

Jesus said, "put this money to work, until I come back"

## The Church Treasury in Scripture

*Note: the phrase "the Lord's money" is sometimes used to describe the common fund collected by the church, but is not of Biblical origin. However, during his habitation as a man, Jesus did have money given to him for his use. His money could legitimately be called "the Lord's money," and how he used it might be instructive to those who desire to please him in their use of money given for his cause. We should also consider apostolic teaching, early examples, and the whole Biblical picture of God's principles for using money in his name.*

We will do well to recall the warning of Mark 7:8-13, where Jesus condemns setting aside the commands of God in favor of the traditions of men, "... whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is 'a gift devoted to God'... Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition..." The topic under consideration here was money, and how some were invoking God's name as a license for selfishness and avoidance of responsibility.

### 1. A common purse

A. Jesus and his twelve disciples had a common purse or treasury.

a. John 12:6, 13:29, Judas kept the treasury.

b. Luke 8:1-3, the treasury was donated by followers who had the means.

B. These funds were used to supply the ordinary needs of the group, help the poor, provide for special occasions, and facilitate the work of the ministry.

a. See A.a. above in context, and consider also John 4:8,31, Mark 6:32-42, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:1-13. With regard to the feeding of the 5,000 note that the purchase of food for the crowd of learners was not out of the question as a legitimate use of the common purse, either to Jesus or the twelve, just impractical due to the size of the crowd (and the limited resources). The crowd was there because they came to hear and see Jesus, so he accepted a responsibility for their needs and comfort.

*Thus, Jesus and his disciples shared a common treasury, to which they contributed their income and the donations of others. This treasury was used to meet the needs of the group and provide support for preaching, gifts to the poor, and meet obligations. Remember that at least once Jesus defended an expenditure in his behalf that others regarded as extravagant and wasteful.*

### 2. No one considered anything his own

A. All the believers in the early Jerusalem church shared a common purse as well, continuing the practice of Christ and the disciples.

a. Acts 2:44-47, 4:32-37, Acts 6:1-7. It is important to realize this did not end with the sin and punishment of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11), but was provided for as an ongoing service administered by deacons in Acts 6. The sharing of common resources was the basic principle of all giving in the church (Acts 11:29-30, II Cor. 8:13-15). Few people gave everything they had, many gave generously, which contributed to the spread of the gospel.

b. Acts 4:35, the basis for distributing (spending) what was donated was "need".

B. Paul taught the gentile churches to have a collection "for God's people" which became the regular pattern for giving in the church.

a. I Cor. 16:1-3, II Cor. 8:1-9:15. "for God's people" (16:1), "supplying the needs of God's people" (9:12), "service for the saints" (9:1), and Gal. 2:10.

b. This is consistent with the giving pattern of Jesus and his disciples, the Jerusalem church, and the Antioch church (Acts 11:27-30).

c. While the collection is especially for followers of Jesus, and not normally distributed to nonbelievers (note Acts 2:44-45/3:3-6), the church and believers have some responsibility to those who have need, Gal. 6:9-10, though it may not (always) be a financial one.

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C. There is a responsibility for the church to financially assist those who preach the gospel: teaching elders, apostles, evangelists, servants of the church.

a. I Timothy 5:17-18, I Cor. 9:3-18, esp. v.14, "the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." And Phil. 2:25, 1:5, 4:14-19, III John 5-10.

b. The church was to assist brethren who travelled, as they had need, Rom. 16:1-2, 3 John 5-10; but not deceivers, 2 John 10-11.

c. Paul used the funds he received to preach full time (Acts 18:5, w/Paul's statements to the Philippian church (above) which was in Macedonia), & to rent a house from which he could teach (Acts 28:30-31).

d. Paul endorsed giving Phoebe, "a servant of the church," whatever help she needed in her travels from Cenchrea to Rome.

*Thus the church continued the basic pattern employed by Jesus and the disciples of having a common treasury, established through donations, from which the needs and obligations of the group were met, including helping the poor, buying supplies, paying rent, and supporting preaching.*

### 3. Tithes and offerings

A. Paul asserted that the principle of supporting preachers came from the Law of Moses (I Cor. 9:8-10, I Tim. 5:18). If we look there for insights, what kinds of things might the money donated to the common treasury be used for?

a. Everything needed for the ministry of the priests, the service of the temple, the building and maintenance of required structures, the support of workers (Levites), the copying and reading of the law, were provided for in the regular and special donations to the tabernacle-temple treasury, the common fund of the Israelite people. Ex. 25:1-9, 35:4ff, 1 Chr. 29:1-9, 2 Chr. 31:2-15

b. Tithes and freewill offerings were to provide for feasts and celebrations for priests, families, and the community of believers, including those who could not afford to pay for their own supplies or refreshments. Failure to make and utilize this provision was viewed as a direct affront to God, a crime against him. Deut. 14:22-29, Mal. 3:8-12

### 4. The guiding concept

A. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Col. 3:17

a. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God." I Cor. 10:31-32

Whatever the church can legitimately *do* in the name of the Lord Jesus, it can (and should) legitimately *pay for*. When the church spends money it is spending just one of the resources supplied by God. If an endeavor is worthy of the church's *time*, or *energy*, it is worthy of the church's *money*, each being resources that the Lord asks people to give to his work. The Lord is not interested in seeing his people hoard resources, but encourages us to use our resources wisely, for the good of others and ourselves, for the meeting of needs and the spread of the gospel.

*"So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'" Luke 19:13 (NIV). See also Matt. 25:14.*