

Luke 9:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Analysis

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? Jesus poses a rhetorical question using ὄφελέω (ἀφελέω, "to profit" or "benefit"). The verb κερδαίνω (κερδαίνω, "to gain") was commercial language—accumulating wealth or assets. Yet the ultimate loss (ζέμιοō, ζημιόω, "to forfeit" or "suffer loss") is the psychē (ψυχή, "soul" or "life")—one's essential self, eternal existence. The phrase "or be cast away" uses ζέμιοθεις (ζημιωθείς, "having suffered loss"), emphasizing total ruin.

This follows Peter's confession of Christ (v. 20) and Jesus' first passion prediction (vv. 22-24). The cross-bearing call demands radical reorientation—spiritual profit transcends earthly gain. Jesus exposes worldly success as worthless if it costs eternal salvation. Alexander the Great conquered the world but died at 32; what profit? This verse dismantles the prosperity gospel and materialism, establishing eternal values as the only rational priority.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words following His transfiguration prediction (v. 27) and immediately before the actual event (vv. 28-36). The disciples still expected an earthly Messianic kingdom—political liberation from Rome and national restoration for Israel. Jewish eschatological hopes centered on territorial sovereignty and economic prosperity under Messiah's reign. Jesus systematically deconstructs these expectations, teaching that the kingdom comes through

suffering, death, and resurrection. His question challenges the Zealot ideology prevalent among Jews—violent revolution to 'gain the whole world' (Roman expulsion) would ultimately 'lose the soul' through forfeiting God's actual kingdom purposes.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What worldly gains are you tempted to pursue that might cost you spiritual vitality or eternal reward?
2. How does Jesus' question expose the irrationality of prioritizing temporary success over eternal destiny?
3. In what ways does contemporary culture promote 'gaining the world' while minimizing concerns about losing one's soul?

Interlinear Text

τί	γὰρ	ώφελεῖται	ἄνθρωπος	κερδήσας	τὸν	κόσμον
what	For	advantaged	a man	if he gain	G3588	world
G5101	G1063	G5623	G444	G2770		G2889
ὅλον	έαυτὸν	δὲ	ἀπολέσας	ἢ	ζημιωθείς	
the whole	himself	and	lose	or	be cast away	
G3650	G1438	G1161	G622	G2228	G2210	

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 16:26 (Parallel theme): For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 8:36 (Parallel theme): For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Acts 1:25 (Parallel theme): That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

1 Corinthians 9:27 (Parallel theme): But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Matthew 13:50 (Parallel theme): And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

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