

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

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THE WORLD

by John Isaac Edwards

The word “world” occurs 287 times in my Bible. It is put to use different ways depending on the context.

1) **HEAVEN AND EARTH.** Sometimes the word “world” has reference to heaven and earth (the universe). The Psalmist said, *“The heavens are thine, the earth is also thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them”* (Ps. 89:11). Paul preached, *“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth...”* (Acts 17:24). The Corinthians were reminded, *“... that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth...”* (1 Cor. 8:4-5).

2) **THE EARTH ITSELF.** Often the word “world” is used of the whole earth, the habitable globe. Hannah prayed, *“He raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and he hath set the world upon them”* (1 Sam. 2:8). Psalm 24:1 says, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness*

thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” In the temptation of Jesus, *“...the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world...”* (Mt. 4:8). Paul wrote Timothy, *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”* (1 Tim. 6:7).

3) **THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD.** Many times the word “world” is put for the inhabitants of the world; its people. *“But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness”* (Ps. 9:7-8). Jesus taught, *“Ye are the light of the world....”* (Mt. 5:14). *“...there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed”* (Lk. 2:1). The Golden Text reads, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16). In dealing with immorality in the church at Corinth, Paul taught, *“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the*

fornicators of this world...for then must ye needs go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:10). That is, to withdraw from human society and seek an abode outside of it.

4) **THE UNGODLY.** The word “world” sometimes represents the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ. When promising the Holy Spirit to the apostles, Jesus declared, *“...whom the world cannot receive...”* (Jn. 14:17). The Lord made a distinction between His disciples and the world. *“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me...”* (Jn. 14:19). He spoke of *“...the prince of this world...”* (Jn. 14:30). Jesus taught, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (Jn. 15:18-19). Again He said, *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”* (Jn. 17:16). Contrasting human wisdom and divine revelation, Paul stated, *“...the world by wisdom knew not God...”* (1 Cor. 1:21). 1 Corinthians 6:2 records, *“...the*

saints shall judge the world....” Paul discussed walking “... according to the course of this **world**...” in Ephesians 2:2.

That’s not a trail over the river and through the woods, but the path of the ungodly. “World” is used in Hebrews 11:38, among the roll of the faithful in Old Testament times, to designate the multitude of ungodly and wicked men, when the Hebrew writer asserted, “*Of whom the **world** was not worthy...*” It is the responsibility of every individual to “...to keep himself unspotted from the **world**” (Jas. 1:27). That’s not to go off and keep from being seen by people (to live in isolation) or to stay out of the mud or mines, but to not be influenced by the evil of those alienated from God. Peter penned, “*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the **world**...*” (2 Pet. 2:20).

Someone reads that and says, “Yes, I’d like to go where there is clean air and pure water!” That’s not what he’s talking about. The “*pollutions of the world,*” in that passage, has to do with sin! John said, “*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the **world**. They are*

*of the **world**: therefore speak they of the **world**, and the **world** heareth them. We are of God...*” (1 Jn. 5:4-6). That is, they speak in accordance with the world’s character and mode of thinking.

5) **WORLDLY AFFAIRS.**

“World” is also used to denote worldly affairs; the aggregate of things earthly; the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which, although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus mentioned “...the care of this **world**...” (Mt. 13:22). Jesus uttered, “*My kingdom is not of this **world**...*” (Jn. 18:36). The kingdom of Christ is not of earthly nature or origin. John appealed to Christians, “*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. For all that is in the **world**, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the **world**”* (1 Jn. 2:15-16). John spoke of obstacles to God’s cause when he said, “*For whatsoever is born of God*

*overcometh the **world**: and this is the victory that overcometh the **world**, even our faith”* (1 Jn. 5:4).

6) NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH. The Scriptures speak of “*the **world** to come*” (Mk. 10:30) and “*this **world**”* and “*that **world**”* (Lk. 20:34-35). There is a new abode, a new dwelling place, “...*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*” (2 Pet. 3:13). John “...*saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea*” (Rev. 21:1).

Knowing how the word “world” is used helps one to reconcile “*God so loved the world*” with “*Love not the world*” and to understand how it is that we are “*in the world,*” but not “*of the world.*”

How many have you helped bring out of the world into Christ and His church?

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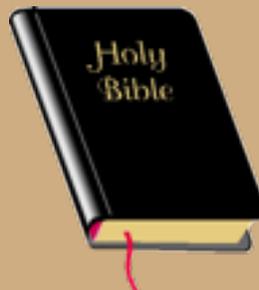
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