

Doctrine of the World

The Christian's Conflict with the World

1. The believer is in constant conflict with three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil.
 - World. *1 John 2:15 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.*
 - Flesh. *Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*
 - Devil. *1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*
2. The enemies of the Christian are intimately related, one to the other. The flesh is seduced by the world, and the cosmos is ruled by the god of this world.
 - *2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*
3. The term for world is used in a variety of different ways.
 - The planet earth. *John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*
 - A perspective that is more man centered than God centered. *John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*
4. In every generation there is the tug of the believer's heart to withdraw completely from the world. But this is not the will of the Lord. Salvation does not come by segregation.
5. The heart of the Christian must not hold people in contempt as the Pharisees did, or the Essenes, those members of a monastic brotherhood of Jews in Palestine from the second century BC to the second century AD.

Special Note.

Some Jewish scholars believe that Josephus coined the term “Essenes” to describe the Jewish sect that was celibate, in contrast to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Some of the Essenes were ascetic, and they were priests. The Essenes dwelt in the desert wilderness of Qumran to the east of Jerusalem with the congregation of men and women in Damascus, according to the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of their primary goals was to withdraw from society.

6. It is the will of the Lord to live in the world, but not be conformed to it.
 - *Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
7. The word for “conformed” (suschematizo, soos-khay-mat-id’-zo), means to fashion alike, to be pressed into a mold, to conform to the same pattern (figuratively).
8. The word for “transformed” (metamorphoo, met-am-or-fo’-o), to transform (literally or figuratively “metamorphose”): change, transfigure, transform.
9. The word for “form” refers to “structure”, or “fixture.”
10. The Lord does not want believers to “com”, or be with, the “structure”, or “fixture”, of the world.

Special Note.

To be popular as a young person is to be informed about the latest music, or TV shows, or movies. It is to accept the dares to steal, take drugs, cheat on tests, or engage in promiscuous behavior. It is to be “cool” in speech and behavior.

To be popular as an adult is not much different, if the truth were told. Many adults will smoke, or drink, they will try drugs, or buy expensive toys of time they cannot afford. All of this will be done in order to be conformed to the image of the world and what it says is sophisticated.

The only difference between men and boys is the price of the toy. The times change, but the goal of being accepted by our peers is something that does not change. The world pulls at the individual every day.

11. What is it that individuals are being joined to? The Germans offer an answer in the word, “zeitgeist”. “Geist” is a familiar term reflected in the word “poltergeist”, or ghosts. “Zeit” is the German word for “time”, and “geist” is the German word for “spirit. The “zeitgeist” is the “spirit of the times”, or “the spirit of the age.” What is fashionable? What is acceptable? People want to know.

12. The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900), opposed the weak Christianity he witnessed, and the cultural rot of his generation, while personally searching for the biological hero of time, he called, the Superman.
13. Nietzsche observed that people are like sheep. They follow, without courage, whatever is expected of them. People become slaves to “zeitgeist”, or the spirit of the age. The superman would leave the herd and dare to think for himself. He would be the ultimate non-conformist.
14. Paul said, “Do not be conformed to this world.” However, care should be taken not to become legalistic, and condemn the arts and fashions that are non-Biblical issues. Some Christians do not dance, or go to movies, or play cards.
15. The kingdom of God has nothing to do with superficial acts of non-conformity. If you want to be a Biblical non-conformist, be someone whose word can be trusted, who honors their commitments, and who is loyal to Christ. Be someone who will do what is right, even if it costs money, reputation, or time.
16. The believer is to be a transformer. The Christian is to go over, and beyond, the structures of the present world. Let the believer out work, out fight, and out love the non-believer. The guidance is not what is legal, or what the courts say, but what the Lord commands.