International Online Teachers Society

American Expression E2774 Mammonism

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

Mammonism is the belief or attitude that money, wealth, and material possessions are among the most important things in life. The word comes from “Mammon,” a biblical term associated with riches and worldly wealth. In the New Testament, Jesus says that a person cannot serve both God and Mammon, suggesting a conflict between spiritual devotion and the pursuit of wealth. Mammonism therefore means more than simply having money. It describes an excessive attachment to wealth as a measure of success and personal worth.

In everyday life, Mammonism can appear in many forms. A person may judge others primarily by their income, house, car, clothing, or social status. Someone may choose a career only because it offers a high salary, even though the work provides little meaning or satisfaction. Businesses may focus entirely on profit while ignoring employees, customers, communities, or the environment. In such situations, money changes from being a useful tool into something that controls human priorities and decisions.

It is important to distinguish Mammonism from the reasonable desire to earn money. Money itself is not necessarily evil. People need it for food, housing, education, healthcare, transportation, and other necessities. Financial stability can protect families, create opportunities, support charitable work, and allow businesses to employ people. The problem begins when acquiring wealth becomes an ultimate purpose rather than a means of supporting a meaningful life. Mammonism is therefore primarily a question of priorities and values.

Mammonism can also affect personal relationships. When wealth becomes the highest value, friendships may be based on usefulness, status, or financial advantage rather than genuine affection. Family relationships can suffer when financial success receives more attention than communication, care, and shared time. People may constantly compare themselves with richer neighbors or colleagues, creating envy and dissatisfaction. Even wealthy people may feel poor when others have more, producing an endless cycle of competition, desire, and discontent.

Mammonism is closely related to materialism, greed, and consumerism, although these ideas are not identical. Materialism emphasizes physical possessions, while greed describes an excessive desire to acquire more. Consumerism often encourages continual purchasing and consumption. Mammonism is broader in a moral and spiritual sense because it treats wealth almost like an object of devotion. Money becomes a source of identity, security, power, and meaning rather than simply a practical resource for everyday living.

Modern society can make Mammonism particularly tempting because financial success is highly visible. Social media displays luxury vacations, expensive cars, designer products, and impressive homes, while advertisements suggest that buying something new will bring happiness or status. Economic competition can encourage people to measure achievement through salaries, profits, property values, and investments. These measurements may be useful, but they cannot measure kindness, integrity, friendship, wisdom, courage, compassion, or love, which are also essential parts of a meaningful life.

In conclusion, Mammonism is not simply possessing or enjoying wealth; it is giving money excessive importance in life. It becomes dangerous when financial gain determines moral choices, personal identity, relationships, and success. A healthier approach recognizes money as a valuable servant but a poor master. Wealth can provide security, opportunity, comfort, and resources to help others. By balancing financial goals with integrity, compassion, relationships, responsibility, generosity, and purpose, people can use wealth constructively without allowing money to control their values or dominate their lives.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Mammonism can become harmful when money becomes the main measure of success?
2. How can a person pursue financial success without falling into Mammonism?
3. Do you think modern society encourages Mammonism? Why or why not?
4. How can Mammonism affect relationships with family, friends, and coworkers?
5. What values should people prioritize over money and material wealth?