

## Money

The first mention of something of value changing hands from one being to another is found in Genesis where Cain and Abel were instructed to bring an offering unto God. There was likely nothing on earth called money in existence at this time. Cain brought fruit of the ground and Abel brought from his flock of the field.

Another mention of something of value changing hands is found in Genesis 14:20 *“And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”* This passage speaks of the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek. Most likely, Abraham did not have money but gave Melchizedek goods that he had taken from the enemy in battle.

### ***The first mention of money***

The first time money appears in the Bible is Genesis 17:12 *“And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.”* Bible historians believe money, as mentioned in this verse, was most likely silver. The word *money* appears approximately 123 times in the Bible.

### ***The first business deal***

The first “business deal” in the Bible was when Abraham bought land on which to bury his wife Sarah. We read of this business deal in Genesis chapter 23:

Gen 23:8-20 *“And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you. 10 And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. 12 And Abraham bowed down himself*

*before the people of the land. 13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. 14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, Gen 15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. 16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. 17 And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure 18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. 19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. 20 And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.”*

This transaction gives us a model of how business dealings should be carried out. Abraham needed a place to bury wife Sarah. He desired to purchase land for her burial. What can we learn from this transaction:

- *Paid what land was worth*

He offered, in verse 9, to pay for the parcel of land “as much money as it was worth.” Pay for things what they are *worth*. Verify their worth through a reputable source. Some folk mistakably pay whatever the asking price is. It may be too high, and the buyer will suffer loss. The asking price may be unreasonably low, and the seller suffers loss. If we pay too much for something, how will we face God when He reviews our financial records and sees we have wasted money? If we pay too little, when God comes to audit our finances, He will be displeased that we were unfair to someone. Some folk thrill to buy something far less than it is worth. It “makes their day” to cheat someone out of the true worth of something. What a shame. This is not Christian conduct.

In verse 11, Ephron offers to *give* the land to Abraham- no charge. Some folk want everything the church obtains to be free, that is,

donated. It is okay to give to the church, and God rewards giving. However, the world (unsaved, un-churched) owes the church nothing. You will sleep better at night if you will pay folk what goods are worth.

- *He made the purchase in the presence of witnesses*

Several verses from the record of the transaction in Genesis 23 tell us it was done in “the audience of the people” or “before the people.” *Witnesses* are important in any sizeable business deal. Abraham paid four hundred shekels of silver for the land *before witnesses*. Notice in verse 16 that Abraham weighed the silver in front of the buyer and in the presence of *witnesses*. How many arguments have erupted over “He took the merchandise, but he never did pay me?” Or, “she never did pay me all the money.” In some cases of buying and selling, it seems neither party knows what the actual agreed to price was. This can be avoided by having witnesses.

I realize most transactions in developed nations are documented on paper and require signatures. This is very good practice. However, much of the world is not developed, and transactions take place just about as they did in Abraham’s day. Witnesses are important.

- *He verified what he was buying*

Did you sell me 1 acre or 1-1/2 acres of land? Are the furnishings included with the house? Where is the marker indicating the boundary of the land on the west side? In verse 17 we read “*the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure.*” The buyer and seller and witnesses went together and confirmed the land! The borders were made sure. They also noted the trees that were on the property. Someone could cut the trees down before the sale was complete and steal them! The property involved in business transactions needs to be verified. A friend once purchased a new car. He completed the transaction. He left the car at the dealer for a small mechanical adjustment to be made. When he returned, the dealer had exchanged the tires and wheels for a less valuable set. The friend had an argument on his hands, and wishes he had made photographs of what he was purchasing. Summary: pay what something is worth; have witnesses or written documentation of the purchase including, most importantly, the agreed to price; and know exactly what you are purchasing.

### ***What a rich man said about wealth***

Solomon was the richest man to ever live. God used Solomon to pen down the book of Proverbs. Proverbs has quite a lot to say about money:

Proverbs 11:4 *“Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.”*

Money buys a lot of things, but it will not buy pardon from judgment. Men will seek to offer God money if He will excuse their sin, but “no deal” with God. Money will buy a lot of things, but will not keep one from God’s judgment.

Proverbs 22:1 *“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.”*

A “good name” is better than being rich? Few believe this. A “good name” means a good reputation and a good testimony before mankind. Does your village know they can trust you? Does your village know you pay your bills? Do your neighbors know you provide for your family? If so, this is better than wealth!

Proverbs 22:16 *“He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.”*

Throughout the world millions of people have gotten rich by cheating the poor. Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of oil in the world, but its citizens are starving. Companies, governments, and individuals have been known to take advantage of the financially underprivileged. What a shame! Yet, the rich man Solomon said they *“shall surely come to want.”*

Proverbs 23:4 *“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.”*

Don’t devote attention to getting rich. When you do, you leave God out of your plans. I know plenty of saved people who are striving on a path to get more and more money. At one time, they were in church and a Christian witness for the Lord. They no longer are. Never let your goal for working or trading or managing the company be for “getting rich.” No one should work for money. “Work” is God’s way of meeting a person’s needs, not a way to get money. We are told this in II Thessalonians 3:10 which reads *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither*

*should he eat.*” We work for food and the other needs of life, and not for money.

Proverbs 23:5 *“Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.”*

There comes a day when the account is empty, the pocket is empty, and the certificates have all been cashed. Today, as I write this article, I read of a lady once married to a billionaire. At the divorce, she was granted \$1.6 million USD per WEEK. After some few years, she is broke. Her \$100M USD home and land went into foreclosure and were sold. Her furnishings have been auctioned off. Her personal belongings, such as jewelry, are soon to be auctioned. What happened? Her riches grew wings and flew away! Flew, not as a floundering sparrow, but as a mighty eagle who can go high and far and never return.

Proverbs 27:24 *“For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?”*

Few things in life are lasting. Salvation through Jesus Christ is lasting. I have a few friends who will be my friends at death. The Bible is lasting. Roses fade. Friends move away and pass unto death. Money does likewise. A generation is generally regarded as thirty years. How many kings ever reign even an entire generation?

Nothing in heaven will have anyone’s name on it. Your name will not be on a mailbox in heaven. Your name will not be on a bank account in heaven. All heaven will be mine and yours and Christ’s. “Mine” won’t be in the heavenly vocabulary. “Hallelujah” for that! What you have in life, God is letting you borrow. If anything is “yours,” it will be in “your” casket at death. I have never seen a dollar bill in a dead man’s casket.

Proverbs 30:8 *“Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me”*

Your heavenly father knows what is best in your life. He knows what is convenient for you. It may be poverty or it may be riches or somewhere in between. If you are in poverty in Africa, it was God who put your soul and body there. Our Heavenly Father knows best. *What can God trust you with?* I would like to have a million dollars,

you may say. You will never get it. God can't trust you with it. Why would He give us that which He cannot trust us with?

Proverbs 15:17 *“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.”*

Herbs are a poor man's meal. A stalled, that is, fatted ox is a rich man's meal. It is better to have herbs where love is than the best steak where hatred dwells.

### ***Money has a place in the work of the Lord***

Acts 4:37 *“Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”* The first church in the book of Acts was greatly persecuted. Many lost their jobs and were excluded from the market place and were not even allowed to buy and sell goods. The apostles' ordered the church members to sell their goods and bring the money and place it in the church treasury. Then, the money was distributed back to the people of the church as needs arose. This was the plan of God for the survival of the early Christians who were starving and excluded by society.

I Corinthians 16:2 *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”* The church today needs money to operate. Many are the needs. Utilities, property payments, insurance, and repairs are just a few of the expenses. The list of needs is much longer. How is the church provided for? It is provided for with the *tithes and offerings of the saints* who worship there. On Sunday, the saints bring their offerings to God's storehouse, the church.

I Timothy 3:3 *“Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.”* Rules about money apply to the church elders. The above verse says “not greedy of filthy lucre” and applies to the men occupying the two offices of the New Testament church, Pastor and Deacon. “Filthy lucre” is money obtained in a way that God considers filthy or dirty.

### ***Some in the Bible were made fools by money***

Acts 8:18-20 *“And when **Simon** saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may*

*be purchased with money.*” Simon was made a fool by money. He thought with money he could purchase the Holy Ghost.

Mark 14:10 *“And **Judas Iscariot**, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. 11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.”* For thirty pieces of silver, Judas Iscariot betrayed the Son of God. The money did him no good, for we read in Matthew 27:2-5 *“And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. 3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”* Judas committed suicide.

John 2:14-16 *“And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the **changers of money** sitting: 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.* Christ was angered that some would make the house of God a place of merchandise. He overthrew the tables and after having made a cord, drove the buyers and sellers and money changers out of the temple. They were made *fools* by money.

Luke 12:20-21 *“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? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”* This man was rich, but he was a fool. God called him a fool, not me. His crops were so prosperous his barns could not hold them. So, his plan was to tear down the barns and build bigger ones. His passion and hope were consumed by his crops. He had no time for God. God reminded him this very night he could die, and all would be lost.

Money ruins people. I have a dear acquaintance a few miles from my house. He was a common man with common means. He was humble, even willing to mow the church’s grass and sweep its floor. He came across a large sum of money. He changed. With money, he

became a “big shot.” He and his family got to do things and have things they had never before had. Suddenly, the church he attended was not good enough for him. It was good enough for some of his family to be saved in, but not good enough to attend after he got money. Money changes people. *I hate money.*

### ***The root of all evil***

What is worse than drugs and gambling and stealing? LOVE of money. Not money itself, but the LOVE of money. Love of money is the “root,” or origination, of all evil. Every plant and tree in my yard has a root. All those plants and trees originated as roots. Love of money is the root of evil. The drug dealer sells drugs for money. The drug addict steals from you and me to get money to buy drugs. Many people are in prison for fraud. They schemed to steal money because of their *love* for money. One man in America recently went to prison for defrauding his clients, who trusted him, out of \$50 billion USD. Preachers “go bad” because of money. Churches get caught up in money and forget God. The first strong drink sold commercially in America was brought to this country so someone could make money from the sale of whiskey.

I Timothy 6:10 *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

### ***Warning***

Luke 12:15 *“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”*

It is OK to “get money,” but when “money gets you” this is a great problem.