

# Luke 12:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

## Analysis

**But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?** The parable's devastating climax arrives with divine interruption: eipen de auto ho Theos (εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Θεός, "But God said to him"). The conjunction de (δέ, but) contrasts sharply with the man's self-directed planning—human schemes meet divine sovereignty. **Thou fool** (aphron, ἄφρων) means senseless, without understanding, morally deficient. This is not an insult but a sober diagnosis of spiritual reality. The fool says in his heart there is no God (Psalm 14:1); this man lived as if God were irrelevant to his economics.

The phrase **this night thy soul shall be required of thee** (taute te nykti ten psychen sou apaitousin apo sou, ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχήν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ) uses banking terminology—apaiteo (ἀπαιτοῦσιν) means to demand back what was loaned. The man treated his psyche (soul/life) as his possession to secure through wealth, but God reveals it was only entrusted temporarily. The present tense "they require" (divine passive, meaning "God requires") emphasizes immediacy—not someday, but **this night** (ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτί).

Jesus' question, **whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?** exposes the absurdity of hoarding. All his planning, demolishing, building, storing—rendered instantly meaningless. He gathered for himself but could take nothing

with him (1 Timothy 6:7). The verb *hetoimazo* (ἵτοιμασας, thou hast provided/prepared) carries bitter irony: he prepared everything except his soul for eternity.

## Historical Context

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In Jewish thought, sudden death was often viewed as divine judgment, especially when it interrupted wicked plans. The rich man's death "this night" parallels other biblical accounts of sudden divine intervention—Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5), Herod's death (Acts 12:23), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). First-century Jews understood that God alone determines the length of life (Psalm 90:12, James 4:13-15). The question "whose shall those things be?" would resonate in a culture where inheritance disputes were common (as in v. 13). Ironically, the inheritance this man hoarded would likely fuel the very family conflicts Jesus was addressing.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

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1. In what ways do you live as if you have unlimited time to get right with God and pursue His priorities?
2. How does the certainty of death and the uncertainty of its timing affect your daily decisions about money, career, and relationships?
3. What would change in your life if you truly believed God could require your soul 'this night'?

## Interlinear Text

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εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Θεός Ἀφρων ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν  
said But unto him God Thou fool G3778 G3588 night G3588  
G2036 G1161 G846 G2316 G878 G3571 G3571

ψυχήν σοῦ· ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ· ἡ δὲ ἡτοίμασας  
soul thee shall be required of thee which But thou hast provided  
G5590 G4675 G523 G575 G4675 G3739 G1161 G2090

τίνι ἔσται  
whose shall those things be  
G5101 G2071

## Additional Cross-References

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**Job 27:8** (References God): For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?

**Jeremiah 17:11** (Parallel theme): As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

**1 Timothy 6:7** (Parallel theme): For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

**Psalms 39:6** (Parallel theme): Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

**James 4:14** (Parallel theme): Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

**Psalms 73:19** (Parallel theme): How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

**1 Thessalonians 5:3** (Parallel theme): For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

**Luke 11:40** (Parallel theme): Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

**Proverbs 11:4** (Parallel theme): Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

**Nahum 1:10** (Parallel theme): For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.