

Luke 12:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Analysis

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Jesus concludes the parable with a universal principle: houtos (οὗτος, "So/Thus") applies this story to all who follow the same pattern. The present participle thesaurizōn (θησαυρίζων, layeth up treasure) indicates continuous action—habitual accumulation. The phrase **for himself** (heauto, ἑαυτῷ) exposes the fundamental orientation: self-directed rather than God-directed living.

The contrast is stark: **and is not rich toward God** (καὶ μὴ εἰς Θεὸν πλουτῶν). The preposition eis (εἰς, toward) indicates direction or purpose. To be rich toward God means investing in eternal realities, using material resources for kingdom purposes, cultivating spiritual wealth through faith, obedience, and love. The rich man had abundance en tō kosmō (in the world) but poverty eis Theon (toward God). This echoes Jesus' teaching about storing treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matthew 6:19-21) and anticipates the warning to Laodicea: "thou sayest, I am rich... and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor" (Revelation 3:17).

Paul later instructs the wealthy to "be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come" (1 Timothy 6:18-19). True wealth is measured by heavenly accounting, not earthly accumulation. The man was poor where it mattered eternally.

Historical Context

In first-century Judaism, wealth was often interpreted as a sign of divine blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), creating theological confusion about the relationship between riches and righteousness. Jesus consistently challenged this assumption, warning that wealth poses unique spiritual dangers (Mark 10:23-25, Luke 16:19-31). The term "rich toward God" would evoke Torah teaching about almsgiving, justice, and using resources to honor God and bless others. Proverbs 11:4 declares, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." Jesus' parable updates this wisdom for His disciples, emphasizing that earthly wealth is worthless in eternity unless transformed into heavenly treasure through godly stewardship.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. If God evaluated your 'richness toward Him' based on how you spend time, money, and energy, what would His assessment be?
2. What specific practices help you invest in eternal rather than merely temporal treasures?
3. How does this verse challenge cultural assumptions that equate financial success with divine approval?

Interlinear Text

οὗτως ὁ θησαυρίζων ἔαυτῷ καὶ μὴ εἰς
So G3588 is he that layeth up treasure for himself and not toward
G3779 G2343 G1438 G2532 G3361 G1519

θεὸν πλουτῶν

God is
G2316 G4147

Additional Cross-References

James 2:5 (References God): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Luke 12:33 (Parallel theme): Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

Revelation 2:9 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Habakkuk 2:9 (Parallel theme): Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!