

Publishing Editor's column

IF I go into our local shop on a Saturday morning to buy something there is invariably a queue at the counter. This is mainly due to people buying tickets for the National Lottery. Sales of lottery tickets have declined from their peak, but many millions of people are still seduced by the prospects of winning millions of pounds, encouraged by such advertising slogans as, 'It could be you', and, 'If you've got a ticket you've got a chance'. People do not seem to have grasped the fact that their chance of winning a significant sum of money is in fact extremely small; by Monday morning they are statistically more likely to have been killed in an accident than to have become a millionaire.

And what if they do win a large sum of money? Does it bring happiness? Almost certainly not. Most people can cope with winning a few thousand pounds, enabling them to pay off a mortgage, buy a new car, and so on. Few can cope with suddenly possessing a large sum of money. It tends to separate them from family and friends and plunge them into a lifestyle which brings no happiness. Yet despite occasional reports in the media of people whose lives have been ruined by the possession of sudden wealth, people go on deluding themselves that a big lottery win is the way to future happiness.

It is a sad feature of modern society that so many people rest their hopes on such uncertainties and ignore the offer which God makes in His Word of eternal life in the future. This hope is "set before us" in the promises which God has made, and because God keeps His promises it can be described as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:18,19). Moreover, God has actually been prepared to give His own Son to die in order that sinful human beings might be able to enjoy the fulfilment of this hope. How disappointed He must be that so few people embrace this sure and certain hope of eternal life, and so many place their hopes in something which is extremely unlikely to happen!

The fundamental problem is that we live in a world which is based on the idea of economic growth, and in order for there to be economic growth people have to be deluded into wanting more and better material things. Hence the attraction of a lottery win. The idea that we should be content with what we have, as taught by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:11,12 and 1 Timothy 6:6-8, is completely foreign to the thinking of people today, and it is difficult for us to keep ourselves free of the current philosophy and accept the truth of what the Apostle Paul says. But we must do so, for covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5), and idolaters will not inherit the Kingdom. Let us get into our minds the immense contrast between the transient pleasure which at best material things can bring us and the eternal blessings that are set before us, described as "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1:4). People may find that the sudden wealth of a big lottery win brings them no happiness; those who are to experience eternal life in God's Kingdom will find that it never palls.

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