

# What the Hundredfold Return Really Means—You May Be Surprised

Many times, especially during an offering, I've heard believers enthusiastically quote Jesus' promise of a hundredfold return. Usually the forecasted results include astounding financial breakthroughs, the cancelling of debt, and material increase.

However, when you study the original text, you will discover an interpretation that is surprisingly different.

Here is the divine pledge Jesus shared with His disciples:

“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 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” (Mark 10:29-30, NKJV; see also Matthew 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30).

Notice money was never mentioned, and Jesus was not pledging an exact multiplication of the items He listed (e.g., if you give up one house, you will eventually own 100 more). He was proposing something altogether different, actually urging His disciples to completely sacrifice their lives for the kingdom of God. This passage was never intended as a divine strategy for His people to achieve a greater level of material prosperity.

Just ask the rich young ruler who apparently prompted the Lord to voice this challenge. Because a few moments before, that wealthy person had walked away from the Messiah sorrowfully because He'd asked him to give his excess wealth away to the

needy.

It wasn't a heaven-to-earth business proposition; it was a call to radical discipleship.

We should never pull those two beginning verses out of context to prove a prosperity point. To get a proper understanding, we must examine the whole passage (Mark 10:17-31). Jesus didn't tell the young man that if he sowed a large offering into His ministry, his businesses and bank account would grow exponentially. Quite the opposite, He made shocking statements like this one:

"You lack one thing: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, take up the cross and follow Me" (Mark 10:21, MEV).

And the line that is quoted most often:

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25, NKJV).

So if this is true, what exactly was Jesus proposing?

If Jesus had intended this conversation to be the basis for a "7 Point Plan for Biblical Prosperity," He would have presented a totally different message to the rich young ruler, who had started the conversation by asking, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17, MEV).

### **What Jesus Really Meant**

Mainly, Jesus was promising that true disciples who make great personal sacrifices to promote the gospel will be enriched by the new, godly relationships that result. The people who receive help from those who proclaim the gospel will open the doors of their hearts and homes, and there will be hundreds of new relationships formed – spiritual brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, mothers and fathers.

The hundredfold increase primarily means the establishing of valuable, long-term covenant relationships that enrich the heart (not necessarily the wallet). Plus, don't forget that Jesus added "persecution" at the end of the list as part of the expected "rewards." Gulp! That part's not easy to swallow, is it? Of course, His greatest encouragement was the promise that those who advance God's kingdom by giving up personal ambitions and possessions will be rewarded with an eternal inheritance that infinitely surpasses anything this world can ever supply.

### **Balancing Out the Discussion**

In closing, let me bring balance to this presentation. I do believe that God wants to prosper His people. If that were not the case, He never would have said, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2, NKJV).

Also, when Christian businessmen invite Jesus to be Lord over their businesses and use them for His glory, God honors that and often commands His blessing. (See Deuteronomy 8:18.) There must be provision for the vision or God's work will never move forward successfully.

For instance, all the mission trips I have taken through the years (to India and to various nations in South America and Africa) were funded by Christian businessmen whose passion was to advance God's kingdom through their generosity, which I prayed would return to them according to the promise, "Give, and it will be given to you: Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will men give unto you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured unto you" (Luke 6:38, MEV).

So, we need to be careful not to go from one extreme to the other (or throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater). God doesn't want His people to be poor, but at the same time

the gospel is not all about attaining wealth and riches.

The truth is usually found midway between two extremes. No wonder when the disciples expressed shock and concern and Peter blurted out, "Who then can be saved?" (Mark 10:26, NKJV), Jesus responded:

"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27, NKJV).

Yes, the key is walking "with God" in all our earthly endeavors. {eoa}

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