

We must avoid the temptation to give the natural desires of the flesh an exaggerated importance in our lives.

After Jesus withstood this temptation He had to face one of quite a different character. Luke says that Satan took Him up into a high mountain where He could see all the kingdoms of the world. This statement was not intended to be understood as strictly literal. There is no high mountain where one could see all the kingdoms of the world. Probably Satan gave Him a vision, causing Him to see a panorama that included the vast military power of Rome and the great intellectual leadership of Athens. Such a scene is beautifully pictured in Milton's Paradise Regained.

Satan said: "All this I will give you if you bow down and worship me." It was Christ's desire to set up His kingdom of righteousness, glory and peace--here was a shortcut way to do it. Satan is the prince of this world, and Satan said that he would turn over all these kingdoms to Jesus. Our Lord could easily imagine all the good that He could do with this power in His hand. He might think of the wonderful help that He could give to every human being. All that would be needed was to bow down and worship Satan. Jesus refused and quoted the Scripture, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

I once met a man who told me that many years earlier he had taken a complete medical course. While doing so he noticed many important points at which our knowledge is very limited and felt a great desire to do advanced medical research. As this would require a great deal of money he made his immediate object the accumulation of property. After working very hard and very skillfully, he acquired a string of theatres up and down the Pacific Coast. He began to think that he had now obtained enough property to enable him to devote it effectively to the purpose of advancing medical research. Just then the country entered the depression of the 30's and he soon lost all property he had accumulated. The last I heard of him he was giving lessons in skiing and running an annual flower show.

There is nothing wrong with acquiring property. God desires us to be stewards of our possessions, and to use them in order to advance His work. If we make accumulation of property the central purpose of our lives we are hedonists just as truly as if we were devoting ourselves to debauchery and immorality.