

The Kingdom of Self-Worship

By Lynn Warner

Most of us have grown up in an increasingly secular culture. To be secular is to be worldly-minded, to focus on this present life. More and more spiritual things are being reduced to a material or physical aspect. There is a sinful attachment to worldly-mindedness, which usurps God's authority to define us as His creatures living in His creation. He alone gives true meaning to our lives because He is the Author of His creation. One of our challenges as Christians is to allow Him to reveal to us what beliefs, values, meanings, and attitudes we must separate from to be more wholly His children. What are our secular idolatries?

I think the main secular idol is "self." In America, "self" is in God's place. Pride is an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority and self-esteem. "Self" is confident in his own power and authority in reasoning, including moral reasoning. Therefore, "self" can judge for himself the values and meanings of everything, including God Himself. "Self" can define what is good and what is evil, including God Himself. (For example, we have all heard an unbeliever say, "I can't believe a good God would allow so much evil in the world.") "Self" can define himself. We all struggle with "self" and the pride of life – Satan fell because of pride and so did man.

From the idol of "self" and pride of life rises the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the mind. In 1 John 2:15-16, we read, *"Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"* (KJV). In America, merchandising fills the air – all our electronics access it. We are surrounded by merchandising; it has become invasive and oppressive. Again, we see Satan's influence on the world system. Many scholars believe Ezekiel 28, after describing the Prince of Tyre, describes Satan. In verse 16a, we read, *"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned."* Merchandising encourages our lusts, and we become covetous, greedy. Many Scriptures warn against covetousness. But Ephesians 5:5 describes a covetous man as an idolater: *"For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

Because the secular kingdom has no god but "self," the happiness and pleasure of "self" is idolized. We are reminded of this in 2 Timothy 3. Beginning in verse 1-2a we read, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,..."* Within a lengthy list of the characteristics people will have in this perilous time, we read in verse 4 that people will be *"lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."* In such a culture, suffering has no value – the solution is to offer help for sale through experts. Not all can afford the experts, and not all the experts actually help us back to true health and "happiness." For those of us who achieve "happiness and pleasure," we want to protect and keep it, so we look for peace and security, another idol found in our secular kingdom. But Jesus said, *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break in and steal"* (Matthew 6:19). We may pursue "safety" (or the illusion of it) instead of holiness. The secular kingdom, instead of trusting God and His ways, has invested in more and more invasive security surveillance systems. Sometimes I wonder if 1 Thessalonians 5:3a refers to this time and season: *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them...."* Idols do not see, hear, move, or

protect!

As Believers, our pride is crushed through great suffering, and our desire for worldly pleasures fades. We learn to surrender possessions, people, and our own bodies and minds to God and His purpose for us, that Christ would be formed in us (Galatians 4:19). In 1 Timothy 6:6-7, we read, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”*

In conclusion, the secular kingdom is idolatry – it is worldly-minded, focusing on this earthly life and removing God and spiritual mindedness. One of the idols in the secular kingdom is “self.” “Self” usurps God’s place and replaces Him with pride of life. From the idolatry of self and pride comes the idolatry to covetousness. Man follows in the spiritual footprints of Satan and sets up worldwide merchandising systems, which encourages lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. The idolatry of pleasure-loving instead of God-loving becomes a goal of worldly life. We try to evade suffering by idolizing peace and security. The secular kingdom enforces this worldly focus by taking God out of our conversation and lives. We miss Him. One of my prayers is that God would reveal the idolatry in the hidden places of our hearts, heal us, and make us whole in Him. Amen.