

# **This Is Not God's World**

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Having been born and reared in Pennsylvania, I have more than a passing knowledge of the Amish country of southeastern Pennsylvania. People similar to the Pennsylvania Amish live in communities in other states too like the Amish of Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia and Kansas. The Amana people of Iowa are also religiously related. In addition, the Mennonites, the original Anabaptist group and somewhat more liberal than the Amish, have communities scattered across the nation and around the world.

These people are well known for pursuing quaint and seemingly severe lifestyles; wearing dark, antiquated garb; running beautiful farms; avoiding electricity, tractors and automobiles; and producing quality goods. But why do they live as they do—within, yet isolated from, the larger community surrounding them? The answer largely stems from a sincere effort to keep themselves from being spiritually contaminated by the world in obedience to I John 2:15-17.

John is not the only apostle who called upon the children of God to do this. James urges us "to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). The apostle Paul makes a strong appeal in Romans 12:2, saying, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Though we do not agree with the Amish method, we must stand in admiration of their strong and enduring practice to combat a very appealing but deceptive roadblock to growth. It is this same battle that we wage in Christ as we prepare for His Kingdom.

## **The World Is Anti-God**

Brethren, *this world is not God's world!* Some have such a difficult time grasping the practical ramifications of this concept, perhaps because we think of God as Creator, Owner and Ruler and marvel at the staggering beauty of what He has made. In that sense it is His world.

Nonetheless, the systems that operate our cultures are not His. The Greek word translated "world" in I John 2:16 is *kosmos*, which has a moral connotation and means "the world apart from God." William Barclay in his commentary on this verse writes, "To John the world was nothing other than pagan society with its false values and its false gods" (p. 56).

The world's systems generate and sustain our government and politics, entertainment, fashion, religion, business ethics, medicine and health care, culinary tastes, social programs and institutions, education, science and technology, economics and use of power. The world's systems have formed much of our belief systems and attitudes, and these in turn have shaped our conduct.

These are the things we must overcome. And this world and its systems are so appealing! But God says not to waste your love on them because they have no future! In fact, this world is so bad that other prophecies show the whole thing will be destroyed and replaced when God invokes the restitution of all things (*cf.* II Peter 3:10-11; Revelation 21:1).

The basic reason all must be destroyed is because at its very foundation is a destroying and antagonistic spirit, Satan the Devil, the god of this world. Henry David Thoreau grasped an important principle when he stated, "Every institution is but the lengthened shadow of one man." As Jesus phrased it, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Satan is a destroyer, and his way is at best a bad mixture of good and evil. James confirms this when he asks this rhetorical question, "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?" (James 3:11).

### **"Come Out of Her"**

So strong is God's warning about the world that He says through Paul:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "‘Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

That is mighty strong language! Not one part of this system will be carried over into the World Tomorrow! The whole thing is unclean, something that contaminates and defiles, rendering unholy those who are touched by it (Haggai 2:10-14). The world is most dangerous to a Christian when it is not persecuting them. It seems friendly, tolerant, even producing good, but God says even then it is still unclean. It is God's judgment that counts.

Have we considered this? Are we afraid of what it might cost us to "come out of her" (Revelation 18:4)? The cost might be great in some areas of life, but it is so important that it is worth considering again. We need to think about these things more intensely because we are on the verge of the fall festivals when we will be appearing in God's presence even more frequently. Let's reevaluate ourselves again in the light of this important fundamental principle and resolve to "come out" of a habit or practice of the world that we have dragged in with us.