

# The Return of the King Revelation 6-19

## **Beware: Materialism Corrodes Our Wills**

### **If We Try to Serve Two Masters**

2 Peter 3:17-18

Every day we each make a big choice. Each day we choose which master we will follow. This is not about what we say, because with our mouth, most believers would readily say that Christ is our Master.

Each day we point to our Master by our choices, with our time investments, and with our motivations that drive our handling of money: those are the actions that speak louder than our words. Those are the choices that clearly frame who really is the master of our lives.

As we turn again to 2 Peter 3 we see what Peter had heard way back there in the Sermon on the Mount, with the disciples: that we can only serve one master at a time. Right there, at the start of His ministry, Jesus comes right to the point.

## **Choosing Which Master We'll Follow**

We have a choice of Masters, and only one can be served. Peter held onto that truth all his days.

As we look at 2 Peter 3, note the repeated tone of Peter's challenge. It is gentle, loving, and urgent. Peter repeats the word "beloved" five times. That should jump off the page for us, setting in our hearts the tone Peter has in this exhortation. Please stand with me.

2 Peter 3:1-18 (NKJV) **Beloved-1**, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior

8 But, **beloved-2**, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

14 Therefore, **beloved-3**, 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-4** brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

17 You therefore, **beloved-5**, since you know this beforehand, **beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness**, being led away with the error of the wicked;  
18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Pray

## **Beware: Is Our Challenge**

Peter loved his brothers and sisters so much that he warned them: Beware. The word translated “beware” means “**be constantly guarding yourself.**” Just like Paul had already said, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12, NKJV).

True believers can’t fall away from being saved, just from being solidly living out what they say they believe. Steadfastness is when what we say and what we do, lines up with God's Word.

Beware of what? Beware of falling away from steadfastness. What was this steadfastness? Peter has already defined this word using the verb earlier in 2 Peter 1:12 (NKJV):

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are **established** in the present truth.

Our stability or “steadfastness” as believers rests upon our trust of God's Word, and experiencing daily, how to apply that Word in those practical decisions of life. The only way to keep from being “led away” as v. 17 says, is to grow spiritually. But, Peter said it isn’t a sprint or a spurt, it is continuous growth that God desires.

## **Be Constantly Growing: Is Our Charge**

“**But be constantly growing**” is the literal translation of the opening phrase of v. 18. That is what the form of the verb communicates. Today we need to beware (constantly guarding against anything) that hinders our growth. Peter raises our awareness of the constant dangers of exposure to the materialism-infected world we live in.

Jesus warned that the “love of many” would grow cold (Mt. 24:12) as the end approaches. Then Jesus illustrates that in His letter to the Laodiceans. Most of us greatly underestimate the impact that our materialism-driven world has had upon us.

Materialism is a tasteless, colorless, invisible power for evil, that surrounds us every day we live, that can slowly rob us of our desires for God. To check my own spiritual temperature this week, I reread a book that has impacted me deeply over the years. It's the book titled: **Treasure Principle** by Randy Alcorn.

I first read the original edition of this book way back in 1989 when it was 520 pages long and called **Money, Possessions & Eternity**. Then again in 1998 when it came out in the new, shorter, easy reading form under the title: **The Treasure Principle**.

Here are the ten life-altering truths that I have meditated on for 24 years as Bonnie & I regularly look at how materialism may be creeping into our lives. These ten statements are very useful for self-examination:

## Ten Life-Altering Truths to Fight Materialism<sup>1</sup>

1. You can't take it with you - but *you can send it on ahead*.
2. The grace that has freed us from bondage to sin is desperately needed to free us from *our bondage to materialism*.
3. God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to *raise my standard of giving*.
4. God doesn't look at just what we give. He also looks at what we keep. *God judges what we give, by what we keep*.
5. I've heard people say, "I want more of a heart for missions." I always respond, "Jesus tells you exactly how to get it. *Put your money in missions - and in your church and the poor - and your heart will follow*."
6. When Jesus warns us not to store up treasures on earth, it's not just because wealth might be lost; *it's because wealth will always be lost*. Either it leaves us while we live, or we leave it when we die. No exceptions. Realizing its value is temporary should radically affect our investment strategy. *According to Jesus, storing up earthly treasures isn't simply wrong. It's just plain stupid*.
7. It's increasingly common for Christians to ask one another the tough questions: How is your marriage? Have you been spending time in the Word? How are you doing in terms of sexual purity? Have you been sharing your faith? But how often do we ask, *"How much are you giving to the Lord?" or "Have you been robbing God?" or "Are you winning the battle against materialism?"*

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, The Treasure Principle, 395 words.

8. Many Christians dread the thought of leaving this world. Why? Because so many have stored up their treasures on earth, not in heaven. Each day brings us closer to death. ***If your treasures are on earth, each day brings you closer to losing your treasures.***
9. He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he's moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain. He who spends his life moving toward his treasures has reason to rejoice. ***Are you despairing or rejoicing?***
10. When you leave this world, ***will you be known as one who accumulated treasures on earth that you couldn't keep? Or will you be recognized as one who invested treasures in heaven that you couldn't lose?***

These life-altering truths are right in line with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. So, in 2 Peter 3 is actually Peter asking these beloved, fellow-believers the same question he was confronted with by Christ, early in his walk as a disciple:

## **Jesus Asks Us Who We are Living For**

Our lives are dominated by serving one of two masters: worldly pursuits or heavenly ones. Turn back to where Peter's view life was deeply altered by Christ's words:

Matthew 6:19-21, 24 (NKJV) "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. 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 mammon.

That seems like quite a clear-cut choice, doesn't it? Peter heard Jesus warn 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: 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)?

## **Contentment Must Become a Learned Way of Life**

How do we learn to be content, and then model and teach contentment to our families? One of the best ways to start is to do a study of 1 Timothy 6:6–17, which describes seven principles that promote contentment.

**Principle 1—Remember that things are only temporary:** *Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out* (1 Timothy 6:6–7).

You cannot take it with you. There are no U-Haul trailers behind hearses.

**Principle 2—Only seek necessities, and wait for the rest:** *Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content* (1 Timothy 6:8).

We need shelter and the basic provisions of life, but everything beyond that is simply a great blessing. Whether it comes or goes is okay. God has said that all we are supposed to expect in life are food and clothing, so we should be happy with that.

**Principle 3—Avoid a consuming desire for prosperity:** *Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and many foolish and harmful lusts, For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

America has been fed a prosperity diet. You might say, “That is not me—I am not rich.” If you own a car, you are rich. Ninety-five percent of the people in the world can't afford a car. Your watch and the clothes you have on are worth more than what hundreds of millions of people on earth have. Tens of thousands even starve to death around the world each year, but Americans regularly throw away super-sized leftovers.

**Principle 4—Flee materialism:** *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness* (1 Timothy 6:11).

Do you seek to accumulate possessions—or to grow in Christlikeness? Value what will count for eternity!

**Principle 5—Cling to eternal life:** *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called. Keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing* (1 Timothy 6:12, 14).

We need a whole generation of people who are holding tighter to eternal life than they are to this world.

The writer of Hebrews says, *You had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven* (Hebrews 10:34). When those Christians were persecuted and their jobs and possessions taken away, they still rejoiced because their focus was on Christ.

If we're not careful, before long our possessions can possess *us*. They then become an anchor that holds us back. The care of riches clouds our minds from seeking the purity of Christ.

**Principle 6—Fix your hope on God:** *Command those who are rich ... not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God* (1 Timothy 6:17).

There is nothing wrong with wealth, but we are to recognize the danger of relying upon it. All that we own can evaporate as quickly as a blip on a computer screen. There are few things that are real possessions in this world. Through money, stocks, and bonds you are trusting that a company, a bank, or a government won't fail. But the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy, can never fail us—and our trust in Him is certain!

**Principle 7—Give until it hurts:** *Let them do good, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life* (1 Timothy 6:18–19).

The real cure for materialism is to give until it hurts! Giving “until it hurts” means giving at the cost of personal sacrifice. For example, the widow gave both of her mites, or all that she had (Mark 12:42–44). The woman who anointed Jesus broke the flask of fragrant oil and irrecoverably gave all she had to Him (Luke 7:37–47). Sacrificial gifts are especially important to Jesus.

Now, back to Christ's challenge in Matthew 6. 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 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 God: "Incline mine heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Ps. 119:36).

## Three Closing Thought to Ponder At Communion

1. When Jesus warns us not to store up treasures on earth, it's not just because wealth might be lost; ***it's because wealth will always be lost.*** Either it leaves us while we live, or we leave it when we die. No exceptions. Realizing its value is temporary should radically affect our investment strategy. ***According to Jesus, storing up earthly treasures isn't simply wrong. It's just plain stupid.***
2. He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he's moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain. He who spends his life moving toward his treasures has reason to rejoice. ***Are you despairing or rejoicing?***
3. When you leave this world, ***will you be known as one who accumulated treasures on earth that you couldn't keep? Or will you be recognized as one who invested treasures in heaven that you couldn't lose?***

Communion Hymns:

At the Name of Jesus  
Nothing But the Blood

1 At the Name of Jesus, Every knee shall bow,  
Every tongue confess Him, King of glory now;  
'Tis the Father's pleasure, We should call Him Lord,  
Who from the beginning, Was the mighty Word.

5 In your hearts enthrone Him; There let Him subdue  
All that is not holy, All that is not true:  
Crown Him as your Captain, In temptation's hour;  
Let His will enfold you, In its light and power.

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