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THE CHURCH TREASURY AND "MY" TREASURES

Bobby Liddell

Jesus said:
Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 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. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 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 (Mat. 6:19-24).

In this section of the "Sermon on the Mount," our Lord presents the choice each man must make and will make, whether to serve God or mammon. None can serve both at the same time, but each will serve one or the other (v. 24). That which one treasures will determine his choice between the heavenly and the earthly—to be a slave of God or a slave of mammon (riches). Man chooses what he treasures, and his treasure will have the foremost place in his heart, soul, and mind. What are treasures?

Literally, Matthew 6:19-20 would read: "Do not treasure for you treasures on the earth, where moth and rust removes, and where thieves dig through and steal; but treasure for you treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust removes, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal." That which one treasures is that which he loves, which he holds in highest regard, and puts in first place in his life because of the value he places on it, whether in accordance with God-placed values or in spite of them. Many think of only material wealth as the point of this passage. Truly, such treasure could be possessions of money, wealth, and financial gain of whatever sort; However, included in this context are the other earthly things one might treasure such as popularity, power, position, and pleasure.

We must note that Jesus does not, in this sermon, prohibit one's wise preparation and saving in order to care properly for his family, which care God's Word plainly and strongly enjoins elsewhere, nor is wealth inherently sinful. In our study, we shall consider these main points as given by our Lord: Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth (Mat. 6:19), Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Mat. 6:20), For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mat. 6:21).

LAY NOT UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES UPON EARTH (Mat. 6:19)

Why Lay Up Treasures That Are Earthly? These treasures hold the danger of making one poorer for having them because they can take God's place, and crowd out what is really valuable. They are

earth-bound and earth-binding for their earthly possession is the love of the possessor's life. They appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and not to the higher, nobler, and purer affections.

Why Lay Up Treasures That Are Temporary? These are treasures that do not last. At best, they are but temporary, and our days of having them are soon over. At worst, in our brief sojourn, they have us, until we depart this life and leave them all behind.

Why Lay Up Treasures That Are Subject To Loss? Those who trust in such treasures often find out, it is as Jesus said. The moth, in satisfying his appetite, does not consider the worth of his meal, devouring the finest tapestry as readily as a discarded rag. Rust enters the palaces of kings as it does the hovel of the destitute. Thieves break through (dig through the wall) and steal without regard for the depth of attachment of the former possessor to his treasured belonging. One may be wealthy today and lose it all, ending up a pauper on the morrow, losing not only the things he holds dear in life, but also his reason for living. Why place such value on that which is so fleeting?

LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN (Mat. 6:20)

Lay Up Treasures That Are Heavenly. These treasures are not chosen under the direction of the outward man, but are the choice of the inward man whose faithful continuance leads him to that heavenly home. As one so well said, at the close of day, the simple cow does not have to be forced from the far end of the pasture, but waits at the gate, ready to be taken to the barn for his feed, his treasure, is there, and his heart is there. So, the child of God, at the close of his earthly day, is ready to go to where his treasure is—where his heart is.

Lay Up Treasures That Are Eternal. That which is of real value is neither temporary nor transient, but timeless. Why enslave ourselves to mammon, spend our lives seeking its gain, hoarding it greedily, when its possession is so soon to end, and our purpose for living ends with it? That which is of real value is that which is of lasting value.

Lay Up Treasures That Are Not Subject To Loss. Men may lose possessions, physical health, power, popularity, position, and that which brings pleasure, but the treasures that are heavenly will continue. When the faithful servant of God leaves this earth, he leaves behind, as does the servant of mammon, all earthly things, but, unlike mammon's servant, he goes to Heaven where he has laid up his riches. No force of nature, man, or the devil himself can remove these treasures from their heavenly store.

FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO (Mat. 6:21)

Where Are Our Thoughts? Jesus warned: "Take no thought" for the things of this world. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (v.25). "And why take ye thought for raiment?" (v. 28).

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"Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (v. 31). "Take therefore no thought for the morrow" (v. 34).

The literal meaning of "take no thought" is "be not anxious"; that is, do not commit the folly of worrying about the earthly, material, temporal things of this world for, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (v. 27). Worry is unproductive, burdensome, and, more often than not, in vain. Worry announces one's lack of faith in God and his fear that God will not provide as He has promised. Worry robs one of peace, prevents happiness, presents an improper influence, and hinders his service to God. Where a man's treasure is, there will his thoughts be also.

Where Is Our Trust? In light of Jesus' statement that no man can, at the same time, serve mammon (the god of riches) and God (the God of true riches), in whom do we trust? If our trust is in things, Jesus said we are like the Gentiles (literally, "nations," and, by implication, "heathen," who do not believe in God, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek" [v. 32]), but the same God who has given us our needs has promised to supply our needs. Where a man's treasure is, there will his trust be also.

Where Is Our Treasure? There will be our thoughts, our trust, and our hearts, centered either upon God or mammon! There are only two places where one may lay up treasure—upon earth or in heaven. If our treasure is laid up on earth, these sad conditions must also follow. We have failed to heed God's warning (v. 19). We have failed to follow God's command (v. 20). Our sight is out of focus, and we are in great darkness (vv. 22-23). We are mammon's servants (v. 24). We are too worried about things (v. 25). We have missed the lesson of God's compassionate care (v. 26). We have failed to consider the glory of God's creation (vv. 27-29). We have shown ourselves to be "of little faith" (v. 30). We have behaved as the heathen (vv. 31-32). We have failed to put first things first (v. 33). We have borrowed trouble, worrying about tomorrow, instead of trusting that God can take care of the future (v. 34).

CONCLUSION

When We Consider Laying Up Treasure, There Are Some Important Questions That Deserve Our Careful Attention.

"Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (v. 25). The slave of mammon worries about these things. The servant of God is concerned about that which makes life precious, gives us purpose, and offers possibilities of godly service, while the servant of mammon is concerned about things that fill the belly and clothe the body. God's servant sees the value of making a life while mammon's servant can see only the need to make a living.

"Are ye not much better than they?" (v. 26). The Father, who made the birds, cares for them, supplying them with food. As one asked, "When was the last time you saw a worried bird?" Of how much greater worth are God's children!

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" (v. 27). One's worry over the measure of his life does not increase it. Being anxious about things will, instead, cause us not to profit in real riches. What a simple lesson, and how we need to learn it!

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (v. 30). One of the greatest challenges to man is to trust in God's providential care. Where is our faith? Do we believe God will keep His word to His children?

What Shall We Treasure? There are some things men must not treasure and there are some things men must treasure. If we treasure the earthly above the heavenly, our prosperity will come to a complete and final end when death comes (if not before). If we treasure the heavenly

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WHAT IF CHRIST HAD COME TO ESTABLISH AN EARTHLY KINGDOM AND HAD SUCCEEDED?

Billy Bland

The Word of God clearly taught that Jesus Christ was coming to the earth. He fulfilled the many prophecies which foretold His first coming, and He accomplished the purpose of His first coming. In fact, just prior to His dying on the cross, He stated, "It is finished" (John 19:30). When Christ came, He established the spiritual kingdom, the church, which was foretold by Old Testament prophets (Isa. 2:1-4, Mat. 16:18-19, Col. 1:13, Heb. 12:28). The same Word of God that foretold Christ's first coming also clearly teaches that Jesus is coming the second time: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28, see also John 14:1-3, 1 The. 4:13-17).

So, the Bible teaches that Christ came to the earth to offer redemption for man through His sacrifice, and He is coming again to judge the world. He will receive unto Himself all who have accepted His atonement, and He will reject all those who have spurned His invitation (Mat. 25:31-46, 2 Cor. 5:10).

However, there is a system of doctrine, known as "Dispensational Premillennialism," that teaches that Christ came to this earth for the purpose of establishing an earthly kingdom, but was rejected by the nation of Israel, and as a result of their rejection, Jesus postponed the earthly kingdom, and will establish it when He comes again. An advocate of this doctrine stated: "The kingdom did come 'nigh' when Christ came, and had they received Him, it would have been manifested, but now it is in abeyance, or waiting until He comes again" (Blackstone, 88). Another person stated: "When Christ came the first time Israel, as a nation, did not repent and the kingdom was postponed. When Christ comes the second time Israel will repent and will receive their Messiah, even as Jesus predicted in Matthew 23:39 (and compare Zechariah 12:10-14)" (Middletown, np).

So, the teaching of Premillennialism is that Christ came to establish His kingdom, but because the Jews rejected Jesus, He had to postpone its establishment, but He will come back the second time and establish the kingdom. There are many problems with such a doctrine. First of all, it simply is not true. Second, Christ's kingdom was not postponed, as there are many passages that speak of Christ's kingdom as currently being in existence: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29).

What many advocates of the postponement theory fail to see are the ramifications of their false doctrine. What are the implications of the doctrine that Christ came to earth to establish an earthly kingdom

and to reign on earth as King? If the kingdom had come the way the premillennialists think, then notice what would have to follow.

(1) *The love of God would not have been manifested the way that it was.* If Christ had come to establish an earthly kingdom and the Jews had received him, then Christ would have established His kingdom and would not have died on the cross. Yet, the Bible says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

(2) *There would have been no redemption for mankind.* Without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb 9:22). Yet, animal sacrifices were inadequate for man's redemption (Heb. 10:4). It took the precious blood of Christ for our redemption: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:18-20). But according to the postponement theory, if Christ had not been rejected (put to death), then He would have established an earthly kingdom (and would not have died for our sins). This would have left man without redemption!

(3) *There would not have been the Gospel.* The facts of the Gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). If Christ had established an earthly kingdom, rather than being rejected and dying for our sins, then there would not have been the facts of the Gospel.

(4) *The church of Christ would not have been established.* The postponement theory affirms that the church was set up instead of the earthly kingdom—because of rejection of Christ. So the church comes into the picture as sort of a substitute. Yet, the Bible shows that the church was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). If Christ had not shed His blood, the church would not be in existence. Premillennialism minimizes the importance of Christ's church, whereas the Bible shows that it was in the eternal purpose of God, and that through which we glorify God (Eph. 3:10-11, 21).

(5) *There would not have been the Book of Acts.* The Book of Acts is a history of the Lord's church. However, if the church had not been established, obviously it would have no history!

(6) *There would not have been the Epistles.* Most of the epistles are written to churches, with the others being addressed to individual Christians. Again, if the church had not been established, there would have been no letters written to the churches.

(7) *The New Testament would not exist.* While the Old Testament was dedicated with the blood of animals (Heb. 9:19-20), the New Testament is dedicated by the blood of Christ. Jesus said: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mat. 26:28). But again, if Christ had not shed His blood (because He would have been received and established His earthly kingdom), then the New Testament would not have been dedicated by His blood.

CONCLUSION

These are only a few of the ramifications of the false doctrine of Premillennialism and in particular the postponement theory. Christ was successful in what He came to accomplish. He established the kingdom just as was promised by God. It is not (nor was it intended to be) a political kingdom, but rather is spiritual and is comprised of the redeemed in Christ. When Christ came to His death at the cross, He did not say, "It is postponed," He stated, "It is finished." (John 19:30).

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