

Chasing the Dollar

"There is nothing more nervous than a million dollars. It moves very fast, and it doesn't speak any language."

-Jean Chretien



Wall Street is the relentless pursuit of the Dollar. It wiggles, it turns, it shifts, and we still run after it, with all of our might. There are many ways to attain the Dollar and just as many ways, if not more ways, to lose it. Some of the brightest minds on the planet play in "The Great Game" and competing with them adds a certain delight to our pursuit.

What is particularly striking, is that many people do not understand what the Dollar means, past its ability to buy goods and services and perhaps fortune and fame. I have just learned this recently and so today, with great respect, I am taking the time to illuminate our currency. The following is the explanation of our Dollar Bill.

On the rear of the One Dollar Bill, you will see two circles. Together, they comprise the Great Seal of the United States. The First Continental Congress requested that Benjamin Franklin and a group of men come up with a Seal. It took them four years to accomplish this task and another two years to get it approved. If you look at the left-hand circle, you will see a Pyramid.

Notice the eastern face is lighted, and the western side is dark. This country was just beginning. We had not begun to explore the west or decided what we could do for Western Civilization. The Pyramid is uncapped, again signifying that we were not even close to being finished. Inside the capstone you have the all-seeing eye, an ancient symbol for divinity. It was Franklin's belief that one man couldn't do it alone, but a group of men, with the help of God, could do anything.

The Latin above the pyramid, "ANNUIT COEPTIS," means, "God has favored our undertaking." The Latin below the pyramid, "NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM," means, "A new order has begun." At the base of the pyramid is the Roman Numeral for 1776. You will also note that "IN GOD WE TRUST" is on our currency. This is not devoid of meaning.

If you look at the right-hand circle, and check it carefully, you will learn that it is on every National Cemetery in the United States. It is also on the Parade of Flags Walkway at the Bushnell, Florida National Cemetery, and is the centerpiece of most hero's monuments. Slightly modified, it is the seal of the President of the United States, and it is always visible whenever he speaks, yet very few people know what the symbols mean.

The Bald Eagle was selected as a symbol for victory for two reasons: First, he is not afraid of a storm, he is strong, and he is smart enough to soar above it. Secondly, he wears no material crown. We had just broken from the King of England. Also, notice the shield is unsupported. This country can now stand on its own. At the top of that shield, you have a white bar signifying Congress, a unifying factor. We were coming together as one nation. In the Eagle's beak you will read, "E PLURIBUS UNUM" meaning, "One from Many." This phrase, in my opinion, seems to be vastly overlooked these days.

Above the Eagle, you have the thirteen stars, representing the thirteen original colonies, and any clouds of misunderstanding rolling away. Again, we were coming together as one. Notice what the Eagle holds in his talons. He holds an olive branch and arrows. This country wants peace, but we will never be afraid to fight to preserve peace. The Eagle always wants to face the olive branch, but in time of war, his gaze turns toward the arrows.

They say that the number 13 is an unlucky number. This is almost a worldwide belief. You will usually never see a room numbered 13, or any hotels with a 13th floor. But think about this:

13 original colonies,
13 signers of the Declaration of Independence,
13 stripes on our flag,
13 steps on the Pyramid,
13 letters in, "Annuit Coeptis,"
13 letters in "E Pluribus Unum,"
13 stars above the Eagle,
13 bars on that shield,
13 leaves on the olive branch,
13 fruits,
and, if you look closely, 13 arrows.

Perhaps we should consider the significance of this number?

And finally, if you notice the arrangement of the 13 stars in the right-hand circle you will see that they are arranged as a Star of David. This was ordered by George Washington who, when he asked Hayim Solomon, a wealthy Philadelphian, what he would like as a personal reward for his services to the Continental Army, Solomon said he wanted nothing for himself but that he would like something for his people. The Star of David was the result. Few people know that it was Solomon who saved the Army through his financial contributions, but died a pauper.

I always ask people, "Why don't you know this?" Why don't your children don't know this, and why don't their history teachers don't know this? I serve on the Board of the Wounded Warrior's Family Services. It seems to me that too many veterans have given up too much to ever let the meaning of our Dollar fade. Many veterans remember coming home to an America that didn't care. Too many veterans never came home at all. This is all measured in a human currency far past the financial value of the Dollar, without any doubt.

So, as we all engage in the chase of the Dollar, each day, from one angle or another, it is an important consideration, almost always forgotten, of what we are actually chasing. We chase the symbol of our nation, that has been built on the backs, and the lives, of so many of our countrymen. May God bless them all for their service and may we, in our pursuit of the Dollar, never forget for what it actually represents, as the currency of our nation and as the basis of our country's conception.

Upon your reputation lies the bedrock of your ability to chase and accumulate Dollars. Guard it like your life. Our forefathers demand nothing less. Wall Street for all of its complexities is based upon honor and nothing less than honor will suffice.

**Mark J. Grant, Chief Global Strategist-Fixed Income,
Managing Director, B. Riley Securities**