

Matthew 16:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

Jesus poses ultimate value question: '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?' (Greek: τί γὰρ ὡφεληθήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐὰν τὸν κόσμον ὅλον κερδήσῃ τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ζημιωθῇ, 'for what will a person be profited if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?'). The verb *κερδήσῃ* ('gain') is business term - profitability analysis. Total material success ('whole world') cannot compensate for soul loss. The soul's value is infinite; nothing can purchase it back once forfeited. This establishes ultimate economics - eternal realities outweigh temporal gains.

Historical Context

Ancient audiences understood profit-loss calculations. Merchants, farmers, fishermen all assessed costs versus benefits. Jesus applies commercial logic to ultimate questions - the soul outweighs everything. This teaching challenged both poverty-stricken peasants dreaming of wealth and wealthy individuals trusting riches. Rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22) illustrates the tragedy - choosing whole world over soul. Early Christians often chose poverty, persecution, and martyrdom over worldly success, demonstrating soul-priority.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What worldly gains tempt you to compromise eternal values?
2. How does recognizing the soul's infinite value reorder life priorities?
3. What would you be unwilling to exchange for any worldly benefit?

Interlinear Text

τί	γὰρ	ώφελεῖται	ἄνθρωπος	έὰν	τὸν	κόσμον	ὅλον
what	For	profited	is a man	if	G3588	world	the whole
G5101	G1063	G5623	G444	G1437		G2889	G3650
κερδήσῃ	τὴν	δὲ	ψυχῆς	αὐτοῦ	ζημιωθῆ	ἢ	τί
he shall gain	G3588	and	soul	G846	lose	or	what
G2770		G1161	G5590		G2210	G2228	G5101
δώσει							G1325
ἄνθρωπος	ἀντάλλαγμα	τῆς	ψυχῆς	αὐτοῦ			
is a man	in exchange	G3588	soul	G846			
G444	G465		G5590				

Additional Cross-References

Job 27:8 (Parallel theme): For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?

Luke 9:25 (Parallel theme): For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Luke 12:20 (Parallel theme): But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Luke 16:25 (Parallel theme): But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Matthew 5:29 (Parallel theme): And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Job 2:4 (Parallel theme): And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

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