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Does Jesus Hate Rich People?

Dear Friend,

Does Jesus hate rich people? What kind of a crazy question is that? Of course, Jesus doesn't hate rich people. But, I wouldn't be surprised if deep down inside, there isn't still just the slightest thought that Jesus might possibly be a little happier that we aren't filthy rich; you know, rolling in money, loaded, lighting our cigars with \$100 bills, rich. Where did the idea that Jesus prefers the poor over the rich come from? My guess is, some well-meaning preacher came along and convinced us that poor is better, rich people are all evil and Jesus would rather we stayed poor. That's simply wrong doctrine. Here's the bottom line, we had better understand this issue of money, because the end time revival that our faith is focused on, is going to require money in order for it to spread. So, let's learn about money.

It is impossible to live in this world and not eventually deal with the issue of money; its lack or abundance. Some Christians look at money as if it were evil. That little piece of paper or that coin in your pocket has no soul or nature of its own. It is neither good nor bad. It is just an object used to facilitate the transaction of business.

Here is an example to illustrate my point. If a police officer pulled over a truck filled with money used in the illegal drug trafficking business, would there be anything wrong with the money itself? Some might think yes, "That's evil money." "It's drug money." "It's dirty money." Is this money really evil? Is the fact that this money was used to facilitate a crime an indictment against the money? Let's go one step further. What if this exact same truck had just visited a world-renowned children's hospital, and the criminals had donated a portion of their ill-gotten gain for cancer research. Wouldn't that be a shock? *(By the way, what self-respecting, criminal really cares about helping the sick? Maybe, they know someone with cancer or someone they loved died with cancer. That's a possibility. Or, maybe they just wanted to ease their guilt-ridden conscience by throwing a little money at a problem. Bingo! Gee that sounds a lot like what is happening right now with all the billionaires unloading a tiny fraction of their treasure on social problems.)* Enough about that. Did the criminal's donation redeem that evil money and change it into good money? Isn't that silly?

Picture the scene at the hospital as the doctors discovered the bags of tightly wrapped bundles of crisp money sitting on the hospital steps. The note attached explains how this donation is to be used for cancer research. Here's the question; is this money evil or good?

Another example, a person works a forty-hour workweek and collects his paycheck on Friday. This person runs to the bank, hands the check to the teller who gives them an envelope full of money. But, wait a second, some of those bills just happened to be used for illegal activity only hours earlier. Oh no, what a shame! All that work, and for what, "dirty tainted money". Might as well just throw that "dirty" money away, it's clearly of no use to a "God-fearing" Christian.

Of course, that's ridiculous! How can anyone know the history of money before it comes into his or her hands? Besides that, why should anyone care? We are handed money all the time with no idea where it has been or for what business transactions it has been used. Right at this moment there may easily be money in your billfold that was used just last week in a drug deal or a robbery or to gamble on a horse race. Does that mean that you have evil money in your pocket? Of course not! No matter what money has been used for in the past, once it comes into my hands its purpose instantly becomes the expansion of the kingdom of God in one way or another.

Money is used as a medium of exchange. It is neither good nor bad. The fact that a person has large amounts of money doesn't automatically mean they are good or evil. Only people operating under a spirit of deception equate having money to being evil. If someone decides to drive a dump truck full of money into your driveway and hands you the keys your immediate response should not be, "Oh no, now I'm going to hell because I finally have some money and Jesus does not like people with money." Just because a person's bank account balance has a line of zeros behind some big, fat, number doesn't mean they are evil. Nor, does having a bank account with one big goose egg, \$0, mean they are good. In other words, having money or not having money is not the issue. The issue is: **Does money have you?** This can be the case whether a person is a multi-millionaire or someone standing on a street corner with a sign in his hand asking for money. Why? Because this is not a "bank balance" issue this is a heart issue. That being the case, when the bank balance grows, what is in our hearts is bound to be exposed. The reason the poor man is safe from all the trappings of riches is because he has no fuel for his fire. Then, the real test for the poor man would have to be to hand him a stack of money and see what happened? It wouldn't take long to see just how dead he was to the love of money.

Why then does it seem like Jesus "had it in" for rich folks? We need to study this out more carefully and see exactly why Jesus said what he did to the rich. Too often, to the casual bible reader, it seems like the rich were always in trouble with Jesus. So much so, that many church people today associate having money with being evil and being penniless as being "godly". Is this really the way it is with Jesus? If yes, then I should immediately give all my earthly possessions away so that Jesus will be happy with me. Is that the truth?

Let's begin our search for the truth about riches by looking at the conversation Jesus had with the rich young ruler. Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler tends to be where most people's confusion about finances begins.

This conversation can be seen in three of the Gospels: Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18. For the sake of this teaching, we will look at Mark 10:17-25,

(17) And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Now, this seems like a fair question by a man who is sincerely interested in his eternal destination. So, why then does it seem like Jesus' reply is a bit sharp?

(18) And Jesus said unto him, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God."

"Hey wait a minute, Jesus, Isn't that a little strong to be coming from You?" Here's a nice, sincere young man asking a very simple question and Jesus answers him with something that, for us today, might sound like a bit of an "attitude". Why is this? Why did Jesus answer him this way? Well, you can call it what you will, but Jesus is responding to a man who is trying to put the "schmooze" on Him. You know what I'm talking about, a "suck up", someone trying to "curry favor", "cozy up to", "grovel", "get in with". That was what this rich young ruler was doing and Jesus wasn't the least bit interested in being "schmoozed". Clearly, the man recognized that Jesus walked in some kind of power and authority and he was interested in tapping into it.

Instead, Jesus turns the conversation towards the heart of this young man by saying,

(19) "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother."

Notice how Jesus only quoted a few of the commandments in His reply and notice the rich young ruler's response.

(20) ..."Master, all these have I observed from my youth."

He replied with self-justification; okay, but does Jesus just allow him to continue living in his little world of deception? No. What we are about to see is Jesus' love for this man on full display. Instead of letting him continue in his deception, Jesus presents him with a request that exposes the rich young ruler's real problem; he serves the false god of mammon.

(21) Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou has and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow me.”

Jesus wasn't mad at this young man for having money, nor did he hate him for being rich. Jesus loved this young man, so much so that instead of patting him on the back and telling him everything was okay; Jesus exposed the motives of his heart in an effort to salvage him. So, this young man's encounter with Jesus was not about Jesus trying to convince him to rid himself of all that filthy, sinful, dirty money because money is evil. You know what they say; money is the root of all evil.

Yes, they may say that, but that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says, (I Timothy 6:10)

For the love of money is the root of all evil.

A person can have all kinds of problems with the love of money and still be a penniless pauper because the love of money is a heart issue and not a “bank balance” issue.

One other point worth mentioning here is that during His time on the earth, whenever Jesus made this request, to forsake all and follow Him, He was inviting men to become members of his inner circle as disciples. What did this young man really pass up? Was he supposed to be the one to fill the place vacated by Judas? We will never know because he chose to keep what he loved the most, his money. Mark 10:22

(22) And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

The truth of the matter is, it wasn't so much that this man had great possessions; it was that the **possessions had him**. One of the commandments missing from the list Jesus quoted was this, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” You see, instead of simply quoting that commandment, Jesus went a step further and exposed this man's love of a god other than the one true God. Jesus didn't do this to hurt the man or shame him, but rather to reveal to him what was truly in his heart, his love of money and its position as god in his life.

To think, “Oh, Jesus just has it in for wealthy people!” is missing the point all together. His love for every single person is what led Him to hang on a cross. To say that He loves the poor more than the rich is really the same as saying that He has favorites, which cannot be the case because that would make Him a “respector of persons”. Poor people aren't more “holy” because they are poor, just as the rich are not more evil because they are rich. The issue is this, “What is in their heart?”

The next verse has become the “go to” verse many have used to promote the wrong doctrine depicting Jesus as someone who doesn't like the rich.

(23) And Jesus looked round about, and said unto His disciples, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.”

Interesting how so many tend to stop at verse 23 and fail to mention verse 24. If Jesus had left us with just verse 23, rich people would have every right to panic, poor people would feel safe in their poverty, and we wouldn't have the benefit of knowing the truth. But, fortunately, Jesus went on to clarify that it isn't a matter of being rich that is the issue. He said,

(24) ...”Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Did we get that? Having or not having riches is not the issue. The issue is whether or not a person's trust is solely in riches. Another way of saying it is this, “Is money their god?” Some of you may be wondering how a person with nothing could be guilty of serving and trusting in riches. The answer is simple. If God were to ask a poor person to do something, let's say it required what he considered to be a large amount of money, would the poor man obey? If not, why? What if he answered that his reason for not obeying was because of a lack of money? Wouldn't it be correct to say that money was his god because money, or the lack thereof, dictated to him what he could or could not do? In other words, he would have to say that he worshipped at the altar of mammon because mammon spoke to him whether or not he could obey God. We have to ask ourselves this, do we obey every instruction given to us by God or do we kneel down at the altar of mammon and ask permission?

Jesus concludes this teaching with a word picture that has tormented people for ages. He said,

(25) “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (26) And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

Many messages have been taught in an effort to explain the eye of a needle. Is it a sewing needle or is it the gate way used in that time period to allow travelers to enter in once the main gate was shut? Here is a clue, whether this is about a loaded down camel unable to pass through the narrow passage way because of all the parcels on its back or a real sewing needle that a camel clearly would be unable to pass through, the point of the analogy is in the next statement.

(27) ...”With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”

It is impossible, impossible, for a person, rich or poor, who has placed their trust in the false god of mammon, as their savior, to be saved. Mammon cannot save anyone. Jesus wants, rather, demands all our confidence and trust to be in Him and Him alone.

Money and riches in and of themselves are not evil. In fact, it takes money to spread this Gospel around the earth. God isn't against money; He is against the god of mammon that people bow down to in their hearts, like this rich young ruler. He is also against the "schmoozing" and jockeying for position exhibited by this young man. There is no impressing Jesus with smooth talking or "schmoozing". What He is looking for is a "heart" change. Rich, poor, young, old, none of this matters to Him. What matters is the change that is accomplished inside of us.

So, instead of getting all excited about whether or not Jesus has it in for the rich man, let's focus on the real issue, the heart. Do you want to handle large sums of money for the kingdom? Deal with your heart. Deal with the strongholds that the enemy will use to tear you apart the first time some big amount of money makes its way into your hands. Money is no problem whatsoever for Jesus. The real problem is having people who are qualified to handle the money once it comes. No matter what a person's bank account might say, the instant some huge amount of money comes into their hands, what is truly in their heart in abundance will be revealed. Whether poor or rich matters not; when the kind of riches God is capable of pouring into a person's life begins to show up, if there exists the slightest hint of weakness in the area of money, there is a potential for a blazing forest fire to erupt that could totally destroy someone. So, should we prayer, "Oh, God, please don't pour out your abundance on me. It will destroy me."? No, that's not the answer. The answer is to surrender yourself to the qualification process and put those things to death that the enemy would use against you to destroy you once the money comes.

One last story will help drive this point home. There was an elderly lady who was one of the most faithful members in her little Pentecostal church. She was there on the front row every time the doors were open, faithfully supporting this little church with the meager allowance her husband gave her. You see her husband, a very wealthy man, did not share in her enthusiasm for Jesus. Often, he would harass her for spending so much time at church, even to the point of locking her out of the house. Through all the harassment, this little lady continued to come to church. Then, one day her husband died and all his wealth was now hers to control. Don't you know the pastor was excited? Now, this faithful lady had access to vast wealth. The pastor eagerly awaited that first big check to appear in the offering tray, but it never came. Instead, this little lady began to drift from the front row to the middle and then to the back of the church. Finally, the only time she was there was for revivals and holidays. When she did come, the only power she fell out under was when she lifted her ring-clad hands over her head and the weight of the diamonds were more than she could support. What happened to our godly, never miss a service, saint of a woman? Many might say, "Oh, that evil money corrupted her." The truth of the matter is this; the money only revealed what was already in her heart.

Money is not the problem. The problem is what is inside of each one of us that having a little money is bound to expose, like pouring gas on a little flicker of a flame. No matter how small the flame, gas will cause a raging inferno.

So, does Jesus hate rich people? Of course not, how silly. What He does hate are the strongholds inside a person that keep Him from ever being able to truly pour His abundance through them and affect the multitudes with the truth of the Gospel. Deal with the strongholds and allow Him to be able to cause money to pour through your hands to bless the kingdom. Amen.

~ Mark Jenkins