

Lacking Nothing (Part 2)

Biblical Weights and Measures

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In my last sermon, I tried to show you that God warns that breaking His commandments, not walking in His ways, and not fearing Him bring about scarcity and famine, and that this is the route this nation and the world have taken.

We began with a world without money and saw that the value of things (especially what is considered money) is affected by the market place (that is, by what people value at any given time) and how that personal valuation changes in a time of crisis.

Money is a very important social institution. It was no more invented by a government than language was. True, the government can influence money in the same way that it can influence language, but it is not the source of money's origins.

It cannot impose its monetary decisions on the public unless people decide that the government is doing the right thing. If people change their minds later on, they can change the government or voluntarily, transaction by transaction, change over to a new form of money.

Historically, people have voluntarily selected gold as the common medium of exchange. Silver has also been widely acceptable, all over the world. No government legislated this; people simply came to use these two metals in their economic transactions.

Why do people select a particular form of money? Because they learn from experience that other people usually accept this monetary unit in exchange. We can make better predictions and plans about the future when we discover that other people generally have accepted a certain currency unit in the past.

What people habitually do, they tend to keep on doing. They have a right to change their minds, but it is easier not to, at least most of the time. Thus, money allows us to gain access in the future to the goods and services we think we will want, or even to new ones that we have not thought about yet.

Thus, historically it was the free market that determined what was acceptable to people for their economic activities. It happened to be gold and silver, but other commodities (such as copper) have sometimes been used widely. The point is that historically people voluntarily selected what they wanted to use as money.

I would like to emphasize a few things about the principles of the origins of money. The Bible does not say that people should be required to use gold and silver as money. But, the Bible does indicate that people in Biblical times came to use gold and silver as money.

The beauty of gold and silver probably had something to do with their popularity. The metallurgical properties of gold and silver make them highly suitable as money. Wrongly, some economists argue that money is what the government says it is. However, the Biblical evidence points to the conclusion, that money is what the market says it is.

We also saw—just as the people at the time of Joseph in Egypt—that money will fail in the end time Great Tribulation, and even gold will be thought of as worthless as garbage, and silver will be valueless and thrown into the streets.

In my last sermon we saw that the apostle Peter was inspired to conclude that the lasting genuineness of our faith is much more precious than perishing gold. We can be encouraged by the fact that God brings us out of trials and tribulation to rich spiritual fulfillment.

In this sermon I am going to talk about maintaining honest units of measurement, what constitutes honest money, the effects of debasing money, and that God as Judge expects the standards to be maintained

Maintaining Honest units of Measurement

What does God say about maintaining honest units of measurement?

Leviticus 19:35-36 You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

For the purpose of this sermon, it is not important to know exactly what unit of measurement an “ephah” and a “hin” were. The point is clear enough that once defined, they could not be changed by individuals in the marketplace.

The Bible does not say who defined the ephah and the hin. Like the widespread use of

gold and silver, certain weights and measures had also come into widespread use on a voluntary basis. But it is important to realize that the civil government had to enforce a consistent standard.

Notice that God immediately provides the reason for this commandment, that He is the One who brought them out of Egyptian bondage. He is the sovereign master of the universe. He is the deliverer of Israel. As He brought the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt, similarly, but in a spiritual way, He has brought us out of the bondage of sin.

To avoid being placed into bondage once again, they had to discipline themselves.

First, they had to discipline themselves by means of God's comprehensive moral law.

Second, they had to discipline themselves by means of honest weights and measures.

We cannot do without discipline. It is never a question of discipline or no discipline. It is always a question of whose discipline. Will we be disciplined by God's law? Or, will we be disciplined by God directly, as when He sends a plague or severe trial as He did several times in the Old Testament?

Or, will we be disciplined by the Government? In our day, government tyranny is the most common alternative to self-discipline. Without self-discipline under God's revealed laws, there can be no freedom. False weights and measures lead to unrighteousness and bondage. It enslaves us to live in a society where everyone is taking advantage of everyone else.

People who sell items to the public must be sure that they avoid giving less than what is expected—revealed on the scales—by tampering with the physical standards. Tampering with physical standards is a sign that people have already tampered with moral standards.

When people in Old Testament times (and even those up until not too long ago) went to market in order to buy something, they brought with them something valuable to exchange. In barter societies, they would bring some homegrown or homemade item for sale. They would try to exchange it for someone else's homegrown item or manufactured item.

If a person brought something that would require weighing (for example, a sheep) and wanted to trade it for some other item that required weighing (for example, a sack of wheat), the question of accurate scales was not necessarily applicable.

If something was under-weighed for the seller, it was equally under-weighed for the buyer. (Remember, both parties are buyers and sellers simultaneously. One buys wheat and sells a sheep, while the other buys a sheep and sells wheat.)

The opportunities to use dishonest weights would be those in which the professional seller—the person who could afford the scales—tampered with the weights in one half of the transaction. Tampering in half of the transaction is not easy.

When people started bringing metals to market in order to buy consumer goods, it became easier for sellers to use dishonest scales. The metal bar or item would normally be measured in small units of weight (i.e., “ounces”), or even less (i.e., “grams”) in the case of gold.

But the item being sold for money would, if sold by weight, probably require much heavier units (“pounds”). The person with the scales could cheat the buyer by lightening up the money metal scale, while making heavier the product scale.

The seller in the marketplace normally has an advantage over the buyers. He understood his trade, especially scales. It is easier for the professional seller to tamper with the scales than it is for the buyer to tamper with the coins. Of course, human nature finds other ways of altering the scales, which show man’s proclivity and ingenuity to cheat others.

Let me give you an example from 19th century United States history. In the late 1800’s, during the Wild West era, a famous crooked cattleman named Dan Grew herded his cattle for days without allowing them access to water. Then, just before he sold them, he would let them drink their fill. He would then take them to the stockyards and sell them. This became known as watering the stock.

The same term was later applied a similar immoral practice by corporations. Corporate officers would print up huge quantities of ownership certificates (stock) and sell them whenever some outside group would try to take over the company by buying up 51% of the outstanding shares. The buyers wound up with shares of depreciated value—watered down stock.

Now let us look at this from a Biblical perspective. God links the ownership of scales with His own sovereignty. The man who owns the scales is a judge. God judges men in terms of moral standards. He is a Judge with the scales of justice.

When the evil Babylonian king Belshazzar was having his great feast, in the midst of a

military siege by the Medo-Persians, the hand of God wrote the famous words on the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." The king called Daniel to translate, and Daniel did so—

Daniel 5:25-27 "And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;

Weighed in the balances is symbolic of God's final judgment. Therefore, the person who controls the scales of civil justice is a judge; so is the person who controls the actual weights and measures in the marketplace.

If a person misuses his position and cheats people, he is, in so doing, testifying falsely to the character of God. He is saying, in effect, that God cares nothing for justice, that He tips the balance, and that He cheats mankind for His own ends. This is precisely what Satan implies about God's role as Judge.

It is a false witness against God. Cheating others through false weights and measures shows defiance, hatred, and lying against God, the righteous Judge. God warns people that they must use honest weights and measures, because He is the sovereign God who delivered them out of bondage. He implies that He has the power to deliver them back into bondage if they cheat in this area of economics. The law of God is the test of human actions.

What was money in ancient Israel in the days before the Babylonian captivity? It would have been any item that people voluntarily accepted in exchange for goods and services. The only monetary units identified in the Bible relating to money were the shekel and the talent. These were units of weight.

In principle, though the Bible does not specify this, they were also units of fineness. Fineness refers to the percentage of pure gold or silver in the total weight of the coin. We conclude this because of the fact that base (cheaper) metals can be melted in when the smelter is pouring the metal into the molds. Weight was not enough; there had to be a particular fineness.

An ingot or coin of a specific size, assuming it is well known, is known by sellers to weigh a certain amount. By measuring the ingot or coin, and then by weighing it, the expert can determine whether it is of the standard fineness (i.e., the proper mixture of a

base metal for hardness and a precious metal for value).

The weights and measures for the ingot of gold or silver is the professional seller's defense against fraud. The scales for produce are the buyer's protection against fraud.

The Bible lays down the rule of honest weights and measures. To tamper with the scales is a moral evil. It is theft through fraud. Someone trusts the seller, and the seller misuses this trust. It is easier to cheat a trusting person because the trusting one is not usually watching every move the seller makes. So, tampering with the scales is a serious sin.

When sellers get away with it because the authorities look the other way, honest, trusting people lose, while crooked dealers win. This reverses God's standards for dominion, namely, dominion by ethical behavior. Furthermore, it reduces the efficiency of the market, because buyers have to devote extra time and trouble in testing sellers. God will not tolerate such behavior indefinitely.

One reason why gold and silver came into widespread use in the ancient world was that they could be tested by the sellers of goods and services. Today, a seller of goods (in a sense a buyer of money) can use simple tools, if necessary, to determine the reliability of a particular ingot or coin. He could test the ingots in the ancient world, too, using similar simple tools.

Because gold and silver were recognized, and because standards of shape and weight made it possible for people to test the full weight (precious metal content) of the ingots, these two metals could more easily function as the most marketable commodities in society.

Honest money is easy to define in the context of a pure precious-metal ingot or coin economy. An ingot or coin contains a specific quantity of gold or silver of a known fineness. In the case of the famous U.S. double eagle, the \$20 gold piece, the coin weighs 1.075 troy ounces (the standard unit for measuring gold), with .967 ounces of pure gold and the rest copper, for hardness.

For greatest ease of use, an ingot would be stamped with some familiar mark or company name, so that the user would know that that smelter or company stands behind the honesty of the weights and measures. The coin or ingot in a literate society would announce its weight and fineness of the metal (such as one ounce, .999 fine).

It would simply be a one-ounce gold coin. With or without a familiar name, the coin

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when originally produced would contain exactly what it says concerning the precious metal. To tamper with either the weight or the fineness of the coin would be like pouring water into the ground meat to add weight at the supermarket. It would be fraudulent: the attempt to get something for nothing.

I want to mention something about the intrinsic value of currency; and how currency has no value of its own. Often people think that a currency, even gold, has an intrinsic value. But gold does not have intrinsic value.

Gold has only as much value as people put into it, and only as much value as we can exchange it for. For example, today gold is going through the roof price-wise; but gold is not worth more than it was 200 years ago. Generally, gold buys about the same amount of something now as it did then. Generally speaking, of course.

Some may disagree about the details of whether or not gold will buy more today than it did yesterday. But the reality is that gold appears to be of greater value today because of the debasing, the devaluation of the U.S. dollar and other currencies.

So it takes substantially more dollars today to buy gold (or silver, or copper) than it did before the fraudulent printing of trillions of U.S. dollars by the fraudulent Federal Reserve Corporation. The relationship between the U.S. Government and the Federal Reserve is a Fascist partnership.

Most people believe that having more money is going to solve their problems—they can go out and buy more stuff—and therefore they demand that the government print more and give them more money. Forty-two of all babies born in the U.S. receive government assistance.

The government's tampering with the money supply, including gold and silver is anti-Christ and anti-God, because government tampering steals God's authority as Righteous Judge.

So when we focus on the fact that the economy is about the absolute value of humans and NOT about the value of the currency, then we understand what the government is trying to do now. It is trying to confuse us. It is trying to get us to focus on the wrong thing. It is trying to make us idolaters to a currency rather than looking to God for our sustenance and thanking HIM for what He has given us every day. God's intention is that humans must work for what they need and want and THAT is what has value in the economy.

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This is one of the main reasons why the Communist hippie communes of the 1960s and 70s did NOT work. There were too many hippies who wanted to play and make love, rather than work. So, a very few people did ALL the work.

Wait a minute! Is that not the same thing happening today in this Progressive Communitarian Society that we see forming in the U.S.? Less than half the people in the U.S. pay taxes to support the rest who are on entitlement programs.

Here is what God says through Paul about those who refuse to work:

II Thessalonians 3:6-12 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

Paul strongly commands that the community as a whole should discipline lazy people by disassociating themselves from those who refuse to work and depend on others for a living.

The community is to keep away from the idle people. Paul takes the sin of these people very seriously, but at this point he still regards them as brothers.

Let me qualify this by saying that there are often those who are temporarily out of work for one reason or another; Paul is NOT talking about them. He is talking about lazy people who are able to work but refuse because they do not have self-control.

'Walking disorderly' refers to idleness in an undisciplined and irresponsible, or unruly manner. These people are shirking their obligation to work (see Gen 2:15). You remember what God told Adam he was to do: "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it."—To work!

The apostle Paul refused to depend on others for his living. He worked hard to avoid being a financial burden to any Thessalonian Christian, even though (in contrast to the idle Thessalonians) it was his God-given right to be supported for his ministerial efforts. Because the Thessalonians were known for being lazy, he wanted to provide them with a Christian example to imitate.

Many were not busy at work, but were busybodies. Those who refused to work were exploiting their free time to meddle in others' affairs. Irreligious prying flows from idleness.

I Timothy 5:13-14 And besides they [the younger widows or singles] learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

Then in II Thessalonians 3:12, Paul gives a forceful command to the idlers to get back to work, so that they may be financially independent. He says, "Work quietly." That is the opposite of being nuisances or "busybodies."

In verses 13-15, Paul gives instructions to the community to keep doing good and to discipline any unrepentant idlers.

Let me quickly recap what I have been saying here. The principle of honest money is quite easy to understand. You deliver what you say you are delivering. If you promise to give an ounce of gold, .999 fine, to a seller, then that is what you deliver.

He can make an estimation of how much that ounce of gold is worth to him, and if he decides that he wants the gold more than he wants what he has offered for sale, then you get the item, and he gets the gold.

If either of the parties tampers with the scales, or in any way substitutes something less valuable than what he has agreed to deliver, then he has committed a sin. This sin is an attack on God's principles of justice and man's social peace.

Exodus 22:10-12 If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven away, no one seeing it, then an oath of the Lord shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept that, and he shall not make it good. But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it.

The sinner must make double restitution, the return of the value stolen, plus a 100% penalty.

The law regarding honest weights and measures is obviously a specific (case-law) application of the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." But because God is Judge, and because the symbolism of His perfect judgment is the scales of honest weights and measures, it becomes a spiritual and moral issue as well as an economic issue.

To tamper with the scales is to defy God in a unique way. It is to assert that man, the lawbreaker, being made in God's image, reflects a God who is equally a law breaker. Therefore, in reality, this lawbreaker's god is Satan the Devil.

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Honest money is an economic application of the law against false weights and measures. Because money in the Bible is metallic, any tampering with the content of the precious metal is the equivalent of tampering with the scales.

Here are the righteous characteristics and actions that the principles of honest money require:

The prevailing definitions of measurement must be observed in all our dealings with one another;

the civil government need not be the originator of these standards, though it is supposed to certify them; the goal is consistency of use; the God who requires honest measures is the same God who delivered Israel from bondage; violating these physical standards is the equivalent of violating God's moral standards; God's activities as Judge symbolically undergird the law of honest weights and measures; when the civil magistrate refuses to enforce honest weights and measures, evil people temporarily prosper at the expense of honest people. This reverses God's standards of dominion.

Let us take a closer look at the effects of the debasing of the currency. God through Moses stipulated honest weights and measures for the Israelites; and we have this idea

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of silver and gold being weights. We find that theme constantly, throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, and into the New Testament.

Isaiah came before the nation of Judah, the Southern Kingdom of the divided nation of Israel, sometime around the year 750 B.C. He began his ministry with a condemnation of the spiritual condition of the people, from the man in the street to the rulers. One of Isaiah's best-known prophecies uses metallurgical illustrations.

Isaiah 1:22 Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water.

Isaiah would not use this example of silver becoming dross if it was not something familiar to the people. We'll talk about this a little later. The principle of the nations, of the state, of the individual, who want to debase their currency, is not something new. This has been going on for a long, long time; one example is by coin clipping.

In the centuries before William the Conqueror's invasion of England in 1066 A.D., Anglo-Saxon England had one of the best economies in Europe thanks to the stability of the nation's coinage. Her prosperity was the envy of the civilized world and this was no doubt a factor in William's desire to take control.

By the time his descendant Henry II had reached the throne the value of the currency was fading fast. The various Mints across the country were substituting the silver in the coin with tin.

The base metal was being removed hence the term of the coins being de-based came into being. This is a phrase that is still used for today's money during this currency crisis.

Up until the last century, coins had a value in their own right thanks to their precious metal content whereas nowadays we simply have promissory notes. Another method of making money illicitly was to clip off the edges of the coins in order to use the silver to produce new ones, hence 'creating money out of thin air'. The inevitable happened and during Henry II's reign; a period of inflation set in as the coins' value dwindled and as a result prices rose.

In other words, in order to get the same quantity of silver in exchange for your goods, you needed to receive more coins and charge higher prices. By 1124 A.D. Henry II had had enough of this abuse and summoned the various Mints to Winchester (then the capital of England) in what was called the 'Assize of Moneyers'.

Two thirds of them were found guilty of debasing the currency and either had their right hands cut off or they were castrated. History does not record as to whether they were given a choice between the two options. It is hard to believe but, this has not deterred later debasers from committing this crime.

According to Wikipedia, coin clipping is the act of shaving off a small portion of a precious metal coin for profit. Over time the precious metal clippings could be saved up and melted into bullion or used to make new coins.

Coin clipping was usually considered by the law to be of a similar magnitude to counterfeiting, and was occasionally punished by death.

Coin clipping is why many coins have the rim of the coin marked with stripes milling, or reeding, text (engraving) or some other pattern that would be destroyed if the coin were clipped, a process attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, after being appointed Master of the Mint (a charge he held from 1699 to his death in 1727).

Although the metal used in most modern coins is NOT intrinsically valuable, modern milling can be a deterrent to counterfeiting, an aid to the blind to distinguish different denominations, or purely decorative.

Modern coins are made of hard, cheap metals such as steel, copper or a copper-nickel alloy, reducing wear and removing the incentive to clip them.

The principle of coin clipping is what the U.S. Government and the Federal Reserve are doing by printing more paper and electronic money. What they are doing is no less than counterfeiting which is no less than stealing labor from the citizens of the U.S. and from the other nations in the world that buy this nation's debt.

Besides stealing, coin clipping, counterfeiting and other forms of debasing a currency is a form of idolatry. Of course, the sin of idolatry has been around since Satan rebelled against God. Idolatry is a sin against God, so it stands to reason that debasing the value of things devalues God in a person's life.

It debases God's value because it sets something up as a higher priority than God. When people try to debase currency, what they are trying to do is play God, to usurp His authority like Satan did. Sadly, there have been idolaters who have debased currencies in every age.

The Apostle Paul warns us to put an end to idolatry.

Colossians 3:5-6 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

The coveting of gold, silver and other forms of value is a form of idolatry and therefore breaks the second and tenth commandments! In addition, debasing currency is stealing, which breaks the eighth commandment!

By extension we see that God's punishment will come on idolaters as whole nations as well. One idolater receives God's wrath; how much greater is God's wrath on a whole nation of idolaters?

The Old Testament prophets did not just talk about the internal mental state of the people of Israel and Judah. They believed that the heart of a people is reflected in their actions. Moses records the words that God had him speak of the essence of God's Law.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

Biblically, your heart represents the seat of your motivation. Jesus stated this principle as also applying to covetous, idolatrous thieves.

Matthew 7:17-20 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Jesus said that a righteous people serve God from the heart. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

Referring to the true origin of our actions Jesus also said,

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Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

So these debasers cheat people because the seat of their character (pictured by the heart) is evil.

Isaiah was saying exactly what Jesus said so many years later. The people of Judah and Jerusalem were corrupt in their hearts. He used the imagery of dross. What is dross?

It is cheap base metal. It is unfavorably compared with precious metals like silver and gold. It can be removed from the precious metal only by melting down the ingot and purging out the base metal by heat or by chemical reaction. This, too, is a familiar Bible image, purging away dross by placing the metal into a hot fire.

God described to the prophet Ezekiel, who wrote over 150 years after Isaiah, about how rebellious Israel and Judah would be punished, as if put in a furnace. Ezekiel recorded this while in captivity.

Ezekiel 22:17-22 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver. Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you. Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst. As silver is melted in the midst of a furnace, so shall you be melted in its midst; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have poured out My fury on you.'"

This same imagery is found in the New Testament, regarding God's judgment. The apostle Paul wrote that a person's works will eventually be tested and judged by fire.

I Corinthians 3:10-15 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can

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anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Judgment is as a fire that tests each person individually; it burns up the dross and refines that which is truly valuable. The association of fire with wrath and the fact that God sometimes destroys the wicked by raining fire make it natural that judgment be depicted as fire.

II Thessalonians 1:7 says that Jesus Christ will be revealed, "From heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire." The book of Revelation gives accounts of the latter days being filled with fire falling from heaven and punishing the wicked.

Those who do not trust in Christ's perfect, zero-dross work are doomed to wind up as permanent dross in eternal judgment. The Apostle John saw the fearful judgment of idolaters and liars in his God-given vision of the future.

Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

So, those who debase currency as idolaters and liars will be burned up in God's judgment fire, if they do not repent.

The Old Testament prophets understood that sin served as dross in Israel. They knew that if people did not purge away their spiritual dross voluntarily through personal moral reform, to be followed by political, economic, and institutional moral reform, then God would purge the whole nation. There would be war, and/or plague, and/or famine. God will not tolerate moral dross indefinitely. Isaiah announced the warning of God:

Isaiah 1:25 I will turn My hand against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away all your alloy.

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As have many societies, the Israelites and Jews of Isaiah's time used fire, they got the base metals out of it, and they had pure silver left. Isaiah must have been very conscious of the fact that this was on the minds of the people in about 750 B.C.

The prophets were God's prosecuting attorneys. God brought them before Israel and Judah with His case against the people. He had set forth His law at Mt. Sinai, and He had made a covenant with them.

Deuteronomy 28:1-14 tells us that obedience to God's covenant brings external, visible blessings. And, Deuteronomy 28:15-68 tells us that disobedience brings external, visible cursings. The list of cursings is much longer than the list of blessings. God wanted them to know just how serious He is about obedience to His law—eternally serious.

As an officer of God's court, the prophet brought God's covenantal lawsuit against Israel and Judah. But to make a case, the prophets had to have evidence. It is not enough in God's earthly law court that people are suspected of harboring evil thoughts. It is not enough to convict someone in God's earthly court of bad intentions. There must be public evidence of a crime.

Deuteronomy 17:6 Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

It is God's heavenly law court that provides evidence of spiritually broken laws of God—of the breaking of the spirit of the law. Heavenly evidence deals with thoughts and intentions, and only God knows the motivation of the heart. This is why God sent so many prophets to bring charges against Israel and Judah. In Isaiah's day, there also appeared Hosea, Amos, and about a generation later, Micah. They all brought the same message of God's anger and coming judgment because of their idolatrous moral and economic sins.

What was the public evidence? First, Isaiah pointed to the false judgment by the rulers.

Isaiah 1:21 How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers.

Second, he pointed to the dross metal in the silver, and the water in the wine —

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Isaiah 1:22 Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water.

Third, he returned to the theme of corrupt judgment.

Isaiah 1:23 Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

Notice that the sins listed by Isaiah are quite specific: Murderers in the capital city (evidence of a breakdown of law and order), debased commodities being sold as high quality and false judgment by bribe-seeking, gift-seeking judges.

Even before he began to talk about the spiritual sins of the people (dross in their hearts), he spoke about the visible sins of the rulers. The rulers were visibly corrupt, indicating that the people were also corrupt. The corrupt leaders of Judah were true representatives of the people.

This describes our national leaders so well that it is unnerving! But the sign of this corruption at the highest levels of government has been visible since about 1965. It was in that year that the United States abandoned its silver currency and substituted a pure dross standard of silvery (but not actual silver) plated copper coins.

Worse than the silver becoming partially dross, it had become entirely dross. The government plated the coins for tradition's sake, but there was no more precious metal in them.

Gold coins had been illegal in the U.S. since 1934. There is a relationship between the moral corruption of a nation's citizens, the moral corruption of their political representatives, and the debasement of the currency.

The prophet Isaiah did not simply bring a complaint against exclusively internal spiritual sins; he brought God's covenant lawsuit against the leaders for their specific public sins. They were no longer enforcing God's law as His representatives to the people. Instead, as representatives of a corrupt population, they were enforcing the people's God-defying standards on the defenseless.

God requires the civil government to enforce predictable standards of weight and measure. This makes it easier for people to make voluntary economic transactions in a

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free market. Not only do we say, as buyers and sellers, “What you SEE is what you GET,” we also implicitly say, “What I SAY you are getting you WILL get.” More specifically, “What my scale says you are getting is what you will get.”

Our scales are symbols of God’s justice. If we rig our scales to cheat our customers, we are implicitly saying either that God does not care (because He is also at heart a cheater), or that God cannot do anything about it (meaning that He is not really God).

The debaser—the cheater is saying that God, as Judge of all mankind, is a liar. He is not really a Judge. Therefore, if we can get the earthly judges to look the other way, we can continue to cheat our customers.

Corrupt businessmen want to deal with civil officers who are equally corrupt. They are willing to pay bribes to get them to look the other way, to get them to turn a deaf ear to those weak people who will be cheated by corrupt scales. This was Isaiah’s accusation against the leaders. They were bribe-seekers, people who did not hear the widow’s plea.

But they were something else. They were also men who refused to prosecute those who tampered with false scales. Remember, the government in Isaiah’s time did not issue coins.

Coins were invented about a century later. There is no indication that the government even certified the weight and fineness of any ingots in circulation as money.

But the government could prosecute fraud. The authorities could prosecute anyone who was passing dross-filled silver or gold bars as if they were high quality, as if they were the normal market standard.

Centuries later, when officials learned about the wonders of debased money, they made the government the monopolist over money. Instead of serving God by enforcing laws against debased money, politicians took the profits for the government. They eliminated the middlemen.

They started stealing from the public directly. One of the main reasons that the Roman Empire fell around 320 A.D. is that the pagan emperors had destroyed the Roman coinage system. Nobody trusted the money, so nobody trusted the government.

Isaiah’s critique of Judah teaches us the following lessons that are paralleled in all governments today, especially among the Israelitish nations of the U.S., Canada, the

U.K., and Australia:

1. A corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit.
2. The people were morally corrupt.
3. God promised to purge them because of their sins.
4. A sign of this moral corruption was the debased condition of their money.
5. Their sins were not simply physical, but internal, sins.
6. Corrupt citizens prefer corrupt rulers.
7. The capital city was corrupt—murderers lived there, the money was corrupt, and false judgment was common.
8. The corruption of their silver was a violation against God's law regarding false weights and measures.
9. The corrupt metal producer produces corrupt metal.
10. The poor treatment of the weak (e.g., widows) is a sign of a nation's lack of commitment to God's law and rebelliousness.

Those are some of the principles we have covered.

The prophets went before Israel and Judah with a covenant lawsuit from God. They warned the people that IF they refused to repent, from the lowest worker to the king himself, that God would bring judgment against them. He would purge their dross.

They were warned that this judgment would be as visible as their sins. This judgment would not be limited to internal crises such as psychological fears. God's judgment would be both internal and external, just as their sins were both internal and external.

One sign of their sinful condition was their corrupt silver. Their money was corrupt and dross-filled, and it reflected their moral condition, testifying against them publicly. They had debased their money because they had debased their morals. The two practices work together.

Nations fall because of moral degradation; and moral debasement leads to debased money, therefore, historically, nations that are marked by dishonest money fall to external enemies; and nations that are marked by honest money do NOT.

Wars that are begun with honest money, eventually are fought with dishonest money—debasement on a massive scale. Neither the winner nor the loser is guiltless in the end, monetarily speaking.

Civilizations fall when they become morally corrupt. One sign of this corruption in virtually all known instances is debased money. When a society finds that its rulers have debased the currency unit, the people receive a warning: the rulers are corrupt, and if the people continue to support these rulers, then they, too, are corrupt.

And in modern times, civil governments have the full support of their people for at least limited inflation, meaning a little corruption of the money supply. This is what we are facing today in this nation and also all the nations of the world. As members of God's church we can see the corruption for what it is: the pride, greed, covetousness, lying, stealing and idolatry. All these sins (and more) drive the global monetary policy today.

The people of the world believe that their salvation from calamity lies in their humanly devised monetary policies. Whatever happens people turn to money for deliverance. It does not matter whether it is a medical emergency, a natural disaster, or a personal or national financial crisis. Money is the savior they choose. But it is an empty and deceiving savior.

Even with all this global corruption today, there is hope—because this world will be forced to submit to God-imposed law when Christ returns and is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.

Those who have put in honest days of work and have maintained honest weights and measures in their daily activities are manifesting good character and producing good fruit. And while the people of the world look to their monetary savior for physical reward and entitlement gifts, we, as members of God's church, are in the process of receiving the greatest gift possible.

There is a saying, "You never get something for nothing, except as a gift." This testifies to God's mercy in redeeming us—true spiritual salvation is a gift.

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

But this gift had to be paid for by Jesus Christ who died to satisfy God's righteous requirements against sin.

Our faith is sorely tested in this world of uncertainty; but God is making sure that as His spiritual children we lack nothing important to our salvation.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

The trials of life are sometimes fiery, but necessary to test our faith, just as fire is used to test the purity of gold and silver. We are to be patient and persevering through them, so that we may lack nothing spiritually in the way of perfection and completion of godly character.