

Who makes people rich or poor? (22:2)

The rich and the poor have a common bond; the LORD is the maker of them all.

THE TEXT (NASB)

The rich and the poor have a common bond; the LORD is the maker of them all.

The rich and poor meet together; the LORD is maker of them all. KJV - Proverbs 22:2

INTRODUCTION



Becoming rich or poor is not simply up to us.

Someone else is intimately involved in our finances, so in a very real sense, they're a matter of teamwork.

Both rich and poor, whether they know it or not, depend on the LORD—though the poor more often know that. So the LORD really makes some rich and others poor? But why?



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COMMENTARY

Repeated for Emphasis

We find this same message repeated often in the Bible. The verb forms of “making poor,” ירשה (yerē•šâ, pronounced “yě-ray-shah”), and “making rich,” עשׂר (ʾā•šār, pronounced “ah-shar”), are used in 1 Samuel 2:7: “The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low; He also exalts.” Yet the last word in our proverb here is “all” and not “both.” “All” refers to everyone, not just the very rich and very poor, but likewise everyone between. The LORD makes the middle class, too. The LORD loves variety in economic strata, just as he loves variety in flowers. So this proverb speaks against a communist notion of uniform income. The LORD actively makes people materially diverse and different from each other.

The same message appears in the oldest book of the Bible, the Book of Job. Job was the richest man in his country. Upon losing disastrously his entire family and fortune, Job said, “The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken away,” Job 1:21. Job did not argue about his ability and managerial skill. He did not complain, “I worked long and hard for all this wealth, but the LORD stole it in a single day by God acting like a bully!” Job didn’t think, “The LORD has given, but Satan has taken away.” No. Job maintained all his confidence in the LORD. He trusted that the LORD was the source of both poverty and abundance. “Through all this *Job did not sin*, (emphasis added) nor did he blame God,” Job 1:22. Job did NOT think he was a self-made kingpin. Job gave God full credit for first raising him up and then taking down. He was humble.

Who is the LORD?



The word LORD is all in uppercase, meaning that the original Hebrew uses the proper name for God, sometimes translated as Jehovah, Jove, or Yahweh. Search the site for additional discussion of the topic, “LORD versus Lord.” Yet here, God is called, not “creator,” but “maker.” So the Keil & Delitzsch Commentary interprets the simple Hebrew word “maker,” עשה (ʾā•śāh, pronounced “ah-sah”), as the creator. Some are born rich, and some born poor. But the text has further implications about riches and poverty, “made” for us after we are “created.”

Unlike the Hebrew verb, “to create,” ברא (bā•rā, pronounced “bah-ra”), used for example in



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Genesis 5:1&2, this word “to make,” בָּרָא has a very broad application. This text refers to the events that God initiates or allows before and after birth, making people poor or rich. For example Proverbs 10:22 states that “it is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich...”

Off on a Tangent

Time to step back: Does God even exist? Perhaps God is merely a delusion, concocted by the weak as an emotional narcotic to dull life’s puzzles and pains. Perhaps, as celebrity atheist Richard Dawkins holds, religion and god are merely poetry to bind society together with fear. Dawkins also believes necessarily that human souls (us) are mirages, and that genetics and natural selection are the real and only drivers of our existence. Since God is not visible, God does not exist. And yet... the wind is invisible; electromagnetic waves are invisible; gravity is invisible. The most powerful realities of our lives, love and friendship, are invisible. Mirages?

Common Sense? Or Do Scientists Believe in Magic?

It may be the height of arrogance to see all the incomprehensible complexities of the cosmos and nature, and conclude that we human beings are the highest form of existence. There is nothing in the realm of experience, common sense, or reason that proves there is no God (Proverbs 21:30). The atheist calls God an illusion, and God repeatedly calls the atheist a fool (Psalm 14:1, Psalm 53:1, Psalm 10:4). Atheists may be eloquent and educated, but if they ignore the visible evidence of a Supreme Being, they reject the beauty of nature and the trust of all humanity throughout all of history. They might ask themselves whether they seek not truth, but elite superiority over the rest of us unenlightened humans. The Bible calls such rejection and pride a deliberate rebellion or sin.

Faith in Evolution (Engineering Without the Engineer)

Evolution in the atheist faith does not refer to simple “micro-evolution,” where there is minor adaption within a species, but to “macro-evolution,” where one species morphs into another. Why do atheists reject order and intelligence, but embrace randomness and mindless material causation? Their reasoning is not new.

Consider the anti-god bias of these three scientists, now playing philosophers, as quoted by John Blanchard in his book, *Does God Believe in Atheists?*

- “The theory of evolution itself [is] a theory universally accepted, not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative is special creation, which is clearly incredible,” says biologist D.M.S. Watson (1929);
- “Our faith in the idea of evolution depends upon our reluctance to accept the antagonistic doctrine of special creation,” says paleontologist L.T. More; and,
- “Evolution is unproved and un-provable. We believe it only because the alternative is



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special creation, which is unthinkable,” says anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith.

Weighing up such honest confessions, Professor Louis Bounoure, President of the Biological Society of Strasbourg and Director of Research at the French National Center of Scientific Research, came to this withering conclusion: *“Evolution-ism is a fairy-tale for grown-ups.* (emphasis added) This theory has helped nothing in the progress of science. It is useless.”

When dealing with the unknown and scientifically unknowable, we must commit to faith in something. We can put our faith in randomness and blind chance—speculation, or we can put our faith in a personal, all-knowing God and seek Him through prayer—supplication.

Financial Speculation and Supplication

Speculation signifies deliberating or reasoning based on incomplete information. In business, it involves the assumption of financial risk for monetary gain. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, we’ve seen a rapid increase in myriad forms of speculation—lotteries, casinos, elaborate derivative swaps, or leveraged financing. Financial leverage is the use of debt in an attempt to magnify investment income. Note the warning in Habakkuk 2:6: “Woe to him who increases what is not his...for how long?—and makes himself rich with loans.”

Supplication signifies a humble request for help from someone in authority, especially when communicating to a deity through prayer. In short: Praying to God for help. During the late 20th and early 21st centuries we have seen a rapid decrease in the use of supplication. Prayer was forbidden in North American public schools in the early 1970s. So North American financial strategies also have shifted from supplication to speculation. Of course, this proverb does not mention supplication; it merely states the LORD, not the bank, makes us rich or poor.

Back From the Tangent. Who is Responsible for Financial Blessings and Troubles?



If there is a God, how much of our financial situation is a result of what God allows or even does? To what degree is God directly involved in our moment-to-moment finances? We might object, “If God controls everything, why should I do anything? If God controls everything, how can He judge us for anything?”



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Does this text imply that people can blame God for their poverty? Definitely! Some causes of poverty, like droughts, hail, hurricanes, and earthquakes are Acts of God. Likewise, some causes of wealth, like perfect growing conditions and fertile livestock, have little to do with human effort. So where does God's work stop and ours start?

Theological Debate

Theologians have debated the question of divine sovereignty versus human free will for millennia. Some arguments have taken the form of "Calvinism versus Arminianism." I like the conclusion reached by A. W. Tozer: "God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil. When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as *the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it*. If in His absolute freedom God willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand or say, 'What doest thou?' *Man's will is free because God is sovereign*. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creature. He would be afraid to do so." ¹ (Emphases mine)

Financial Resolution

How does this relate to finances? The strategy I recommend is, if our current finances are in trouble, we should bring our concerns to the LORD. After all, this proverb says the LORD is the money-maker and money-destroyer. But don't stop there. Pray as if it all depends on God, and work as if it all depends on you. As you pray, pray humbly, asking the Father: Should I pray for more money? As you work, work humbly, remembering that wealth is not deserving of your trust. And avoid the common mistake of boasting of your accomplishments, as if they were all your own doing. Work hard, but boast in God. (Deuteronomy 8:17-18, 1 Corinthians 1:31)

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus made people financially richer and poorer.

At a wedding feast in Cana he turned over 500 liters of ordinary water into the finest wine (John 2:1-10). In a meeting with the tax-collector Zacheus, Jesus influenced Zacheus to give half of his goods to the poor (Luke 19:8).

A true encounter with Jesus changes everything—including our finances.

APPLICATION



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The rich and the poor have a common bond; the LORD is the maker of them all.

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Thank God for your current financial condition. Read Footnote 2 on Social Classes.
- List ten ways God could make you rich and prayerfully bring them before Him.
- List ten ways God could make you poor and humbly bring them before Him.
- Use the God's Help tab on Your Money Kitchen as an active prayer log.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus take now? Ask Him.



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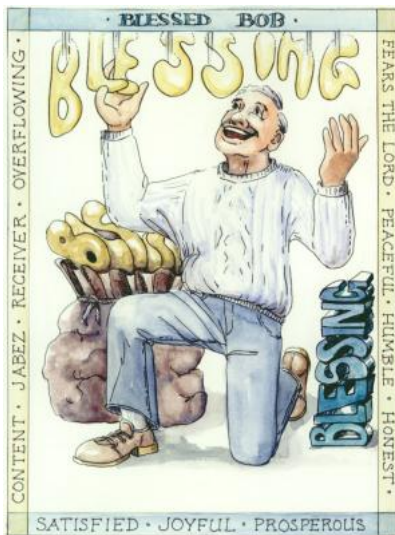
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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), communist, contentment, income, leverage, Maker, net worth, prayer, risk, speculation, poor (rāš pronounced “rash”)

ILLUSTRATION

[Who is Blessed Bob?](#)



Blessed Bob is very fortunate. He recognizes that good things come from God! God is shunned by many, but not by Bob. Bob loves God. He wants to receive all the good things that God has for him. He's not too proud to ask God for help. In fact, Bob prays often. Some think that he prays without ceasing. But he is not without fault. Blessed Bob makes many mistakes, and when he does, he admits his errors. He corrects them and presses on.

Bob gets so many blessings he feels overwhelmed. His cup overflows. But he doesn't hoard his blessings. Like Generous Genevieve, Blessed Bob likes to give to others. He is truly prosperous, even though there are many who are financially richer than he is.

We see examples of Blessed Bob in the Bible in the lives of Job and Joseph. Job went through some very good times (Job 29:2-25) and some very bad times (Job 2:7-8). Joseph had similar financial cycles (Genesis 39:2,21). Both men kept their focus on God, not on their financial condition (Job 1:21, Genesis 50:19-21).

More recently we have examples of those who have lived with the same life focus. R. G. LeTourneau was the inventor of the largest earth moving machines in the 1930's and 1940's. He credited God for his tremendous success. He gave away much of his wealth while he was



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still living saying that, "When I shovel money out to God's interests, God shovels money back to me, but God's shovel is bigger than mine." He was called the mover of men and mountains because of his great work and influence. On his gravestone, R. G. LeTourneau left all visitors with these words, SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU MATTHEW 6:33.

Blessed Bob is full of joy. He is satisfied with life!



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FOOTNOTES

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, Copyright 1961, Harper Collins, pages 110-111
2. Generations Family Devotional June, 22, 2022

People tend to make a big deal out of social classes. The communist philosopher Karl Marx looked at all of human history in terms of class warfare, and the Indian caste system is built entirely on a system of social classes. But Christians have a different way of looking at human society. Social class and wealth status are mere incidentals when considered from the viewpoint of the Creator. In the words of Job, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked I return thither” (Job 1:21). For that very short duration of time between birth and death, a man may collect a few marbles and a few bricks of gold. But what really matters is his standing before God on that last day. Both rich and poor will meet together at the final judgment, and what good will riches do them at that time? What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loses his own soul?

Difficult though it may be for those who are accustomed to interacting with people in terms of class, Christians must learn to ignore these categories when they come together in Christ. They worship the same God. They serve one another with their assorted resources and spiritual gifts. They have all received of the same unspeakable Gift, the infinite worth of divine forgiveness by the blood of Jesus. If we have a right to call ourselves the body of Christ and a true church, there must not be any strain of envy giving birth to strife among us. If there is a reticence to give up all for Christ (whether it be our energies, money, time, or other gifts), then we must simply remind one another again that Jesus gave up all for us.

