

James 4:4 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- James 4:1
- James 4:2
- James 4:3
- [James 4:4](#)
- [James 4:5](#)
- [James 4:6](#)
- [James 4:7](#)
- [James 4:8](#)
- [James 4:9](#)
- [James 4:10](#)
- James 4:11
- James 4:12
- James 4:13
- James 4:14
- James 4:15
- James 4:16
- James 4:17

Click chart to enlarge

Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
See also [Overview](#) and [Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

JAMES

Faith for Living

Motives for Works	The Place of Works: Outward Demonstration of Inner Faith						Outreach of Works
Jas 1:1-18	Jas 1:19-2:13		Jas 2:14-25	Jas 3:1-12	Jas 3:13-4:12	Jas 4:13-5:12	Jas 5:13-19
Trials & Temptations	Word & Works		Faith & Works	Tongue	Wars	Future	Others
Faith In Testings	Fulfill	Favor	Fallacy	Fountain	Factions	Faith and the Future	Faith and our Fellowship
FAITH AT WORK							

The Reactions of Living Faith to Worldliness

The reaction of living faith to selfish strife (James 4:1–5:12)

- A. The condition manifesting worldliness (James 4:1–6)
 - 1. The description of the condition (James 4:1–3)
 - a. The questions exposing the source (James 4:1)
 - b. The outcome of the condition (James 4:2a)
 - c. The reasons for the condition (James 4:2b–3)
 - 2. The rebuke for the condition (James 4:4–6)
 - a. The adulterous character of worldliness (James 4:4)
 - (1) The question of rebuke (James 4:4a)
 - (2) The significance of their attitude (James 4:4b)
 - b. The authoritative message of Scripture (James 4:5a)
 - c. The divine response to the worldly (James 4:5b–6)

- (1) The yearning of the Spirit (James 4:5b–6a)
- (2) The verification from Scripture (James 4:6b)
- B. The exhortation to the worldly (James 4:7–12)
 - 1. The call to return to God (James 4:7–10)
 - a. The statement of the basic demand (James 4:7)
 - (1) Nearness to God (James 4:8a)
 - (2) Personal cleansing (James 4:8b)
 - (3) Open repentance (James 4:9)
 - (4) Godly humility (James 4:10)
 - 2. The injunction against censoriousness (James 4:11–12)
 - a. The statement of the prohibition (James 4:11a)
 - b. The justification for the prohibition (James 4:11b–12)

The reaction of living faith to presumptuous planning (4:13–17)

- A. The rebuke of their self-sufficient attitude (James 4:13–14)
 - 1. The delineation of the attitude (James 4:13)
 - 2. The presumption in the attitude (James 4:14)
- B. The indication of the proper attitude (James 4:15)
- C. The evil of their present attitude (James 4:16–17)
 - 1. The evil of their boasting (James 4:16)
 - 2. The sin of their inconsistency (James 4:17) (Hiebert - James Commentary)

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes *himself* an enemy of God." ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [moichalides, ouk oidate \(2PRAI\)](#) [hoti e philia tou kosmou echthra tou theou estin? \(3SPAI\)](#) [os ean oun boulethe \(3SAPS\)](#) [philos einai \(PAN\)](#) [tou kosmou, echthros tou theou kathistatai. \(3SPPI\)](#)

Amplified: You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ASV: Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.

BBE: O you who are false to God, do you not see that the friends of this world are not God's friends? Every man desiring to be a friend of this world makes himself a hater of God.

Darby: Adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore is minded to be [the] friend of the world is constituted enemy of God.

ESV: You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

GWT: You unfaithful people! Don't you know that love for this {evil} world is hatred toward God? Whoever wants to be a friend of this world is an enemy of God.

KJV: Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Macent: Degenerate race, don't you know that friendship with vice is hostility against heaven. he that is a friend to the vicious world, is an enemy to God.

Moffatt: (Wanton creatures! do you not know that the world's friendship means enmity to God? Whoever, then, chooses to be the world's friend, turns enemy to God.

NAB: Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God

NLT: You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: You are like unfaithful wives, flirting with the glamour of this world, and never realising that to be the world's lover means becoming the enemy of God! Anyone who deliberately chooses to love the world is thereby making himself God's enemy. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

RSV: Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

TLB: You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband's enemies. Don't you realize that making friends with God's enemies—the evil pleasures of this world—makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God.

Wuest: O, adulteresses, do you not know that your friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore would desire after mature consideration to be a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God. (Erdmans)

Weymouth: You unfaithful women, do you not know that friendship with the world means enmity to God? Therefore whoever is bent on being friendly with the world makes himself an enemy to God.

Young's Literal: Adulterers and adulteresses! have ye not known that friendship of the world is enmity with God? whoever, then, may counsel to be a friend of the world, an enemy of God he is set.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?: moichalides, ouk oidate (2PRAI) hoti e philia tou kosmou echthra tou theou estin? (3SPA1):

- Ps 50:18; 73:27; Isaiah 57:3; Jeremiah 9:2; Hosea 3:1; Matthew 12:39; 16:4
- **Friendship** - John 7:7; 15:19,23; 17:14; 1John 2:15,16
- **Enmity** - Genesis 3:15; Romans 8:7
- [James 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD A convincing evidence of true piety is the spirit of separation from the world](#)

THE CONTEXT OF JAMES 4:4

Note - See also James 4 Commentary

Hiebert introduces James 4 observing that "James first describes the reader's turbulent manifestations of worldliness (Jas 4:1-3) and then rebukes their adulterous friendship with the world (Jas 4:4) ([D Edmond Hiebert - James](#) - Highly Recommended Commentary - Any commentary written by Hiebert is excellent!)

For context below are several translations of James 4:1-3 so that you may have a sense for the worldly attitudes and actions among the readers, behaviors that set the stage for James' scathing rebuke in Jas 4:4...

NASB - What is the source of **quarrels** (Gk =- polemos - English polemic = an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another) and **conflicts** (mache [word study] = of physical combat, but on figurative in NT of "word wars") among you? Is not the source your **pleasures** (Gk = hedone [word study] = in a bad sense, as indulgence and lack of control of natural appetites - sensual pleasure, passion, lust, cp 2Pe 2:13-note, English = hedonism = doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life) that (present tense = continually) **wage war** (strateuomai [word study] = see 1Pe 2:11-note) in your members? 2 You **lust** (epithumeo [word study] = strong desire directed toward something, in context in a wicked sense; present tense = continually) and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives (NB: Worldliness had even invaded their prayer life!), so that you may spend ("spend freely" cp Lk 15:14 = prodigal son) it on your pleasures.

WUEST - From what source do quarrels and conflicts among you come? Do they not come from this source, namely, from your inordinate passions which are struggling with one another in your members? You have a passionate desire and are not realizing its fulfillment; you murder, And you covet and are filled with jealousy, and you are not able to obtain. You engage in conflicts and quarrel, You do not have because you are not praying for something to be given you. You pray for something to be given you and do not receive because you pray with evil intent in order that you may use it in your inordinate passions. ([Erdmans](#))

AMPLIFIED - WHAT LEADS to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members? 2 You are jealous and covet [what others

have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 [Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

PHILLIPS - But about the feuds and struggles that exist among you - where do you suppose they come from? Can't you see that they arise from conflicting passions within yourselves? You crave for something and don't get it, you are jealous and envious of what others have got and you don't possess it yourselves. Consequently in your exasperated frustration you struggle and fight with one another. You don't get what you want because you don't ask God for it. And when you do ask he doesn't give it to you, for you ask in quite the wrong spirit - you only want to satisfy your own desires.

SPIRITUAL UNFAITHFULNESS

You adulteresses - Note that James drops his customary "my brethren" (Jas 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19) in exchange for "**you adulteresses**". Do you think he might of piqued his readers' attention? Just a little I would imagine! Of course, in context, James is not referring to literal adultery, but uses this lurid metaphor to describe the spiritual unfaithfulness of his readers as he just outlined in James 4:1, 2, 3. Remember also that his readers were **predominantly Jewish** (Jas 1:1-note) and would have been familiar with God's frequent OT denunciation of Israel for her "spiritual harlotry", in which she repeatedly behaved much like an unfaithful, adulterous wife would to her husband.

[Arthur Pink](#) writes that spiritual adultery is "a giving unto the world that love and devotion, time and strength, which the Lord alone is entitled unto. As natural marriage is a solemn and sacred engagement which is not to be entered into lightly, constituting as it does a lifelong compact—much more should there be the most serious and self-searching deliberation before anyone openly professes to be united to the Lord."

Spiritual adultery is worshiping false gods, while pretending to worship the true God.

[J C Ryle](#) - All loving of the world, and all fellowship with it — is unfaithfulness to Him who has so loved us; and in the measure in which loving of the world is followed, it proves us in that measure, to be untrue to Him. It is *spiritual adultery*, and as such it will be counted to the sore loss of him who indulges in the friendship of the world. ([Love Not the World](#))

[Thomas Brooks](#) has a stinging commentary on spiritual adultery - Neutrality is the spiritual adultery of the heart. Double-minded men are spiritual harlots; they have their hearts divided between God and mammon, between Christ and other lovers. Now harlots in ancient time were to be burnt, Gen. 38:24. Certainly hell is for the double-minded man—and the double-minded man for hell. God will be as severe, yes, more severe, in punishing, spiritual whoredom, than ever men have been in punishing bodily whoredom. God looks upon every double-minded man as in arms against him: Mat. 12:30, "He who is not with me, is against me;" and, therefore, martial law shall be executed upon them. God will blot out their names, and hang them up as monuments of his justice and vengeance. ([The Crown and Glory of Christianity, or, HOLINESS, the Only Way to Happiness](#))

[Warren Wiersbe](#) succinctly defines **spiritual adultery** as...

being married to Christ (Ro 7:4-note) yet loving the world (2Co 11:2,3). In the OT, God called Israel's idolatry "adultery" because the idols had robbed Him of the people's devotion. How can Christians have friendship with the world when they have been called out of the world? (Jn 15:18,19) We have been crucified to the world, and the world to us (Gal 6:14).

There are four dangerous steps that take the believer into a wrong relationship with the world: **(1)** friendship with world, Jas 4:4; **(2)** being soiled by the world, Jas 1:27-note; **(3)** love with the world, 1Jn 2:15, 16, 17; **(4)** conformity to the world, Ro 12:1-note, Ro 12:2-note. The result is that the compromising believer is judged with the world (1Co 11:32). Lot illustrates this folly; see Ge 13:10, 11, 12, 13 and Ge 19:1-23, 24, 25, 26. ([Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

ISRAEL: GOD'S WIFE

In the OT God is portrayed as the **husband** of Israel...(See also Israel Wife of Jehovah)

"Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your **betrothals** (espousal = indicates time of engagement of Israel to God), your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown. (Jer 2:2)

'Return, O faithless (apostate, idolatrous) sons,' declares the LORD; 'For I am a **master (ba'al = a husband)** to you, and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.' (Jer 3:14, **cp other translations** = Jer 3:14NIV, Jer 3:14KJV)

Surely, as a wife treacherously and faithlessly departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously and faithlessly with Me, O house of Israel, says the Lord. (Jer 3:20 Amplified)

(Speaking of the **New Covenant** Je 31:31 which Jehovah says is...) not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke (Mosaic Covenant - the "10 Commandments"), although I was a **husband (ba'al)** to them," declares the LORD. (Jer 31:32)

(Speaking of the future day at the onset of the **Millennium** Jehovah declares) "And it will come about in that day," declares the LORD, "That you will call Me **Ishi ("Husband")** and will no longer call Me **Baali** (means "lord" or owner but in context used in sense of idol-worship) For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that they will be mentioned by their names no more. In that day I will also **make a covenant** (literally "cut a covenant", cp Ro 11:26, 27-note) for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety. And **I will betroth you to Me forever**; (This is the fulfillment of the New Covenant, cp Jer 31:33, 34, 35, 36, 37, Ezek 37:25 = "forever") Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion (Hos 2:16, 17, 18, 19)

"Fear not, for you will not be put to shame. Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your **husband (ba'al)** is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth. (Isa 54:4, 5)

Comment: This promised declaration will be fulfilled in the time of the **Millennium**., for that will be the only time that He would not be angry with Israel (as Isa 54:9 prophesies).

THE CHURCH: BRIDE OF CHRIST OUR BRIDEGROOM

The NT Church, composed of the body of all believers, both Jew and Gentile (cp Ep 2:11, 12-note, Ep 2:13, 14-note, Ep 2:15, 16-note), is often referred to as the **"Bride of Christ"**, a phrase which actually never appears in Scripture.

Jesus Himself however did allude to the "Bride of Christ" when He said...

While the bridegroom (clearly a reference to Himself) is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. (Mk 2:19, 20)

Paul describes the mystical body of Christ, the **Church** as Christ's **bride** writing to the believers at Corinth that...

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for **Ibetrothed** (Gk = harmozo = to fit or join together, from harmos = a joint or articulation! In Scripture betrothal unlike our modern "engagement" was so binding that to break that covenant required a bill of divorcement!) you to **one Husband** (emphasizes that there is one person and ONLY ONE to Whom the Corinthians owed their allegiance and faithfulness!), so that to Christ I might present (Gk = technical term for a priest's placing an offering on the altar = Literally to place beside with idea of yielding to the disposal of another) you as a pure (**hagnos**) virgin. (2Co 11:2)

Comment: And so Paul parallels James' warning to remain loyal to Christ (Jas 4:4) and not to engage in "lewd, lurid" activities with "another woman" named the "wicked world" for to do so would be tantamount to committing "marital (spiritual) infidelity" of the grossest kind!

Writing to the saints at Ephesus **Paul** used the relation between a **husband** and **wife** to expand on the intimate relationship between **Christ**, the **Bridegroom** and His **Bride**, the **Church**...

Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as **Christ also is the head of the church**, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the **church (Think "Bride")** is subject to (hupotasso; present tense = continually) **Christ (Think "Bridegroom")**, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, **love** (agapao) (present imperative = not a "suggestion" or an option but a command to do so continually! **How? Only** possible as we choose to die to self [cp Mk 8:34, Jn 12:24] and practice surrendering our will to the will of the Holy Spirit that we might be

controlled by Him that we would first be prompted to even "desire" to love this way and then be empowered to do so! See Ep 5:18-note, Php 2:13NLT-note) your wives, **just as** (no "wigggle room" here!) **Christ ("Bridegroom") also loved the church ("Bride")** and gave Himself up for (= substitutionary sacrifice) **her**, 26 so that **He** might sanctify **her** (set her apart, make her holy), having cleansed **her** by the washing of water with the word (The gospel, cp Col 1:5-note, 1Co 15:1-note), 27 that He might present to Himself **the church in all her glory, (When?** see Rev 19 below) having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Eph 5:22-27-see notes beginning with verse 22).

John refers to the **Church** as a **Bride** in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ declaring...

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb **"Bridegroom"** has come and His **bride (Church)** has made herself ready. 8 It was given to her **(Bride)** to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (cp Ep 5:26-note). 9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' " And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Rev 19:7, 8, 9-see notes [Re 19:7](#), [19:8](#), [19:9](#)).

Comment: Holloway writes that "James extends the metaphor from the church as a whole to the individual Christian. Each Christian is to God as a wife to a husband. Thus, these Christians, like Israel of old, have broken their vows of exclusive allegiance to God to follow pleasure, one of the gods of their age and ours." (Holloway, G.: James & Jude. The College Press NIV Commentary. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub)

Erdman's Dictionary of the Bible observes that the "Bridal imagery in the OT and NT connotes the intimacy and mutual fidelity (the quality or state of being faithful) between God/Christ and God's people. It also signals the care and protection required of the **bridegroom** toward the **bride**. The bridal metaphor underscores her dependence on and obligation to show reverence toward her spouse, in accordance with the demands of gender relationships in "honor and shame" cultures. Israel's infidelity, or "harlotry" (Hos 2), constitutes the most developed form of this marital metaphor in the OT."

John Piper writes that James 4:4 "pictures the church as the wife of God. God has made us for Himself and has given Himself to us for our enjoyment. Therefore, it is adultery when we try to be "friends" with the world. If we seek from the world the pleasures we should seek in God, we are unfaithful to our marriage vows. And, what's worse, when we go to our heavenly Husband and actually pray for the resources with which to commit adultery with the world, it is a very wicked thing. It is as though we would ask our husband for money to hire male prostitutes to provide the pleasure we don't find in him! (Piper, J. Desiring God. Page 164. Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers)

ISRAEL: THE WIFE OF JEHOVAH PLAYED THE HARLOT

Tragically, the OT record is riddled with lurid descriptions of Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness to her Husband, Jehovah - e.g., Jer 2:20; 23, 3:1,6,8,9; Ps 78:58, Ezek 16:25, 26, 27, 28, 29; Jer 3:8, 13:27, Hos 1:2; 7:13-16, 9:1, Isa 50:1, 57:3, 5, 6, 7).

In fact the OT uses the phrase **play the harlot** some 19 times (in 18v) alluding to Israel's spiritual adultery -- Ex 34:15, 16; Lev 17:7; 20:5, 6; Nu 25:1; Dt 31:16; 2Chr 21:11, 13; Isa 23:17; Ezek 16:17; 20:30; Hos 3:3; 4:10, 13, 14, 15, 18.

The related phrase **played the harlot** is used to portray Israel's spiritual adultery in the following 20 passages - Nu 15:39, Jdg 2:17, 8:27, 33, 1Chr 5:25, 2Chr 21:13, Ps 106:39, Ezek 6:9, 16:15, 16, 26, 28, 23:3, 5, 19, 30, Hos 2:5, 4:12, 5:3, 9:1.

Jesus used the figure of spiritual harlotry in describing the unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel to its vows to the Lord (see passages below)

In the present context the fact that James uses the plural (**adulteresses**) implies that he is directing his rebuke at those individuals who were behaving unfaithfully toward their Covenant partner Christ who was also their Bridegroom (cp 2Co 11:2).

The commentator **Dauids** (Epistle of James) writes that this stinging introduction **Adulteresses** makes it clear that James has broken off analysis and is now preaching repentance.

Note that some of the translations of Jas 4:4 (see above - e.g., KJV, RSV, Young's Literal) use the **Textus Receptus** reading which is translated "**adulterers and adulteresses**". Most modern translations have only the word **moichalis** which describes female adulteresses, and most commentators accept this rendering as the more accurate.

And so to reiterate a common biblical picture for the covenant between God and His people is the marriage covenant. In this image, breaking the covenant with God is likened to the unfaithfulness of adultery.

Thomas Manton flatly states that...

Worldliness in Christians is spiritual adultery. It dissolves the spiritual marriage between God and the soul; of all sins it is the most inappropriate to the marriage covenant (See related study: [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)), the covenant of grace in which God declares himself to be "all sufficient" (Genesis 17:1 - see [EL Shaddai - God Almighty](#)). We have enough in God, but we desire to make up our happiness in the creatures; this is plain whoring: "you [God] destroy all who are unfaithful to you" (Psalm 73:27-[note](#))—that is, **those who seek in the world what is only found in God** There are degrees in this whoredom. There may be adultery by desire when the body is not defiled; unclean glances are a degree of lust (cp Mt 5:28-note). The children of God may have some wandering and straggling thoughts; when the devil is at their elbows, the world may be increased in their esteem and imagination. But soon they correct themselves and return to God's arms: "Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15-[note](#)). ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

Matthew Henry comments that in this passage James is giving his readers "fair warning to avoid all criminal friendships with this world. Worldly people are called adulterers and adulteresses, because of their perfidiousness (faithlessness, acts of disloyalty) of God, while they give their best affections to the world. Covetousness is elsewhere called idolatry, and it is here called adultery (Col 3:5-note); it is a forsaking of Him to Whom we are devoted and espoused, to cleave (to adhere firmly and closely or loyally and unwaveringly) to other things; there is this brand (a mark fixed or) put upon worldly-mindedness—that it is enmity to God. A man may have a competent portion of the good things of this life, and yet may keep himself in the love of God; but he who sets his heart upon the world, who places his happiness in it, and will conform himself to it (cp Ro 12:2-note), and do any thing rather than lose its friendship. He is an enemy to God. It is constructive treason (the highest crime of a civil nature of which a man can be guilty) and rebellion against God to set the world upon His throne in our hearts. Whosoever therefore is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. He who will act upon this principle, to keep the smiles of the world, and to have its continual friendship, cannot but show himself, in spirit, and in his actions too, an enemy to God. You cannot serve God and mammon, Mt. 6:24-note. Hence arise wars and fightings, even from this adulterous idolatrous love of the world, and serving of it; for what peace can there be among men, so long as there is enmity towards God? Or who can fight against God, and prosper?"

Steven Cole comments that

James is saying that if you know Christ, you are married to Him. Just as marital adultery is serious sin, even more so spiritual adultery is serious sin...James draws the line in the sand (Jas 4:4): "Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Take your pick: Are you married to God or to the world? Can you imagine a couple that gets married, and a month later the husband tells his wife, "I'm going out tonight with my old girlfriend"? "I love you, but I want to keep in touch with her, too!" Needless to say, that marriage is in big trouble! When you get married, you vow to forsake all others and be devoted exclusively to your spouse.

In the same way, when you come to Christ as Savior and Lord, you say goodbye to the world. It used to be your companion and friend. You spent many hours running with it. But you can't bring it into your marriage to Jesus Christ. He brooks no rivals. You are either friends with the world and an enemy of God, or friends with God and an enemy of the world. And how frightening to make yourself the enemy of the living God!...

As John Piper has aptly pointed out, the Bible is not against us having pleasure. Rather, it is against us finding pleasure in the wrong things or in wrong ways. Knowing God is the ultimate pleasure. The Psalms often proclaim this truth:

Psalm 16:11 ([note](#)): "You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

Psalm 36:7-9 ([note](#)): "How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light."

Psalm 37:4 ([note](#)): "Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart."

There are many more such verses. But the point is that the world is the evil system that competes with God. It offers you pleasure apart from God. But true, lasting, eternal pleasure is to be had only in God Himself! As God says (Jer. 2:13), "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Friendship with the world means trying to satisfy your thirst in man-made, broken cisterns that leak. Every time you go for a drink, they're dry. Only God is the fountain of living water that satisfies the soul ([Read the full sermon](#))

Michael Andrus on adulteresses - The label "adulterous people" seems strange in a passage addressed to believers, until one realizes that he is probably not referring to physical adultery, which hopefully is relatively uncommon in the church, but rather to spiritual adultery, which is very common in the church. This is, in fact, a term borrowed from the OT. God had brought Israel into a

covenant relationship with Himself, but they had been unfaithful to Him through idolatry, disobedience, and compromise with the pagan cultures around them. So the prophets accused the people of being spiritual adulterers. James sees the same problem in the church of his day—too much fraternizing with the enemy. Christians don't want to be different; they don't want to stand out in the crowd; so they borrow the world's priorities; and they pursue worldly pleasures. But what they often fail to consider is that the world hates their Heavenly Father, and when they fraternize with the world they stir up God's jealousy. ([Sermon](#))

Adulteresses ([3428](#)) (**moichalis**) is related to **moichos** (which means essentially "married and impure", literally adulterer, "unlawful" lover - moichos 3x in NT = 1Co 6:9, He 13:4, Lk 18:11; 4x in the Lxx = Ps 50:18, Job 24:15, Pr 6:32, Isa 57:3). **Moichalis** pertains to being unfaithful to one to whom one should remain faithful and is used literally of a wife who does not remain faithful to her husband.

Figuratively **moichalis** is used to describe one who is **spiritually unfaithful**. As discussed above in the OT, Israel is presented as the **wife** of God - see Je 2:2, Je 3:1, 6, 14, Je 3:14KJV, Je 3:14NIV, Je 31:32, Isa 54:5, Ho 2:16YLT.

Proverbs 30:20 This is the way of an **adulterous** woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, "I have done no wrong."

Hosea 3:1 Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an **adulteress**, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."

Comment: Here we observe a succinct but clear "definition" of what God means when He calls Israel an adulteress -**they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes**.

Malachi 3:5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the **adulterers** and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

Ezekiel 16:38 "Thus I shall judge you, like women who commit **adultery** or shed blood are judged; and I shall bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

Ezekiel 23:45 "But they, righteous men, will judge them with the judgment of **adulteresses**, and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are **adulteresses** and blood is on their hands.

Moichalis in the New Testament...

But He answered and said to them (some of the scribes and Pharisees Mt 12:38), "An evil and **adulterous** generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet (cp Mt 16:4)

Comment: Observe that Jesus associates "evil" (poneros = evil in active opposition to good) with moichalis in this passage. He condemns the nation of Israel for being unfaithful in its vows to the Lord.

Mark 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this **adulterous** and sinful (hamartolos) generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. (Mk 8:38)

Romans 7:3-note So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an **adulteress**; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an **adulteress**, though she is joined to another man.

2Peter 2:14-note having eyes full of **adultery** and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

THE PIERCING QUESTION

Do you not know?- Questions are calculated to get the hearers' attention (Also commonly used by Paul - Ro 6:16; 11:2; 1Co 3:16; 5:6; 6:2; 9:13). Questions draw the audience into the dialogue. And so James begins with a question which calls for an affirmative answer from his readers. In short, the readers cannot be ignorant of the truth that friendship with the world is hatred toward God.

THOUGHT - They **did know** the truth of what he was getting ready to reiterate. In short, they had no excuse for forsaking God for friendship with His enemy. And neither do we beloved, for we live much closer in time to the appearing of our blessed hope, our Bridegroom's sudden return to sweep us (His Bride) off our feet (See "we shall be caught up"!)). Therefore, it behooves us to continually ponder the maxim that "the fine linen (of our bridal attire) is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev 19:8-[note](#))

Kistemaker observes that "James puts this statement in the form of a question and appeals to the intuitive knowledge of his

readers. What husband permits his wife to have an illicit affair with another man? And what do you think of a wife who forsakes marital love by engaging in adulterous relations? What do you think is God's reaction when a believer becomes enamored with the world? God is a jealous God (Ex 20:5; Dt 5:9). He tolerates no friendship with the world." (Ibid).

Puritan **Thomas Manton** remarks that James "appeals to their consciences; this is a rousing question. Worldly people do not sin out of ignorance so much as not thinking." ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

Hiebert comments that this question calling for the answer "**Yes, we know**" "implies that they have received instruction concerning the demands of Christian discipleship (Mt 6:23, 24, Lk 16:13). Their conscience will confirm that in their self-indulgence and love for the pleasures of the world they are unfaithful to the Lord to whom they have pledged their full allegiance (1Jn 2:15). James' question to them implies that their friendship with the world was so pleasurable and acceptable that they had lost their consciousness of its sinfulness." (Ibid)

The **KJV Bible Commentary** - A common characteristic of backsliding is the voluntary blindness toward the seriousness of sin. ([Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

Related Resource:

- [Backsliding - article](#)
- Backsliding or Drifting - quotes

Know (1492)(**eido, oida** - **eido** is used only in the **perfect tense** = **oida**) means in general to know by perception.

Literally **eido/oida** refers to perception by sight (perceive, see) as in Mt 2:2

Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For **wesaw (eido)** His star in the east, and have come to worship Him."

Eido/oida is distinguished from **ginosko** (epiginosko, epignosis - the other major NT word group for knowing) because **ginosko** generally refers to knowledge obtained by experience or "experiential knowledge". It is knowledge obtained by observation. On the other hand, **eido/oida** often refers more to an intuitive knowledge or to know by reflection, although this distinction is not always clear cut. **Eido/oida** is not so much that which is known by experience as an intuitive insight that is drilled into one's heart. **Eido/oida** is a perception, a being aware of, an understanding, an intuitive knowledge which in the case of believers can only be given by the Holy Spirit. In short, it is not necessary for we believers to know sin by observation or experience, but we have the mind of Christ which allows us to discern good from evil without having to experience or observe the evil.

And so **eido/oida** suggests fullness of knowledge, absolute knowledge (that which is without a doubt), rather than a progress in knowledge (cp **ginosko**) a distinction illustrated in the following passages.

(Paul writes to the believers at Rome) Or do you not **know (eido/oida)** what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? (Ro 11:2-note)

(Jesus is speaking to unbelieving Jews about His Father in Jn 8:54, and declares to these Jews that) you have not come to **know (ginosko)** Him, but I **know (eido/oida)** Him; and if I say that I do not **know (eido/oida)** Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do **know (eido/oida)** Him, and keep His word. (John 8:55)

Jesus answered and said to him (to Peter who was a bit "put off" that Jesus was preparing to wash Peter's dirty feet!), "What I do you do not **realize (eido/oida** - know beyond a shadow of a doubt) now, but you shall **understand (ginosko** - understand by your experience) hereafter. (John 13:7)

THE RUINOUS RELATIONSHIP

Friendship with the world - Earlier James had described the beloved patriarch Abraham who "was called the friend of God" (Jas 2:23-note; cp 2Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8) because of his faith in God and His promised Messiah (Ge 15:6, cp Gal 3:8, 3:16). What a stinging rebuke to call his readers **friends** of the **world**! In our modern culture we may not fully appreciate what James is trying to emphasize by using the word **friendship** for in his day (and in the Old Testament), **friendship** was a much richer term than it is today. In fact, **friendship** was one of the aspects of **being in covenant with someone** (even as Abraham was in covenant with Jehovah) and thus implied a unity or oneness in thought and purpose. To be a friend was to share all (See Covenant The Oneness of Covenant - The Meaning of Friend or click here for additional notes on friend). And thus Abraham was no faithless adulterer but

was faithful to Jehovah, the One Who had called him out of the **pagan world** in Ur of the Chaldees and unto Himself. And so by analogy, the one who determines to be a friend to the world shares its outlook on life and feels very much at home in it!

THOUGHT - Beloved, there can be few of us who read James' word and are not at least somewhat convicted as we ponder our own affections and associations as they relate to this present world which is passing away! May the Spirit of the Living God burn into our hearts the command He gave through Paul in 2 Corinthians...

"Therefore, **come out** (aorist imperative = Command which conveys a sense of urgency. Do this now!) from their midst and **be separate** (aorist imperative again - Do it effectively!)," says the Lord. "And **do not touch** (present imperative = Command to either stop doing this or don't begin doing this) what is unclean; and **I (Jehovah) will welcome you.** (2Cor 6:17)

Thomas Manton remarks that by **friendship with the world** James "understands an emancipation of our affections to the pleasures, profits, and desires of the world. People try to please their friends, and they are friends of the world if they seek to gratify worldly people or worldly desires and if they court external vanities rather than renounce them—a practice that is inappropriate to religion. You may use the world but not seek friendship with it. People who want to be dandled on the world's knees lose Christ's friendship. "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10). It is the same with gratifying worldly desires. We may use the comforts of the world but may not serve its desires and pleasures—a description of the worldly state (Titus 3:3)." ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

Phil Newton observes that **friendship with the world** "implies not only a love for the world but that the world loves back. It is a growing comfort with the worldly system that is set in opposition to the Lord. Curtis Vaughan explained, "To be "a friend of the world" is to value the approval of and cherish a relationship with persons and forces which are either indifferent toward or openly hostile to God. The situation is comparable to that of a wife who would cultivate friendship with a man trying to seduce her. Such a wife becomes her husband's enemy" [The Bible Study Commentary, 86]." ([Diagnosing Trouble](#))

Rich Cathers charges us not to

be cozy with the world. You see an example of this in the life of Lot, Abraham's nephew. (Ge 13:10) He did this even though he knew that the people of Sodom were wicked (Gen. 13:13). At first, he only moved closer to Sodom (Gen. 13:12), but as you follow the story, he eventually moved right into Sodom. In Genesis 14, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were invaded by a group of kings from the east. And because Lot was living in Sodom, he and his family were taken captive by these kings and he had to be rescued by uncle Abraham. It was kind of like the Christian who keeps visiting his old drug buddies and one day when the house gets busted, the Christian ends up in jail too. By Genesis 19, God is fed up with Sodom and Gomorrah and is planning on destroying the cities as soon as He can get Lot and his family evacuated. The Lord sends a couple of angels to warn Lot, but they did not have an easy time getting the family out. When Lot went to talk to his sons-in-law:

(Ge 19:14KJV) And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

They didn't take him seriously. Why should they? When it came time to leave, Lot was a bit reluctant to leave Sodom, and the angels had to grab him by the hand and force him to go. On the way out of the city, Lot's wife was turned to a pillar of salt because she looked back, not being able to let go of the world. Lot went through much trouble because he had become a friend of the world. Some of the most miserable people are those who have too much of the Lord to be comfortable in the world, but too much of the world to be comfortable with the Lord. ([James 4:1-10](#))

Albert Barnes - The term **world** here is to be understood not of the physical world as God made it, for we could not well speak of the "friendship" of that, but of the community, or people, called "the world," in contradistinction from the people of God. Compare Jn 12:31; 1Co 1:20; 1Co 3:19; Gal 4:3; Col 2:8-note. The **friendship of the world** is the love of that world; of the maxims which govern it, the principles which reign there, the ends that are sought, the amusements and gratifications which characterize it as distinguished from the church of God. It consists in setting our hearts on those things (contrast Paul's commands in the present imperative = Col 3:1-note, Col 3:2-note); in conforming to them (contrast Peter's instruction in 1Pe 1:14-note) in making them the object of our pursuit (cp Demas - 2Ti 4:10-note) with the same spirit with which they are sought by those who make no pretensions to religion. See [Ro 12:2-note]. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

It is notable that James' strong warning is interpreted differently by evangelical commentaries, as emphasized by the following examples...

John MacArthur writes that

Jesus spoke of unbelieving Israel of His day as “**an evil and adulterous generation**” (Mt 12:39; cf. Mt 16:4; Mk 8:38). It was because most Jews, even those who were religious, had turned away from the Lord and His revealed Word to gods of their own making and to their own man-made traditions that they did not receive Jesus as their Messiah. They used their traditions to interpret Scripture, and in doing so they strayed from and often contradicted Scripture, becoming blinded to God’s truth and even to His own Son (Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-13; Col 2:8-note; cf. Jn 5:39, 40). Despite fierce claims of faithfulness to Judaism and the God of Judaism, they were **adulterous** and apostate. The same can be said of those who claim to be Christians and attach themselves to the church but have no saving relationship to God or love for Him or His Word. They were found even in the early church, and James calls them **adulteresses**. There is no middle ground... you can no more spiritually have two gods than you can legally have two spouses. ([MacArthur J. James. Moody](#))

James has in view professing Christians, outwardly associated with the church, but holding a deep affection for the evil world system...The sobering truth that unbelievers are God’s enemies is taught throughout Scripture (cf. Dt 32:41, 42, 43; Ps 21:8; 68:21; 72:9; 110:1,2; Is. 42:13; Nah 1:2,8; Lk 19:27; Ro 5:10; 8:5, 6, 7; 1Co 15:25). ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

Adam Clarke is similar to MacArthur lamenting "How strange it is that people professing Christianity can suppose that with a worldly spirit, worldly companions, and their lives governed by worldly maxims, they can be in the favour of God, or ever get to the kingdom of heaven! When the world gets into the Church, the Church becomes a painted sepulcher; its spiritual vitality being extinct."

The English Puritan Nonconformist pastor and author **Joseph Alleine** whose best known work was [An Alarm to the Unconverted](#) (1672) once wrote that "There is no surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love and estimation."

R Kent Hughes on the other hand offers a contrasting interpretation (one which is held by the majority of conservative commentaries) stating that "God regards pleasure-dominated believers adversely, as Jas 4:4 makes so clear: “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” Thus we understand that a Christian, someone who has trusted in Christ alone for salvation, can become **an enemy of God**—God’s adversary. This is horrifying!...These are painful thoughts—that a Christian for whom Christ died when he was still an enemy (Ro 5:10) should in effect lower himself to live as a redeemed enemy of God! Yet this is the very focus of our text because James is writing to Christians. And it rings true to our Christian experience. Many Christians, believers who have not disclaimed God or announced their allegiance to the world, derive their pleasures and entertainments in things which are patently hostile to God. (Hughes, R. K.. James : Faith that Works. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

However **Hughes** does issue the following clear caveat to his previous comments "It must be said that those who persist in living as friends of the world are very likely without grace, not Christians, despite their claims to faith. Paul says of such, “For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things” (Php 3:18, 19-notes). They are friends of the world! (Ibid)

Thomas Manton wrote that "A carnal Christian is the carcass of a true Christian." (WOE!)

As the **A W Tozer** once pithily quipped "If I find anyone who is settled down too snugly into this **world**, I am made to doubt whether he's ever truly been born again."

Evangelist **Billy Sunday** put it bluntly when he said "You might as well talk about a heavenly devil as talk about **aworldly Christian**."

David Shepherd reasons "that some people want only as much of God's salvation as will keep them out of hell, and they measure out with unconscious precision how much worldliness and sin they can still hang on to without jeopardizing their chances."

Richardson notes that "Instead of being faithfully wedded, James’s hearers had, by their evil ways, turned their back on God and were having an “affair” with the world. This dangerous condition caused them to be opposed to God and his purposes for them... The terrible misdirection of their friendship, which should have been with God (Jas 2:23), proves again how self-deceived they were. The status of unbelievers is enmity toward God and friendship with the world, and this worldly friendship is something Christians can flirt with (cf. Mt 6:24; 2Ti 3:4; 1Jn 2:15). James was not saying conclusively that his addressees were completely the “friends of the world” rather than “friends of God.” Rather, they were “adulteresses,” unfaithful lovers. James was speaking generally, but his hearers were dangerously close to this negative condition, not one of familiarity with the world or active participation in it but rather a personal investment in it and chief concern placed in its ways of life that do not follow the standards established by God for his

people." (Richardson, K. A. Vol. 36: James: The New American Commentary. Page 178. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

Friendship (5373) (**philia** from **philos** = fondness and **phileo** = to have affection for, to kiss [a sign of this affection]) describes affection, tenderness (in the family), once for erotic love (in the Lxx use in Pr 7:18-note). The idea of **philia** is to have love or affection for someone or something based on association. It speaks of a friendship based on common interests and concerns. In the ancient world, friendship was used to describe special and exclusive relationship (cp use of **philos** in Lk 23:12)

In James 4:4 **philia** pictures the readers as adopting the interests of the world as their own personal interests. In a sense **philia** pictures one falling in love with the world and that if you do this you will begin to hate God! We simply cannot have an affection for the world and for God at the same time. It is either one or the other, but not both.

Mayor writes that **philia** involves "the idea of loving as well as being loved".

TDNT writes that in common Greek use...

The stem **phil-** is of uncertain etymology but carries the sense of "related." Hence **phileo** means "to treat somebody as one of one's own people." It is used for the love of spouses, of parents and children, of employers and servants, of friends, and of gods and those favored by them. With reference to gods and friends it often has the concrete sense "to help," "to care for," "to entertain."

Philia means "love" or "friendship"...The strongest ties of **philia** are love of parents, brothers and sisters, or spouse. The term also denotes erotic love, both heterosexual and homosexual. Friendship is commonly the sense, with such nuances as a "pleasant relationship" and "hospitality." In politics the word means "alliance." In a transferred sense it means "harmony" as a principle of unity. **Philía** becomes a proper name, e.g., for Isis.

(Philia) Having Hebrew equivalents only in Proverbs (Pr 5:19; 10:12; 7:18; 15:17; 17:9; 27:5), this term may denote either erotic love (Pr. 5:19; 7:18) or political friendship (1Macc. 8:1; 2 Macc. 4:11). ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

The **1828 Webster's Dictionary** defines **friendship** as "An attachment to a person, proceeding from intimate acquaintance, and a reciprocation of kind offices, or from a favorable opinion of the amiable and respectable qualities of his mind. **Friendship** differs from benevolence, which is good will to mankind in general, and from that love which springs from animal appetite. **True friendship** is a noble and virtuous attachment, springing from a pure source, a respect for worth or amiable qualities. **False friendship** may subsist between bad men, as between thieves and pirates (**Ed**: As pictured by friendship with the evil, fallen World!). This is a temporary attachment springing from interest, and may change in a moment to enmity and rancor.

The root verb **phileo** can also mean to treat somebody as one of one's own people. **Phileo** is used for the love of spouses, of parents and children, of employers and servants, of friends, and of Greek gods and those favored by them.

James is describing an attitude which is marked by friendly, affectionate regard for the godless world.

This is the only use of **philia** in the NT but there are 8 uses in the non-apocryphal Septuagint, all in Proverbs...

Proverbs 5:19-**see notes** As a **loving** (Lxx = **philia**) hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her **love** (Lxx = **philia**) .

Proverbs 7:18-**see notes** "Come, let us drink our fill of **love** (Lxx = **philia**) until morning; Let us delight ourselves with caresses.

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But **love** (Lxx = **philia**) covers all transgressions.

Proverbs 15:17 Better is a dish of vegetables where **love** (Lxx = **philia**) is, Than a fattened ox and hatred with it.

Proverbs 17:9 He who covers a transgression seeks **love** (Lxx = **philia**), But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.

Proverbs 19:7 All the brothers of a poor man hate him; How much more do his **friends** (Lxx = **philia**) go far from him! He pursues them with words, but they are gone.

Proverbs 25:10 Lest he who hears (Lxx = **philia**) it reproach you, and the evil report about you not pass away.

Comment: Admittedly this is one of the Lxx uses which does not seem to make much sense, for here **philia** is used where the Hebrew is **shama** meaning to hear, listen, obey, etc.

Proverbs 27:5 Better is open rebuke than **love** (Lxx = **philia**) that is concealed.

James' reference to **friendship** with the world closely parallels a phrase employed by Paul in 2Ti 3:4 ("lovers of pleasure rather than

lovers of God") and by John in 1 John 2:15 (see below).

Someone has well said that "Buying, possessing, accumulating is not worldliness. But doing so for the love of it, with no love of God paramount, doing it so that thoughts of eternity and God are an intrusion and doing it so that one's spirit is secularized in the process, is in fact **worldliness**."

J. I. Packer once said that "Those who love the world serve and worship themselves every moment: it is their full-time job."

THE ENTICING ENEMY

The Plymouth Brethren writer **F B Hole** comments that Jas 4:4...

brings in another consideration. We cannot very well be set on our own pleasures without becoming entangled with the world. The **world** is, so to speak, the arena wherein pleasures disport themselves, and where every lust that finds a place in man's heart may be gratified. Now for the believer alliance with the world is adultery in its spiritual form.

The apostle James is exceedingly definite on this point. The **world** is in a state of open rebellion against God. It was ever thus since man fell, but its terrible enmity only came fully to light when Christ was manifested. Then it was that the world both saw and hated Him and His Father. Then it was that the breach was irrevocably fixed. We are speaking, of course, of the **world-system**. If it be a question of the people in the world, then we read, "God so loved the world." The world-system is the point here, and it is in a state of deadly hostility to God; so much so that friendship with the one entails enmity as regards the other. The language is very strong. Literally it would read, "**Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God.**" It does not say that God is his enemy, but the breach is so complete on the world's side that friendship with it is only possible on the basis of enmity against God. Let us never forget that!

And let us also never forget that we, as believers, are brought into such close and intimate relations with God that if we play Him false and enter into guilty alliance with the world the only sin amongst mankind with which it can be compared is the very terrible one of adultery. ([James](#))

KOSMOS or CHAOS?

World ([2889](#)) (**kosmos** related to the verb **kosmeo** = to order or adorn, to put in order [Mt 25:7 = "trimmed"], to adorn literally [1Ti 2:9], to adorn figuratively [Titus 2:9+]) means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. **Kosmos** refers to an ordered system or a system where order prevails. As explained below however, **kosmos** as used here in James 4:4 and many places in the NT, takes on a considerably more negative shade of meaning. In this sense **kosmos** is much like the Greek word for **flesh** (**sarx**), which can be a neutral word, but which many times in the NT takes on an evil connotation.

Related Resource:

- [An Out-of-this-World Experience A Look at Kosmos in the Johannine Literature](#)
- [See 6 page article on Kosmos in New International Dictionary of NT Theology](#)

Excerpt - Classic use 1. The noun kosmos, attested from Homer onwards, denoted originally building and construction (e.g. Homer, Od., 8, 492; Hdt., 3, 2). But more especially it denotes order, both generally (e.g. Homer, //., 2, 214 and often in the phrase kata kosmon, duly, in order) and in a specific sense (e.g. the seating position of the rowers, Od., 13, 76f.; battle array, //., 12, 225; later the regulation of life in human society, the constitution, Plato, Leg., 8, 846d). It also often means ornament and adornment (esp. of women; e.g. Hom. J//., 14, 187; Hes., Works 76; Hdt., 5, 92). In Gk. philosophy (see below, 2) kosmos is the basic term for the world-order, the world-system, the sum total of things preserved by this ordering, the world in the spatial sense, the cosmos, the universe, the earth, and also (in Koine Gk.) the inhabitants of the earth, humanity, the > oikoumené. The vb. kosmed, corresponding with the basic meaning of kosmos as order, is used as a technical term, e.g. to marshal an army, to arrange battle formation (Homer, //., 2, 554; Xen. Cyr., 2, 1, 26), and also generally to organize, put in order, and very frequently to adorn (e.g. Hesiod, Works, 72).

The basic meaning of **order** leads to the two main uses...

(1) **Adornment**, decoration, eternal adorning (used this way in NT only in 1Pe 3:3-note, where **kosmos** speaks of the woman wearing that which is fitting with her character as a believer and not incongruous or "out of order". In the context of Jas 4:4 she should not be a believer who seeks external adornment that mimics that of the world [cp "friendship with the world"]! Beloved, a believing woman's attire should always be so "ordered" as to draw attention to her face, not her form! Compare God's desired "adornment" in 1Pe 3:4-note)

(2) **The world**, which has in turn a variety of nuances which must be determined by examining the **context** in which it is used.

Kosmos/kosmeo give us our English words **cosmos** (the ordered universe), **cosmopolitan** (literally a citizen of the world!) and **cosmetics** (those things we put on in order to bring order out of "chaos"! English terms. A matter of "cosmic" significance, is something which is important for the whole world. When one speaks of a "cosmopolitan" city, it means a city which has citizens from many parts of the world.

Kosmos is the absolute antithesis of **chaos** (a Greek word meaning a rude, unformed mass), **chaos** being the fantasized condition with which the theory of evolution begins! The Bible on the other hand uses **kosmos** to describe the original condition of the universe (cp kosmos in 2Pe 3:6-note) as one of perfection ("it was very good" Ge 1:31, not very chaotic! **Kosmos** is used the first time in LXX of Ge 2:1 all their hosts = "and the whole world". The sons of God (the angels) did not shout for joy over chaos, but **kosmos** when they saw this universe come into existence by the creative fiat of God (Job 38:4, 5, 6, 7)!

Mounce writes that "In classical Greek and the LXX, kosmos communicated the idea of order and adornment, and from this it developed into the basic term for the cosmos or the universe. The OT conception of the created world or kosmos was very different from the Greek notion, however. There, creation is never seen as a separate entity controlled by an all-embracing order (kosmos) as in Greek thought. Instead, the universe, usually described with the phrase "heaven and earth," is always understood in its relationship to its Creator, God."

The following nuances of **kosmos** are mentioned in various Greek lexicons (adapted primarily from Thayer, with additions from a variety of our resources - note also that is some subjectively involved in determining the specific nuance of meaning of kosmos, so that the reader may not agree with all of the Scriptural examples below. As always "Be a Berean" - Acts 17:11-note)...

1. Kosmos is found in Greek writings from Homer down with the basic meaning of "an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution". A condition of orderliness, orderly arrangement, order. It denotes what is well assembled or constructed from its individual parts.

In early Greek literature the word **kosmos** spoke of building or establishing a culture or city. Anything which was made up of parts was called a **kosmos** as, for instance, a group of rowers or a troop of soldiers.

By the time of Plato, the **kosmos** had taken on the meaning of a world or universal viewpoint. It was the universe, inhabited by people. Aristotle felt that this world was eternal, and that it had neither beginning nor end.

2. Ornament, decoration, adornment: 1Pe 3:3-note - In classical Greek **kosmos** was used to refer to the adornment or the ornaments worn by women. In a related use of the derivative word **kosmios** in 1Ti 2:9 Paul emphasizes that the adornment of the Christian woman should be one of order, not disorder, a trait that is translated as modest or modesty. This orderliness is not to be just external, but also is to affect her Christian character and testimony so that her apparel is congruous with, fitting to, and consistent with her status as a child of God.

In the Septuagint (LXX) **kosmos** is used of the arrangement of the stars, 'the heavenly hosts,' as the ornament of the heavens Ge 21, Dt 4:19, 17:8, Isa 24:21, 40:26

3. The world, i.e. the created universe - Acts 17:24, Ro 4:13, Jn 1:10, 1Jn 3:17, 4:17 - The sum total of everything here and now, the orderly universe. It is notable that the future redeemed world is never called **kosmos**.

4. The world as the sphere or place of human life. The circle of the earth, the earth, as a place of inhabitation - Mk 8:36, Mt 4:8, Jn 1:10, 3:19, 2Co 1:12

5. Kosmos can stand for humanity, mankind, the inhabitants of the world, the sum total of all created beings above the level of the animals; humanity in general; the human race. Especially in Paul and John, it designates the place and object of God's saving activity - Jn 3:16, 1Jn 2:2, 1Co 4:9; 2Co 5:19, Mt 13:38, 18:7

THE KOSMOS THE WORLD SYSTEM THE EVIL ANTI-GOD FORCE

6. Kosmos defines the **world** not as a neutral influence but as an "evil force", the inveterate, incorrigible, intractable, intransigent, irrevocable enemy of God and of every believer. This begs the question **"Why would any believer ever desire to befriend or be friends with such a 'ferocious' foe?"**

Trench summarizes the definition of the **anti-God world system** as...

All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.

Kosmos includes the ungodly (unsaved) multitude, the whole mass of men alienated from God and hostile to Him and His Son Jesus Christ (See also [Earth Dwellers](#), the synonymous term used by John in The Revelation of Jesus Christ). This meaning describes the system of values, priorities, and beliefs that unbelievers hold that excludes God. (E.g., Just mention the name "Jesus" in a positive sense in a secular setting! You can "feel" the hackles rising up on the back of their necks! Read the following related passages and see if you still want to be **"friends"** with the **world**! - Jn 7:7, 15:18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 17:14, 3:19, 20, Lk 6:26, cp Ro 1:30-note, Ro 8:7, 8-note, 2Ti 3:4-note, 1Jn 3:1-note, 1Jn 4:5, Mt 5:10, 11, 12-note, Mt 10:22, 24:9, Mk 13:13, Lk 6:22). This negative meaning of **kosmos** includes the aggregate of things earthly -- earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which, although empty and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ (**The antidote?** Gal 6:14, 1Jn 2:15-note, 1Jn 2:16-note, 1Jn 2:17-note, and remember Mt 16:26, Mk 8:34, 35, 36, Lk 9:23, 24, 25, 26) (**See also study** of the related Greek word **aion** which is translated age or ages 26x and world or worlds 8x [eg **world** is **aion** in 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:2-note; Ro 12:2-note]).

BDAG = the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved

Johann Bengel = kosmos is the subtle (**Ed**: It's not that subtle in these last days of the second millennium!) informing spirit of the kosmos or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God

I looked for the church and I found it in the world;

I looked for the world and I found it in the church.

--Horatius Bonar

Marvin Vincent = (Kosmos is...) The sum-total of human life in the ordered world, considered apart from, alienated from, and hostile to God, and of the earthly things which seduce from God (Jn 7:7; 15:18; 17:9, 14; 1Co 1:20, 21; 2Co 7:10; Jas 4:4).

David Guzik = One of the first examples of this idea of the **world** in the Bible helps us to understand this point. Genesis 11 (Ge 11:1NLT "whole world"; Ge 11:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) speaks of human society's united rebellion against God at the tower of Babel. At the tower of Babel, there was an anti-God leader of humanity (whose name was Nimrod - cp Ge 10:8, 9, 10 "beginning of his kingdom was Babel"). There was organized rebellion against God (in disobeying the command to disperse over the whole earth). There was direct distrust of God's word and promise (in building what was probably a water-safe tower to protect against a future flood from heaven). The whole story of the tower of Babel also shows us another fundamental fact about the **world system**. The world's progress, technology, government, and organization can make man **better off**, but **not better**. **Because we like being better off, it is easy to fall in love with the world** Finally, the story of the tower of Babel shows us that the **world system** - as impressive and winning as it appears to be - will never win out over God. The Lord defeated the rebellion at the tower of Babel easily. ([1 John 2:15-17 - David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible](#))

John Trapp - Pleasure, profit, preferment are the worldling's trinity.

D Edmond Hiebert = Because of the fallen nature of the human race, the term (kosmos) predominantly has an ethical import, the human race in its alienation from and opposition to God.

Hiebert adds that **kosmos** (as used in Jas 4:4) "does not refer to the material creation but rather to the mass

of unredeemed humanity as an egocentric world-system that is hostile to God. It is "a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which have been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, moulding it, degrading it" (Liddon). Its central aim is self-enjoyment and self-aggrandizement in disregard of or in open hostility toward God. To cultivate the world's friendship implies conformity to its principles and aims. To be controlled by the spirit of worldliness is wholly incompatible with loyalty to God; it makes them guilty of spiritual adultery." (cp Mt 6:24-note) ([D Edmond Hiebert - James - Highly Recommended Commentary - Any commentary written by Hiebert is excellent!](#))

Akin = (Kosmos is) an evil organized earthly system controlled by the power of the evil one (1Jn 5:19) that has aligned itself against God and His kingdom (1Jn 4:3, 4, 5; 5:19; Jn 16:11). (Akin, D. L. 1, 2, 3 John: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

W. H. Griffith Thomas - Worldliness is a spirit, an atmosphere, an influence permeating the whole of life and human society, and it needs to be guarded against constantly and strenuously.

R H Mounce = The **world** is the place where God has come to do His redeeming and transforming work. In this sense, **kosmos** often has a negative connotation. This **world** is equated with this passing, evil age, which is opposed to God (1Co 3:18KJV, 19; Eph 2:2-note; cf. Ro 12:2-note). A fundamental part of Christ's work on the cross was defeating the elements of this world (Col 2:8-20)...The **kosmos** resists the very God who created it and his Son (Jn. 1:9, 10, 11; 7:7); consequently, this world is ruled by the evil one (Jn 12:31; 16:11). Therefore, while Christians continue to live in this **kosmos**, they must maintain purity and refrain from being caught up in this world's systems (Jn 17:15, 16, 17; 1Jn 2:15-note; cf. Php 2:15-note; Jas 1:27-note; Jas 4:4). But the superabundant grace and power of God are shown in that despite this opposition and corruption, "God so loved the **world** that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

Malcolm Watts - Make no mistake about it, the **world** with its unbelief is a spiritual ice-house, and too much contact with it will quickly cool the spirit.

Kenneth Wuest = **Kosmos** refers to an ordered system. Here it is the ordered system of which Satan is the head, his fallen angels and demons are his emissaries, and the unsaved of the human race are his subjects, together with those purposes, pursuits, pleasures, practices, and places where God is not wanted. Much in this world-system is religious, cultured, refined, and intellectual. But it is anti-God and anti-Christ...

The Germans have a word for **kosmos** (world of men who are living alienated and apart from God) the **zeitgeist** or **spirit of the age**. This masquerade costume which saints sometimes put on, hides the Lord Jesus living in the heart of the Christian, and is an opaque covering through which the Holy Spirit cannot radiate the beauty of the Lord Jesus. The world says to that kind of a saint, "The modernism of your appearance nullifies the fundamentalism of your doctrine." (**Wow!**) ([Wuest](#))

Wuest discusses an instructive use of **kosmos** in Ephesians 2...

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this **world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (Eph 2:1, 2-note)

Kenneth Wuest - "The Germans have a word for it, **zeitgeist**, "the spirit of the age." "World" is in the head (i.e., Satan is the head - 1Jn 5:19, Lk 4:6, Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 2Co 4:4, Ep 2:2-note), his demons are his emissaries, and all the unsaved **kosmos**, which here (Eph 2:1,2-note) refers to the system of evil of which Satan are his slaves, together with the purposes, pursuits, pleasures, and places where God is not wanted. To distinguish the words, one could say that **kosmos** gives the over-all picture of mankind alienated from God during all history, and **aion** represents any distinct age or period of human history as marked out from another by particular characteristics. But not only does the sinner order his behavior as dominated by the spirit of the age in which he lives, which spirit is just part of that **kosmos** human-history-long alienation of the human race from God. He is dominated or controlled by the "prince of the power of the air." ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

Thomas Watson - He that is in love with the world will be out of love with the cross.

William MacDonald = The **world** (kosmos in Jas 4:4) does not mean the planet on which we live, or the world of nature about us. It is the system which man has built up for himself in an effort to satisfy the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. In this system there is no room for God or His Son. It may be the world of art, culture, education, science, or even religion. But it is a sphere in which the name of Christ is

unwelcome or even forbidden, except, of course, as an empty formality. It is, in short, the **world** of mankind outside the sphere of the true church. To be a friend of this system is to be an enemy of God. It was this world that crucified the Lord of life and glory. In fact, it was the religious world that played the key role in putting Him to death. How unthinkable it is that believers should ever want to walk arm-in-arm with the world that murdered their Savior! ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

John MacArthur = On **kosmos** as used in Jas 4:4 is not as a reference "to the physical earth or universe but rather to **the spiritual reality of the man-centered Satan-directed system of this present age** (Gal 1:4), which is hostile to God and God's people. It refers to the self-centered, godless value system and mores of fallen mankind. The goal of the world is **self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction**, and every other form of **self-serving**, all of which amounts to hostility toward God." (Ed: Take the "h" off of "flesh" and spell it backwards. What do you get?) ([Macarthur J. James. Moody](#)) (Bolding added)

Robert Law = God lays down one program of life for his children; the **world** proposes another and totally incompatible program for its servants. So love for the one excludes love for the other.

John Henry Jowett = Defines a related term which reflects the influence of the fallen world (even on believers!). **Worldliness** is a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of soul. It is life without high callings, life devoid of lofty ideals. It is a gaze horizontal, never vertical. Its motto is 'Forward', never 'Upward'.

Lange = (The **world** signifies) befriending and alliance with an ungodly world (Jas 1:27-note; cf. 1Jn 2:15-note), not merely inclination to worldly goods (Theile and al.), nor worldly desires (Laurentius), nor both of these together (de Wette). The **world** is personified in this antithesis; it is idolatry depicted as a whole, the vanity of mankind deifying itself and deified (i.e., ungodliness showing itself in its propensity for the impersonal) connected with the whole visible world frustrated by it.

Andrew Murray - The spirit of this world is devotion to the visible. Conformity to the world can be overcome by nothing but conformity to Jesus.

Some other quotes on the evil world system... (Most of the quote below are from [John Blanchard's The Complete Gathered Gold- A Treasury of Quotations - The best Christian quote resource available!](#))

The world counterfeits every Christian grace, but never is able to produce a coin with the right ring. -Donald Grey Barnhouse

The world is all appearances, like our clothes: the truth lies underneath. -Thomas Carlyle.

The world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns. -Matthew Henry

This world is our passage and not our portion. - Matthew Henry

Enemy-occupied territory—that is what the world is. - C. S. Lewis

It is a hard matter to enjoy the world without being entangled with the cares and pleasures of it. - Thomas Manton

The money, the pleasures, the daily business of the world are so many traps to catch souls. - J. C. Ryle

There is no surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love and estimation. - Joseph Alleine

If you have a distorted view of the Christian life you have let the world develop the negative. - Anon

If you are wise, let the world pass, lest you pass away with the world. - Augustine

A man caught up with this world is not ready for the next one. - John Blanchard

Jesus did not pray that his Father would take Christians out of the world, but that he would take the world out of Christians. - John Blanchard

I looked for the church and I found it in the world; I looked for the world and I found it in the church. - Horatius Bonar

The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose earths are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God and to the assurance of his favour. - Thomas Brooks

It is infinitely better to have the whole world for our enemies and God for our friend, than to have the whole world for our friends and God for our enemy. - John Brown

The mind of a Christian ought not to be filled with thoughts of earthly things, or find satisfaction in them, for we ought to be living as if we might have to leave this world at any moment. - John Calvin (**A good reminder!**)

If you find yourself loving any pleasure better than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, any house better than the house of God, any table better than the Lord's table, any person better than Christ, any indulgence better than the hope of heaven—take alarm! - Thomas Guthrie

If you stand on the Word you do not stand in with the world. - Vance Havner

When the nightclub invades the sanctuary it ought not to be difficult for any Bible Christian to discern the time of day. - Vance Havner

Worldliness is rampant in the church. The devil is not fighting churches, he is joining them! He isn't persecuting Christianity, he is professing it. - Vance Havner

Whoever marries the spirit of this age will find himself a widower in the next. - William Ralph Inge

To forsake Christ for the world is to leave a treasure for a trifle... eternity for a moment, reality for a shadow. - William Jenkyn

Being of the world means being controlled by what preoccupies the world, the quest for pleasure, profit and position...Those who love the world serve and worship themselves every moment: it is their full-time job....Worldliness means yielding to the spirit that animates fallen mankind, the spirit of self-seeking and self-indulgence without regard for God. - J. I. Packer

It is dangerous dressing for another world by the looking-glass of this world. - William Secker

All earthly things are as salt water, that increases the appetite, but satisfies not. - Richard Sibbes

Take care if the world does hate you that it hates you without cause. - C. H. Spurgeon

If I find anyone who is settled down too snugly into this world, I am made to doubt whether he's ever truly been born again. - A. W. Tozer

Identification with the world and its needs is one thing; imitation of the world and its foolishness is quite another. - Warren Wiersbe

Related Resources:

[The World](#) by Bishop J C Ryle

[If you are at home in the world](#) by J C Philpot

7. Any aggregate or general collection of particulars of any sort; collective aspect of an entity, totality, sum total (cf. English a *world* of curses - Shakespeare, etc.): James 3:6

Wuest summarizes the meanings writing that...

kosmos is used to refer to the world system, wicked and alienated from God yet cultured, educated, powerful, outwardly moral at times, the system of which Satan is the head, the fallen angels and the demons are his servants, and all mankind other than the saved, are his subjects. This includes those people, pursuits, pleasures, purposes, and places where God is not wanted (Mt. 4:8; Jn 12:31; 1Jn 2:15, 1Jn 2:16, being examples). It refers also to the human race, fallen, totally depraved (Jn 3:16). It may have reference to the created universe (Jn 1:10 first and second mention). It may also refer simply to mankind without any particular reference to man's fallen and wicked condition (Gal. 4:3; Jas 2:5). **Kosmos** is translated in every place by the word "**world**" except in 1Pe 3:3 where it is rendered "**adornment**." In interpreting the passages where **kosmos** is found, the student should study the **context** in order to determine which one of the above meanings is to be used in any particular passage. ([Ibid](#))

Cremer writes that...

Kosmos denotes the sum-total of what God has created (Jn 17:5, 21:25; Acts 17:24; Ro 1:20; 1Cor 4:9). **Since the beginning of the world** (kosmos) (Mt. 24:21) involves a reference to the fact that the world is the abode of man, or that order of things within which humanity moves, of which man is the center.... This leads us to the more precise definition of the conception,... As **kosmos** is regarded as that order of things whose center is man, attention is directed chiefly to him, and **kosmos** denotes mankind within that order of things, humanity as it manifests itself in and through such an order (Mt. 18:7).... The way would thus seem sufficiently prepared for the usage which by kosmos denotes that order of things which is alienated from God, as manifested in and by the human race, in which mankind exists; in other words, humanity as alienated from God, and acting in opposition to Him and to His revelation.

Wuest points out that...

There are three Greek words in the New Testament translated by this one English word, **kosmos**, **aion**, and **oikoumene**. It should be obvious that if one is to arrive at a full-orbed interpretation of the passages where the word "world" is found, one must know which Greek word is used, and the distinctive meaning of that Greek word. A knowledge of how these words were used in classical Greek, will help us to better understand their use in the New Testament.

Aion ...means "a space or period of time," especially "a lifetime, life." It is used of one's time of life, age, the age of man, an age, a generation. It also means "a long space of time, eternity, forever." Again, it was used of space of time clearly defined and marked out, an era, age, period of a dispensation.

Oikoumene the third word, made up of the Greek word for "home" (oikos) and the verb "to remain" (menō), referred in classical Greek to the inhabited world, namely, that portion of the earth inhabited by the Greeks, as opposed to the rest of the inhabited earth where non-Greeks or barbarians lived. Later it was used to designate the entire Roman empire. ([Ibid](#))

Barclay has some interesting thoughts on **kosmos** James 4:4...

The best commentary on this saying is that of Jesus: "No one can serve two masters" (Mt 6:24). There are two attitudes to the things of this world and the things of time. We may be so dominated by them that the world becomes our master. Or we may so use them as to serve our fellow-men and prepare ourselves for eternity, in which case the world is not our master but our servant. A man may either use the world or be used by it. To use the world as the servant of God and men is to be the friend of God, for that is what God meant the world to be. To use the world as the controller and dictator of life is to be at enmity with God, for that is what God never meant the world to be. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible - see comments on James 4:4](#))

The path of the Word
and the path of the world
do not run parallel.
-Vance Harmer

Kosmos - 186x in 151 verses (Observe that over 50% of NT uses are in the gospel of **John** [78x] and **John's epistles** [24x]) -

Mt 4:8; 5:14; 13:35, 38; 16:26; 18:7; 24:21; 25:34; 26:13; Mk 8:36; 14:9; 16:15; Lk 9:25; 11:50; 12:30; **Jn 1:9, 10, 29; 3:16, 17, 19; 4:42; 6:14, 33, 51; 7:4, 7; 8:12, 23, 26; 9:5, 39; 10:36; 11:9, 27; 12:19, 25, 31, 46, 47; 13:1; 14:17, 19, 22, 27, 30, 31; 15:18, 19; 16:8, 11, 20, 21, 28, 33; 17:5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 24, 25; 18:20, 36, 37; 21:25**; Acts 17:24; Ro 1:8, 20; 3:6, 19; 4:13; 5:12, 13; 11:12, 15; 1Cor 1:20, 21, 27, 28; 2:12; 3:19, 22; 4:9, 13; 5:10; 6:2; 7:31, 33, 34; 8:4; 11:32; 14:10; 2Cor 1:12; 5:19; 7:10; Gal 4:3; 6:14; Eph 1:4; 2:2, 12; Php 2:15; Col 1:6; 2:8, 20; 1Ti 1:15; 3:16; 6:7; Heb 4:3; 9:26; 10:5; 11:7, 38; Jas 1:27; 2:5; 3:6; 4:4; 1Pe 1:20; 3:3; 5:9; 2Pe 1:4; 2:5, 20; 3:6; **1Jn 2:2, 15, 16, 17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 14, 17; 5:4, 5, 19; 2Jn 1:7**; Rev 11:15; 13:8; 17:8. Translated in NAS as **adornment**(1), **world**(184), **world's**(1).

Kosmos - 27x in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)** -

Ge 2:1; Ex 33:5, 6; Dt 4:19; 17:3; 2Sa 1:24; Esther 4:17; Pr 17:6; 20:29; 28:17; 29:17; Isa 3:18, 19, 20, 24, 26; 13:10; 24:21; 40:26; 49:18; 61:10; Jer 2:32; 4:30; Ezek 7:20; 16:11; 23:40; Nah 2:9.

The world in its figurative sense (as in Jas 4:4) constitutes all of the forces and elements opposed to God. It represents the whole complex of human institutions, values, and traditions that knowingly or unwittingly are arrayed against God.

As **Thomas Manton** once said "It is a hard matter to enjoy the world without being entangled with the cares and pleasures of it."

The saintly bishop **J C Ryle** rightly warned that "The money, the pleasures, the daily business of the world are so many traps to catch souls."

Jesus warned His disciples (and all believers of every age) concerning the antipathy and outright antagonism they were destined to experience because they belonged to Him...

If you were of the **world** (**kosmos** - 5x in this verse), the **world** would love its own; but because you are (Gk = **absolutely**) **not** of the **world**, but I chose you out of the **world**, therefore the **world** (present tense = **continually**) hates you. (John 15:19, cp Jn 17:14)

Comment: Let's be honest - we don't really like this verse very much. In fact, we all like to be liked, but Jesus clearly teaches that will never happen if we live like His disciples! And so even this desire to be liked (the self-consciousness which comes from our old fallen nature, the **flesh**), exerts a continual pull and pressure that seeks to force us into the mold of the world's way of thinking (cp Ro 12:2-note). We reason that at least then the **kosmos** won't be so antagonistic toward us. Beloved, let us be honest here - when we do this we are seeking friendship with the world above friendship with God. We are not to hate the world, but are to be like life rafts so to speak in the water (of this world), drawing into the boat (cp the Ark in Genesis 6, a picture of safety from the wrath to come in "the Ark" Christ Jesus, cp 1Th 1:10-note) as many drowning men and women as we can. As followers of Christ we are called to live in the world, but not to allow the world live in us! Christians are like "boats" - a boat (Christian) in the water (in the world) is by design, but water in the boat is disaster.

In John 17, in **His high priestly prayer to His Father** the night before He went to the Cross, **Jesus** prayed about a disciple's relationship to the **world** (**kosmos** used 12 times in the following passages, sometimes with a literal meaning and sometimes with a spiritual/figurative meaning)...

"I have given them Thy word; and the **world** (the spiritual anti-God kosmos) has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the **world** (the physical kosmos), but to keep them from the evil one. 16 "They are not of the **world**, even as I am not of the **world**. 17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. 18 "As Thou didst send Me into the **world**, I also have sent them into the world.

21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the **world** may believe that Thou didst send Me.

23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the **world** may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me. 24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the **world**. (the physical kosmos) 25 "O righteous Father, although the **world** (the spiritual anti-God kosmos) has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me; 26 and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them." (Jn 17:14-18, 21, 23-26)

ILLUSTRATIONS RELATED TO THE WORLD, WORLDLINESS

A scuba diver lives in the water but breathes the air. He is able to function because he takes his environment with him. If he "conforms" to environment around him, he will eventually die! (Modified from source unknown)

The **world system** is committed to at least four major objectives, which I can summarize in four words: fortune, fame, power, pleasure. First and foremost: Fortune, money. The world system is driven by money; it feeds on materialism. Second: Fame. That is another word for popularity. Fame is the longing to be known, to be somebody in someone else's eyes. Third: Power. This is having influence, maintaining control over individuals or groups or companies or whatever. It is the desire to manipulate and maneuver others to do something for one's own benefit. Fourth: Pleasure. At its basic level, pleasure has to do with fulfilling one's sensual

desires. It's the same mindset that's behind the slogan: "If it feels good, do it." (Charles Swindoll, Living Above the Level of Mediocrity, p.219)

Addressing a national seminar of Southern Baptist leaders, George Gallup said, "We find there is very little difference in ethical behavior between churchgoers and those who are not active religiously...The levels of lying, cheating, and stealing are remarkable similar in both groups. Eight out of ten Americans consider themselves Christians, Gallup said, yet only about half of them could identify the person who gave the Sermon on the Mount, and fewer still could recall five of the Ten Commandments. Only two in ten said they would be willing to suffer for their faith. (Erwin Lutzer, Pastor to Pastor, p. 76)

BEWARE OF THE SUBTLE INFLUENCE OF THE WORLD - Some years ago, musicians noted that errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled out of tune as they went about their work. It was talked about and someone suggested that it was because the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and they were discordant. The boys did not know there was anything wrong with the peals, and quite unconsciously they had copied their pitch. So we tend to copy the people with whom we associate; we borrow thoughts from the books we read and the programs to which we listen, almost without knowing it. God has given us His Word which is the absolute pitch of life and living. If we learn to sing by it, we shall easily detect the false in all of the music of the world. - Donald Grey Barnhouse

The world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns.

Addressing a national seminar of Southern Baptist leaders, George Gallup said, "We find there is very little difference in ethical behavior between churchgoers and those who are not active religiously...The levels of lying, cheating, and stealing are remarkable similar in both groups. Eight out of ten Americans consider themselves Christians, Gallup said, yet only about half of them could identify the person who gave the Sermon on the Mount, and fewer still could recall five of the Ten Commandments. Only two in ten said they would be willing to suffer for their faith. - Erwin Lutzer, Pastor to Pastor, p. 76.

Worldliness - The Bible defines worldliness by centering morality where we intuitively know it should be. **Worldliness** is the lust of the flesh (a passion for sensual satisfaction), the lust of the eyes (an inordinate desire for the finer things of life), and the pride of life (self-satisfaction in who we are, what we have, and what we have done). **Worldliness**, then, is a preoccupation with ease and affluence. It elevates creature comfort to the point of idolatry; large salaries and comfortable life-styles become necessities of life. (Read 1 John 2:15-16-note) **Worldliness** is reading magazines about people who live hedonistic lives and spend too much money on themselves and wanting to be like them. But more importantly, **worldliness** is simply pride and selfishness in disguises. It's being resentful when someone snubs us or patronizes us or shows off. It means smarting under every slight, challenging every word spoken against us, cringing when another is preferred before us. **Worldliness** is harboring grudges, nursing grievance, and wallowing in self-pity. These are the ways in which we are most like the world. - Dave Roper, The Strength of a Man, quoted in Family Survival in the American Jungle, Steve Farrar, 1991, Multnomah Press, p. 68.

The course of rebellion against God may be very gradual, but it increases in rapidity as you progress in it; and if you begin to run down the hill, the ever-increasing impetus will send you down faster and faster to destruction. You Christians ought to watch against the beginning of worldly conformity. I do believe that the growth of worldliness is like strife, which is as the letting out of water. Once you begin, there is no knowing where you will stop. I sometimes get this question put to me, concerning certain worldly amusements, "May I do so-and-so?" I am very sorry whenever anyone asks me that question, because it shows that there is something wrong, or it would not be raised at all. If a person's conscience lets him say, "Well, I can go to A," he will very soon go on to B, C, D, E, and through all the letters of the alphabet. . .When Satan cannot catch us with a big sin, he will try a little one. It does not matter to him as long as he catches his fish, what bait he uses. Beware of the beginning of evil, for many, who bade fair to go right, have turned aside and perished amongst the dark mountains in the wide field of sin. (C. H. Spurgeon)

The world was...

1. Originally created good (Ge. 1:31).

2. Cursed and corrupted through Satan (Gen. 3:1-24).
3. Now enemy occupied territory with Satan as God (2Cor. 4:4, John 12:31, 16:11).
4. Whole world lies in his power (1John 5:19).
5. Permeated by Satanic influence, a defiling (II Peter 1:4, 2:20, James 1:27), deceptive (2Cor 11:14-15, Rev. 12:9), scheme (Eph. 6:11), that is at work around and in us; designed to convince us to conform (Rom. 12:2) to a mindset and lifestyle that are essentially anti-god and pro-self (cf. I Peter 5:8, Eph. 1:1-3, 6:12, 16, Isa. 14:11-14). (From J. Grant Howard, Balancing Life's Demands, p. 134)

D. L. Moody wrote: The church is full of people who want one eye for the **world** and the other for the kingdom of God. Therefore, **everything is blurred**; one eye is long and the other is short; **all is confusion**...When the Spirit of God is on us, the **world** looks very empty; the world has a very small hold on us, and we begin to let go our hold of it and lay hold of things eternal. This is the church's need today. Today in the Word, October, 1997, p. 9

The Father opposes the **world**: 1 John 2:15-17-note

The Son opposes the **Devil**: Luke 4:1-13, 1 John 3:8-note

The Holy Spirit opposes the **flesh**: Gal. 5:16-17-note

The world counterfeits every Christian grace, but never is able to produce a coin with the right ring. - Donald Grey Barnhouse

Worldly glory is but a breath, a vapour, a froth, a phantom, a shadow, a reflection, an apparition, a very nothing. - Thomas Brooks

The created world is but a small parenthesis in eternity. -Thomas Browne

What a charming place this world would be if it was not for the inhabitants. - Esther Burr

The world is all appearances, like our clothes: the truth lies underneath. - Thomas Carlyle

As long as there are spots in the moon it is vain to expect anything spotless under it. -Thomas Fuller

The world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns. -Matthew Henry

This world is our passage and not our portion. -Matthew Henry

Enemy-occupied territory—that is what the world is. -C. S. Lewis

There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan. -C. S. Lewis

It is a hard matter to enjoy the world without being entangled with the cares and pleasures of it. - Thomas Manton

The world belongs to God and he wants it back. -David Pawson

The money, the pleasures, the daily business of the world are so many traps to catch souls. -J. C. Ryle

The earth is big in our hopes, but little in our hands. -William Seeker

Thorns will not prick of themselves, but when they are grasped in a man's hand they prick deep. So this world and the things thereof are all good, and were all made of God for the benefit of his creatures, did not our immoderate affection make them hurtful. -Richard Sibbes

Nothing in the world can be properly understood unless it is understood in terms of God's design and plan. -R. C. Sproul

The world would not hate angels for being angelic, but it does hate men for being Christians. It grudges them their new character; it is tormented by their peace; it is infuriated by their joy. -William Temple

Without God the world would be a maze without a clue. -Woodrow Wilson

There is no surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love and estimation. - Joseph Alleine

If we loved the world the way God loves it, we wouldn't love it the way we shouldn't love it. -Anon.

If you have a distorted view of the Christian life you have let the world develop the negative. -Anon.

The Christian must live in the world, but he must not let the world live in him. -Anon.

If you are wise, let the world pass, lest you pass away with the world. -Augustine

A man caught up with this world is not ready for the next one. -John Blanchard

Jesus did not pray that his Father would take Christians out of the world, but that he would take the world out of Christians. - John Blanchard

I looked for the church and I found it in the world; I looked for the world and I found it in the church. - Horatius Bonar

It is infinitely better to have the whole world for our enemies and God for our friend, than to have the whole world for our friends and God for our enemy. -John Brown

The mind of a Christian ought not to be filled with thoughts of earthly things, or find satisfaction in them, for we ought to be living as if we might have to leave this world at any moment. -John Calvin

Nothing is more contrary to a heavenly hope than an earthly heart. -William Gurnall

The bee will not sit on a flower where no honey can be sucked, neither should the Christian. -William Gurnall

If you find yourself loving any pleasure better than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, any house better than the house of God, any table better than the Lord's table, any person better than Christ, any indulgence better than the hope of heaven—take alarm! -Thomas Guthrie

If you stand on the Word you do not stand in with the world. -Vance Havner

Many Christians are still in the wilderness, longing for garlic instead of grace, melons instead of manna! - Vance Havner

The path of the Word and the path of the world do not run parallel. -Vance Harmer

We cannot have a heavenly fellowship if we allow a hindering fellowship. -Vance Havner

We must deal with the carnalities if we desire the spiritualities. -Vance Havner

When the nightclub invades the sanctuary it ought not to be difficult for any Bible Christian to discern the time of day. - Vance Havner

Worldliness is rampant in the church. The devil is not fighting churches, he is joining them! He isn't persecuting Christianity, he is professing it. -Vance Havner

Worldlings make gold their god; saints make God their gold (Ed: And their "Goal"!)-Matthew Henry

Whoever marries the spirit of this age will find himself a widower in the next. -William Ralph Inge

To forsake Christ for the world is to leave a treasure for a trifle... eternity for a moment, reality for a shadow. - William Jenkyn

Worldliness is a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of soul. It is life without high callings, life devoid of lofty ideals. It is a gaze horizontal, never vertical. Its motto is 'Forward', never 'Upward'. - John Henry Jowett

It is better to trust in the Lord than in men or princes; whereas whoever will live on worldly principles must carry the same strain and care as does the man of the world. - G. H. Lang

God lays down one programme of life for his children; the world proposes another and totally incompatible programme for its servants. So love for the one excludes love for the other. - Robert Law

The health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise and hurry and pleasures and business of the world, lead us on with eyes that see not and ears that hear not. - William Law

The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not even in spiritual things. The spiritual mind sees him in everything, even in natural things. - Robert Leighton

The legitimate courtesies of life become positively sinful when they take priority over the interests of the Lord Jesus. - William MacDonald

The world is a dirty, defiling thing. A man can hardly walk here but he shall defile his garments. The men of the world are dirty, sooty creatures. We cannot converse with them but they leave their filthiness upon us. - Thomas Manton

Depend upon it, as long as the church is living so much like the world, we cannot expect our children to be brought into the fold. - D. L. Moody

If I walk with the world, I can't walk with God. - D. L. Moody

Conformity to the world can be overcome by nothing but conformity to Jesus. -Andrew Murray

The spirit of this world is devotion to the visible. -Andrew Murray

There is nothing the Christian life suffers more from than the subtle and indescribable worldliness that comes from the cares or the possessions of this life. - Andrew Murray

Being of the world means being controlled by what preoccupies the world, the quest for pleasure, profit and position. - J. I. Packer

Those who love the world serve and worship themselves every moment: it is their full-time job. - J. I. Packer

Worldliness means yielding to the spirit that animates fallen mankind, the spirit of self-seeking and self-indulgence without regard for God. -J. I. Packer

Worldliness and Christianity are two such ends as never meet. -Nehemiah Rogers

It is dangerous dressing for another world by the looking-glass of this world. -William Secker

It strikes me that some people want only as much of God's salvation as will keep them out of hell, and they measure out with unconscious precision how much worldliness and sin they can still hang on to without jeopardizing their chances. - David Shepherd (**Ed:** Woe! Do not be deceived. Whatever a man sows he will reap!)

He that loves the world is a worldling. - Richard Sibbes

All earthly things are as salt water, that increases the appetite, but satisfies not. - Richard Sibbes

You might as well talk about a heavenly devil as talk about a worldly Christian. - Billy Sunday(**Ed: A pithy saying for sure!**)

Worldliness is a spirit, an atmosphere, an influence permeating the whole of life and human society, and it needs to be guarded against constantly and strenuously. -W. H. Griffith Thomas

If I find anyone who is settled down too snugly into this world, I am made to doubt whether he's ever truly been born again. - A. W. Tozer

It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God. - A. W. Tozer

Of all the calamities that have been visited upon the world, the surrender of the human spirit to this present world and its ways is the worst, without any doubt. - A. W. Tozer

Pleasure, profit, preferment are the worldling's trinity. -John Trapp

If men do not put the love of the world to death, the love of the world will put them to death. -Ralph Venning

He that is in love with the world will be out of love with the cross. -Thomas Watson

Make no mistake about it, the world with its unbelief is a spiritual ice-house, and too much contact with it will quickly cool the spirit. -Malcolm Watts

Identification with the world and its needs is one thing; imitation of the world and its foolishness is quite another.

(Most of the quotes are from [John Blanchard's excellent resource - Complete Gathered Gold: A Treasury of Quotations for Christians](#) - the best compilation of Christian quotes ever assembled!)

John reminds us of what we should already know writing...

We know that we are of God, and that the **whole** (Gk = holos = complete in extent, cp Devil's attempt to tempt

Jesus - Lk 4:5, 6 - Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim to world dominion!) **world** (kosmos) lies (continually = present tense) in *the power* (words in italics in NAS/KJV/NKJV not in Greek text but added to amplify the meaning) of the evil one (The Diabolos). (1Jn 5:19, cp 2Co 4:4, Ep 2:2-note)

If you stand on the Word
you do not stand in with the world.
--Vance Havner

The apostle **John** issued a charge parallel to that of James 4:4...

Do not love (present imperative + a negative = command to stop doing something they were doing or the prohibition may simply prohibit a practice without implying that it is actually being done - John calls for undivided allegiance manifest by a singular loyalty and commitment to the Father) the **world** (kosmos - all 6 uses = God's enemy, the Christ hating world and its seductive influence = It is a danger against which they must constantly be on guard), nor the things in the **world** (kosmos). If anyone loves (as their habitual practice = present tense) the **world** (kosmos), the love of the Father is not in him. **16 For** (John explains in vivid terms those things that come from the evil world system and attempt to lead astray those who have believed in Jesus Christ) all that is in the **world** (kosmos), the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the **world** (kosmos). **17 And the world** (kosmos) is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who **does** (habitual practice = present tense) the will of God abides forever (1Jn 2:15-note, 1Jn 2:16-note, 1Jn 2:17-note; cp Jesus' frightening words in Mt 7:21-note where "does" = present tense [habitually]; In other words, they claimed they were believers but they loved the world and lived like it and their "works" showed that their "faith" was fake - cp Jas 2:14-26- see notes beginning in verse 14).

Augustine comments: If you are wise, let the world pass, lest you pass away with the world.

Hiebert comments: John was calling not for monastic separation from the world but for an inner attitude of separation from the sinful world and its practices. As those loyal to God, his readers are to be on guard against a kindly feeling toward the world's evil, and are not to establish intimate relations of loyalty with it...John pointed out that love for God and love for the world are by their very nature antagonistic to each other and cannot coexist in the human heart. Here is another of those opposites John often used (1Jn 1:5, 6; 2:4).

If any one loves the world presents a hypothetical case for the readers to consider. The individual is anyone who persistently makes the world the object of his love. The inevitable result is, "**the love of the Father is not in him**" The expression, "**the love of the Father**", used only here in the New Testament, is capable of three meanings. "It may refer to love that comes from the Father (ablative of source), it may refer to the Father's love for the person involved (subjective genitive), or it may speak of the person's love for the Father (objective genitive)." As the opposite of love for the world, the last meaning seems clearly intended. **The tragic fact is that love for God "is not in him," is not a motivating power in his heart and life...**

But (1Jn 2:17-note) points to a contrasting reality: **the one who does the will of God abides forever**. This assurance is for "the one who does the will of God" who sets himself to be obedient to God's will rather than pursuing the fleeting lusts of the world. Houlden remarks, "The 'mystical' supernatural gift of God's love had certainly to be received (1Jn 2:15)—but the test of that was no mere spiritual 'feeling'; it was doing God's will, the keeping of his commands, in particular the command to love the brothers (1Jn 2:2f). **John, like James, insisted that saving faith must be functional in daily life. It is this resolute obedience, imperfect though it may be, that brings the assurance of God's approval, assurance that the believer "abides forever", literally, "abides into the age," the eternal age of God's kingdom. Born again he is already in the spiritual kingdom, and no essential change in his spiritual life is ahead for him. There may well be a break in the outer continuity of his life between death and resurrection, but his abiding spiritual union with the eternal Christ will remain unchanged. (Hiebert 1John 2:7-17)**

Ryrie agrees with Hiebert's interpretation of 1Jn 2:17-note - Doing the will of God (the opposite of loving the world) proves the possession of eternal life and of living forever. ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

John Piper: "And the world passes away, and the lust of it." Nobody buys stock in a company that is sure to go bankrupt. Nobody sets up house in a sinking ship. No reasonable person would lay up treasure where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal, would they? The world is passing away! To set your heart on it is only asking for heartache and misery in the end. That's not all: not only is the world passing away, but also the lusts of it. **If you share the desires of the world, you will pass away. You will not only lose your treasure. You will lose your life. If you love the world, it will pass away and take you with it. "The world passes away and the lust of it."** Second, in 1Jn 2:17b John says, "But he who does the will of God abides for ever." The opposite of loving the world is not only loving the Father (1Jn 2:15-note), but also doing the will of the Father (1Jn 2:17-note). And

that connection is not hard to understand. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). John said in 1Jn 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." So loving the Father in 1Jn 2:15-note and doing the will of God in 1Jn 2:17 are not really separate things. If you love God, you will love what He wills. It is empty talk to say I love God but I don't love what God loves. So John is saying in 1Jn 2:17, "**If you love the world, you will perish with the world, but if you don't love the world but love God, you will do his will and live with him for ever.**" (See full sermon [Do Not Love the World](#))

Akin adds this comment: The heart of John's argument is now given. This final verse of the section "contrasts the outcomes of these two loves, two lives, and two orientations toward Life." When compared with a life lived in the will of God, the things this life has to offer are really empty imitations of God's best. The things of the world seem to be of great value, but they are worthless when compared to the eternal blessings that come from doing the will of God. Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection has defeated the world that is opposed to God and has secured life eternal for those who believe. **John links the believer's confession of faith to his conduct by using the phrase "the one who does the will of God remains forever" to describe who will be a part of God's eternal kingdom.** (Ibid)

Gingrich calls 1Jn 2:12-17 - "The Sixth Test for Being a Christian - Not loving the world"

David Wells defines **worldliness** as

What any particular culture does to make sin look normal and righteousness look strange.

As **Matthew Henry** succinctly said...

This **world** is our passage and not our portion.

C S Lewis added that...

Enemy-occupied territory—that is what the **world** is.

John Piper offers this insight into the meaning of **the world** as used by **James**...

The **world** has an inconsolable longing. It tries to satisfy the longing with scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, ascetic rigors, managerial excellence, etc. But the longing remains. (Piper, J. The Dangerous Duty of Delight. Multnomah Publishers)

Lehman Strauss observes that...

Worldliness in a Christian's life must of necessity create disturbance and turmoil because neutrality is impossible where you have a divided allegiance. Can an unfaithful husband hope for harmony in his home, or a disloyal wife peace?...The Christian who turns from Christ and His Church to seek pleasure and satisfaction at the cisterns of this world are like unfaithful women who leave their husbands to seek sensual pleasure with other men. God is jealous over us with a holy jealousy. He purchased us at great sacrifice to Himself; hence He wants us solely for Himself. (Lehman Strauss – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James)

Thomas Manton adds that...

Seeking the world's friendship is the quick way to be God's enemy. God and the world are contrary; he is all good, and the world lies in wickedness and commands contrary things. The world says, "Do not miss any opportunity for gain and pleasure; if you will be fussy in standing on conscience, you will do nothing but draw trouble on yourselves." But God says, "Deny yourselves, take up your cross (Mk 8:34), renounce the world," etc. The world says, "Why should I take my bread and water ... and give it to men coming from who knows where?" (1Sa 25:11). But God says, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out" (Lk 12:33). ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

"I DON'T HATE GOD" REALLY???

Hostility toward God - This is a frightening phrase not to mention a foolish position! The antonym of **friendship** is **hostility** and if we yield to the anti-God spirit of this present world (Gal 1:4 = evil age), we are defiantly taking a position in direct opposition to the Almighty God! **Talk about hubris** (exaggerated pride or **self**-confidence {hold mouse over **self** and/or click})! This **hostility** in one sense describes any and all of us (i.e., believers and obviously non-believers) when we "**dabble**" (Beloved, we must not be deceived... we never just "dabble" {[click English definition](#)}! We become ensnared!) with the subtle enticements of the wicked world, God's forever foe! We have to remember **Jesus' clear warning** that...

No one (Greek = absolutely no one, no exceptions here; if you think you are an exception, you are already DECEIVED!) can (dunamis = has the inherent power or ability to) **serve** (douleuo = as a slave, submitting our will to our "master's" will; **present tense** = as one habitual practice you cannot continually be enslaved to) two masters (kurios = "lords"); for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You (absolutely) cannot serve God and mammon (Aramaic word = "what is stored up" = property - came mean riches or wealth and in context anything in which one puts their trust - **Be Careful - this can be very subversive and subtle!**). (Mt 6:24-note)

We cannot have a heavenly fellowship
if we allow a hindering fellowship.
-Vance Havner

Kistemaker - Straddling the line is dangerous, as every driver knows, for he has been taught to stay on his own side of the road. That is a fundamental traffic rule for safe driving. Nor can a Christian straddle the line. He cannot be a friend of God and a friend of the world, because "no one can serve two masters (Mt 6:24)...A Christian cannot pursue his selfish ambitions and still remain loyal to God. In fact, when he looks toward the pleasures of this world, he turns his back to God. (Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. Vol. 14: New Testament commentary : Exposition of James and the Epistles of John.: Baker Book House)

Barnes observes that we are at enmity with God "since that **world** is arrayed against Him. It neither obeys His laws, submits to His claims, nor seeks to honor Him (cp Ro 1:20, 21-note). To love that **world** is, therefore, to be arrayed against God; and the spirit which would lead us to this is, in fact, a spirit of hostility to God. (Ibid)

Thomas Watson put it this way - He that is in love with the **world** will be out of love with the cross.

Paul paints the pitiable picture of every person born into Adam (for **ALL** born are born into Adam! Into his sin, and into the death sin brings = Ro 5:12-note), emerging even from the womb as creations/creatures alienated against their Creator (cp Ps 58:3-note where "estranged" = LXX = alienated = apallotrioos as in Col 1:21 below!) until we by grace through faith are born again and made spiritually alive Christ (1Co 15:22, Ro 5:17, 18, 19-note)...

For if while we were **enemies (echthros)**, we were reconciled (katallasso) to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved (sozo) by His life. of God (Ro 5:10-note, cp "ungodly" [asebes] Ro 5:6)

James had earlier addressed a similar topic when he discussed the danger of **double mindedness** ("two souls")

But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a **double-minded man** (dipsuchos), unstable in all his ways. (Jas 1:6-note, Jas 1:7, 8-note)

In a parallel passage in Romans **Paul** alludes to the **double minded mindset** that vividly pictures the incongruity and incompatibility of being in the World and drawing near to God...

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is **hostile (echthra)** toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh (**absolutely**) cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-note, Ro 8:6, 7, 8-note)

And although you were formerly alienated (apallotrioos) and **hostile (echthros)** in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled (apokatallasso) you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy (hagios) and blameless (amomos) and beyond reproach (anegkletos) (Col 1:21, 22-note)

As noted above the Greek word **aion [word study]** is somewhat synonymous with **kosmos**., especially the meaning of aion which describes the popular culture and manner of thinking that is in rebellion against God and which will try to conform us to its ungodly pattern. Keeping that thought in mind it is instructive to observe Paul's use of "**world**" (**aion**) in his last written communication (last words are always important words to hear and heed!)...

Demas, having loved (agapao) this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. (2Ti 4:10-note)

As **Spurgeon** once said "He who has the smile of the ungodly must look for the frown of God."

NEW NAVE'S TOPIC

WORLDLINESS

WORLDLINESS. 1 Sam. 8:19, 20; Job 20:4–29; Job 21:11–15; Ps. 49:16, 17, 18; Ps. 73:2–22; Prov. 14:12, 13; Prov. 15:21; Prov. 21:17; Prov. 23:20, 21; Prov. 27:1, 7; Eccl. 1:8; Eccl. 2:1–12; Eccl. 6:11, 12; Eccl. 8:15, 16, 17; Eccl. 10:19; Eccl. 11:9,10; Isa. 22:12, 13; Isa. 24:7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Isa. 28:4; Isa. 32:9, 10, 11; Isa. 47:7, 8, 9; Hos. 9:1, 11, 13; Amos 6:3, 4, 5, 6, 7; Amos 8:10; Mic. 2:10; Mic 6:14; Hag. 1:6; Mt. 6:25–34; Mt 10:39 Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 17:33; Jn 12:25. Mt. 16:26 Mk 8:36, 37. Mt. 18:1, 2, 3, 4 Luke 9:46, 47, 48; Mark 9:33, 34, 35, 36. Mt. 24:38, 39 Lk 17:26, 27, 28, 29. Lk 8:14 Mt. 13:22; Mark 4:19. Luke 12:19; Lk 14:17–24 Mt. 22:2–6. Lk 16:1–13, 19–25; Luke 21:34; John 5:44; John 12:43; John 15:19; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 7:29–31; 1 Cor. 10:6; 1 Cor. 15:32; Phil. 3:18, 19; Col. 3:2, 5; 1 Tim. 5:6; 2 Tim. 2:4, 22; 2 Tim. 3:2–7; Titus 2:12; Titus 3:3; Heb. 11:24–26; Jas. 2:1–4; Jas. 4:4, 9; Jas. 5:5; 1 Pet. 1:14, 24; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4; 2 Pet. 2:12–15, 18; 1 John 2:15–17; Jude 11–13, 16, 19

See Amusements and Worldly Pleasures;

Carnal Mindedness; Greed; Pleasures; Riches.

Instances of: Esau, Gen. 25:30–34; Heb. 12:16. Jacob, Gen. 25:31–34, 27:36, 30:37–43. Judah, Gen. 37:26, 27. Israelites, Num. 11:33, 34; Ps. 78:18, 29, 30, 31. Balaam, 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11, with Nu22:1ff, 23:1ff, 24:1ff. Eli's sons, 1 Sam. 2:12–17. Gehazi, 2 Kin. 5:21–27. Herod, Matt. 14:6, 7. Cretians, Titus 1:12.

Hostility (2189) (**echthra** [word study] from **echthros** = speaks of an enemy in an active sense, of one who is hostile to another) is a noun which means enmity (positive deep-rooted, irreconcilable hatred which may be open or concealed). It means hatred (feeling of intense dislike or aversion).

Given the context of James 4:4, it is quite fitting that **echthra** is the exact antithesis of **friendship**.

Here are a list of **synonyms** for **hostility** and as you read them, remember that they "define" your and my attitude when we "cozy up" to God's enemy, the **World**- abhorrence, animosity, animus, antagonism, antipathy, aversion, bad blood, detestation, enmity, hatred, ill will, malevolence, malice, opposition, resentment, unfriendliness. **Antonyms** -- agreement, amity, approval, congeniality, cordiality, friendliness, goodwill, sympathy.

THOUGHT - Beloved, does not even taking a moment to ponder this horrid list cause you to desire to determine to be diligent to keep yourself unspotted, unstained and uncontaminated by the vile abominations proffered (presented for acceptance) to us by this present evil age (world)?! (Jas 1:27-note) (May God's Spirit make it so for each one who reads these words - Php 2:13NLT-note)

In its essence **echthra** is the opposite of love. It describes being the enemy of another and here in James the enemy is God Himself. At its core sin is rebellion and every sinner is a rebel against God and lives in overt hostility to Him (whether overtly or covertly). If any proof were needed as to the hostility or enmity of sinners against God, it is clearly demonstrated in the crucifixion of the sinless Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Echthra describes the extreme negative attitude which is the opposite of love and friendship and from which hostile words and acts flow. It is the inner source ("the root") rather than the acts ("the fruit") themselves on which the word **echthra** focuses.

Paul uses **echthros** in Romans 8 stating that...

the mind set on the flesh is **hostile** toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so (Ro 8:7-note)

Hodge commenting on Ro 8:7 notes that **hostility** or...

Enmity towards God has its necessary consequence: subjection to the enmity of God. The apostle's immediate purpose is to show that to have one's mind controlled by the sinful nature is death. This must be the case, as it is enmity towards God. But those who hate God are the objects of His displeasure; and to be the objects of the wrath of God is perdition. Surely, then, to have one's mind controlled by the sinful nature is death (Ro 8:6). ([Hodge, Charles: Commentary on Romans. Ages Classic Commentaries](#))

TDNT says that **echthra**...

"Hatred," "hostility" is a disposition, objective opposition, and actual conflict. In the LXX canon the word mostly denotes individual hostility, in the apocrypha national enmity. In the NT hatred is one of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:20 (cf. Herod and Pilate in Lk. 23:12). Christ, however, has broken down the wall of human hostility (Eph. 2:14). The carnal mind means enmity against God (Rom. 8:7; cf. Jas 4:4). ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., &](#)

Larry Richards writes that...

Echthra is translated "hostility" and "hatred." These words describe that extreme negative attitude that is the opposite of love and friendship. The NT views this attitude as the source from which hostile acts flow. It is the inner source rather than the acts themselves that are focused on. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

One of the most famous uses of **echthra** is in Genesis 3 where God tells Satan...

And I will put **enmity** (echthra) Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." (Ge 3:15)

Echthra existed between Herod Antipas and Pilate, but as a result of their common action against Jesus this turned into friendship.

Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been **atenmity** with each other. (Lk. 23:12)

Paul explains that enmity is one of the rotten fruits of the flesh...

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, **enmities**, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions (Gal 5:19-20)

Christ our Peace made Jew and Gentile one...

by abolishing in His flesh the **enmity**, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the **enmity**. (Eph 2:15-16)

Thomas Manton comments that...

When you begin to please the world, you wage war against heaven and openly defy the Lord of hosts. The love of God and care to obey Him is abated just so much as the world prevails in you. There is a similar expression in Ro 8:7 (note), "the sinful mind is hostile to God." In this way the world not only withdraws the heart from God but opposes Him. It is hard for someone to serve two masters, even if they think alike. But God and the world are opposite masters; they command contrary things: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1Jn 2:15); "you cannot serve both God and Money" (Mt 6:24-note). People who match covetousness with Christianity seek to reconcile two of the most irreconcilable things in the world. ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

Denham Smith...

It is like the ivy with the oak. The ivy may give the oak a grand, beautiful appearance, but all the while it is feeding on its vitals. Are we compromising with the enemies of God? Are we being embraced by the world by its honors, its pleasures, its applause? This may add to us in the world's estimation, but our strength becomes lost.

C H Spurgeon

I know a beloved sister in Christ who was baptized. She had moved in high circles, but after her baptism she received the cold shoulder. When I heard it, I said, "Thank God for it," for half her temptations were gone. If the world has turned its back on her, she will be all the more sure to turn her back on the world and live near to her Lord. The friendship of the world is enmity to God. Why should we seek it?

John MacDuff, "Evening Incense" 1856 offers the following prayer for weanedness from the world

"They are not of the world--even as I am not of the world." John 17:16

O my God, I desire to come into Your gracious presence. May the incense-offering of gratitude and thanksgiving ascend from a grateful heart. How manifold are the proofs I have to recount of kindness on Your part! How deep the ingratitude I have to mourn on my own! My sins have reached unto the clouds--they are more in number than the sands of the sea! You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. I cannot evade Your righteous scrutiny--all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom I have to do!

Lord, I mourn the debasing influence of earthly things--the fascinating power of a present evil world. How

inclined I am to conform to its evil maxims and unholy practices! How often I am found among those who "mind earthly things"--my soul cleaving to the dust, instead of soaring upwards to Yourself, my sole satisfying portion!

O Lord, it is my earnest prayer that You would wean me from the world. Keep me from over-anxiety about the things that are seen--from being over-careful and troubled about earth's "many things"--to the exclusion of the one thing needful!

Break every alluring worldly spell!

Disenchant temporal things of their false and delusive charm!

By all the beneficial discipline of Your providence--disengage me from what is fleeting, uncertain, transient, perishable; and unite me to the things which cannot be shaken--but which remain forever! May my heart be more in Heaven--imbibing more of the pilgrim spirit. May I declare plainly that I seek a better country.

May I be driven nearer and closer to Him who is the true refuge and portion and Savior of His people. I rejoice to think that He has . . .

a balm for every wound,

a comfort for every bosom,

a solace for every tear!

May it be mine to go up through this 'wilderness world'--leaning on His loving and omnipotent arm!

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God: ος εαν ουν boulethe (3SAPS) philos einai (PAN) tou kosmou, echthros tou theou kathistatai. (3SPPI):

- Gal 1:10
- Ps 21:8; Lk 19:27; Jn 15:23,24; Ro 5:10
- [James 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

IT'S A MATTER OF PERSONAL CHOICE!

Moffatt renders it "Whoever, then, **chooses** to be the world's friend, turns enemy to God."

God has never sought spiritual "puppets" but men and women who are compelled by love to **choose** Him and to obey Him. Shortly before he died Joshua warned Israel...

If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, **choose** for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)

Years later (circa 550BC) **Elijah** ask a similar question to the men and women of the Northern Kingdom of Israel...

Elijah came near to all the people and said, "**How long will you hesitate between two opinions** (they were **choosing** to combine worship of Jehovah with worship of Baal)? If the LORD (Jehovah) is God, follow Him; but if Baal (Hebrew means "lord, owner, possessor, husband", the Canaanite male god of fertility), follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. (1Ki 18:21)

Therefore (3767) (oun) is a **term of conclusion** and in this verse based on the fact that friendship with the world is enmity with God, James concludes that the individual who curries a friendship with God's enemy is also God's enemy! James is pulling no punches and does not want his readers deceived.

Whoever - There are no exceptions to the following principle. Whether one is flagrantly opposed to God or feigns obedience to Him by going to church on Sunday, tithing, praying, fasting, etc... it matters not "who" he is in the world's eyes, for if he chooses to align his heart with the world, he is no friend of God.

THOUGHT - Beloved of the Lord, is there any area of your life in which you are deliberately choosing to befriend the world?

As **Warren Wiersbe** said "Identification with the world and its needs is one thing; imitation of the world and its foolishness is quite another."

Barnes comments that this phrase **whoever wishes** (boulomai)...

implies purpose, intention, design. It supposes that the heart is set on it; or that there is a deliberate purpose to seek the friendship of the world. It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships. Wherever there is a manifested purpose to find our chosen friends and associates there rather than among Christians; wherever there is a greater desire to enjoy the smiles and approbation (act of approving formally) of the world than there is to enjoy the approbation of God (cp 2Co 5:9) and the blessings of a good conscience (1Ti 1:5, 19, 3:9, 2Ti 1:3-note); and wherever there is more conscious pain because we have failed to win the applause of the world, or have offended its rotaries, and have sunk ourselves in its estimation, than there is because we have neglected our duty to our Saviour, and have lost the enjoyment of genuine religion, there is the clearest proof that the heart wills or desires to be the "friend of the world." (Ibid)

Thomas Manton comments that on **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world** observing that...

a serious purpose and choice reveal the state of the soul; and **whoever chooses to be a friend of the world** is absolutely a worldly person. Similarly in 1Ti 6:9, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation." In heavenly matters deliberate choice and full purpose reveals grace: "to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts" (Acts 11:23). Therefore Christians should look to their purpose and aim. What is it? What do you give your minds to? When someone sets himself to become rich, to lay up treasures on earth, he is a worldly man; and when he gives his heart and whole mind to do what God requires, whatever comes of it, he is a true servant of the Lord. Solomon says the same thing: "Do not wear yourself out to get rich" (Pr 23:4); that is, do not give up your heart and endeavors to discover and follow every way to increase your wealth and situation. "One eager to get rich will not go unpunished" (Pr 28:20)—one who has set that up as his purpose. Now this purpose of the soul may be known partly by our resolutely pursuing the end without weighing the means and consequences, and partly by our diligence and earnestness of spirit. When the end is fixed, we put up with the hard work but are impatient with hindrances and disappointments. ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

Dave Roper writes that

A self-assertiveness is the essence of worldliness. That is the world's creed: if you want to get ahead, then do it for yourself. No one else will do it for you. You have to claw and kick your way to the top of the heap. You only go around once, so you have to grab the brass ring. You have got to get what you want out of life. James says that when we feel that we have to get what we desire by asserting our self; then we ally our self with the world and with its philosophy, and thus we become an enemy of God. Why God's enemy? Because God wants to bring peace and reconciliation to the world. But the world's way always produces conflict and bitterness and strife. So when we choose to assert our self we constitute our self an enemy of God.

And what is far worse, James says, we become adulteresses, The word translated "unfaithful creatures" in Jas 4:4 is actually the Greek word for adulteresses. Men, how would you feel if your wife got \$50 from the man next door when she needed money to buy clothes? Or if, when she needed counsel or help or assurance or anything else, she went to all the other men in the neighborhood instead of coming to you? It would break your heart. And that is what this does to God. It breaks His heart when we go the world's way. It is as if we are saying, "*Lord, you are not adequate. Your way is not the right way; it's not the best way for me. I am going to have to get what I want by myself.*" ([War and Peace](#))

William Kelly comments that James reminds one of Paul's words...

to the Corinthians, "I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2Co 11:2) Here each individual is more in view; but the principle is the same, and the figure of departure quite intelligible. The **world** corrupts from simplicity (wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion) to Christ (2Co 11:3) many who would turn from immoral ways at once. For the **world** looks fair enough, and offers a variety of attractions suited to our nature. And the question is often raised, What is the harm of this? Is there any wrong in that? But this Epistle lays bare the character of the enticement.

Are we seeking or accepting the world? Now friendship with the world is enmity with God. Did not the world crucify the Lord of glory? Is it Christian then to value its approbation, or to court its honor? Is it loyal to the Lord

to walk in familiar ease with the system which shed His blood and put Him to the vilest ignominy?

No one clears himself of that guilt save he who believing is washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Those who profess the name without the power (cp 2Ti 3:5-note) are sure to grow weary of separateness to Christ and to hanker after earthly things. But the word is plain: "Whosoever therefore shall be minded to be friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God." ([Exposition of the Epistle of James.](#))

Wishes (1014) (**boulomai**) refers to a settled desire, one born of or springing from **reason** and not from **emotion**. To will, to wish, to will deliberately, to intend, to have a purpose, to be minded. **Boulomai** underlines the preset determined intention which drives one's planning, wishing, resolving. In contrast, the verb **thelo** focuses on the desire ("wishfulness") behind making an offer.

Gary Hill notes that "On one level, God's offers can be rejected (**thélō**), but His **boúlomai** ("planning") always happens and works out His purpose – as in purposefully presetting all the physical scenes of history....The Lord has also equipped people to resolve (plan, **boúlomai**) but never in a way that overrules what God resolutely plans (**boulomai**). All our choices are free, and each happens in divinely-planned circumstances. Therefore history always comes to pass as God has resolved (planned - **boúlomai**). " (The Discovery Bible)

Wishes is aorist tense which indicates that the individual made a definite decision of their heart at a given time. **Zodhiates** explains that "When you take your stand, your willing and determinate stand for the world, James declares, it is the same as if you took your stand against God. When the world has captured your will, that worldly will cannot tolerate God. You voluntarily open the door to the world and you open the window and cast God out." (Faith, Love, and Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James: AMG Publishers)

In the NT **boulomai** is used primarily of **men** and conveys the senses mentioned above. **Boulomai** is also used of **God** meaning to will, to purpose, to wish as in (Lk 22:42; Heb 6:17; Jas 1:18; 2Pe 3:9, of Jesus - Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22, of the Holy Spirit - 1Co 12:11)

Boulomai expresses the idea of the deliberate and specific exercise of volition (an act of making a choice or decision). Stated another way **boulomai** conveys the sense of more than simply wanting a desire or wish to be fulfilled. It conveys the stronger sense of choosing one thing over another or of preference of one thing before another.

Boulomai is more likely to express God's will of **decree** whereas the verb **thelo** refers to God's will of **desire**. **Boulomai** carries the tone of a preordained, divine decision, somewhat more deliberate than **thelo** (Lk 22:42).

Dr Grant Richison commenting on **wishes** writes in Jas 4:4 writes that **boulomai**...

conveys more than desire or a wish but the more forceful idea of resolving to hold one value over another. It is a volitional decision after careful deliberation. This is the process whereby a carnal Christian arrives at his carnality... We cannot love God halfheartedly. He wants all of us or none of us. To embrace one is to forsake the other. When we lose heart for God something else has displaced our love for God. ([James 44b - Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Vine writes that **boulomai** means "to wish, to will deliberately, and expresses more strongly than **thelo**, the deliberate exercise of the will." One of the best examples of this sense is from the lips of Jesus Who declared

"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son **wills** (**boulomai** - resolves, plans) to reveal Him. (Mt 11:27, cf the will of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:11, the will of the Father in Heb 6:17-18)

Zodhiates - **Boulomai** expresses a merely passive desire, propensity, willingness, while **thelo** expresses an active volition and purpose. **Boulomai** expresses also the inward predisposition and bent from which active volition proceeds; hence it is never used of evil people ([Zodhiates. S. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

Thayer has these thoughts on distinguishing **boulomai** from **thelo** - **Thelo** = to determine as an active option from subjective impulse; whereas **boulomai** properly denotes rather a passive acquiescence in objective considerations (**Ed**: I hope you can understand that comment. It's a bit obtuse for me!), i.e., choose or prefer (literal or figurative); by implication to wish, i.e. be inclined to

Theologians refer to the first (**boulomai**) as God's secret will and the second (**thelo**) as His revealed will. In other words, God desires many things that He does not decree. A decree is an official order, command, or edict issued by a king or other person of authority and in Scripture refers to God's universal laws or rules to which the entire world is subject (cp Ps 148:6).

Although the above resources suggest there is distinction between **boulomai** and **thelo**, not all lexicons agree...

Human will or volition can be represented, on the one hand, as a mental act, directed towards a free choice. But, on the other

hand, it can be motivated by desire pressing in from the unconscious. Both kinds of volition are rendered by the word-groups associated with *boulomai* and *thelo*. A clear terminological distinction between **boulomai** (originally volition as a mental act) and **thelo** (originally instinctive desire) is no longer possible after the very early overlap of the areas covered by the words and is excluded at the time of the NT by their largely synonymous usage.

Boulomai - 37 uses in the NT - The renders *boulomai* as am unwilling (1), desire(2), desired(1), desires(1), desiring(1), desirous(1), intend(1),intended(2), intending(2), like(1), want(7), wanted(2), wanting(2), will(1), willing(3), wills(3), wish(1), wished(1),wishes(1), wishing(3).

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not **wanting** to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.

Matthew 11:27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son **wills** to reveal Him.

Mark 15:15 And **wishing** to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified.

Luke 10:22 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son **wills** to reveal Him."

Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if Thou art**willing**, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."

Boulomai carries the tone of a preordained, divine decision, somewhat more deliberate than**thelo**.

John 18:39 "But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you**wish** then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

Acts 5:28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and **intend** to bring this man's blood upon us."

Acts 5:33 But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were**intending** to slay them.

Acts 12:4 And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him,**intending** after the Passover to bring him out before the people.

Acts 15:37 And Barnabas was **desirous** (wanted to) of taking John, called Mark, along with them also.

Barnabas' earlier involvement in the dispute at Antioch showed that his natural sympathies lay principally with Jewish Christians (Gal 2:13) and it was also natural for him **to want to** take Mark with them in revisiting the churches.

Acts 17:20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; we**want** to know therefore what these things mean."

Acts 18:15 but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am**unwilling** to be a judge of these matters."

Comment: "A judge of these things I do not desire to be." These are the exact words of a Roman magistrate refusing to exercise his *arbitrium iudicatis* within a matter *extra ordinem* (Sherwin-White, 102). It is within the competence of the judge to decide whether to accept a novel charge or not (Sherwin-White, 100).

Acts 18:27 And when he **wanted** to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace;

Acts 19:30 And when Paul **wanted** to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.

Comment: Plainly Paul **wanted to** face the howling mob

Acts 22:30 But on the next day,**wishing** to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Acts 23:28 "And **wanting** to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council;

Acts 25:20 "And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was**willing** to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters.

Acts 25:22 And Agrippa said to Festus, "I also**would like** to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

Comment: A T Robertson "The imperfect for courtesy, rather than the blunt **boulomai**, **Iwish**, **I want**. Literally, "I myself also was **wishing**" (while you were talking), a compliment to the interesting story told by Festus.

The idea of **boulomai** is to desire to have or experience something, with the implication of some reasoned planning or will to accomplish the goal.

Acts 27:43 but the centurion, **wanting** to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,

Acts 28:18 "And when they had examined me, they **were willing** to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as **Hewills**.

Comment: Boulomai = He continuously (present tense) determines "not according to the merit or wishes of men, but according to His own will" (Hodge). Regardless of the spiritual gift, the Holy Spirit has supernaturally and sovereignly distributed them to produce His own spiritual results...hence there is no occasion for conceit, pride, or faction (1Co 4:7). The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts **as He wills**, not as we will and therefore believers should never complain about or boast about there gifts for we are many members but one body and are to minister to each other.

This passage clearly proves that the Holy Spirit is a person. Will is attributed to him here, and this is one of the distinctive attributes of a person. Both the divinity and the personality of the Holy Spirit are therefore involved in the nature of the work here ascribed to him. (Hodge, C. 1Corinthians)

2 Corinthians 1:15 And in this confidence I **intended** at first to come to you, that you might twice receive a blessing;

2 Corinthians 1:17 Therefore, I was not vacillating when I **intended** to do this, was I? Or that which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?

Philippians 1:12 Now I **want** you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

1 Timothy 2:8 Therefore I **want** the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

1 Timothy 5:14 Therefore, I **want** younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach;

1 Timothy 6:9 But those who **want** to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Comment: Wuest: Boulomai, a desire that comes from the reasoning faculties. This desire to be wealthy is not a passing emotional thing, but the result of a process of reasoning. Mature consideration has been given the matter of the acquisition of riches, with the result that that desire has become a settled and planned procedure. Vincent says: "It is not the possession of riches, but the love of them that leads men into temptation." ([Ibid](#))

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I **want** you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

Philemon 1:13 whom I **wished** to keep with me, that in your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel;

Hebrews 6:17 In the same way God, **desiring** even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

Comment: Wuest: (Desiring is) **boulomai** which speaks of a desire that is based upon the reasoning faculties as over against **thelo** a desire that arises from the emotions. God, facing human infirmities, was minded to do thus and so. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

James 1:18 In the exercise of His **will** He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

James 3:4 Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot **desires**.

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever **wishes** to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not **wishing** (boulomai - present tense = continually He does not wish) for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Comment: Compare Paul's use of **thelo** in a similar context - "(God our Savior) Who **desires** (thelo - present tense = continually this is God's desire!) all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Ti 2:4). It follows that in some uses it is somewhat difficult to discern a clear distinction in meaning between **thelo** and **boulomai**. And not surprisingly **Wuest** offers this analysis of 2Peter 3:9...

The word "willing" (2Pe 3:9) is boulomai . The synonyms **thelō** and **boulomai** mean "to wish, desire." **Thayer** says: "Many agree with Prof. Grimm that **thelō** gives prominence to the emotional element, **boulomai**, to the rational and volitional; that **thelō** signifies the choice, while **boulomai** marks the choice as deliberate and intelligent; yet they acknowledge that the words are sometimes used indiscriminately, and especially that **thelō** as the less sharply defined term is put where **boulomai** would be proper." Trench, in his Synonyms of the New Testament says regarding synonyms: "All that we certainly affirm is that, granting this, (namely, that there may be one hundred passages where it would be quite as possible to use the one as the other), there is a hundred and first, where one would be appropriate and the other not, or where, at all events, one would be more appropriate than the other."

It would seem that boulomai is used here advisedly by Peter. It is not God's considered will that any should perish. There is the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. God will not violate man's will. While it is His considered will that no one should be lost, yet in making man in His image He necessarily had to make him a free moral agent, with a will which is able to say "yes" and "no" to Him. While God is always willing to save man, man is not always willing to be saved. ([Ibid](#))

2 John 1:12 Having many things to write to you, I do not **want** to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

Comment: Wuest: Want is boulomai "a desire which comes from one's reason." John had considered the matter carefully and had come to the conclusion that it would be wiser to wait until he saw this Lady again to talk things over with her rather than include them in this letter. Smith has a most helpful note in this connection: "Why would he not write all that was in his mind? It was a deliberate decision ere he took pen in hand: This is the force of 'I would not.' His heart was full, and writing was a poor medium of communication.... he was an old man, and writing was fatiguing to him (Plummer). The reason is deeper. The 'many things' which he had in mind, were hard things like his warning against intercourse with heretics, and he would not write at a distance but would wait till he was on the spot and had personal knowledge. ([Ibid](#))

3 John 1:10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who **desire** to do so, and puts them out of the church.

Jude 1:5 Now I **desire** to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

Boulomai - 74x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Gen 24:5; Ex 4:23; 8:2, 21; 9:2; 10:3, 7, 27; 16:28; 22:17; 36:2; Lev 26:21; Deut 25:7f; Ru 3:13; 1 Sam 2:25; 15:9; 18:25; 20:3; 22:17; 28:23; 31:4; 2 Sam 2:23; 6:10; 20:11; 24:3; 1Ki 13:33; 16:28; 21:6; 1Chr 10:4; 11:19; 2Chr 21:7; 25:16; Ezra 10:3; Esther 3:11, 13; 8:11; Job 9:3; 13:3; 21:14; 30:14; 34:14; 35:13; 36:12; 37:10; 39:9; Ps 36:3; 40:8; 70:2; Pr 1:10; 12:20; 18:1; 21:7; Isa 1:11, 29; 8:6; 30:9, 15; 36:16; 42:21, 24; 53:10; 65:12; 66:4; Jer 6:10; 13:10; 25:28; 42:22; Ezek 3:7; 33:11; Dan 4:31; 5:19; 11:3; Jonah 1:14

To be ([1511](#)) (**eimi**) is in the present tense indicating continuous action and it "matches" the verb "makes" (kathistemi which is also in the present tense). In other words continually seeking to be a friend of the world continually assigns one to the position of God's enemy!

Friend ([5384](#)) (**philos**) means loved (loved one), dear, befriended, friendly, kind. **Philos** can mean kindly disposed or devoted (Acts 19:31). **Philos** describes one having special interest in someone else. One who is on intimate terms or in close association with someone else **Philos** can describe a love which is emotional and conditional. **Philos** refers to one who has a liking for, is fond of something or someone.

There is an interesting derivative of **philos** used by Paul describing the last days as those in which men will be **lovers of pleasure** (**philedonos** from **philos** + **hedone** = pleasure) rather than lovers of God." (2Ti 3:4-note)

Aristotle defined a **"friend"** as "one soul inhabiting two." (cp use in Lxx of Dt 13:7)

Ropes writes that "To be **friend** of the world is to be on good terms with the persons and forces and things that are at least indifferent toward God, if not openly hostile to him. (Ropes, J. H. A Critical and Exegetical commentary on the Epistle of St. James. 1916)

Gilbrant in the [Complete Biblical Library](#)

Although primarily an adjective with the meaning of "beloved, friendly," or "dear," *philos* came to be used as a noun meaning "friend." Neither Greek nor Hebrew tradition requires a distinction between a relative and a friend; a *philos* may also be a relative.

Philos bears this sense in classical Greek as early as the writings of Homer (Eighth Century B.C.). The word denotes a friendly relationship, a helping and caring attitude between persons whether related by blood or not. It can further denote several aspects of close relations. *Philos* can mean "lover" in an erotic sense; it can also refer to "followers" of a politician or "clients" of a wealthy man. Thus it can express both equal and unequal relationships (Stählin, "philos," Kittel, 9:147). Many Greek and Roman authors wrote on the subject of friendship, particularly Cicero. Aristotle, for instance, gives four qualities of friendship: friends are a single soul; they share all things; they are equal; and friendship begins in the home (Nicomachean Ethics 1168b. 6–8). Greeks believed that a man could have only a few real friends and that a pair of friends was the true ideal.

The supreme duty of a friend was to sacrifice himself for his friend, and examples of sacrifice are highly extolled in Greek literature (Stählin, "philos," Kittel, 9:151–152). Cicero gave several qualities of a friend. First, friendship could only exist between good men, men who lived pure lives, free from greed, lust, and violence. Friends had complete agreement on all subjects and good will toward one another. Friendship was based on love. Friends would not ask one another to do what was wrong and only did good to one another. Permanence and stability in friendship were the product of mutual loyalty. The golden rule for a friend was to put himself on the same level as his friend (De Amicitia 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19).

Other Greek literature uses *philos* in its normal meaning of "friend." Moulton-Milligan reports its frequent use in letters of commendation and even in legal documents.

The **Septuagint** employs *philos* approximately 180 times. In about 40 texts *philos* renders the Hebrew *rēa'* "friend" or "fellow," but in the majority of cases it does not translate a specific Hebrew word. In the Septuagint *philos* conveys several shades of meaning: a close friend (Deuteronomy 13:6); a closest friend (1 Chronicles 27:33); a friend of the house (Proverbs 27:10); a political supporter of someone in authority (Esther 6:13); and even a best man (1 Maccabees 9:39). *Philos* often appears either in combination with or parallel to other terms (Stählin, "philos," Kittel, 9:154). The Jewish world also knew and understood the concept of deep friendship. The classic example is that of David and Jonathan. Scripture notes that Jonathan loved David as he loved himself (1 Samuel 20:17). David, in his lament for Saul and Jonathan declared, "Your (Jonathan's) love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (2 Samuel 1:26, NIV). Curiously, *philos* is not used to describe this relationship (nor *rēa'*). According to Stählin, there was no technical term for this kind of friendship in Hebrew; substitute phrases were needed (ibid., 9:156).

The New Testament employs *philos* about 30 times, often to indicate "a friend to whom one is under a basic obligation" (Günther, "Love," Colin Brown, 2:549). Although friends and relatives are sometimes differentiated (Luke 21:16; Acts 10:24), this need not be the case (John 15:13–15). Scripture notes several interesting examples of friendship: John the Baptist is best man to Jesus (John 3:29); Jesus is a "friend" to sinners (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34); Abraham is "the friend of God" (James 2:23); and believers cannot be friends both of the world and God (James 4:4).

In Luke 14:12 Jesus exhorted his hearers not to invite their friends, etc., to a meal, but rather to invite those unable to repay. In the ancient world a man invited individuals to his home in order to obligate them to himself. In this way when he desired a favor, he could demand a response, for ancient social custom obligated a man to return favors. Thus, many invited only those who could repay them or who could in the future provide them with favors. To invite the poor, etc., was unthinkable, since they could not repay. Jesus exhorted his disciples to create a new custom, not based on selfish reciprocity but on selfless giving without seeking return favors.

In the New Testament the supreme example of a friend was Jesus. His example of love crosses all cultural boundaries. To the Jews he represented one who loved His disciples as He loved himself; to the Greeks and Romans He was the one who laid down His life for His friends. In John 15:15 Jesus declared that His followers were His friends not merely His servants (*doulos* [1395]). The believer is more than a servant of God, i.e., one who ignorantly obeys orders under fear of punishment; rather, he is a friend—one who knows the Lord's will

and follows Him out of love and desire.

NIDNTT writes that...

philos is also in the NT a friend to whom one is under a basic obligation (cf. Lk. 7:6; 11:5f.; 14:10, 12; 15:6, 9, 29; 23:12; Jn. 11:11; Acts 10:24; 19:31; 27:3). Relatives (syngeneis) and friends are often mentioned alongside each other. But neither in Gk. nor in Jewish tradition can any firm distinction be upheld; ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Jesus gives some of the most complete teaching on the Biblical meaning of **philos** in John 15, noting first that the greatest manifestation of a friend was to give up one's life for his friend. To be a friend of Jesus is not just a matter of saying but of obeying. Those who have believed in Jesus are now called His friends. Walter Clippinger writes that in Jn 15:13, 14, 15 "Jesus and His disciples illustrate the growth of friendship from that of teacher and disciple, lord and servant, to that of friend and friend" (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

My Savior, My Almighty Friend

My Savior and Almighty Friend
When I begin to praise
It seems Thy mercies have no end!
I'm overwhelmed by grace.
-- Isaac Watts

THOUGHT - In light of the infinite grace of such a dear Friend, why are we so prone to wander and seek the leeks and garlic of this fallen world?

As noted earlier **friend** or **philos** is a covenant term with a much deeper import in Scripture than in our modern culture - See Covenant The Oneness of Covenant - The Meaning of Friend or click here for additional notes on friend).

A friend is one who comes in when the world goes out. A real friend warms you up by his presence, trusts you with his secrets, and remembers you in his prayers. Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief. There are not many things in life so beautiful as true friendship, and there are not many things more uncommon. He whose hand is clasped in friendship cannot throw mud. A faithful friend is an image of God. A faithful friend is one of life's greatest assets. A friend is one who knows you as you are, understands where you've been, accepts who you've become and still, gently invites you to grow. A friend will joyfully sing with you when you are on the mountaintop, and silently walk beside you through the valley.

A friend is one who makes me do my best. - Oswald Chambers

The dearest friend on earth is a mere shadow compared with Jesus Christ. - Oswald Chambers

Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life; many spirits might have failed beneath the bitterness of trial if they had not found a friend. - C H Spurgeon

Keep a fair-sized cemetery in your back yard, in which to bury the faults of your friends. - Henry Ward Beecher

A friend is:
a push when you've stopped
a word when you're lonely
a guide when you're searching
a smile when you're sad
a song when you're glad.

Philos - 29x in 27verses -

Matthew 11:19 "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a **friend** of tax-gatherers and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

Friend of Sinners, Lord of Glory

Lowly, mighty, Brother, King!
Musing o'er Thy wondrous story,
Grateful we Thy praises sing:
Friend to help us, cheer us, save us,
In Whom pow'r and pity blend—

Praise we must the grace which gave us
Jesus Christ, the sinners' Friend.

Luke 7:6 Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent **friends**, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof;

Luke 7:34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, **a friend** of tax-gatherers and sinners!'

Luke 11:5 And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, **Friend**, lend me three loaves; Luke 11:6 for a **friend** of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; Luke 11:8 "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his **friend**, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Luke 12:4 "And I say to you, My **friends**, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

Luke 14:10 "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, '**Friend**, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

Luke 14:12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your **friends** or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you.

Luke 15:6 "And when he comes home, he calls together his **friends** and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

Luke 15:9 "And when she has found it, she calls together her **friends** and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'

Luke 15:29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my **friends**;

Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make **friends** for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Luke 21:16 "But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and **friends**, and they will put some of you to death,

Luke 23:12 Now Herod and Pilate became **friends** with one another that very day; for before they had been at enmity with each other.

John 3:29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the **friend** of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full.

John 11:11 This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep."

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his **friends**. 14 "You are My **friends**, if you do what I command you. 15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Christ a Redeemer and Friend

Poor, weak and worthless though I am
I have a rich almighty Friend;
Jesus, the Savior, is His Name;
He freely loves, and without end.

John 19:12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this Man, you are no **friend** of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

Acts 10:24 And on the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close **friends**.

Acts 19:31 And also some of the Asiarchs who were **friends** of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.

Acts 27:3 And the next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his **friends** and receive care.

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the **friend** of God.

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

3 John 1:14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the **friends** by name.

Philos - 68 verses in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Ex 33:11; Deut 13:6; Jdg 14:20; 15:2, 6; 1Chr 27:33; Esther 1:3, 13; 2:18; 3:1; 5:10, 14; 6:9, 13; 8:12; 9:22; Job 2:11; 6:27; 19:13, 21; 32:1, 3; 35:4; 36:33; 42:7, 10, 17; Ps 38:11; 88:18; 139:17; Pr 3:29; 6:1, 3; 12:26; 14:20; 15:28; 16:28f; 17:9, 17f; 18:1; 19:4; 22:24; 25:1, 8, 10, 17f; 26:19; 27:6, 10, 14; 29:5; Jer 9:4f; 20:4, 6, 10; 30:14; Dan 2:13, 17f; 3:24, 27; 5:23; 6:13; Mic 7:5;

Ex 33:11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his **friend** (Lxx = philos). When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

As **Dwight L Moody** rightly put it "If I walk with the world, I can't walk with God."

C H Spurgeon has an interesting insight commenting that...

In one sense, Christians are the greatest friends of the world, for they desire the good of all men, and seek their salvation. But, in another sense, viewing the world as a great conglomerate of evil, we are no friends of the world. There is a certain form of theology, popular nowadays (see note below on the "Downgrade Controversy"), which teaches us that we ought to remove the line of demarcation between the Church and the world. This kind of teaching may be called theology, but it cometh not of God; it is a gross falsehood which we ought to abhor in the very depth of our spirit.

Comment on the Downgrade Controversy: A controversy among the Baptists flared in 1887 with Spurgeon's first "Downgrade" article, published in The Sword & the Trowel. In the ensuing "Downgrade Controversy" The Metropolitan Tabernacle became disaffiliated from the Baptist Union, effectuating Spurgeon's congregation as the world's largest self-standing church and thus a precursor of megachurches of the 20th century. Contextually the **Downgrade Controversy** was British Baptists' equivalent of hermeneutic tensions which were starting to sunder Protestant fellowships in general. The Controversy took its name from Spurgeon's use of the term "Downgrade" to describe certain other Baptists' outlook toward the Bible (i.e., **they had "downgraded" the Bible and the principle of sola scriptura**). ([Ref](#))

Makes (2525) (**kathistemi** from **kata** = down + **histemi** = to set or stand) means literally "to stand or set down". To constitute. To cause someone to experience something (here = life as the enemy of God!) Most of the NT uses of **kathistemi** are figurative and refer to "setting someone down in office" or appointing or assigning a person to a position of authority. To put in charge or to appoint one to administer an office. To set in an elevated position.

Vincent comments that the primary meaning of **kathistemi** is "to set down, it is used in classical Greek of bringing to a place, as a ship to the land, or a man to a place or person; hence to bring before a magistrate...From this comes the meaning to set down as, i.e., to declare or show to be; or to constitute, make to be. (Word studies in the New Testament: Vol. 3, Page 1-64)

Kathistemi means to "to make someone something" and is used by Paul explaining that "as through the one man's disobedience the many **were made** (constituted - kathistemi) sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many **will be made** (constituted - kathistemi) righteous." (Ro 5:19-note)

Richison adds that **kathistemi** "means to assign, to establish, to institute, to bring into a certain state, to exhibit one's self. Once we become a friend of the world, we assign ourselves to the position of an enemy of God. We appoint ourselves to this position of an enemy of God by using the world-system for our essential values... A person who attempts to love God and the world simultaneously is a double-minded man. He wants his cake and eat it too. This is spiritual adultery. ([James 4:4c - Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Enemy (2190) (**echthros** from **échthos** = hatred, enmity; noun = **echthra** = enmity, hostility) is an adjective which pertains to manifesting hostility or being at enmity with another, where enmity is a deep seated animosity or hatred which may be open or concealed or a "deep-rooted hatred." In the active sense **echthros** means to be hateful, hostile toward, at enmity with or an

adversary of someone, in this case the Almighty God! In the passive sense **echthros** pertains to being subjected to hostility, to be hated or to be regarded as an enemy.

Echthros is one who has the extreme negative attitude that is the opposite of love and friendship. An enemy is one that is antagonistic to another, even seeking to injure, overthrow, or confound the opponent. Scripture often uses **echthros** as a noun describing "the adversary", Satan! Like father like son!

In Colossians Paul uses **echthros** to explain that...

although you were formerly **alienated** (estranged - and hostile in mind, the antonym of reconciled), **engaged in evil deeds** (echthros), yet He has now reconciled (apokatalasso = reconcile fully, thoroughly, completely, change thoroughly, of bringing together friends who have been estranged) you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before (Literally = down in the eye of God ~ **Coram Deo** = before the face of God) Him holy and blameless (amomos) and beyond reproach (anegkletos) (Col 1:21, 22- see note)

In Chapter 1 **James** had confronted the deceptive danger of false religion explaining that...

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world (kosmos) (Jas 1:27-note)

Albert Barnes comments that the phrase **makes himself an enemy of God**..

is a most solemn declaration, and one of fearful import in its bearing on many who are members of the church. It settles the point that any one, no matter what his professions, who is characteristically a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian.

In regard to the meaning of this important verse, then, it may be remarked,

(1) that there is a sense in which the **love of this world**, or of the physical universe, is not wrong. That kind of love for it as the work of God, which perceives the evidence of His wisdom and goodness and power in the various objects of beauty, usefulness, and grandeur, spread around us, is not evil. The world as such-- the physical structure of the earth, of the mountains, forests, flowers, seas, lakes, and vales--is full of illustrations of the Divine character and it cannot be wrong to contemplate those things with interest, or with warm affection toward their Creator.

(2) When that **world**, however, becomes our portion; when we study it only as a matter of science, without "looking through nature up to nature's God.;" when we seek the wealth which it has to confer, or endeavor to appropriate as our supreme portion its lands, its minerals, its fruits (Ponder Jesus' parable in Lk 12:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21); when we are satisfied with what it yields, and when in the possession or pursuit of these things, our thoughts never rise to God; and when we partake of the spirit which rules in the hearts of those who avowedly seek this world as their portion (Ponder Jesus' questions Mk 8:36, 37), though we profess religion, then the love of the world becomes evil, and comes in direct conflict with the spirit of true religion.

(3) The statement in this verse is, therefore, one of most fearful import for many professors of religion (Titus 1:16-note). There are many in the church who, so far as human judgment can go, are characteristically lovers of the world. This is shown **(a)** by their conformity to it in all in which the world is distinguished from the church as such; **(b)** in their seeking the friendship of the world, or their finding their friends there rather than among Christians; **(c)** in preferring the amusements of the world to the scenes where spiritually-minded Christians find their chief happiness; **(d)** in pursuing the same pleasures that the people of the world do, with the same expense, the same extravagance, the same luxury; **(e)** in making their worldly interests the great object of living, and everything else subordinate to that.

This spirit exists in all cases where no worldly interest is sacrificed for religion; where everything that religion peculiarly requires is sacrificed for the world. If this be so, then there are many professing Christians who are the "enemies of God." See (Php 3:18). They have never known what is true friendship for Him, and by their lives they show that they can be ranked only among His foes.

It becomes every professing Christian, therefore, to examine himself with the deepest earnestness to determine whether he is characteristically a friend of the world or of God; whether he is living for this life only, or is animated by the high and pure principles of those who are the friends of God.

The great Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived, and soon our appropriate place will be assigned us, and our final Judge will determine to which class of the two great divisions of the human family we belong--to those who are the friends of the world, or to those who are the friends of God. (Ibid)

Kistemaker writes...

A friend of God who endures the enmity of the world can always take comfort in the words of the sixteenth-century reformer John Knox, who said, "A man with God on his side is always in the majority." But the person who meets God as his enemy stands alone, for the world cannot help him. The author of Hebrews concludes, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (He 10:31). (Ibid)

Don't Court the World by Theodore Epp James 4:4-7 - Consider the accusation of James concerning the illicit love affair with the world as stated in the following paraphrase: "You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God." (James 4:4, Amplified Bible). Being a friend of the world indicates that the person agrees with the values of the world system. The Old Testament Prophet Amos asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The believer who is able to be in agreement with this evil world system is woefully out of fellowship with Almighty God, who saved him from the penalty and power of sin. If a person has a consistently worldly life-style, it is a clear signal that he has never trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. On the other hand, there are believers who are out of fellowship with the Lord and who are worldly for a time. Perhaps this is because many want Christ as Saviour but not as Lord. They want the assurance and peace of knowing that they are saved from eternal condemnation, but they also want to live to please themselves rather than letting Christ be the Master of their lives."Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). ([Back to the Bible](#))

Disloyalty - Suppose that in a certain community lives a man and his wife who love each other very much. Across the street lives a man who develops a hatred for the woman's husband. One night he invades their home and kills him. Although he is arrested, a loophole in the law allows him to escape punishment, and he is released to return to the community. Now imagine that in a few short weeks you see the widow and her husband's murderer walking down the street together. Her hand is slipped into his arm and she looks smilingly into his face. She says to him, "I'm so happy." What would you say about a woman like that? Surely you would brand her as disloyal to her husband's memory and unworthy to bear his name.

We must never forget that this godless world hated Jesus enough to kill Him. One who walks hand in hand with a system headed by our Lord's enemies and becomes friendly with them is disloyal to Jesus Christ. Only those who keep themselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27-note) have a right to bear the name Christian. Let's avoid all unholy alliances. -P. R. Van Gorder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Lehman Strauss comments that...

It is in a deep exercise of my own soul that I speak frankly to you about worldliness. Face the facts with me! The adultery of the Church to her Lord is worldliness. I am not now thinking of those things frowned upon by most Christians, as drinking alcoholic beverages, gambling, smoking, sex, show business, and the like. Rather does my mind go out to those things which make up "the world" of most believers in Christ, things which are not harmful in themselves, but which come between your own soul and your fellowship with God in prayer and the study of the Holy Scriptures. There are those who confess Christ as Saviour and who, like Demas, forsake the Saviour and the saints "having loved this present world" (2Ti 4:10-note), or who, like Peter, follow "afar off" (Luke 22:54). When Jesus calls men to follow Him He does not expect them to turn back ever. But alas! Some of you who one day made a decision to follow the Son of God could not resist the after appeal of the world. You went back, didn't you? Your business, your house, your automobile, or something else, took your affections, and your Saviour was crowded out. Such is worldliness. It is impossible to walk in spiritual fellowship with God, at the same time following the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

Exactly who has our fondest affection? Is it God or the world? With weeping, Paul reminded the brethren at Philippi that among them were "enemies of the cross of Christ... who mind earthly things" (Php 3:17, 18, 19-note). Minding earthly things, earthly possessions, earthly pleasures, earthly recognition, is worldly. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2-note). Charles Brown draws our attention to that grand old hymn of Isaac Watts, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" In the third stanza he raises the question of our relation to this world,

"Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?"

I feel certain that every Bible-believing child of God can answer the question of this hymn with an emphatic "No." (Lehman Strauss – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James)

Puritan writer **Richard Baxter** in his chapter [Hindrances to a Heavenly Life on Earth](#)...reminds us that

AN EARTHLY MIND is another hindrance to be avoided. When the heavenly believer is rejoicing in hope of the glory to come, perhaps you are blessing yourself with thoughts of worldly prosperity. You are rejoicing in hopes of earthly success. When he is comforting his soul with the views of Christ, of angels and saints, with whom he shall live forever; you are comforting yourself with your money, and in thinking of the advancement of your family. Your earthly mind may coexist with church membership and formal religious activities, but it cannot coexist with heavenly contemplation. Keep worldly matters as loose as a light jacket, that you may take it off whenever you can; but let God and heaven be next to your heart. Ever remember, that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1John 2:15). This is plain speaking, and happy is he who faithfully receives it. ([THE SAINTS EVERLASTING REST](#))

****Dabble** ([see above comments on "hostility"](#)) = Literally, to dip a little or often; to paddle, splash, or play in or as if in water; to deal with frivolously or superficially; to involve oneself superficially, casually or intermittently especially in a secondary activity or interest; to tamper; to touch here and there; to dally, to dip into, to tinker, to trifle. I like what **Thomas Guthrie** wrote...

If you find yourself loving any pleasure better than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, any house better than the house of God, any table better than the Lord's table, any person better than Christ, any indulgence better than the hope of heaven—**take alarm!**

John Calvin had it right when he said...

The mind of a Christian ought not to be filled with thoughts of earthly things, or find satisfaction in them, for we ought to be living as if we might have to leave this world at any moment.

THE ANTITHESIS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

Instead of friendship with the **world**, the heavenly minded believer should continually (only possible as he or she is *motivated* and *enabled* by the Holy Spirit, - memorize Php 2:13NLT+ which makes Php 2:12+ possible!) be choosing to **separate from the world** as the following passages (among many) instruct...

2 Ti 2:21-note Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Now **flee** from youthful lusts and **pursue** righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

2 Cor 6:14 **Do not be bound** together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 "Therefore, **come out** from their midst and **be separate**," says the Lord. "And **do not touch** what is unclean; And I will welcome you.

18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

2 Cor 7:1-note Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

James 4:4-7 DON'T COURT THE WORLD - Theodore Epp

Consider the accusation of James concerning the illicit love affair with the world as stated in the following paraphrase: "You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God." (James 4:4, Amplified Bible).

Being a friend of the world indicates that the person agrees with the values of the world system. The Old Testament Prophet Amos asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The believer who is able to be in agreement with this evil world system is woefully out of fellowship with Almighty God, who saved him from the penalty and power of sin. If a person has a consistently worldly life-style, it is a clear signal that he has never trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. On the other hand,

there are believers who are out of fellowship with the Lord and who are worldly for a time. Perhaps this is because many want Christ as Saviour but not as Lord. They want the assurance and peace of knowing that they are saved from eternal condemnation, but they also want to live to please themselves rather than letting Christ be the Master of their lives.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15^{[+](#)}).