

# “Should Christians Be Rich?”

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, so today we're going to take a little bit of a break, kind of, from Mark. But we're going to use the last passage that we looked at in Mark as like a springboard.

Let me get to my notes here. So the last passage that we looked at in Mark was about the rich young ruler. And Jesus said some interesting things to that rich young ruler that surprised a lot of Christians.

But he told the rich young ruler to sell everything you have. Come follow me, sell everything. Give it away to the poor and come follow me.

And then he warned his own disciples after the fact when the man walked away sad about how difficult it is for somebody with a lot of money to enter into the kingdom.

And so over the centuries, since the time these scriptures were written, many believers, many Christians have asked the question that we'll have as the title for our message today.

[ 1 : 06 ] Should Christians have wealth? Should Christians be rich? What should the relationship of a Christian and money be? And, you know, most of us are drawn towards money, right?

Anybody could, could any of us use a few extra bucks? Yeah? I saw at least one person, Joe, you and I. Both you and I. We could use a few extra bucks. Yeah. But we all know that, you know, we see from observation that money can also have a corrupting power, right?

It can lead people astray towards doing things that they shouldn't do. A lust for money can be negative. But we're going to use this question as really a springboard to consider really how we should study the Bible.

The Bible has a ton to say about money. A lot of people have observed this. You know, there's, I didn't look up what percentage of the Bible, but there's a lot in the Bible about money and wealth and riches and those kinds of things.

But I think by understanding the big picture of the whole Bible and the storyline of the Bible, it can help us when we look at questions like this.

[ 2 : 24 ] And money is something that we all need to use, right? Money's pretty useful. And so as Christians, we should know, well, what should our relationship be with money and wealth?

Well, as we generally understand that there's this big difference between the two big sections of the Bible. We've got the Old Testament and the New Testament.

And most of us have a general vague idea. You know, maybe some of us have a better idea than others that there's a difference, there's a change. There's certain things in the Old Testament that as Christians today we shouldn't necessarily do.

And so we're going to talk about that a little bit in more detail. So there are various views over the last 2,000 years since Christ came about what the relationship of the Christian should be towards money and wealth.

So we have had over the last 2,000 years people who have basically eschewed any kind of wealth. We typically think about the monks, the monastics, the monasteries, in which people who wanted to be especially spiritual in their life would take a vow of poverty and say, I'm going to live poor.

[ 3 : 40 ] And a lot of times it was based on the things that Jesus taught and said. They look at passages like Jesus saying, blessed are the poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

Or when Jesus said, do not store up treasures on earth, but store up treasures in heaven. Don't store up any treasures on earth. You need to focus just on treasures in heaven.

Or what we read a couple weeks ago to the rich man to sell all that you have and give it to the poor. And how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

The other thing we've seen over the years is what I would call it Christian communes. And we actually talked about this a little bit this morning or the video that we watched at Sunday School.

This concept of Christian communes. And I think the guy in the video, Les Feldick, said that he'd never seen this before. But I was thinking as I watched that, I said, I've seen this.  
[ 4 : 46 ] Has anybody ever heard of a Christian commune? I know they were actually pretty popular during the Jesus movement back in the 70s.

People would start up these Christian communes because they wanted to go back to the book of Acts and live like the early Christians. So Christian communes became a popular thing during that time.

Less so today, but our family and I, we watched this documentary about this group in New Zealand. And am I getting this right? Gloria Vale? It's this group. And they call themselves, or maybe their property, Gloria Vale.

And some rich guy in their group, or somehow they got all this money together. They bought a bunch of property. And they all lived together as Christians in this property. And they all pitch in and work together.

And they hold all their property in common. And this is based on a passage in Acts, early Acts. Acts 2, verse 44 says this, Now all who believed, they were together, and they had all things in common.

[ 5 : 46 ] And they sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need. This is right after Pentecost. All these believers, they were trusting in Christ, the Messiah.

And they decided, we need to just sell all of our stuff and live together. And we'll just share the things that we have after we sell all of our property. You know, that has even impacted certain Christians' political philosophy.

So you got this guy named Karl Marx, who came in, a German, and started teaching this idea of a political philosophy, a way of ruling in which everybody just shares everything together.

And he had this saying that says, From each according to his ability, and to each according to their needs. So everybody pitches in and works, and everybody just holds everything in common, and then you just give it away as people have need, or hand it out as people have need.

There are Christians who have, that's called communism, or socialism is kind of the lighter version of that. But typically, like in this church, we don't believe in communism or socialism.

[ 7 : 03 ] But it's right here in the Bible, what's going on? The other thing that you've seen, especially recently in recent years, is what many have called the prosperity gospel.

And people will point to verses like Deuteronomy 28, where it says that you shall be blessed above all people. You'll be the head and not the tail. Blessed when you're coming in and when you're going out.

There's a verse in Malachi that says this, Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me now in this, says the Lord of hosts.

If I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you such blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive it. And so there are all these different views, not just now, but over the last 2,000 years, about what should the believer's relationship be with money.

I've got this book from an author I actually really like. His name is Randy Alcorn. Anybody ever read anything by Randy Alcorn? He's written dozens and dozens of books. Really neat guy.

[ 8 : 13 ] We actually make one of his books available out on the, at least one, there might be more, out on the book table called Why Pro-Life? He was actually a very strong pro-life activist.

Actually got arrested and got into big trouble. He actually talks about it in this book because he was sued by Planned Parenthood, I believe it was, and got into this whole battle about whether he was going to pay them the judgment or not.

But really neat guy. But he has this book called The Treasure Principle, in which he tries to give teachings on how Christians should be related to money. And he uses as his principle verses things that Jesus taught about, really it's that one about treasures in heaven, right?

Not treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven. We'll talk more about that. But some of the things that he teaches in this book is that we should prioritize giving over saving for our future.

We should take our wealth and give it away now rather than save for our future, our retirement, or things like that. Any wealth that we might have at the end of our lives, we should give to church or ministry rather than leaving an inheritance to our kids.

[ 9 : 29 ] As Christians, even if we have a lot of money, we should consume as little as possible, just live very frugally, and keep our standard of living low.

Just a few things. And there's lots of things in here I would agree with, and there's a lot of great content in this book. But then there are other things that I think maybe he's, I take a different approach on.

And so here's a few questions that Christians ask in struggling to think about my relationship as a Christian with money. One, is money a hurdle to receiving eternal life?

Well, from what we read a couple weeks ago, according to Jesus, it certainly was. Another question, is material wealth an indication that someone is greedy or they have the wrong priorities in life?

It seemed like for that man, that rich man, it was an indication. He had the wrong priorities. But is that the case for anyone with wealth? Should I judge others who have more than I do, or whether it's a lot more or just a fair bit more as greedy or they've got the wrong priorities in their life?

[10:45] Is material success and wealth, is that a sign of God's blessing in my life? Or maybe the opposite. If I'm not doing very well financially, does that mean that my life is cursed, that God is not blessing me in some way?

Is God more pleased with me if I live more simply and frugally? A very practical question, should I save for retirement?

Should I save up money so that I could retire at some certain age out in the future? Another question for especially younger people, should I save up money for that house out in the country or just be content in our small house that we have in the town?

Another question some people might have is, should I devote my life to ministry and just expect God to provide for all of my needs? That's kind of what Jesus was asking the rich man to do, right? Come follow me. Just sell all your stuff. Come follow me. God will take care of you, right? So what we're going to do, we're going to look at a ton of scripture, a big survey. So don't try to keep up with me.

[11:58] I'll give you some references. If there's anything that you want to look up later, just ask me. We're just going to do this quick survey through the whole Bible from beginning to end. Everybody got their seatbelts on?

Here we go. We're going to go to Genesis. Genesis 1.28, God said this. This is part of the creation narrative, the very first chapter of the Bible. Genesis 1.28, Then God blessed them.

He's talking about his creation, his man and his woman that he created. And he said, Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, See, I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed. So to you it shall be for food.

Also to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, to everything that creeps on the earth in which there is life. I have given every green herb for food. And it was so. God created a planet, an earth of abundance.

[13:03] And he created it for man to subdue, to multiply on, to be fruitful. Fruitful in having kids. Kids are fruit. The Bible says that.

But also fruitful in taking what God created, those seeds and the animals, and doing something with them to create even more abundance.

We go down a little bit further into Genesis to look at Noah. Remember that sin happened. But did that change kind of the original plan for abundance for the earth?

When we look at Noah, God destroyed the whole earth because of sin. But he said this to Noah after he got off the ark. Genesis chapter 9, verse 1. So God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

Same mandate. A few verses later, Genesis 9, 7. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply. Bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.

[14:13] I want you to be abundant in the earth, Noah, you and your children. A couple chapters later, there's this new guy who comes into the scene. His name is Abraham.

Abraham, he's actually a pretty wealthy guy. Even before God met him or got a hold of him.

Genesis 12, 5 says this. Then Abraham took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran.

And they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abraham was a pretty rich dude. He had lots of stuff, including servants.

It says this in Genesis 13, verse 2. Abraham was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. He didn't just have livestock, not just servants.

He had gold, hard cash. Gold and silver. It says in a few verses later, Lot also, who went with Abraham, had flocks and herds and tents.

[15:21] Both of these guys were pretty well off. And this actually caused an issue, because they were kind of, their different families were vying over the land, and who's going to get to eat the grass over here with their flocks?

The land wasn't able to support them. They were so well off, and they ended up making a split. That's a story for a different time. Later on, Abraham has a couple of sons, and this is something that God says to Jacob, Abraham's grandson, Jacob.

Genesis 35, verse 10 says this, And God said to him, Your name is Jacob. Your name shall not be called Jacob anymore. But Israel shall be your name.

So he called his name Israel, and also God said to him, I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you, and to your descendants. After you I give this land. And remember, what kind of land is this?

[16:29] Is this a desolate land? It's described later on as what? A land flowing with milk and honey. A prosperous land. Because God had intended for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all of their progeny, all their children, to live in a prosperous land, in this land, the land of Canaan at that time, what we call today the land of Israel, so that they could prosper materially, not just spiritually, but materially prosper in that land.

Later on, the Jews, the people, they became slaves, but they were delivered by a man named Moses, because God had a plan for this group of people. And he introduced something, Moses introduced something called the law.

And with that law, there were certain benefits of obeying that law. In Deuteronomy 8, 18, it says this, And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

God said, listen, people of Israel, God gave a covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he wants to make you wealthy.

Not just spiritual wealth, but physical wealth on the earth. But remember the Lord your God. Don't forget him. Remember him. It's he that gives you the power to get that wealth.

[18:06] In Deuteronomy 8, there's this whole chapter called the blessings and cursings of the law. In fact, that's maybe one place we'll turn. Could you turn there? Deuteronomy chapter 28.

It's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and then Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 28. And it says this, we won't go through the whole thing for the sake of time.

But Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 1. And now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all his commandments, which I commanded you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations on the earth.

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you because you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground, and the increase of your herds, and the increase of your cattle, and the offspring of your flocks.

Blessed shall be your basket, and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and when you go out. He goes on and on and on about how your storehouses will be filled if you will give yourself diligently to obeying this law.

[19:23] Now the second half of this chapter, he gives the counterpoint. If you're not faithful, it's not going to be so nice. You won't have these blessings.

In fact, there will be curses that will come upon you. During this time of the law, there was a prophet, Malachi, and we read that scripture already. Malachi chapter 3 verse 10 says this, and I'll read it again.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse. The tithing was something required in the law to make room for the support of the Levites and those who ministered in the temple.

That there may be food in my house, and try me now in this day, says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

Wow. God said, if you will make sure that my temple, my house is full of food for the Levites, I'm going to prosper you, and I'm going to make you rich and wealthy.

[ 20 : 26 ] Your storehouses will be full. Then we have the time of the kings. And the kings who were faithful to the Lord, we see that God prospered them, and especially who?

Which was the, the Bible says there was a king who was the richest of all the kings on the earth. Can anybody shout out his name? Solomon. He asked for wisdom. Remember he asked for wisdom, and God said, I really appreciate that request.

Because he, God said, I'll let you ask for anything, whatever you want. Solomon asked for wisdom. In 1 Kings 3.11, here's how the story goes. After Solomon asked for wisdom, it says, Then God said to him, Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice.

Behold, I have done according to your words. See, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so there shall be, so there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all of your days.

[ 21 : 38 ] And it goes on to speak about all these different kings that came to see the splendor of Solomon and his kingdom. Things, all kinds of furniture made out of gold and silver, timber works from the cedars of Lebanon.

It was an amazing sight for people all around to behold. The other thing we have in the Bible is these Proverbs. Proverbs, teachings of wisdom, who mostly come from Solomon.

Again, most of the Proverbs that we have in the Bible were written by Solomon, who God gave so much wisdom to. And there are, the Proverbs are principles of wisdom when it comes to matters of life.

How God designed things to work. You know, we have a lot of people believing things and living based on principles that are against reality.

When you live your life based on principles that do not comport with reality, things break, your life breaks. And so Proverbs are all these principles of wisdom based on how God designed the world to work and for people to work.

[ 22 : 50 ] And so I'm going to jump through a bunch of Proverbs that are related to wealth and money. Proverbs 3, 6. Length of days is in her right hand. He's talking about wisdom. And in her left hand, riches and honor.

If you are wise, that leads to riches and length of days. Proverbs 10, 22. The blessing of the Lord makes one rich.

And he adds no sorrow with it. There are other ways to get rich through cheating and stealing, but that comes with something else.

That comes with sorrow. But if you do things right, God's blessing will make one rich. Proverbs 11, 25. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

If you're generous, that will tend towards your own prosperity. Proverbs 13, 7. There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing, and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches.

[ 23 : 55 ] This is talking about the fickleness of money, right? A lot of people think, well, if I just had more money, I'd be happy. And sometimes it can help, but sometimes it doesn't.

And so, you can be happy and content regardless of the amount of riches that you have. Proverbs 13, 22. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.

A good man is the kind of person who saves up money for the future, not just his future, but for his children's future and the future of even his children's children. That's a good man.

Proverbs 23, 4. Do not overwork to be rich because of your own understanding. Cease. Hey, a good man builds up an inheritance, but hey, be careful.

Don't overwork just to try to get those riches. Proverbs 28, 6. Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

[ 25 : 06 ] It's a warning. Hey, prosperity is good. Abundance is good, but be careful how you do it. Do it in the right way. It's better to be poor while maintaining your integrity than it is to earn riches through cheating and stealing.

Proverbs 28, 11 says this, The rich man is wise in his own eyes, but the poor who has understanding searches him out. It's easy, right, to put too much trust in your riches and think, well, if I'm wealthy, it's because I'm so wise.

And there is some truth to that, as we already read, but not always. Proverbs 28, 20. A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

And then there's another book that Solomon wrote called Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes. And there's an interesting verse in here from Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is an interesting book because it's really kind of, not all of it is true on the face of it.

You have to read it in the context of a man who has a lot of wisdom but has made a lot of mistakes in his life. And it's all about how everything in life is vanity, right?

[ 26 : 29 ] And is everything in life vanity? No, of course not. But there are lessons that we can learn from his sayings in Ecclesiastes.

But Ecclesiastes 5 makes this, I think, a good observation. Ecclesiastes 5, 12. The sleep of a laboring man is sweet.

What's a laboring man? Somebody who you just go to work and you build things or whatever.

You're maybe a day laborer or whatever. He sleeps soundly whether he eats little or much but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.

And I know there are people out there that say, I can agree with that. The more you have, the more you have to take care of, right?

Now, that's all from the Old Testament. We're going to continue on here in the New. And we're going to look specifically at the Gospels, what we've been studying here for the last year.

[ 27 : 33 ] So Jesus taught specifically to his disciples. This is what Luke 6, verse 20 says. Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and he said, blessed are you poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

He looked at his disciples and he said, you guys are poor and blessed are you because the kingdom of God belongs to you. Now, this is starting to shift, right?

Isn't this different from what we've seen in the previous passages? There was a time also, an account in Luke, in which Jesus was observing the giving at the temple.

Luke chapter 21, verse 2. It says he saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites as an offering to the temple.

So he said, truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God. But she, out of her poverty, put in all the livelihood that she had.

[ 28 : 40 ] Jesus said, she gave away everything. And he praised her for it. She gave away everything. She didn't leave anything behind. Even though she gave less than the others, she gave it all.

And he was very pleased with that. So you might think, well, maybe that's what I as a Christian should do. I should just give everything away and the Lord will be happy with me. We'll keep going. Jesus taught this kingdom principle. He taught lots of parables, a lot of them about the kingdom. But there's this one that kind of seems to, it's a simple one, a short one, but it seems to encompass a lot of the others.

And then it's this. This is from Matthew 13, verse 45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. There's a business guy and he's looking for pearls.

That's his favorite. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and he bought it. Jesus said, that's what the kingdom is like.

[ 29 : 45 ] It's like somebody who finds something so valuable that they will sell everything in order to gain that one thing. And that one thing, that pearl of great price, it's the kingdom.

And Jesus told that rich man, sell everything you have to gain that kingdom. That was a principle, a pattern throughout Jesus' teaching ministry.

And then we see, even after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven with the early church, we already looked at this, Acts 2, 44. Now all who believed were together and they had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need.

Notice that there's this big contrast between the Old Testament and what we've read so far in the New Testament in which God really wanted to bless people and see them abound.

But as we get into the Gospels and in the early part of Acts, we see this very different message to where abundance and riches are actually an impediment to what God is doing.

[ 30 : 54 ] What's going on there? But we also see Jesus talks about something that's going to happen in the future. He told that rich man to sell everything that you have.

Give it to the poor. Come follow me. But then later on, as we talked about a couple of weeks ago, his disciples say, well, who can enter into the kingdom? Who can gain eternal life?

Jesus said, well, it's hard if you're rich. But he says this because his disciples, remember Peter says, hey, Jesus, well, we've given everything up. We've given up all our jobs and money and resources so that we could follow you.

What do we get out of it? And this is what Jesus said, Mark chapter 10, verse 29. So Jesus answered and said, assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mothers or wife or children or lands for my sake in the Gospels who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time.

Houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life. Jesus said there's a time coming and he was talking about this kingdom age.

[ 32 : 07 ] When the kingdom arrives, you will receive rewards. You'll receive great abundance. You will live in abundance. That abundance that you have forsaken right now, you will get back a hundredfold what you gave up.

And then finally, there's some passages in the book of Revelation about the final end of all things, what's called the new heavens and the new earth.

And what will it be like in the new heavens and the new earth? Well, there's this description of the city of Jerusalem coming down from heaven where the people of God will live. And what is that city like?

Are people living in straw huts and mud houses? No, it's a city with walls that are built out of jewels. Gates that are made of pearls. Not just many pearls.

One huge, gigantic pearl that makes up the city gates. What are the streets made of? Concrete? Gold. Pure gold. It's a city of abundance.

[ 33 : 11 ] really, I think, getting back to what God intended for things to be like in the very beginning. So, we looked at a lot of Scripture and I just want to try to summarize.

How do we take all that in? So, you have creation. God created man to live in a material abundance that we should bear lots of fruit as stewards of the earth. Yet, we have to keep in mind that our relationship with Him is of utmost importance.

Not the abundance itself. There was the fall and sin came into the earth. The earth is cursed. But God still wants His people to be abundant, abundant, materially.

He told Noah, be fruitful and multiply. And then He went to Abraham. Took a man who was already rich and promised to make him even more wealthy, more abundant, more abundant than he could even imagine.

And He commanded him and his children also to bear fruit and to multiply. Then we see Moses brings the law in and there's a new covenant made with these people, a specific people.

[ 34 : 17 ] The people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And if they keep that law, there's a promise that they will be materially abundant. They'll prosper financially. But financial ruin if they are unfaithful.

Then we see the kingdom come, the Davidic kingdom that we call it. In which the kingdom, especially of Solomon, was the greatest on the earth.

And he taught many principles about wealth. But the disobedience to the law would... Oh, excuse me. And then the prophets...

Sorry, let me go back. So the Davidic kingdom in which there is abundance and prosperity. But what happened to that kingdom? The kingdom started to go downhill, right?

The second king... Well, really it was the third king, right? You had Saul. He was kicked out of his position as king. And then you had David. That's why we call it the Davidic kingdom.

[ 35 : 16 ] And then his son Solomon. And it was going up, up, up from David. It got even better to Solomon. Then when did it start going down? Right about there, right? Yeah, Solomon's kingdom was the peak.

That's where it peaked. And then what? Because of sin and disobedience, the nation of Israel just began to continually decline until they were utterly removed even from their own land.

They were removed and driven out of the promised land, the land of abundance, the land of Canaan. And the prophets, the prophet of Israel, though, they spoke of a day that was coming, a day that was coming in which Israel would be restored to that land again in abundance, that God would restore them to abundance.

Abundance. Then we have Jesus coming, the Messiah, the one who was prophesied. And he teaches about a coming kingdom, a kingdom that is right at hand, but that it belongs to the poor, that the rich should sell their goods to inherit that kingdom, which is very different from God's past dealings with Israel.

That those who would be willing to give up those goods, that when the kingdom finally arrived, they would receive a hundredfold of what they gave up. And that all these promises of abundance would finally be realized when that kingdom was restored.

[ 36 : 49 ] And that finally, at the end of all things, when evil is restored, the earth will become like the original garden, full of abundance and riches forevermore.

So here's the question. Where do we today fit into all that story? Where do we fit in? Do we fit into the Gospels? Do we fit into the time of Abraham?

The time of the law where there's blessings and cursings of financial abundance based on how faithful we are? One of the interesting things that happened, what was promised for Israel before this coming kingdom?

It talks about this in Daniel. Daniel chapter 12 says this, At that time, Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people, and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.

And at that time, your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. There is this promise made that there's coming a deliverance, your people will be delivered, but right before that, this time of trouble.

[ 38 : 07 ] Many of the prophets had spoken about this time of trouble in which the people of Israel will be severely tested. Zephaniah chapter 1 verse 15 says this, That day is a day of wrath and a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

He's speaking of that same day. Jesus talks about that day coming up ahead in Mark chapter 13, which we'll look into more in the coming weeks or months.

For in those days there will be tribulation such as has not been seen since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved.

But for the elect's sake whom he chose, he shortened the days. You see, there was this plan before this kingdom is restored for a time of trouble.

And that's what, when Jesus was teaching on the earth, he was preparing his own people for that time of trouble. And this is how you need to live. It's different from the time of Abraham and the time of Moses.

[ 39 : 21 ] We can't, we can't enjoy our wealth and abundance, anything that you've had. But what happened? That whole tribulation plan kind of, well, fizzled out.

And this is where we come in. What the Bible teaches is that because of Israel's unfaithfulness, we talked about this this morning, there was this parable Jesus told about this tree that was not bearing fruit.

And the gardener tried to get it to bear fruit for three years and it didn't. And the master said, cut that tree down. It's not bearing any fruit. Why does it use up the ground?

And people have questioned, you know, what is that parable about? Three years, not bearing any fruit? The gardener says, well, hey, let's just try again for one more year, we'll fertilize it, and then if it still doesn't bear any fruit, then we'll cut it down.

Well, I think a good student of the Bible will look at that and say, hey, the master of the field is always the Lord, and who's the gardener?

[ 40 : 31 ] Well, I think in this case it's Jesus. He had a three-year ministry to Israel, Israel would not bear fruit. And Jesus said, one more year, I'll go up into heaven, I'll send the Holy Spirit, we'll see what happens.

But still, even after that one year, Israel did not bear fruit. So this is what it says in Romans chapter 11. In Romans chapter 11, Paul teaches that Israel stumbled on the cornerstone, Jesus, their Messiah, they stumbled.

And because of that, they were cut off from the tree. That tree was cut down. And the Gentiles, though, a new people, were grafted in to that tree.

Romans 11, 11 says this, I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not. But through their fall to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? He says, God's not done with Israel, but for the time, God's working with the Gentiles. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul says, I magnify my ministry.

[ 41 : 46 ] If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if they're being cast away as the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

We are in this time, not part of prophecy, which many people call the age of grace. Paul calls it in one place the dispensation of the grace of God.

That's the time in which we live. How do things work in this day? Well, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, as he just said, he has teachings which I think we can look at, we can consider for how we ought to live.

And here's what he says about money and wealth. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 10. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this, if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

In 1 Timothy 5, 8, he talks about the importance of providing for your family. But if anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

[ 42 : 58 ] Now he told his own disciples, leave your nets, leave your families, and come follow me. That's different, isn't it? Paul teaches in Romans chapter 12 that there's some people that have a special gift, a gift of giving, in which you have the means to support others through your wealth, to give for certain causes.

In 1 Timothy 6, verse 17, Paul speaks of commands to the rich. He said, 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.

Let them do good that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Don't trust in riches, but do good with them. But we'll wrap up with this.

In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3, Paul speaks of the blessings that God intends for us. Remember, what are the blessings of the law?

[ 44 : 18 ] Well, material wealth. But in this age in which we live, what are the blessings God intends for us? Here's what it says in Ephesians 1, verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

You see, God has blessed us with spiritual blessings to have an identity in Him. And those blessings of material wealth did not apply to us today.

In Colossians chapter 3, verse 1, Paul says to seek heavenly things. Put your focus on heavenly things. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above and not on things on the earth. As Christian believers, our primary focus, our primary energy should be on heavenly things, not just on earthly things.

So, going back to our original question, should Christians today, in this age of grace in which we live, should we be rich? And I think the answer is if you want to be.

[ 45 : 40 ] If you can, right? Sounds so easy. Well, am I going to decide, am I going to be rich or am I going to be poor? Most of us don't just make that decision, right? There's a lot of things involved.

But, if you want to build wealth, go for it. Just make sure that you prioritize the more important matters in your life. Being rich in good works, being rich in your relationships with others, having a good name, being rich in faith toward God.

Also, we shouldn't put too much weight on our ability to gain wealth. You know, some people gain wealth through just industry, right? Good character and industry.

Other people gain wealth through cheating and stealing. And still, other people gain wealth just through good fortune, right? They're in the right place at the right time, maybe an inheritance, whatever it might be. Some people are a mix of all those, right?

Most people, you know, maybe they work hard, but, you know, they've kind of cheated here and there. So, we shouldn't look at somebody and their wealth or lack thereof as any kind of indication necessarily of their character or whether they're a good Christian or a bad Christian at all.

[ 46 : 56 ] Some people might choose to, they feel like they have a gifting and a desire and a passion to build a business which tends to make, to create abundance.

And they do so with honesty and integrity, creating value in the world, providing jobs and benefits to people who need employment, providing goods and services to customers who need them.

and because of providing all that value can grow in abundance and that is a good thing. Some may choose to live their life in relative poverty.

I'm going to go be a missionary in Africa and I'm going to live in mud huts with those folks over there. That's how I'm going to spend my life and that's okay too. But I think most of us are going to choose somewhere in the middle, right?

Not going to necessarily try to be as rich as we can but also we don't want to we want to provide some kind of a good living. We want to provide financial security for our families.

[ 48 : 05 ] Maybe work harder, a little bit harder to get out of a bad neighborhood into a safer one. And that's good. Work some overtime so that mom can stay home with the kids.

And that's good. Maybe we can take a vacation once a year or so. And that's good. Or make enough money so that we can help out not just our immediate family but even our extended family.

Or give support to our local church or some gospel ministry. And even save for retirement and our future. And maybe even save enough to leave something for our children's future.

And none of these choices makes you more spiritual, makes you more godly, or more blessed than another person.

We all have our gifts and talents and passions. And our only obligation really as Christians, if you look at it in a big picture overview, is to do what is right in our life, rich or poor, or somewhere in between, and to make Christ known in the world.

[ 49 : 12 ] And if we're doing those things, then the rest is up to you. So is money a hurdle to eternal life? Not in this age.

Right? Maybe during that time it was a hurdle to eternal life because the kingdom was coming and, hey, there's some requirements here. But there's only one requirement today. It doesn't matter how much money or how little money you have.

You just have to trust Christ and Him alone. Rich or poor, it's as easy as can be. So all these questions, I think, we can answer and there's so many more, right?

So many more questions when it comes to money. And the Bible is a big book and it has a lot of details. I think if we study the Bible carefully and figure out, well, where do we fit in to the big picture, it can really help us to make good, wise decisions about us and our families and how we interact with money.

Money is a big topic in our lives. It's something that comes up a lot. And it's a big topic in the Bible. The Bible has a lot to say about it. Hopefully, that kind of overview helps provide a foundation, a big picture overview for looking to the Bible for principles and wisdom and wisdom to live for Him now and on to the future.

[ 50 : 38 ] Amen? Does that help anybody? Father, let's pray. Father, we love you. Thank you so much for your word. You gave us a big book. A lot of details in there and sometimes it can be challenging and difficult to understand.

I hope that today's message was helpful for people to get that big picture perspective on how we can study the Bible correctly in the context that is provided to know how we today ought to live. and I ask that you would work in me and in each one here as we make decisions for our day-to-day and for our futures that would be pleasing and honoring to you according to the principles and guidance that you give us in our word and your word in Jesus' name.

Amen.