

What do you See?

Matthew 6:22-23

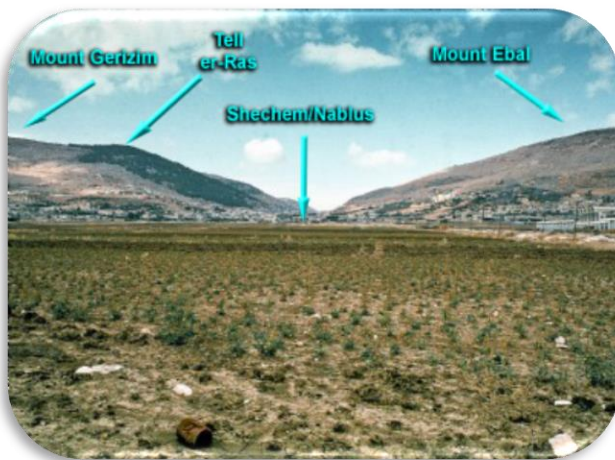
Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

Charles Spurgeon called these verses “one of the most pithy, sententious utterances of our Savior,” “capable of being adapted to so many things that the best of commentators despair of being able to give you the whole of its fullness.”¹ Amen! Having been “sandwiched” between Jesus’ reference to storing up treasures in verse 19-21 and His reference to “money” in verse 24, this passage undoubtedly relates to one’s attitude towards material possessions. And yet I can’t help but feel that Jesus’ command to keep one’s eye healthy has far reaching implications. While the letter of Jesus’ words clearly points to prosperity theology and wealth hording as being sins, His reference to the “eye being a lamp of the body” seems to indicate there is a deeper moral lesson to be learnt in this passage. The first part of this sermon is going to examine prosperity theology and Jesus’ rebuke of such thinking by explaining where “real” treasure is to be stored. The second part of this sermon is going to suggest the “eye” in this passage most likely refers to our affections and conscience and as such is a warning that what we allow into and dwell upon in our souls not only affects our faith but also obedience to Christ.

Prosperity Theology

Before one can truly understand the significance of Jesus’ critique concerning material



possessions one must first understand the curses and blessings as outlined in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 27-28). In Moses’ farewell speech he outlined God’s expectations for His people as they entered the promised land. He instructed Israelites to setup an altar on top of two mountains. The first altar on Mount Ebal was to remind the people that breaking God’s laws would lead to the following negative consequences: their city, wombs, crops and herds would become cursed in the form of war, few children, diseases, drought, livestock handed over to their enemies and locusts and worms

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“A Single Eye and Simple Faith,”](#) in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 389.

devouring their vineyards. The second altar on Mount Gerizim was to remind the people that obeying God's laws would lead to the following positive consequences: their city, wombs, crops and herds would be blessed in the form of defeated enemies, more children, plenty of rain and an abundance of livestock and crops. These two altars were to remain on both Mounts as a constant reminder of the curses and blessings for either not obeying or obeying God's commands.

Health and wealth in Bible times became a key indicator of their standing before a holy God (Psalms 1:3).² For example, after having lost his wealth, health and children Job's friends



wrongly concluded that he must have sinned. When the young ruler “went away sad” the disciples were astonished for he had great wealth and yet was not saved (Matthew 19:25). This belief that health and wealth are tied to God's blessings is still alive in some churches today. For example, playing on society's insatiable desire for health, wealth and happiness,³ Prosperity Gospel teaches that when people give more money to the church it guarantees God will return to them an abundance of health and wealth.⁴ There are countless modern-day stories of couples who gave away their life

savings to the church in hopes of “buying God's” favor and becoming filthy rich! According to proponents of Prosperity Gospel the root cause of anyone who is unhealthy, poor and unhappy is due to their being stingy and giving so little money to the church!

Where to Store Treasures

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”⁵

² Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 185.

³ [“What Do Miserable Christians Sing?,” Themelios 25, no. 2 \(2000\): 1.](#)

⁴ Taken from the following website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_theology

⁵ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 6:19–24.

Given the Old Testament belief in a direct correlation between obedience to God and material blessings, one can almost feel how shocked the audience of the Sermon on the Mount must have been when Jesus said treasures are to be stored in heaven where “the uncertainties of



life cannot affect them.”⁶ Storing treasures on earth in the form of nicer homes, cars and fat bank accounts for example is not a wise practice for Christ stated that all these things are subject to “the destructive effects of life in a fallen world.”⁷ Either thieves will steal or moths and vermin will destroy one’s earthly possessions. It is not the presence of wealth that is evil, for Job and Abraham were rich, but the prioritizing of one lifestyle in a manner that focuses on selfishly, accumulating money (1 Timothy 6:10)⁸ rather than seeking first the kingdom

of God that is evil. Since God and money make all-consuming demands⁹ and represent competing interests and moral values,¹⁰ one’s choice of where to store one’s treasure truly dictates to whom one has chosen to be the master of their heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:37).¹¹

In a world infatuated with material possessions, Christ’s teaching on what kind of



treasures one should seek is equally shocking to today’s Christians. Proponents of the Prosperity Gospel would have one believe that the key to great wealth comes from giving more money to the church. While Christians are to give a tithe to God (Romans 12:13), provide for their relatives (1 Timothy 5:8), widows and the poor of this world (Luke 12:33-34; 1 John 3:16-18; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)); these acts of service are not to be done to satisfy one’s selfish, coveting of material possessions but are to be given out of love for God and one

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 59.

⁷ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 293.

⁸ D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 177.

⁹ D. A. Carson, “[The Gospels and Acts](#),” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1941.

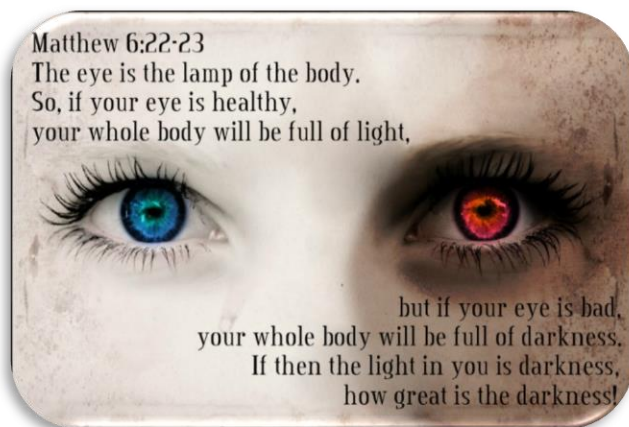
¹⁰ Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 132.

¹¹ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 296.

another!¹² This does nullify Scripture that says a person “reaps what they sow” (Galatians 6:7), but accentuates the fact that those who labor to obey God, especially in their generosity, will be rewarded not necessarily with earthly treasures but with “treasures above the sun.”¹³ Like Paul I want to finish the race, keep the faith and obtain the crowns of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:6-8), but most of all my heart’s desire is to hear Christ speak the following words to me “good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:11) you truly saw me as your God, Savior and King (Psalms 73:25)!

Eye is a Lamp unto the Body

Now that one understands the role treasures are to have in one’s life lets dig a little deeper into the sandwiched passage concerning the eye. In Jesus’ day the eye was thought to be



the “window that brought light into the body” that was either “good” or “evil.”¹⁴ The meaning and ramifications, however of such a statement is not easy to determine.¹⁵ Jesus uses “eye” here in a “metaphorical sense as a lamp that illumines a person’s inner life.”¹⁶ Jesus is not necessarily stating the “eye is a window of the soul”¹⁷ but more likely is referring to one’s conscience¹⁸ or heart.¹⁹ What the heart focuses on as being valuable tends to be a barometer of one’s spiritual health.²⁰ If one has a “single-minded”²¹ devotion is to hold onto God’s commands (Psalms

119:10),²² one’s eye will be healthy because it is able to discern and obey God’s will for one’s life.²³ If one’s “value, personal significance, and earthly security” comes from material possessions then one’s eyes is unhealthy, filled with darkness²⁴ and undivided loyalty.²⁵ Jesus

¹² D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” 177.

¹³ Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), 129.

¹⁴ Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), 59.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 153–154.

¹⁶ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), 294.

¹⁷ Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), 131.

¹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, “[A Single Eye and Simple Faith](#),” in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 389.

¹⁹ D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” 178.

²⁰ D. A. Carson, “[The Gospels and Acts](#),” 1941.

²¹ Craig S. Keener, [Matthew](#), vol. 1, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Mt 6:22.

²² D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” 178.

²³ Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), 131.

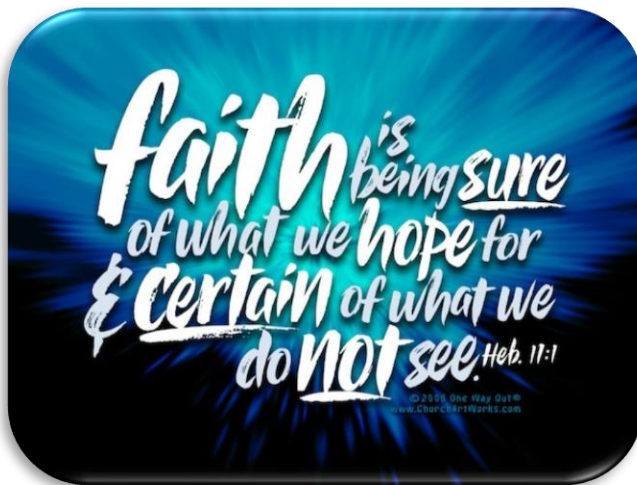
²⁴ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), 295.

²⁵ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), 294.

warns us in verse 24 that trying to serve both God and possessions is not possible²⁶ for one cannot serve two masters whose kingdoms are diametrically opposed to each other! For the remainder of this sermon I want to look at how important it is to have two good eyes, one of faith and one of obedience.

Eye of Faith

“Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). It is by faith that a person is saved (Ephesians 2:8) and it is by faith that one walks not by natural sight²⁷ but by the grace of God which enables one to fix one’s eyes on what



is unseen and eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). The eye of faith is one that is quick to examine (1 Corinthians 11:28) and confess sins (1 John 1:9) and discern and surrender to the Master’s will regardless of how hard the race becomes or how unjust one’s circumstances. The eye of faith is one that knows if it should stare upon and indulge in its sinful desires (James 1:13-15) then its sight will be darkened, its heart will become weak and ministry ineffective.²⁸ The eye of faith is one whom can stand in the midst of the attacks of “the powers of this dark world” (Ephesians 6:12) and fear no evil (Psalms

23) for when it wears the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20) the devil has no choice but to flee (James 4:7) as one soars on wings of eagles (Isaiah 40:31) and accomplishes all things by His grace and will. As Spurgeon so succinctly states:

“I am willing to be anything, that thou mayst be all in all; I take thy grace as a free gift; I come to thee naked to be clothed, helpless to be helped, dead to be made alive; I come to thy merit without pretence of any; I come, although without any fitness, without any qualification, with a hard heart, with a stubborn will; yet I come to thee just as I am. Lord, do the work from beginning to end; work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure, and then help me to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling.”²⁹

May our eye forever be focused on the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:1)!

²⁶ D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) 178.

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“A Single Eye and Simple Faith,”](#) 390.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“A Single Eye and Simple Faith,”](#) 392.

Eye of Obedience

The second healthy eye that I want to focus on is one that is willing to give full allegiance to Christ by obeying His word. While we know that we are not to love the ways of this world (1 John 2:15), too many Christians give only part of their hearts over to follow some



of God's commands while keeping other parts to themselves so that they can indulge in sin. This kind of neither hot nor cold, lukewarm attitude towards cherishing sin (Revelation 3:15-17) within one's heart needs brought before the Lord for if we truly want to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16) then we must have a single minded devotion to imitate our Lord, Savior and King.³⁰ While pretending to look towards heaven while gratifying one's own carnal desires might fool the people of this world, He who knows everything about you

(Psalms 139) will clearly see the planks (Matthew 7:3-5) in your double-minded heart!

Obedience to God is not to be done with the intent of receiving an abundance of health or wealth as proponents of the Prosperity Gospel suggest but with gratitude that God would allow the dogs (Matthew 15:21-28) and blind beggars of His kingdom to serve as His hands and feet! What a shame it is that our divided loyalties between Satan and God's kingdom shine so bright that Christians have become objects of contempt and scorn to this world,³¹ instead of objects of light!

Conclusion

Having been "sandwiched" between Jesus' reference to storing up treasures in verse 19-21 and His reference to "money" in verse 24, the phrase that the "eye is a lamp unto the body" has profound implications when it comes to fulfilling Christ's command to be holy as He is holy. When Jesus said, "where your treasure is there your heart will be as well" He was stating a fact that one cannot have one foot in His and Satan's kingdom at the same time. What the heart focuses on matters for it tends to be a barometer of the spiritual health of one's soul. If the heart focuses on accumulating treasures on this earth, then it will be cold and indifferent to God's word. It is only when the heart focuses on faith Christ by strict obedience to His word that it can let God's light shine from within and be a proper witness to this world. So, I want to leave you with this one final question: if you examined your heart right now would you find your thoughts, words and deeds truly reflect He who is righteous and true or have your eyes been so darkened by sin that you have become a mere pretender of the faith?

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, ["A Single Eye and Simple Faith."](#) 394.

³¹ C. H. Spurgeon, ["A Single Eye and Simple Faith."](#) 395.

