

Investing in Heaven

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Date: 21 September 2008

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back to that chapter now for a few moments and look at it together. Matthew chapter 6. And I want us to think particularly on the passage that begins in verse 19. Page 978, Matthew chapter 6 and verse 19, where Jesus says, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

One of the most common objections to the Christian faith is that it divides and separates into two.

There are categories of saved and unsaved, good or bad, heaven and hell. And people say, well, surely it's not like that. Surely life is much more complicated than that.

It's not as easy as the blacks and the whites, the goods and the bads of this world. It's not as clear as that. That's what people say. But the more I read my Bible, the more I come across such division, such clear cut division.

[1 : 3 8] And that division is made by none other than Jesus Christ. And particularly in his parables, for example, there's a parable of the wheat and the weeds, the good fish and the bad fish, the ten bridesmaids, the five that were wise and the five that were foolish.

And there were the three servants to whom the master gave the talents. One, he gave ten talents. To another, he gave five talents. And to another, he gave one. And it was the one that went away and didn't invest the money, but it went and dug a hole in the ground and put the talent in the hole in the ground.

There again, you have a separation between the two who were wise and faithful and obedient. And the one who was disobedient and he dug a hole in the ground.

So this division is something that's all the way through the Bible. You go back into the Old Testament, you see a clear cut division between the people of God and the rest of the world.

And however comfortable or uncomfortable it makes us feel, that division is absolutely clear throughout the Bible. Anyone who reads the Bible with an open mind has to contend with that bare fact.

[2 : 5 0] You'll find that in this passage that we read, beginning 19 and ending 24, there are three examples of that clear cut division. There are three illustrations of what I've just said.

First of all, there are those who either lay up for themselves treasures in heaven or those who lay up treasures on earth. That's a division again.

There's no middle ground. There are the human race is divided into those who lay up for themselves treasures in heaven and those who lay up for themselves treasures on earth.

Then he goes on to talk about the good eye and the bad eye. There are either those whose eyes are good. Here we go. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. There again, either your eye is bad or your eye is good. Again, the same division between one section of humanity and the other.

[3 : 52] And lastly, he says, no one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

Once again, you're either going to love one master and hate the other or love the other and hate the one. There is no getting away from the division that Jesus brings into the world.

I want us tonight to look at verse 19 to 21. That first example that he uses, the example of laying up for yourselves either treasures on earth where he says moths corrupt, thieves break in and steal or rust destroys.

Or what it means to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Let's look at the first. Do not, he says, the first comes by way of a negative. He says, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where he says moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

Now, Jesus often used financial imagery to get across a spiritual point. For example, there's the parable of the pearl, which a man found.

[5 : 10] He recognized what it was worth and he sold everything he had and he bought that pearl because it was a pearl that was worth a huge amount of money. Then, like I said before, there was a parable of the talents.

One servant got the ten talents. The other servant got the five talents. The last servant got the one talent. And then there was the treasure hidden in the field that a man found once. He went and sold everything that he had and he bought the field so that he could get the treasure that was hidden in it.

The gospel is very often described in financial terms. And that's because the world of Jesus' day, just like our world, finance was such a big issue.

There's nothing new about finance at all. There's nothing new about money. It was just as big an issue. There maybe wasn't so much of it in Jesus' day, but it was just as big an issue. And we'd miss the point entirely if we only saw this parable, this instruction of Jesus, only in financial terms.

Jesus not saying, and he never said, that there was anything wrong with money in itself. In itself, the Bible never condemns money or having money.

[6 : 22] And neither is there any condemnation of investment. That was how the three servants went and invested their master's money.

The one who got the ten talents went and invested it, and he got ten talents more. In fact, that was the faithful thing to do. That was the action, the proper action to take with the money that the master gave to him.

And Jesus is not suggesting that we should not make any provision for ourselves and our families in the life. There's got to be a responsible use of what God has given us in this world.

And it's totally irresponsible to believe that somehow money has no importance at all to the Christian. A Christian is somehow, he lives in another world. He doesn't live in another world.

He lives in this world. And he's got to contend with all the challenges that money bring. The point here is what it means to us.

[7 : 25] The place that it has in our lives. That's the first thing. But the second thing is that whatever we invest our life in, if we do not invest it in the Lord, then it's going to come to nothing.

Even the most successful person in the world, the person who's never wrong in his investment, who always banks properly, and the person who makes the most out of this world, even if he gets to be a millionaire, even if he gets to do the best that he ever can do in financial terms in this world, he's always, he's going to come to the same place as the person who was born in poverty and who dies in poverty.

He's going to have nothing. And that's why Jesus is making sure that we understand that whilst money is important, an important part of this life, it's not what we live for.

It mustn't be what we live for. And our treasure, he says, must be in the right place. I want to ask this evening, where is your treasure?

Where is your treasure? For some people, their treasure is their house, the place they live in. It's quite common to be house proud and to live for the place that we live in.

[8 : 59] When I log on to AOL, my internet provider, very often there's the gossip section which shows photographs of houses of celebrities someplace like the south of France or in Hollywood or wherever.

And the idea is that the rest of the world envies places like that and wishes that their houses were the same as the houses of the stars.

For other people, it's their career, the kind of job they have. They live for the kind of job they have. They've worked hard. They've trained. And they know that they're good at what they do. Their boss has told them that.

And it becomes their life. It becomes their obsession. All they want is to make the most out of... There's nothing wrong with having a career. There's nothing wrong with having a house. But there is a big difference between having a house and a career and living entirely for that, investing your whole life into it.

For some people, it's sport. For some people, it's possessions. For other people, it's their car. And it doesn't have to be an expensive car. It doesn't have to be the top of the range. You can love your smaller car just as much as you can love your big, expensive car.

[10 : 13] It's a matter of what it means to you. For other people, it's their looks. That's what their treasure is, is their looks. And they dread looking at the mirror and finding out one day that they've aged even a little bit because they've put so much investment and because they've loved the way they looked so much.

We live in a world which is obsessed with all of these things. And you can get sucked into that world and you can get carried away by that world and you can get deceived into thinking that these really are the most valuable things to live for.

Well, according to Jesus, these are not the valuable things in this world. No matter what value we place on them, that Jesus was saying there's only one thing of value and that's your relationship to God.

And Jesus' message is that if these things have captured your heart and if they've taken the place that God deserves in your heart and your living, then they have become your treasure.

Where your treasure is, says Jesus, there your heart will be also. And Jesus is concerned that our treasure must rest in God.

[11 : 23] So he says, do not store for yourselves treasures on earth where these things happen. It's as if he's saying to us, stop, whatever you're doing, just stop and listen to me and hear what I say.

Now, if Jesus, if that was all he had to say, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, then the message of the gospel would amount to this.

Get rid of everything that you own and make sure it doesn't mean anything to you. But the message of Jesus goes much further than that. That's only the negative side of it. There's the positive side as well.

He says, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Store up for yourselves. I want to spend the rest of the time this evening asking, well, what do we mean by storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven?

How can I, if I want to take seriously these words of Jesus, and I hope that we all take them seriously this evening, how can I listen to Jesus' words? How can I take them seriously and how can I put them into practice in my own heart?

[12 : 31] How can I make sure that I'm storing for myself treasures in heaven? Let's look, let's try and break up what Jesus is saying and try and understand it, I hope, in such a way that will make clear what Jesus is saying to us.

First of all, let's talk about heaven. Let's talk about heaven. That's what Jesus came to announce to the people round about him. He came to tell them that the kingdom of God was among them.

He came, his message included the day of judgment when all nations of the world would gather before him and there would be a great separation between those who had trusted in him and those who hadn't.

And to those who had trusted in him, the judge will say, come you blessed of my father into eternal rest, into the joy of the Lord. So heaven is the joy of the Lord.

But we mustn't think of heaven only in terms of being a place, a place or like a city. The Bible doesn't make the place very clear to us.

[13 : 37] It doesn't give us very much information. It just, but it tells us that heaven is a reality. Let's think about what Jesus is saying in these verses.

First of all, let's look at the fact that heaven is about God. God, heaven is about God. In fact, the whole word heaven is meaningless if you take God out of it.

That's what makes heaven heaven. It's defined in the Bible as the place where God is, where the presence of God. In other words, if God doesn't mean anything to you today, you won't want to be in heaven.

To be in heaven is to be next to God, with God, in the presence of God. So if you love God today through Jesus, then you'll want to be in heaven. God is your everything.

He's your whole life. And because you've seen what he's done for you in giving his son, Jesus, and you've experienced the newness of life that Jesus had given, that God has given to us in Jesus Christ.

[14 : 39] And your life, your whole life, has been oriented towards God. You love God. You know that you're not like you should be, that your life isn't what it should be, but at the same time, you know that God stands at the center of your heart.

The Bible tells us that we were made by God, for God. And as long as we keep on living without God at the center of our being, then we're going to miss something.

We're going to lack something. There's a gap in our hearts that can only be filled by God. And the problem is, and this was as true for the world in which Jesus lived, as it is through today, what we do is we try and fill that gap with our treasures.

And we think our treasures are going to give us the joy and the contentment. Well, they will for a while. They will for maybe a few hours or a few days or a few years. But we want more.

As soon as we get used to one treasure, we move on to another. That's because it doesn't satisfy us. There's always a hunger, no matter what you live for. Whatever your treasure is, no matter what you live for, it will not satisfy you, and you'll come to the end of your life and all you'll have is memories of all that you enjoyed in this world and you won't have anything else.

[15 : 55] You won't have, you won't look forward to anything because you know that the next stage is to stand in front of God and to whom you're accountable. The things that we fill our hearts with in this life, they simply don't give us anything.

Eternal. But God tells us that the treasure I can give you is one that lasts forever and that we will never be dissatisfied with that treasure. It is all about God.

So I want us to think this evening about God. I want us to think about where we stand in relation to God because that's what heaven is ultimately, where we stand in relation to God.

And here again, there is a great division. It's a simple matter. There's nothing complicated about it. That either we stand right with God this evening or we don't.

We either have God or we don't. We either love God or we don't. And we're either right with God or we don't. It's as simple as that. And I don't want us to complicate things.

[16 : 54] Jesus never complicated anything. He came to explain the kingdom of God as clearly as it was possible for us to understand. And I want, even if you don't, I would love to think this evening that even if you don't understand what Jesus is saying, that you'll come to God and ask him, Lord, make this clear to me where I stand before you this evening.

Make it clear to me. What must I do to be saved? Will you pray that prayer? What must I do to be saved? Because only God can show you how to be saved.

And God can bring you into his kingdom. And God can create a new heart within you. First then, heaven is about God. And that's our relationship to God because we were made to be in relationship with God.

That's the first thing. But then, heaven is about the future. It's about the future. The Bible promises heaven as the future of everyone who trusts and follows Jesus.

But it also tells us that it is a different dimension to the dimension in this world. You and I live in this present dimension. It's a dimension in which we can see and hear and think, in which we can feel and smell, and in which we are aware of the things that are around us, or some of them in any case.

[18 : 17] This is the dimension into which you and I have been put. It's the dimension that God has created. He's created the molecules and the atoms and all the structures of this world and all their complexity.

God has created all of these things. But God, listen to this, God could have created things differently. He could have created a whole different dimension.

Let me tell you also this, that it's possible that God could create another dimension that runs parallel to this one. Now we're getting complicated, aren't we? But let me just, for those of you who are fascinated by science, it's really, this is where science and the Bible come together, or one of the places anyway.

I don't believe true science is not, it's not a denial of the Bible, and the Bible doesn't deny true science. You know why? Because science is the study of what is, of what really is.

It's when we research the existence of things in terms of their chemistry, or their physics, or their biology. Science is great.

[19 : 23] It's the way in which we are able to discover the world and the universe around us. It's tremendous. But of course, it's when we set out to disprove God that it all turns poisonous and sour, doesn't it?

But let's talk about true science. A few, a couple of weeks ago, there was this great announcement of this multi-billion pound structure that they've, that they've created in Geneva and Switzerland, in which they're going to start investigating the atom and what constitutes an atom.

It's absolutely fascinating. And it will be fascinating to discover what comes out of it. It's absent. This is the first time anything like this has ever happened in the scientific world.

Thousands of scientists have been involved in this. And I don't know how much money has been spent. Just amazing, isn't it? When you think of all the effort and all the energy that's gone into just to playing around with the tiniest of atoms and that's the region of the universe that we don't understand.

It's incredible, isn't it? You know, now I was listening to a discussion amongst some scientists on the television when this was happening and they were saying this and I really was fascinated by this. They were saying that one of the things, of course, there was a scare that they would create a black hole that would suck in, that would draw in the whole of the world and that we would disappear in an instant.

[20 : 47] Well, anybody who reads their Bible and who believes the Bible knows for a start that that's not going to happen. It's not going to happen because the Bible tells us how the world will come to an end and it won't be in a black hole either.

But that's the first. The other discussion that was going on was this, that they were saying this and I believe this, that it is conceivably possible that if the atomic structures were changed, that there could be a parallel universe.

You know the reason I believe that? Because, again, God has told us that there is a parallel universe and it's called heaven. You see, we think heaven is just a kind of a wishful thinking.

It's a kind of a place that people, it's like pie in the sky. And the world doesn't really think of heaven except as just a fairy tale. It's just another myth that people have created out of their own imagination.

I can tell you tonight that according to the Bible, heaven is as real as the earth and the universe. The universe that we belong to.

[22 : 04] You see, for us, this is reality. But we are fools if we think that this is the only reality that's possible. God can do anything. He can change things around at his will.

And it's because of our poor, limited minds that we refuse to believe that God has created another universe. God has created another universe.

And I don't believe it's far away from us at all. I don't believe heaven is far away. I think there are places in the Bible that show us that heaven isn't far away. For example, for example, when John we go back to our studies in Revelation, when John was given his insight, his vision of heaven itself, he says it was like a door opening and he was able to see in.

It's just like that. He wasn't transported a million miles away from the world. It was like a door opening and he was able to see what was going on. The throne and the one who sat on the throne and the lamb that stood in the midst of the throne.

This was reality. Heaven is a real place. For example, let me tell you another thing and I'm spending maybe perhaps a bit too much on this but I find it so fascinating. Where was Jesus after he was raised to the dead?

[23 : 15] Let me ask you this. Where was Jesus after he was raised from the dead 40 days before he ascended to the Father? Now, he only appeared to his disciples five or six times.

Where was he in the rest of the time? Now, I can't say for certain but I believe that where he was was he was phasing in and out between two parallel universes.

He would come into this universe when he wanted to meet with his disciples, when he wanted to appear before them, like in the upper room and then at other times he would just simply phase out and go to be in the other universe which is heaven.

Now, you say, well, how can you be? Because I believe in God and I believe in the Bible and I also believe in science. Now, there might not be any scientific explanation as far as heaven is concerned but I believe, you know, because God has created the atoms and the molecules and all the structures that make up our world, they are God's creation.

They are what God has fashioned. He fashioned them in all his perfection and he also tells us we haven't, the only difference is we haven't seen heaven yet and the problem, well, we're fools, aren't we, for not believing what God has told us.

[24 : 36] Heaven is a reality. It's a reality. And one day, if you follow Jesus, if you trust in Jesus, you will see for yourself what that reality is.

If you don't, you will also see for yourself but from afar off and there'll be no second opportunity. That's the awfulness of it because just in the same way as there's one parallel universe, there's perhaps a third as well and that's what we call hell.

So there you go. Heaven is about the future. It's a reality. It's a reality. It's explained to us in various parts of the Bible. But then, the third thing I want us to see this evening is that heaven is about our life beyond this world.

Look at what he says in verse 19. Look, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break through and steal.

But, he says, look at the wording he uses, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Now look at that, for yourselves. Now what does that tell you?

[25 : 45] It tells you that it's Jesus' intention if we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven that we will one day be there to enjoy the benefit of these treasures in heaven for ourselves.

And again, that agrees with the rest of the Bible where it leaves us in no doubt whatsoever but that one day God's people, this is the prayer of Jesus in John chapter 17, Father I will that those of you have given me in this world will be with me where I am that they will see my glory.

That's Jesus' intention that we will be with him where he is for yourselves. There's a connection between heaven and earth and what keeps us out of heaven.

The only one thing that will ever keep you out of the place where Jesus is is our sin because heaven is a perfect universe. It's a perfect place, the place where God dwells and God cannot have in his presence anything that is sinful.

So that means that you and I by nature we simply cannot get anywhere near it. There's a door that will be shut to anyone who is a sinner and yet God has done something about it to remove our sin, to take away the guilt and the stain of sin by his death, by Jesus' death on the cross so that and the result is so that we can be with Jesus forever.

[27 : 22] So we will be forever says Paul with the Lord. So that's the third thing. It's about our life beyond this world. Our life beyond this world.

The fourth thing is this that it's about everlasting security. Look at what he says again. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

So if you it's just like what I said before that if you're going to invest your life into this world whatever it is whatever your treasure is if it belongs to this world then it's likely to be destroyed and even in Jesus' day there were the enemies of clothing I remember when I was a wee boy we went on holiday to this house and the room that I was in had a big old wardrobe in the room and I remember opening the door of the wardrobe and there was this incredible smell I just I still remember this awful smell from the wardrobe and I just ran downstairs to my mother and I just called her upstairs and she says that's mothballs I'd never heard of what mothballs were that's what they used to use in those days to make sure and I can tell you this smell made sure that nobody no living creature would ever come anywhere near this cupboard and of course it was because there were moths and then I began well what's wrong with a moth and my mother had to sit down and explain to me what in the world how a moth could harem a piece of clothing and it was hard for me to believe it was hard for me to believe how an insect like that could possibly put a hole in a piece oh believe me she says they can over a period of time a piece of clothing a vest or a shirt or a jumper can be ruined just by the presence of a moth and that's why people can put that's why people put mothballs well I wasn't sure which was worse having clothes that were smelling of mothballs or having clothes that were full of holes but it was the same in Jesus' day and a moth doesn't care whether your clothes your shirt comes from

Max and Spencer or Gucci or Jager or whoever he doesn't care he can ruin any kind of clothing and you can spend an absolute fortune and it's gone there's no point in complaining about it because that's part of life if you're going to invest in this world then prepare to be disappointed and you will be disappointed believe me there will come the day when you'll be disappointed it's the same with rust especially in the kind of climate that we live in I remember when I was a young man buying my first cars the big thing was rust it's not the same issue anymore because chemicals and technology have developed so much that you can rust proof your car but I remember the days when even if you bought a brand new car within five years it would be a wreck because of rust the rust problems in the 1960s and the 70s there were some makes that were worse than others so you could spend thousands of pounds on a car and you were disappointed because within five years it was a wreck if you invest in this world you will be disappointed have you ever had your house broken into it doesn't happen very often in these parts it happened when we were in

Glasgow and I can tell you the one thing regardless of what they've taken there wasn't very much for the poor thief to take in our house in Paisley years ago but I tell you what the feeling is it's not what they've taken it's the fact that you feel so unsafe the fact that someone else has been able to break into your house by kicking a door down that's what they did and come into your house and they were in your house I couldn't sleep at night for the next week or two because I didn't know how safe it was if you invest in this world prepare to be disappointed you will be disappointed in one form or another it's either the moths or the rust or the thieves breaking in and steal and a whole host of other possibilities a whole host some of them can be your fault some of them may not be your fault some of them might be accident it might be normal processes whatever this world is a decaying place and it's only a fool that lives for what he can get out of this world only a fool and especially in the light of what

[32 : 24] Jesus came to bring us the gospel the good news that our lives can be and what he tells us here is that this is the way of everlasting security the subject of these verses is investment and I have to confess that's why I wanted to choose them for this evening I can't think of a more topical subject than investment in a day when even the greatest the most massive investments have crashed and where the great institutions of the world in which thousands and millions of people have placed their trust has faced the biggest crisis since the 1920s massive structures have come crashing to the ground like Lehman Brothers AIG all of these financial institutions and it does affect here it affects all of us and if ever there has been a salutary lesson of how unstable and dangerous this world is and how foolish it is when it comes

I'm not saying don't make investments the Bible doesn't denounce investments although I really have to question the practices that have come to light over the past week practices that I didn't know very much about until this week you read them in the paper and you think well that's just greed it's just pure and simple greed on the part of human beings trying to make a quick buck where they can just for themselves and it doesn't matter at the expense of themselves and other people and I have to ask when you think of all the hundreds of billions that have had to be injected into these to bail out you think of the poverty in the world you think of how that same amount of money how many millions of lives could have been saved or helped in some way with the same injection of cash into where it's really needed you know this world is a strange place isn't it it's a totally unjust place it's a world that is so broken and so unpredictable it's a world in which you just don't know what's going to happen and it's a world in which given the choice of investing my life and the most precious thing I have which is my soul into living for what I can see and hear around me and the choice between that and investing it into the

Lord who is totally secure Jesus doesn't say come to me and I'll do my best with your investment depends on the stock market depends on the confidence of investors no he doesn't say that at all he doesn't say come to me and we'll do a few deals of short selling and if we're lucky then things will be okay if we're not well we'll cross that bridge when we come to them he doesn't say come to me I've got a good hedge fund we'll see what happens and if we're lucky then we're going to be rolling no that's not Jesus business at all Jesus business is beyond this world but it is true and total and absolute security there is no doubt whatsoever in this investment no doubt you have his word for it you have his resurrection to prove that what he promised he would do he actually did in himself by rising from the dead that's an investment that's the investment and that's the only one that's worth anything ultimately in this world so there you go do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where the moth and and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroyed and where thieves do not break in and steal how then do you store up time is gone how then do you store up for yourself treasure in heaven well if you're going to save in a bank account you have to go to the bank first of all don't need to tell you this to some of you some of you even work in banks or in financial institutions but I remember telling one of my children not so long ago how to open a bank account this is how you begin you have to open the account so you go and you see the person who works in the bank let's say it's one of the managers and you say I want to open an account it gives you a form or she gives you a form and they say you have to fill that form out so they give you a number they give your account and the first thing they ask you is how much do you want to deposit you go to

God you go to the Lord Jesus and you ask him I want to store up for myself treasures in heaven if he was to ask you how much do you want to deposit you'd have to say nothing because I don't have anything some of you might feel well I do have something I've got there's a lot of good in my life you don't not as far as the Lord is concerned you've got nothing if you go to your bank manager you say well I don't have anything you say well I think we'll go home I think we better end this conversation now because we have nothing to talk about unless you've got any money then there's no point in having a bank account but God said that's what my bank account is for those who have nothing see it's actually worse than that it's actually worse than that because when you and I were conceived we not only had nothing we were in debt but when you come to God in faith God tells you not only will I clear your debt the massive debt that you and

I have but I will pay into your account more than you can ever dream and more than you can earn in this world you can only store up for yourself treasures in heaven by asking God to save you to rescue you to come into your life to open up your heart to change you and to make you into a new person you have to come as you are and you have to come with nothing nothing that's perhaps what most people find so difficult about coming to faith in Jesus because they have to confess what they really are which is nothing but as we come tonight to discover once again the words of Jesus and as God works among us to convince you of the truth of his word then he will draw you to see how much you need him and to come to him by faith let's pray our father in heaven bless your word to us again this evening bless it to us we pray by opening up our hearts and by moving powerfully amongst us and by persuading those who need to take that first step and to admit that they have nothing in this world they have nothing in their own hearts but

[40 : 50] Lord we pray that you will show them how much you can do for them bring them oh Lord to store up for themselves treasures in heaven which will never be taken away from them and which will never be destroyed in Jesus name Amen