

# Stored

## Matthew 6:19-21, 24

### Dr. Pierre Cannings

#### I. Cheap Store v. 19

- a. Store Up - **to keep some material thing safe by storing it, lay up, store up, gather, save**
  - i. High estimation of acts of love as such, and obedience with a view to the last hour, will determine the judgment. Is so far as the heaping up of earthly goods expresses a this-worldly and egotistic attitude, it is a contradiction of God (Lk. 12:21; Jm. 5:3). At times earthly goods have to be given up, especially when the concrete situation makes this unavoidable (Mt. 6:19–21 and par; Lk. 12:33; Mk. 10:17 ff.; 1:16 ff.). In accordance with the Jewish image, acts of love are described as a laying up of treasure in heaven (→ θησαυρός).
  - ii. Treasures - material things
    1. Gospels Jesus often uses ‘treasure’ figuratively. Since God rewards wholehearted service in the hereafter, it is termed laying up treasure in heaven, which is contrasted with money-making in Mt. 6:19f As the storehouse of either good or evil the heart controls conduct (Mt. 12:35; Lk. 6:45). A man’s heart is where his treasure is (Mt. 6:21; Lk. 12:34), *i.e.* his interests are determined by what he values most
    2. Jesus commands his followers not to accumulate possessions they do not use for his work. Wealth in the ancient world, as often still today, regularly consisted of precious metals and cloth. Owners thus worried about attacks of moth and rust
    3. θησαυρίζειν refers to the activity of stockpiling for reserve or later use. Since that which is stockpiled is so on the basis of value, the cognate noun θησαυρός (‘place of storage’ and then what is stored there) develops the secondary meaning ‘treasure’ (here plural). Attention to the damage done by moths makes it clear that the imagery of treasure here extends to clothing, tapestries, and other goods
  - ii. On Earth
  - iii. Destroyed - ἀφανίζκειν is a strong word in this context, connoting ruin or destruction.
    - a. where moth and rust consume,” expresses the truth that treasures stored up on the earth are at best insecure. They

are subject to the destruction caused by nature in a variety of forms, of which moth and decay are only two examples

b. – to cause to disappear, **destroy, ruin**, of treasures

2. Moth

a. The moth (σῆς) was a well-known destroyer in the ancient world and, hence, frequently came to be used as a symbol of destruction (cf. Isa 50:9; 51:8; and esp. Job 4:19, “those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth”).

b. whose larvae eat clothing

3. Rust

a. In classical Greek, however, the word was used for “decay” of teeth. In two OT passages (Job 13:28; Hos 5:12), furthermore, the moth is parallel to “rot” or “dry-rot.”

b. **the process of causing deterioration by consuming, consuming**

iv. Thieves

1. Break In

2. Steal

a. Burglary was not uncommon in the ancient world. It was not difficult for thieves to burrow their way through the mud-brick walls of the typical Palestinian house (cf. Job 24:16). Treasures in the ancient world were often buried under house floors, as archeologists have repeatedly discovered. Hence the verb διορύσσειν, “dig through,” may be used here quite literally. Earthly wealth is thus always precarious and may easily be lost.

b. But the entry of the thief is marked also by a violent element (διορύσσω), as in Mt. 6:19 f. with its warning that earthly treasures may only too easily fall victim to the thief.

## II. High-End Store v. 20

a. Treasures

i. Heaven

1. The concept of treasures in heaven as good works stored up before God is a common one in Jewish tradition. The folly of the person who looks for security by storing up treasures in this world is illustrated in the parable in Luke 12:16–21, which is prefaced by the saying “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

“Treasure in heaven” is promised by Jesus to the rich man if he gives away his wealth to the poor (Matt 19:21; cf. 1 Tim 6:18–19).

2. Spiritual treasure should be defined as broadly as possible—as everything that believers can take with them beyond the grave—e.g., holiness of character, obedience to all of God’s commandments, souls won for Christ, and disciples nurtured in the faith. In this context, however, storing up treasures focuses particularly on the compassionate use of material resources to meet others’ physical and spiritual needs, in keeping with the priorities of God’s kingdom
  3. Rather than accumulating material wealth, people should work for spiritual riches invulnerable to loss and death (cf. Luke 12:15–21).
  4. The Matthean Jesus clearly has a healthy suspicion of preoccupation with the material issues of life. He has already identified the importance of a readiness to give up the claim our material wealth has on us (see at 4:20; 5:42; 6:19).
- ii. No Destruction
  - iii. No Thieves
    1. Heavenly treasure is vulnerable neither to nature nor to one’s fellow humans. What might be involved in storing up treasures in heaven has already been made clear by the principles established in vv. 1–18. On the location of the treasures in heaven see the discussion at 5:12 (on reward in heaven).
    2. the argument here against stockpiling earthly wealth depends finally on the contrast of the absolute security of heavenly wealth.

### III. Locations v. 21

- a. Where?
  - i. Treasure
  - ii. Heart- of the emotions, wishes, desires
    1. The main and central organ of the body is a well-known metaphor for the center of a person’s inner being and thus the center of a person’s attention and commitment. With this, compare the earlier uses of καρδία in the sermon (5:8, 28). Truly, the one who piles up treasures on earth will have his or her attention and commitment necessarily turned to earthly matters rather than to the will of the Father in heaven (cf. Luke 12:21).
    2. that the heart will follow the stockpiled treasure. The former fits better and prepares for v. 24: to love God with all one’s heart (Dt. 6:5
    3. Rich Young Ruler Matthew 19:16-22

## IV. Can't Have Both v. 24

### b. Not Both

- i. Serve - **to act or conduct oneself as one in total service to another, perform the duties of a slave, serve, obedience**
- ii. Two Masters- **one who is in charge by virtue of possession, owner**
  1. In view is the degree of commitment of the slave to his duty (thus rightly Gundry), as can also be seen from the clause that follows. This use of "hate" is clear from a passage such as Luke 14:26, where Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." This does not refer to hatred as we understand the word but is only an emphatic way of referring to the absolute commitment required in discipleship. "Hate" thus equals "love less than," as can be clearly seen from the parallel in Matt 10:37. This idiom is found already in the OT (compare Gen 29:31, 33 with 29:30; in Deut 21:15
  2. The point here, however, is that a slave with two masters can do justice to neither. Truly to serve a master demands total and undivided commitment. This is why serving two masters is impossible.

### c. Either

- i. Hate - **be disinclined to, disfavor, disregard** in contrast to preferential treatment
- ii. Love
- iii. Devoted - **to have a strong attachment to someone or someth, cling to, hold fast**
- iv. Despised - **to look down on someone or someth with contempt or aversion, with implication that one considers the object of little value**
  1. need not be taken as "despise" but can have the more mild sense of "disregard ἀντέχειν in a similar way may be understood as simply "pay attention to The point of this verse is that by nature slavery requires absolute loyalty and commitment and, therefore, an exclusive commitment to a single master. In a similar way discipleship requires undivided and absolute commitment
  - 2.

### d. Pick One

- i. God
- ii. Wealth - The potential for divided loyalty expressed in the present passage is emphasized in the concluding sentence: One cannot serve both God and money

- iii. Wealth -, *property* occurs only on the lips of Jesus. In the first instance it means “property,” “earthly goods,” but always with a derogatory sense of the materialistic, anti-godly and sinful. In the earthly property which man gathers (Mt. 6:19 ff.), in which he erroneously seeks security (Lk. 12:15 ff.), to which he gives his heart (Mt. 6:21), and because of which he ceases to love, Jesus finds the very opposite of God (Mt. 6:24) Because of the demonic power immanent in possessions, surrender to them brings practical enslavement (Mt. 6:19 ff.). The righteous must resolutely break free from this entanglement and stand in exclusive religious dependence on God, Mt. 6:24 par

# Word Studies

Store - **to keep some material thing safe by storing it, lay up, store up, gather, save**<sup>1</sup>

The piety of Jesus is distinguished by His definite repudiation of the laying up of earthly goods. High estimation of acts of love as such, and obedience with a view to the last hour, will determine the judgment. Is so far as the heaping up of earthly goods expresses a this-worldly and egotistic attitude, it is a contradiction of God (Lk. 12:21; Jm. 5:3). At times earthly goods have to be given up, especially when the concrete situation makes this unavoidable (Mt. 6:19–21 and par<sup>2</sup>; Lk. 12:33; Mk. 10:17 ff.; 1:16 ff.).<sup>31</sup> In accordance with the Jewish image, acts of love are described as a laying up of treasure in heaven (→ θησαυρός).<sup>4</sup>

Treasures **that which is stored up, treasure Mt 6:21; Lk 12:34** of material things<sup>5</sup>

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus often uses 'treasure' figuratively. Since God rewards wholehearted service in the hereafter, it is termed laying up treasure in heaven, which is contrasted with money-making in Mt. 6:19f.; Mk. 10:21 and parallels; Lk. 12:33 (cf. Mt. 19:21; Lk. 18:22). As the storehouse of either good or evil the heart controls conduct (Mt. 12:35; Lk. 6:45). A man's heart is where his treasure is (Mt. 6:21; Lk. 12:34), *i.e.* his interests are determined by what he values most<sup>6</sup>

Moth - whose larvae eat clothing

Rust- **the process of causing deterioration by consuming, consuming**<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 456.

<sup>2</sup>par. parallel.

<sup>31</sup> Acc. to Mt. Jesus requires the gathering of heavenly treasures instead of earthly, but acc. to Lk. He demands the surrender of all earthly goods. Lk. has thus made the saying of Jesus more extreme and more general in accordance with the ancient ideal of poverty current in his day, cf. P. Feine, *Theologie des NT*<sup>2</sup> (1911), 687 ff. (abbreviated in the 3rd ed.); J. Behm, "Kommunismus und Urchristentum," NKZ, 31 (1920), 282 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Hauck, "Θησαυρός, Θησαυρίζω," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 138.

<sup>5</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 456.

<sup>6</sup> L. C. Allen, "Treasure, Treasury," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1202.

<sup>7</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 185.

Destroy – to cause to disappear, **destroy, ruin**, of treasures<sup>8</sup>

Thieves - In the N<sup>9</sup>T κλέπτης (κλέπτειν) is often used in parables or parabolic sayings for the breaking in of the Messianic age. As the householder prevents the thief from breaking in by watching, so the disciples must be ready for the coming of the Lord by watching, Mt. 24:43 == Lk. 12:39, The only point of comparison in this pure parable is the element of the sudden and unexpected which is common both to the coming of the Messiah and to that of the thief. But the entry of the thief is marked also by a violent element (διορύσσω),<sup>104</sup> as in Mt. 6:19 f. with its warning that earthly treasures may only too easily fall victim to the thief. Paul uses the same comparison in 1 Th. 5:2–4 when he is answering a question as to the time of the day of the Lord. He obviously builds on the dominical saying that the day of the Messiah will come as a thief at an unexpected hour. But if unbelievers are suddenly surprised thereby as by a thief, this ought not to be so with members of the community. For they realise that the coming of the Messianic day is imminent. Again, they live already in the bright radiance of the new age of salvation. They are not groping in uncertain night. Hence they cannot be surprised by the *parousia*.<sup>115</sup> The sudden and unexpected element in the day of the Lord is also brought out by the same figure in 2 Pt. 3:10. Allegorically the comparison is applied to the Lord Himself in Rev. 3:3; 16:15.<sup>126</sup> The Lord will come unexpectedly like a thief in the night, and this should startle the community into watchfulness.<sup>13714</sup>

Steal

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<sup>8</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 154.

<sup>9</sup>NT New Testament.

<sup>104</sup> διορύσσω as in Job 24:16: תִּרְחֹק מִן־הַיָּם; רָחַק, Ex. 22:1.

<sup>115</sup> This keeps the unity of the train of thought. The reading ὡς κλέπτας in A B bo introduces a very different idea, namely, that those who are still in the night of unbelief will be caught by the coming day like thieves; the day of the Lord will surprise them as daylight overtakes thieves (G. Foerster, ZNW, 17 [1916], 169 ff.). But the decisive ideas of the passage have nothing to do with unbelievers. The concern is with Christians. Hence we should accept ὡς κλέπτης (⊗ DFG) in v. 4. Otherwise “the harmony with v. 2 would be completely destroyed” (A. Steinmann, *Th.-Briefe*<sup>2</sup> [1921]). Dib. Th., *ad loc.* points out that the history of the image also favours the above interpretation.

<sup>126</sup> 16:15 is to be seen in the light of 3:3a, Loh. Apk., *ad loc.*

<sup>137</sup> In 3:3 we should not read ἐπὶ σέ (⊗K vg<sup>cl</sup>). Hence the idea of destructive violence is not part of the comparison. In 16:15 the figure of “walking naked” is a fixed technical phrase meaning “condemned in the judgment.” Hence it does not introduce the idea of violence, as Foerster tries to argue, *loc. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Herbert Preisker, “[Κλέπτω, Κλέπτης](#),” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 755–756.

Heart - of the emotions, wishes, desires<sup>15</sup>

Hate-**to be disinclined to, *disfavor, disregard*** in contrast to preferential treatment<sup>16</sup>

Love- **to have a warm regard for and interest in another, *cherish, have affection for,***

Devoted - **to have a strong attachment to someone or someth<sup>17</sup>, *cling to, hold fast to, be devoted to***<sup>18</sup>

Despise - **to look down on someone or someth<sup>19</sup>. with contempt or aversion, with implication that one considers the object of little value,**<sup>20</sup>

Serve **to act or conduct oneself as one in total service to another, *perform the duties of a slave, serve, obe***<sup>21</sup>

Master - **one who is in charge by virtue of possession, *owner***<sup>22</sup>

Wealth - *wealth, property*

occurs only on the lips of Jesus. In the first instance it means “property,” “earthly goods,” but always with a derogatory sense of the materialistic, anti-godly and sinful. In the earthly property which man gathers (Mt. 6:19 ff.), in which he erroneously seeks security (Lk. 12:15 ff.), to which he gives his heart (Mt. 6:21), and because of which he ceases to love, Jesus finds the very opposite of God (Mt. 6:24 par<sup>23</sup>). Because of the demonic power immanent in possessions, surrender to them brings practical enslavement (Mt. 6:19 ff.). The righteous must resolutely break free from this entanglement and stand in exclusive religious dependence on God, Mt. 6:24 par<sup>24</sup>. This realistic view of the actual facts makes it impossible for Jesus to think of earthly possessions with religious

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<sup>15</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 509.

<sup>16</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 653.

<sup>17</sup>**someth. someth.** = something

<sup>18</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 87.

<sup>19</sup>**someth. someth.** = something

<sup>20</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 529.

<sup>21</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 259.

<sup>22</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 577.

<sup>23</sup>par. parallel.

<sup>24</sup>par. parallel.



optimism or to regard them as a mark of special divine blessing (Job 1:10). The phrase μαμωνᾶς τῆς ἀδικίας in Lk. 16:9 (= ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ, 16:11) corresponds exactly to the Aram<sup>25</sup>. ܩܩܫܕܝܢܘܢܗ, == possessions acquired dishonestly.<sup>269</sup> The saying of Jesus need not have been originally directed against publicans, for in practice no property can be acquired except with some element of injustice (cf. Σειρ. 26:28). The estimation of God as the supreme good, and the high ethical emphasis placed on brotherly love, especially in expectation of the imminent end, rule out all ideas of using mammon in the world to serve cultural aims and concerns. The only possibility for Jesus is the renunciation of earthly wealth as this is expressed in giving it to the poor. This ethically unobjectionable and religiously prudent use of earthly riches in the service of love for others is something which the righteous may learn from the ethically unjustifiable but clever use of money for corrupt purposes as this may be seen in the world (Lk. 16:17, 9). Even in respect of modest earthly wealth, the righteous is under the obligation of faithfulness, Lk. 16:11. Faithfulness in small things is the presupposition of participation in the eternal (great) things which are the true wealth of the disciples (τὸ ἀληθινόν, play on words → 388).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Aram. Aramaic.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Tg. Prv. 15:27: “He destroys his house who gathers the mammon of dishonesty.” Cf. also Str.-B., II, 220; Merx, 327 f.

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Hauck, “[Μαμωνᾶς](#),” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 389–390.

# Background

## *Introduction*

The Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7) is the first and lengthiest of the five Matthean discourses. It presents the first and main example of the ethical teaching of Jesus. The righteousness of the kingdom of God (cf. 6:33) expounded in the sermon is presented as being in continuity with the righteousness of the OT law (5:17–19), yet also as surpassing it (cf. the antitheses of 5:21–48). The evangelist’s placement of this first discourse toward the beginning of the Gospel indicates he attached importance to this material. Indeed, the content of the sermon would have had special relevance for the Jewish-Christian readers of the Gospel.

The “sermon” is clearly a compilation of the sayings of Jesus by the evangelist, rather than something spoken by Jesus on a single occasion. The parallel material in Luke (hence, <sup>28</sup>Q material) is found at different places. Luke’s “Sermon on the Plain” (Luke 6:17–49) does contain parallels to Matt 5:1–12, 38–48 and 7:1–5, 12, 16–21, 24–27. But other material is sprinkled throughout Luke (cf. 5:13 in Luke 14:34–35; 5:14 in Luke 11:33; 5:18 in Luke 16:17; 5:25–26 in Luke 12:57–59; 5:31–32 in Luke 16:18; 6:9–13 in Luke 11:2–4; 6:19–21 in Luke 12:33–34; 6:21–23 in Luke 11:34–36; 6:24 in Luke 16:13; 6:25–34 in Luke 12:22–32; 7:7–11 in Luke 11:9–13; 7:13–14 in Luke 13:23–24; and 7:22–23 in Luke 13:25–27).

The contents of the sermon are as a whole fundamentally Jewish (cf. Friedländer; Montefiore), while at some points they admittedly go beyond what is typically Jewish teaching and reflect the originality of Jesus (e.g., 5:39–42, 44; 7:12, which puts in positive form what Judaism expressed negatively).

Much debated has been the question of the practicability of the sermon at a number of points. Do we have here an interim ethic, applicable only during the (short) interval between the first coming of Christ and his imminent return (thus Schweizer), or is the ethic for the long haul of what we call the church age, a description of “ordinary” Christian discipleship? Do the radical demands of the sermon point only to the level of personal ethics, or do they intend a social dimension as well? Does the sermon represent a “realistic utopianism” (Lapide), or is the sermon an invitation to asceticism (Derrett)? Is the idealism of the sermon mainly intended to demonstrate the need of grace and hence to drive us to the gospel (the “Lutheran” view)? Does the sermon present in reality a salvation by works, or does it presuppose a framework of grace? These issues deserve fuller discussion than can be given here (see Davies and Allison, *SJ<sup>29</sup>T* 44 [1991] 283–309, and esp. Kissinger on the history of interpretation of the sermon). We assume the perspective that the sermon describes *the ethics of the kingdom*, thus explaining its idealism. An adequate understanding of the sermon is thus hardly possible apart from the context of the Gospel and the proclamation of the good news of the now dawning kingdom of God. The grace of God is fundamental to all, as the beatitudes that preface the sermon clearly show. (For a defense of the sermon as an integral part of the Gospel, against the argument of

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<sup>28</sup>Q Qumran

<sup>29</sup>*SJT Scottish Journal of Theology*

Betz [*Sermon*], see Stanton [“Origin”].) The righteousness described here is to be the goal of the Christian in this life, although it will only be attained fully in the eschaton proper. It is primarily an ethics concerning the individual, but it is not without implications for social ethics (see Strecker, *Sermon*). The radical nature of the sermon must not be lost in a privatization of its ethics. Some of the practical issues will receive discussion in the commentary as we proceed.

The structure of Matthew’s sermon is not easy to discern. A variety of proposals have been made. Jeremias (*Sermon*), for example, proposed that 5:3–19 was the introduction; 5:20 the “theme” of the sermon; and that this was followed by the discussion of three types of righteousness: that of the scribes, 5:21–48; that of the Pharisees, 6:1–18; and that of the disciples, 6:19–7:27. Grundmann, on the other hand, attempted to structure the sermon in relation to the Lord’s Prayer, which is at the center of the sermon. The beatitudes and 5:13–16 correspond to “Thy kingdom come” and “Hallowed be thy name,” while 5:17–48 correspond to “Thy will be done.” The material following the sermon he then understood to correspond to the remaining petitions. Thus, 6:19–34 relates to “our daily bread,” 7:1–5 to “forgive us our debts,” and 7:13–27 to “deliver us from evil.” In an influential article (*NT<sup>30</sup>S* 24 [1978] 419–32), Bornkamm modified this hypothesis, focusing on the material following the Lord’s Prayer, with the following resultant analysis: the first three petitions of the prayer correspond to 6:19–24; the fourth petition to 6:25–34; the fifth petition to 7:1–5; and the sixth and seventh petitions to 7:6. Bornkamm is followed by Guelich (*Sermon*, 324–25) and to a lesser extent by Lambrecht (155–64). See too K. Syreeni’s discussion (168–84). At least a few things seem clear: 5:3–16 constitute a kind of introduction; 5:17–7:12 the body of the sermon, with the reference to “the law and the prophets” in 7:12 serving as an *inclusio* corresponding to 5:17; and 7:13–27 the admonitory conclusion of the sermon. The Lord’s Prayer does indeed stand at the approximate center of the sermon, and its content is related generally to some of the themes in the material that follows, though it seems doubtful that deliberate structural correspondence is intended. To a considerable extent, the sermon consists of an arbitrary gathering of ethical materials available to the evangelist. This is not to deny, however, the presence of considerable and impressive structure in the individual components that make up the whole.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>*NTS New Testament Studies*

<sup>31</sup> Donald A. Hagner, [Matthew 1–13](#), vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 82–84.

## Comment

**19–20** The clause ὅπου σῆς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, “where moth and rust consume,” expresses the truth that treasures stored up on the earth are at best insecure. They are subject to the destruction caused by nature in a variety of forms, of which moth and decay are only two examples. ἀφανίζειν is a strong word in this context, connoting ruin or destruction. The moth (σῆς) was a well-known destroyer in the ancient world and, hence, frequently came to be used as a symbol of destruction (cf. Isa 50:9; 51:8; and esp. Job 4:19, “those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth”). The meaning of βρῶσις is much more difficult to ascertain. The literal meaning of the word is “eating,” and the linking with moth has inclined some to understand here some other living organism such as a locust or a worm (cf. *Gos. Thom*<sup>32</sup>. 76; “worm” is parallel to “moth” in Isa 51:8; cf. NJB’s translation here in Matthew: “woodworm”). βρῶσις is used in Mal 3:11, apparently to refer to the devouring locust. In classical Greek, however, the word was used for “decay” of teeth (BAG<sup>33</sup>D, 148). In two OT passages (Job 13:28; Hos 5:12), furthermore, the moth is parallel to “rot” or “dry-rot.” The same parallel is found in Jas 5:2, which is undoubtedly dependent on the Jesus tradition here recorded in the Sermon on the Mount (“Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten” [σητόβρωτα, a combination of Matthew’s two words]). The next verse in James, to be sure, does go on to talk about rust. But since Greek has a specific word for rust (ῥίος), used in Jas 5:3, it seems better to translate βρῶσις here more broadly as “rot,” “decay,” or “corrosion” (contra Luz, who opts for an insect such as “the death-watch beetle” that would eat wooden storage boxes). The statement ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσιν καὶ κλέπτουσιν, “where thieves break in and steal,” refers to the other constant danger to earthly treasures. Burglary was not uncommon in the ancient world. It was not difficult for thieves to burrow their way through the mud-brick walls of the typical Palestinian house (cf. Job 24:16). Treasures in the ancient world were often buried under house floors, as archeologists have repeatedly discovered. Hence the verb διορύσσειν, “dig through,” may be used here quite literally. Earthly wealth is thus always precarious and may easily be lost.

The disciples are exhorted instead to “treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ. The concept of treasures in heaven as good works stored up before God is a common one in Jewish tradition (see Tob 4:9; 4 Ezra 6:5; Sir 29:10–13; *Pss. Sol.* 9:5; for rabbinic references cf. <sup>34</sup>*m* Pe<sup>35</sup>a 1:1; further references in Str-<sup>36</sup>B 1:430). The folly of the person who looks for security by storing up treasures in this world is illustrated in the parable in Luke 12:16–21, which is prefaced by the saying “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of

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<sup>32</sup>*Gos. Thom. Gospel of Thomas*

<sup>33</sup>BAGD W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ET, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago, 1979)

<sup>34</sup>*m* Mishnah

<sup>35</sup>Pe<sup>35</sup>a Pe<sup>35</sup>a

<sup>36</sup>Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck’sche, 1926–28)

possessions.” “Treasure in heaven” is promised by Jesus to the rich man if he gives away his wealth to the poor (Matt 19:21; cf. 1 Tim 6:18–19).

**21** Where a person’s treasures are, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδιά σου, “there also will be your heart.” This is the main point of these verses (vv 19–21). The main and central organ of the body is a well-known metaphor for the center of a person’s inner being (J. Behm, *TDN*<sup>37</sup>T 3:605–14) and thus the center of a person’s attention and commitment. With this compare the earlier uses of καρδιά in the sermon (5:8, 28). Truly, the one who piles up treasures on earth will have his or her attention and commitment necessarily turned to earthly matters rather than to the will of the Father in heaven (cf. Luke 12:21).<sup>38</sup>

**24** The situation of a slave having two masters, though unusual, was actually possible, as for example when a slave was owned by two brothers. (The Talmud contains discussion of cases where such a slave gained half his freedom but remained a “half-slave.” See Str-<sup>39</sup>B 1:433 for references; see too Acts 16:16, 19.) The point here, however, is that a slave with two masters can do justice to neither. Truly to serve a master demands total and undivided commitment. This is why serving two masters is impossible.

The literal translation of ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, “for he will hate the one and love the other,” is misleading since this Jewish idiom of loving and hating intends to express a matter of absolute versus partial commitment. In view is the degree of commitment of the slave to his duty (thus rightly Gundry), as can also be seen from the clause that follows. This use of “hate” is clear from a passage such as Luke 14:26, where Jesus says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” This does not refer to hatred as we understand the word but is only an emphatic way of referring to the absolute commitment required in discipleship. “Hate” thus equals “love less than,” as can be clearly seen from the parallel in Matt 10:37. This idiom is found already in the OT (compare Gen 29:31, 33 with 29:30; in Deut 21:15 the NRS<sup>40</sup>V’s “disliked” is lit<sup>41</sup>. “hated”).

The next pair of verbs, ἀνθέξεται and καταφρονήσει, should be understood similarly. καταφρονεῖν need not be taken as “despise” but can have the more mild sense of “disregard”

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<sup>37</sup>*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

<sup>38</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 157–158.

<sup>39</sup> Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck’sche, 1926–28)

<sup>40</sup>NRSV New Revised Standard Version (1989)

<sup>41</sup>lit. literally

(see BAG<sup>42</sup>D, 420); ἀντέχειν in a similar way may be understood as simply “pay attention to” (see BAG<sup>43</sup>D, 73). The point of this verse is that by nature slavery requires absolute loyalty and commitment and, therefore, an exclusive commitment to a single master. In a similar way discipleship requires undivided and absolute commitment.

The potential for divided loyalty expressed in the present passage is emphasized in the concluding sentence: One cannot serve both God and money. (For a sensible examination of the practical issues here, see France, “God and Mammon.”) The word μαμωνᾶς, “mammon,” is translated from the Aramaic noun מַמְוֹנָא, *mamôn* (emphatic state, מַמְוֹנָא, *mamônā*), meaning “wealth” (in the broad sense of the word) or, more basically, “property,” and is here personified and regarded as a potential master. In addition to its occurrence in the Lukan parallel (16:13), the word is found elsewhere in the NT only in Luke 16:9 and 11 where both times it is modified by the ἀδικία stem (“unrighteous”). The word also occurs in 2 Clem 6:1 (in dependence upon Matthew) as well as in *m. Sanh.* 1:1; *b. ’Abot* 2:7, where Hillel is reported as saying “the more possessions, the more care.” (See C. Brown, NIDNT<sup>44</sup>T 2:836–38.)

### **Explanation**

The issue in view in these passages is not wealth primarily, but an absolute and unqualified discipleship. Wealth, it happens, is only the most conspicuous example of that which can distract from true discipleship. Only the rarest of individuals can possess much of this world’s wealth without becoming enslaved to it and without letting it cut the nerve of true discipleship. For this reason, the NT contains a very strong polemic against wealth (e.g., 1 Tim 6:6–10; Heb 13:5). Most important is where one’s heart lies, i.e., what controls one’s interests, energy, and commitment. There is no absolute requirement here for poverty. But the individual disciple must be sensitive to that point at which wealth and possessions are not compatible with authentic discipleship. Jesus asks for uncompromising commitment to God’s will and purposes. This is what it means to store up treasures in heaven. The person who stores up treasures on earth “is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21) and is in the end “a fool.” The person who is distracted from unqualified discipleship because of a covetous eye exists in a deep darkness and is to be pitied. The nature of discipleship is such that it allows no such divided loyalties. If one chooses to follow Jesus, the commitment and service entailed are absolute. It is impossible to be a partially committed or part-time disciple; it is impossible to serve two masters, whether one of them be wealth or anything else, when the other master is meant to be God. This view of

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<sup>42</sup>BAGD W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ET, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago, 1979)

<sup>43</sup>BAGD W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ET, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago, 1979)

<sup>44</sup>NIDNTT C. Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary, of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–78)

the rigorously single-minded nature of discipleship is in keeping with the view of discipleship elsewhere in the Gospel (e.g., 10:34–39; 16:24–26).<sup>45</sup>

### Commentary Studies

**6:19** Despite the strong scholarly consensus to connect vv. 19–21 (only) with the materials following to the end of the chapter, there are various links back to 6:1–18: the opening negative imperative matches that in v. 16; as in vv. 2–4, 5–6, 16–18, what is forbidden is followed (with negative parallelism) by what is demanded; vv. 19–21 mimics the move from second person plural to second person singular forms that has marked vv. 1–4, 5–6, 16–18; the language of treasure picks up on the language of reward in vv. 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18 (τὸν μισθόν; ἀποδώσει), with perhaps the plural form (contrast v. 21) designed to pick up on the three contexts of reward reviewed in vv. 2–4, 5–6, 16–18; ἀφανίζει (lit.<sup>46</sup> ‘make disappear’—see discussion at v. 16) in vv. 19–20 is probably an ironic echo of the same verb in v. 16.

θησαυρίζειν refers to the activity of stockpiling for reserve or later use. Since that which is stockpiled is so on the basis of value, the cognate noun θησαυρός (‘place of storage’ and then what is stored there) develops the secondary meaning ‘treasure’ (here plural). Attention to the damage done by moths makes it clear that the imagery of treasure here extends to clothing, tapestries, and other goods.<sup>35479</sup>

βρῶσις is literally ‘[the activity of] eating’ or ‘food’. Some scholars think in terms of a misleadingly translated Semitic word and suggest a reference to a wood-eating beetle attacking the storage boxes,<sup>36480</sup> but since the object of the activity of the moth stands parallel to that of the βρῶσις<sup>36491</sup> and moths are not to be thought of as attacking wooden boxes, both must be attacking the treasured contents. βρῶσις as some other textile-consuming insect is possible (cf. Mal. 3:11 LX<sup>50</sup>X, where the term is applied to some kind of grasshopper), but this would mean that the images of damage would apply narrowly to treasures of a textile nature. The traditional rendering ‘rust’ or, better, ‘corrosion’ remains the most likely (Galen used the word of the ‘decay’ of teeth).<sup>36512</sup> Matthew probably has in mind various forms of natural deterioration (rotting, pitting, rusting, staining, etc., from damp, corrosive elements in the atmosphere, mould growth, etc.).

It is a moot point how literally one should take the imagery of digging (διορύσσειν = to dig) with the thief. In ancient times construction with unfired bricks or other materials which a

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<sup>45</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 159–160.

<sup>46</sup>lit. literally

<sup>47359</sup> For moth damage cf. Is. 51:8; Sir. 42:13; Jas. 5:2.

<sup>48360</sup> E.g., Luz, *Matthew*, 1:395.

<sup>49361</sup> If the order were reversed, then a sequence from damage to container to damage to contents would have been possible.

<sup>50</sup>LXX Septuagint

<sup>51362</sup> Galen (ed. Kühn) 6:422; 12:879.

determined thief could fairly readily dig through led in time to the term's gaining a quite general sense, like 'breaking and entering' in English.<sup>36523</sup>

Though the insecurity of earthly wealth is quite real and even proverbial, the difficulties can easily be exaggerated (most stockpiling is relatively successful, most of the time), so the cogency of the argument here against stockpiling earthly wealth depends finally on the contrast of the absolute security of heavenly wealth.

In a secondary and derivative sense Matthew may expect his reader to see the relevance of the imagery of storing up treasure on earth to the efforts of the hypocrites in vv. 1–18, but he is primarily anticipating the discussion of mammon in v. 24 (one has to become very nonliteral to get a sense for 'moth and corrosion ruin[ing]' out of vv. 1–18). This makes for a 'cross-stitch' arrangement, with v. 19 anticipating what follows but v. 20 looking back to what comes before. This helps to join the materials before and after into a unity.

**6:20** The positive formulation commends storing up treasure in heaven. The detailed repetition of the language of v. 19 is relieved by substituting for two of the uses of *καί* ('and') an *οὔτε ... οὔτε* ('neither ... nor') construction and a use of *οὐδέ* ('and not'). Where similar language elsewhere in Matthew is always invested in bringing heaven and earth together in some way or other, heaven and earth are sharply contrasted here. Heavenly treasure is vulnerable neither to nature nor to one's fellow humans.<sup>36534</sup> What might be involved in storing up treasures in heaven has already been made clear by the principles established in vv. 1–18.<sup>36545</sup> On the location of the treasures in heaven see the discussion at 5:12 (on reward in heaven).

While the notion of a treasure (or the opposite) with God in heaven is a common Jewish idea,<sup>36556</sup> the sharp dualism with which Matthew works (one kind of treasure or the other) is not matched in Jewish sources.<sup>36567</sup> It will find further explanation and justification in v. 24.

**6:21** What is the nature of the link between v. 21 and what precedes? The *γάρ* ('for') probably points to a more fundamental reason for the challenge to stockpile heavenly treasures rather than earthly. The words of the statement could mean either that the place of investment

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<sup>52363</sup> Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 395.

<sup>53364</sup> *T. Pe`a* 4:18 has an anecdote which uses the idea of treasure with God being out of reach of damage by fellow humans.

<sup>54365</sup> In Mt. 19:21 'treasure [sing.] in heaven' is connected to the sale of one's assets and the dispersal of the proceeds to the poor. But in 6:20 the point is more general and links naturally to the preceding examples of what God rewards.

<sup>55366</sup> Negatively see Dt. 32:34. Tob. 4:9 has, '[By almsgiving] you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity'. *Pss. Sol.* 9:5 has, 'The one who practices righteousness stores up life with the Lord'. *2 Bar* 14:12 has, 'The righteous ... possess with you a store of good works which is preserved in treasuries'. With narrowly monetary imagery of capital (available for the coming world) and interest (usable now) *m. Pe`a* 4:18 identifies honouring one's father and mother, deeds of lovingkindness, peacemaking, and study of the law as capital deposited and producing investment interest.

<sup>56367</sup> By far the closest is Sir. 29:10–11, where in a discussion of the use of money we find, 'Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone or be lost. Lay up your treasure according to the command of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold'.



reveals the commitment of the heart ('one's treasure tells the tale of one's heart'<sup>36578</sup>) or that the heart will follow the stockpiled treasure. The former fits better and prepares for v. 24: to love God with all one's heart (Dt. 6:5)<sup>36589</sup> produces activity that will stockpile treasures in heaven and not on the earth.<sup>59</sup>

The 'treasures on the earth' side of the contrast in vv. 19–20 is now taken up in the imagery of slave service to mammon. On the structure of vv. 19–24 see further at vv. 19–21.

The material is to be found in a quite different context, but almost identically in Lk. 16:13 (Matthew has probably deleted the Lukan οἰκέτης ['servant'] in the interests of generalisation).

**6:24** The material of the verse is neatly arranged with parallelled opening and closing clauses (the final clause restating the opening clause as applied to God and mammon) enclosing supporting argumentation consisting of two parallel statements in which the material is arranged to create a chiasm.<sup>38600</sup>

The opening clause here is not literally true. Historically there were cases of co-ownership of slaves,<sup>38611</sup> and in fact the whole point of v. 24 is that Jesus here speaks against what people are actually doing.

Despite the fact that the matter is explored in relation to the experience of the slave, Tilborg is probably right to suggest that it is the slave owner's perspective which provides the basis of evaluation and not the slave's perspective:<sup>38622</sup> being part owner of a slave is not a very satisfactory arrangement.

The following supporting clauses identify the difficulty (not the impossibility) of split service. 'Hate' and 'love' are a coordinated pair here. The point is not that a slave might hate his master; it does not take two masters for that to be possible. With two masters it is the contrast between feelings for the one and feelings for the other which makes for the difficulty. Given our harsh images of slavery, talk of love might at first seem out of place, but in the Greco-Roman world the lot of slaves was extremely varied and in many cases was consonant with deep loyalty to

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<sup>57368</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:632.

<sup>58369</sup> To the reference to 'heart' in v. 21 v. 24 will add the language of love.

<sup>59</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 297–299.

<sup>60380</sup> Note the sequence: 'hate ... love ... be devoted to ... despise'.

<sup>61381</sup> Cf. Acts 16:16–19; *Test. Jos.* 14:2. Scholars who discuss dual ownership draw attention to the impossibility of satisfying the competing demands but also the possibility that the slave might evade duty by playing his two masters off against each other; see Dupont, 'Dieu ou Mammon', 441.

<sup>62382</sup> Tilborg, *Sermon*, 148–52.

and warm affection for the master.<sup>38633</sup> The slave owner who engendered affection was likely to get more than his fair share of the efforts of the shared slave.

Though offered as an alternative ('either ... or'), the second statement is really only a restatement of the first ('or [to say it another way]').

In the final clause God is mentioned for the first time in vv. 19–24, but he has not been far from sight throughout. Though implicit in the case of the contrasted eyes and explicit here, in both cases the application involves treating as involving a personal choice what in terms of the imagery is a fixed given. It is likely that already the definitive rejection of dual service in the image owed something of its sharpness to the application now to be made: it is when God is one of the masters in view that any consideration of dual service becomes totally impossible.<sup>38644</sup>

In the OT serving idols and other gods is incompatible with service to God,<sup>38655</sup> now the service of mammon<sup>38666</sup> takes its place alongside these as an impossible combination.  $\mu\alpha\mu\omega\nu\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$  is a grecized form of Hebrew *māmôn* or Aramaic *māmônā*.<sup>38667</sup> The etymology of its Semitic origins is disputed, but it came to be used quite neutrally of all the possessions that make up one's wealth, whether much or little (money, property, slaves, etc.). The best suggestion as to why the word remains untranslated is that the untranslated form suits the personification of worldly goods here as master.<sup>38677</sup> Probably already in the Semitic original the word had a certain colourfulness.

The target group for such a saying is not people who already understand themselves as serving both God and mammon and have as yet seen no difficulty. Rather, the saying is meant to provide a penetrating flash of insight for those who find their behaviour mirrored here: suddenly the text exposes for what it is what they have seen as combining their devotion to God with a 'responsible' investment of effort to securing their own financial situation. Mammon is actually functioning as a demanding master usurping the exclusiveness of God's claim.

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<sup>63383</sup> E.g., Varro, *De re rustica* 1.17 (end), assumes that the desired norm for slaves working on agricultural estates would be to have 'goodwill (*voluntatem*) and kindly feeling (*benevolentiam*) towards the master'.

<sup>64384</sup> For the exclusiveness called for in the service of God see Ex. 20:2–3; Dt. 6:4–5; 2 Ch. 33:17.

<sup>65385</sup> Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Dt. 4:23–24; 5:8–9; 6:14–15.

<sup>66386</sup> The double 'm' of the English spelling is the result of a Latin influence.

<sup>67387</sup> As far as I have been able to discover, the Gospel uses (cf. Lk. 16:9, 11, 13) are the earliest surviving instances of the term in Greek.

That money can become an imperious master has been widely recognised and is not distinctive to Jesus.<sup>68</sup> He simply placed this recognition into the context of the claim of God on the lives of those who were faced with the impending arrival of the kingdom of God.

The Matthean Jesus clearly has a healthy suspicion of preoccupation with the material issues of life. He has already identified the importance of a readiness to give up the claim our material wealth has on us (see at 4:20; 5:42; 6:19). But the present text addresses the experience of being taken up (taken captive) by matters of material well-being; it does not address at all directly the question of the possession and use of wealth. 6:19 is more clearly directive, but the absoluteness of the contrasting options in vv. 19–20 is probably to be seen in terms of the state of servitude imaged in v. 24 (note the role of the heart in v. 21). The ‘safest’ wealth is the wealth that one has walked away from or given away, but the Matthean Jesus also assumes that people will have and use wealth and did not necessarily treat this as a negative state of affairs (see, e.g., 11:19; 26:35–36).<sup>69</sup>

19. Jas 5:2–3, which may well be based upon the saying preserved in Mt 6:19–21, reads: ‘Your riches have rotted (σέσηπεν) and your garments are moth-eaten (σητόβρωτα). Your gold and silver have rusted (κατίωται) and their rust (ἰός) will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure (ἔθησαυρίσατε) for the last days’. Note also Ecclus 29:10–11: ‘Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust (ἰωθήτω) under a stone and be lost. Lay up your treasure (θέξ τὸν θησαυρόν) according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold’.

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<sup>68</sup> *Test. Jud.* 18:2–6: ‘Love of money ... enslave[s] him, so that he is unable to obey God’; cf. 19:1: ‘Love of money leads to idolatry, because once they are led astray by money, they designate as gods those who are not gods’. Philo, frg. 2.649 (cited following Str-B, 1:435): ‘It is impossible for love of the world to coexist with the love of God’. Plato, *Rep.* 8.555C: ‘It is impossible for the citizens of a city to honour wealth and at the same time acquire a proper amount of temperance; because they cannot avoid neglecting the one or the other’. Demoph., *Sent. Pythag.* 1.42 (cited following Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, 1:333): ‘It is impossible for the same person to be a lover of money and a lover of God’. For other texts see Wettstein, *ibid.* and Dupont, ‘Dieu ou Mammon’, 442 n. 4.

<sup>69</sup> John Nolland, [\*The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text\*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 303–305.

**ὅπου σῆς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει.** Like the happiness it brings, earthly treasure is only for a season; it is destined to pass away. ὅπου serves to indicate that the true value of any treasure can be determined by its location: is it in heaven or on earth? ἀφανίζω (Mt: 3) occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 13:41. See further on 6:16. διαφθείρει (cf. Lk 12:33) may have stood in Q (although see on 6:20). σῆς (Mt: 2; Lk: 1; nowhere else in the NT) is the ‘moth’, whose larvae eat clothing (*BAG*<sup>70</sup>*D*, s.v.; cf. the biblical and rabbinic *sās*, which sounds so similar). In the biblical tradition the moth destroys that which is feeble: Job 4:19; 13:28; Isa 33:1 LX<sup>71</sup>X; 50:9; 51:8; Hos 5:12; Ecclus 19:3; 42:13. βρῶσις (Mt: 2; Mk: 0; Lk: 0; usually for a form of ἄκλ in the LX<sup>72</sup>X) is a problem. Although typically it means ‘eating’ (Rom 14:17) or ‘food’ (Jn 6:27), ‘decay’ is also an attested meaning (Galen 6:422; 12:879). So many, encouraged by the parallel in Jas 5:2–3 (where moth and rust (ἰός) appear together), have here translated ‘rust’ (e.g. Tyndale, RS<sup>73</sup>V, NE<sup>74</sup>B). Still, the issue is not resolved so readily. In Mal 3:11 LX<sup>75</sup>X A, the word means ‘grasshopper’. And in Ep. Jer. 10 v.l., βρῶσις is found with ἰός and hendiadys is doubtful (so *BAG*<sup>76</sup>*D*, s.v., βρῶσις). Thus Mt 6:19 may have to do with two different insects. If so, costly-textiles are in view (cf. 6:28–30). Gos. Thom<sup>77</sup>. 76, which here does not appear to depend upon the synoptics, offers confirmation: ‘Do you also seek for the treasure which fails not, which endures, there where no moth (*joolēs*) comes near to devour and no worm (*fnt*) destroys’. Note also LA<sup>78</sup>B 40:6, which links the destructive moth with the spoiling worm.

**καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσιν καὶ κλέπτουσιν.** Compare Lk 12:33. Destruction by nature (19b) is now joined to destruction by human beings (19c), with the result that treasures treasured upon the earth are assailed from every direction. The picture is of a thief breaking through the mud brick wall of a house (cf. Ezek 12:5, 7; Mt 24:43) in order to steal the wealth there vainly hidden for safe-keeping. If such is the fate of earthly treasure, if it can be destroyed or taken away, how can the wise individual rely upon it? Can it ever be really owned? Money is ‘a matter insecure’ (Menander, *Dyskolos*, frag.); ‘prosperity is unstable’ (Ps.-Phoc<sup>79</sup>. 27); or, as Epictetus would have put it, wealth is an ‘external’ over which we do not have control. Fortune, the wheel of chance, is fickle, so ‘it will never be sufficient just to notice what is under one’s nose: prudence calculates what the outcome of things will be’ (Boethius, *de Consolatione* 2:1). This is the prudence which Jesus, from an eschatological perspective, is demanding. Compare 1 E<sup>80</sup>n 94:8; 97:8–10; 100:6; Lk 12:13–21.

<sup>70</sup>*BAGD* W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, F. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, Chicago, 1979.

<sup>71</sup>LXX Septuagint

<sup>72</sup>LXX Septuagint

<sup>73</sup>RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

<sup>74</sup>NEB The New English Bible.

<sup>75</sup>LXX Septuagint

<sup>76</sup>*BAGD* W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, F. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, Chicago, 1979.

<sup>77</sup>Gos. Thom. Gospel of Thomas

<sup>78</sup>LAB Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)

<sup>79</sup>Ps.-Phoc. Pseudo-Phocylides

<sup>80</sup>1 En 1 Enoch

The command not to store up treasure on earth should not be understood to entail the renunciation of all possessions. In the first place, the subject of 6:19 is ‘treasure’, not earthly goods in general. In the second place, the verb, ‘to treasure’, refers to accumulation, not simple possession. Finally, Matthew’s attitude elsewhere is not one of unremitting hostility towards wealth (see on 4:18–22 and 6:24).

**20.** Compare Justin, *1 Apol.* 15. This sentence stands in perfect parallelism with 6:19:

Do not	lay up for yourselves earth treasure on the	6:19a
but	lay up for yourselves heaven treasure in	6:20a
where	moth and worm consume	6:19b
where neither	moth nor worm consumes	6:20b
and where thieves	break in and steal	6:19c
and where thieves do not break in and steal		6:20c

We have already offered some evidence for supposing Mt 6:19–20 to be closer to Q than Lk 12:33. Our case is greatly reinforced by this fact: Lk 12:33 contains recognizably Lukan vocabulary.<sup>812</sup> We believe, then, that there is little reason to conjecture that Mt 6:19–20 and Lk 12:33 derive from different sources or are independent logia. Lk 12:33 is rather a redactional reformulation in line with Luke’s characteristic praise for the sharing of possessions and wealth. See further W. Pesch (v).

**θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅπου οὔτε σὴς οὔτε βρώσις ἀφανίζει καὶ ὅπου κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν.** Compare Mk 10:21 = Mt 19:21 = Lk 18:22. Luke has ‘in the heavens’. This comes from Q since the Third Evangelist prefers the singular, ‘heaven’ (Lk: 29; Acts: 24) to the plural (Lk: 4; Acts: 2). Matthew, who is more fond of the plural, has here chosen the singular to underline the parallel with ‘on the earth’ (cf. 6:10). For heaven as a place without corruption see T. Jo<sup>82b</sup> 33:4–5.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>812</sup> ὑπάρχοντα: Mt: 3; Mk: 0; Lk: 8. διαφθείρω: Mt: 0; Mk: 0; Lk: 1; the related διαφθορά occurs six times in Acts, nowhere else in the NT. ἐλεημοσύνη: Mt: 3; Mk: 0; Lk: 2; Acts: 8. βαλλάντιον: Mt: 0; Mk: 0; Lk: 3.

<sup>82</sup>T. Job Testament of Job

<sup>83</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew\*](#), vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 628–631.

Both heaven and the kingdom of God could be spoken of as treasure (cf. Mt 13:44; Gos. Thom<sup>84</sup>. 109; T. Jo<sup>85</sup>b 26:3); and no doubt for Matthew as for Jesus before him, treasure stood not for specific rewards for specific acts but rather conjured up the kingdom of God and all its blessings (see further on 6:21).

Although there is in 6:19–21 no explanation of how to store up treasure in heaven, this lack is more than made up by the broader context, Mt 5–7. Those who are rewarded by the Father in heaven are those named by the beatitudes (5:3–12), those who practise their piety in secret (6:1), those who give alms in secret (6:4), those who pray in secret (6:6), those who fast in secret (6:18), and those who love their neighbour as themselves (7:12). Such people know that ‘Whatever is now is nothing, but that which shall be is very great’ (2 Bar<sup>86</sup>. 44:8).

**21. ὅπου γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ θησαυρός σου, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδία σου.**<sup>873</sup> In Lk 12:34 ὑμῶν replaces σου, and ἔσται is placed at the end. Matthew may have used σου, despite the plural imperatives in 19 and 20, because σου is what he has used in the surrounding verses (17, 18, 22, 23)—even though the same argument could be used to explain the ὑμῶν in Luke (cf. 12:30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37). Matthew probably moved the verb forward to enhance the parallelism between 21a and b:

ὅπου ...	ἔστιν	ὁ θησαυρός σου
ἐκεῖ	ἔσται καὶ	ἡ καρδία σου

The meaning of 6:21, which supplements 6:19–20 by focusing upon the source of one’s deeds, ‘the heart’ (see on 5:8), becomes evident when it is reversed: where your heart is, there will your treasure be also. To have one’s heart or mind<sup>884</sup> set on the things above, not on the things below (cf. Col 3:2), is to store up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor worm destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. A heart or mind directed towards heaven, and therefore acting in accordance with heaven’s will, shall find its reward in heaven (cf. 5:8). In this way one’s treasure tells the tale of one’s heart. A person is worth what the object of his heart is worth. Compare Sextus, *Sent.* 316 (ὅπου σου τὸ φρονοῦν ἐκεῖ σου τὸ ἀγαθόν) and

<sup>84</sup>Gos. Thom. Gospel of Thomas

<sup>85</sup>T. Job Testament of Job

<sup>86</sup>2 Bar. 2 Baruch

<sup>873</sup> Under Lukan influence and because of the verb forms in 6:19 and 20 (second person plural), L W Θ 0233 *f*<sup>1:13</sup> Maj f sy bo<sup>pl</sup> have twice substituted ὑμῶν for σου.—Despite the very weak attestation (B bo<sup>ms</sup>), the omission of καὶ before ἡ καρδία is conceivable. καὶ slightly disrupts the parallelism between 6:21a and b. On the other hand, καὶ could easily have been accidentally omitted after ἔσται.

<sup>884</sup> In the biblical tradition, as in Buddhism, the heart and mind are not distinct realities. The heart is a knowing vessel. Cf. Exod 7:23; 28:3; Deut 4:9; 7:17; 1 Kgs 3:9; 2 Bar. 20:3. Note that, in their versions of Mt 6:21, Justin, *I Apol.* 15, and Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7:12, have substituted ‘mind’ for ‘heart’ (cf. Auth Teach 6:28:22–6).

Epictetus, *Diss.* 2:22:19 (ὅπου γὰρ ἂν τὸ ἐγὼ καὶ τὸ ἐμόν, ἐκεῖ ἀνάγκη ῥέπειν τὸ ζῶον). For further discussion of parallels see W. Pesch<sup>89</sup>h (v), pp. 361–6.<sup>90</sup>

**6:19–21** Jesus commands his followers not to accumulate possessions they do not use for his work. Wealth in the ancient world, as often still today, regularly consisted of precious metals and cloth. Owners thus worried about attacks of moth and rust.<sup>7912</sup> Both were common in the hot, sandy Palestinian climate. The danger of theft applies to almost all kinds of valuables in every time and place. Rather than accumulating material wealth, people should work for spiritual riches invulnerable to loss and death (cf. Luke 12:15–21).<sup>7923</sup> Even if people succeed in safeguarding all their earthly riches, they cannot control how long they will live. Spiritual treasure should be defined as broadly as possible—as everything that believers can take with them beyond the grave—e.g., holiness of character, obedience to all of God’s commandments, souls won for Christ, and disciples nurtured in the faith. In this context, however, storing up treasures focuses particularly on the compassionate use of material resources to meet others’ physical and spiritual needs, in keeping with the priorities of God’s kingdom (vv. 25–34; cf. Luke 16:8–13).

Against the potential objection that material prosperity has no effect on one’s spiritual condition, v. 21 adds that one’s affections are inherently drawn to one’s treasure. This does not imply that rich people cannot be Christians, although the first centuries of Christianity knew only a small number of them. It does imply that riches bring grave dangers, not least of which is the extra anxiety of having to protect one’s possessions. To avoid those dangers, rich Christians must be characterized by generosity in giving and meticulous stewardship in using money for

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<sup>89</sup>W. Pesch W. Pesch, *Matthäus der Seelsorger*, Stuttgart, 1966.

<sup>90</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 632–633.

<sup>9172</sup> “Rust” is literally “eating,” as perhaps in the corrosion of metal but also the gnawing of clothing by vermin. R. H. Mounce, *Matthew*, GNC (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 56, states that the rendering “rust” was introduced into English by Tyndale.

<sup>9273</sup> On the definition of “treasure,” see Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:621, “That which is of exceptional value and kept safe.”

the Lord's work. F. W. Beare rightly notes that without some accumulation of capital, no new ventures can be easily undertaken: "The words assume that the treasures are hoarded; they are prized for their own sake, not put to work to create jobs and produce goods."<sup>7934</sup> Nevertheless, most all people who are able to save and invest experience the temptation drastically to overestimate their genuine needs and/or to try to secure their futures against all calamity. Meanwhile, the truly destitute of the world continue to grow poorer.<sup>794595</sup>

**6:24** Against those who might protest that they can accumulate both spiritual and earthly treasures, Jesus replies that they have only two options. They must choose between competing loyalties. "Master" suggests a slaveowner who required total allegiance. People could not serve two masters in the way in which people today often work two jobs. "Money" is more literally *mammon*, referring to all of a person's material resources. Of course, many people do try to cherish both God and mammon, but ultimately only one will be chosen. The other will be "hated," even if only by neglect. "Love" and "hate" in Semitic thought are often roughly equivalent to *choose* and *not choose*.

Many perceptive observers have sensed that the greatest danger to Western Christianity is not, as is sometimes alleged, prevailing ideologies such as Marxism, Islam, the New Age movement or humanism but rather the all-pervasive materialism of our affluent culture. We try so hard to create heaven on earth and to throw in Christianity when convenient as another small addition to the so-called good life. Jesus proclaims that unless we are willing to serve him wholeheartedly in every area of life, but particularly with our material resources, we cannot claim to be serving him at all (cf. under 8:18–22).<sup>796797</sup>

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<sup>9374</sup> F. W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 182.

<sup>9475</sup> Two excellent treatments of wealth and poverty in the Gospels are D. P. Secombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz: SNTU, 1982); and T. E. Schmidt, *Hostility to Wealth in the Synoptic Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

<sup>95</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 122–123.

<sup>9677</sup> Cf. esp. G. A. Getz, *A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Chicago: Moody, 1990); R. J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, rev. (Dallas: Word, 1990).

<sup>97</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 124.