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LET'S TALK ABOUT 'MONEY'

Over the last couple of months several people have asked questions about money matters. Some asked about tithing; others about usury. The only thing about this topic of money that really gets me excited is the knowledge that it won't be too long until there won't be any of this stuff we call "money" around any more!

That's the good news!

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PHYSICAL LIFE

It is God's plan to create a vast Family of spirit-born sons. This Family will exist in the presence of God for all future eternity. They will share God's existence. By nature God is a GIVING Being. The Bible expresses this in the term that "God IS love" (1 John 4:8). God wants every member of His Family to have that same nature of GIVING.

In order to achieve this goal of creating a Family of immortal God Beings, God has devised a plan, which provides for human beings joining His Family at two different times. The first group of human beings will become a part of God's Family at the time of the first resurrection. This group is referred to variously as "they that are Christ's" (1 Cor. 15:23) and as "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4).

All of the rest of humanity that is not included in these "firstfruits" will make up the second group (but excluding all those people who will end up in the lake of fire because of rebellion against God). This second group, vastly larger than the group of firstfruits, will become a part of God's Family at the end of the 100-year period which follows the millennial rule of Christ. That will be just before the time of the lake of fire, which will devour the wicked (Malachi 4:1-3). This incredibly vast group of people is variously referred to as "a great multitude which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9) and also by the expression "then comes the end" (1 Cor. 15:24), i.e. then comes the last stage in God's plan of building His Family.

That's the plan in a nutshell.

To achieve this plan of creating other independent beings with a free will of their own, but who will ALWAYS inherently think exactly the same way God thinks, based on the same principles and standards as God's thinking, God decided to create us human beings as physical and mortal beings ... subject to death. This Earth is destined to be God's headquarters for the entire universe for all future eternity. But at this present time this Earth is only the testing and training ground for potential future Gods. In the process of this testing taking place, God is prepared for humanity inflicting considerable damage to this Earth. That damage God will deal with later.

A CALCULATED RISK!

In creating us human beings with totally free wills, God was taking a calculated risk! That risk was that some of these human beings, perhaps even many (?), would not cooperate with God's desires. That was a risk that was unavoidable because of what God intends to achieve ... to create spirit beings who have totally free minds and wills, but who will nevertheless always voluntarily accept and abide by God's standards and God's wishes, who will always live in total harmony with God's purposes.

That same risk existed when God created the spirit beings, which we collectively refer to as "angels".

As it turned out, Satan led one third of the angels in rebellion against God. God was prepared for this turn of events and God will punish these rebellious spirits with a suitable eternal punishment, which is to be for ever banished from the presence of God and His creation into some state or location of total restraint in "the blackness of darkness" (Jude 1:13). The damage these rebellious spirits caused, God will take care of later, at the time of the new heaven and the new Earth.

When God created Adam and Eve, God laid out a way of life by which He desired them to live. But God did give them a choice. As it turned out, they rejected God's way and instead chose the way of life which Satan offered them.

NOW THIS IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND!

When humanity rejected God's guidance and God's way of life, then God in effect **SENTENCED MANKIND TO 6000 YEARS OF BEING CUT OFF FROM GOD!** You probably remember Mr. Armstrong explaining this many times.

For example, on page 120 of his book "Mystery of the Ages" (hard cover edition) Mr. Armstrong wrote:

When God "drove out the man" from the Garden of Eden, and barred re-entrance – lest he go back and receive eternal life in sin (Gen. 3:22-24) – God pronounced sentence!

God said, in effect: "You have made the decision for yourself and the world that shall spring from you. You have rejected me as the basic source of knowledge--you have rejected power from me through my Spirit to live the righteous way--you have rebelled against my command and my government--you have chosen the 'getting, taking' way of Satan. Therefore I sentence you and the world you shall beget to 6,000 years of being cut off from access to me and my Spirit – except for the exceedingly few I shall specially call. And that few shall be called for special service preparatory for the kingdom of God. They shall be required to do what you have failed to do – reject, resist and overcome Satan and his ways, and follow the ways of my spiritual law.

"Go, therefore, Adam, and all your progeny that shall form the world, produce your own fund of knowledge. Decide for yourself what is good and what is evil. Produce your own educational systems and means of disseminating knowledge, as your god Satan shall mislead you. Form your own concepts of what is god, your own religions, your own governments, your own life-styles and forms of society and civilization. In all this Satan will deceive your world with his attitude of self-centredness--with vanity, lust and greed, jealousy and envy, competition and strife and violence and wars, rebellion against me and my law of love. [end of quotation from page 120]

As Mr. Armstrong said, God's sentence was: **"FORM YOUR OWN WORLD AND FORM YOUR OWN INSTITUTIONS!"** And that is precisely what mankind has done. In the process man, under the influence of Satan, has rejected almost everything that is right and good by God's standards. The customs and ways of our human societies seem quite natural and normal to us, because they have been a part of our lives since birth; but they are so far removed from God's ways that for a large part of humanity God's ways will seem like foolishness. God's ways appear to be impractical.

Now understand this:

When mankind decided to do things contrary to God's ways, then, **FOR THIS PRESENT PERIOD OF 6000 YEARS**, God has in many cases acknowledged man's freedom to make these bad choices! And

even when God has specifically worked with people (e.g. with the nation of Israel in Old Testament times), God has NOT pressured people to totally reject all of the ways that are contrary to His perfect ways. Instead, in many cases God has only given laws to regulate these wrong human ways of conducting life; not to restore everything to the perfectly right way of doing things, but to at least contain man's wrong ways within, relatively speaking, "acceptable boundaries or norms". Going beyond these "acceptable boundaries" would have resulted in the breakdown of human societies ... as has happened many times in various primitive societies which are totally cut off from ANY kind of contact or influence from God.

This is part of the "calculated risk" God was taking in order to create spirit-born sons of God. It was essential that God would leave mankind the freedom to organize their societies along wrong ways, without intervening at every wrong turn man made, so that human beings will TRULY have been totally free to choose how to organize and plan their way of life.

Let's look at some illustrations of this.

LAWS WHEREBY PEOPLE SHOULD NOT LIVE

To get a clearer picture, we need to study Ezekiel chapter 20. In this chapter God gives us a rundown of His dealings with the people of Israel.

In verse 5 God starts with choosing Israel while they were still in the land of Egypt. In verse 7 God explains that He expected Israel to give up their idolatrous practices. Verse 8 shows that Israel did not respond correctly to God ... they rebelled. So God brought them out into the wilderness (verse 10) and then gave them His laws, including His Sabbath days (verses 11-12). But Israel rebelled repeatedly (verse 13). God then determined to not bring that particular generation into the land He had promised them (verse 15) because they despised His laws and clung to idolatry (verse 16). Yet God had mercy (verse 17) and determined to bring the next generation into the land (verse 18). To these children God made a proposal (verses 19-20). But like their fathers they too rebelled (verse 21). As a penalty God determined to scatter Israel among the nations (verse 23).

Now notice verse 24:

BECAUSE they had not executed MY judgments, but had despised MY statutes, and had polluted MY sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. (Ezekiel 20:24)

Notice: here God tells us that "BECAUSE" Israel did not really obey HIS laws, THEREFORE God did what is mentioned in the next verse, which reads ...

WHEREFORE I GAVE THEM ALSO STATUTES [THAT WERE] NOT GOOD, AND JUDGMENTS WHEREBY THEY SHOULD NOT LIVE; (Ezekiel 20:25)

Do you understand what God is telling us in this verse?

IF Israel had obeyed God faithfully, THEN God would also NOT have given them some of the statutes and judgments that He did give them! Some of the laws God gave to Israel were specific responses from God to Israel having rejected His ways! In addition to this, God ALSO gave Israel a system of sacrificial and ceremonial laws because of their transgressions (Galatians 3:19), in order to train them in obedience, much like a "schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24). [These verses are explained in detail in my article on the Book of Galatians.] These ceremonial laws were added only until Christ's first coming ... "till

the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19 again). But the laws that "were not good" and "whereby they should NOT live" will only be revoked at the second coming of Christ.

Ezekiel 20:25 is NOT a reference to the sacrificial and ceremonial laws, which came to an end after Christ's first coming. The "statutes" and "judgments" referred to in this verse refer to OTHER laws!

THE STATUTES THAT WERE NOT GOOD

Right, let's see if we can understand these verses more clearly. Let's look at specific examples.

1) In God's ideal system of things there is no such thing as divorce. Yet for the hardness of their hearts God "ALLOWED" the Israelites to get divorced. In this regard the laws "that were not good" that God gave REGULATED the procedure to be followed IF a man decided to get divorced (see Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Jesus Christ made very clear that this law was in fact contrary to God's intentions (see Mark 10:4-9). Note that the law God gave did NOT institute divorce! Rather, the law God gave only REGULATED HOW people should go about this matter if they were going to do it anyway! In other words, irrespective of any laws God would give, people were going to get divorced anyway (that is proved by the vast scale on which fornication and adultery are committed!) ... and so God gave a law that regulated this practice to prevent things degenerating into total anarchy!

2) Similarly, in God's system there is no place for bigamy or for polygamy, for a man having more than one wife. In this regard the laws "that were not good" which God gave again REGULATED this practice of having more than one wife (see Exodus 21:9-11; Leviticus 18:18; etc.). God's laws did not establish bigamy; rather that is something people would do anyway. So God gave laws to at least keep this wrong practice within certain bounds. But these laws "were not good" and they did not really reflect the mind of God. They only reflected an accommodation of the hardness of human hearts!

3) Nowhere in God's system of things is there ever a place for slavery! Slavery is a concept which Satan originated! God's laws did NOT establish the practice of slavery. That is one of the things human beings would inevitably establish in one form or another at various times. So the laws that God gave in this regard which "were not good" (e.g. Exodus 21:2-8; etc.) at least REGULATED this wrong practice to prevent total chaos. But those laws also did NOT reflect the mind of God or God's will.

4) God did not intend that human beings would EVER kill one another. The mind of God is AGAINST warfare. Christ clearly said that those who take up weapons will "perish with the sword" (see Matthew 26:52). So the laws "that were not good" which God gave in this regard again REGULATED various aspects of warfare, but they did not institute warfare. Cain had already killed Abel and it was a foregone conclusion that human beings would fight. So God gave laws that REGULATED military service and warfare (see Numbers 10:9; etc.).

Are you beginning to understand?

When Adam and Eve REJECTED God's way of life, then God sentenced all of humanity to 6000 years of being "CUT OFF" from God's ways. For 6000 years humanity has had to "muddle through" its existence and establish its own ways of running a society. To ensure that human beings truly DID have a free will and a free choice, God allowed humanity to depart to a very considerable degree from His holy and perfect ways, ways that reflect His eternal will and intentions. The ways humanity has chosen reflect the mind of Satan, something that God knew in advance would happen, from the time He sentenced Adam and Eve. After all, that was precisely what Adam and Eve had done ... voluntarily chosen Satan's ways.

Now approximately 2500 years after sentencing mankind to being responsible and accountable for establishing their own standards of what is right and what is wrong, God brought the enslaved people of

Israel out of Egypt. At Mount Sinai God then gave to these people of Israel His laws. Now since the time God first created the angels, there had always been two great laws. Jesus Christ explained this during His ministry as follows:

The first and "GREAT COMMANDMENT" is as follows:

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38)

The second commandment that God had given is this:

And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matthew 22:39)

On these two laws God has built His entire way of life. As Christ said:

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:40)

When God first created Adam and Eve, these are the two laws that were in effect! But in order to apply them to physical, mortal human beings, God expanded these two commandments into ten specific statements of principles. We refer to these ten principles as "the ten commandments". At Mount Sinai God spoke these ten commandments to the people of Israel and made them the central core of the agreement He made with Israel. This agreement we refer to as "the old covenant".

These ten commandments are in fact a SPIRITUAL law (Romans 7:14), which means that their intent is not just to control the actions of people, but rather to control THEIR SPIRITS, i.e. their minds! To be in submission to God's laws, we must WITH OUR MINDS be in harmony with and in submission to the mind of God! The correct outward actions and behaviour then follow that voluntary submission of the mind.

So God DID give Israel His holy spiritual law. God entrenched this law in His dealings with Israel by making it the very heart and core, around which the rest of the old covenant was built and developed.

But God also did something else! So let's understand.

At the time God brought Israel out of Egypt, Satan had already swayed all human societies for about 2500 years! At one stage mankind had proven themselves to be so receptive to Satan's ways, that God intervened in the process and brought on a worldwide flood in the days of Noah. By starting over again with just eight human beings, God was saying that mankind's wrong conduct had gone beyond standards that God was prepared to tolerate. However, soon after the flood mankind again degenerated so rapidly into Satan's ways, that God again intervened in human affairs and scattered humanity along family-lines, by dividing the languages at the tower of Babel. Approximately 750 years after that event God brought the people of Israel to Mount Sinai.

At that time the only way of life that Israel knew was the society and the culture that Satan had imposed on humanity. They had no idea of God's REAL PURPOSE AND INTENTIONS ... to establish a Family within which everything would be based on love, an outgoing concern for every other being.

When Israel came out of Egypt, slavery was a "normal" fact of life. They themselves had been slaves. And if circumstances changed, they themselves were quite prepared to become slave-owners. Military

armies and warfare were also a "normal" part of human existence to them, much like they are for us today. To them it was obvious that nations "needed" to have armies. Divorce and bigamy were also "normal" phenomena of human existence. Many other ways of behaviour or ways of dealing with situations were also contrary to God's real intentions for His creation; but Israel was totally oblivious to God's real intentions.

The only society Israel knew, the only society that they could picture in their minds (which did not have access to the Holy Spirit, remember!) was one that WE TODAY, WHO HAVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD GUIDING US, can only refer to as a society that is based on the ways of the god of this world (see 2 Cor. 4:4). It was beyond them to even imagine a society as God would ideally like it to be! That is like us today asking people in the world to picture "the wonderful world tomorrow", as Mr. Armstrong used to refer to it.

So when God gave Israel additional laws at Mount Sinai, He did NOT eradicate everything that was contrary to His eternal purpose! Israel had already proved that they really rejected God's ways anyway (see again Ezekiel 20:24). And so God acknowledged man's freedom of choice to make bad decisions and to establish carnal ways of living with fellow-man, by giving laws that acknowledged the existence of these carnal ways of living. The laws God gave at that time did not abolish these carnal ways of living; but they REGULATED these carnal ways so that things would at least stay within certain bounds that God was prepared to "tolerate" for this present age. But these laws that did not abolish the carnal ways of living and only "regulated" those carnal ways to some extent, were not really "GOOD statutes" and they were not judgments whereby God REALLY wants people to live (see Ezekiel 20:25 again).

Can you understand that, in order to prevent Israelite society degenerating into totally unacceptable conditions which would require God's intervention, as was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah, God was prepared to give laws that were less than ideal, but which at least STILL left people the option to live carnally and to bear the consequences of such conduct? People were to learn FROM EXPERIENCE that carnal ways always bring suffering.

For example, while God gave laws that regulated the practice of bigamy, these laws NEVER removed the anguish and the suffering that this carnal and selfish custom automatically produces. There is always a painful stress between the competing wives ... as witnessed by Leah and Rachel (e.g. Genesis 30:15), and by the two wives of Elkanah, who was the father of Samuel (see 1 Samuel chapter 1), not to mention the wives of David and of Solomon.

Similarly, divorce and slavery and warfare all bring with them suffering and pain and anguish of spirit. The laws which regulated these things could not prevent this pain and suffering. And there is no place in God's eternal scheme of things for divorce or for slavery or for warfare. In God's eternal scheme of things there is no place for fear. Fear must be totally "cast out".

There is no fear in love; but PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR: BECAUSE FEAR HATH TORMENT. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)

Now think about this verse very carefully. This verse reflects God's eternal intention ... to create an environment of perfect love. And that means that there is no room in God's thinking for divorce and slavery and bigamy and warfare, all of which create fears and torment. So the laws God gave that regulated these wrong and ungodly practices were "not good". They were not good BECAUSE they accommodated ungodly practices, but this "accommodation" ensured man's freedom of choice, the right to sin and then be punished for sinning.

There is a mistake we need to beware of making!

We can look at all of these wrong practices and see that God actually "worked with" and even "made use of" these wrong practices. For example, once Israel had set their minds to reject God's leadership and to do their own fighting, then God UTILIZED and at times even directed the fighting of Israelite armies. But it would be a mistake to imply that God's involvement with the armies of Israel demonstrates God's APPROVAL for warfare.

As far as God's "intentions" are concerned: God never "INTENDED" that any human being would ever experience what it is like to put another human being to death! Yet prominent servants of God (e.g. Samuel and David) had considerable exposure to this experience. It should be quite obvious to us that "from the beginning it was not so"! The sins of humanity had created conditions for which there is no room in God's eternal future environment.

Similarly, God has "worked with" the practices of bigamy and divorce and slavery; but these practices do not in any way carry God's approval. God "worked with" the children whom the man Jacob fathered by four different women; God "worked with" the two sons Pharez and Zarah, which Judah begat through his own daughter-in-law Tamar ... but "from the beginning" this was not God's intention. "Working with" such things shows the extent to which God has given us the freedom to sin and to transgress His laws, though the penalties ALWAYS follow! Likewise, there is no room in "perfect love" for the condition of slavery! Slavery is a very selfish and carnal practice; but when human beings have established this practice, then God has at times just "worked with it and through it".

So we need to understand:

God has given us human beings the freedom to establish WRONG ways and practices. That freedom was implied in the 6000 year sentence. When we have done so (i.e. established wrong practices), then at times God has just tolerated it, while letting spontaneous penalties just take their course. At other times God has actually given some laws "to regulate and to contain" these wrong practices within certain bounds, lest we overstep the mark so dramatically that God would need to intervene and blot out a whole society, as with Sodom. But when we want to understand the real will of God, then we need to acknowledge that in God's REAL will, as intended "from the beginning", there is no room for any of these wrong practices. That is true even though God Himself at one time actually gave some laws to regulate these wrong practices.

With this background understanding, let's now look at some background to the subject of money.

THE ORIGIN OF THE "GET" WAY OF LIFE

When God created Adam and Eve, God GAVE them everything they needed. Their food was freely available. Then they sinned and God expelled them from the Garden in Eden. As a penalty God placed a curse on the ground (Genesis 3:17-19,23) and explained that the production of food would from henceforth require a great deal of work.

Long before the time of Adam, Satan had already invented "TRADING". While Satan had ruled on this Earth, he accumulated "merchandise". Ezekiel chapter 28 speaks about the time when Satan had been "the anointed cherub" (verse 14). In verse 16 we read ...

BY THE MULTITUDE OF THY MERCHANDISE THEY HAVE FILLED THE MIDST OF THEE WITH VIOLENCE, AND THOU HAST SINNED: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezekiel 28:16)

Satan invented "trading" for the express purpose of "GETTING MORE FOR SELF", while giving less to others. He accumulated "merchandise" to enhance his own status. He surrounded himself with every precious stone and material imaginable ...

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; EVERY PRECIOUS STONE [WAS] THY COVERING, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. (Ezekiel 28:13)

I think we can easily read into this verse that Almighty God actually "set him up" with all these precious stones, but I don't believe that is what this verse is telling us. In his book "Mystery of the Ages" on page 73 (hard cover edition), Mr. Armstrong wrote:

"IT IS REVEALED in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, THAT GOD PLACED THE ARCHANGEL LUCIFER, a cherub, ON A THRONE ON THE EARTH. HE WAS PLACED THERE AS A RULER OVER THE ENTIRE EARTH. God intended him to rule the earth by administering the government of God over the earth. And the government of God was administered on earth until the rebellion of the sinning angels."

[COMMENT: Read my article on the subject of "Lucifer" to understand why God never at any time gave Satan the name "Lucifer".]

But then Mr. Armstrong also went on to explain that the Earth and the rest of creation was "unfinished" when God sent a third of the angels to this Earth under Satan's leadership. On page 89 Mr. Armstrong wrote:

"So it is with God's creation. It is perfect, but subject to a beautifying finish that God intended angels to accomplish. THE ORIGINAL "UNFINISHED" CREATION WAS PRODUCED BY GOD ALONE. But he intended angels, prehistorically, and man, now, to utilize creative power -- to finish this part in God's creation -- of adding the final beautifying and utilitarian phases of what shall be the final completed creation!" (my emphasis)

Now consider Kings David and Solomon: God chose David and later Solomon. So in that sense God "placed them on the throne" over the kingdom of Israel. But God did NOT build the literal thrones these two kings sat on. The actual physical chairs (a throne is an elaborate chair, that's all!) these kings sat on they themselves were responsible for building.

Likewise, when God sent Satan to this "unfinished" Earth, He did NOT provide the actual throne, which was composed of physical matter, like gold and jewels, for Satan to sit on. It is not logical to claim, on the one hand, that God presented this Earth to Satan in an unfinished form with the specific responsibility to put the finishing touches of creation to this Earth; and then on the other hand to claim that God provided a perfectly finished throne of incredible beauty for Satan.

It seems much more likely to me that Ezekiel 28:13 is a factual description of the way Satan himself produced a throne for himself, and the way he embellished his own environment. God had given him a position ... but Satan himself created the physical environment to signify that position. God gave Satan a position; but whether God actually also WANTED him to have "A THRONE" from which to exercise that position is another matter. Yes, Satan did end up having "a throne", as Isaiah 14:13 makes very clear. But did Satan's position actually warrant "a throne"? After all, he was NOT sent to this Earth to be "A

KING"! Rather, the Scriptures show that Satan WANTED TO BE "a king".

His commission and his mandate was to prepare this planet for human habitation by creating suitable flora and fauna. Had they done this job correctly, Satan and the demons would have qualified to become the "guardian angels", who would watch over and help physical human beings to attain unto salvation. As it turned out, Satan instead created the world of the dinosaurs ... the most inhospitable environment he could possibly have put together for the frail and mortal human beings God would create in the next phase of His plan. There was no way God could use the world Satan had ruled over to achieve His (God's) purpose.

Question: WHY should God have given Satan a throne? Does the archangel Michael have a throne? If he does, this is not indicated in the Bible. So if Michael does not have a throne, WHY should Satan have had one at God's initiative?

I think it is far more likely that, as things progressed under Satan's rule over this Earth, he himself decided that he WANTED and NEEDED a throne ... because he was competing with God! And once he HAD established a throne for himself in the most splendid environment he could conceive of, THEN he figured that he really should sit on GOD'S throne. This we see in Isaiah 14:13.

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I WILL EXALT MY THRONE ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: (Isaiah 14:13)

And in the next verse ...

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH. (Isaiah 14:14)

A verse that is sometimes misunderstood and thus misapplied is found in Ezekiel 28:14 ...

THOU [ART] THE ANOINTED CHERUB THAT COVERETH; AND I HAVE SET THEE [SO]: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezekiel 28:14)

This verse does NOT say that God had set Satan upon a throne on this Earth, though people sometimes read this meaning into this verse. The only thing this verse tells us is that, prior to his appointment to lead the one third of the angels who would come to this Earth, Satan had been "set by God" to be one of the cherubim that cover the very throne of God with their wings. Satan had spent considerable time in the immediate close presence of God the Father, expressed here as "having walked in the midst of the stones of fire".

From our perspective of history it doesn't really make a difference whether God Himself prepared a throne for Satan to sit on, or whether Satan simply established a throne for himself, feeling that this was appropriate for his position as the leader here on Earth. The fact is that at some time thereafter Satan attempted to take over God's throne and in this he was defeated.

What is important is that Satan had "invented" something. He had invented SELFISHNESS. He invented what Mr. Armstrong used to call "the GET way of life"! And it was inevitable that Satan would also persuade humanity to accept his "GET way".

Now, once you have the GET philosophy of life, that it is better to get than it is to give, THEN the need for money arises!

WHY MONEY IS NEEDED

While it is not impossible, it is nevertheless EXTREMELY DIFFICULT to practice the get-way of life without a medium like "money".

Let's define what we mean by "money".

Money is something that is accepted as a medium of exchange. Money is needed in order to attach a value to any possession or service. Money is a means of payment for goods or services.

Without money all of our civilizations today would grind to a halt. When the value of money is suddenly questioned (perhaps in a great depression?), then this triggers national and even global crises. Money really does "make the world go 'round" ... it is the life-blood of all economies.

BUT GOD DID NOT INVENT MONEY!

Money is a concept Satan inspired human beings to conceive of. It is one of the most effective means for expressing selfishness. It is also a very powerful tool for enslaving ALL people, by creating an environment where all people absolutely DEPEND on having money available in order to live.

CONSIDER A WORLD WITHOUT MONEY

What would our world be like if there was no such thing as "money" anywhere? What if there was no "accepted medium of exchange" anywhere? What would our societies look like?

How would we determine the value of ANYTHING? How would you decide that a painting by Picasso or by Vincent van Gogh is worth more than a picture painted by your neighbour? How would you decide that a Cadillac or a Mercedes Benz car is worth so much more than a Volkswagen Beetle? How would you persuade anyone to work for you as your employee? How would you get anything for singing a song or for entertaining other people? How would you get anything for playing sport, which other people would enjoy watching? What would you get if other people come to visit your country as tourists? What motive would you have for making movies and videos? What would you get from the people who want the drugs you could peddle to them? If you have a very fine home, why would you ever want to persuade someone else to "take it over" from you (i.e. sell it to them)? What would you get for writing endless fiction stories? Why would you want to establish a factory that just churns out an endless stream of "widgets" ... shirts, watches, calculators, cigarettes, junk foods, radios, jewelry, furniture, musical instruments, alcoholic drinks, briefcases, carpets, toys, trinkets, etc., etc.? If you couldn't actually get any "money" for any of these things, WHY would you produce them?

The overwhelmingly greatest number of the things that are stolen, are stolen for their monetary value and not because the thief wants to consume or to use the things he has stolen. He is hoping to convert the stolen goods into money.

If there was no such thing as money, why would anyone ever want to steal things for which he himself actually does not have a use? If gold and jewels had no monetary value, why would pirates ever have wanted to rob other ships of their cargo? If houses had no monetary value, why would you ever want to acquire a house in an area where you yourself really don't want to live? If there was no money, why would you possibly want to own a huge apartment building? If there was no such thing as money, there would be no banks and no stock exchanges and no insurance companies. If there was no agreed

medium of exchange, then people would never be tempted to steal anything other than possibly something they themselves would want to have or to use. Why would farmers possibly specialize in producing huge quantities of "cash crops", when there is no such thing as "cash"?

Without any medium for attaching a value to services rendered, why would you offer your services as a lawyer or as a consultant or as an agent of any kind? What motivation would you have for organizing a world tour of rock concerts for some well-known band? Why would you concentrate all your energies into extracting minute quantities of gold from the rocks that lie over two miles below the surface of the ground (as is the case here in Johannesburg, South Africa) when gold actually does not have any monetary value? Why would you risk your life and your health in ANY mining activity? If there was no money, why would you possibly want to work in any office anywhere on Earth? If you couldn't in any way get money for it, why would you want to produce a daily newspaper or a weekly magazine or a daily TV program? If there was no medium of exchange, would you REALLY want to become a doctor or a dentist or an archaeologist?

If your cattle had no monetary value, why would you possibly want to own hundreds of cattle ... when it takes your family a whole year to eat the meat from one single slaughtered animal? If you didn't get money for the milk, why would you possibly want to own 100 dairy cows, which require daily milking? Why would you possibly want large numbers of any domestic animal, if they had no monetary value? Why would you possibly want to grow twenty tons of wheat or maize, when your own family could only consume a fraction of one single ton in the course of a year? Why would you want to own a vast fruit orchard with hundreds of trees, if the fruits had no monetary value?

Why would you possibly want to go out on a huge fishing trawler, for many weeks at a time, if you couldn't get any money for the fish you catch? Would you really have the time to stalk famous people in the hope of getting photographs or film-footage that exposes their private lives, if you couldn't get any money for your photos or for your gossip stories?

Why would you possibly want to produce junkfoods, with carcinogenic colouring and artificial flavours and preservatives to enhance the shelf-life of the product and with hundreds of other additives which are detrimental to human health ... if you couldn't get any money for these junkfoods? Why would a farmer possibly use fungicides and pesticides and herbicides, if all he could do with his produce is give it away because there is no such thing as money?

Why would the large fashion houses possibly want to come up with constantly new fashions and trends in dress and in personal grooming if money didn't exist? How would people possibly gamble on the horse races or on any other form of competition if there wasn't any kind of accepted medium of exchange in existence? How many athletes and sportsmen would really devote their lives to their particular sports discipline, if nobody would ever pay to come and watch them and if they themselves would never be paid for performing?

What motive would anyone have for trying to establish vast shopping centres, if money didn't exist? What incentive would anyone have for importing goods from the other side of the world, if he could not get any money for them? Why would anyone possibly want to collect gold coins or antique silver or antique furniture or "antique-anything", if none of those things had a monetary value? Why would you need locks and safes and bank vaults if nothing anybody owns has a monetary value?

Why would you establish huge industries, if you cannot get money for the things you produce? If there is no medium of exchange in existence with which to entice people to work for you as your servants or employees, why would you want a huge house and a large estate, the upkeep of which requires hundreds of man-hours every week? How many prostitutes would stop their activities if money did not exist? How would human governments charge taxes if there was no such thing as money? What would

drive people to become workaholics, to live for their jobs, if they never received any pay? Who would ever accept a job transfer to an area where he really has no desire to live, if he was not going to be paid money for accepting the transfer?

Who would ever accept and put up with abusive language from an employer, if the employer was not also paying him money to stay in the job? Who would ever be willing to work long shifts at some conveyor-belt, if there was no money paid for such work? Who would ever be willing to work night-shift in any number of occupations, if he was not going to be paid for such work? How much less flattery would people express, if there was no financial advantage in uttering the flattery? How many more people could you trust not to be saying things from an ulterior motive, if there was no such thing as money? How many people would fight over inheritances, if nothing at all had a monetary value?

How many people would hunt rare animals to the point of extinction, if the fur or the tusks or the skin of these animals had no monetary value? Who would make the effort to produce anything artificial which imitates things that occur naturally, if he did not receive money for doing so?

YES, WHAT WOULD THIS WORLD REALLY BE LIKE IF MONEY DID NOT EXIST?

Money is the most dominant global incentive for the actions of human beings. Money is so inextricably tied to our very existence, that we almost think of it as just as essential to our existence as air and water! How could we possibly do without some form of money? Why, without money we'd be back in the stone-age, living in caves ... is the way some people might view this subject.

And it all goes back to the being who, long before the creation of man, invented the concept of trading ... and that is Satan! God has never ever "traded" with anyone. And God never ever WILL "trade"! Trading is contrary to the nature of God! Let's take a look at what the Bible tells us about "trading".

THE ORIGIN OF "MERCHANDISE"

In the Book of Ezekiel, chapters 26 - 28 form one section that ties together. To illustrate this: in Ezek. 26:2 God proceeds to pronounce a judgment against Tyre. This theme continues into the next chapter, where in Ezek. 27:2 Ezekiel is instructed to take up "a lamentation" for Tyre. This still continues into the next chapter. In Ezek. 28:2 God addresses "the prince of Tyre", a human being who is influenced by Satan. Then in Ezek. 28:12 God proceeds to address "THE KING of Tyre", and the next few verses refer to Satan himself. Satan is very clearly identified in verse 14 as "the anointed cherub that covered". Only in verse 20 of this chapter is there a slight switch in subject matter ... with a message addressed to "Zidon".

So understand that the passage of Ezekiel 26:1 - 28:19 should be treated as one unified section. Chapters 26 and 27 focus on THE ECONOMIC POWER through which Satan works at the time of the end (this is prophecy, remember). Then the first part of chapter 28 speaks about the religious leader through whom Satan will do his work. And the second part of chapter 28 identifies the real power behind both, the economic and the religious system that has been addressed. That real power is Satan.

So here is something to keep in mind: THE INSPIRATION for the things that are revealed in chapters 26 and 27 is very clearly Satan! This should be apparent even though Satan is not identified for us until the second part of chapter 28.

Next: chapters 26 and 27 are not merely an acknowledgement of circumstances that will prevail at the end. These chapters are in fact A CONDEMNATION OF THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF "TYRE"! They are an indictment against Tyre! In this section "Tyre" is used to represent the economically unified

Europe at the end time.

Now to some statistics.

The word "merchandise" appears in the text of the KJV of the Old Testament 17 times in 14 different verses. Over half of those occurrences are in Ezekiel chapters 26 - 28.

A number of different Hebrew words, including some verbs, are translated into English as "merchandise". Some of those words are used only in these three chapters of the Book of Ezekiel. Let's look at one of these words more closely.

The Hebrew word "rekullah" is used only four times in the whole Old Testament, once in Ezekiel 26:12 (where it is translated as "merchandise") and three times in chapter 28. In chapter 28 it is translated as "merchandise" in verse 16 and as "traffick" in verses 5 and 18. This word is the passive participle of the verb "rakal", which literally means "to go about" and is usually taken to mean "a merchant" ... a merchant being someone who goes about with the goods he wants to trade with.

Let's now look more closely at the verses in which this word is used.

THE HEBREW WORD "REKULLAH"

The four references in which this word is used refer once to "Tyre" (i.e. the unified economic superpower of Europe), once to the false religious leader (i.e. the false prophet) and twice to Satan himself.

Remember that this word refers to getting riches by "going about" and trading with the motive of making a profit. In the following verses I have rendered the English translation of this word into capital letters for easier recognition.

And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of THY MERCHANDISE: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. (Ezekiel 26:12)

This is a reference to when "Tyre" was historically destroyed, which is a type of what will happen to Europe during the second woe (or the sixth trumpet of Revelation chapter 9).

By thy great wisdom [and] BY THY TRAFFICK hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: (Ezekiel 28:5)

This is a reference to the false prophet who would like to sit in the seat of God (verse 2). Notice: this verse is an expression of disapproval from God!! Here the word is translated as "traffick". By a very selfish way of dealing this individual has become rich. Through his merchandise, by going about and trading, he has accumulated very great wealth. And this great wealth has resulted in a great deal of pride and vanity and arrogance ... actually a very common consequence of becoming wealthy, though this is obviously not always the case.

His "great wisdom" is very "earthly" (see James 3:15) and carnal. It has not been used to enhance the lives of other people, but only to increase his own wealth.

By the multitude of THY MERCHANDISE they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and

thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezekiel 28:16)

This verse is speaking about Satan at a time before the creation of Adam and Eve. It refers to the time when God had sent Satan to this Earth to prepare it for human habitation, which was just after Satan had been employed as "the anointed cherub that covers" (verse 14).

Notice that God here refers to "THE MULTITUDE" of Satan's "going about" and trading in order to increase wealth for himself. Satan got into trading for profit in a big way! But notice something else. That trading, which Satan had invented, also CAUSED "VIOLENCE"! In fact, it caused a great deal of violence. And believe it or not, trading will ALWAYS, somehow, in some way, produce violence, even if it is only through a third party!

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS VERY CLEARLY!

This verse reveals to us THE ORIGIN of violence! There never was any violence until Satan invented trading or bartering. Trading focuses our minds on what we would like to GET! This verse reveals the origin of a spirit of competition, because that is what trading really is ... it is a way of competing.

Trading focuses our minds on what we WANT TO GET! It is selfish. We are not prepared to "trade" something we have (be it money or be it goods) for something we have no interest in, even if it is more valuable than what we ourselves happen to have. Similarly, for the things we really want to GET through trading (again, be it money or be it goods), we face the question: how much of what I have do I have to give for the thing I want to get? Can I get more for my money somewhere else? Can I get more money somewhere else for what I want to trade off? What value do I attach to the things I want others to buy from me? If I buy this item over here, can I sell it for MORE money somewhere else? After all, I also need to make a profit out of this deal.

The whole concept of trading is totally and completely and diametrically opposed to God and God's nature. By very definition, trading is INHERENTLY selfish!

Now once you have the concept of "trading", then there will always be those (like Satan) who want something for nothing; and they are prepared to cheat or to steal or to use deception in order to get what someone else already has. Those are the people who have taken the next step, which will inevitably follow the concept of trading and the existence of a medium of exchange.

That "next step" is coveting and lusting!

Let's now look at the last verse where this Hebrew word is used.

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of THY TRAFFICK; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. (Ezekiel 28:18)

This verse is still speaking about Satan's activities prior to the creation of man. There has been no change in subject in the previous verse (which also speaks about Satan). What has made it difficult for some people to understand this verse is that it mentions "IT SHALL DEVOUR YOU" and "I WILL BRING YOU TO ASHES UPON THE EARTH". Since we understand that Satan will not be "killed" by God, therefore we have tended to want to apply this verse to some human being, claiming a sudden switch of subject in the middle of this sentence.

Let's first look at what this verse tells us about Satan, and then we can look at these "difficult" phrases.

This verse tells us that Satan defiled "his sanctuary" through two specific things. These two things are:

- 1) the multitude of his iniquities;
- 2) the iniquity of his "traffick" (i.e. his trading).

Next, "the sanctuary" refers to a place which has been "set apart to be holy"; i.e. a place which has been set apart for use by God Himself, since it is the presence of God that makes any location "holy". "The sanctuary" is the subject of this verse 18. But what is this speaking about? What is God actually telling us?

"The sanctuary" in this verse refers to THIS PLANET EARTH! That was the place to which Satan had been sent, which he was to prepare for human habitation and which Satan knew God intended to LATER make His very own headquarters for the entire universe! In Jude 6 this Earth is referred to as "their first estate" and as "their own habitation", which Satan and the demons did not really take care of as God had instructed them to do.

So back to Ezekiel 28:18 and the word "rekullah".

Having already told us in verse 16 that Satan's invention of the "get-way" of life, by inventing trading, produced violence and sins, and that it lead to a "CORRUPTION" of wisdom (see verse 17), God in this verse tells us that Satan DEFILED THIS EARTH by the multitude of his sins. Satan did not just commit one single little sin! He committed A MULTITUDE of sins! And this multitude of sins is identified in the next expression God inspired. This multitude of sins consisted of "the iniquity of your traffick", which means in plain English "THE SINS OF YOUR TRADING"! Or, if you prefer, "THE LAWLESSNESS OF YOUR TRADING"!

Trading, ANY form of trading, in ANY manner, goes against the eternal spiritual law of God, to love God above all else and to love neighbour equal to love of self. The eternal law of God is "GIVE", but trading in any shape or form is "GET"! It focuses on "getting" and it is based on a "get-attitude". And, when done by spirit beings, then trading is lawlessness and it is sin! God will never trade!

By inventing trading, Satan invented money, the concept of attaching a value to any goods or services, and establishing an accepted medium of exchange to express these values on some kind of scale (i.e. this item is worth one dollar and that item is worth one hundred dollars, and my services are worth so many dollars per hour or per day, etc.). This whole concept contains a fatal flaw from God's perspective.

ATTACHING A VALUE TO ANYTHING

This may be difficult for many people to understand, because we have lived all our lives in a state of being so thoroughly deceived by Satan, who as the god of this present world has thoroughly deceived ALL of mankind. But the thing we need to understand is this:

**ABSOLUTELY NOTHING AT ALL THAT WE COULD EVER "TRADE WITH" HAS ANY
INHERENT VALUE!**

Gold, silver, jewels, real estate, houses, clothing, food stuffs, trees, mountains, cars, modern appliances, the services of other people in the form of labour or advice and counsel, etc., ABSOLUTELY NOTHING REALLY HAS ANY INHERENT VALUE! It all depends on the values which we are prepared to

ARTIFICIALLY attach to these things!

It is BECAUSE a commodity is rare that we attach a greater value to it. And it is BECAUSE something else is very common and abundantly available that we attach a lesser value to it. We talk about "supply and demand" determining the value any item will have. But that is utterly meaningless with God.

Now trading (buying and selling) depends on us being prepared to part with something we have (be it something that is rare, like a great deal of wealth, or be it something that is abundantly available, like small amounts of money or like a very common vegetable) in order to obtain for self something we want to have (more money or certain possessions, etc.). Trading means that we try to get the most for what we are prepared to give.

But with God gold does not really inherently have a greater value than water; the services of a lawyer or a dentist don't really have a greater value than the services of a farmer. With God a motorcar is not really worth more than a shirt or a banana. God created all physical matter ... and He can create as much of it as He wants at any time He wants to do so! Different substances have different USES, yes! Each substance has its own place, but that does not affect THE VALUE which these substances have to God.

Before God NOTHING that is physical has a greater "VALUE" than anything else that is physical. In order to practice the "get-way of life" WE HUMAN BEINGS have decided to attach a value to everything physical. And so WE have decided that "this small gold coin" I have in my possession should be worth "a very large quantity of your farm produce". This is in spite of the fact the large quantity of produce could feed a family for some time, but the small gold coin has no other use ... other than that you can look at it. If the coin is very old or very rare, then we want to attach an even greater value to it, but you still can only look at it. And all the values we attach to things are TOTALLY ARBITRARY and TOTALLY ARTIFICIAL!

Consider this: if there was no such thing as ANY "medium of exchange" (i.e. money), how could anybody possibly be RICH? It would be impossible to be rich without the concept of money! If you have 1000 head of cattle and all you could do is eat one or two of them in the course of one year, but it was impossible to "GET" anything for any of them, then how could you possibly be "rich"? Either you GIVE some of the cattle away while they are still in their prime, or they would get old and simply die on you. If you couldn't GET anything for them, then you really would not WANT any more cattle than you and your family possibly had a use for. Any additional cattle would only be a burden to you.

Similarly, why would anyone possibly want a huge fruit orchard with over 1000 trees, if the only thing you can do is either consume the fruit yourself or give it away to other people to consume? But you are never able to "GET" anything for the fruits your trees produce.

Here is something we should understand clearly:

By attaching an artificial value (i.e. a monetary value) to everything, Satan has persuaded mankind to accept A TOTALLY DIFFERENT MOTIVATION FOR LIVING AND FOR ACHIEVING AND FOR PRODUCING ANYTHING!

Mr. Armstrong used to explain that Satan conned mankind into accepting "the GET-way of life". And that "get-way" is tied very closely and firmly to the concept of money! Mr. Armstrong would then continue to explain that God really wants us to learn to live by "the GIVE-way of life". But that "give-way" is opposed to everything that the concept of money and the concept of trading stand for. There is no provision in the "give-way" for any form of "money" ... otherwise it would no longer be "give".

Understand this:

The things God created do not COMPETE with one another! Each item has its place, but one is NOT "more important" or "more valuable" than another. Can you understand this? For example, grapes are different from cabbages, but grapes are NOT "more valuable" than cabbages. Cattle are different from chickens, but beef is NOT "more valuable" than chicken. And kiwi fruits and mangoes are not "more valuable" than carrots or potatoes. God did not intend that the immense variety of foods He created for us human beings would compete for importance or for value in our eyes. Each has its proper place. And the incredible variety of foodstuffs God created for us is an expression of His concern and His outgoing nature.

Consider further: if gold had no value as a medium of exchange, if no one was ever prepared to GIVE you anything in return for the gold you would give them, what motivation would you have in accumulating gold? What if you owned 1000 gold coins and absolutely nobody on Earth was prepared to PAY you anything for even a single coin? What motivation would you have in striving to accumulate 1000 coins in the first place? You wouldn't really have any motivation at all, would you? I mean, while you spend years of your life accumulating those 1000 coins, others all around you are really enjoying being alive and enjoying the activities they are able to engage in ... but you are busy working at building up your collection of 1000 pieces of gold. And once you have it, the whole world around you says: "Oh that's fine. But we have a collection of 1000 pebbles from the beach and hey, they also look quite neat. But it only took us two days to collect them."

Attaching a value to physical things, any value, changes the motivation according to which people live their lives. And the people who live by that changed motivation are really in slavery, even if they don't know it themselves. And when Jesus Christ returns, He is going to set humanity free from this slavery.

If you are relatively well off, you may even like the slavery you are in ... it seems to serve you well and you don't have the foggiest idea what life outside of the slavery, in which you have been enslaved all your life, is really like. From our perspective it might seem unbelievable that the people of Israel actually wanted to go back into Egypt at one stage (see Numbers 14:4), the land where they had been in slavery. Yet we today are probably not unlike the people back then ... we don't really perceive the way all of humanity for the past 6000 years has been ENSLAVED by Satan's "get-philosophy". We have never even vaguely experienced what God's "give-philosophy" is REALLY like! To put it in vernacular terms, when Christ returns and REALLY establishes the government of God and God's way of life, it will "blow our minds"! We will be given opportunities to see how God lives and what God REALLY means by saying that the greatest one is the one who serves the most. There is absolutely no room anywhere in God's way of life for things like: "If I give this much money to you, HOW MUCH will I get from you?" and "If I do this for you, what will you do in return for me?" and "You still owe me a certain amount of money or goods to the value of ...!"

Can you understand the problems we create for ourselves when we attach monetary values to physical things?

But let's get back to Ezekiel 28:18 and "the difficult phrases".

EZEKIEL 28:18 EXAMINED

Let's notice this verse again.

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to

ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. (Ezekiel 28:18)

We have examined what this verse tells us about Satan ... that he filled this Earth with a multitude of sins through the selfish system of trading that he invented. Now let's look at the other phrases in this verse.

God says: "therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of you". Now exactly WHO does the word "YOU" in this verse refer to? Is God trying to tell us that he will start a fire "in the midst of the being we know as Satan"? NO! So who is meant by "you" in this verse?

The answer should be very obvious. But let's go one step further. WHY does God start a fire? Do you understand?

The purpose of the fire is TO CLEANSE SOMETHING! The thing that needs to be cleansed is the thing that has been "DEFILED"! And what was defiled by Satan's actions is "THE SANCTUARY", meaning THIS PLANET EARTH! There is always a purpose for fire with God. Fire is NEVER something God sends "just to vent his anger on some sinner".

So the expression "from the midst of you" refers to "from the midst of the Earth"! And the expression "it shall devour you" refers to THE SURFACE OF THIS EARTH, which will indeed be devoured by the lake of fire. The expression "I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you" refers to the surface of this planet being turned to ashes and at the same time all the wicked are burnt to ashes as well and they will be trodden down by the righteous who will behold them. This refers to exactly the same event as does Malachi 4:1,3.

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (Malachi 4:1)

And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do [this], saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 4:3)

So understand this:

The sins of Satan have defiled this Earth. Therefore it is this Earth which needs to be cleansed by fire. That fire will start "from the midst of this Earth". That is the only way to truly cleanse this planet of EVERY POSSIBLE CONTAMINATION!

The centre of this Earth is a fire. There the elements are in a molten state ... and every now and then a small quantity of that molten fiery liquid (we call it 'lava') is spewed out of some volcano.

What Ezekiel 28:18 tells us is that the lake of fire will start from the inside of this Earth and go outwards! The entire crust of this earth will be burnt up! This entire planet will then be in a totally molten state. And starting with that state of this Earth being like a miniature sun, totally liquid and totally fiery, God will then proceed to create "A NEW EARTH", not a patched-up and doctored old one, but "a NEW Earth".

AND I SAW a new heaven and A NEW EARTH: for the first heaven and THE FIRST EARTH were PASSED AWAY; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)

"A new Earth" is not the old one just patched up with a new veneer on it, or a new surface with a new coat of paint. It is going to be A NEW EARTH! Yes, it will be the same planet that God started with; but

first God turns this planet into a fiery inferno, where there will not be any solid matter that will survive, and THEN God recreates the surface of this Earth in such a way that it will truly be ideal for the eternal abode for the entire Family of God. As this verse very plainly tells us, "THE FIRST EARTH WILL HAVE PASSED AWAY"!

When the righteous, who will have been changed into spirit beings before this event, see this Earth and all the wicked become ashes under their feet, they will fully understand that this action will have removed for ever all of the multitude of Satan's sins and all of Satan's influence and all of Satan's ways. And, as the next verse shows, all the righteous will stand in awe of the way God will have for ever removed every vestige of Satan's influence (see Ezekiel 28:19). Never again will Satan in any way exert any influence on anybody!

Now let's look at Ezekiel chapter 27 and notice the references to "merchandise" and to "merchants".

EZEKIEL CHAPTER 27

Notice the subject of this chapter, as expressed in verse 2.

Now, thou son of man, TAKE UP A LAMENTATION FOR TYRUS; (Ezekiel 27:2)

The expression "take up a lamentation for ..." means that A PUNISHMENT FOR THAT NATION is about to be pronounced or revealed. So this whole chapter is about the punishment of Tyre.

Now what is it that we are told about Tyre in this chapter? What is the emphasis? The total emphasis of this chapter is on TRADING! In 19 of the 36 verses in this chapter we find a word for "merchandise" or for "merchant". In this regard, three of the five different Hebrew words that are involved here are used only in this chapter and nowhere else in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew word "ma'arab" is used exactly nine times in the whole Old Testament, and all of those nine occurrences are in Ezekiel chapter 27. In five instances this word is translated as "merchandise" (in verses 9, 27, 27, 33, 34) and the other four times it is translated as "market" (in verses 13, 17, 19, 25). This word is a noun and refers to "articles of merchandise which are interchanged or bartered" (Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament).

The word "cechorah" is used only once in the Old Testament, here in verse 15, where it is translated as "merchandise". Similarly, the word "markoleth" is also only used once, here in verse 24, where it is also translated as "merchandise".

Then there are two verbs, which are translated into English as "merchants". They are the verb "rakal" (referred to earlier and which means "to go about") and the verb "cachar" (which means "to go round", very similar in meaning to "rakal").

Now, while none of these Hebrew words are particularly important for us, what we should take note of is the detailed focus on this economic system of Tyre which is built on MONEY! The emphasis on "trading" is very specific ... both by the frequent references to merchants and merchandise, and also by introducing three Hebrew words into this chapter, which are not used anywhere else. All three of these words (ma'arab, cechorah & markoleth) refer to "merchandise".

Keep in mind also that chapter 27 is the introduction for what we are told in chapter 28. So when we read in Ezekiel 28:16 that Satan invented "merchandising" or "trading", and that this produced a great deal of violence, then God expects us to remember that we have just had a very thorough discussion about

"merchandise" and "merchants" in the previous chapter. Put another way: in chapter 27 we have a discussion of a mighty economic power which is built on the concept of trading (i.e. buying and selling), and in chapter 28 this is followed by the revelation that Satan invented this concept of "trading" even before the creation of Adam and Eve. So the "trading" in chapter 27 represents an expression of Satan's philosophy, or his way of life. The two chapters must be seen as one context, linked together by a common focus on "Tyre".

So we have seen that Satan invented the "get-way of life" and then, in order to effectively give it an outlet amongst human beings, Satan inspired the concept of "money". After all, he is the god of this present world; and he does exert a considerable amount of influence on the lives of all human beings. It was Satan's intent to use money as a way of enslaving all of mankind to his way of thinking.

But let's now look at God's way of life, the way that Jesus Christ will establish after His return.

GOD'S WAY OF LIFE AND "MONEY"

When Christ returns, He will teach all of humanity "the truth". And it is the truth that will make true freedom possible.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

Now consider this:

ABSOLUTE AND COMPLETE FREEDOM IS IMPOSSIBLE AS LONG AS THE CONCEPT OF "MONEY" EXISTS!

Consider some basic teaching which Christ gave early in His ministry. Let's take a look at a section of Matthew chapter 6.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON. (Matthew 6:24)

The word "mammon" is a translation of the Greek word "mamonas", which in turn comes from a common Aramaic word that was in use in Palestine and which means "riches". So Jesus Christ was speaking about wealth that is measured in terms of "money". By "mammon" He meant "money" and "financial security". Now notice the next verse.

THEREFORE I SAY UNTO YOU, TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR YOUR LIFE, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; NOR YET FOR YOUR BODY, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Matthew 6:25)

The expression "take no thought" is translated from the Greek expression "me merimnate". The negative "me" expresses a QUALIFIED negation, as opposed to the particle "ou(k)" which is used to express an absolute denial. The verb "merimnao" is derived from the noun "merimna" which means literally "to be drawn in different directions" (Thayer's Lexicon), and which is usually translated as "anxiety" or "care".

So while Christ is not saying that we are not to think about our lives at all, He is saying: "DON'T WORRY

about your physical needs". But that is exactly what Satan pressures us to do ... to worry about having enough money to pay for everything we want to have. When we "worry", we are "drawn away in a different direction from focusing on God".

Notice Christ's next statement.

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. ARE YE NOT MUCH BETTER THAN THEY? (Matthew 6:26)

God provides for His creation. And if we are serving God instead of serving "money", then God will also see to it that our physical needs will be taken care of. But "serving God" certainly does not mean that we do not also work in order to generate an income to take care of our needs. Rather, when our first priority is to seek God, and we demonstrate this to God by the way we live, THEN God will also provide the opportunities for us to work in order to generate an adequate income. And in the process God will add undeserved blessings for those who are truly seeking Him first.

After giving another illustration about how God takes care of His creation, Jesus Christ then summed up as follows:

THEREFORE TAKE NO THOUGHT, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (Matthew 6:31)

Again, the expression "take no thought" means "DON'T WORRY ABOUT" the things you need for this physical life ... food and clothing and housing. Don't allow Satan to use these physical needs to draw YOU away from what should be the first priority in our lives, because that is precisely what Satan has used to draw all nations away from God, as is explained in the next verse.

(FOR AFTER ALL THESE THINGS DO THE GENTILES SEEK:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. (Matthew 6:32)

God most assuredly knows what our daily needs are.

But seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU. (Matthew 6:33)

And if we really put God and His instructions first, then God will provide for our needs. But the more we worry about these physical needs, the more Satan is able to draw us away from God.

TAKE THEREFORE NO THOUGHT for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day [is] the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

This verse is a very powerful statement by Jesus Christ!

It is the last phrase in this verse which reveals what the subject matter that is being discussed really is. That subject matter is "THE EVIL" that may unexpectedly confront us.

In other words, Jesus Christ was here speaking about THE PROBLEMS that tomorrow may bring. Yes,

there will no doubt be problems we will have to face. But don't worry about them. Just concentrate on coping with today's tests and challenges and problems. In faith look to God to help you cope one day at a time. Worrying about the future is a very unprofitable exercise ... at least 90% of the worries we conjure up in our minds never come to pass; yet we may have spent many hours worrying about them.

And in some way, somehow, MONEY features prominently in a great many of those needless worries.

GOD'S WAY OF LIFE:

1) FOR THIS PRESENT AGE money should only play a minor and secondary role. It is God who sends His rain on the just and on the unjust alike. And it is God who gives the increase to the efforts we put out. As Solomon pointed out in the Book of Proverbs:

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and [there is] that withholdeth more than is meet, but [it tendeth] to poverty. (Proverbs 11:24)

This is the factor in the equation that those who worry about their physical needs overlook or are unaware of. Sometimes it may seem that things can't really work out for people who put God first, and who have a generous disposition, that their income is just not going to be large enough to cover all their needs ... but somehow it just DOES work out. Then there are those who have made the acquisition of money their goal, who never give away more than they absolutely have to give ... but they are still not any better off. A spirit of generosity is something God will bless, because that is the way God Himself is ... generous!

2) FROM CHRIST'S SECOND COMING ONWARDS money will not play a role at all. There will not be a "Central Reserve Bank" anywhere ... not in Jerusalem or in London or in New York or in Tokyo or anywhere else. That will be the time when God will provide for the needs of those who obey Him without any money being involved.

When Christ returns, He will redeem people "without money". Notice ...

For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; AND YE SHALL BE REDEEMED WITHOUT MONEY. (Isaiah 52:3)

It will be the time when God will freely pour out His blessings on this Earth.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, AND HE THAT HATH NO MONEY; COME YE, BUY, AND EAT; YEA, COME, BUY WINE AND MILK WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE. (Isaiah 55:1)

God is here expressing this in terms we can identify with. So the word "BUY" is used to emphasize that this will in fact not be "buying" at all! No money in any form will be involved! God is speaking about freely GIVING people things ... and not only the necessities, like water and milk, but also luxuries like wine.

This will be the time when the blessings God will pour out will be on an unbelievable and mind-boggling scale! Crops and fruits will be produced in such vast quantities, that people will not finish reaping one crop before the next one is already there. That is what will happen when God totally removes the curses He put on the ground as a result of man's sins. The first curse was put on the ground after Adam and Eve had sinned (Genesis 3:17-19) and the next curse was put on the ground after Cain had killed Abel

(Genesis 4:12). Even though mankind continued to sin, God said in the days of Noah that He would not continue to compound these curses on the ground (Genesis 8:21).

We try to get around those curses God put on the ground by using chemical fertilizers and herbicides and pesticides and fungicides, etc.. But when God removes those curses, then the crops produced will be absolutely staggering.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER, AND THE TREADER OF GRAPES HIM THAT SOWETH SEED; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. (Amos 9:13)

This is not speaking about one single bumper crop; this will be an ongoing experience throughout the entire time Jesus Christ in person will rule over this Earth. When everyone is able to reap such bumper crops year after year, there would not be any demand for "BUYING" such produce ... everybody will have more than they could possibly need. Malachi 3:10 will certainly be true during Christ's rule ... people simply will not have enough storage places to store the blessings God will pour out. So what better use could people find for the blessings they are not able to even store adequately than to GIVE them away?

And besides, people will certainly abide by Jesus Christ's instructions ...

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE. (Matthew 10:8)

That's the way God is ... God gives FREELY! And during the millennium people will be taught to think like God thinks. People will be taught God's value system. It will be a time for preparing people to join the Family of God. And those who will freely receive such staggering crops and harvests will certainly also FREELY share them with other people.

Think about this for a while: if people do become sick during the millennium, then they will FREELY receive healing. There will not be any medical bills to pay. Does it then make sense to say: "Yes, healing is free of charge, but if you want some potatoes, then you will have to pay for them"?

During the millennium God wants all people to learn to FREELY GIVE ... and God doesn't mean a lump of metal (i.e. coins) or a piece of paper that has been printed in the most intricate way to avoid unauthorized duplication (i.e. paper money) or a piece of paper to which we have put our signature (i.e. a bank cheque), because NONE OF THOSE ITEMS HAVE ANY REAL VALUE! We all have to play a silly game of totally artificially and arbitrarily attaching a value to these things ... and as long as everyone else is willing to play along by the same rules, we can pretend that gold coins and bank notes and bank cheques do have some value.

But it is only a game! It is a game of "make believe".

We need to understand that Satan has used this totally artificial value system we call "money" to enslave all of mankind. Money instills in us the concept that we can use something we have already "GOT" in order "TO GET" something else that we do not yet have. This is of the utmost importance for us to understand. So let me repeat it:

MONEY INSTILLS INTO OUR MINDS THE IDEA THAT WE CAN USE SOMETHING WE

ALREADY HAVE IN OUR POSSESSION IN ORDER "TO GET" WHATEVER ELSE OUR SOUL MAY DESIRE (to paraphrase Deuteronomy 14:26)!

Money ASSUMES trading as an established fact of life. It assumes the right to turn whatever we may possess into something else that other people may possess. It assumes that other people, who may produce things we really would like to have as well, are going to be pressured to give them to us ... because we have money to pay for those things; and we assume that our money will be sufficient motivation for other people to give us what we really want to have.

But when Christ returns in power to rule this Earth, one of the first things people will do is throw their money away! Did you know that? Notice ...

Isaiah chapter 2 speaks about the time when Christ will establish the government of God over this Earth (verse 2). Just prior to Christ's return the land is ... "full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures" (verse 7). Verse 8 says ...

Their land also is FULL OF IDOLS; THEY WORSHIP THE WORK OF THEIR OWN HANDS, that which their own fingers have made: (Isaiah 2:8)

Yes, historically the people may very well have had little figures and icons out of gold and silver, which represented their gods. But even then it was basically a matter of money. You may recall the incident with "Demetrius the silversmith" who made a fortune out of making these icons ...

For a certain [man] named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that BY THIS CRAFT WE HAVE OUR WEALTH. (Acts 19:24-25)

For these silversmiths themselves their wealth was their idol, as Demetrius makes quite clear in this passage in Acts chapter 19. And in our day, just prior to Christ's second coming, the idols are in most cases not formed and shaped to look like Diana of the Ephesians; today in most cases in our "first world nations" money, pure and simple, is the idol of most people.

So let's get back to the account in Isaiah chapter 2. When Christ returns, He will abolish all idols.

And the idols he shall utterly abolish. (Isaiah 2:18)

At the second coming of Christ people will be so terrified, that they will try to hide wherever they possibly can.

And THEY SHALL GO INTO THE HOLES OF THE ROCKS, and into the caves of the earth, FOR FEAR OF THE LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. (Isaiah 2:19)

Now notice the next verse!

IN THAT DAY A MAN SHALL CAST HIS IDOLS OF SILVER, AND HIS IDOLS OF GOLD, WHICH THEY MADE [EACH ONE] FOR HIMSELF TO WORSHIP, TO THE MOLES AND TO

THE BATS; (Isaiah 2:20)

Let's face it: the main idol people at this time have is MONEY! And that is what "gold and silver" refers to ... to money. When Christ returns money will be worthless. The reason this prophecy predicts that people will throw their gold and silver (i.e. their money) away is because people will realize that their money is worthless! In the presence of Christ it will have no value at all. And those amongst these people who will then come to repentance will then be able to "buy without money" the things they need, as we saw in Isaiah 55:1. They will learn that when they "worked for money" they really "laboured for things which don't satisfy".

WHEREFORE DO YE SPEND money for [that which is] not bread? and YOUR LABOUR FOR [THAT WHICH] SATISFIETH NOT? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye [that which is] good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. (Isaiah 55:2)

So in God's way of life there is really no room for something like "money".

Well, if that is the case, how do you explain all the numerous references to money all the way through the Bible? The answer to this question takes us back to what we looked at right at the beginning of this paper ... "statutes that were not good and judgments whereby they should not live".

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO MONEY

When mankind had rejected God's way of life, which is "THE GIVE-WAY", then they were obviously going to live by "the get-way", Satan's way. God accepted that decision by man. Therefore God allowed man to regulate his entire system of human societies for the next 6000 years based on this "get-way of life". What God then did is "work with" this selfish system man had chosen. So God gave laws and instructions which "regulated" this selfish way of life; these instructions provided "parameters" as it were, within which man could function and operate and still have a certain measure of acceptance by God.

God laid down ground rules for how man could live within this "GET" way of life and still receive blessings from God. Those ground rules were built around the concept of "TITHING" and giving offerings. Notice what God did. God wants to wean mankind away from this totally selfish perception of "everything I have is MINE and is for ME to use for MY good as I see fit". The truth is that "NOTHING I have is mine; it ALL belongs to God who has FREELY given it to me to use not only to enhance my own life, but also to enhance the lives of OTHER people". And so God introduced into our way of living the concept: "Alright, I want you to learn to ALWAYS GIVE 10% of what you earn". In so doing God wants us to learn THE START of His "give-way of life".

Tithing is not the end; tithing is only a start. It is to teach us to habitually give, to train us to always automatically include giving somewhere in every picture. Giving is to become a part of our nature, not just giving to our own children or family or team or group, but giving to whoever may need our giving. Christ explained this same purpose this way ...

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. (Luke 14:13-14)

It is this attitude of generosity that the system of tithing and of giving offerings was to inculcate into people's minds.

Now the world as a whole has never really learned this attitude. The world as a whole is on Satan's wavelength. The world lives by the "get-way". It is first and foremost the attitude of GETTING, of making a profit, of acquiring wealth that drives forwards our economies, our industries, our inventions and our research. In our desire to get more, we destroy and pollute anything that stands in our way ... the air we breathe, the water we drink, the soil we grow our foods in, the natural vegetation, the indigenous animal life, the moral standards of a people and our own integrity. The discovery of gold and the resulting "gold rush" in various areas of the world vividly illustrated this desire to get more.

WE WANT TO GET MORE! AND WE WANT IT NOW!

Yes certainly, this is not true for all people. There are people who have risen above this selfish approach. There are people of honesty and integrity. But they have been far too few in number to avoid the huge penalties which the "get-way" has exacted from this planet! Our get-attitude has all but destroyed this planet; and unless God would intervene it would surely destroy all human life (see Matthew 24:22). The Apostle James pointed out that the "get-way" is responsible for all wars and fighting (see James 4:1-5).

So we should understand that, even though God has "worked with" the concept of money, it is not something which has any place in God's eternal scheme of things. It is like the Apostle Peter said to Simon Magus ...

But Peter said unto him, THY MONEY PERISH WITH THEE ... (Acts 8:20)

And that's what will happen to ALL MONEY at the second coming of Christ ... it will perish!

APPLICATIONS IN THIS PRESENT AGE

So what do we today do? Should we try to live without any money? Should we go back to a system of bartering?

No! We live in a society which is controlled by its "god" (see again 2 Cor. 4:4). We are a part of that society in many ways. And even as God "worked with" certain human ways, so we too have to "work with" money.

We need to realistically plan to provide for the needs of our families (see 1 Timothy 5:8). We should pay our bills and work to provide for our own needs. But it should never be our top priority in life. There is a balance in all of this. In this present age we are forced to deal with money, and we should do so wisely.

After first exhorting Christians to provide for the needs of their own families (1 Tim. 5:8), Paul went on in the next chapter to point out what the real problem with money is. There Paul wrote:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Timothy 6:6)

CONTENTMENT is the key! Are we really content ... or are we only planning to be content once we have all the things we are still hoping to GET? In the next two verses Paul explains a very simple philosophy, one that is diametrically opposed to our materialistically-minded societies today. It is ...

For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. (1 Timothy 6:7-8)

Isn't that a simple formula for contentment? For today add a third item to that list ... the matter of housing. So: "having housing, food and clothing let us be content therewith". But are we?

Yes, there are contented people around. But, as far as our societies at large are concerned, there are also very large numbers of discontented and competitive people. They may feel that they will be contented one day, when they will have acquired all the other things they feel they need ... a car, a second car, a fancier house, a swimming pool, TV's and CD players, large numbers of electrical appliances, computers, travel to foreign lands, additional special clothing, money for eating out in restaurants, money for entertainment, memberships at expensive clubs, a large bank account, etc.. THEN we will be content. But, as Mr. Armstrong used to also explain, there are very few really contented people in our western world. And money is a major contributor to this lack of contentment.

As Paul continued to point out in the next verse ...

But they that will be rich FALL INTO TEMPTATION AND A SNARE, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. (1 Timothy 6:9)

This is not a verse we really like to face all that much. Most of us will probably say: "Look, it is not that I am really desirous of becoming rich. It is just that I would like to have a bit more money just to cover all my NEEDS." And we overlook that what we consider "a normal average lifestyle with normal average needs like everyone else around us" would have represented extreme luxury for literally thousands of millions of people who have lived in the past.

This is not to point a finger in any way. And this also includes me. MY lifestyle is very average by western standards. But compared to the billions who have lived it is absolute luxury. Hundreds of kings of past ages have not had access to the things I have access to ... and you have access to. I can go down to the supermarket and buy foods that were produced on the other side of the world. I can take those foods home and keep them chilled in the fridge. Other foods I can buy and store in the deepfreeze. I can turn on a tap and have a hot shower. I can have a small swimming pool in the backyard. I can just get into the car and two hours later I can be 100 miles away, visiting friends or family. While travelling in the car, I can put on the heater if it is too cold or the air conditioner if it is too hot. On the radio I can listen to someone who is on the other side of the country, broadcasting a program. I can pick up the phone and talk to just about anybody else I want to ... anywhere on Earth. I have flown to different countries and the journey has taken only a few hours. Lest I feel any discomfort, during the flight I was served a meal or two and then entertained with a movie. I can use a small personal computer (i.e. a PC) to do more work in certain ways than 100 servants would have been able to do 100 or more years ago.

None of these things are in any way "a big deal" ... but they are way beyond what even kings and the richest men in society in past ages were able to experience. But for me none of these things have anything to do with "wanting to be rich" ... they are really more along the line of what I would think I "NEED" to be able to do and to have. It is easy for me to picture my "NEEDS" as being far greater than what Paul listed in verse 8 of this chapter; it is easy for me to replace Paul's criteria with a somewhat enlarged list of my own. But should I really be doing that??

Now let's look at the next verse.

FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:10)

The Greek text does not have the definite article with the word "root". So this verse should really read:

"For the love of money is a root of all evil". There are other roots as well; but the love of money is surely one of them.

Most times when I have heard people comment on this verse, it has been something of a cosmetic surgery job! It seems most times people want to be very clear about making a distinction between "money" and "THE LOVE OF money". Yes, it is true that there is a distinction. "Money" is a totally valueless piece of metal or piece of paper, which Satan has persuaded all of mankind to accept as something of value. "The love of money" refers to our own personal attitude towards this piece of paper. People then are very quick to try to point out that ...

"MONEY ITSELF is not the problem; there is only a problem if people have A WRONG ATTITUDE towards money".

But that statement is wrong!

The truth is that money itself also IS a problem! The whole concept of money is based on a selfish desire to get for self. Money stands in opposition to God's give-way of life. Money is something God has "tolerated" because man had chosen to live the get-way ... even as God "tolerated" bigamy and divorce; "but from the beginning it was not so"!

Next, the Greek word translated as "the love of money" is "philarguria", from the words "phileo" (to like very much) and "arguros" (silver). It is not the word which really means "love" (i.e. agape) that is used here, but the word "phileo".

There is also an adjective, which is formed from this word. This adjective is "philarguros", which is used twice in the New Testament (Luke 16:14; 2 Tim. 3:2) and is in both cases translated as "covetous" in the KJV. This word literally means "money-loving" or "money-liking".

So what Paul is saying in 1 Timothy 6:10 is this:

"Having a real liking for money is a root of all evil which ...".

I mentioned that most times I have heard people comment on this verse, it has been a cosmetic surgery job. Why did I say this? I made this statement because when we focus on this verse, we very often do two things:

- 1) we do our best to find money itself as very acceptable;
- 2) we do our utmost to convince ourselves that our own attitude to money is actually quite acceptable to God, that our attitude is right and certainly not a problem ... after all, we are tithing.

And in so doing we don't actually confront the question which this verse contains. That question is: "Yes, but tell me, do you really LIKE money or don't you?" Are we going to be honest?

The really honest answer would be:

"Well yes, actually I DO like money. I have no intentions of stealing from anyone; but if a large sum of money happens to come my way, then that will certainly make me happy. So yes, as a matter of fact, I really DO like money quite well."

Can we admit this to ourselves ... that we DO like money? Can we admit that therefore this verse contains a warning for us personally?

The tree of evil has many roots. A liking for money is a very prominent root. Other roots which this tree has are pride and lust and vanity. There are many other roots as well. All of those roots have a way of sending young and tender shoots out into our very lives. Yes, all of those roots are present in our lives. Like weeds in a bed of flowers, we need to identify them and then root them out. But even when we do so, we should be on the lookout for new weeds coming up next week in the same flowerbed. As long as we have this bed of flowers, it is a never-ending process to be constantly on the look-out for new weeds.

Liking money is a root of ALL evil that is present in my life and in yours. This is a fact we need to face. Recognizing this fact should help us to combat this tendency to want to have more and more money. If that little root is not kept under control and regularly weeded out, then it will grow into full-blown covetousness.

God can give us more physical possessions than we need for our lives; and in many cases God has done this for many of His servants over the past nearly 6000 years. Possibly you are one who has been blessed with far more than you need. I know I currently have far more than I need for my life. But when that is the case, we need to be vigilant and watch so that that little root of a liking for money never gets out of control and takes over our lives. As long as we are physical and live in this present dispensation, this particular root of all evil is an ever-present threat, just as much as are all the other roots of all evil. We are never beyond the influence of this root. The antidote to this particular root of evil is CONTENTMENT.

WHAT ABOUT "USURY"?

"Usury" refers to charging interest for money that is lent out. Sometimes it refers to excessive or exorbitant rates of interest.

This is one of the results of our "get-way of life". We want our wealth itself to generate MORE wealth for us ... without us ourselves having to work. That was Satan's original idea. The idea is to get something for nothing. (Before you get too upset, I also have some money in the Bank which is earning interest for me.)

The whole thing is motivated by a desire to get more for self. I'll give you something of mine for a limited period of time on the condition that you give it back to me with MORE than I gave to you. I also know that you want what I have (i.e. my money) because you feel you have a way of making STILL more if you had the use of my money; therefore you don't mind giving me a cut from your profits. So both of us, the lender and the borrower, are hoping to get more for self.

It should be obvious that in the sight of God charging interest is a wrong practice ... like bigamy and like divorce and like slavery. And like these other wrong ways of living, God "tolerates" this wrong practice for this present age, though "from the beginning" this was not God's intention. And we true Christians live in a world which is totally enveloped by this ungodly practice of charging interest. We can no more extricate ourselves from it than the man Jacob was able to extricate himself from his polygamous situation of having four wives and children by all of them (calling two of them 'concubines' instead of 'wives' is really only a matter of semantics in our present age). And so God acknowledged the reality of the situation and worked with the sons of all four of these women.

Likewise, we need to acknowledge the reality of our present economic situation, where charging interest is embedded in the very foundation of modern economics. And so we too, in most cases, need to "work with" this wrong practice. But in doing so we also need to watch our own attitudes, that greed does not

become our motivation. When we look for that "maximum return" on our investment, we are in danger of that root called "the liking of money" getting out of control. And it is a fact that many people, in search of that "maximum return on their investment" have also "pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (see 1 Timothy 6:10 again). Very often people have LOST the money they started with. It is the desire to get more that drives us on to take certain risks ... the prospect of huge profits makes such risks very enticing. Beware!

So, like God, be prepared to "work with" the system of interest. We are all subject to it in one way or another. And so yes, you too can invest money which will earn you some interest. BUT BEWARE OF THE ATTITUDE OF TRYING TO MAKE THE SYSTEM "WORK FOR YOU"! That would be like trying to make bigamy or divorce or slavery "work for you" ... trying to get the most you possibly can out of this wrong system. Every wrong system, even when God "tolerates" it for this present age, has automatic in-built penalties.

IN CONCLUSION:

We need to understand that God did not invent money. Money is an expression of selfishness, a desire to have wealth. In this present age God has tolerated and "worked with" this selfish practice. But when Jesus Christ returns to this Earth to establish God's way of life for all of humanity, then Christ will establish the ways that God truly intended for mankind "from the beginning". Christ will structure all human endeavour around God's GIVE-WAY of life. And there is no place for the concept of "money" in God's thinking. The people who live under Christ's rule will know they are being trained and instructed for living for ever in the presence of God and they will have to think like God thinks.

For this present age we all still have to "work with" money. Money has considerable influence on our lives ... that is precisely why Satan invented it. When we put it to a right use, it can assist us in the process of developing godly character. But we need to be ever vigilant that our liking for money never gets out of control, to the point where our judgment will be clouded and we do things which are in reality motivated by "a love for money".

I know this is a bit of a philosophical subject. I wasn't very keen to address this subject in the first place. But I received a few questions over a period of time, which I felt I really should address.

So ... do you also look forward to the time when all concepts of money will be totally obsolete?

Frank W. Nelte