



[1 John 2:15-17](#)

(15) 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. (16) 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. (17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

King James Version

The word translated "world" is *cosmos* in Greek. John uses it six times in three short verses, emphasizing its importance to us. It literally means "an orderly arrangement." In other words, it means "a system." The apostle refers to the environment and lifestyle system into which we were born. Our values originated from this source, and those values are a confused mix of good and evil, specifically designed to entrap us in a web of death.

Cosmos identifies the system on earth established apart from the Creator [God](#). Since the system's source is [Satan](#), it cannot produce life. The problem for us is that this system is quite appealing to human nature, and it is continuously exerting pressure on us to return to it. Yet, if we [love the world](#), it precludes love for the Father. The Father is then pushed to the background of our lives.

John points out that love for the world is essentially meaningless because the world is passing away. If it and its values pass away, what will a person following that system have to show for his life?

The basics of that system's values are contained in the words "flesh," "eyes," and "pride":

Flesh indicates a self-oriented outlook that pursues its own ends independent of God, a focus that clearly produces idolatry.

Eyes suggest being captivated by everything that entices the sight, drawing attention to the human attraction to [covetousness](#), which is idolatry.

Pride stands for a pretentious hypocrisy that glories in self, possessions, and accomplishments. This, too, is idolatry because pride focuses devotion on the self.

So, to whom or what are we loyal? [1 John 5:19](#) identifies the source of the spiritual beliefs and values of everybody in the world prior to his calling: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

This system is the source of much of what we believed, and its author, Satan, has been its ruler, though we did not realize it. Because Satan has been clever enough to include some of the true God's system, beliefs, stories, and practices within his, the Devil's system has an air of righteous authority. We can feel good, even joyous and inspired, while doing evil—like committing idolatry—in submitting ourselves as servants to his way.

[Romans 1:18-32](#) provides a compelling history of mankind's efforts to avoid God as the Source of their values, showing what this has produced. Satan has made strong and persuasive efforts—seemingly doing everything in his power—to diminish the importance of obedience to the Ten Commandments. Mankind's failure to keep these godly standards is responsible for the world's state.

The undermining of their importance began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Satan's persuasions were so enticing that they submitted to his values despite seeing God literally eye to eye! None of us has been blessed with that gift. However, in God's judgment, that does not let us off the hook. Yet, humanity cannot plead complete ignorance of God because He is revealed by His handiwork. Since men will not seek out and obey the true God on their own, the best they can do in regard to a standard of values

is their own experience, and that has produced this perverted and violent world. That is the story of idolatry in Romans 1.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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