

**Text: 1 Jn 5.19**

Last week I talked about the impulse that prompts the question, “What about Christians and media?”

If you are born again, there is a universal instinct that some aspects of human culture/society/daily living don’t meet God’s standards, are displeasing to God.

Today I want to consider the topic from another angle. For our text, we will start with:

**1 Jn 5.19 ¶ We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**

The word for “world” here is the word that means the “organized system of the world.” We could use “society” or “culture” in much the same way.

Each nation has an individual culture, different ways of expressing itself.

We can talk about “Mexican food,” “Chinese food,” “Indian food,” even “American food,” and pretty well have an idea about what we are talking about — there are certain features of diet that fit in those cultural categories.

The same is true for music, the arts, culture, and other means of communication. There are some aspects of culture that are dominated by ethnic or regional ways of thinking or expressing one’s self.

Yet, on the other hand, certain aspects of culture are becoming universal, especially when we think of “media” and even more especially “mass media.”

The whole world seems to be adopting a certain point of view, and expressing itself culturally much the same ways everywhere.

That makes our text even more crucial. It is talking about the environment, or if you want a fancy word, *milieu*. The whole world is under the influence of the evil one.

**Proposition:** Our decisions about media struggle with identifying competing realms.

**I. The spiritual realms (1 Jn 5.19)****A. The state of believers in this world****1. We are “out of” God – new creation, regeneration**

2. We are self-aware (the Spirit witnesses with our spirit) — “we know”
3. We are also aware of the place the rest of the world is in

## B. The state of the world itself

1. This is more than merely the people of the world
2. This is the *cosmos* – the sum of
  - a. The people
  - b. The culture
  - c. The arts
  - d. The media

In short, the whole world system

3. All that is the world (*i.e.*, that which is not “out of God”) lies in the power of the evil one
  - a. The world is not “out of” the evil one – it rests “in the evil one”  
[note: “power” not in text]
  - b. The world rests in, lies down in, reclines in

The world makes its bed in the evil one: that which fuels its imagination, drives its conversation, informs its proclamations and communications is the mind of the evil one.

There is a spiritual or heavenly realm.

There is a natural or worldly realm.

## II. What the Bible means by “worldly”

### A. Terms translated ‘worldly’ in the NAU and ESV

1. NAU *babelos*: basic meaning – unhallowed
  - a. 1 Tim 4.7 – worldly fables

1 Tim 4.7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;

b. 1 Tim 6.20; 2 Tim 2.16 – worldly chatter

1 Tim 6.20 ¶ O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” —

2 Tim 2.16 But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,

“βεβηλος denotes a. the place which may be entered by anyone ... i.e., “accessible.” It corresponds exactly to the Lat. *Profanes*... It then acquires the further sense of what may be said publicly in contrast to what must not be uttered on religious grounds”<sup>1</sup>

“*accessible, lawful to be trodden; properly, used of places hence, profane*”<sup>2</sup>

In English, the sense is ‘common, ordinary, public’ as opposed to ‘private, devoted, sacred’.

Thus, worldly in this sense is something that is not sacred but is of ordinary value, in common use among men.

2. NAU *psukikos*: ‘worldly-minded’; basic meaning – soulish, natural, of the soula. Jude 19 – worldly minded, natural minded

Jude 1.19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 1:604 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

<sup>2</sup> Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

## b. Compare 1 Cor 15.44-49.

1 Cor 15.44-49 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.<sup>45</sup> So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.<sup>46</sup> However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.<sup>47</sup> The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.<sup>48</sup> As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.<sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

In this sense, worldly is something that is not spiritual, corruptible not incorruptible, earthy not heavenly.

3. ESV *sarx*: basic meaning – flesh

- a. 1 Cor 1.26 – not many wise according to worldly standards (KJV: not many wise after the flesh)

1 Cor 1.26 ¶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

ESV 1 Cor 1.26 ¶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

Things valued or esteemed *in society* – ‘according to flesh’ – ‘according to humanity’.

- b. 1 Cor 7.28 – those who marry will have worldly troubles (KJV: such shall have trouble in the flesh)

1 Cor 7.28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

ESV 1 Cor 7.28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have **worldly troubles**, and I would spare you that.

According to this life, parallel to the cares and troubles that spring up in the thorny ground and tend to choke the word, the troubles of life.

The focus of worldly in these passages has to do with human society or the general course of human life.

4. esv *of the world*: the genitive form of *kosmos*, world

- a. 1 Cor 7.33 – the married man is anxious about worldly things (KJV: things that are of the world)

1 Cor 7.33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

- b. 1 Cor 7.34 – the married woman is anxious about worldly things (KJV: the things of the world)

1 Cor 7.34 and *his interests* are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

These two passages treat ‘of the world’ very similarly to ‘according to the flesh’ or ‘in the flesh’ in the previous two passages.

Worldly here means that earth-bound character of the troubles and demands of this life.

- c. 2 Cor 7.10 – worldly grief produces death (KJV: sorrow of the world)

2 Cor 7.10 For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to* salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- 1) Opposite of godly grief
- 2) Lit: ‘the of the world sorrow’ vs. ‘the according to God sorrow’

Worldly here is unspiritual, selfish and self-centered; something not submitted to God or out of a response to God or godly motivators, but instead a ‘self-centered sorrow over the painful consequences of sin’.

5. Heb 9.1 – the worldly sanctuary (as opposed to the heavenly sanctuary – translated earthly by NAU and ESV)

Heb 9.1 ¶ Now even the first *covenant* had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.

6. Titus 2.12 – [the grace of God is] teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live... (desires NAU; passions ESV)

Tit 2.12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

This last is a key verse for studying worldliness. We will look at it in more depth in lessons to come.

Worldly desires are those desires that characterize the worldly mind in general, the desires for earthly things, the lusts for fleshly pleasures.

## B. Summarizing:

Something is *worldly* when

1. It is common or profane – ‘babelos’, “worldly fables, worldly chatter”
2. It is not spiritual, but is natural – ‘psukikos’, worldly-minded (natural minded) Jude 19
3. It is oriented towards life in the flesh, humanity – ‘worldly troubles’ [‘according to the flesh’]
4. It is oriented towards concerns that are of this world as opposed to concerns of heaven – ‘worldly things’ [‘of this world’ things]
5. It is self-centered rather than God-centered – ‘worldly sorrow’ [‘sorrow of this world’ — as opposed to ‘godly sorrow’]

6. It is earthly rather than heavenly – ‘the worldly tabernacle’

7. It involves worldly desires, the passions that motivated the lost mind

**A working definition:**

Something is worldly when it belongs to the affairs of life on this earth, *especially* as opposed to the life of the spirit or of heaven.

**Conclusion:**

**Proposition:** Our decisions about media struggle with identifying competing realms.

We need to grow in our discernment of the worldly in the media we consume. Since the world rests in the evil one, worldliness is more than just “not Christian.” It is really “anti-Christian.”

We can’t live outside our world, but we can live with an awareness of our world and make good decisions about it.