

Preposition Propositions

What is Your Relationship to the World?

Scripture Reading: Psalm 37

Prepositions are words, used in phrases, to describe the relationship one thing has to another in terms of time, space, direction or other definitive information. Words like “in,” “under,” “to,” “towards,” “against” are prepositions. We want to focus on five prepositional ideas that will question us about our relationship to the world.

- **From** the world.
- **In** the world, but not **of** it.
- **To** the world.
- **Over** the world.

Psalm 37 provides a source of meditation for these themes and will be considered as we pursue the “preposition propositions.”

Proposition # 1 – Are we **in** the world and **of** the World? Or, have we been delivered **from** the world so that we are free to follow Christ? – Galatians 1:3-4

The word, “salvation” means “deliverance.” Delivered from what? Usually, our minds turn to the matter of deliverance from the penalty of our sins and the consequence of going to Hell. That is very important, but that is not the total picture. Galatians 1:3-4 tells us that Christ delivered us **from** this present evil world.

The World

Here, the word “world” is not referring to the physical planet earth. It is describing a dark spiritual kingdom that is operated by Satan. It is a network of philosophy, religion, lust, pride and godlessness. The “world” is all that is contrary to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

God’s Spirit and God’s Word bring order, love, joy and peace. Satan has a system of disorder, chaos, hatred, fear, selfishness and unrest. That which is truly spiritual is mocked and rejected by the “world.” When we are born into this world, we naturally are influenced by worldly thinking and are brought into bondage to it. Only by the new birth can we perceive God’s kingdom: a kingdom of light and love; the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

See Ephesians 2:1-7; I Corinthians 1:18-21; 2:6,12 (see vs. 1-16); Colossians 1:12-13; John 1:1-5, 9-13; 3:3, 19; James 4:4; II Peter 1:2-4; I John 2:15-17; 4:1, 5-6; 5:18-19.

Deliverance

Romans 7:6 – We are delivered **from** the condemnation of the law, which held us in bondage through the weakness of the flesh. Through Christ we are also delivered into His glorious freedom and liberty to serve God by the power of His Spirit. See Romans 7:24 – 8:4 cp. John 8:30-36; Galatians 5:1.

I Thessalonians 1:9-10 – We are delivered from the false idols of this world (which can be things like money, sex, fame, pleasure and power) to love, worship and serve God. We are also delivered from God's wrath, that is to later be poured out on this world. See Acts 26:18; Revelation 11:15-18

Thoughts from Psalm 37

Psalm 37:3-5 tells us to put our trust in the Lord. It is the Lord that is worthy of our trust – not the world. He will take care of us. He will guide us and provide for us as a shepherd. We are to delight ourselves with Him (find pleasure and contentment). We are to commit our way to the Lord (as if rolling over a heavy burden from our shoulders onto His shoulders). See Psalm 118:8; 23:1-6

Psalm 37:11 tells us to be meek before the Lord. That means that we submit or yield ourselves to Him. To be meek is to have the attitude of a servant. The promise is that if we are yielded to Him, we will inherit the earth. We shall be delighted in the abundance of peace! That which others struggle so hard to gain, but cannot keep will be given to us freely forever! See II Peter 3:10-14.

Are you delivered from the love of this World?

Matthew 16:24-26 – The fear of worldly men; the desire to please worldly men; the desire to compete with worldly men for worldly things: all have their roots in self-centeredness. Jesus said that we have to deny ourselves and escape the world's allurements and agenda, so that we can have eternal life and follow Him. See Isaiah 2:22; 55:1-3, 6-7; Psalm 46:10; II Peter 1:2-4; I John 2:15-17; 3:1-3.

Proposition # 2 – Are we **in** the world, but not **of** the World?

The **first proposition** explained that we are born into a world that is going to hell. We are naturally **in** the world (physically) and **of** the world (spiritually). When we are born again (John 3:3) we not only escape the world's destiny (hell), but we are delivered from the world's dominion over us through Satan. Christ's deliverance has made us citizens of heaven – members of God's family (Philippians 3:18-20). Being delivered from the world, our heart is able to see something better than the world and embrace it.

In this **second proposition**, we who have been delivered remain physically **in** the world. We still live among those who are under the influence and control of Satan. Though **in** this world, we must not be **of** it! We live here, but we don't belong here. Our purpose is to be instruments (weapons – Romans 6:13) in God's hands, to war against Satan's kingdom and rescue (deliver) others who are still **in** and **of** the world (II Timothy 2:24-26).

Let's focus on the phrase, "**In** the world, but not **of** it."

After we repent, believe and become followers of Jesus, the world tries to cling to us – to seduce us back into its ways. See II Corinthians 11:2-3, 13-15; I John 2:15-26; 4:1-6.

- Before going to the cross, Jesus prayed that we would be kept from the evil of this world – sanctified (set apart for holy purposes) by the word of God. See John 17:14-17.
- Paul warned us that the world will try to conform us to itself (push us into its mold). We must be transformed by the renewing of our mind. See Romans 12:1-2 cp. II Corinthians 3:18.
- Paul also warned us about murmurings and disputings that can interfere with our purpose of being lights that shine in this dark world. See Philippians 2:14-16 cp. vs. 1-16; Matthew 5:13-16.
- The world tries to entangle us with a great variety of pleasures and concerns. We must get the grace to stay focused and have the discipline of a good soldier. See II Timothy 2:1-4 cp. Matthew 13:22; I Peter 2:1-11.

It has been noted that when God delivered Israel out of Egypt, it only took a few weeks. But getting the "Egypt" out of Israel took forty years! Sanctification can also be described by what happens after you empty a glass of milk. The milk is basically gone, but there is a film – a residue that still remains, clinging to the inside of the glass. Removing worldliness from the thoughts and patterns of habit in a Christian is like washing the inside of that glass. Sometimes it seems to be dried and stuck in there very firmly. You will have to spend your whole life working on that cup. Don't just work on the outside of the cup. Work on the inside of it too. Many people attempt to be sanctified by changing outward appearances. They follow rules that have been set by a church, but their hearts are still clogged up with desires and attitudes that make things difficult and hypocritical. Men see only outward appearances, but God is looking at the heart (I Samuel 16:7). If we work on the inner man

(pride, lust, greed, fear, anger, etc.) the outward things will clean up more easily. If we only work on the outward things, we will be always having a big fight inside. See Matthew 23:25-26; Mark 7:14-23; Galatians 5:16-25; James 4:1-10.

Thoughts from Psalm 37

Psalm 37:4 tells us that God wants to give us the desires of our heart. However, our hearts must first be in alignment with His heart. We must first delight ourselves in the Lord and in the things that please the Lord. See Psalm 51:6-10; Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Psalm 37:7 tells us to rest in the Lord (be silent before the Lord). We are not to catch the restless, anxious and fretful (fuming & inflamed) spirit of this world. We are to patiently wait on the Lord's instructions and the Lord's provision. See Psalm 32:6-11; 46:10 (see vs. 1-11); Philippians 4:4-8.

Psalm 37:31 describes those who love and trust the Lord as people who have a heart-felt love for God's Word. This love will keep them sure-footed, on the right path. Psalm 119:9-16; 97-105; John 17:17; Romans 7:22; Colossians 3:16-17.

Are you **in** the world, but not **of** it?

Colossians 3:1-3 tells us that we are risen with Christ, above the sinful and mundane things of this world's agenda. Therefore, we should seek the things which are above – heavenly and holy things. We should set our mind and affections on the realities of God's kingdom, not the kingdoms of this earth. Though in this world, our lives are hidden (protected and nurtured) with Christ in God (Psalm 31:19-24; Proverbs 18:10). This truth should lead us to mortify (disable) the works of the flesh and walk as children of light in this dark world. See Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 6:4-14; 8:10-13; Ephesians 5:1-21.

Proposition # 3 – Are we taking the Gospel **to** the world?

Through the Gospel, born-again believers have been delivered **from the World** – delivered from the overwhelming influence of Satan and his world system. That power, which operated through our yielding fleshly nature, has been broken. The New Birth makes us realize that we are dead to this world. However, the realities of this liberation are not fully understood by the new believer. Step by step we yield to the Holy Spirit's influence to see ourselves as **in this world, but not of it**. With proper understanding from the Scriptures, we will learn to live accordingly.

Now, with all this talk of deliverance and separating from worldly ways, we could easily become isolationists. We could find ourselves colonizing or become aloof and indifferent to others around us who are still in and of the world. An attitude of being "holier than thou" could render us to become no earthly use to God's purposes described in the Great Commission. See Isaiah 65:5; Jude 20-23; I Corinthians 9:19-23; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15.

"Go ye **into** all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" – Mark 16:15

After the Lord has delivered us **from** the world's power and leads us to morally and spiritually separate, so that we are not **of** the world, then He sends us back **into** the world. We are to take the Gospel **to** the world.

Note these classic passages which are termed "**The Great Commission**" – **Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8**. These statements were given to the Apostles and early disciples. Those people constituted Christ's first church. We must look at these commissioning passages as not just belonging to them, but to all succeeding churches in all generations.

Christ sent us into

- A hostile and dangerous world (Matthew 10:16-20 cp. Romans 8:35-36)
- An unloving world (John 13:34-35; 15:16-19; 17:14-18)
- A divided and divisive world (Matthew 24:4-12; John 17:20-23)
- A dark and unspiritual world (John 3:19-20; 15:20-21 cp. I Corinthians 1:18-21; 2:6-14).

Paul confirms the commission.

Paul often speaks of his unique calling to ministry (Acts 26:8-20; Romans 1:1, 14-16; I Timothy 1:12-16). Yet Paul also calls us to follow his example and to obey the call to share Christ and the Gospel to the world (I Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1; Philippians 1:3-5; 2:14-16; 3:12-17; 4:9; II Corinthians 5:17-20; Romans 10:8-17). See also I Corinthians 9:16-27.

Paul refers to "...the house (household) of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground (foundation, buttress, support) of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). We are the living stones that make up God's house / church (I Peter 2:5). Does not this mean that we are all a part of holding up / supporting the work of spreading the truth to the world?

Before the Church was formed or the Great Commission was given, God has always intended that His people share the knowledge and glory of God to all nations.

"O Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy:" (Psalm 107:1-2)

"O Praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD." (Psalm 117 ~ "The Missionary Psalm")

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because His mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, that His mercy endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that His mercy endureth for ever. Let them now that fear the LORD say, that His mercy endureth for ever." (Psalm 118:1-4)

"All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom." (Psalm 145:10-12)

"And in that day shall ye say, 'Praise the LORD, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.'" (Isaiah 12:4-6)

Thoughts from Psalm 37

In Psalm 37:30-32, God's people use their mouths to speak the truth in wisdom. They speak of God's righteous deliverance (salvation). What is in their hearts comes out through their lives and from their mouths. Wicked people watch them. Even though the wicked are looking at them for evil purposes, they are, none the less, looking at them and observing their testimony.

See I Peter 3:13-16 cp. Hebrews 12:1.

Are you taking the Gospel **to** the World?

You may not be called to preach, as a pastor or evangelist, but we all have been given a testimony and at least one spiritual gift to use for promoting the work of the Gospel. Has your life been changed by Christ? Do you have the wonderful assurance that you are going to heaven? Tell your story to others. Learn how to use Scripture to document your testimony.

See I Peter 4:10-11; II Timothy 1:7-8, 12; 2:8-13 cp. Romans 1:16; 10:17; II Timothy 3:15-17.

