

22 September 2013

Riches Deceive People (Money & Riches Pt 6)

This is our sixth study on the topic of money and riches. In our previous study we covered four points; (1) use your money to lend to brethren for no usury, and (2) use your money to pay taxes, and (3) use your money to give to the work of the Lord, and (4) let every man give his money as purposed in his heart.

In this study we establish the relationship between riches and deceit. In doing so we identify two points; 1) false brethren are full of deceit & become fat with riches, and (2) riches can choke the *word* of God causing young believers to become unfruitful.

Let us add a little more detail to our two points.

1. False brethren are full of deceit & become fat with riches

Jer 5:27 As a cage is full of birds, so [are] their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

Before we seek an understanding of this verse from Jeremiah and then apply it to us today let us first consider the meanings of some key words that include wicked, deceit and waxen. Let us consider a brief meaning from the Oxford dictionary and then Scripture.

Wicked means (a) "evil or morally wrong", and (b) "playfully mischievous", and (c) "informal excellent; wonderful"

Deceit means "the action or practice of deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth."

Waxen means (a) "having a smooth, pale, translucent surface or appearance like that of wax: a canopy of waxen, creamy blooms", and (b) "archaic or literary made of wax: a waxen effigy".

It is clear from these dictionary meanings that we cannot simply use a dictionary to understand the meaning of words in Holy Scripture. The meaning of wicked for young people today includes (b) and (c) from our dictionary meanings, whereas in the context of scripture wicked takes on the dictionary meaning (a) above, "evil or morally wrong" (see 1Jn.3:1 2).

The meaning of deceit is similar to that in the scriptures as we see from Prov.12:17 where deceit is a false witness.

The meaning of waxen is quite different to the dictionary meaning. This is evident when we substitute the word waxen with the phrase "having an appearance like that of wax", from our dictionary meaning above. The eleven uses of waxen in Scripture indicate a meaning of 'become'. For example Deut 31: 20, when you replace waxen with 'become' the verse makes sense within its context. Interestingly enough there is no Hebrew word for waxen.

However, in three occurrences in Leviticus waxen is followed by poor, so we looked up poor in the Strong's dictionary as it is used in Lev.25: 25, 35 & 39 and we found the Hebrew word *muwk* (Strong's number 4134) means "a prim. root; to become thin, i.e. (fig) be impoverished:- be (waxen) poor (er). Which concurs with our meaning from Deut.31: 20 and indicates that waxen means "to become".

So now that we have established the meaning of some of our key words in this verse, let us consider the meaning and how it applies to us today.

Looking at the wider context of this passage we established Jeremiah is prophesying to backslidden Judah (see Jerm.3: 6, 7 & 14). In the preceding verse God through Jeremiah is saying that among His *people are found wicked men* (sounds exactly the same as the church age): *they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men*. Then comes our verse, where, after the wicked have snared the true believers they become full of deceit as pictured by the example of a cage full of birds. Such deceit causes the wicked to become great and waxen rich. The next verse expounds what happens in them becoming great and rich, they have waxen (become or grown) fat, they shine, they overpass the deeds of the wicked. Hence, as a title to this point I have taken the wicked among God's people in Judah and make application to the false brethren of the church age today. Therefore, I assert that it is the false brethren today who lay snares for believers and it is they who are full of deceit which often leads them to become fat with riches. Such deceit is worse than those who are unsaved.

Now turn to Prov.6: 16-19, and you will see that among the things that the Lord hates is *a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren*. And who does that? Someone that is deceitful!

Now turn to Gal.2: 4 where Paul warns the church in Galatia to beware of *false brethren brought in, who come in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they bring us into bondage*. All very deceitful, wicked and mischievous behaviour. Remember, that such false brethren are full of deceit & deceit often leads people to become fat with riches.

Now think of these Mega-Churches where the pastor is driving a Harley Davidson motor-bike and taking expensive cruises, whilst preaching the prosperity doctrine at the expense of the poor in their church. They may not have been brought in unawares, or come in privily, but they have most likely deceived the flock with false doctrine before getting to their position of leadership. Hence deceit has been a part of their journey in acquiring their wealth.

When you consider all the verses that relate to a wealthy, rich person the majority are negative, which is not surprising given that the love of money is the root of all evil. Yes, there are those who have acquired their wealth through honest means, but when you consider the films where the bad guys are involved they always get rich from the poor by deceitful means, ill-gotten gains. They lay snares or traps for others to catch them like birds in a cage. The gangsters in movies prey on the weaker, whether that be women or men.

In this point we have established the relationship between deceit and riches and found that when a person is deceitful they are prone to desire riches, and if they have acquired their wealth deceitfully, they are inclined to deceive the brethren. Let us beware of brethren whose focus is on money, as such tend towards deceit & become fat with riches.

2. Riches can choke the *word* of God causing young believers to become unfruitful

Mk.4: 18 & 19 *And these are they which are sown among thorns, such as bear the word, And the cares of the this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

When believers sow the seed of the gospel of Christ crucified some seed falls to the way side and others take root but bear no fruit. This parable of the sower offers several reasons why the seed bears no fruit. Matt.4:1-8 is the parable, and verses 14 - 20 outline the Lord Jesus' interpretation of His parable.

The seed either falls on the way side, on stony ground, among thorns or on good ground. It would appear from the Lord's interpretation that the seed that falls by the way side is immediately taken away by Satan. The seed that falls on stony ground appears to take root in the heart but when affliction and persecution come, the person is offended, backslides and bears no fruit. The seed from the third sower falls among thorns and three things can deter this seed from bearing fruit. They include; *the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in* (see verse 19). And it is the deceitfulness of riches and their effect on the new believer which is the topic of this point.

New believers are babes in Christ who feed on the milk of the word and are unskilful in the word of righteousness (see Heb.5: 13), they are more vulnerable to temptation from the devil, they are more easily seduced by riches, because wealth, money and riches are deceitful. This is confirmed when we reflect back on what we have already covered in this series of studies:-

- * that the love of money is the root of *all* evil. And under this point we also mentioned that it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of heaven. The level of difficulty was compared to a camel passing through the eye of a needle, and
- * there is uncertainty in riches, and
- * treasures of wickedness profiteth nothing, and
- * there is no satisfaction with money or what money can buy.

Hence riches are deceitful, they are deceptive and they offer the young false security.

Like thorns that choke the vine from growing lushly and bearing fruit so does the devil use riches as a device to deceive and choke the word which is sown in the heart of a man.

If you were eating something and you choke what happens? Perhaps the passage that carries the food in the human body, the oesophagus gets blocked and does not function. Or looking at our parable it would be like the thorns which have grown up around our seed (the word), strangling the life out of the seed, such that it cannot feed from the soil or draw up water from its roots, and if it can, it is in such diminished amounts that the seed, now a vine, cannot produce any fruit because it has little sustenance to propagate fruit.

So what happens when a young babe in Christ gets choked on the deceitfulness of riches? Their desire for riches, their lust for money deceives them away from the Scriptures of truth and time with the Lord Jesus in prayer, and they gradually feel choked and unable to bear fruit (just like a frog in water that gradually gets heated up). Because the devil has used the age-old device of money, and the lusting for wealth to deceive the believer and they starve. Remember that when a person becomes a believer the word of righteousness is their food (see Heb.5: 12 & 13), hence why I prefer to feed on the purest words possible given that God promised to preserve every one of His words, and the Lord Jesus Christ is their water, from which they will never thirst (see Jn4: 15). So if the new believer, the babe in Christ does not feed from the Scriptures, or feeds on an erroneous version, or they have an incorrect understanding of who the Lord Jesus Christ is because they feed from a counterfeit copy of the Scriptures, then even without thorns they will struggle to bear fruit. Imagine what would happen when the devil tries to deceive *them*. They would be even less able to stand against the wiles of the devil (see Eph.6: 13 & 14), they would be more likely to choke on the lust of riches.

Have you ever felt like you were spiritually choking on riches or any other lusts of the world?

How does a young babe in Christ prevent themselves from being deceived by either riches, cares of this world or lusting after any other thing?

They find the promised preserved words of God and feed on them daily as if the survival of their very soul depended on it, such that their eyes fail for the word of God (see Ps,119: 81). And they spend time in prayer. Then they find a church where the Bible is taught, and feed on the richness that the teachers can bring out from the word, and desire those little nuggets of gold, more than gold and silver. Finally when they feel their heart desiring the cares of the world, or being deceived by riches and the lust for more money, or the lust of other things, then we encourage them to take those things to the cross of Christ, and die to them.

And for those who feed on the meat of the Scriptures, let us pray for the babes in Christ, that the Lord even Jesus would keep them safe from the lusts of riches, the deceitfulness of money. Let us be prepared to counsel the young and encourage them to recognise the onslaught of being deceived by riches and, that we may through God's grace and in all humility, help the young at such times, and not criticise them if we see them being deceived, lest we too should be deceived. Because riches can choke the word such that a believer is unfruitful.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our sixth study on the topic of money and riches we have looked at the relationship between riches and deceit and covered two points; (1) false brethren are full of deceit & become fat with riches, and (2) riches can choke the *word* of God causing young believers to become unfruitful.