

Excerpts from Life-Study of 1 John,

Message 20

**THE WORLD AND THE THINGS
IN THE WORLD**

Bible Verses:

- 1 John 2:15** Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;
- 16** Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.
- 17** And the world is passing away, and its lust, but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The word in 2:15-16, strictly speaking, is not to the fathers nor to the young children; it is a word given to the young men. Of course, whatever is written in the holy Word is written

for all of God's children. Nevertheless, according to the context of chapter two, these verses are written specifically to the young men, to those who are strong, who have the word of God abiding in them, and who have overcome the evil one.

In the first section of this Epistle, the section concerned with the fellowship of the divine life (1:1—2:11), we saw that sin and sins damage our fellowship. In the second section of this Epistle we see two other negative things: the world and antichrist. In verses 13 and 14 John also mentions the evil one. However, this evil one, Satan, the Devil, does not appear directly here. Instead, he wears the masks of the world and of antichrist. No one would love the Devil if he were to appear directly. But everyone loves the world. The world is Satan's mask that he uses to deceive us and cheat us. In this section of 1 John, the problem is not with the Devil; it is with the world as the Devil's mask.

In verse 15 John says, "Do not love the world, neither the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The Greek word for world, *kosmos*, has

more than one meaning. In Matthew 25:34; John 17:15; Acts 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; and Revelation 13:8, it denotes the material universe as a system created by God. In John 1:29; 3:16; and Romans 5:12, it denotes the fallen human race corrupted and usurped by Satan as components for his evil world system. In 1 Peter 3:3 it denotes adorning, ornament. Here, as in John 15:19; 17:14; and James 4:4, it denotes an order, a set form, an orderly arrangement, hence, an ordered system (set up by Satan, the adversary of God), not the earth. God created man to live on the earth for the fulfillment of His purpose. But His enemy Satan, in order to usurp the God-created man, has formed an anti-God world system on this earth by systematizing men with religion, culture, education, industry, commerce, and entertainment through men's fallen nature in their lusts, pleasures, pursuits, and even in their indulgence in living necessities, such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation. The whole of such a satanic system lies in the evil one (1 John 5:19). Not loving such a world is the ground for overcoming the evil one. Loving it just a little gives the evil one the ground to defeat us and

occupy us.

It is important for us to understand the different meanings of the word *kosmos* in the New Testament. We have pointed out that this word is used to denote the material universe, the fallen human race corrupted and usurped by Satan, and the anti-God world system set up by Satan in order to usurp the man created by God for the fulfillment of His purpose. In such a situation, where shall we go? The answer is that we need to go to the Triune God. Only the Triune God has not been systematized by Satan. Along with going to the Triune God, we also need to go to the Word of God. Therefore, since every thing, every one, and every matter have been systematized by Satan, we need to flee to the Triune God and His Word. God's Word is our refuge, our protection.

In 5:19 John says that the whole world system lies in the evil one. Not only has this evil one systematized everything, but the entire system lies in him. We may use a patient in surgery as an illustration of the world lying in the evil one. In surgery, a patient is anesthetized and lies on the operating table. The surgeon is then

able to operate on the patient, and the patient has no consciousness of what is happening. This is a picture of the whole world lying under the hand of Satan. Those in the world are unconscious of the fact that they are lying on the “surgery table” of the evil one and that he is “operating” on them.

We have seen that the world in 2:15 denotes an evil, satanic, anti-God system that is constituted of the things created by God. Satan has used these things to form his system. However, these things are not the contents of the satanic world system. This system comprises the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of the present life. It is not easy to differentiate between the things, matters, and persons used by Satan to constitute his evil system and the actual contents of this world system. Your car and house may be used by Satan to constitute the anti-God world. We may use owning a car as an illustration of the difference between something used by Satan to form his system and the actual contents of this system. How can a car be utilized by the enemy of God to form his evil system? The car itself is not a

problem and is not the content of Satan's system. The problem is with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and, in particular, with the vainglory of the present life. If it were not for man's vainglory, a car would not become a problem. However, many people like to buy an expensive car in order to make a display. In their case, the car they drive is used for vainglory.

Read the verses and footnotes online: <https://text.recoveryversion.bible/>

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction

[CW:] One of the interesting words in the original language of the New Testament is *kosmos*. This Greek word is normally translated in the Bible as *world*. In John chapter 3, God so loved the *kosmos* that He gave His only begotten son to save it. Yet in John's epistles, we are told not to love the *kosmos* because it is impossible for us to both love the world and love God the Father at the same time. The reason that we as believers need to flee any love and attachment for the world is that the world is a mask for God's enemy, Satan. Bill Lawson is here with us today as we touch these verses in 1 John chapter 2 and chapter 5. Bill, there's a lot to be revealed here, isn't there, for God's people regarding this matter of the world.

[BL:] Yes, I trust the Lord today that the Lord could unveil us and really open our eyes concerning this satanic world that we're faced with, especially the believers, all the time. So I think we really need to get into this Greek word *kosmos* to see what the Lord has for us today.

[CW:] Yeah, I think we need to note that the word *kosmos* has a number of connotations in the Bible. Sometimes it doesn't seem to have a value attached to it. Certainly, the *kosmos* or the world that God loved giving His only Son for, the famous verse in John chapter 3, this is really a reference to all mankind, all humanity, so we don't associate it as being something so evil and sinister. But I'm reminded of another passage from the Gospels in Matthew chapter 4. This is the portion, Bill, where the devil has led Jesus up for the temptation and he's tempting Him with this and that. In chapter 4 of Matthew verses 8 and 9, it says, "And again the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world". And here is, of course, the word *kosmos*, the kingdoms of the *kosmos* and their glory. "...And he said to Him, All these will I give to you if you will fall down and worship me." Well, of course, we know the Lord Jesus did not succumb to that temptation. But it's interesting, neither did He refute the devil's authority to give away these kingdoms, did He?

[BL:] Right, that's interesting, Chris. We would think, well, the Lord should have probably said, "No, Satan, you have no right, you have no authority, you have no control over the kingdoms of the world. I created everything." Well, that's true, God did create the earth, but God did not create the *kosmos*. So we have to see that distinction there. The Lord created the physical universe, the heavens, the earth, and so on, but He did not create the satanic *kosmos*. That was due to the satanic fall of man. So the Lord acknowledged, in a sense, that those satanic kingdoms were, in fact, of Satan, and Satan had the right to do with them what he wanted. But surely the Lord would not succumb to that temptation.

[CW:] Yes, so the question of ownership, in a sense, is addressed indirectly in this passage. He did not dispute the devil's ownership of the world and its kingdoms, its satanic kingdoms. Very interesting. I think that helps us understand the context in which we're given to look at these verses now in 1 John 2, verse 13 says, "I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you young children, because you know the Father." And then verse 15, our target verse I would say today, "Do not love the world, nor

the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him, and the world is passing away, and its lust, but he who does the will of God abides forever.” All right, let's join Witness Lee with this portion of very important fellowship related to the world and God's people.

Part 1

[CW:] Bill, I like this point. I think it strikes something in all of us, because we've all been taken in. We've all been deceived by one of the many masks that Satan uses from and in the world to come and distract us away from God. This is a key point, isn't it, for God's people to realize?

[BL:] It is, Chris. It's interesting when Brother Lee talks about the damage and frustration of the divine fellowship. At the beginning of 1 John, he talks about these matters of our sinful nature, and also our sinful deeds that we commit. And obviously, we know this really damages and adversely affects our fellowship with the Lord Jesus. But when he gets deeper here into 1 John 2, he touches the world, which I would say is a far deeper problem and more subtle problem than just the sinful things that we commit and the nature of sin itself. Because the world, like Brother Lee says, it's a real mask. On the outward appearance, it looks very attractive, very lovely, and it easily lures us. It draws us into things that we should not be into, and it really affects our inward being, and it draws out from within us things like the inward lust and all these things that are within us. In other words, it's like a match. We have the problem within us, which is the lust, the flesh, that kind of thing. Then outwardly, we have those outward physical things that match the inward lust within, and these two are like a magnet drawing one another. So the real damage there to God's children in 1 John 2 is really the world and its mask.

[CW:] Yeah, there's the verse in chapter 2 we didn't read, and maybe I'll read it now, “Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.” These are the real intrinsic components or structure or underpinning of the world, regardless of what mask it takes at a particular point in time. What is behind it is usually related to these kinds of things, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and vain glory, because these are where we're all prone to be drawn off and drawn into failure, aren't they?

[BL:] Really so. Like you say, Chris, they're like the subjective things that are lying there within us, in a sense latent, hidden in there, and as soon as something of the outward world comes up, it just awakens the inward lust, the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the vain glory that's within us, it's just awakened, and we're right away, there's a match between the inward lust and the outward world, and then right away, we fall prey to this, and especially I enjoy the Apostle John, he breaks down God's people into three categories, the young children, the young men, and then the fathers. And you can see, we must grow, Chris, from the stage of the young believers who are just regenerated in the Lord, we must grow to be the young men who are strong, John says, and who have the Word of God, not just in us, or not just that we know the “Logos”, the outward Bible, and we read the Bible, but Word of God has to be constituted into us, so that it becomes a powerful strength and life and life supply, so that when the world does come, it has no effect on us.

[CW:] Wonderful, that is really the only hope and solution, I think we get to that in the later stages of the program, but we need the Word of God and the life of God that we contact and are strengthened by in the Word of God, to have any chance to overcome, because over the centuries, it's amazing how good the devil has become at designing aspects of the world to, as you say, match those things in us, where it will create these points of ultimate vulnerability, he's really masterful in that way, isn't he?

[BL:] He really is.

[CW:] Alright, let's go back to Witness Lee, we come back to John's writings, this time the Gospel, in chapter 17, he says, "I have given them your Word", as you just said, Bill,"...and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are in the world, we do not want to be of the world. Alright, here's Witness Lee once more.

Part 2

[CW:] Bill, I would say there's another aspect of revelation that needs to dawn on God's people related to the world in what we just heard. It is not just the evil, the obvious, the Las Vegas, the fleshy things that are all around us. It's the entire system. The systematic construction that has evolved to such a sophisticated level that we need a refuge from and protection from, isn't it?

[BL:] Right, Chris. The scope of the world, as Brother Lee here mentioned, is far greater than we realize. We think it's just maybe the nightclub down the street or some ones who are not dressed properly. But it's much more than that. It's a whole worldly system which is organized and arranged by the devil, Satan himself, to usurp man from God, to trap man, and to bring man into a situation where even the things of necessity are usurped and used for an evil purpose, like food, shelter, transportation, clothing, all of these things which human beings need. Even these things can be utilized by Satan and his satanic system to ensnare people, so that a desire for God, a love for God, even turning to God, that whole feeling can be just taken away and usurped by the enemy. One thing I wanted to say is, Brother Lee here, no doubt, he got a lot of help from Brother Watchman Nee and Brother Nee's book, Love Not the World. And I really appreciate here, Brother Lee, no doubt, getting into the depth of this word cosmos. If we didn't have this kind of light, we couldn't see that the world, the material things, and also the satanic cosmos, it's a much bigger problem than we realize to the believers.

[CW:] Applying it somewhat to our day-by-day existence, I was struck with what you were talking about here, how the scope goes far beyond the obvious things, the easily identifiable things. We all get caught up in the system of day-to-day living. How much time do we spend consumed with anxiety and cares related to our finances, or our transportation, our housing, etc., etc., etc. These things fill our waking moments, almost as soon as our head leaves the pillow, oftentimes before our head leaves the pillow. We're flooded with thoughts concerning these kind of practical things, and we're caught up in the need to meet all of the expectations. This is all part of Satan's, in a sense, economy, his so-called eternal plan to distract us and lead us away from God, aren't they?

[BL:] Really so, because what is taken away from us, Chris, a lot, is mainly our time. All the things of time that we could be used in getting saturated with the Word of God, enjoying the triune God, fellowshiping with others. Now, all of the time, our thoughts are just filled with, how can I make the next dollar? How can I get my kids through college? What will happen with my children? My car is breaking down. Should I buy a new car? I need better clothes. Our whole world is just taken up in trying to exist on this earth, and this is part of that satanic cosmos invented and fully developed through the centuries and ages by Satan himself to usurp God's people away from God.

[CW:] Yeah, I want to read this verse again that we spoke of a moment ago, verse 16 and chapter 5 of 1 John, because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. Verse 19, very key in this final portion today, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one." Alright, here's Witness Lee for our last segment.

Part 3

[CW:] Bill, that whole segment was so poignant, hardly needs comment. We are obligated to make a

comment there. But I think he touched a very deep, resonating chord within all of the hearers there. We've all been drawn into this to one degree or another, haven't we? Especially our current modern society and living here in California. It's just inescapable how this system is designed, as he just said, to encourage the indulgence of our lust.

[BL:] Everything, like you say, Chris, is tailor-made to draw the lust of the flesh, especially the lust of the eyes, these kind of things. Also, I think we're realizing more and more through Brother Lee's fellowship here that the world is far more than something outside of us. The physical things like the cars, the million-dollar homes, all the beautiful things, material things that we can buy, the world is mainly within us. It's broken down here by the Apostle John into the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life. Of course, the lust of the flesh being that satanic nature that got into man from man's fall to pollute the human body and fill it with all the lust to make the body the flesh. And then, of course, the soul was damaged, according to Genesis, and the soul became the self, self-centered. And then you have man became absolutely vainglory. Everything is just vanity of vanities. There's no reality. So John breaks down the world here into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. This is exactly what, especially we believers face today. There's no way that the believers today can overcome these things. It's not just a matter of not buying another car. It's a matter of those things are within us, and the world just matches the inward world that is within us. So if we don't get another element into it, like the Word of God, the Father's Word, there's no way we can overcome the attraction of the outward things. No way.

[CW:] Yeah, it's not a matter of what we can empty ourselves from. It's what we have to also, at the same time, be filling ourselves with. We cannot exist in a vacuum, absence, all of these things that entice us and detract us. These have to be replaced by the very love of God and the Word of God that abides forever and is capable of strengthening us, enabling us to overcome.

[BL:] Right. So outside of us, we have the Bible, the Word of God. And inside of us, we have that organ that God created, our human spirit. And these two match. Just like in the negative side, we have the lust within us that matches the world outside. On the positive side, we have the Word of God outside of us that matches our human spirit within. So we need to match these two inward parts, our human spirit, with the Word of God outside of us. Then that supplies our inward being with the life and nature of God. Then that begins to swallow up the lust, the vain glory, and replaces it with God Himself.

[CW:] Well, all of us, Bill, start out as young children. We need to progress to become young men and ultimately, by the Lord's mercy, to become the very fathers. But now we're in that stage of needing to be strengthened, filled with this abiding Word and overcoming in His overcoming life, day by day. Good to have you here for this fellowship. Thank you.

[BL:] Very good. This is a rich portion.