

## Breaking the Grip of Greed

John Milton paints a detailed portrait of hell in his famous poem, *Paradise Lost*. He describes Satan as a commander-in-chief of damned. Milton names several demon generals, chosen from the names of gods of antiquity: Moloch, Dagon, Astarte, Osiris and Belial. He also names a demon general, Mammon, after the words of Christ in Matthew 6. In live the abundant life that Jesus promised we must Break the Grip of Greed from our lives. We will use greed and mammon synonymously today.

### Matthew 6:19-21, 24

#### Mammon defined:

- Aramaic: riches
- It is an attitude that says: Man does not need God; we are self-sufficient
- Material wealth or possession especially as having a debasing influence
- Riches or wealth: "that in which one trusts"
- Christians began to use mammon as a pejorative, a term used to describe excessive materialism, **greed** and unjust worldly gain
- Gregory of Myssa asserted that Mammon was another name for Beelzebub.
- Cyprian and Jerome relate mammon to greed as an evil master that enslaves.
- John Chrysostom personified mammon as greed.
- Mammon appears in *The Divine Comedy* as a wolf-like demon of wealth, coming to inflame the human heart with greed.
- In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Mammon is a fallen angel, described as being more interested in heaven's pavements than in the Creator. He tells other fallen angels to be content in Hell.
- The Phantom of the Opera worships Mammon in *The Phantom of Manhattan*.
- In the *Alchemist*, Sir Epicure Mammon is a man obsessed with material wealth.
- In *Dungeons and Dragons*, Mammon is an archdevil, the ruler of the Third Layer of Hell

#### Mammon's intentions

- Mammon wants to rule over you
- Mammon looks for servants. It seeks worshippers.
- Jimmie Evans, "Mammon promises us those things that only God can provide—security, significance, identity, independence, power and freedom."
- People caught in the grip of mammon have much fear about money. They never have enough. The pursuit of making more, more, and more drives them!
- "Cannot serve God and mammon."
- Mammon seeks servants to rule over. Money is a good servant, but a terrible master!
- Mammon promises things that only God can give: security, significance, identity, power & freedom.
- Mammon says: Money is the answer.

#### Money v. Mammon

- Money and Mammon NOT synonymous.
- Money is not inherently evil.
- Money is neutral, neither righteous nor wicked
- Money takes on the spirit attached to it
- Money either has the Holy Spirit upon it or Mammon—**Psalm 112:1-3**
- Money submitted to God and his purposes has God's blessing on it
  - It is used to bless
  - It is like seed that multiplies
  - It is protected from the devourer
- Money not submitted to God has the spirit of mammon attached to it
  - People try to use money to control or manipulate others
  - Many falsely believe money will bring them happiness
  - Mammon is a liar!

- Mammon is the spirit of this world. Satan is the god of this age (world system)—“whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” - **2 Corinthians 4:4**
- Mammon says: Buy and sell. God says: Sow and reap.
- Mammon says: Cheat, deceive, manipulate and steal. God says: Give and receive.
- The second beast in Revelation 13 seeks to control people through the fear of money: cannot buy or sell without his mark: mammon.
- Mammon is selfish. God is generous.
- If we love and worship God, we will Break the Grip of Mammon: greedy, selfish, deceiving fearful love of money.
- “You will love one and hate the other, or you will be loyal to one and despise the other.”
- Fear and/or greed grip those under the rule of mammon.
- The Beast of The Revelation dominates people through commerce (buying and selling)—**Revelation 13:14-17**
- Mammon says, “Take.” God says, “Give.”
- Mammon is selfish. God is generous.
- Money is not the answer to everything.
- There are things more important than money.

### Things more important than money

- Shared experiences (concert, athletics, vacation, meal, etc.)
- Wisdom
- Loving marriage
- Good friends
- Physical and mental health
- Purpose
- Helping others
- Strong relationship with God
- Family
- Good name

### Money is a useful tool

- Money can buy a house, but not a home.
- Money can buy a book, but not wisdom.
- Money can buy a bed, but not sleep.
- Money can buy a position, but not respect.
- Money can buy blood, but not life.
- Money can buy gadgets, but not happiness.

### Luke 16:9-13

- Unrighteous mammon (NLT—worldly resources)
- We can use our money for eternal purposes.
- “Lay up treasures in heaven...”
- Only people are eternal.
- Our money can be invested in Heaven by giving to the church, whose purpose is to seek and to save the lost.
- The people who came to Christ through your giving will welcome you in God’s eternal kingdom.
- **Money will not welcome you in heaven. The friends you make by investing your money in God’s kingdom will welcome you.**
- **Jesus, who turned water into wine, also turns money into saved souls.**
- Money feeds, clothes, houses, pays medical expenses and spreads the Gospel.
- Hell is plundered through our tithes and offerings.

### Unselfish generosity is the only way to break free from the grip of Mammon!

### Mammon’s twin friends: Poverty and Pride

- There is a poverty spirit that is not determined by the amount of money one possesses.

- Spirit of Poverty says: You don't have enough. You will never have enough. It causes you to hoard.
- A prideful spirit says: Look what I did. It gives no credit to those who helped and the favorable circumstances that enabled them to produce wealth. It causes you to be selfish with your money.
- Poverty says: You should feel guilty about your money.
- Pride says: You deserve even more.
- Gratitude says: Thank you Lord.

### **Deuteronomy 8:18**

#### **Prayer:**

Dear God, please forgive me for being selfish, prideful, covetous and fearful concerning money. Please forgive me for listening the unholy spirits of mammon, pride and poverty. Lord, I ask you to break the grip of mammon off of my life, off of my family, off of my business and off of my descendants. Help me to be a generous tither and giver to the kingdom of God. In the name of Jesus, Amen.