

## ***RATE OF EXCHANGE***

Don't you just hate trying to hold a meaningful conversation in a foreign language you are not familiar with? Preparation is everything when traveling abroad. We can learn things like this by reading travel magazines in the back of airline seats. Many warnings are given that range from being careful of changes in the electric current for electronics to changes in dining customs that have the potential to generate offense. The part that really captures interest though, is the warning about currency exchange rates. It seems that they vary depending on whether the currency is traded at home or abroad. And on what institution handles the transaction. A little research is recommended. Especially if we will be living there after arrival.

Currency is not the only thing that varies in value from country to country. Precious metals and jewels are priced according to their scarcity locally. Energy in the form of electricity, or even gasoline, varies wildly in cost. Time is of little importance in some cultures. Friendships are bought and sold and love and favors are used as commodities for trading. Even basics, such as food, come dearly in times of shortage. And sadly, as the population increases and violence rises, life itself has become cheap to far too many.

Let's assume that we have begun a journey. We are headed for heaven. We will be traveling by air, and we know how important it is to have our flight arrangements made well in advance of when we will need them. We won't need to figure out the shortest route, because there is really only one way to get there. A one way ticket, at that. Passports are useless, because when we get there, we will have a new name anyway. The accommodations will be satisfactory, because they are being custom built just for us. The language of our destination is unique, but we've been practicing it for a while now. It seems we have all of the bases covered. Nonetheless, preparation being so important, let us still consider everything that we know which might differ between here and where we are going. Especially the currency. After all, we won't be coming back.

The exchange rate is especially confusing. There is a story of a miser who actually succeeded in taking his gold with him. Heaving and hauling, he managed to drag the heavy sack containing it up the hill to the Pearly Gates. St. Peter, watching his exertion with amazement, assured him that it was okay to take it with him into heaven, though paving stones were strange things to be dragging around. In God's economy, it seems like the only thing that gold is good for is to be trod under foot. Jewels there also have a peculiar value. On this earth, the larger the jewel, the more priceless it becomes. In heaven, jewels of staggering size are worthy only to be used as gates. Interesting that even there, they can function to keep us out of the presence of God.

The standard of living will take some getting used to. Food will not be a problem at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Our daily bread will be supplied, and to drink, we will have a choice between new wine, living water, or maybe both. The only form of energy will be light. And the source of that will be God Himself. For entertainment, we will be able to choose between choirs of heavenly angels and the song of the redeemed. We normally could not afford to live in mansions, except for the fact that we will be given one when we arrive. Even clothing will not be a problem. Robes of righteousness neither wear out nor go out of style.

Even the intangible things we hold so dear have different values there. We have a saying that time is money, but when time becomes limitless in eternity, that very concept will become meaningless. Now we define it as the space from one heartbeat to the next, but with a new and glorified body, the time clock will probably not exist. Friendships will be eternal. True love here is almost

impossible because it requires death of self. Love there will be free and incorruptible because it will flow from the divine love of God, who did give His all. The ultimate commodity, life itself, will have ceased. The new Life will be free and limitless, because it will already have been given to all the inhabitants by Jesus Christ Himself.

Is there anything of value that we can take with us from a lifetime of effort on this earth. Well, what have we done for Christ? It is really that simple. What have we done for the hungry, the naked, and the homeless? When have we suffered for His name's sake? Have we invested our hearts and our time in pleasing our Savior or in trying to accumulate wealth and prestige in this rather short life? What a shame to have poured our lives into material possessions, only to watch everything burn at the end of time. 1 John 2:15 says that if we have the love of the world (and its version of wealth and success), the love of the Father is not in us. Matt 6:33 is a powerful promise that says to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added unto us. Paraphrased a bit, if we put our focus on pleasing God and being right in His sight, everything else that is added to us falls into the right perspective. They become just things. We trade the temporary wealth of this world for the eternal wealth of God, which by the way, is an excellent exchange rate.

### ***STUDY QUESTIONS***

1. Have you ever been in another country such as Canada or Mexico paid for something in U.S. currency, and received change back in the foreign currency? Were you short changed? Did you even try to figure it out? Have you ever exchanged currency at a financial institution?
2. Did you know that the value of one currency compared to another could change hourly? Do you know that vast sums of money are won and lost simply by trading one currency for another as the exchange rate varies and fluctuates?
3. Did you know that the value of heaven's currency never changes? Eternal life still requires all of our natural life in exchange for it.
4. It is disturbing how little value is placed on life in some cultures, especially in times of shortages. We become so immune to reports of death when it becomes commonplace, that often the only sensation we feel when we hear of tragedy, is a sense of relief that it was neither us nor someone we love. How does this attitude compare to that of a God who says that He cared enough for every individual that He died for them? That every person born was created to be an eternal companion for Him?
5. Have you ever considered how abrupt and final the last phase of our journey through our physical life will be? How similar living here should be to waiting on standby at an airport for a plane flight? There are many comparisons that could be made such as watching and waiting for Him, being careful not to become too entangled with external affairs, the fact that if you miss your one chance at the flight, you won't make it to your preferred destination, etc.. Can you think of any other similarities?
6. What are some investments that could be made now that would pay dividends in eternity? Do you believe there will be different levels of rewards in heaven? On what do you base your belief?
7. Can you think of other things that you consider to be of value on earth that will probably be worthless in heaven?
8. Our economy is based upon the laws of supply and demand. What type of economy will exist in a place where everything you need or can even imagine will be supplied to you?

9. Have you ever had to say goodbye to someone you really loved? What if you truly believed that the one you loved is not dead? How would you react to someone asking you to meet them next to the throne in twelve thousand years from a certain date?
10. We make conscious decisions to invest money, education, etc., in our earthly futures. Do you ever look for ways to invest in your eternal future? How real is it to you?
11. What does the scripture mean that says that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also?
12. If you could be absolutely guaranteed a home in heaven, how much of what you own now, or in the future, would you be willing to give up in exchange for that guarantee? What if all you could ever call yours would be one set of clothes at any given time? What if eating every meal would depend on God moving on someone's heart to offer you food? If not, you would just go hungry?
13. Is it fair to say that that is exactly what Jesus asked of His original disciples?