***

Making the Choice to Divest Control of My Possessions

To close today’s challenge from God’s Word turn with me back to Revelation 3:17-18. Listen to what Jesus Christ is saying to us in His Church, as we stand for prayer:

Because you say, ***‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’***— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, ***blind***, and naked— 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; ***and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.***

To respond to whatever the Lord Jesus has stirred your heart about this morning, I invite you now to turn in your hymnbook to # 335

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus