

Lesson 5: Materialism
"You Cannot Serve God and Mammon"

Introduction

Materialism is the love of material things. It is a love that goes beyond appreciation to idolatry - the worship of material wealth (Col. 3:5); both God and others take second place to a passion to possess this world's goods.

Because this fever to possess things is such a grave threat to the service of God and the love of others it is taken with utmost seriousness in Scripture. Jesus once sternly warned a man to "beware of covetousness because one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Lk. 12:15). Paul lists it among the things which must be "put to death" (Col. 3:5) because it will keep one from inheriting the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Those that the covetous person is classed with in the New Testament - fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards - makes clear what a dark and devastating sin it is. As Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and mammon [riches]" (Mt. 6:24).

In some ways the love of things is the most basic kind of all worldliness. It involves a shallow fascination with things that have no life and do not last, and a disregard for things spiritual and eternal. For the person who is mad for things the future is sold to buy the here and now.

I. The Possession of Riches

1. How does the Bible say we should view the physical blessings of this life? Eccl. 2:24; 3:12,13; 1 Tim. 6:17b. Note Eccl. 9:7-9
2. Does the Bible speak of any rich men who were righteous? Gen. 13:2 Job 1:1-3
3. If wealth itself is not sinful, what is it that can make it spiritually poisonous? 1 Tim. 6:9,10
What was the problem of the rich young ruler? Mk. 10:17-24
4. Can a poor person be covetous? Do you think the rich might have a greater temptation to trust in their riches?

II. The Deceitfulness of Riches

5. What can choke the spiritual life and usefulness out of a Christian? Mt. 13:22
6. Why is the sense of security that riches can give one, a deception?
 - a. Prov. 23:5
 - b. Eccl. 5:10
 - c. 1 Tim. 6:7
7. What can riches blind you to? Rev. 3:17,18

III. The Christian and Things

8. Whatever he may have materially with what should a Christian be content? Why? 1 Tim. 6:6-8
9. Does a Christian "own" what he has? 1 Cor. 6:19,20
10. What is the Christian's relationship to the "things" God has given him? 1 Pet. 4:10
Note Mt. 25:14-30
11. Where should the Lord's disciple invest his treasure? Why? Mt. 6:19-21
12. What can the Christian do to be a good steward of what God has given him? Eph. 4:28;
Phil. 4:14-16 Gal. 6:10 Jas. 1:27 Heb. 13:1,2
13. What must we always remember? Acts 20:35 How does giving transform us?
Acts 20:
14. List some signs that things are coming between us and God. Between us and our families,
our brothers and sisters in Christ, other people.
15. List the material things you own and indicate what your main purposes are for possessing
those things.