

World - Kosmos (Greek Word Study)

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-note]) 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](#)

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?"**

Bishop Trench gives a frequently quoted summary definition of the **anti-God world system** explaining that it is...

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.

A convincing evidence of true piety is the spirit of separation from the world ([SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD](#))

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

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-note, 1Jn 2:16-note, 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-note 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-note 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 (see word study) ...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 (see word study) 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-note...

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 under James 4:4](#))

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

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." (See his article on [The World](#))

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.

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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...

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)
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D. L. Moody once said "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." (From Today in the Word, October, 1997)

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!)

NEW NAVE'S TOPIC

WORLDLINESS

WORLDLINESS. 1 Sam. 8:19, 20; Job 20:4–29; Job 21:11–15; Psa. 49:16, 17, 18; Psa. 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

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; Psa. 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.