



## Biblical Money and the Church's Mission in the Digital Age

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### Abstract

This article examines the relationship between biblical money principles and the mission of the church in the digital age, focusing on Bitcoin as a form of "biblical money" that transcends the modern fiat money system. Based on Luke 16:9 and teachings such as Leviticus 19:36 and Proverbs 11:1, the author asserts that fair money should reflect honesty, avoid value-stealing inflation, and reduce dependence on debt. Bitcoin is judged to meet the principles of scarcity, fragmentability, portability, and resistance to censorship, making it most in line with biblical values of economic justice. In the Indonesian context, although still limited in regulation, Bitcoin has the potential to be used for the storage of value, funding cross-cultural missions, and empowering churches through decentralized financial technology. This article invites the church to rethink missiological finance by applying biblical money ethics in the midst of global economic challenges.

Keywords: Biblical Money, Church's Mission, Digital Age

### Introduction

I tell you, use *worldly wealth* to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings... (Luke 16:9, NIV)

Jesus' parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16 was meant to be jarring to his original audience. And it still has that effect today. What could Jesus mean by τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, translated in the NIV as "worldly wealth"? This phrase has generated a lot of debate and has been interpreted variously, but the thrust of the parable as a whole is using money shrewdly to bring people into God's kingdom. Jesus' statement here is revealing in light of the relatively new technology of fiat or paper money. Jesus' parable has direct relevance to the issue of "financial justice" or the concept of a "biblical" money. This paper will function as a short introduction to the characteristics of what would qualify a "biblical" money, how Bitcoin fulfils these characteristics as opposed to "fiat" money (i.e., government paper money), and the utility of bitcoin particularly in the Indonesian context.

Most research, sermons, books, and Christian devotional literature focuses almost exclusively on matters of personal stewardship (i.e., saving, tithing, budgeting) in relation to money without considering the theological implications of the monetary system itself (Christanti et al., 2023; Objantoro et al., 2022). But deeper thinking should be done, especially in the light of the emergent technology of cryptocurrencies, particularly bitcoin, whether or not one ends up

agreeing with its utility as a money or its status as perhaps the most biblical money that has ever existed. For the fact of the matter is, money touches every aspect of life. And according to biblical teaching, how such “worldly wealth” is used has eternal implications for every person. Some questions that need to be explored include: Why is the current financial system unjust? What even is money, and what makes money “sound”? (King et al., 2025). The following presentation is only a very succinct explanation of biblical teaching on sound money, basic principles of sound money, and how bitcoin emerges as a *sui generis* cryptocurrency that is categorically different and superior than not only every other cryptocurrency that currently and perhaps ever will exist, but also superior to every form of money that has ever existed, whether silver, shells, oil, or gold. This short article will briefly sketch: the current Indonesian monetary system; biblical principles of “just” money and the disincentives of “unjust” and unsound money; principles of sound money and how these characteristics are fulfilled through Bitcoin (*vis a vis* other cryptocurrencies); and some possible uses for Christian ministry in Indonesia.

### **The Current Indonesian Financial System**

Today's global financial system faces increasingly complex challenges in light of what has been coined “fiat money” (i.e., print by demand by national governments), and Indonesia, as a post-colonial country, is no exception (Ammous, 2021b). While space doesn't permit a history of Indonesia's financial history, it will suffice for now to simply state that the current reality of Indonesia's monetary system is emblematic of most post-colonial countries' reliance on the dollar as global reserve currency (Rezkitha, 2023). Rising inflation, reliance on centralized banking systems, and lack of financial inclusion have created significant gaps in financial services globally and in Indonesia.

Indonesia is actually one of the more stable world economies, with *only* a persistent inflation of 5.47% in 2023, exceeding Bank Indonesia's target of 2-4%. (Sharma & Yadgari, 2023). And, in theory, the financial crisis of 1998 could happen again because of the issue of a single point of failure in the centralized banking system (Agustina et al., 2022). This latter point has had perhaps the most profound impact on Indonesia's economy in recent history – millions losing their savings without hope of recovery as banks closed, and the rupiah was subsequently weakened, never to truly recover again after the collapse of Indonesia's economy in 1998 (Rezkitha, 2023). As of the writing of this article in October, 2025, 1 USD is worth approximately Rp. 16,500, and this inflation shows no signs of abating. In fact the rupiah has lost about 70% of its value against the dollar over the last 20 years (Bank Indonesia., 2025; CEIC Data, 2025; Trading Economics, 2025).

### **Biblical Principles of Just Money**

The main biblical teaching related to the issue of sound and moral money is quite simple, straightforward, and clear to all even without biblical teaching – “thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15). While the prohibition to not steal is taught by all major religions, the mechanics of theft in an economic system are not always immediately apparent. Passages like Leviticus 19:36,

Isaiah 1:22, Proverbs 11:1, Proverbs 22:7, and Romans 13:8 explicate how theft both occurs and the impact it has on people in unjust economic systems. For instance, in Isaiah 1:22, God criticizes Israel's silver because it has been debased and quality of the wine because it has been diluted. In an economic system in which money can be easily printed or made and is centrally-controlled, it is easy to reduce the value of money, and subsequently the quality of goods. This is undeniably apparent in a fiat based economic system where central banks both force the use of and control the supply of money of any given population. This is not necessarily to criticize any one particular government – the reality of the current economic system is a result of historical and geographical factors outside the control of most people (Ammous, 2021b). The point is simply to see the reality of how the world operates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Because most of the world's major economies hold dollars as their main reserve currency, in order to participate in the global market, countries need to exchange their currency for dollars. Exchange rates are often fluctuating, and because the Federal Reserve prints money, the value of the dollar is debased every year and the value of international currencies gets devalued even more. This directly violates the command to preserve "honest scales" (Lev 19:36; Prov 11:1). Other countries lose their purchasing power and suffer economically because they are beholden to the dollar as the reserve currency. Because of what has been coined the "Cantillon Effect," those closest to the money, namely, the "elites" of society (large corporations, bureaucrats, politicians) have more and easier access to freshly printed money; and by the time that money, if ever, makes it down to the normal person, that money is already devalued and prices of goods have gone up, disproportionately affecting the normal citizen, let alone the lower classes of any given society.

As one consequence, whole societies are driven to live in constant indebtedness, a reality described in Proverbs 22:7: "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrowers is slave to the lender." This is clearly not a reality that the author of this proverb thought was a good thing. Furthermore, as Paul teaches in Romans 13:8, believers should seek to not be indebted to anyone (perhaps if at all possible, though this often seems unavoidable), but only "owe" the debt of love to others as a result of Christ's love demonstrated on the cross.

In short, money that is "just" is rarely if ever inflated; preserves honest scales when exchanged; and disincentivizes indebtedness. These are all issues with the current fiat based monetary system.

### **Disincentives of "Unrighteous Wealth"**

The Apostle Paul, criticizing the Corinthian churches, wrote "bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV). It is also appropriate to say, "bad money corrupts good morals." "Bad money," in this case, money that is easily printed because it is centrally controlled actually incentivizes dishonesty, laziness, and actively harms the forward progress of the gospel. In short, easy printed money affects *time preference* (Ammous, 2021a) – in other words, short-term thinking replaces long term thinking, such as in regard to preserving cultural legacy or personal savings. Consider why there is not the same calibre of music, architecture, literature,

and other cultural artifacts such as were created under civilizations that operated under a sounder (gold) standard (Ammous, 2021b). Building something like the Sistine Chapel or making music like Mozart or Beethoven requires a lot of time, and more importantly cultures that supports such art work. But in today's world perhaps most art, music, movies, and literature (at least in the West) reflects a nihilistic worldview. Regarding medicine, Big Pharma, insurance companies, and hospitals are often more concerned on profitable treatments and the volume of patients seen rather than the quality of care or efficacy of medicine. When money is increasingly debased, families face increasing economic pressure; if a family doesn't live in proximity to other family members or live in a more communal culture, both parents are essentially forced to work, which leads to reduced parental presence and involvement in childrens' lives. Charitable giving goes down because of reduced purchasing power. When church members have their purchasing power eroded (i.e., stolen through inflation), there is less to give, making ministry more difficult, whether domestic or international.

There are many other negative results of unsound and unjust money. Another is what has been coined "brain drain," or the moving of human capital to areas where there are more opportunities (i.e., jobs), leading often to the economic harm of particularly more rural communities. Yet another is the reduced quality or quantity of goods in order for businesses to get the same amount of money or purchasing power as before. It is no wonder that a lot of food that is cheap and easily available for the average person today has a lot of chemicals and slowly kills those who consume them. There is the issue of reduced competition, which harms whole societies – it is more difficult to start a small business and make a significant profit when bigger companies and corporations have easier access to money because of cheaper interest on loans. Wars can be waged indefinitely because all a government has to do to fund them is turn on the money printer rather than directly tax its population – inflation becomes a hidden, slower, subtle tax instead (Gladstein, 2022; Sammons, 2025).

### **Principles of Sound Money**

Given some basic biblical principles of what constitutes a more or less moral money, it is essential to ask what exactly money is and what makes money "sound." The principles of sound money are actually quite commonsensical once one is aware of them, and can observe them to various degrees in all the objects that have been used as money throughout human history. Most pertinent to the current economic zeitgeist and this presentation are gold, paper (i.e., fiat) money, and bitcoin. The following characteristics offer spectrums across which money can be considered sound or not (Ammous, 2021a):

1. Scarcity
2. Portability
3. Divisibility
4. Fungibility
5. Verifiability
6. Censorship Resistant

Most of these principles are commonsensical – the rarer a thing is and the harder to produce, the more valuable it is, whether it be gold, pokemon cards, and so on. Portability concerns the ease of moving something around – the easier the better! The more divisible a money is the easier it will be to denominate goods and have fair and exact pricing for said goods. Fungibility refers to the interchangeability of money – trading, for instance, a \$1 bill or Rp. 100,000 for another bill. This is even better with digital money because paper money can be ripped, crinkled, and defaced. Verifiability refers to the ability to determine the authenticity of money – paper money, for instance, may have watermarks or holograms to prevent it from being counterfeited. Finally, censorship resistance has to do with whether or not transactions can be easily prevented or not. This is a major problem with digital transactions – if one uses a credit or debit card, that transaction can be cancelled or rejected by a business or even by a government, if the latter chooses to freeze someone’s bank account(s). The following chart gives a quick overview comparing fiat, gold, and bitcoin and therefore a brief introduction as to why bitcoin actually functions as a superior and even biblical money (OpenAI, 2025):

**Table 1. Comparison of Fiat, Gold, and Bitcoin by Six Principles of Sound Money**

*Note. Generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI., 2025) in response to a prompt by the author.*

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Fiat Money</b>	<b>Gold</b>	<b>Bitcoin</b>
<b>Scarcity</b>	Low to moderate (central banks can increase supply)	Moderate (mining is costly; new supply grows slowly)	High (protocol cap ensures fixed maximum supply)
<b>Portability</b>	High (digital & physical currency moves easily)	Low to moderate (physical gold is heavy / costly to transport)	Very high (fully digital, global transfer)
<b>Divisibility</b>	Moderate (can subdivide units, though practical limits)	Low to moderate (physical subdivision is costly, loses value)	Very high (divisible into 100 million “satoshis” and more)
<b>Fungibility</b>	High (units are interchangeable; though regulation can affect)	High (same purity/weight are interchangeable)	Generally high (each BTC is equal)
<b>Verifiability</b>	Moderate (banks / central authority verify)	High (physical assays, purity tests)	High (cryptographic proofs, ledger transparency)
<b>Censorship Resistance</b>	Low (authorities can block, freeze, reverse)	Moderate (physical seizures possible)	High (decentralized, ideally resistant to censorship)

### **Bitcoin – A "Biblical Money"**

As can be seen from the previous chart, Bitcoin fulfils all the characteristics of sound money; and in the evaluation of this author, far surpasses fiat and gold in both utility and soundness. Furthermore, there is significant alignment with the aforementioned biblical

principles: Because bitcoin is absolutely scarce, and at this point is virtually impossible to change because of the consensus protocol of what are called “nodes” being run by tens of thousands of computers (i.e., individual computers running the same or similar software constantly verifying an immutable ledger called the blockchain), rampant inflation no longer needs to be an issue (see Isa 1:22). Because every subdivided unit (called “satoshis”) is fungible, honest exchange can be preserved. In fact, if economies, local, national, and/or global simply switched to transacting with bitcoin, there would be no need to exchange currencies anymore (see Lev 19:36 and Prov 11:1). Because the bitcoin blockchain is verifiable and immutable, it is the most transparent ledger that has ever existed; whereas a country’s stock of gold may never be disclosed or verified and determining how much paper money exists with exact precision is an impossible task at this point, the bitcoin blockchain preserves honesty (Fenwick & Vermeulen, 2019).

### **Challenges and Limitations**

It has to be admitted that there are challenges facing the adoption of bitcoin as a global reserve currency and medium of exchange. In the Indonesian context, where regulatory restrictions are often tighter than Western countries, it is still illegal to buy and receive goods and services using bitcoin, as it is only listed as an asset (Badan Pengawas Perdagangan Berjangka Komoditi, 2025). This automatically negates the possibility of circular economies. Since people have to sell their bitcoin to convert it to rupiah and then transact, bitcoin will continue to function mostly as a savings technology for those who are financially able until financial regulations change.

A second challenge is the availability of internet. Using bitcoin normally requires internet access, though there are ways around this that are being utilized around the world, including more remote areas without internet access. Space doesn’t suffice to explain all the mechanisms of different solutions for this issue, but some resources are included for the curious (Blockchain Web3 Insights, 2025).

Another challenge, not only common to Indonesia, is the matter of education. Because bitcoin has and is lumped together as synonymous with all other cryptocurrencies, which do not fulfil the characteristics of sound money mentioned previously, it is often seen as simply another speculative asset or something only for the rich – meanwhile, circular economies and even very poor communities all around the world, throughout Africa, Latin and South America, of instance, are using it because of the total collapse of their currencies, whereas Indonesia is still relatively stable. Quality materials are hard to come by, though they are available for those willing to look for them (The following are all Indonesian materials: (Baudach & Hubrig, 2024; Bitcoin., 2025; M. F. Bitcoin, 2024; SatsVsFiat, n.d.)).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ammous, 2021a & b are already translated into Indonesian and are perhaps the best books currently available to teach about the basics of bitcoin and the history of the current global financial system. Also, the SatsVsFiat link has an introductory video explaining the main problem with the modern financial system with Indonesian subtitles and as well as the whole slideshow translated into Indonesian free for download. Also I would be remiss if I didn’t include the original Bitcoin White Paper, though this is a bit more technical to understand, though there is an Indonesian translation: Bitcoin: A peer-to-peer electronic cash system. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2025, from <https://bitcoin.org/en/bitcoin-paper>

## Implications and Recommendations

In spite of current regulations in Indonesia concerning the use of bitcoin in transactions, there are still uses of bitcoin that are legal. The following uses are preliminary thoughts and would require deeper research on proper custody and use of bitcoin, which is not difficult for those who are simply willing to learn. For instance, as a savings technology for denominations, organizations, and even churches that want to do longer-term projects like building churches, supporting other ministries, or even set aside a pension fund for retired pastors, can save in bitcoin rather than saving with rupiah. They can save with bitcoin so that over a longer time frame, the value of their money would appreciate. The bitcoin could later be converted to rupiah through legal exchanges in Indonesia and used for different longer-term projects.

Another idea is directly funding cross-cultural ministers, whether inside or outside the country. Because bitcoin is a *peer-to-peer* technology and money, donors can actually directly support cross-cultural workers or church planters. This is especially useful for those who serve in remote and/or unbanked areas or in countries where Christians face significant persecution and are even at risk of losing access to their bank accounts. Bitcoin can be sent directly to them using just their cellphones, and, if need be, converting that to local currency via either local exchanges or peer-to-peer exchanges if using local exchanges faces issues. Transfer fees are often much cheaper than sending through traditional intermediaries like Western Union, Remitly, or international bank transfers, and cross-cultural workers can receive those funds almost instantly, rather than waiting for banks as clearing houses that can often take several days or even weeks. This peer-to-peer model does raise significant questions related to organizational oversight and financial accountability, so that even if one doesn't agree with this use case or thinks there are lots of issues, all the more reason to start the conversation amongst mission organizations concerning funding models (Labs, 2024; Ventures., 2025)

A final, and perhaps the best starting point, is simply educating oneself and others. At the end of the section "Challenges and Limitations" were listed many resources (in Indonesian) that groups could study together. The "My First Bitcoin" (Bitcoin Pertamaku) is actually a curriculum developed for beginners that small groups can work through to learn. If there are people who can speak English, there are many books and podcasts available for Christian audiences (T. B. and Bitcoin, 2025; T. G. for Bitcoin, n.d.; YouTube, 2025).

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