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"The world" is one of those phrases that both smacks of danger and allure. If we lived in a one dimensional existence it would be easy to explain and understand the world. But in our reality "the world" has many facets that we need to comprehend and understand, especially how they interact with the gospel of Christ and the Plan of Salvation.

What the world is

In the literal sense "the world" is the planet earth. This is the world created for us to experience mortality. The key word in that last sentence is mortality. Our mortal bodies bring with them desires unlike anything we experienced in our premortal life. We refer to these desires as being carnal, or desires based in the flesh. Our natural desires must be used wisely or they can all lead to sin. Carnal desires include all the appetites of the flesh - feeling full or satisfied, which can lead to the sin of gluttony, the desire for physical comfort, which can lead to envy, jealousy, etc. Our earthly appetites, or carnal desires are usually the opposite of the spiritual desires the Lord wants us to learn.

Part of the difficulty with what mortality teaches us is that we can't see beyond the confines of this phase of our existence. We don't see anything before mortality or anything after mortality. This restricts our vision, and hence our comprehension to just what we can understand that affects our time here on earth. This limited understanding causes us to have a sense of urgency to grasp for comfort and ease while it is still available. One of the first lessons we all learn on earth is that everything is temporary and fleeting. Nothing lasts very long. Everything needs to be repaired or replaced. Nothing is fair or equitable, and those who are able to get more in this life than someone else seem to enjoy this life more.

All these faulty impressions of what "real" life is all about cause us to misunderstand our true reality. As eternal beings what life is like in the eternities is the actual reality. Life on earth is temporary and just a passing phase, it doesn't reflect in any real way the eternities where we have always lived and will live after our death here. The appearances of reality here do not last, and do not represent the truth of existence in

the eternities. This is why there are so many schools of thought here in mortality. Everyone is trying to make sense of our life and time here. It is innate within us to seek for understanding and for our place in the universe. This seeking is the eternal part of our nature that finds itself in a new existence it can't readily explain.

Part of what the world is comprises the philosophies of men and the outlook and perspectives mankind has developed as people have tried over the centuries to understand this life without any input from God, our Father. That doesn't mean He hasn't tried to teach us to see where this life fits in the eternities. He has sent prophets to us to teach us this very thing from day one. Unfortunately, we must choose to believe them, and many, without any memory of what went on before, choose to dismiss them as just other mortals with an opinion to offer that doesn't make any sense to the way they are thinking. So mankind struggles on trying to explain the unexplainable. And it is only unexplainable because you have to have the gift of the Holy Ghost to understand the plan of salvation as explained by the prophets. The Plan is the only thing that does make sense in the eternities.

What the world offers

God's children are gods in embryo. We are not entirely stupid creatures. We have the capacity to grasp truth and to create in all manner of ways. Our Father has given bits and pieces of truth to all those in mortality or in the world, since the beginning of time. Throughout history people have been inspired to produce and create marvelous things. As a result the Lord has commanded us to learn about governments, histories, languages, science and the arts. All these things have truth in them.

Mind you, what the world, or the people living in mortality, have to offer, is not eternal truth, but truth that works in this life, nonetheless. The world does have good to offer us. We learn the gospel better and more completely when we are educated in the ways of the world, so the Lord has commanded us to get as much education as possible. That education is always, always, always commanded based on the premise that our education will damn us if we do not choose to believe in God's word. The only way for our education to be truly uplifting and beneficial in the eternities is to pair it with the eternal truths that come from the Spirit and the prophets.

What the world cannot offer

Since those who live in mortality (in the world) cannot see into the eternities, on either side of our time in mortality, the world cannot offer us anything that will save us and make us happy in the eternities. The focus of the world is only on the here and now, today. Everything the world seeks after is to better our condition while we are here. There simply is no consideration for any time after this life, for they have no knowledge of experience with that knowledge.

Being so short sighted causes the philosophies of the world (the ideas generated by those who live in this world) to be inherently flawed. If a system of belief doesn't include what it takes to be successful and happy in the eternities then what lasting happiness can it possibly bring to beings that live for eternity?

Where is the world?

The world is in two places. First, the world is the planet on which we live. So we cannot help but live in the world, because that is where we all spend our time in mortality. Second, the world consists of the adopted philosophies of those who live in the world. Living by the philosophies of the world is what the scriptures refer to when they talk about being worldly. We can choose to live outside these philosophies if we follow the teachings God has given to His children through His prophets.

Satan is the god of this world in that he is able to heavily influence how people see and behave while they are here. He actively promotes the ideas that rely on the temporary nature of mortality. He wants us to believe that there is an urgent need to fulfill our basic needs for comfort. He encourages us to quarrel, squabble, fight, and hurt one another, all based on the carnal desires that come with our bodies. He encourages us to exploit all things sexual, since we didn't have these urges before mortality, and we won't have them after mortality unless we are exalted. In short, the more damage he can cause to us in the here and now, the more headway he believes he is making in his vendetta against God and Christ. With Satan it really is all about the present. He doesn't want us to see, comprehend, or enjoy any of the blessings that can come into our life by us learning about the eternities from whence we came and to whence we will return. So in this sense, the world is firmly grounded in today.

How long will the world last?

The world, as in mortality, began with the Fall of Adam and Eve. It will last only until the Savior's second coming. So the days of "the world," meaning mortality, are very limited. The philosophies of men were created only after the Fall. They will all be replaced or corrected with the truths of eternity when the Savior returns and all men reenter the telestial kingdom, and same kingdom or level of glory Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden of Eden.

The return of Christ signals the end of the world, or the end of the wicked. His return also ends the passage of time as we know it in mortality. The earth will pass back into eternity when it receives its paradisiacal glory once again. Though the earth will still exist, and mankind will still live on earth, the world/philosophies of men will cease to exist.

Can the Spirit work within the world?

It is a mistake to think that the Spirit only works with those who have been baptized and received the gift of His company. The Spirit's influence extends to all of humanity, as we are all God's children. He uses the light of Christ, our conscience to lead us to accept as much truth as He can. The goal is to lead all who will listen to Him to the covenant path available only in the Lord's kingdom on earth, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are told that miracles happen wherever there is faith. That faith is not based on covenants, but belief and action. In all ages and cultures of the world, as long as belief and trust are put in correct principles, the Spirit can make good things happen.

How do I leave the world?

Physically, we are all in the world until the day we die. But we can leave the world to the extent we are able to identify the difference between the philosophies of men and eternal truth, and embrace the eternal truth. This task is simplified for us through the study of the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets. The Lord has given the prophets commandments for us to live by. These commandments are based on eternal truths that are meant to bless our lives in the eternities, so living by these commandments will open doors of happiness that cannot be found in the world at large.

On a simple level, obeying the commandments will raise us a certain amount above the philosophies of men and help us find joy that does not exist elsewhere. When we are educated and are studying the scriptures and seeking, through prayer, to be in tune with the Spirit, He will show us other ways in which we can change out the philosophies of the world for the ways of God.

The reason we find joy in leaving the world and its ways is that the commandments are based on an eternal perspective, an eternal life. That means that what the commandments teach us and how they change us, turn us into the kind of beings that God can bless eternally, not just for the short duration of mortality. This is the challenge of mortality. We must live in the world, but learn how to not be worldly in our way of thinking and behaving. We must learn to rise above our physical condition and spiritually live as people destined to live with God in the celestial kingdom. This will require learning to live as God lives, which is what the Spirit wants to teach us.

Lessons from the Apostles

Following are a series of comments about mortality and being in the world from Elder L. Tom Perry. The link to his talk is at the bottom of the article.

> It is “in the world” where we have the privilege of coming and enjoying a mortal experience. It is “in the world” where we are tested and tried. It is “in the world” where we have opportunities to participate in sacred, saving ordinances which will determine our postmortal life. It is “in the world” where we have opportunity to serve and make our contribution to mankind. It is to this world the Savior must come.
>
> We live “in the world” during our mortal experience. The Christian principles, which the gospel teaches, are needed in all we do and among all peoples.
>
> The spheres of influence we can radiate from our associations can make worthwhile contributions in the world. A righteous example can attract others to living a standard which has been established by the Lord, for the conduct of His children here in mortality. It can be a source of bringing souls to the light of the gospel, causing some to join the Church, while others do not. Embracing the gospel is a personal decision, and we always respect and understand the rights of individuals, but how can we ever expect the world to embrace the righteous principles the Lord has declared to govern His children here if we do not extend our influence outward?
>
> How our governments need standards of integrity! How our communities need yardsticks to measure decency! How our neighborhoods need models of beauty and cleanliness! How

> our schools need continued encouragement and assistance to maintain high educational standards!
>
> As we live “in the world,” may we contribute by making it a better place because of our righteous living, our service in causes that are just, and our faith that good will ultimately triumph over evil.

Following are some quotes from a Conference talk by Elder Neal A. Maxwell. The link to the talk is at the bottom of the article.

Just because we don't physically see God doing what He does to help us and bless us, some in mortality feel like He must be absent.

> Like goldfish in a bowl, some are mindless of who changes the water and puts in the pellets (see Jacob 4:13–14), or, like a kindergarten child whose retrieving parent seems a little late, concluding, “Man is alone in the universe.”
>
> We wince as we watch those once flattered by the world, like Judas, being used, despised, and discarded (see D&C 121:20). Nevertheless, when some of these are ready, even their hands need to be lifted up (see Heb. 12:12; D&C 81:5).
>
> Thus, while granting the deserved role of commendation and praise, we must not forget the words of Jesus about the recipients of mortal honors: “They have their reward” (Matt. 6:2, 5).
>
> There is an underlying reason, brothers and sisters, for all this fleetingness: those who bestow the transitory things of the world are, themselves, transients. They cannot confer that which is lasting because they do not possess it! Some, so sensing and seeing so little, want to have it all now!
>
> Let us likewise honor the special place of the family. As James Q. Wilson wrote:
>
> “We learn to cope with the people of this world because we learn to cope with the members of our family. Those who flee the family flee the world; bereft of the [family’s] affection, tutelage, and challenges, they are unprepared for the [world’s] tests, judgments, and demands” (The Moral Sense [1993], 163).
>
> Personal righteousness, worship, prayer, and scripture study are so crucial in order to “[put] off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). Be wary, therefore, when some demand public tolerance for whatever their private indulgences are!
>
> By choosing the Lord first, choosing one’s friends becomes easier and much safer. Consider the contrasting friendships in the city of Enoch compared to peers in the cities of

Sodom and Gomorrah! The citizens of the city of Enoch chose Jesus and a way of life, then became everlasting friends. So much depends on whom and what we seek first.

Like the prodigal son, we too can go to “a far country,” which may be no further away than a vile rock concert. The distance to “a far country” is not to be measured by miles but by how far our hearts and minds are from Jesus! (see Mosiah 5:13).

Let us adopt the attitude recommended by President Brigham Young: “Say to the fields, … flocks, … herds, … gold, … silver, … goods, … chattels, … tenements, … possessions, and to all the world, stand aside; get away from my thoughts, for I am going up to worship the Lord” (Deseret News, 5 Jan. 1854, 2). There are so many ways to say to the world, “stand aside.”

By paying more attention to what we are rather than exclusively to what we do, our public and our private persons will be the same—the man or the woman of Christ. Our intrinsic value is not dependent upon mortal acclaim anyway; in fact, the world may actually see us as weak and foolish (see 1 Cor. 1:27). Countering, however, are divine affirmations, including this one: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

God is infinitely more interested in our having a place in His kingdom than with our spot on a mortal organizational chart. We may brood over our personal span of control, but He is concerned with our capacity for self-control. Father wants us to come home, bringing our real résumés, ourselves!

Even so, our mortal jealousies still occur regularly over money, turf, a slight, or the “robes” and the “fatted calf” given to others (see Luke 15:22–23).

Isn’t it marvelous, brothers and sisters, that God, *who knows everything,* still spends time listening to our prayers? Compared to that cosmic fact, what does the world really have to offer us? One round of applause, one fleeting moment of adulation, or an approving glance from a phantom Caesar?

Final Thoughts

In the end, it isn't because we lived in the world that we will find ourselves in trouble with God. It is when we fail to learn how to give up being OF the world that will get us into trouble. The world is the only place we can live out our mortal lives, but it is a choice we make to live by the world's (man's) philosophy or by God's teachings. Eternal happiness is based on eternal truths, and man's teachings cannot provide those truths.

We are eternal beings, and only eternal principles will suffice to bring us the joy we seek.

“In the World”

L. Tom Perry

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Tugs and Pulls of the World

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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The Importance of Being in the World