

1. Understanding What the World Is

Today, we are starting a new group of topics. The title for this group of topics is, “Developing Leaders who are Becoming Like Their Savior”. The title for this group of topics is taken from Luke 19:10, where we read: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” As a result, we want to develop leaders who also have a tremendous concern to join Christ in seeking the lost.

In John 3:16-17, Christ said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” Yet in 1 John 2:15-17, we read, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

In these two passages, we see that God loved the world in one passage, yet, at the same time, we are told not to love the world in the other passage. Unfortunately, many Christians have misunderstood what is taught, and, as a result, have little or no contact with those who are not yet Christians. That is why it is important to help developing leaders understand what is meant by “the world”.

In John 3:16, Jesus is talking about the love that the Father and the Son both have for the people of the world. The Father loved the people of the world so much that He sent the Son to die for the sin of the people of the world. The Son loves the people of the world so much that He chose to give His life to pay for sin so that the people of the world could have their sins forgiven. In the same way, we are to have a great love for the people of the world who have been blinded by the lies of Satan.

In contrast, in 1 John 2:15-17, we are talking about the world system that is the result of evil coming into the world. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve and they sinned, Satan persuaded them to satisfy their own desires. That resulted in rebellion against the clear command of God. That rebellion caused man to have a sin nature and so death passed upon all men according to Romans 5:12. As a result, the entire world system is based on rebellion against God. In John 15:18-19, Christ said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

1 John 2:15-16 tells us, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” In verse 15, we see that we are not to love the world system, because that system is based upon rebellion against God. Then, in verse 16, we see that Christians are not to be controlled by the evil desires that are the result of the world system – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. As a

result, we are not to love the evil world system with its evil desires.

This brings us to a second passage that Christians often misunderstand. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 says, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’” To have a full understanding of this passage, we need to go back to 1 Corinthians to get a little background. Some of the Corinthians were still offering sacrifices in the temples of their idols, while trying to follow Christ. As a result, 1 Corinthians 10:19-21 says, “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.”

Paul makes it very clear that joining together with unbelievers in offering sacrifices to idols is actually having fellowship with demons. As a result, in 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul points out that being yoked together with unbelievers in their worship of idols would profane the temple of God since Paul had already pointed out in 1 Corinthians 6:14-20 that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The focus of 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 is that Christians are not to join together with unbelievers in the worship of demons. Instead, as Christians, we are to totally separate ourselves from any form of demon worship.

2 Corinthians 6:18-7:1 goes on to point out, “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” We are to cleanse ourselves both from filthiness of the flesh and filthiness of the spirit, because we are now in the family of God. We defile both our body and our spirit by joining ourselves together with unbelievers in demon worship.

By the way, although idols, not marriage, is the context of 2 Corinthians 6:14, we can still share this verse when warning Christians about the dangers of dating and marrying a non-Christian. This is appropriate because every non-Christian is in bondage to sin and has replaced God with an idol such as money, pleasure, or some other thing, even if he does not have an idol made of wood or stone.

God loves the people of the world, but He hates the world system that is controlled by Satan and his demons. In fact, God views those who are controlled by sin as being in bondage to Satan. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Here, we see that Christ came to destroy Satan and his works so that Christ

could release those who are in bondage.

If we understand the difference between the world system and its lusts and the people of the world who are in bondage to Satan, it will change the way we relate to those who are not yet Christians. We will realize that Christ left us here on earth to help Him free them from their bondage to Satan by telling them the good news that Christ died to set them free from sin. We will share with them the good news that the Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment Christ made for sin by raising Christ from the dead.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, we read, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” Verse 9 shows that the Thessalonians understood the meaning of repentance. Verses 5 and 6 show that the Thessalonians turned to Jesus Christ in true faith.

These verses also help us to see the Christian life from three viewpoints. In the past, we repented of our sin of unbelief (the only sin that will keep people out of heaven) by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. In the present, we are to serve the living and true God. As we look to the future, we are to eagerly await the return of Christ from heaven.

If we understand what the Bible teaches about the world, we will become partners with Christ by sharing the message that Christ died to deliver people from the bondage of sin. We will share that Christ, “was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification” – Romans 4:25. We will share that when people turn from whatever idols they are following, and place their faith in Jesus Christ, they will receive forgiveness of sins and an eternal inheritance – Acts 26:18. We want every developing leader to clearly understand what the world is so that he or she will know that he is to avoid the sinful lusts of the world, but reach out to the people of the world with Christ’s love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders grow in their understanding of these things.