

Christ's Last Word to His Church SERIES: Laodicea: Jesus Warns of The Danger of Having Too Much Stuff Revelation 3:14-22

As we open to Revelation 3:17, we are opening to Jesus the Christ of Christmas, talking about something so timely to Christmas, so relevant to our choices this season, and so right where we are today: that it is uncanny.

Jesus is addressing the condition that the believers at Laodicea had gotten themselves into. They were simply described by Christ as: ***loaded down with stuff***.

They could afford all that stuff, they bought all those items with their hard-earned money. They stored their possessions carefully, and used them regularly. But, what the Laodiceans are confronted with by Christ is not that they had so much, but the danger that comes when we have too much stuff.

The fact is that in all their careful earning and buying, they had in the process, lost sight of Christ, literally. Jesus Christ warns them, and us, of:

The Danger of Having Too Much Stuff

We all have witnessed two amazing, global events in the past week: they both involve buying stuff. The whole world has watched Americans again take first place on Earth as "biggest consumers".

There is no one nation, in all of recorded history, that has consumed more stuff of every kind, than we are currently consuming.

Remember the events? First, on the day after Thanksgiving Americans spent more money buying stuff on that "Black Friday" event, than any other day in our national history.

That was followed three days later, by the "Cyber Monday" event that saw another record for the world: more stuff was purchased that day than any other day of online purchasing in the history of the world.

Jesus said it all in Revelation 3:17. The heart of our study today is that second phrase in

v. 17. I will emphasize the words from all five of the major Bible translations.

Please **stand** and listen to this verse spoken by Jesus Christ, two-thousand years ago, and every day since, to anyone who knows and loves Him:

Because you say, 'I am rich,

[second phrase in NKJV: have become wealthy; NAS: and have become wealthy; NIV: I have acquired wealth; ESV: I have prospered; KJV: and **increased with goods** (that is the one that hits me hardest)]

and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

Christ's warnings were not new, they were just another in a long line of words that God has sent to His people throughout the ages. Listen to these words from the Old Testament's wisest man who warns about the:

Eight Dangers of Having Too Much Stuff

God has spoken often, and very clearly about why the more we have, the more dangerous our lives become.

Most of us always think those verses are warnings to people that have MORE than us. In life there are always people with more, and people with less. So we are okay because that means the words God spoke must be for them and not us.

Solomon, the man with the most stuff in the Bible, was inspired by God to explain the dangers that God is talking about. Listen to his wisdom as we turn to Ecclesiastes 5.

Starting in v. 10 we have these very clear warnings. Instead of thinking they are pointing elsewhere, just ask the Lord, as we read these verses, to speak to your heart. Ask Him if there is any message from Him to you from these six verses. Open to the middle of the Bible, hit the book of Psalms. Head to the right past Proverbs, and the next book is Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 5:10-15 (NKJV) He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity. 11 When goods increase, They increase who eat them; So what profit have the owners Except to see them with their eyes? 12 The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. 13 There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt. 14 But those riches perish through misfortune; When he begets

a son, there is nothing in his hand. 15 As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor Which he may carry away in his hand.

Here are the Divinely inspired lessons on the stuff of life:

Lesson-1: ***The more stuff we accumulate, the more stuff we will want.***

"He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;" (v. 10a).

Lesson-2: ***The more stuff we grasp on to, the less satisfied we become.***

"Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity." (v. 10b).

Lesson-3: ***The more stuff we own, the more stuff everyone tries to get from us.***

"When goods increase, They increase who eat them;" (v.11a).

Lesson-4: ***The more stuff we pile up, the less of it we can really use.***

"So what profit have the owners Except to see them with their eyes?" (v. 11b).

Lesson-5: ***The more stuff we build up, the more we worry about our stuff.***

"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep." (v. 12).

Lesson-6: ***The more stuff we hold tightly, the more we get injured from holding onto it.***

"There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt." (v. 13).

Lesson-7: ***The more stuff we keep, the more stuff we can lose.***

"But those riches perish through misfortune;" (v.14a).

Lesson-8: ***The more stuff we clutch, the more stuff we must leave behind.***

"When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor Which he may carry away in his hand." (v.15).

When Jesus was speaking to the wealthiest church in Revelation 2 & 3, He was speaking the same truths He shared in the Gospels. In Rev. 3 Christ implies that it was their

wealth that was holding them back from pleasing God.

Christ Constantly Exposed The Dangers of Wealth

Jesus spoke so much about money, wealthy, and possessions during His earthly teaching ministry. There are 89 chapters and nearly 2,800 verses in the Four Gospels. These record that no less than one in seven, or 15% of all the words Christ spoke: are about money and possessions, or stuff. And, almost half of Christ's 38 parables are lessons on finances.

Starting in Matthew, let me just share a few of His clear commands about the place stuff is to have in our lives, the dangers of too much stuff, and what pleases Him.

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.** (NKJV)

Matthew 6:28-30 "And **why do you worry about clothes?** See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (NIV)

Matthew 13:22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the **cares of this world** and the **deceitfulness of riches** choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (NKJV) [These same words are also recorded in Mk. 4:19; Lk. 8:14]

Matthew 19:23-24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is **hard for a rich man to enter** the kingdom of heaven. 24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (NKJV) [These same words are also recorded in Mk. 10:23-25; Lk. 18:24-25]

Why would it be hard for rich people to get to Heaven? Because we tend to hold on tightly to our possessions, and Christ warned that holding onto (or loving) the things of this earth spells eternal disaster.

Riches Make it Hard to Get to Heaven

We have more `things per person ` than any other nation in history. Closets are full, storage space is used up, and cars can't fit into garages.

We live in a society where our possessions first imprison us by debt, then our possessions take over our houses; and finally stuff begins to occupy our time. We have been conquered by our possessions. Everything I own, owns me. Why would I want more? Jesus said that the care of things can make our hearts grow cold.

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

1 Timothy 6:9-10, 17-19 But **those who desire to be rich** fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 17 **Command those who are rich in this present age** not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, **that they may lay hold on eternal life.** (NKJV)

So in their state of being rich, wealthy, and having everything: Jesus diagnosed the church at Laodicea as having all but stopped living in the power and sanctifying effects of the Cross. They had slowly drifted away from Christ's control over their lives.

They had cultivated some very bad habits. Habits that made them unacceptable to Christ, and even worse, sickening to Him. In these verses Jesus writes a letter that asks them, and us today, to repent as often as needed until we are personally pursuing:

The Fourth Habit Christ Desires

We've already seen the first three habits.

Habit One: Jesus wants us to
Repent of any Spiritual **Neutrality**

v. 15 **“I know your works** that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I will vomit you out of My mouth.**

- Spiritual **Neutrality** is when we stop aggressively resisting sin in our lives.

Habit Two: Jesus wants us to Repent of any Spiritual **Self-Sufficiency**

v. 17a Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and **have need of nothing**’—

- Spiritual **Self-Sufficiency** is when we think we are making it on our own, and don’t need the Lord’s power, guidance, and presence.

Habit Three: Jesus wants us to Repent of any Spiritual **Insensitivity**

v. 17b and **do not know that you are** wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

- Spiritual **Insensitivity** is when we lose our spiritual sight, and no longer see ourselves as God’s Word explains we are. We lose touch with the mirror of the Word that shows us what needs changing each day as we wait before the Lord.

Today, we see:

Habit Four: Jesus wants us to Repent of any Spiritual **Wastefulness**

v. 18a **I counsel you** to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, **that you may be rich;**

- Spiritual **Wastefulness** is when we abandon Christ as our investment counselor and start investing our time and money for earth and not Heaven. We begin to measure things by their earthly and not eternal worth.
- Slowly we begin to trade the precious time we have for objects that will only rust, burn, rot, get stolen, and weigh us down in life. The Bank of Heaven gets neglected and the treasures we lay up are here on Earth.
- Spiritual **Wastefulness** is when we ignore Christ’s words in Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Eternal Dangers of Stuff

If we primarily store our treasures here on Earth, we will live our lives leaving behind what is most important to us.

Jesus said that if we give to Him what is most important to us, then we go through life heading towards our treasures, rather than away from them. Since Paul invested in Heaven, death was gain. For those who never invest in Heaven, death is always loss.

Jesus told us that our view of stuff is the reference point for all of life. If we view stuff as only in our care, and belonging to Another, everything changes. We aren't always worried about it, wanting more, and lamenting any loss. Rather we are consulting the Owner about His desires, and trusting His care for all that we watch on His behalf.

There is a profound lesson in missionary martyr Jim Elliot's famous words, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." The pathway to usefulness for God began: when Jim Elliott realized everything belonged to God and was no longer his!

Today, as we celebrate Communion, take some time to surrender the ownership of your stuff to God.

Ask Him to change your heart's desires to only wanting stuff that will reflect His ownership.

Decide now to be primarily an investor in Heaven, with Christ as your investment counselor.

Spiritual **Wastefulness** or laying up our treasures on Earth instead of Heaven: is sickening to Christ.

Because you say, 'I am rich, and **increased with goods** and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

So Jesus Christ calls each of us to repent today of any Spiritual **Wastefulness**.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and

where thieves break in and steal; 20 **but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

APPENDIX:

The Mark of a Christian:

Writing in about A. D. 125, a Christian philosopher by the name of Aristides looked at Christianity and said this: "They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another. They despise not the widow, and grieve not the orphan. He that hath, distributeth liberally to him that hath not. If they see a stranger, they bring him under their roof, and rejoice over him, as it were their own brother: for they call themselves brethren, not after the flesh, but after the spirit and in God; but when one of their poor passes away from the world, and any of them see him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food."